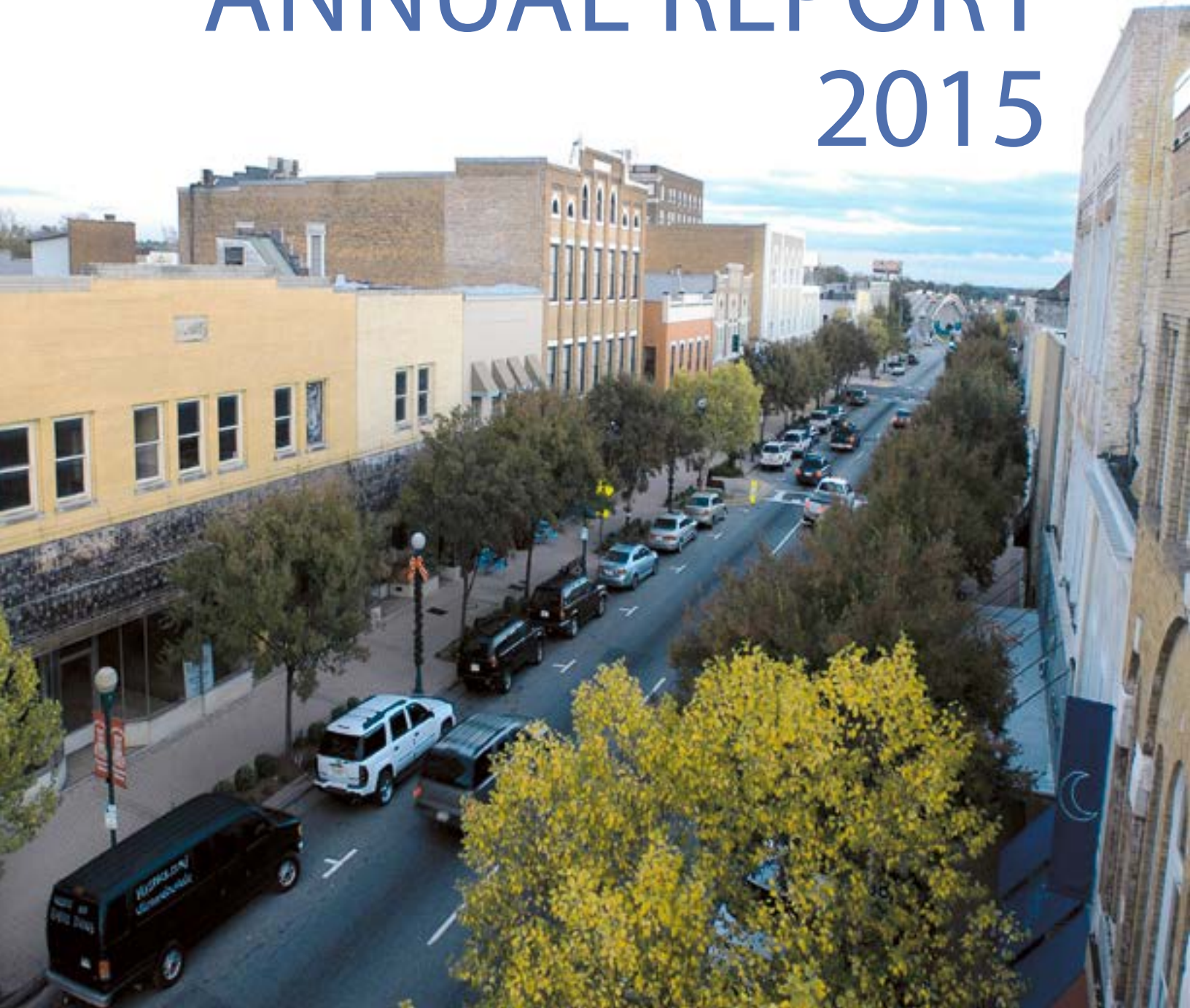


# CITY OF VALDOSTA ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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[WWW.VALDOSTACITY.COM](http://WWW.VALDOSTACITY.COM)

**VALDOSTA**  
A City Without Limits

# From the City Manager



Larry Hanson  
hanson@valdostacity.com

It is my pleasure to present the 2015 City of Valdosta Annual Report, our 20th consecutive report, designed to inform our citizens, elected officials and other interested individuals of our city's activities, progress, challenges and accomplishments last year. This year's publication features the profiles of people who serve our city through our local government and puts faces to the services that citizens receive throughout the year. The profiles included in this document represent a total of more than 150 years of collective experience.

In 2015, the city continued to operate in a fiscally-challenged economy, and our employees continued to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate economic conditions while maintaining quality services for our citizens. Valdosta—Georgia's 14th largest city—continues to have one of the lowest millage rates among its peer cities in the state, and its millage rate remains lower than it was in 1992.

Through the dedicated work of the Finance Department staff, the city was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 29th consecutive year by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The city also received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 18th consecutive year—the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

Throughout 2015, 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, and I invite you to take the time to view the department pages to read their accomplishments.

The city began a new website campaign in 2015 to provide more transparency and accessibility to local government through modern technology. An increased effort was made to communicate more effectively with all citizens via social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, coupled with our continued utilization of Metro Valdosta Channel 17, timely newsletters, E-News blasts and other citizen programs and events. In addition, the city continued to host three public education programs—Valdosta Government 101, Citizens Fire Academy and Citizens Fire Academy—all designed to give citizens a closer look at their local government and the services it provides. Mayor and Council also approved the formation of the inaugural Valdosta Youth Council, made up of student public servants making a difference in their community.

"The City Without Limits" continues to be a great place for business, and we are beginning to see manufacturing, retail and commercial interests. While we are cautiously optimistic about the years ahead, we look forward to significant development announcements in the coming year that will produce positive economic benefits for our future.

Thank you for taking the time to review the work of your local government throughout the pages of this report. I'd like to make special mention of 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.

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# 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.

# Mayor and City Council



Mayor John Gayle  
jgayle@valdostacity.com



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



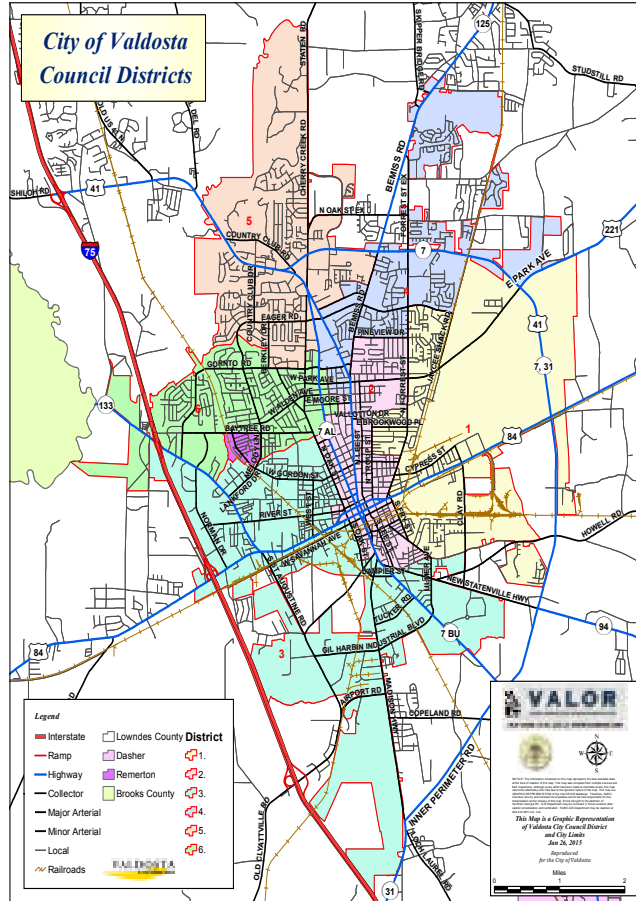
Councilman Ben Norton  
At-Large  
bnorton@valdostacity.com



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



Councilwoman Sandra Tooley  
District 2  
stooley@valdostacity.com



Councilman Joseph Vickers  
District 3  
jvickers@valdostacity.com



Councilman Tim Carroll  
District 5  
tcarroll@valdostacity.com



Councilman Robert Yost  
District 6  
ryost@valdostacity.com

The Mayor and members of the City Council invite and encourage the citizens of the City of Valdosta to attend City Council meetings whenever possible, because good government depends on the interest and involvement of citizens. City Council meetings are held on the first and third Thursday following the first Sunday of each month, at 5:30 p.m. and are held on the second floor of City Hall, located at 216 East Central Avenue, in beautiful Downtown Valdosta.

