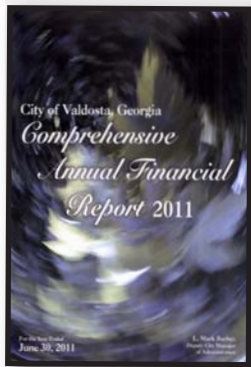


City Beat

Valdosta Receives Top Honors in Financial Reporting

The City of Valdosta received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada for its Comprehensive Annual



Financial Report (CAFR) for Fiscal Year 2010-2011. The certificate is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting,

and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. This year marks the 27th consecutive year that the City of Valdosta has received the award.

City Manager Larry Hanson credits the Mayor and City Council, Deputy City Manager for Administration Mark Barber, and the men and women in the city's Finance Department for continuing to exercise the best practices in government finance.

The CAFR is judged each year by an impartial panel using standard evaluation criteria that include technical significance, transferability, documentation, originality, cost effectiveness, and finance officer involvement. Citizens may view the CAFR on the City of Valdosta's website from the Finance Department webpage.

www.valdostacity.com

Downtown Property Owners Celebrate Retirement of CID Tax

Eight Years Early

Downtown Valdosta property owners recently received an overall 5 mills decrease in the tax millage and gathered for a celebration on Aug. 3 to commemorate the ending of 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. The CID was originally established for 20 years, with the loan repayment to end in the year 2020. However, due to continued 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—all as a result of the Streetscape Project—the CID is being retired eight years early.

For information on how to establish a business in downtown Valdosta, call the Valdosta Main Street office at (229) 259-3577.

Browns Canal Project Receives Statewide Award



IN PHOTO Mayor John Gayle (left) recognized the following at a recent city council meeting: City Engineer Pat Collins, Bill Kent of Innovate, City Stormwater Manager Emily Davenport, Tommy Radney of Radney Plumbing, and City Project Manager Jim Martinez.

The City of Valdosta's Browns Canal Streambank Restoration Project was recently recognized as the Georgia Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement for Natural Environment by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The project featured the construction of a 1,250-foot gabion wall system along a portion of Browns Canal, which was designed to stabilize the streambank, improve the natural channel flow, restore ecological habitat and protect adjacent homes and structures. The project—the first of its kind in the City of Valdosta—was cited as allowing the city to maintain hydraulic capacity while reducing maintenance costs and providing the neighborhood with an aesthetically pleasing and safe channel.

People's Choice Winners



Lin McMichen's photo above, titled "Upside Downtown" won Best of Show in the City of Valdosta annual People's Choice Photo Contest.

In addition to **Lin McMichen** and **Megan Ford** (youth) capturing the Best of Show in the 4th annual Valdosta People's Choice Photo Contest, the following won first place or honorable mention (HM) in the respective categories:

Lights, Camera, Action

First Place: Lin McMichen
 HM: Becky Martin
 HM (Youth): McKenzie Ford
 HM (Youth): Lauren Burgess

Over the Rainbow

First Place: Sally Querin
 HM: Greg Fricker

Animal House

First Place: Theresa Alonso
 HM: Rose Prince
 HM (Youth): Morgan Parrish

It Takes a Village

First Place: Theresa Alonso
 HM: Carolyn McMillian

Taking Care of Business

First Place: Carolyn McMillian
 HM: Tiffany Christie

The photos are currently on display in the city's Customer Service Center, at 102 N. Lee Street.

City Hosts Electronic Recycling Event, Nov. 3

Citizens who are wondering what to do with their outdated or unwanted electronic equipment are urged to attend a community e-recycling event that will properly dispose of their unwanted electronics, while reducing unnecessary clutter in time for the holiday season. The City of Valdosta Public Works Department, in partnership with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) and Atlanta Recycling Solutions, will host the Electronic Recycling event on Saturday, Nov. 3, 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. Since the inception of the e-recycling events in 2006, the city has saved over 200 tons of electronic waste—over 400,000 pounds!—from being disposed of into the landfill.

Visit www.valdostacity.com for list of items accepted or call (229) 259-3590 for more information.

Second Annual Farm Days a Success!

