

A City Without

LIMITS

2020

City of Valdosta

ANNUAL REPORT



FROM THE *City Manager*

It is my pleasure to present the 2020 City of Valdosta Annual Report, our 25th consecutive report, designed to inform our citizens, elected officials and other interested individuals of our city's activities, progress, challenges and accomplishments last year.

In 2020, the city continued to operate in a fiscally challenged economy, and our employees continued to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate rising costs of running a city, while maintaining quality services for our citizens. Even so, Valdosta—Georgia's 14th largest city—continued 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 34th 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 24th consecutive year--the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

Throughout 2020, 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 all its resources to provide more transparency and accessibility to local government through modern technology. An

strategic effort was made to communicate more effectively with elected officials, citizens and media via our website, social media tools, Valdosta Click 'N Fix mobile app, Metro Valdosta Channel 17, timely publications and E-News blasts, citizen engagement programs and events.

Furthermore, the "City Without Limits" continues to be a great place for business, and we look forward to positive economic and community development that will continue to move us forward.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. I'd also like to thank the 650 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.



MARK BARBER
CITY MANAGER

mbarber@valdostacity.com

JOSEPH "SONNY"
OVERPASS



VICKERS

JOSEPH “SONNY” VICKERS OVERPASS

On August 28, 2020, a ceremony was held to dedicate the West Hill Avenue Overpass in honor of Councilman Joseph “Sonny” Vickers. Councilman Vickers was joined by his family and friends, as well as state and local leaders as he unveiled the new signs that can now be seen by drivers as they approach the Hill Avenue Overpass.



