

CITY OF VALDOSTA ANNUAL REPORT



2016

VALDOSTA
A City Without Limits

From the City Manager



Larry Hanson
hanson@valdostacity.com

It is my pleasure to present the 2016 City of Valdosta Annual Report, our 21st 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, once again, 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 city government.

In 2016, 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. Even so, Valdosta—Georgia's 14th largest city—continues to have one of the lowest millage rates among its peer cities in the state.

Through the dedicated work of the Finance Department staff, the city was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 30th 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 20th consecutive year—the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

Throughout 2016, 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. I invite you to take the time to view the department pages to read their accomplishments.

The city fully utilized its website platform in 2016 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 our Valdosta Click & Fix mobile app, 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 Police Academy—all designed to give citizens a closer look at their local government and the services it provides. The strategic effort to engage the youth in our community was continued through the Valdosta Youth Council, Great Promise Partnership, and other youth outreach programs.

"The City Without Limits" continues to be a great place for business, and we look forward to positive economic and community development in the new year.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. I'd also like to thank 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



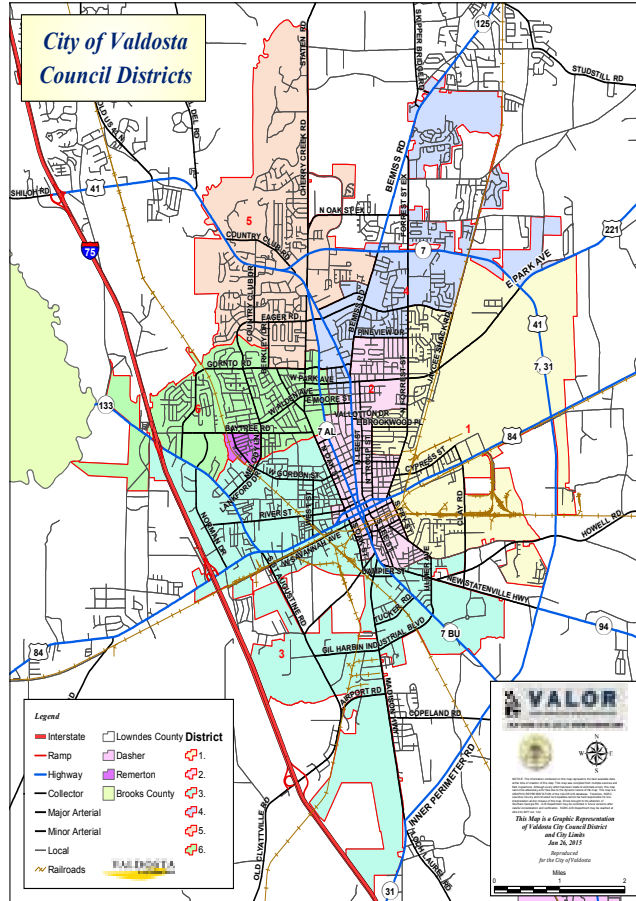
Councilman Ben Norton
At-Large
bnorton@valdostacity.com



Councilwoman Sandra Tooley
District 2
stooley@valdostacity.com



Councilman Tim Carroll
District 5
tcarroll@valdostacity.com



Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody, District 1
vmiller-cody@valdostacity.com



Councilman Joseph Vickers
District 3
jvickers@valdostacity.com



Councilman Robert Yost
District 6
ryost@valdostacity.com

The Mayor and members of the City Council invite and encourage the citizens of the City of Valdosta to attend City Council meetings whenever possible, because good government depends on the interest and involvement of citizens. City Council meetings are held on the first and third Thursday following the first Sunday of each month, at 5:30 p.m. 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 set the a dozen goals at their annual retreat in March 2016. The following reflect the top priorities that were addressed during the past year:

- Approve the compensation plan and make every effort to identify revenue sources to budget the plan as presented.
- Improve and strengthen ordinances related to nuisance violations such as grass and property maintenance to include strengthening priorities for repeat offenders.
- Agree on a Service Delivery Strategy Agreement with Lowndes County and all municipalities based upon the most effective and efficient manner to deliver services and what is in the best interest of the taxpayer.
- Study and develop recommendations to address traffic flow and traffic volume management in the entire Valdosta Mall area.
- Develop a plan to improve traffic flow and management citywide by use of fiber to create a connected traffic signal system with more timed routes, incorporation of new smart signals, and to fully utilize the Traffic Management Center.
- Continue to operate the city in a fiscally responsible manner meeting the current and future needs recognizing a need to identify future revenue sources for funding of the priority initiatives.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority and others to enhance economic development in the city and the community.
- In collaboration with the Housing Authority, develop a plan to gain public and private support for a mixed use housing development.
- Meet with Conference Center and Tourism Authority and reactivate the Municipal Auditorium Steering Committee to discuss a public facility project to include funding, location sale of Mathis Auditorium and a timeline.
- In partnership with the CVDA, continue to support economic development downtown by construction of a parking deck at the existing Toombs Street parking lot.
- Continue to pursue flood relief with the USACE to lead the effort for both studying the regional water shed and funding projects to resolve the flooding.
- 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).

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.