# Mayor / Council Goals

The Valdosta Mayor and City Council held their annual retreat on Jan. 9-10 to discuss the city's top priorities and set the following fiscal year goals:

- Continue to pursue flood relief and USACE to lead the effort for both studying the regional watershed and funding projects to resolve the flooding.
- Continue to carry out wastewater related projects with a goal of completing projects within designated timelines.
- Hold meetings with the County and the School Board to discuss common issues and concerns.
- Reactivate the Municipal Auditorium Steering Committee to discuss the project, funding, sale of Mathis, needs of the SGMC, etc.
- Study the Tree and Landscape Ordinance and Nuisance Ordinance (yard, bushes, etc.) to include a review of fees and penalties.
- Contract for business development and advocacy support person to enhance economic development.
- Work to utilize CDBG funds for the development of the comprehensive plan and creation of a strategic plan to address issues such as job training, housing, economic development and employment.
- Make an effort to implement the compensation plan based on financial resources.
- Coordinate meetings with property owners in the Perimeter Road area to pursue master planning of infrastructure and future development.
- Hold a meeting with the Housing Authority with a goal to visit the Fellwood Savannah development to gain public and private support for mixed use housing development.
- Review revenue sources and expenses in order for the City to continue to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Collaborate with community and regional leaders to continue advocacy efforts on behalf of Moody Air Force Base in support of its value to national defense and our community and seek opportunities for base growth and expansion in preparation for future Base Realignment and Closure Commissions (BRAC).

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## Valdosta Youth Council

Initiated by Mayor John Gayle and approved by the Valdosta City Council, the Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) seeks to inspire local middle school students to build leadership and civic responsibility, to gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare youth for a lifetime of public



and community service. Guided by an Advisory Board of local educators and city staff, this youth-run council initiatives for FY 2015-16 include an anti-bullying campaign in the local schools and community, overseeing the annual "If I Were Mayor" essay contest for 6th graders, and serving as a role model for citizens of all ages through community service work. ■

# ADMINISTRATION



Larry Hanson  
City Manager



Mark Barber  
Assistant City Manager

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 city manager coordinates the work of the department heads and other employees, who help ensure the smooth and efficient delivery of services. The city 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. The Assistant City Manager provides city-wide administrative support to the City Manager.

In 2015, our customer-centered departments continued to serve citizens with information and services. Public information programs, such as the Valdosta City Government 101 Citizens Orientation, continued to provide citizens with information about how their city operates. This program takes 25 citizens annually and puts them face-to-face with city leadership in an exchange of information

and to interact on issues of citizens' concern. Valdosta 101 is one of three public education programs hosted by the city—Citizens Police Academy and Citizens Fire Academy are the other two—all designed to give citizens a closer look at their local government and the services it provides. All departments continue to look for ways to effectively communicate with our citizens.

The city is also proud to be a partner in the greater community, with our employees investing their time and resources serving through many public programs and organizations, including but not limited to the following:

- American Cancer Society
- American Red Cross
- AMVETS Bike Giveaway
- Community Partners in Education
- Drug Education For Youth (DEFY)
- Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation
- Goodwill Industries, Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity
- Heroes for Tots Softball Tournament
- Mayor's Holiday Gift Drive
- Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)
- Neighborhood Watch
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)
- Shop with a Cop / Shop with a Fireman
- Special Olympics
- South Georgia Coalition for Employment
- VFD Give a Child a Bike Program

# Valdosta Organization Chart



### Department Leadership

Pictured are: (top row) City Manager Larry Hanson and Assistant City Manager Mark Barber; (middle row) Chief of Police Brian Childress, City Engineer Pat Collins and Public Works Director Richard Hardy; (bottom row) Finance Director Chuck Dinkins, Human Resources Director Renassa Small, Utilities Director Henry Hicks, Fire Chief Freddie Broome.

Not pictured is Municipal Court Judge Vernita Bender.



## Meet Bo Bewley

This past year, Bo Bewley left a quiet and comfortable position in a bucket truck within the Engineering Department's Signal Division to help the Traffic Management Center in getting broken fiber optic connections troubleshooted, isolated and repaired. These connections are critical because they function as the backbone of the City intranet and other city communication systems used by public safety. Bo's daily work results in valuable contributions and positive changes for the City of Valdosta. ■

# ENGINEERING

**Mission:** 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.

The Engineering Department has four key divisions, 46 employees/positions, and an overall annual operating budget, including projects for FY2016, of \$8,456,265. The funding sources include general fund, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), Stormwater Utility and grant funding. The department's four divisions are Engineering Services, Traffic Management, Stormwater and Arbor.

The Engineering Services Division is responsible for providing a variety of administrative and technical support services to city departments, the public, utility companies, private engineers, private surveyors and architects. These activities typically involve work in the city right-of-way (ROW), alleys, easements and city-owned property.

The Traffic Management Division is responsible for the Traffic Management Center (TMC), traffic signs and markings, traffic signals and street maintenance.

The Stormwater Division is responsible for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the stormwater conveyance system, managing the Stormwater Utility, and the stormwater permit with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

The Arbor Division is responsible for planting, maintaining and protecting trees along city streets and public property. The division reviews all tree removal permit applications and works closely with the Community Development Department to review landscape plans to ensure consistency with the city's tree and landscape requirements. ■



## Engineering Services Division

Driveways Inspected	52
Land Disturbance Permits Issued	15
Soil Erosion Inspections on Permitted Sites	173
Soil Erosion Inspections on Non-Permitted Sites	32
Corrective Actions Taken on Soil Erosion	6
Pond Inspections Performed	87
Rain Events .5" or Greater	27
Rain Events Less than .5"	87
Rights-of-Way Authorization Numbers Issued	203
Certificates of Occupancy Issued	48
Asbuilts Accepted	21
NPDES, Construction and Site Plans Reviewed	65
Private Project Inspections	20

## Traffic Management & Street Maintenance Division

### Signals

Bulbs	42
Emergency Call Out	141
Signal Head's - Installed/Replaced	48
LED'S - Installed	8
LED'S - Replaced	148
Misc Equipment - Installed/Replaced	97
Cameras - Installed/Replaced	7
Banners - Installed/Removed	50
Loops Installed	3

### Signs & Markings

Signs - Installed	188
Traffic Counts	59
Stop Signs - Repaired/Upgraded	110
Street Signs - Repaired/Upgraded	360
Trimming of R.O.W.	70
Stop Bars/Arrow - Painted	32
Painting - Feet	2,464
Thermo Arrow/Stop Bars	520
Overhead Signs Made	24
Reflectors Installed	40
Barricades Installed	90
Speed Hump Investigations	5

### Traffic Center

Signal Timing Evaluations	21
Signal Timing Changes	15
Fiber Repairs - Test/Ends Installed in Field	5
Cameras Installed and Operational	26
TMC Tours	5

### Streets & Sidewalks

Potholes Repaired	878
Washouts - Linear Feet	1,602
Trench Lines - Square Feet	856
Root & Base Cuts	65
Driveways Repaired	116
Edge Washouts	216
Sidewalks - Linear Feet	1,274
Base / Root Repair - Square Feet	6,780
Wheelchair Ramp	10
Locations Saw Cut	325
Bollards Placed	25
Asphalt Tons Used	250
Concrete - Cubic Yards Used	224
Millings - Tons Used	53