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Our Purpose



MAYOR

Scott James Matheson

sjmatheson@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN

Ben Norton

At-Large

bnorton@valdostacity.com



COUNCIL WOMAN

Vivian Miller-Cody

District 1

vmiller-cody@valdostacity.com



COUNCILWOMAN

Sandra Tooley

District 2

stooley@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN

Joseph Vickers

District 3

jvickers@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN

Eric Howard

Councilman District 4

ehoward@valdostacity.com



MAYOR PRO-TEM

Tim Carroll

District 5

tcarroll@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN

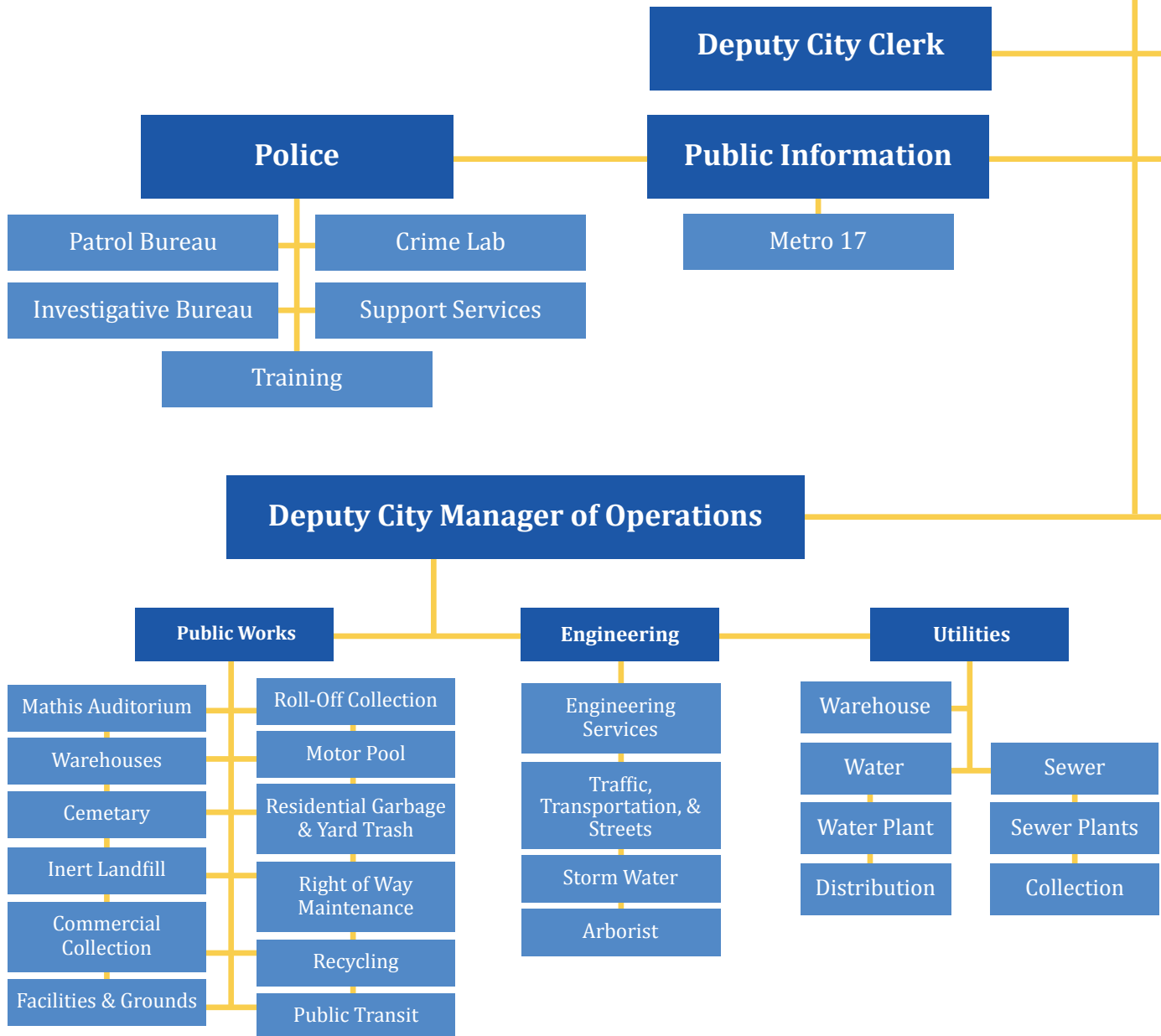
Andy Gibbs

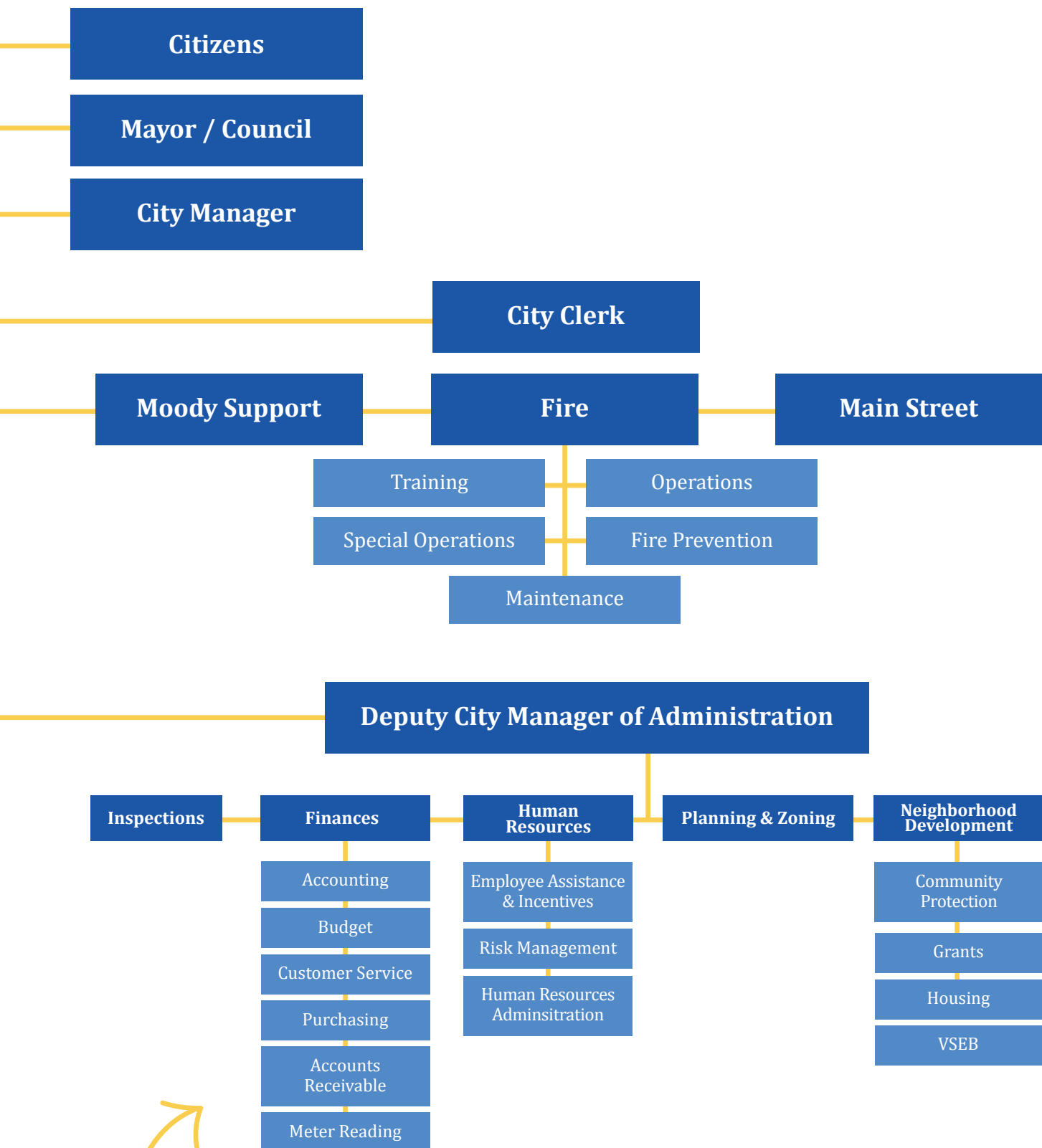
District 6

agibbs@valdostacity.com

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.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





Contact Us!

Questions about a department? Go to www.valdostacity.com to view each department's contact information.

Custom BUILT Location FOR YOUR BUSINESS



CEILING HEIGHT 36 FEET

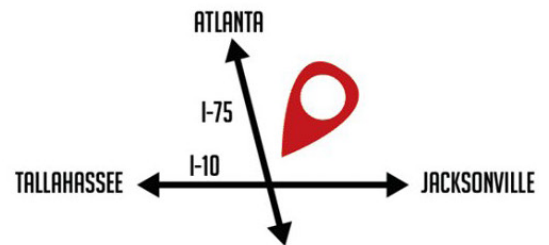
SQUARE FEET 100,000 - EXPANDABLE TO 300,000



OUR PEOPLE:
110,775 AVAILABLE WORKFORCE



OUR CONNECTIONS:
LAND • RAIL • AIR • SEA



OUR LOCATION:
GATEWAY TO GEORGIA

The Westside Business Park Spec Building is very visible and easily accessible.
The space is perfect for logistics or light manufacturing.



For more information call 229.259.9972
buildlowndes.com

Balanced GROWTH

- City of Valdosta currently has an estimated 23,700 customer service accounts.
- Average water bill is 7 units of usage for \$75.65.

• **12,795**
INSPECTIONS IN 2020

• **8,044**
PERMITS ISSUED IN 2020

• **4** PAYMENT
METHODS AVAILABLE

• **5,044** WEB PAYMENTS
Valdostacity.com estimated monthly payments

• **1,775** AUTO DEBIT PAYMENTS
received monthly

• **1,384** ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS
from outside sources received monthly

• **1,592** IVR PAYMENTS
estimated monthly payments by phone

Need help making a payment?
Give us a call at 229-259-3510

BUSINESS LICENSES RENEWED



218
Professional



181
Alcohol



3,798
Regular



114
Miscellaneous

PAVING THE WAY *for a Great Future*

The Engineering Services Division had a busy year, completing the resurfacing of 22 streets (5.50 miles) and addition of 3800 feet of new sidewalks.