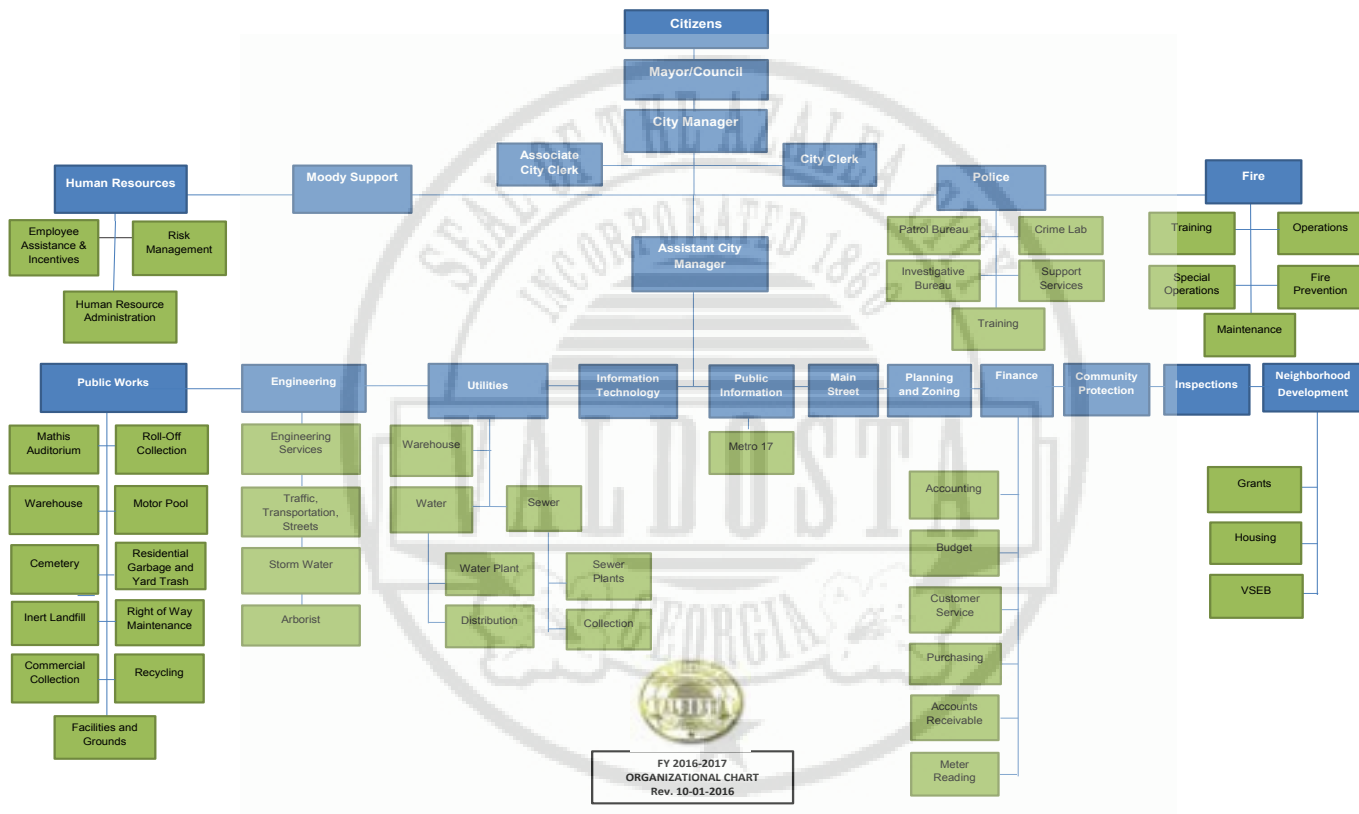
In 2016, our customer-centered departments continued to serve citizens with information and services. Public information programs, such as the Valdosta City Government 101 Citizens Orientation, continued to provide citizens with information about how their city operates. This program takes 25 citizens 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—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](#)
- [Mayor's Motorcade](#)
- [Muscular Dystrophy Association \(MDA\)](#)
- [Neighborhood Watch](#)
- [Pink Heals Valdosta/South Georgia Chapter](#)
- [Students Against Destructive Decisions \(SADD\)](#)
- [Shop with a Cop / Shop with a Firefighter](#)
- [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 Ben Johnson

Ben Johnson, retired Air Force with 24 years of experience in civil engineering, was hired as a Street Maintenance Division Supervisor in April 2016. Ben supervises a crew of five city employees who repair sidewalks and potholes in the city limits. He says that interacting with citizens and making sure their issues are resolved are what makes his job worthwhile. Ben and his crew keep the city safe for pedestrians and motorists, while also impacting the quality of life for those who live in or visit our city. "I'm passionate about what I do; my work is my resume," says Ben. ■

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 \$5,423,115. 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 Inspections 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	8
Soil Erosion Inspections on Permitted Sites	43
Soil Erosion Inspections on Non-Permitted Sites	99
City Projects Inspected by Engineering	6
Pond Inspections Performed	43
Rain Events .5" or Greater	20
Rain Events Less than .5"	30
Rights-of-Way Authorization Numbers Issued	283
Certificates of Occupancy Issued	52
Asbuilts Accepted	12
NPDES, Construction and Site Plans Reviewed	113
Private Project Inspections	20