The 2nd annual Downtown Valdosta Farm Days was a huge success, growing from a 5-month calendar event in its first year to a 7-month calendar event in 2012. According to Valdosta Main Street Manager Amanda Peacock, the farmers market grew approximately 40 percent in vendors and nearly doubled in shoppers this year, while successfully bringing the crop of the country to the heart of the city.

One of the strong affiliations with Farm Days that has contributed to its success is the Lowndes County Partnership for Health, who recently received a \$96,858 grant from the USDA. The grant will allow the partnership to continue to develop Farm Days, while also establishing an agricultural center in our community and providing low-cost fresh produce to primarily low-income populations, including food deserts, in our area. In addition, this project will continue to aggregate commodities from surrounding farms for distribution which will support economic development.

The grant will also pay for a portable vegetable stand to be used on a distribution route, travel cost associated with the distribution route, and promotional and educational materials for Farm Days and the agricultural center. Citizens wishing to learn more about growing a community garden in their neighborhoods, about the portable vegetable stand route, or any other services that the grant will fund may contact the Lowndes County Partnership for Health at (229) 245-0020.

Oct. 20 marked the final Farm Days for the year 2012. However, citizens may look forward to the next season kicking off in April 2013. For more information about Farm Days or any other Main Street events, call (229) 259-3577.



Daylight Savings Time Ends, Nov. 4

Reminder to set clock back and check smoke detector batteries



Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 a.m., on Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012, and citizens should turn their clocks backward one hour to 1 a.m.

The purpose of Daylight Saving Time—observed by the United States and Canada—is to provide more hours of daylight during the evenings and less in the mornings. Daylight Saving Time is also a great biannual reminder to change the batteries in smoke detectors. More than 70 percent of home fire deaths result from fires in homes where the smoke detector did not work.

On Nov. 4, take an extra minute to change your smoke detector batteries while setting your clocks backward.



The Valdosta Police Department has announced the hours for the city's annual trick-or-treat activity for Wednesday, Oct. 31, from 6 to 9 p.m. Extra police patrol will be scheduled during this time to ensure the evening is both safe and enjoyable.

The Police Department offers the following practical tips for citizens and their family members to enjoy the traditional event:

- Instruct children to walk in pairs and stay on the sidewalks.
- Accompany children under age 12.
- Wear reflective clothing.
- Pin a slip of paper on children with child's name, address and phone number inside a pocket in case he or she gets separated from the group.
- Select a safe route with good lighting and equip children with flashlights or glow sticks to increase visibility.
- Feed children dinner before trick-or-treating to decrease the amount of candy they are tempted to eat before an adult can inspect it.
- Inspect treats before children are allowed to eat them, and be sure to throw out unwrapped or unpackage candy.

For more information, please contact Valdosta Police Department Commander Bernard Robinson at (229) 293-3104.

Opportunities to Serve on Local Boards

Citizens who want to get more involved with their community and local government should consider applying for one of the commission or authority positions open:

- **Central Valdosta Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority (3 positions open)**
- **Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (1)**
- **Valdosta Housing Authority (1)**
- **Valdosta-Lowndes Conference Center & Tourism Authority (1)**

Interested applicants must review the Membership Requirements and Code of Ethics Booklet, complete a General Board Application, and sign a Code of Ethics form. The deadline for submitting the General Board Application and Code of Ethics form to the City Clerk for the current vacancies is Wednesday, Oct. 31. The Mayor and City Council will evaluate the applications and appoint individuals to the vacancies listed above at the Nov. 8 City Council meeting.

For information or to get a copy of these documents, contact City Clerk Teresa Bolden, at Valdosta City Hall, at (229) 259-3503, or at tbolden@valdostacity.com. All documents are also available at www.valdostacity.com.



By law, everyone—including homeowners—must contact Georgia 811 by dialing (800) 282-7411 at least 48 hours before digging on your property. If your digging project is small or you are unsure as to whether you should notify Georgia 811 before you break ground, remember it's always best to call.

For City of Valdosta water and sewer emergencies, citizens may call (229) 259-3592 during business hours or (229) 333-1832 during non-working hours to have standby personnel dispatched to assist.

Appropriate Vehicles in Neighborhoods



Neighborhoods are important areas in our city. They are the hubs for some of our greatest investments—our families, friends and our property. The city provides various guidelines to protect these citizen investments, while also preserving clean and safe neighborhoods in which to enjoy life.