Baymeadows Drive

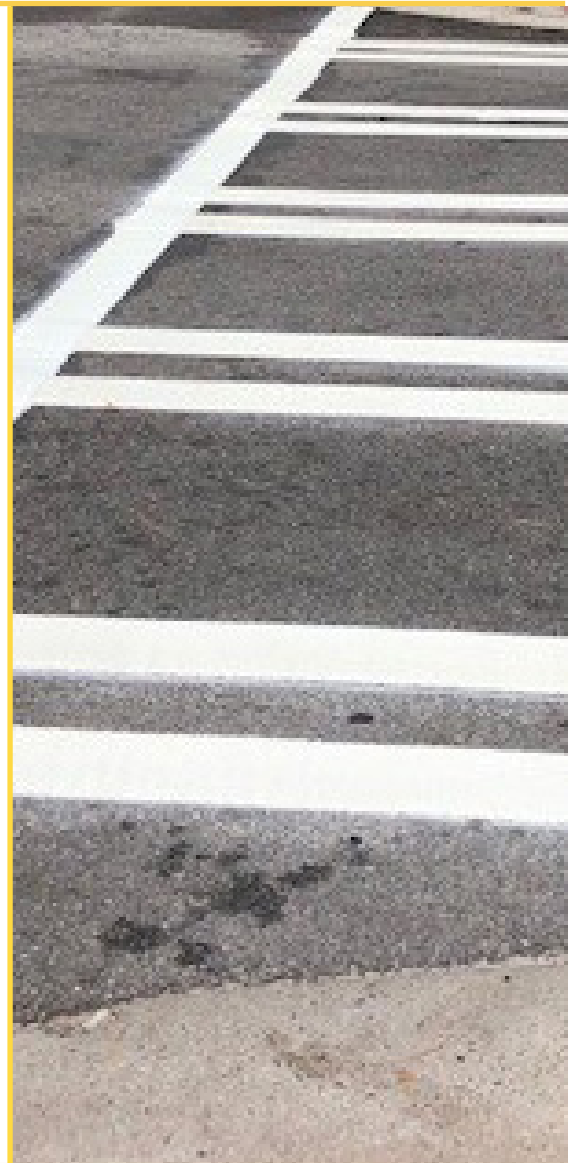
Baymeadows Drive extends from East Moore Street to East Park Avenue and is classified as a local road (two-lane). The roadway traverses a residential neighborhood that has heavy foot-traffic. There are attractions such as nearby convenience stores and J.L. Newbern Middle School and W.G. Nunn Elementary School that all generate foot-traffic out of the neighborhood. Baymeadows Drive is now has brand new sidewalks, utilizing \$114,000 of SPLOST funding for the project. Prior to the sidewalks, Pedestrians had on the grass shoulders or in the roadway to get to their destinations.

Ulmer Avenue

This project completed a loop of pedestrian movement from East Martin Luther King Drive to the south end of South Lee Street via Fry Street, Lake Park Road, Ulmer and Griffin Avenues. This looped corridor contains popular walking destinations such as the Mildred Hunter Homes, at least three churches, several convenience stores, and a health care facility. The project added 1,000 feet of sidewalk, curb and gutter, and storm drainage. The street was also repaved.

Taylor – Cowart Park Improvements

Taylor-Cowart Park is located off Bemiss Road. It is 2.44 acres and rests under large shady oak and poplar trees. SPLOST funds allowed for the purchase of new playground equipment that was much needed! \$35,000 in City SPLOST 7 Funds was used to add new parking spots to the front entrance of park. \$132,000 of City Parks & SPLOST 7 Funds purchased the new playground equipment and swings.



762

POTHoles & ROAD
CUTS REPAIRED

115

TRAFFIC COUNTS

11

SPLOST
PROJECTS



New Development within the City

The City of Valdosta saw a record number of permits in 2020 despite the coronavirus pandemic, showing signs of significant growth within our community. Part of this growth was the Zion Heights Subdivision – the first to be built in the city limits since 2009.

TravelSafely App for Safer Travel

Residents and Visitors are encouraged to download the TravelSafely App as part of the City of Valdosta Smart Cities Grant. With TravelSafely you'll be connected to city infrastructure, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The app provides audible warnings so you are aware of dangerous traffic situations while keeping your eyes on the road. We need your help to keep our community safe on the road. Download the app now to get started!