Traffic Management & Street Maintenance Division

Signals

Bulbs	58
Emergency Call Out	133
Signal Head's - Installed/Replaced	11
LED'S - Installed	11
LED'S - Replaced	12
Misc Equipment - Installed/Replaced	118
Cameras - Installed/Replaced	9
Banners - Installed/Removed	45
Loops Installed	9

Signs & Markings

Signs - Installed	188
Traffic Counts	62
Stop Signs - Repaired/Upgraded	112
Street Signs - Repaired/Upgraded	396
Trimming of R.O.W.	68
Stop Bars/Arrow - Painted	580
Painting - Feet	7,000
Overhead Signs Made	67
Barricades Installed	131
Speed Hump Investigations	10

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	1,022
Washouts - Linear Feet	1,602
Trench Lines - Square Feet	217
Root & Base Cuts	39
Driveways Repaired	51
Edge Washouts	178
Sidewalks - Linear Feet	905
Base / Root Repair - Square Feet	3,095
Wheelchair Ramp	6
Locations Saw Cut	928
Bollards Placed	27
Asphalt Tons Used	348
Concrete - Cubic Yards Used	239
Millings - Tons Used	160

Stormwater Division

Storm Pipe Cleaned - Linear Feet	53,360
Storm Pipe Inspected-Linear Feet	112,957
Canals Cut - Linear Feet	481,149
Catch Basins Inspected	1,806
Catch Basins Cleaned	518
Catch Basins Repaired	70
Beaver Dams - Hours	1,194
Streets Swept - Miles	1,161
Outfalls Inspected	154
Rainfall (7 Rain Gauges, Average in Inches)	49.81
Dig/Grade Ditches/Swale	59

Arbor Division

Trees Removed	129
Trees Trimmed	682
Trees Planted	45





Meet Wendall Barrentine —————
Wendall Barrentine used to work as a Valdosta wastewater treatment plant operator. Following an injury, Wendall was assigned to light duty at the city's Customer Service Center. That was six years ago. As a customer service representative, Wendall can't see himself doing any other job. He is a people person who enjoys communicating with citizens about their city services. His pleasant personality and willingness to help others makes him a valuable asset to the city. ■

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 2016, 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 2016. This is the 30th 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, 2016, for the 20th 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.

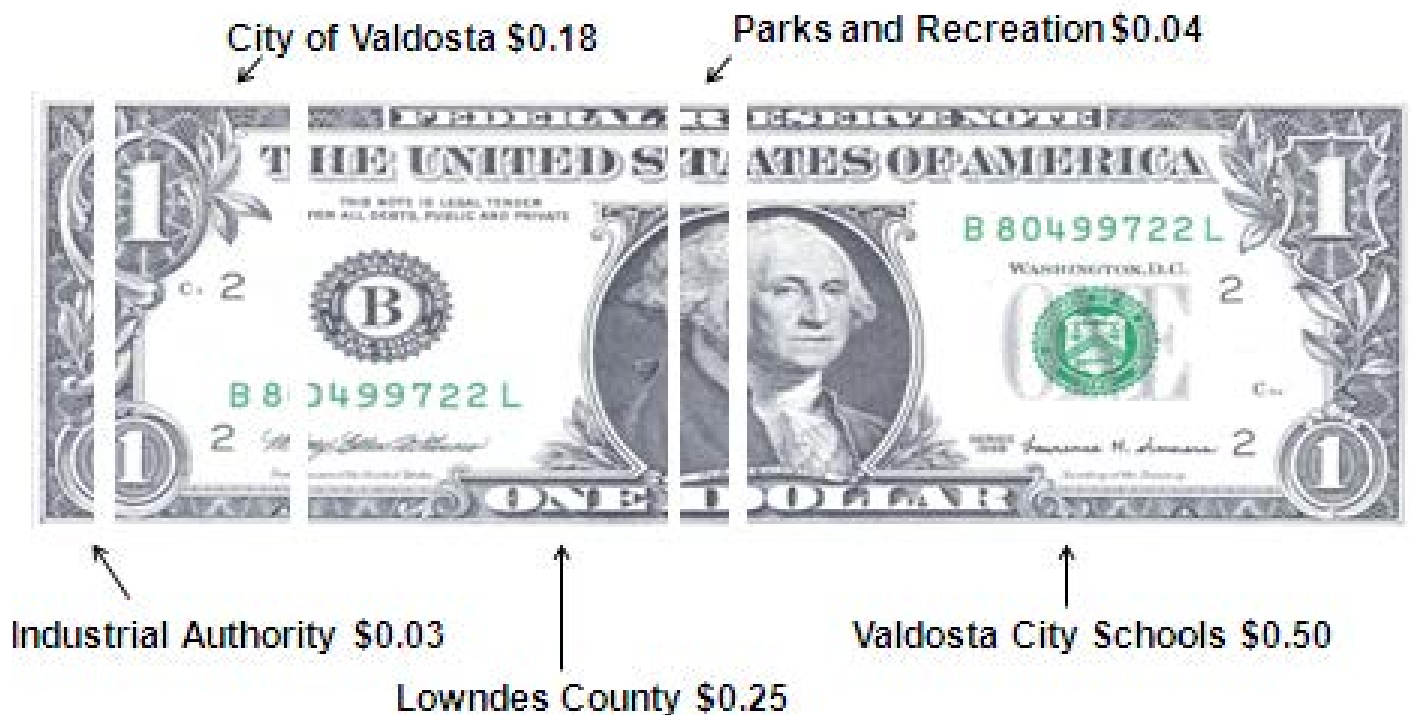
Each year, Georgia requires an audit of the books of accounts, financial records and transactions of all funds of the city by independent certified public accountants selected by the Mayor and City Council. The Finance Department is pleased to report that it has once again successfully completed a financial 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. Furthermore, the city has no bonded general fund debt, a remarkable accomplishment achieved by sound financial management and through the work of the dedicated city employees in the Finance Department. ■