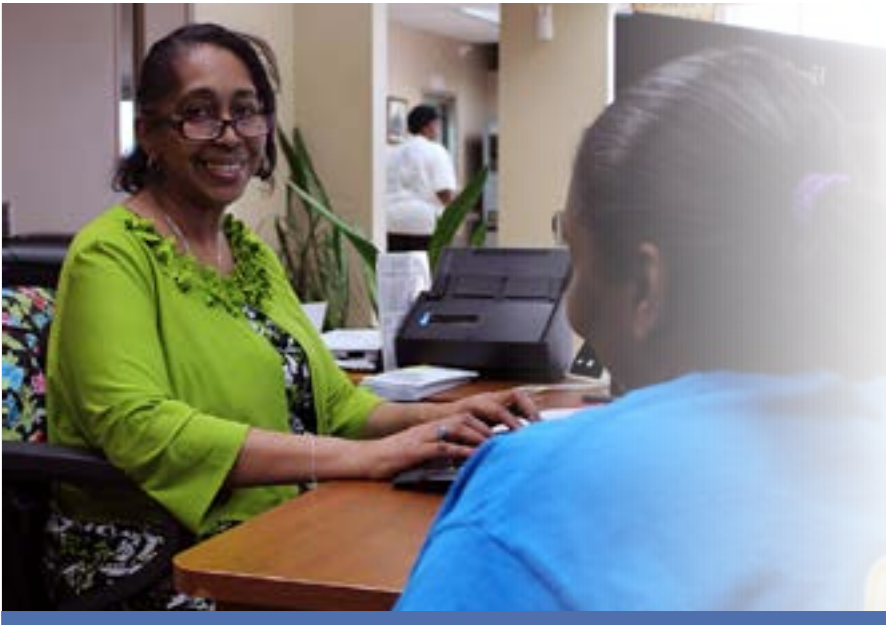
### Stormwater Division

Storm Pipe Cleaned - Linear Feet	50,981
Canals Cut - Linear Feet	505,069
Catch Basins Inspected	1,715
Catch Basins Cleaned	834
Catch Basins Repaired	69
Beaver Dams - Hours	1,056
Streets Swept - Miles	1,166
Outfalls Inspected	240
Rainfall (10 Rain Gauges, Average in Inches)	55
Dig/Grade Ditches/Swale	50

### Arbor Division

Trees Removed	138
Trees Trimmed	776
Trees Planted	52





## Meet Phyllis Lewis

Displaying the utmost in customer service, Phyllis Lewis was moved from behind the window counter to a desk in the Customer Service Center lobby to be more accessible to customers, making her one of the first friendly faces customers see when they enter. Phyllis establishes and disconnects water services for both residential or commercial accounts and handles all temporary water service requests for realty companies and property managers. Phyllis also finds time to help her fellow employees by covering cashier or billing duties, as needed. ■

# FINANCE

**Mission:** To provide accurate 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.

In 2015, 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 2015. This is the 29th 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, 2015, for the 19th 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 audit of the books of accounts, financial records and transactions of all funds 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.

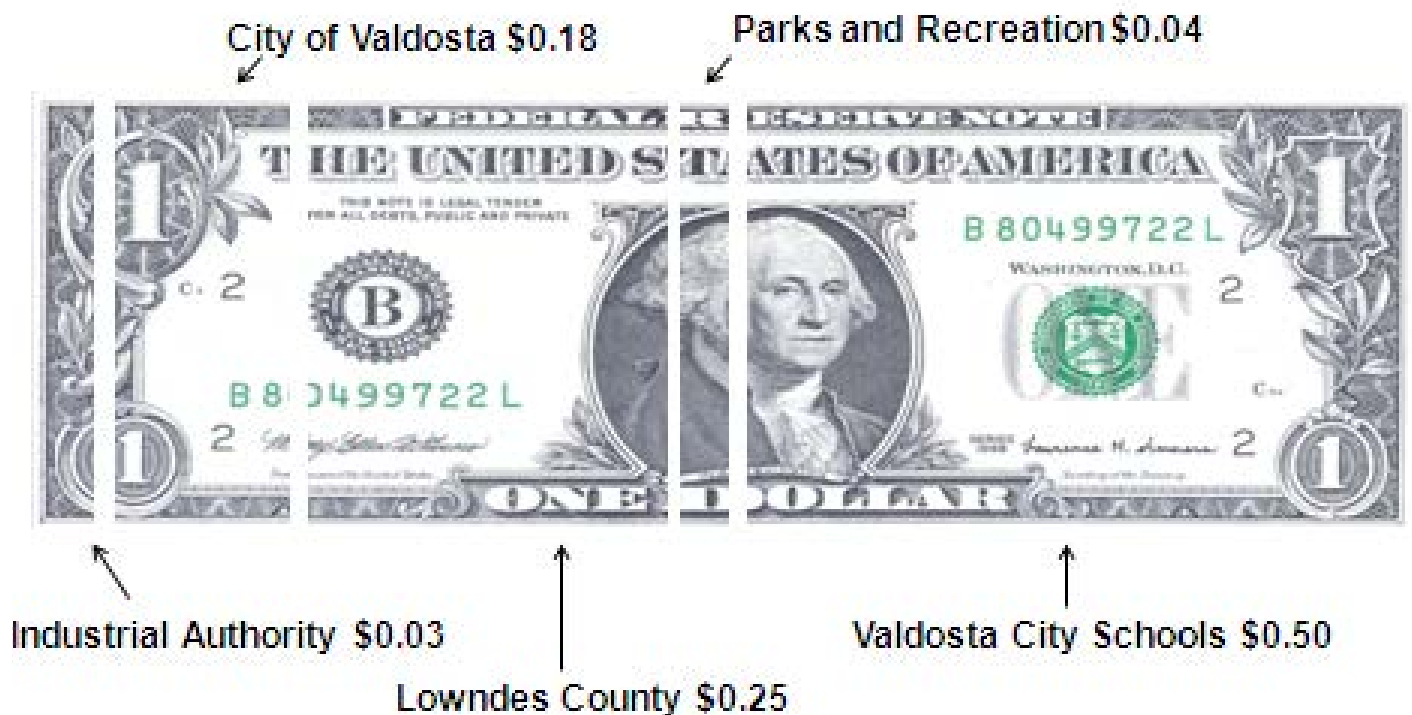
The city continues to have one of the lowest millage rates among its peer cities in the state and its millage rate remains lower than it was in 1992.

Furthermore, the city has no bonded general fund debt, a remarkable accomplishment achieved by sound financial management. ■



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

Property taxes make up 10.2% of the funding necessary to operate the city. Although the city's FY 2015 budget was approximately \$82.4 million, approximately \$8.4 million of this was 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.

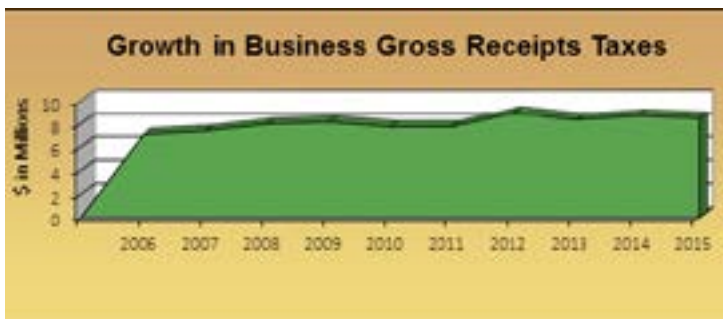


# Optimistic Financial Outlook

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:

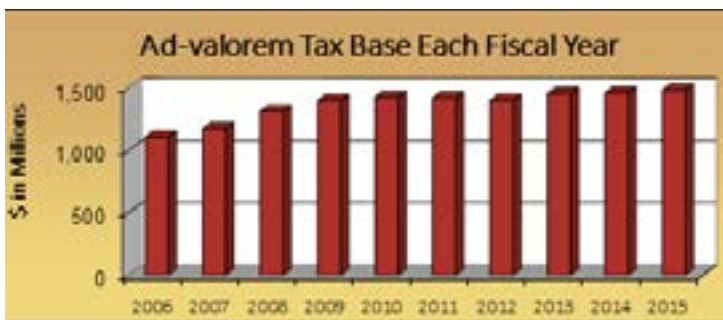
While the city has certainly been affected by the economy, conservative budgetary policies and adherence to sound financial policies and philosophies have provided a hedge against anemic property tax revenues, increased operational costs and surging healthcare costs.