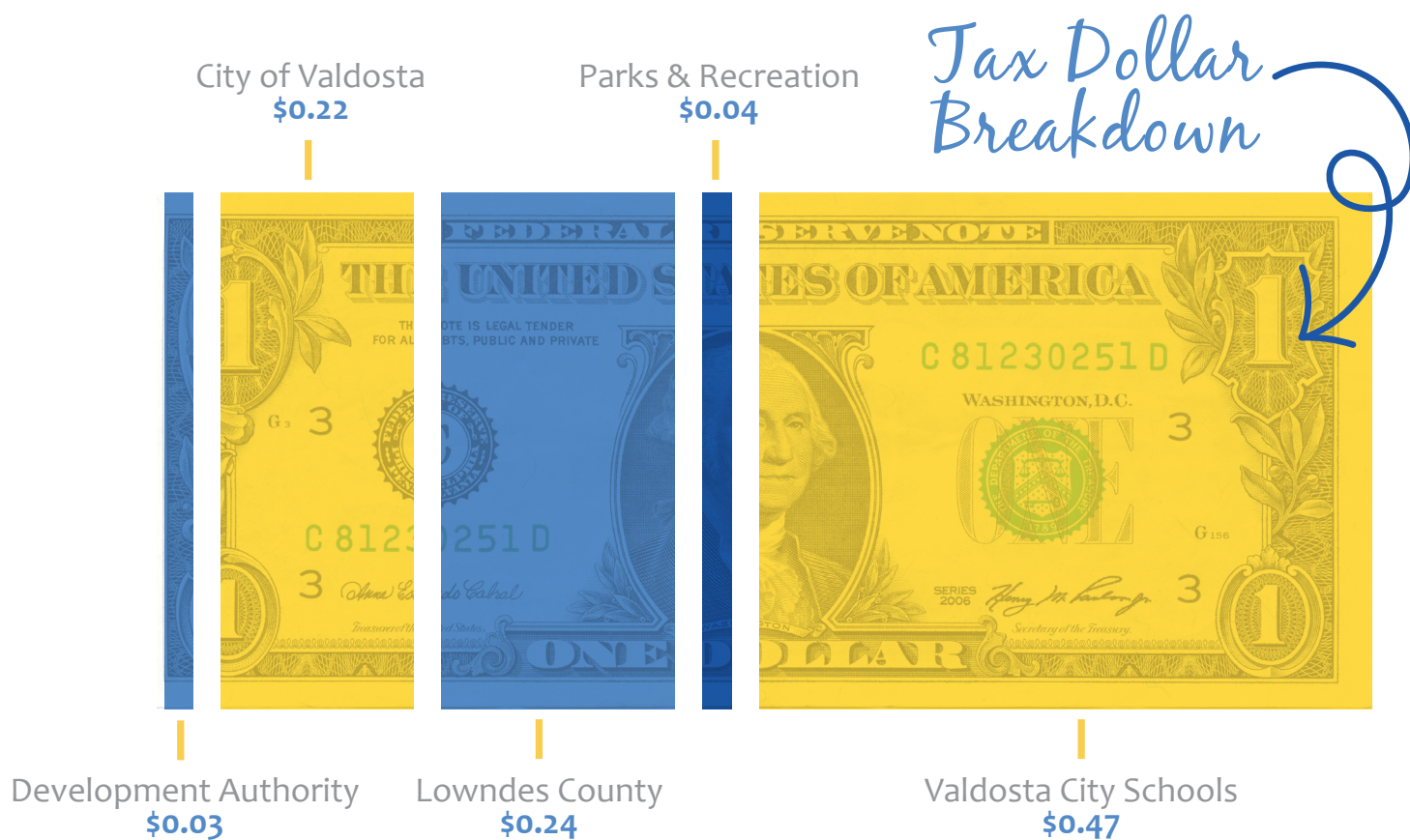


DEPARTMENT OF *Finance*

Although the city's FY 2021 budget was \$114 million, approximately \$11.8 million of it 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.