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

Property taxes make up 10.2 percent of the funding necessary to operate the city. Although the city's FY 2016 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.

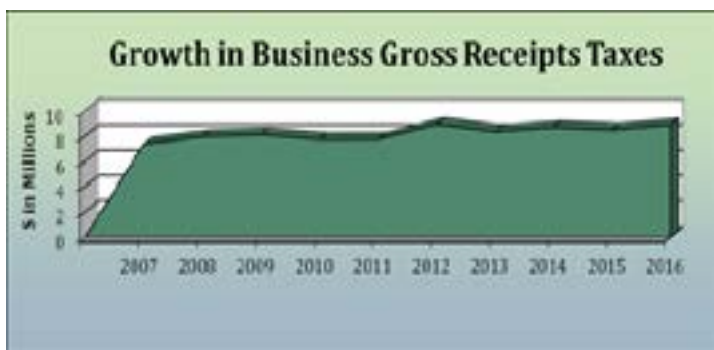


Optimistic Financial Outlook

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:

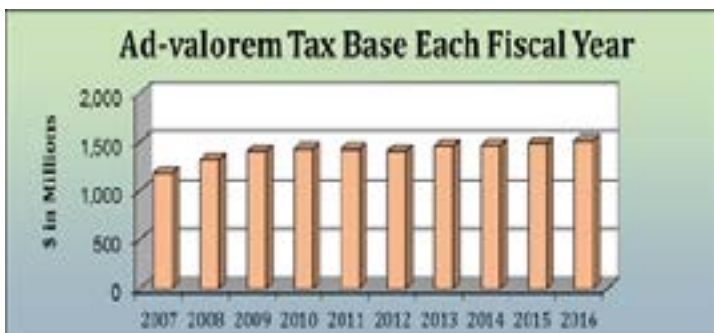
While the city has certainly been affected by the economy, conservative budgetary policies and adherence to sound financial policies and philosophies have provided a hedge against anemic property tax revenues, increased operational costs and surging healthcare costs.

Note: The graphs and charts on these pages reflect the FY 2016 actual information and the FY 2017 budget information.



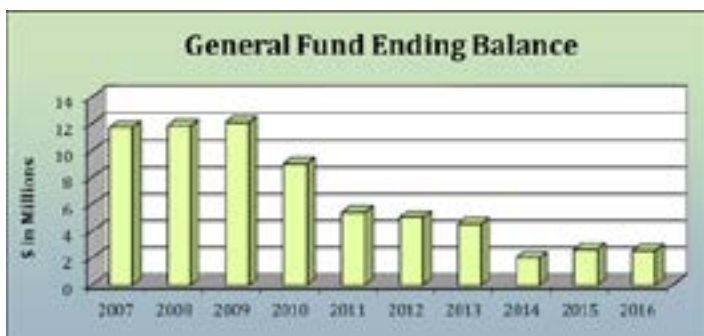
Business Gross Receipts Taxes

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

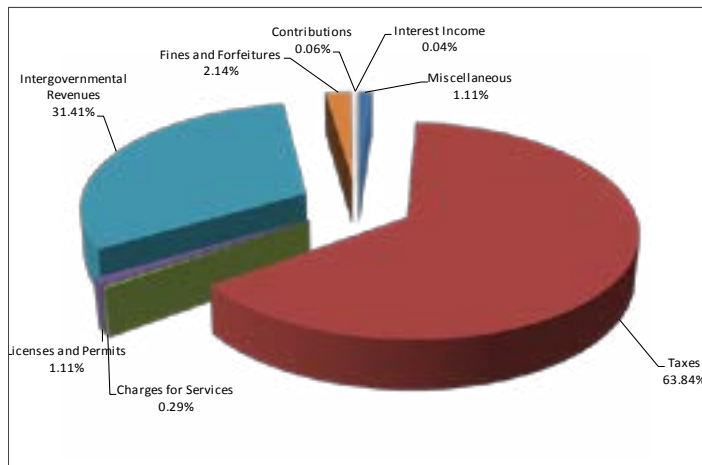
Property values represent growth in construction and development.