*Note: The graphs and charts on these pages reflect the FY 2015 actual information and the FY 2016 budget information.*



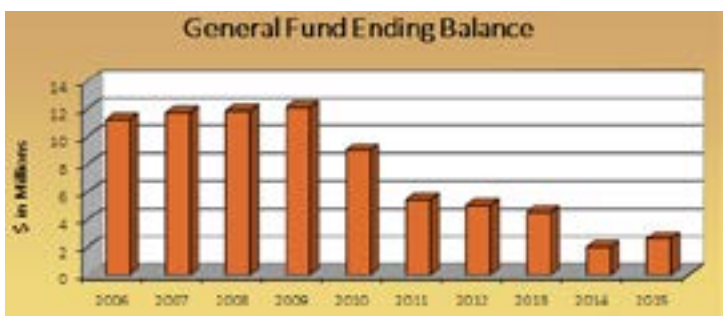
## Business Gross Receipts Taxes

These taxes are based on business gross receipts. As the receipts from the taxes increase, it reflects the health of Valdosta's economy.



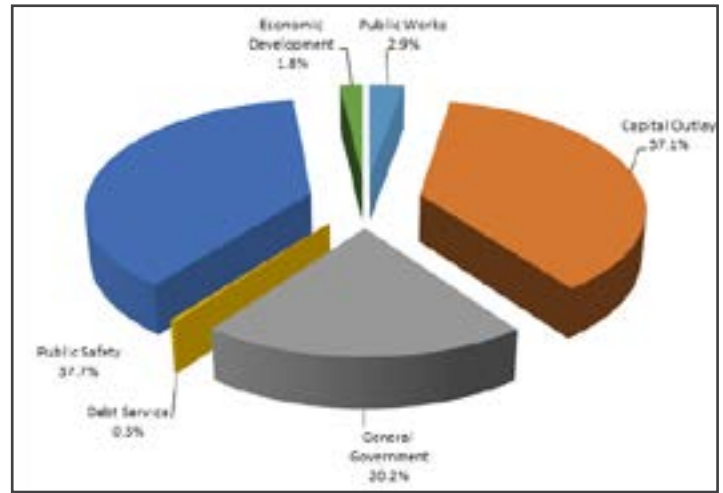
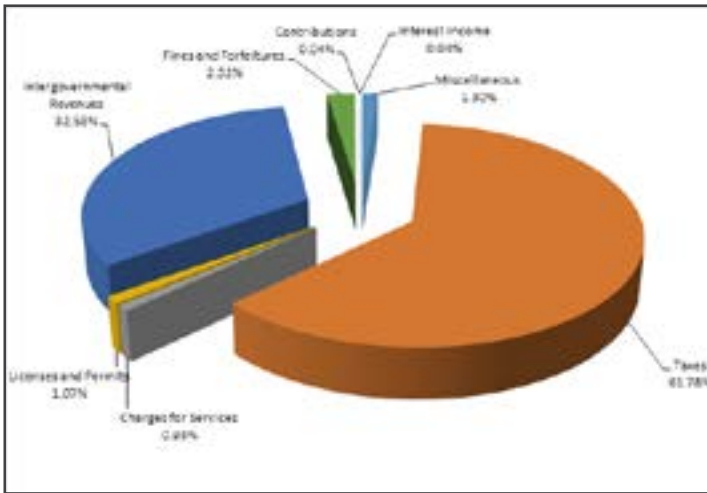
## Ad-Valorem Tax Base

Property values represent growth in construction and development.



## General Fund Ending Balance

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



### 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. The continuation of the one-cent SPLOST revenue source through 2019 is expected to bring in an estimated total of \$80 million to fund city infrastructure projects over the six year period. 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 continue to 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





## Meet Firefighter Rowe

Alexander Graham Bell once said, "Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." If true, then Firefighter Tangela Rowe is greatly helping the VFD succeed in its mission to serve and protect the community. Over the past year, Rowe voluntarily obtained her relief driver, Firefighter II, EMT, Fire Inspection and Life Safety Educator certifications. Rowe's avid devotion to her vocation makes her highly prepared and capable to carry out her Firefighter duties with excellence, no matter the circumstance. ■

# FIRE

**Mission:** 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.

The Valdosta Fire Department provides full-time, professional fire protection and educational services for the City of Valdosta, which include Fire Suppression, Fire Safety Education and Prevention, Code Enforcement, Hazardous Materials Mitigation, Confined Space Rescue and First Responders. The department had an ISO (Insurance Service Office) inspection in August of 2015, which resulted in the department receiving a Class 1 rating. This is the first time the department has ever held a top rating.

The department increased the total number of nationally and state certified personnel. A total of 83 personnel are certified as Firefighter II, 33 are certified Fire Officers and 26 are now certified as National Registered EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians). All certified Firefighters are also trained from the Hazardous Material Awareness

to Technical Level.

The VFD also created positions for one Assistant Chief and two Administrative Battalion Chiefs, which enhanced the department's ability to operate a more efficient Administrative Division.

In 2015, the VFD responded to approximately 3,501 calls (290 total fires, 943 Rescue & EMS, 524 Hazardous Condition, 1,105 false calls, 57 weather/natural disaster and 582 other calls). Our highly skilled firefighters, combined with the quick arrival on the scene, saved property owners \$26 million of the \$28 million total property values involved in 93 fires last year.

The department is currently meeting both ISO and Fire Accreditation standards with an engine arriving on the scene 81% of the time within 5 minutes and 33 seconds.

## Partnering with the Community

“Give Burns the Boot” Drive  
MDA “Fill the Boot” Drive  
“Guns & Hoses” Blood Drive  
Heroes for Tots Softball Tournament  
Community Partners in Education  
Shop with a Firefighter Program  
Mayor’s Holiday Gift Drive  
Give a Child a Bike Program  
Fire Explorers Program  
Wiregrass EMS Partnership  
American Cancer Society



In addition, 47% of the time the department has 15 personnel on the scene on all confirmed structure fires with a minimum damage estimate of \$15,000.

The Fire Prevention Division conducted 1,196 Fire Inspections, finding over 500 fire and life safety violations. The division is also responsible for conducting and coordinating over 40 Night Club Safety Inspections, over 40 CPIE (Community Partner in Education) Programs and over 117 community education programs. The VFD also conducted 1,445 Hydrant Inspections and 4,243 Hydrant Flow Tests.

VFD personnel received over 23,000 hours of training in 2015. There was a 90% increase in the number of employees that received their Firefighter II certification. All personnel received their annual CPR and AED train-

ing, ensuring all personnel are certified and are aware of changes in cardiopulmonary resuscitation as outlined by the American Heart Association.

The department’s response area covers approximately 57,000 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. The VFD is also the proud home to one of eight regional Georgia Search and Rescue (GSAR).

The department received GEMA grants to build capabilities that enhance homeland security and to acquire or sustain equipment for hazardous material programs. Collectively \$43,000 in grant funding was awarded to the VFD to serve the fire protection needs of Valdosta. ■





## Meet Berna and Cheryl

Berna Hepburn and Cheryl Gallagher are not strangers to hard work and dedication. Not only have they been with the City of Valdosta for 18 and 17 years respectively, both are also willing and able to take on numerous responsibilities, while wearing genuine smiles. When the Human Resource Analyst resigned, both graciously accepted additional duties left by the vacancy. In addition to the numerous programs to oversee, Berna and Cheryl's extensive skills and joyful attitudes make them valuable assets to the City of Valdosta. ■

# HUMAN RESOURCES

**Mission:** To offer quality, efficient, and courteous service to all customers.

The Office of Human Resources focuses on a comprehensive approach to managing the human capital and associated issues within the City of Valdosta.

Staff plays a key role in the strategic utilization of employees, recruitment and selection, classification and pay, compensation and benefits, training and development, workers' compensation administration, unemployment compensation administration, performance management, organizational development, safety and health, wellness, strategic and succession planning, and employee relations functions of the city. The continued contributions and efforts of staff assist the city in attracting, motivating, and retaining an effective and highly-qualified work force to which its employees and citizens have become accustomed.

In 2015, the Office of Human Resources recruitment efforts resulted in the receipt and review of approximately 13,964 employment applications, which resulted in the hiring of 103 new employees. In addition, the recruitment unit participated in three career/job fairs to market employment opportunities with the city. The career/job fairs included a collaboration with Valdosta State University that promoted the value of hiring VSU graduates and local citizens.