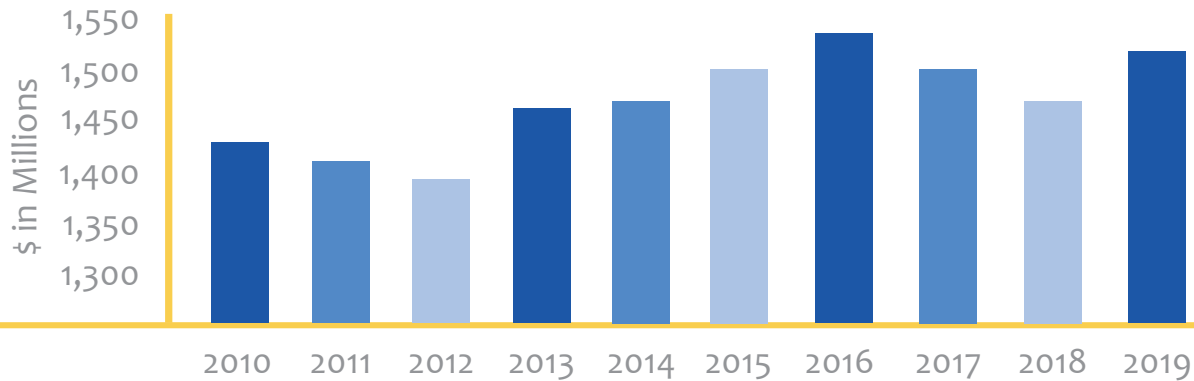
\$114 MILLION 2021
ANNUAL BUDGET

\$11.8 MILLION IN
PROPERTY TAXES

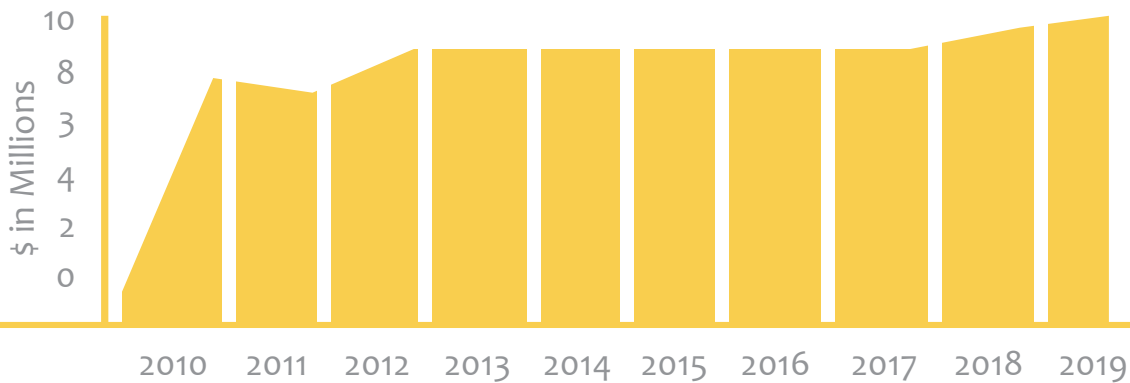


*Where Does Your City of Valdosta
Property Tax Dollars Go?*

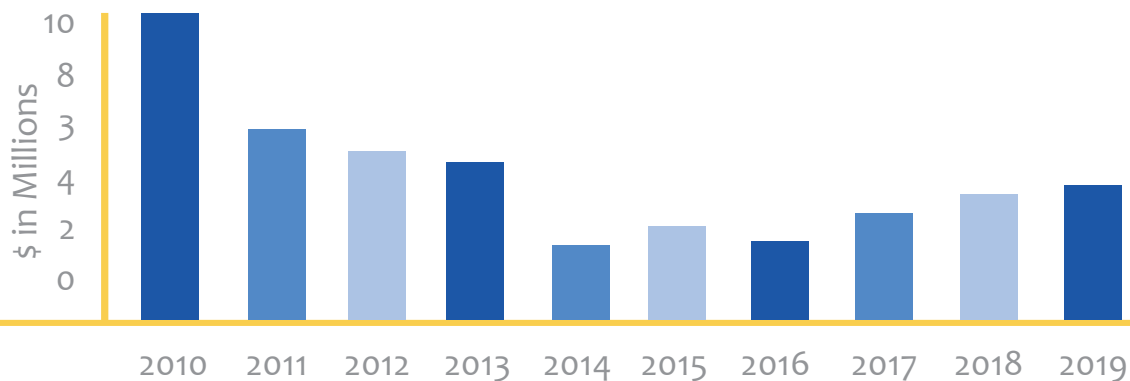
BY THE NUMBERS



Ad-Valorem Tax Base Each Fiscal Year



Growth in Business Gross Receipts Taxes



General Fund Ending Balance

Public Safety

Fire Department

The COVID -19 Pandemic posed challenges in 2020 for the members of VFD. As an established component of the Infectious Disease Transport Network, the department was ahead of the curve in preparation. However, there was a need for addition personal protective equipment to ensure protection for medical response. The State of Georgia provided additional masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves for our response needs to help supplement our cache. Based on our annual data, the department answered 889 medical related incidents. Out of the 889 incidents, there was potentially 173 of those that resulted in COVID patient contact which is 521 individual members in contact with COVID patients.

Last year, VFD's training division delivered four National Fire Academy courses locally to firefighters utilizing both classroom and virtual delivery. Community Risk Reduction was hosted by Valdosta with 13 participants from all over South Georgia. The department successfully added 15 new Emergency Medical Technicians in 2020 bringing the department at approximately 80% medically trained. A car seat technician class was delivered, adding 6 new technicians to the department.

The Fire Prevention Division conducted 1,963 Fire Inspections, 51 CO (Certificate of Occupancy) Inspections and 40 building sprinkler plan reviews; while finding over 573 fire and life safety violations. The division is also responsible for conducting and coordinating over 345 pre-incident surveys, installed over 65 smoke detectors and 24 community educational programs.

Police Department

In 2020, the Valdosta Police Department demonstrated significant competence by continuing to solve crimes, working with the community, improving technology, and striving for professional excellence. Our department responded to over 73,925 calls for service, which is an increase from 2019. The department made over 2,728 arrests, which included 205 DUI arrests. The department investigated over 3,468 traffic accidents.

The Police department implemented automated external defibrillators, AEDs, in patrol vehicles, along with training our officers on how to use them. At all times there are 2 AEDs on the road with our patrol officers. Many times our officers are the first to arrive on scene when individuals are experiencing cardiac issues. Having these AEDs available with our officers, gives a tool for our officers to provide lifesaving actions.

VPD personnel attended more than 6,225 hours of training, which does not include mandatory on-line training. This includes 100% of our officers successfully completing training on response to resistance, code of conduct, racial and biased based profiling, de-escalation training, vehicle pursuit, and sexual harassment.

● 11
NEW POLICE
OFFICERS HIRED

● 73,925
POLICE CALLS
FOR SERVICE

● 1,488
CRIME LAB CASES

● 1,963
FIRE INSPECTIONS

● 3588
HYDRANT
INSPECTIONS

● 25,000
HOURS OF FIRE
TRAINING



Fire Calls By The Numbers

By City Council District



Council 01

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 154 | Fire Alarms |
| 149 | Medical Emergencies |
| 48 | Other Fires |
| 69 | Other Hazards |
| 4 | Natural Disasters |
| 13 | Structure Fires |
| 35 | Vehicles Accidents |



Council 04

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 105 | Fire Alarms |
| 161 | Medical Emergencies |
| 39 | Other Fires |
| 87 | Other Hazards |
| 5 | Natural Disasters |
| 18 | Structure Fires |
| 144 | Vehicles Accidents |

Council 05

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 157 | Fire Alarms |
| 48 | Medical Emergencies |
| 24 | Other Fires |
| 75 | Other Hazards |
| 7 | Natural Disasters |
| 9 | Structure Fires |
| 114 | Vehicles Accidents |

Council 02

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 304 | Fire Alarms |
| 209 | Medical Emergencies |
| 68 | Other Fires |
| 128 | Other Hazards |
| 8 | Natural Disasters |
| 21 | Structure Fires |
| 67 | Vehicles Accidents |

Council 03

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 200 | Fire Alarms |
| 167 | Medical Emergencies |
| 47 | Other Fires |
| 122 | Other Hazards |
| 10 | Natural Disasters |
| 13 | Structure Fires |
| 173 | Vehicles Accidents |

Council 06

| | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 229 | Fire Alarms |
| 56 | Medical Emergencies |
| 25 | Other Fires |
| 124 | Other Hazards |
| 16 | Natural Disasters |
| 13 | Structure Fires |
| 119 | Vehicles Accidents |

66 OUT OF DISTRICT CALLS

Crime Reports By The Numbers

By City Council District

Council 01

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 24 | Aggravated Assault | |
| 0 | Arson | |
| 38 | Auto-Theft | |
| 60 | Burglary | |
| 1 | Homicide | |
| 171 | Larceny | 297 |
| 2 | Rape | TOTAL |
| 1 | Robbery | CRIMES |