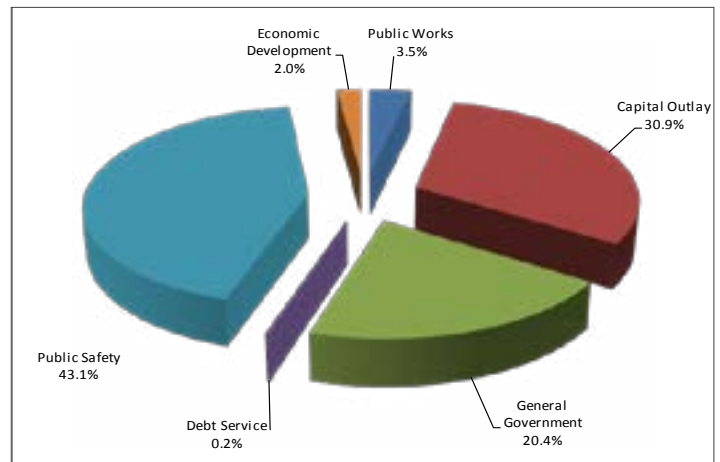
General Fund Ending Balance

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



General Government Expenditures



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.

The General Government Expenditures group is broken down into the following five areas:

- Capital Outlay: Costs associated with new infrastructure and long lived equipment
- 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 Lt. Bennie Kennedy

For 21 years, Lt. Bennie Kennedy has excelled in his duties in the VFD Training Division. He was one of the first members to be accepted to the Managing Officer Program at the National Fire Academy and completed the Fire Department Executive Training Course at the Georgia Fire Academy. Bennie was recently promoted as Accreditation Manager and will lead the Valdosta Fire Department through the Fire Accreditation process. Bennie also makes time to serve his community by volunteering in various community programs. ■

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 includes 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 2015, which resulted in the department receiving a Class 1 ISO rating, effective April 2016. This is the first time the department has ever held a top rating.

The VFD provided quality services to a response area of approximately 57,000 citizens and over 100,000 in the Valdosta metro area, responding to 3,803 calls for fire (405), Rescue & EMS (1,137), Hazardous Condition (581), false alarms (1054), weather/natural disaster (50) and other

calls (576). 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 VFD conducted 594 fire inspections, 34 Certificate of Occupancy inspections and 34 building sprinkler plan reviews, and discovered 218 fire and life-safety violations. Staff also conducted 102 pre-incident surveys, 49 night club safety inspections, more than 100 community educational programs and installed over 172 smoke detectors.

The department welcomed four new 1,000-gallon Sutphen Fire Engines, which can haul more water and are equipped with advanced safety features for efficiency. These were added to the fleet which includes a total

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

Pink Heals Valdosta/South Georgia Chapter

Wiregrass EMS Partnership

American Cancer Society

American Red Cross HEROES



of six fire engines, two ladder trucks, one air/light truck, one urban/search and rescue truck, and one 2,000-gallon tanker truck—all of which serve six fire stations strategically located throughout the city. In addition, the department provided staffing, ARFF training and day-to-day operations at the Valdosta Regional Fire and Rescue Airport Station.

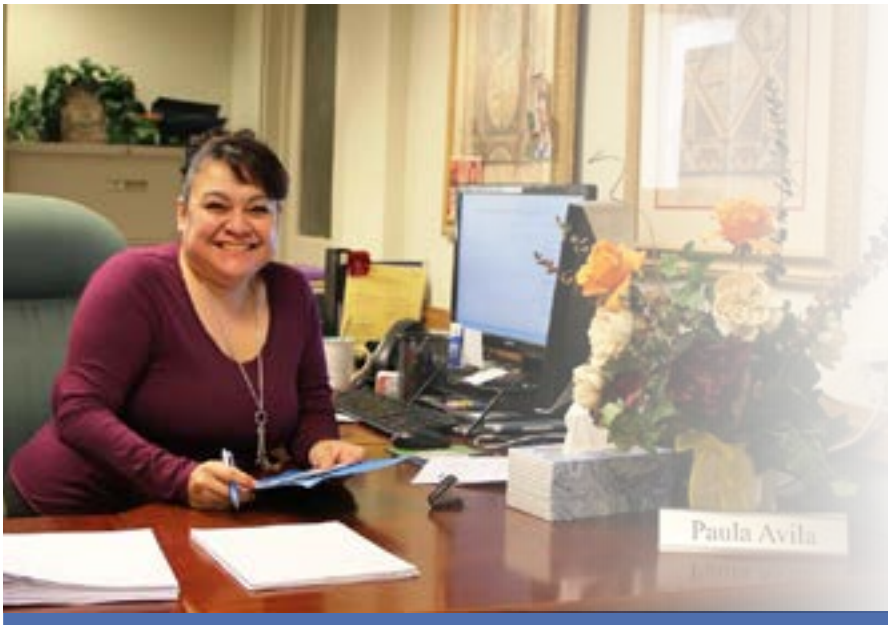
The VFD remains the proud home to one of eight regional Georgia Search and Rescue (GSAR) teams designated by the State of Georgia Governor's Office for the Southwest Georgia area. In 2016, each GSAR member participated in over 90 hours of training. This training was instrumental for assignments such as when the GSAR team was deployed during Hurricane Matthew to assist Cook,

Ware, McIntosh and Miller Counties.