In addition, the Employee Relations Committee, comprised of representatives appointed from each of the city's departments, continued its work to recognize employees for milestones accomplished in their careers and for performance beyond the normal duties and responsibilities of their positions through the Employee of the Month



program. Selectees are honored at the first City Council meeting of each month, given a framed certificate and a check for \$200, and their names are engraved on a plaque that is displayed in City Hall.

The Employee Relations Committee also coordinates the city Blood Drives and the annual Employee Thanksgiving Luncheon, which was attended by 288 city employees in 2015. Additionally, the committee assists with Georgia Cities Week luncheon, held in April at Saunders Park.

Serving as a primary health care center for a majority of city employees, retirees and their eligible dependents enrolled in the city's health insurance plan, the city's CareHere Clinic continued to flourish during the 2015 plan year. The total number of appointments for the year increased to 5,864, which is a 4% increase in patients. Utilization at the clinic rose to 99.8% during 2015.

The CareHere Clinic, in addition to its prevalent role in providing medical care, provides a variety of other services such as lab work, prescription medications, influenza inoculations and physicals at no cost. The CareHere Connect program is an optional program available to employees. A participant may collaborate with a personal health care coach who provides education, management and guidance with health-related goals and issues such as healthy eating, diabetes, hypertension, exercise and other objectives.

As an event sponsor of the annual Employee Health Fair, held in October 2015 at the city's Fire Station #1,

CareHere Clinic provided free influenza inoculations at this year's event that was coordinated by the Office of Human Resources. More than 35 vendors participated in this year's Employee Health Fair and approximately 216 employees attended. City retirees and dependents of current and retired employees also participated in the one-day event.

Safety continues to remain a top priority of the City of Valdosta. The Office of Human Resources continues its efforts to improve safety by revamping and providing a more enhanced safety program that includes a Defensive Driving Course, safety training, risk assessments, and the proper use of safety equipment. To add value to the city, our ongoing effort to reduce workers' compensation costs and work-related injuries and accidents is reflected in the 47% decrease in monies spent during the same period last year.

In 2015, Human Resources also continued its Lunch and Learn Series program for city employees.

The Office of Human Resources strives to provide a positive impact in the city in clear, concise and measurable ways that add value, and abandon the idea of the traditional role of Human Resources as an administrative, personnel, and transactional role based department. ■





## Meet Cathy Cribb

As the clerk of court, Cathy Cribb assists the Municipal Court Judge by overseeing the court records, managing the daily case load and court calendar, and accepting and filing legal pleadings. One of her most important roles is to serve as the point of contact between the court and the public. Her excellent customer service and compassionate listening skills allow her to effectively resolve an unpleasant visit to the court for citizens. ■

# MUNICIPAL COURT

**Mission:** To serve as the judicial arm of municipal government.

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 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 courtroom, as well as the 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 for citations and further contact information may be found on the back of any citation. Arraignment dates to appear in Municipal Court may also be found on the front of the citation near the bottom for individuals who wish to contest a traffic citation.

The City of Valdosta Municipal Court is a full-time court. General operating hours of the Municipal Court are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and court sessions convene at 9 a.m. Monday through Friday. Environmental Court (City Ordinances) sessions are held every third week, usually on Monday, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to a full court schedule, the Municipal Court staff remained involved with the youth in our com-



munity last year 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.

In the State of Georgia, there are over 400 municipal courts with more than 400 judges managing over 800,000 cases per year. Over 9,946 cases were docketed in the court this year. Dockets may have one citation or as many as seven citations included in one docket.

In 2015, probationers completed more than 40,676

community service work hours at: Habitat for Humanity, recreational facilities, cemeteries, Valdosta School System custodial services, Lowndes County Bus Barn, Echols County Sheriff's Department, Hahira Public Works Department, Grassy Pond, Soup Kitchen, LAMP, LODAC, and other facilities. Probationers donated approximately 11,084 pounds of food to the local food bank.

Sentinel Offender Services supervised approximately 13,161 cases (active, jail and tolled) for the court.

The Municipal Court had approximately 43 Work Alternative Program (WAP) participants. Since the WAP implementation in June 2001, approximately 114,736 work hours have been completed on various municipal projects, saving the city \$831,836 in jail housing fees. ■





## Meet Officer Braddy

It only takes one person to make a difference. On Nov. 21, 2015, Officer Jonathan Braddy was dispatched to an overpass bridge on Clay Road where a male was hanging over the bridge, preparing to jump from the bridge onto railroad tracks below. Braddy calmly distracted the man and pulled him from the edge of the bridge. The man was uninjured and was taken to the hospital where he received psychiatric help. That day, Officer Braddy demonstrated what law enforcement is truly about and what officers do every day: protect our community and save lives. ■

# POLICE

**Mission:** To maintain social order within prescribed ethical and constitutional limits while providing professional law enforcement services to the citizens and visitors of Valdosta.

The Valdosta Police Department (VPD) consists of 148 sworn personnel, 24 non-sworn support personnel, and 14 part-time employees. The VPD 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.

In 2015, the department attained “Triple Crown Accreditation” by attaining three voluntary accreditations, two for law enforcement and one for crime laboratory. In April 2015, the Valdosta/Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory became the first locally-operated crime laboratory ever in Georgia to obtain this accreditation through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors. This extremely difficult process included a rigorous review of laboratory procedures, training, and equipment by five

out-of-state assessors.

The department also maintained the status of Law Enforcement Accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). This voluntary international accreditation process examines all aspects of the VPD’s policies and procedures, management practices, daily operations, and support services. The department has been internationally accredited since 1999 and complies with 484 standards for professionalism and service delivery in the field of law enforcement. During the last assessment inspection, the VPD was honored with the “Accreditation with Excellence” and “Meritorious Distinction” awards for the department’s 15 years of accreditation. For the last four onsite inspections, the VPD was named a “Flagship Agency” twice and received

# 2015 In Numbers

186

Officers and Staff

77,445

Calls Responded To

15 %

Decrease In Part 1 Crimes  
From 2000-2015

“Accreditation with Excellence” twice. Assessors called the VPD “one of the best agencies they have ever assessed.”

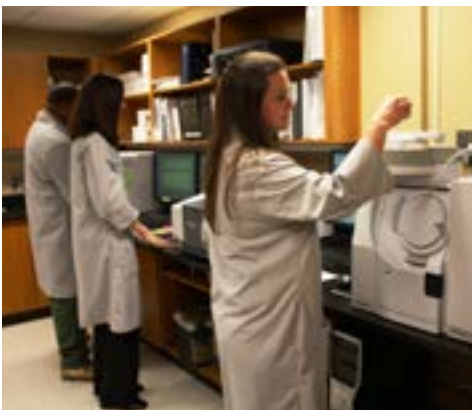
In addition, the department is also voluntarily assessed every three years by the State of Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, and has maintained state certification.

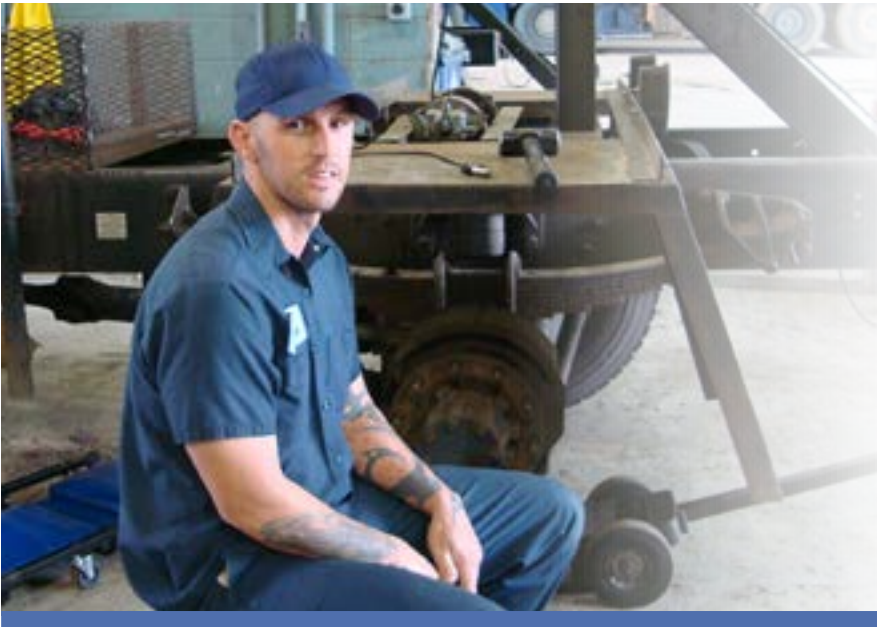
The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) publishes national average crime clearance rates each year and the VPD uses those rates as benchmarks to reach and exceed. For the seventh consecutive year, the VPD exceeded the national clearance rates for all major Part 1 Crimes (as defined by the FBI), which includes arson, murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, robbery and larceny. The department recorded 3,083 overall Part 1 Crimes in 2015, which is relatively stable and consistent

overall compared to 2014.