One of these guidelines, found in Sections 222-11 and 222-12 of the city’s Land Development Regulations, addresses the parking of vehicles in residential districts. Large vehicles, such as motor homes, moving vans, tractor-trailers or any other vehicle with a gross weight of more than 14,000 lbs may not be parked at your home or on an adjacent street for any period longer than six hours, unless they are engaged in loading or unloading.

Otherwise, any vehicle larger than an SUV must be parked in either the side or rear yard, or in some cases on an improved surface in the front yard (as long as the provided area does not exceed 25% of the total square footage of the area between the front of the house and the right-of-way). If the home is located within the city’s Residential Parking Overlay District (areas generally around VSU or otherwise to the north of Baytree Road), then all vehicles must be parked on an approved surface. Front yard parking in this district is limited to a maximum of 5 vehicles and subject to the same 25% rule mentioned above. In residential areas throughout the city, recreation vehicles (including boats on trailers) must be parked so that at least 50% of the recreational vehicle is located behind the front building line of the house. Recreational vehicles may NOT be occupied overnight except in an approved RV park.

Be a good neighbor. Park any large vehicles that may otherwise be an eye-sore or a safety hazard in the appropriate parts of your property. For more information or to request a copy of the Residential Parking Overlay District Map, citizens may call the city’s Planning and Zoning Division at (229) 259-3563.

City Lowers the Millage Rate

The lowest millage rate since 1995 and one of the lowest in the state

Property Tax Bill Estimates				
Taxing Authority	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	Tax Rate
City of Valdosta	\$ 140	\$ 222	\$ 304	4.106
Lowndes County	249	395	541	7.31
Vald City Schools	577	917	1,257	16.98
Recreation Authority	43	68	54	1.25
Industrial Authority	34	54	74	1.00
State of Georgia	9	14	19	0.25
Total	\$1,051	\$1,669	\$2,287	

The Valdosta Mayor and City Council lowered the 2013 millage rate for Valdosta citizens to 4.106 mills, down from 4.112 mills in 2012. The City Council adopted the decreased millage rate—the lowest millage rate since the year 1995 and one of the lowest in

the state—at their Aug. 9 council meeting, 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.

Deputy City Manager for Administration Mark Barber reported that the 2012 net tax digest increased by 3.74 percent (excluding inflationary growth) compared to the 2011 digest. Applying the proposed millage rate to the current digest is expected to generate approximately \$5,982,784 in revenue.

As a result of the decreased millage, citizens should experience a reduction or no increase in taxes paid to the City of Valdosta. However, City of Valdosta property owners also pay a portion of their taxes to the following entities: Valdosta City Schools, the State of Georgia, Lowndes County, the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority.

Valdosta’s millage rate of 4.106 mills is notable next to Albany’s 8.6, Tifton’s 6.7, Warner Robin’s 9.9, Brunswick’s 12.7 or Savannah’s 13 mills.

New Committee to Analyze Fair Housing

The Fair Housing Committee will meet the second Thursday of every month, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. The meetings will be held in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room, located at 300 N. Lee Street.

For more information or to obtain a meeting agenda, contact the city’s Neighborhood Development Department at (229) 671-3617.



The next scheduled meeting of the Fair Housing Committee is Nov. 8.

S.P.L.O.S.T.

Making Up the Difference One Penny at a Time

Since 1987, the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) has been a longstanding source of revenue for Lowndes County and the cities of Valdosta, Lake Park, Dasher, Hahira and Remerton. The funding in recent years has helped to make up the difference between a struggling economy and a growing list of community improvement needs. Revenue from this one-penny tax has helped improve these communities and their infrastructures with such projects as paving and repairing roads, sidewalks and bike trails, constructing and renovating local fire stations, creating parks and recreation facilities, updating equipment and technology for local law enforcement agencies, and constructing and improving water and sewer facilities. An interesting fact about SPLOST is that over 50 percent of the money generated is collected from non-residents who visit our area for their shopping, dining and entertainment pleasures—that's local revenue from a source outside our area.