The VFD reached its goal of ensuring 100 percent of all members were Firefighter II Certified, which helps maintain the Class 1 ISO rating and meets requirements for various firefighter grants. Firefighters completed more than 36,000 training hours; and through the partnerships with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College and Georgia Fire Academy, nine employees received their Fire Officer Certifications and 10 received their EMT certifications.

The VFD launched a social media campaign to enhance its communication efforts, which includes the VFD webpage, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook. Staff also enhanced overall recruitment efforts by participating in over 10 recruitment fairs in the community. ■





Meet Paula Avila

HR Analyst Paula Avila has been working with the City of Valdosta since 2015. Paula is willing and capable of managing numerous responsibilities, which include coordinating the workers' and unemployment compensation, Family and Medical Leave Act, Health and Wellness, Safety and Risk and benefits programs, while serving employees and potential employees with a smile on her face. Her extensive skills, knowledge, and work ethics help carry out the mission of the Human Resources Department. ■

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 2016, the Office of Human Resources recruitment efforts resulted in the receipt and review of approximately 14,012 employment applications, which led to the hiring of 115 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, composed 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 240 city employees in 2016. 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 2016 plan year. Appointments for the year increased to 6,283 (a 6 percent increase), and utilization of the clinic rose to 105.5 percent.

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.

Projected medical and pharmacy claims savings for 2016, when compared to years 2014 and 2015 is estimated to be \$3,250,252.

As an event sponsor of the annual Employee Health Fair held in October 2016 at the city's Fire Station #1, CareHere Clinic provided free influenza inoculations coordinated by the Office of Human Resources. More than 35 vendors participated in the 2016 Employee Health Fair and approximately 273 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 for 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 9% decrease in monies spent during the same period last year.

The Office of Human Resources provide a positive impact that adds value and abandons the idea of the traditional role of Human Resources as an administrative, personnel, and transactional role-based department. ■





Meet Kim Fulford

As the court administrator for 10 years, Kim Fulford assists the judge by coordinating the monthly court calendar with various agencies, managing the city ordinance court and the environmental court, as well as other duties to keep the office and facility running smoothly. Kim says that her main goal is helping people, because not many enjoy going to court. Her positive attitude allows her to do just that, while also turning unpleasant visits to the court into more positive experiences. ■

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 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.

More than 400 judges manage over 800,000 cases per year in the state of Georgia, and more than 9,989 cases were docketed in the Valdosta Municipal Court in 2016. Dockets may have one citation or as many as seven citations included in one docket.

In 2016, probationers completed more than 39,542

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 3,197 pounds of food to the local food bank.

Sentinel Offender Services supervised approximately 1,827 cases (active, jail and tolled) for the court.

The Municipal Court had approximately 62 Work Alternative Program (WAP) participants. Since the WAP implementation in June 2001, approximately 118,032 work hours have been completed on various municipal projects, saving the city \$696,227.80 in jail housing fees. ■





Meet Officer Hancock

Officer Randall Hancock was shot in the line of duty in 2016, after he was ambushed during a routine call for service. After being shot three times, Officer Hancock remained calm, took cover, and returned fire, ending the assault by the offender. What was even more extraordinary was Hancock could be seen on body-camera video directing emergency medical services personnel to the offender, before addressing his own injuries. For his actions, Officer Hancock was awarded the Medal of Honor. ■

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 149 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 2016, the department maintained “Triple Crown Accreditation” by remaining in compliance with three voluntary accreditations, two for law enforcement and one for crime laboratory. The Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory remains the only locally-operated crime laboratory ever in Georgia to obtain accreditation through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors. This process included a rigorous review of laboratory procedures, training, and equipment by five out-of-state assessors.

Since 1999, 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, support services, and ensures compliance of 484 standards for professionalism and service delivery in the field of law enforcement. The VPD has received the Accreditation with Excellence, Meritorious Distinction and Flagship Agency awards multiple times.

The VPD 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 since 1999.

2016 In Numbers

187

Officers and Staff

75,793

Calls Responded To

22 %

Decrease In Part 1 Crimes
From 2000-2015

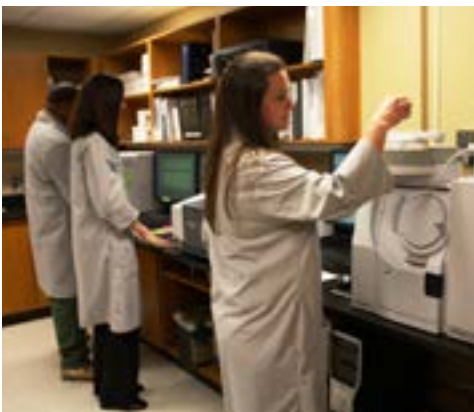
For the eighth consecutive year, the VPD exceeded the national clearance rates for all major Part 1 Crimes (as defined by the FBI), which includes arson, murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, and larceny. The department recorded 2,833 overall Part 1 Crimes in 2016, which is 22 percent lower than when compared to year 2000—even though the city’s population has grown 31 percent.

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 utilizes high-definition body cameras, which have been effective in dealing with citizen complaints, reviewing officer use of force incidents, and providing valuable video evidence during court proceedings. A city-wide

camera system gives officers access to real-time crime and traffic analysis data to help deter and predict crimes.