Protecting our officers and citizens through the use of modern equipment is important. The VPD has a state-of-the-art car camera system for the patrol bureau. The VPD also implemented body cameras well before the national outcry for the use of cameras by law enforcement. In 2015, all body cameras were upgraded to high-definition video, which has been very effective in dealing with citizen complaints, reviewing officer use of force incidents, and providing valuable video evidence during court proceedings.

The VPD has demonstrated significant competence in 2015 by reducing crime, solving crime better than the rest of the country, engaging citizens in the community policing process, and striving for professional excellence. ■





### Meet Michael Weldon

Maintaining approximately 700 vehicles and pieces of equipment, including lawn mowers, automobiles, trucks and heavy equipment is no piece of cake, unless you're Michael Weldon. Weldon's 16 years of experience with Public Works combined with his strong dedication and work ethic makes him a valuable asset to the department. Weldon is able to fill any vehicle/equipment mechanic position in the shop at any time, and he takes great pride in his work, striving to be the best at every step of his career. ■

# PUBLIC WORKS

**Mission:** To provide consistent and quality customer service in all aspects of daily operations to our customers and citizens of The City of Valdosta.

The Public Works 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, Property Abatements, Special Pickups, Compost Landfill, designated City facilities and grounds.

In 2015, the Special Pickup process on bulk material was revamped. The department eliminated the need to

call for a special pickup by following the daily sanitation route to pickup: residential garbage, yard trash, recyclables and bulk items (a special pickup). This has improved the aesthetic appearance of our neighborhoods and environment by reducing the time frame of items being placed outside by residents.

The Recycling Division received a grant last year from Deep South Regional Municipal Solid Waste Management Authority for the purchase of equipment for the Recycling Center/Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Additionally, the Recycling Center stepped up its efforts to reduce the amount of recyclable material going to the landfill and is now processing over 95% of all recyclable material coming into the Center. Environmental awareness and education efforts have resulted in an increase in recycling participa-

## Quick Statistics

- 20,641 Residential Sanitation Customers
- 1,528 Commercial and Small Business Customers
- 11,265 Number of Special Pick-Ups
- 1,856 Tons of Recyclable Material Collected
- 25,158 Tons of Solid Waste Collected
- 9,737 Tons of Yard Waste Collected/Mulched
- 31,833 Pounds Collected from E-Recycling Events
- 7,617 Fleet/Maintenance Work Orders Completed
- 1,681 Automotive Services Completed
- 1,653 Street Miles Swept



tion from both residential and commercial customers, as well as the local school systems. The director served as a guest speaker during several events, delivering a presentation on the city's Recycling Program. The department has converted the transfer site into a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and has partnered with Lowndes Advocacy & Resource Center (LARC) personnel with the sorting of the single stream recycle material collected.

As in previous years, staff continued to monitor mosquito activity in our area through a joint mosquito surveillance program—partnering with key local and state experts from Lowndes County, the South Health District, and Valdosta State University. The Public Works Department

protected its citizens this past year from mosquitoes through a spraying and larvicide program.

Also in 2015, the department appointed a new Public Works and Operations Superintendent; continued the refurbishing project at Mathis Auditorium; and completed the first phase of MRF deployment, which was to conduct an initial run of operations of the Conveyor Sorting System with LARC personnel in the MRF.

The department works closely with the city's Public Information Office to educate citizens by participating in the annual Azalea Festival and through the use of various communication vehicles such as water bill inserts, newsletter articles and the city's website. ■





### Meet Willie Graham

After 23 years with the city, Willie Graham always stays cool under pressure. He often faces the difficult challenge of quickly replacing a damaged fire hydrant or meter. He arrives promptly, works tirelessly to map out and track down alternative valves to shut off the water and makes the critical repairs. As always, he confronts this difficult task head-on, ensuring the work is accomplished safely, correctly and efficiently. Graham is often commended publicly by citizens who recognize his outstanding devotion to duty and his can-do attitude, which are great assets to the city. ■

# UTILITIES

**Mission:** To be known by our customers for delivery of the highest quality municipal utility services possible through continuous improvement.

In 2015, the Utilities Department treated 3.9 billion gallons of water and 3.3 billion gallons of wastewater, and staff continued over \$56 million in major infrastructure and numerous other water and sewer system projects to ensure regulatory compliance is maintained now and into the future.

Construction of the Force Main, Master Pump Station, EQ Basin and new Headworks Project was started in June 2014, with the expected completion date being Spring 2016, almost five months ahead of the original schedule. In August 2014, construction began for the relocation of the Withlacoochee WPCP using an expedited Design Build approach. The anticipated completion date for this new Withlacoochee WPCP is also Spring 2016, 15 months ahead of the original schedule.

Our ongoing smoke testing program is on track to complete the final 120 miles of the sewer collection system next year. To date, approximately 180 miles of the city's 300 miles of lines have been evaluated through smoke testing and CCTV work, and 574 defects within the sewer collection system have been identified for repairs. Over 6,000 of the city's 6,473 manholes have been mapped and approximately 3,700 inspected. Approximately 179 seriously deteriorated sewer manholes have been replaced or rehabilitated since 2012, and an additional 30 to 60 manholes will be out for bid each year through 2018. In addition, over 15,800 feet of sewer lines have been rehabilitated using cured in place pipe lining technology. The results of this work will significantly reduce sewer spills, inflow and/or infiltration (I&I) of ground and surface wa-





ter into the sewer systems, as well as develop a prioritized long term sewer collection system rehabilitation plan.

In 2015, the EPD required a Supplemental Environmental Project to update the Withlacoochee sewer collection system model to assist the department in further identifying potential sewage overflow locations as well as areas with high I&I probability. This report identified two high priority sewer main upgrade projects which were bid out in December 2015, along with a third sewer main identified (through the smoke testing program) for replacement in early 2016. These report findings will also be utilized to develop a new five-year sewer system rehabilitation plan to be started in 2019. The anticipated completion date for this replacement work is September 2016.

In 2015 the second of three portable emergency generators was purchased along with electrical wiring and controls at every lift station for quick connection to a generator in case of localized power outages. The sewer lift station rehabilitation program is in its final year with 16 of the 20 stations, identified for upgrades and improvements, completed to date. Improvements to the last four lift stations are currently under design.

In 2015, the department continued to upgrade and improve its critical water facilities and infrastructure by implementing specific strategies to rehabilitate its existing water distribution system, wellfield system and treatment systems.

Raw water test wells #9 & #10 were completed, and construction to connect these wells to the existing wellfield started in November 2015, with the anticipated completion date being summer 2016. Once finished, these two new production wells will increase available capacity for the next several years. In addition, the construction and start-up of a new chlorine booster pump station was completed in late summer 2015. This booster station should significantly improve water quality in the southern areas of the Valdosta water distribution system.