Council 04

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 24 | Aggravated Assault | |
| 4 | Arson | |
| 23 | Auto-Theft | |
| 34 | Burglary | |
| 2 | Homicide | |
| 225 | Larceny | 338 |
| 6 | Rape | TOTAL |
| 20 | Robbery | CRIMES |

Council 05

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 9 | Aggravated Assault | |
| 0 | Arson | |
| 9 | Auto-Theft | |
| 10 | Burglary | |
| 1 | Homicide | |
| 149 | Larceny | 183 |
| 2 | Rape | TOTAL |
| 3 | Robbery | CRIMES |

Council 03

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 27 | Aggravated Assault | |
| 2 | Arson | |
| 31 | Auto-Theft | |
| 38 | Burglary | |
| 2 | Homicide | |
| 369 | Larceny | 488 |
| 6 | Rape | TOTAL |
| 13 | Robbery | CRIMES |

Council 06

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 12 | Aggravated Assault | |
| 1 | Arson | |
| 22 | Auto-Theft | |
| 29 | Burglary | |
| 0 | Homicide | |
| 238 | Larceny | 319 |
| 1 | Rape | TOTAL |
| 7 | Robbery | CRIMES |

NUMBERS BASED ON 2020 REPORTS



VALDOSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Valdosta Fire Department took delivery of a new Air/Light truck. This truck is replaced a 1996 truck in VFD's fleet. The new truck has an SCBA cascade refilling station, generators, lights, firefighter rehab equipment, and additional essential tools and equipment needed for firefighters to perform their duties efficiently and effectively.



Water Matters!

The Utilities Department would like to thank the Valdosta community for allowing us to serve the potable needs of our customers, provide essential firefighting infrastructure, as well as protect and preserve the community's eco-system. Working together, Valdosta has rebuilt from the forces of major rain events, controlled floodwaters, and withstood extended power outages. In addition, the Utility has remained operational seven (7) days per week and twenty-four (24) hours a day through the most deadly pandemic, the world has seen in over one-hundred years. Throughout these events, the women and men of the department maintained, without interruption, water, sewer, and fire prevention services. The department also continued to investment in power generation through emergency generators, as well as Automatic Transfer switchgear. Together, the seven divisions comprising the Utilities Department stand ready to meet the uncompromising expectations our community deserves.

2021 Goals & Objectives

- Complete Phase 1 of the Inflow & Infiltration Analysis
- Complete the design and implementation of a complete sewer hydraulic model
- Continue rehabilitation and upgrade sewer collection system to eliminate all sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs)
- Complete flow control at Mud Creek and Withlacoochee by installing lift station on ee street
- Continue Implementation of advanced technologies to optimize operations and increase efficiency - Hydraulic Modeling, SCADA, AMI
- Expand water quality initiatives to enhance overall water quality - tank maintenance and management, flushing program, system looping, well rehabs.

In 2020, the sewer rehabilitation program continued with over 5,000 linear feet of sewer main being completed utilizing Cured-In-Place-Pipe (CIPP). This process renews old terra-cotta pipe, which has cracked or collapsed, thus restricting sewer flow. The department also utilized a spiral wound technology to rehabilitate a defective concrete pipe which lies beneath Two Mile Branch. This technology reduced project costs and accelerated the repair. Also, 3,700 feet of sewer main was replaced and upsized as part of the Supplemental Environmental Program (SEP). This project identified six high-priority problem areas and bottlenecks in the sewer system. All of those projects have been completed. The department continued the Wireless SCADA System project which allows secure, real-time remote monitoring and control using cellular data transmission. The three (3) Treatment Plants, off-site storage and all lift stations have been upgraded with this new SCADA.

WITHLACOOCHEE SEWER PLANT 2020 Accomplishments

- Completion of Secondary Equalization basin.
- Installed booms to secure aerators inside SBR basins.
- Designed filter by pass to improved wet weather operations during heavy inflow events.
- Added additional power generation to ensure continuity of operations during sustained power outages.
- Maintained all certified plant operators with a minimum GA Class 3 Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator license.

MUD CREEK SEWER PLANT 2020 Accomplishments

- Installed new structure for on-site blowers
- Implement new NPDES permit from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division
- Initiated Division succession plan, with the retirement of the treatment plants Superintendent



20,904

WATER CUSTOMERS IN 2020



WATER TREATMENT PLANT 2020 Accomplishments

- Eliminated HAA and THHM violations during this reporting period
- Completed rehabilitation of three (3) raw water wells to include new MCC panels and controls
- Installed backup power at the elevated storage tanks
- Painted the exterior of Gornto and Fry street tanks
- Initiated removal and replacement of Manual transfer switches inside both generator load centers

CENTRAL MAINTENANCE 2020 Accomplishments

- Installed standby diesel generators at 12 lift stations; ensures critical backup power; reduces likelihood of station failure during storms and power outages
- Installed 10 Automatic Transfer Switches (ATS) at lift stations
- Installed booms on the SBR's at Withlacoochee Treatment Plant
- Completed SCADA installations at all Water and Waste Water facilities
- Procured backup Generator for the City's largest lift station, Gornto, and the City's Mud Creek Wastewater facility

CENTRAL MAINTENANCE 2020 Accomplishments

- 30 in-house Manhole Rehabilitations
- Completed sewer rehabilitation project (CIPP #9)
- Collected data and identified 1&1 areas for next CIPP sewer rehab project (CIPP #11)
- Implemented Phase 8 of the Manhole Rehabilitation Program (35)
- Initiated the Upgrade of improved water systems on McArthur Drive; upsized main from 2" galvanized to 6" PVC; includes valves, fire hydrants, new services, and meter boxes
- Initiated Night Crew maintenance staff



EQUALIZATION BASIN

After four months of construction, the City of Valdosta's Utilities Department completed the new Equalization (EQ) Basin at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The EQ Basin's need became apparent after the city experienced unprecedented rainfall in December of 2018. Adding the additional 7.8 million gallons of storage capacity will allow the WWTP to take in the excess flows after the rainfall and pump that wastewater back through the treatment process to get it properly treated so that it can then be discharged.