Embracing programs such as the Community Policing, Neighborhood Watch, Police Chaplain, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), Gang Awareness and other programs allow the VPD to provide resources and opportunities for citizens. Staff also volunteer their off-duty time to participate in numerous programs and charities within the community.

The VPD has demonstrated significant competence in 2016 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 Lawrence McCoy

Servicing over 22,000 combined Residential and Commercial customers as a Heavy Equipment Operator on a weekly basis is no small task unless you're Lawrence McCoy. McCoy's 28 years of experience with Public Works combined with his dedication to customer service makes him a valuable asset to the department. McCoy is the go-to employee because of his ability to operate an array of equipment which has been proven during many emergency situations. ■

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 continued the daily operation of sanitation services, which in 2016 served 22,993 residential and 1,606 commercial sanitation customers by providing 15,751 bulk items/special pick-ups, processing 1,092 tons of recyclable materials, collecting 29,011 tons of solid waste and collecting/mulching 10,497 tons of yard waste. Staff also continued to provide services for Right-of-Way Maintenance, Right-of-Way Street Maintenance, Mosquito Control Program, Automotive/ Fleet Maintenance Center, City Fuel Center, Small Engine Repair, Mathis City Auditorium, Property Abatements, the Compost Landfill, designated city facilities and grounds, and Sunset Hill Cemetery, which had 117 interments.

In 2016, the department balanced its sanitation routes based on the day of the week, number of households ser-

viced and their density to provide same-day service for bulk pickup, yard trash, recycling and residential garbage, reducing the time frame for items placed at curbs and greatly improving the appearance of city neighborhoods.

Also in 2016, the department hosted two Electronic Recycling events with Atlanta Recycling Solutions and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB), saving over 31,833 pounds of electronic equipment from disposal in the landfill. Since the first event held in March 2006, over 628,178 pounds of electronics have been collected.

In addition, the department initiated clean-up efforts of debris left behind by Tropical Storm Hermine. The department coordinated with the City of Douglas and Advanced Disposal by picking up over 2,000 tons of yard debris.

Quick Statistics

- 22,993 Residential Sanitation Customers
- 1,606 Commercial and Small Business Customers
- 15,751 Number of Special Pick-Ups
- 1091.55 Tons of Recyclable Material Collected
- 29,011 Tons of Solid Waste Collected
- 10,497 Tons of Yard Waste Collected/Mulched
- 31,833 Pounds Collected from E-Recycling Events
- 7,484 Fleet/Maintenance Work Orders Completed
- 1,652 Automotive Services Completed
- 2,228 Street Miles Swept
- 1,357 Bags of litter collected from Right-of-Ways



During National Public Works Week in May, the department showcased nine superior employees who were recognized for superior job performance, attendance, attitude, and work ethic during an awards banquet.

Crews collected 1,357 bags of litter from right-of-ways, and provided assistance with the following community service and neighborhood beautification programs, through a partnership with KLVB and the Neighborhood Development Division: Great America Cleanup, Make a Difference Day Cleanup, Rivers Alive, The Magic of Recycling, Bulk Trash Amnesty Day, Bring One for the Chipper and the Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade.

As in previous years, staff continued to monitor mosquito activity in our area through a joint mosquito sur-

veillance 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.

The department continued the refurbishing project at Mathis Auditorium, which included installing new theater fly lines. Mathis was rented 166 times in 2016.

In 2016, the department also added a street sweeper and two Kawasaki Mules to the Right-of-Way division's vehicle inventory. These vehicles increased the mobility efforts which allowed the addition of litter control routes to the department's daily schedule map and increased the division's sweeping mileage by 35 percent. ■





Meet John Waite

During his 37 years with the city, John Waite has met every challenge and demand of his work with a smile on his face as well as a dedication to see the job done right. On many occasions, he would be on the job hours after his shift would end to assist his coworkers in emergencies or to make sure that the facility was operating at peak efficiency. John excels in each and every position that he is placed in by always taking on more demanding responsibilities and new challenges. The City of Valdosta celebrates John's faithfulness and his expected retirement in 2017. ■

UTILITIES

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

In 2016, over \$37 million in major infrastructure work was completed, including the new Withlacoochee Treatment Plant and a new sewer conveyance system to that facility as well as 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 and completed in March 2016, three months ahead of the original schedule. Moreover, after 20 months of construction, the new Withlacoochee WPCP was also completed in March 2016, 12 months ahead of the original schedule.

Our ongoing smoke testing program is on track to complete the final 120 miles of the sewer collection sys-

tem by the end of January 2017. Upon completion, all of the city's 300 miles of lines have been evaluated through smoke testing and CCTV work, and 600 defects within the sewer collection system have been identified for repairs. Over 6,200 of the city's 6,473 manholes have been mapped and approximately 3,700 inspected. Approximately 215 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 19,700 feet of sewer lines have been rehabilitated using cured in place pipe lining technology. This work will significantly reduce sewer spills, inflow and/or infiltration (I&I) of ground and surface water into the sewer systems, as well as 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 along with a third sewer main identified (through the smoke testing program) for replacement. All three projects were completed in September 2016. A project to update the Mud Creek sewer collection system model was awarded in December 2016 and is expected to be completed by June 2017. As with the Withlacoochee report, findings of this report will also be utilized to develop a new five-year sewer system rehabilitation plan to be started in 2019.