The department's highest priority continues to be the ongoing rehabilitation and replacement of seriously deteriorated sewer infrastructure throughout the sewer collection and treatment systems, as well as implement water quality improvement projects to ensure a long term, sustainable and safe water supply for the future. ■





## Meet James Dean

James Dean, retired decorated Army First Sergeant, has been a City Marshal for 17 years. He is responsible for patrolling designated zones, scanning for obvious violations, responding to reported violations and solving community code enforcement issues. James' ability to build relationships with citizens and educate the public on codes and ordinances improve the health, safety and welfare of the community. He believes building cooperative partnerships, coupled with consistent and fair code enforcement, leads to voluntary compliance and a beautiful community. ■

# COMMUNITY PROTECTION

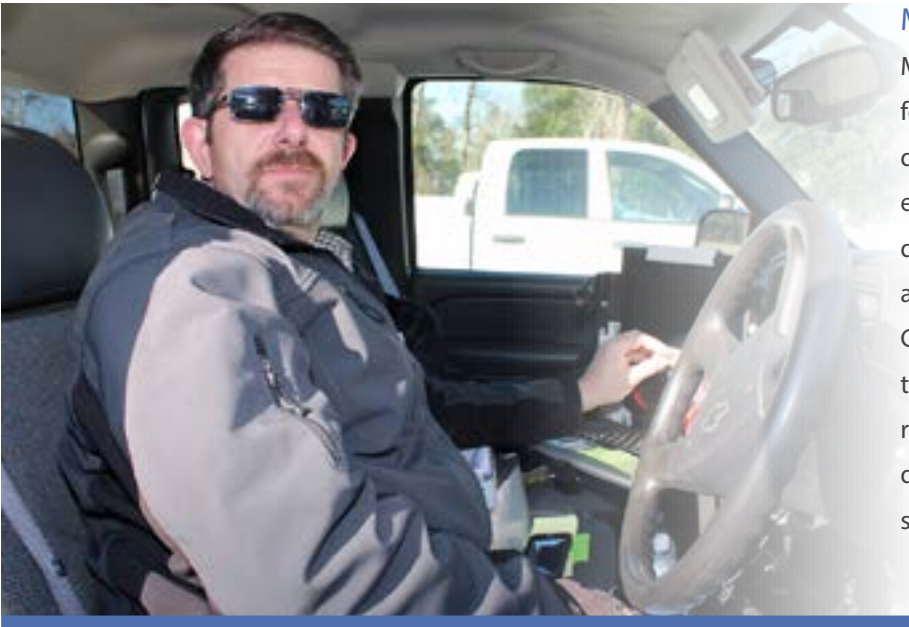
The Community Protection Division strives to improve our community's standard of living by proactively ensuring compliance with the latest edition of the International Property Maintenance Code, as adopted, amended and revised by the Department of Community Affairs, and by eliminating structures that are hazardous, unsafe, or unsanitary through rehabilitation or demolition. Staff inspects all substandard housing in Valdosta and Hahira and notifies owners and tenants, indicating what improvements are needed to meet minimum standards.

The division is comprised of five city marshals and one technician responsible for ensuring compliance with city codes and ordinances relating to the use of property, zoning, sanitation and housing. The process is accomplished by investigating complaints concerning overgrown grass & weeds, abandoned vehicles, litter, illegal dumping, obstruction of the right of way, zoning violations and residential parking. Other duties include conducting searches of deed records to locate property owners as

necessary, issuing court summons, testifying in municipal court proceedings, and verifying that businesses within the city limits have proper occupational tax certificates.

All department marshals maintain the highest Level II certification. In 2015, the division was responsible for processing over 3,400 community protection cases and assisted with the coordination of the Great American Cleanup, Make a Difference Day, Bulk Trash Amnesty Day, and other city neighborhood beautifications events. The dedicated work of the city marshals is credited for helping the city create and maintain a positive image for our citizens and visitors to our community. ■





## Meet Tony Drake

Mechanical Inspector Tony Drake is responsible for on-site inspections of commercial and residential buildings in the city and county and for ensuring that mechanical work meets the standards and the minimum codes as adopted and amended by the city, county and the state of Georgia. Tony is one of five certified and cross-trained inspectors at the city who play a major role in ensuring new residential and commercial developments are carefully constructed for the safety of all citizens. ■

# INSPECTIONS/DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

As a joint function, the Development Services Division continues to meet the needs of property owners and developers within [Lowndes County](#) and the cities of [Valdosta](#), [Lake Park](#), [Dasher](#) and [Hahira](#). In 2015, Development Services helped homeowners, business owners, and those in the commercial industry plan and execute development projects—as simple as a home remodel and as complex as constructing a new building on undeveloped property.

Five certified and cross-certified field inspectors continued to provide building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical inspection services, and staff ensured compliance with all codes related to the commercial and residential construction industry for the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County. The division addressed citizen complaints regarding construction activities, investigated building code violations, and ensured proper receipt of permits related to residential and commercial construction.

In 2015, the division performed a total of 9,526 building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical inspections, issued 5,045 permits for the same, and processed \$734K in permit revenue.

Staff also continued to serve as the first point of contact for those submitting commercial plans by conducting weekly First Step meetings and coordinating with all necessary city departments to provide the necessary collaboration of all development services for the development community with a “one stop shop” concept. ■





## Meet Missy Smith

Missy Smith, Valdosta Main Street Program Coordinator, is responsible for coordinating all of the public Main Street events downtown, including Farmers Market, Art Walk and the Holiday Open House. As a spouse of a deployed service member, she enjoys encouraging citizens to attend the fun community events that take place in the heart of the city. Missy is passionate about reminding citizens to shop local. She believes that traffic downtown helps our downtown merchants succeed, which boosts Valdosta's overall economy. ■

# MAIN STREET

Last year, Main Street welcomed six new businesses that brought in approximately 25 jobs to downtown. There were also over \$1 million in private investments that brought new development and business into downtown.

In 2015, a total of 46 events welcomed approximately 40,000 visitors to downtown events, such as the Taste of Downtown Valdosta, Brown Bag Concert Series, Farm Days, Art Walk, First Fridays, and the Holiday Open House.

Main Street hosted a town hall session in 2015 to help set the direction for the upcoming year. Suggestions from the town hall meeting resulted in several new downtown events, monthly merchant meetings, and a Downtown Valdosta Merchant Facebook group. Main Street reinforced its goal of improving communication with downtown business owners. As a result of the suggestions, Main Street also upgraded lighting in Bennie's Alley to be more attractive and to brighten the area for pedestrians.

Various trainings this year also served as a valuable

tool for staff to learn what other organizations across the state and country are doing to revitalize their downtowns.

Valdosta Main Street received national accreditation for the 30th consecutive year for meeting commercial district revitalization standards set by the National Trust Main Street. Valdosta's selection into the Georgia's Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) certification program will also continue this year to help strengthen our organization. Main Street is proud to be distinguished among seven other Main Street Programs that have gone above and beyond expectations by making a strong and positive impact in their communities. ■





## Meet Sarah Lowe

As the Neighborhood Development Administrative Technician, Sarah is the first point of contact for citizens with questions regarding Housing and Community Programs. When working with citizens on revitalizing their homes, Sarah is in contact with them and the Construction Coordinator, ensuring a smooth process. Sarah assists in coordinating events such as Goodwill on the Go, Bulk Trash Event and Community Development Week. Her efficient and compassionate work ethic ensures customers are served with a consistently high level of professionalism. ■

# NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In 2015, the Neighborhood Development Division—which includes the Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) Program and the Valdosta/Lowndes County Land Bank—continued to promote reinvestment in the city's neighborhoods and utilize their community relationships to address citizen needs. The division addressed fair housing, neighborhood conditions and economic development through the owner-occupied home reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, small business information workshops and seminars, and the fair housing promotion and awareness programs.

Staff completed five reconstruction/rehabilitation projects in 2015, utilizing Community Development Block Grant funding. The first Bulk Trash Amnesty Day event was held in partnership with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful's annual Make a Difference Day, which resulted in over 10 tons of bulk debris collected from citizens, eliminating it from city neighborhoods and streets.