Main Street DOWNTOWN VALDOSTA

During a year of many challenges and uncertainty, six new businesses took a chance on Downtown Valdosta and opened their doors in the heart of our City. From food to fun, downtown has something new and exciting for everyone. When potential businesses owners start looking around for locations throughout our city, the downtown community shines brightly for not only being a hub for local entrepreneurs but also the added value of a Georgia Exceptional Main Street Program as partner in helping them reach their business goals.

Mo's Mediterranean Table

This small locally owned business that opened its doors in May of 2020 hit the downtown food scene running and hasn't stopped since. This authentic Mediterranean restaurant offers up some of the most authentic and unique dishes you can find in the western hemisphere. Their quaint location and unique flavor is unmatched, creating an atmosphere that keeps you coming back time after time. They are located at 122 McKey Street and are open for lunch and dinner Tuesday-Saturday.

Downtown Salon & Wellness

Downtown Salon & Wellness opened their doors in August of 2020 adding to the already thriving Downtown beauty scene. This salon is located inside the Varnadoe building, one of Downtown Valdosta's most iconic structures. Not only does this salon offer up routine hair services they also offer other services like extensions, massage therapy, nail care, facials, waxing services & the Emsella Chair experience. They are located at 136 North Patterson Street and are open Tuesday-Saturday by appointment only.

Downtown Spa & Wellness

Located in the historic and well known Varnadoe building on the corner of Central Ave & Patterson St, Downtown Spa & Wellness offers a wide variety of services from massages and acupuncture to services addressing incontinence and urinary health.

Stylish Southern & Sassy

Stylish Southern & Sassy opened their doors in May of 2020. Located in the old Livi & Co building on the corner of Hill Ave & Ashley St, this family owned and operated businesses boasts inventory that is sure to attract any and every one. From ladies boutique wear to a huge collection of local art, Stylish Southern and Sassy is making a name for itself in South Georgia and North Florida! They are open Tuesday through Sunday from 10am until 5:30pm at 100 North Ashley Street in Downtown Valdosta.

El Paso Tacos & Tequila

Just when you thought Valdosta/Lowndes County couldn't possibly accommodate another Mexican restaurant, here comes El Paso Tacos & Tequila, opening their doors in July of 2020. This family run chain of restaurants hails from Texas and introduced us all too authentic Mexican dishes with a flair that can't be found anywhere else. They were able to turn what was a vacant and run down building in the core of Downtown into a place where everyone wants to gather! From their daily dish specials, one of a kind custom desserts to their top notch service and the best happy hour around, you would be hard pressed not see a friend or neighbor every time you pass through their doors. They are located at 110 N. Ashley Street and open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner.

Gud Coffee

Gud Coffee is the quintessential Downtown coffee spot. From their unique hand crafted coffee drinks to an ever changing seasonal menu, owners Daniel Bayman and Isaac Musgrove knew exactly what Downtown Valdosta was missing. This coffee shop is the place to be for that morning cup, lunch, study sessions or just hang out to unwind and unplug from the busy world. Gud Coffee is located at 120 North Patterson St and are open Mon-Saturday 7am-5pm.



800

ESTIMATED DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES IN 2020





Adopt a Bench Program

Valdosta Main Street is now offering an opportunity to commemorate or honor family, friends or events in Downtown Valdosta through the adoption and financial care of a downtown bench.

Designed to increase public enjoyment of the downtown area, the Adopt-A-Bench Program will aid in maintaining benches and the beautification of the downtown area. Benches may be endowed for \$1,250. A bench is a wonderful way to memorialize or honor a loved one. While the plaques take about 8 weeks for production and installation, a personalized certificate can be provided immediately upon adoption to notify the recipient that a bench has been adopted in their honor.

Valdosta Main Street will acknowledge a donation of \$1,250 with a personalized plaque on the bench of your choice. Full payment must be received before you can reserve a bench.

Mobilize Main Street

Valdosta was chosen as a stop on the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development's Mobilize Main Street Tour in March of this year. This event highlighted three South Georgia communities, Thomasville, Valdosta and Bainbridge, all of which are successfully utilizing the Main Street Approach. This workshop is designed to be an active and engaging event taking the concept of mobile tours to the next level featuring walking tours which highlight completed projects and success stories on the ground.

8,200 DOWNTOWN JOBS IN 2020

Business & Investment

Since completion of the streetscape project in 1998 downtown has seen over \$80 million in private investment.

In 2020 we welcomed 5 new businesses that brought approximately 32 new jobs and \$400,000 of investment to our downtown.

These businesses either relocated within downtown or expanded in downtown:

- Chez What – addition of 4 jobs
- Book and Table Inn
- Studio 112 Salon – addition of 3 jobs

Downtown Valdosta is the home to an estimated 800 businesses with approximately 8,200 jobs, representing 20% of the city's total jobs. The average downtown business has 10 jobs per establishment.