In 2016 the last two portable emergency generators were 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. Bids have been received for the last four lift stations and will be completed in November 2017.

In 2016, 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.

In the summer of 2016, two new raw water wells (9 & 10) were connected to the existing wellfield, increasing available capacity for the next several years. As part of the South Troup Street improvement Project, 3,500 feet of new water main and new valves were installed, along with 84 water services being replaced. Also in 2016, water and sewer construction were completed on additional annexed islands and will continue annually through 2018 until all the remaining annexed islands are served.

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 Ricky Folsom

Ricky Folsom has been a city marshal for 15 years. He is one of five city marshals responsible for responding to reported violations and solving community code enforcement issues. Ricky's ability to build relationships with citizens and educate the public on codes and ordinances improves the health, safety and welfare of the community. Ricky says that everything he does is safety oriented, because he wants to make sure that citizens are living in a safe and 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 composed 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 and 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 neces-

sary, 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 2016, the division was responsible for processing over 3,078 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 Tim Hines

Electrical Inspector Tim Hines is responsible for on-site inspections of commercial and residential buildings in the city and county, along with ensuring that all electrical work meets the standards and the minimum codes as adopted and amended by the city, county and the state of Georgia. Tim is also responsible for all commercial electrical plan reviews and maintains multiple certifications as awarded by the International Code Council. Tim along with four other inspectors are instrumental in ensuring new residential and commercial developments are carefully constructed for the safety of all citizens. ■

INSPECTIONS DIVISION

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 2016, 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 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 2016, the division performed a total of 11,925 build-

ing, electrical, plumbing and mechanical inspections, and issued 7,274 permits.

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

In 2016, Downtown Valdosta hosted 66 events which included First Fridays, Art Walk, the Downtown Easter Egg Hunt, a movie night, Farm Days, Brown Bag Lunch Concert Series, Build a Bouquet, Taste of Downtown and Restaurant Week, Flower Gallery's Christmas Open House and more.

Main Street has worked to increase the awareness of the organization's mission through public speaking opportunities, media coverage, interviews, and development of quality marketing for their events and promotions.

This year, Main Street welcomed six new business that brought approximately 63 new jobs and \$7.5 million of investment to Downtown Valdosta. Staff looks forward to seeing several development projects to completion that will bring \$2.37 million in property sales in 2017 and looks forward to the positive impact that each will bring to their diverse mix of businesses in the district.

Various trainings opportunities in 2016 provided valu-

able tools for staff to learn what other organizations are doing to revitalize their downtowns. Downtown Valdosta's selection into the Georgia's Exceptional Main Street certification program will continue to help strengthen their organization. Valdosta is among only seven other Main Street Programs that have been distinguished by the Georgia Office of Downtown Development for going above and beyond expectations.

Main Street continues to plan and improve their schedule of events and activities to attract more visitors to Downtown Valdosta. The goal is to be successful and to encourage more businesses and customers to come to the beautiful and historic downtown. ■





Meet Richard Joyner

As the neighborhood development rehabilitation construction coordinator, Richard is the first point of contact for citizens who need help fixing their homes. Richard helps eligible homeowners utilize grant funding to make their homes safe to live in, and he keeps in contact with them throughout the process. Richard says that he enjoys repairing houses for qualifying low-income families, the elderly and the disabled because he likes changing people's lives. Since 1997, his efficient and compassionate work ethic ensures citizens are served with a consistently high level of professionalism. ■

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In 2016, 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 awareness programs.

Staff completed three reconstruction and two rehabilitation projects in 2016, utilizing Community Development Block Grant funding. The Bulk Trash Amnesty Day event was held in partnership with KLVB's annual Make a Difference Day, which eliminated over 50 tons of bulk debris from city neighborhoods and streets. Also, the Azalea City Yard Showcase, which provides the tools and resources for citizens to clean up their

neighborhoods, was successfully implemented.

The division was awarded a Community Assistantship Program grant from the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing at the University of Georgia, which allowed staff to create an online survey that will be utilized to further assess citizen housing and transportation needs.

The city partnered with the Great Promise Partnership Program and Valdosta High School to offer entry-level positions for students at-risk of not completing high school. Eight students were hired in 2016 to assist various city departments. ■





Meet James Horton

Special Projects/Historic Preservation Planner James Horton helps the city preserve historic areas that contain important architectural building 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 2016, 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, five 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 and quality service.

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 2016, staff wrote and produced 162 press releases, 52 weekly E-newsletters, three City Beat newsletters, an Annual Report, the Water Quality Report, four water bill inserts, and other materials and reports as requested. The division increased the effectiveness and integrity of its Twitter, YouTube and Facebook platforms, partnering with a VSU Social Media class for a mutually-beneficial educational project. E-news distribution grew by 15 percent, increasing our reach with more than 750 city news stories sent in 2016. 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 47 tours and public education

events during 2016 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 outreach 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 valuable local government information. ■

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.

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