The Fair Housing Committee continued to seek options

to address the impediments to fair housing identified in our 2012 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report. The committee worked with the Center for Applied Social Sciences at Valdosta State University to complete a series of community focus groups to survey neighborhood and housing conditions in the city, many of which have and are being addressed. The committee, along with the assistance of our local Habitat for Humanity college chapter, was also able to complete a windshield survey of the Designated Revitalization Area (DRA) of the city, which will assist staff in analyzing the conditions of the city's neighborhoods and housing stock. ■





## Meet James Horton

Special Projects/Historic Preservation Planner James Horton helps the city preserve historic areas that contain important architectural buildings and homes. His responsibilities include working closely with the HPC commission in the local historic district, reviewing new construction of buildings in the overlay district, and ensuring that new structures built within historic areas are consistent with the city's historic character. As a result of James' work, citizens are able to move forward into modern society while still experiencing and enjoying the city's historic identity. ■

# PLANNING & ZONING

The Planning & Zoning Division, which serves both the cities of Valdosta and Hahira, ensures quality growth and development consistent with the Greater Lowndes 2030 Comprehensive Plan in order to preserve our unique quality of life. In 2015, the division coordinated 143 First Step and Pre-Application meetings, and efficiently processed a wide variety of 42 land use cases, 42 subdivisions, 424 license requests, 209 development plan and permit reviews, 90 historic reviews, sign permits, 40 overhead banner requests, 5 text amendments, and other planning & zoning matters for current and projected developments.

The division's four-person staff processed all license application reviews within three days, all development plan reviews within four days, and all sign applications within five days—demonstrating a continued commitment to excellence.

The division continued to update the Land Development Regulations, while educating the public on general land planning and development principles. This included

the participation in the Valdosta High School Job Shadow Day and Lowndes Youth Leadership League events, and being guest speakers at Valdosta State University's Urban Planning class and the VHS International Baccalaureate Programme. Division staff coordinated the city's annual Historic Preservation awards in May and the annual Community Planning Month activities in October, and helped teach the Planning & Zoning class at the Georgia Municipal Association summer conference. Staff also participated in the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) update to the 2040 Transportation Vision Plan and quarterly meetings of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee. ■





## Meet Marcus McConico

With a smile that lights up the screen, Marcus McConico enthusiastically tells the stories of the city via Metro Valdosta 17, the city's government access channel on Mediacom. With years of experience in the broadcast field, Marcus produces quality and timely media productions according to established FCC regulations for government channels, researching, writing and editing news stories and programs that inform and educate citizens about local government. He is also utilizes the city's social media tools for greater citizen reach. ■

# PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Public Information Division continued to provide accurate and timely information to the city leaders, citizens and the news media by collaborating with department personnel to obtain current and pertinent information about city information, services and programs.

In 2015, staff wrote and produced 162 press releases, 52 weekly E-newsletters, 3 City Beat newsletters, an Annual Report, the Water Quality Report, 4 water bill inserts, and other materials and reports as requested. The division increased the effectiveness and integrity of its Twitter, YouTube and Facebook accounts, partnering with a VSU Social Media class for a mutually-beneficial educational project. E-news distribution grew by 15%, increasing our reach with nearly 700 city news tips sent in 2015. Leading a team of content managers representing all city departments, the division launched a website redesign project to replace the eight-year-old city website with a modern look and user-friendly technology. Staff coordinated tours and public education events—over 47 of

them during 2015—and worked to strengthen relationships with VSU Communications Arts and Mass Media staff, increasing opportunities for better qualified interns, local programming, and educational projects. The division provided photo/video support for countless events, meetings, services, etc. throughout the year.

Staff was also responsible for carrying out the Mayor's initiative to create the Valdosta Youth Council and served on the NYC Advisory Board, coordinated the Valdosta Government 101 Citizens Orientation, People's Choice Photo Contest, Essay Contests, Georgia Cities Week activities and other citizen-focused events in the city.

Metro Valdosta Channel 17 continued to serve the community through video, producing 25 quality news shows throughout the year, and a dozen short programs. Staff stretched the reach of these news stories by posting individual stories on the city's social media site, increasing the number of social media followers and citizens' view of the information. ■



# ACCOLADES

- Maintained one of the lowest millage rates in the state for the citizens of Valdosta, currently 6.102 mills.
- Delivered a balanced \$85 million budget for Fiscal Year 2016 that included no property tax increase and one that met the expectations of Valdosta citizens.
- Awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting in 2015 for 29 consecutive years and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 19 consecutive years, which is the highest forms of recognition in governmental budgeting and financial reporting.
- Received an ISO (Insurance Service Office) inspection in August 2015, which resulted in the VFD being awarded a Class 1 rating—the highest fire insurance rating in the nation, held by only 136 out of 48,000 communities nationwide, only 11 of them in Georgia out of nearly 700 local governments. Valdosta is the first local government in South Georgia to ever receive a Class 1 rating.
- The Police Department received “Triple Crown Accreditation” for attaining three voluntary accreditations, two for law enforcement and one for the crime laboratory. The Valdosta/Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory became the first locally-operated crime laboratory in Georgia to obtain crime laboratory accreditation through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD).
- Proceeded ahead of schedule on more than \$55 million in sanitation collection system improvements.

- Selected as one of the first eight cities in the state to convert to new Light-Emitting Diode (LED) Roadway Lighting offered by Georgia Power. As a result, more than 3,600 of Valdosta’s 6,200 street light fixtures were replaced at no cost to the city—part of a Georgia Power capital investment project to install approximately 407,000 LED roadway lighting fixtures in communities across the state over the next four years. This initiative was one of many that led to the city being named the Smart Energy Municipality of the Year by the Technology Association of Georgia in December 2014.
- Ranked 6th Best Georgia City for Families in a study conducted by Apartmentlist.com in 2015, outscoring most other Georgia cities in four categories: safety, housing costs, school quality and child friendliness.
- Formed the inaugural Valdosta Youth Council, initiated by Mayor John Gayle and approved by the Valdosta City Council, to inspire and prepare local middle school students for leadership and civic opportunities, while allowing them to gain a better understanding of municipal government and community service.
- Selected as one of 12 Georgia cities by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) at their 2015 Convention in Savannah, Georgia, to showcase Valdosta’s partnership with the Annette Howell Center for the Arts and their collaborative local arts initiatives and to highlight how the partner-





ship utilizes public art and culture as a tool for community and economic development.

- Received approval from the Georgia Department of Transportation Board for the U.S. Hwy 84/Hollywood/Clay Rd realignment project for \$3.6 million to resolve a long standing safety issue, realign a dangerous offset intersection and assist major industries in the area with semi-truck traffic issues. The city has pursued this project for 10 years to eliminate a safety issue on this state route and its connection with two local streets.

- Completed two of 10 new Valdosta Gateways on N. Valdosta Road, which was funded in part by a Georgia Department of Transportation grant to welcome new and returning citizens and guests to our city. Valdosta was one of only two communities who received the grant in GDOT District 4, which is made up of 36 counties.

- Received national accreditation for the Valdosta Main Street Program for the 30th consecutive year for meeting commercial district revitalization standards set by the National Trust Main Street.

- Hosted two Electronics Recycling events in partnership with Atlanta Recycling Solutions and Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB), saving over 73,000 pounds of electronic equipment (E-Waste) from disposal in the land-fill. Since the first event held in March 2006, over 555,000 pounds (277.5 tons) of electronics have been collected.

- Designated a Tree City USA community by the National Arbor Day Foundation for its 29 consecutive years of commitment to community forestry.

- Graduated 26 citizens from the 6th annual Valdosta

Government 101 Citizens Orientation, designed to give local citizens (up to five of them high school seniors) an inside look at the programs and services of their government.

- Received a Special Recognition Award at the annual Municipal Court Judges Council and Meeting for Valdosta Municipal Court Judge Vernita Lee Bender's implementation of the city's Mock Trial Program, which seeks to educate area youth on the consequences of their actions and the inner workings of local government.

- Joined other cities across Georgia in celebrating Georgia Cities Week, April 19-25, to recognize the many services city governments provide for the quality of life of citizens. Eleven activities were planned along the "Destination Downtown" theme that featured how Valdosta Main Street is a gathering spot for people throughout our region and an economic development hot spot.

- Hosted events in observance of National Community Development Week, Community Planning Month, National Preservation Month, Fire Prevention Month, National Drinking Water Week, and a variety of other observances that provided opportunities to reinforce important messages to our citizens.

- Visited by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in May for their quarterly board meeting and a tour of DCA-funded projects in the city and downtown, as well as other economic development sites in the city. This was the first time that the DCA board held their board meeting in Valdosta.



Thank you for taking the time to view the City of Valdosta Annual Report. Questions about the content of this publication or use of the content may be directed to the Public Information Office at 229-259-3548 or at [smathews@valdostacity.com](mailto:smathews@valdostacity.com).

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