Funding from SPLOST I through SPLOST VI have been used to build a state-of-the-art Water Treatment Plant, Fire Stations 1, 2 and 6 and the renovations of Stations 3 and 4, the James H. Rainwater Conference Center, the Regional Crime Lab, Valdosta Regional Airport renovations, the Senior Citizens Center, the Downtown Streetscape Project and numerous renovations to area parks and public facilities. Most of the projects funded by SPLOST could not have been completed in a timely manner or at all, had it not been for the funding that this critical revenue source generates.

Below is a list of city projects funded by SPLOST VI, approved by voters in 2007 and collection initiated in 2008. SPLOST VI will expire in December 2013. Projects identified with an asterisk (*) have already been completed.

Utilities:

Madison Hwy Utility Extensions *

Sidewalks Projects:

College Street Sidewalks *

Troupe Street Sidewalks *

River Street Sidewalks

Eastwind Sidewalks

Brookwood Place Sidewalks

Resurfacing:

LMIG Resurfacing (FY2011) *

LMIG Resurfacing (FY2012)

Ditch Piping:

Fry Street *

W. Alden Avenue

Cypress Street

Road Improvements:

Melody Lane Repair *

MLK Corridor Phase 1A *

Twin Street Intersection

Woodrow Wilson Drive-Gornton Rd. Ext.

Drainage:

Park Avenue Culvert Replacement *

Country Club at Three Mile Branch *

Brown's Canal Restoration *

Freedom Park Dam Breach *

Sugar Creek at Baytree Repairs *

Upgrade of Brown's Canal Ponds

Lake Laurie Cross Drain Replacement

Madison Hwy Drainage

Annexed Islands Phase 1:

Islands 1-21 *

Island 27

Island 35 A *

Island 35B

Island 35C

Islands 56,59,63

Island 69A

Island 69B

Island 69C-1 *

Island 69C-2

Island 76

Island 77A *

Island 77B *

Island 77C

Annexed Islands Phase 2:

Islands 23,24

Island 26

Island 29

Island 85A

Note: While Annexed Island projects are paid for using GEFA loans, both SPLOST VI and SPLOST VII funds will be used to repay those loans.

Citizens will vote on SPLOST VII at the polls in November 2012 and whether to continue this special purpose sales tax of one percent on items subject to the state sales and use tax within the county. If passed, SPLOST VII will become effective January 2014 and its proceeds must be spent for capital, non-operating items by the county government and participating city governments in the county. A list of proposed SPLOST VII projects is available at www.valdostacity.com.

Tuned in to Metro 17 ONLINE

Citizens can now enjoy Metro 17 programming from anywhere by visiting our new online video library located at www.vimeo.com/metro17valdosta. At the site, citizens will find City Focus news shows, special events and other locally produced videos and programs. For more information about our online video library or for information on programming contact Media Coordinator Shemeeka Johnson at scjohnson@valdostacity.com or call (229) 671-3615 and remember to stay tuned to Metro 17 on Mediacom, your news and information station.



Right-of-Ways Maintained By Property Owners

Residential, commercial or industrial property owners in the city are required to maintain the right-of-ways on their properties as required by city Ordinance No. 2011-37. This includes the portion of improved property between the street or curb and the property boundaries and any ditches.

For more information, contact the Public Works Department at (229) 259-3590.



Curb Marker Events Have Positive Impact

As part of the city stormwater permit with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, the city's curb marker program allows local volunteers to help place curb markers on catch basins and distribute door hangers with information about the program. The curb marker events provide community awareness and have

a positive impact on our environment. Students in the Lowndes County 4-H and Valdosta Early College Academy (in photo above) are coordinating events in the months of October, November and December.

For more information and to schedule an event, call (229) 671-3642.

VITA: Getting Ready for Tax Season

The City of Valdosta partners with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which provides free tax-preparation services for qualifying individuals and/or households with incomes of less than \$49,000. VITA is currently looking for volunteers to assist with preparing and filing tax returns for local citizens. Training for Valdosta volunteers is scheduled for Dec. 4 and 5.

To become a VITA volunteer, contact JaTaryia Thomas at the C.A.S.H. Prosperity Campaign at (229) 444-2614 or at cashpcampaign@gmail.com.

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
 Sementha Mathews...Public Information 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 Sementha Mathews at (229) 259-3548. Citizens may also sign up for Enews at www.valdostacity.com/publicinformation to stay informed on news and events in the city.