In the downtown core, we are home to approximately 138 businesses

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 13 cafés/restaurants | 12 government |
| 26 shopping | 50 professional services |
| 14 arts & entertainment services and venues | 11 Financial Services |
| 7 churches | 7 Auto Repair & sales |

1,124 Total Parking Spaces Downtown

- 2 Hour Times Parking
- On Street Parking = 342 Spaces
- Toombs Street Lot = 51 Spaces
- McKey St. Lot = 15 Spaces
- Remainder are 24 Hour Zones

Parks & Greenspace

- Olympic Park (1996)
- Mack's Park (2000)
- MLK Memorial Park (2010)
- Lee Street Park (2019)
- Projected Amphitheater Coming 2021

\$29,767 TOTAL PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN 2020

107 DOWNTOWN
LOFT APARTMENTS

8 DOWNTOWN
AIRBNB RENTALS

773 DOWNTOWN
EVENTS IN 2020

First Fridays

Second Saturday
Maker's Market

Love Downtown Valdosta
Campaign

Food Truck Crawl

ArtOberFest

Movie Nights

Greater Valdosta Christmas
Parade

Small Business Saturday

Sidewalk Sales

FestiFall

Bennie's Alley Pop-Up Market

Kids Crafts on the Lawn

Holiday Haul Crawl

Small Businesses 'Adapt & Overcome' COVID-19 Pandemic

While the shutdown was not an ideal situation to be in for restaurants and retail businesses, many of the downtown merchants decided to rise to the challenge of reinventing their business models to fit with the restrictions and were successful. We had one business (a restaurant) completely shift to take out only and was more successful this year than compared to the same time last year. Many of the retail businesses shifted to an online platform, offered appointment only shopping, or Facebook live sales.

After the onset of the COVID19 pandemic downtown still

hosted some events and while that number is greatly reduced from our "normal" schedule of events, it shows that downtown is still active and the businesses are being creative in coming up with new ways to engage the community.

The Main Street staff created an amended calendar of socially distance friendly events while still allowing the community to enjoy downtown.







BENNIE'S ALLEY MURAL

On Friday, December 4, The City of Valdosta Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC), in partnership with Valdosta Main Street, held a ribbon-cutting to officially celebrate the completion of the new mural in Bennie's Alley. Local Valdosta artist, Natalie Milko, was selected through a juried process. Milko spent a total of three separate weekends to complete this one of a kind project.

DEPARTMENT *Highlights*



Recycling Drop Sites Provide 24/7 Access

The Recycling Division shifted from curbside collection and implemented three new drop site locations for the disposal of recyclable materials. Improvements consist of 24/7 access with unlimited use. Anyone living in condos or apartment complexes now have an option to recycle. Six employees that collected the recyclable material were placed in open positions throughout the department. The Three Recycling Drop Sites are located at:

- Five Points Shopping Center
- City Lot on West Hill Avenue (1025 West Hill Avenue)
- City Lot at the Corner of S. Lee St & East Savannah Ave

Keeping Essential Employees Protected

The Public Works Department worked diligently since the inception of the COVID-19 outbreak by taking drastic measures to protect the employees as they delivered essential services to the City's customers. Plexiglas Sneeze shields were installed in city vehicles as protective barrier between staff. Drums filled with a combination of hand soap and sanitizer were placed in the bed of supervisor vehicles to provide on the route hand wash stations. All vehicles and equipment were treated with disinfectant and equipped with bottles of hand sanitizer. Each employee received gloves, safety glasses and a mask for their protection.



• **24/7**
ACCESS TO NEW
RECYCLING DROP-
OFF SITES

• **1,000+**
STUDENTS
PARTICIPATED
IN DRIVE-THRU
SCHOOL SUPPLY
GIVEAWAY



City of Valdosta Embraces Digital Water Technology for Improved Customer Service and Operations

The City of Valdosta is working to modernize its aging utility meter system for more than 25,000 accounts by investing in Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). The improved metering system will allow the City to remotely read meter data on an hourly basis. This will create the ability to track system leaks, reduce meter reading costs, and provide immediate and transparent information to customers.

Valdosta Police Department Partners Local Agencies to Host Food Drives for Families in Need

In 2020, some local families dealt with food insecurities during the coronavirus pandemic. The Valdosta Police Department stepped up to be part of the solution by collecting food for local families in need. VPD partnered with agencies such as Living Bridges and Citizens Against Violence Venture Club to host several food drives throughout the year.

Utility Grant provides help to City Residents

As the “stay at home” mandates were coming to an end, many citizens were faced with huge utility bills from entire families being home and in some cases with limited resources to pay. The City was very fortunate to receive additional funding from the U.S. Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the CARES Act to assist our community to respond to and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. With this directive and necessary funding to assist, we wanted to make sure all citizens had the capability to continue to combat COVID-19 with the ability to stay home, sanitize themselves and their environments. After months of suspending utility service cut-offs, many utility providers were looking to start such actions again. For many citizens the possible \$350.00 utility grant was the difference between having and not having lights and water in their homes during this serious health crisis. The Utility Grant Program which ran from September 2020 through December 2020, served 797 households!

They're Back! Join a Neighborhood Action Association

The Devonwood Community was the first to participate in the neighborhood revitalization program, which is a city program that seeks to put residents in charge of their community. The Neighborhood Information Boards are part of that new initiative. The city has a person who will work as the liaison for the NAA. The liaison will act as connective tissue between the city and neighborhoods. This will ensure the NAAs have access to city resources and that the city is kept aware of activities happening in the neighborhoods. payment must be received before you can reserve a bench.

Annual Backpack Giveaway... Drive-Thru Style!

Our staff members were very fortunate the impact of the pandemic only affected the manner we completed our responsibilities and not the stability of our jobs, like so many of the citizens we serve. Many of us have never seen the degree of loss as was placed upon our community both physically and economically due to COVID-19. Each year in August the City sponsors its Annual Back to School Bash in Drexel Park. Although schools had been closed for several months, we still saw the need to make sure families had school supplies for their students. This back to school event normally hosts over a thousand children each year with school supplies and valuable family resources. The initial thought was to cancel the event as so many other events had been over the first half of the year. But, since children were going to be back in school, only virtually, the need for school supplies and resources was still there. With limited community partnerships and sponsorships this year, we continued to "think outside the box" to make the event happen. Instead of having a big event in the park for everyone to attend, we shifted to a "drive-thru" event and were still able to give out book bags, supplies and informational resources to more than 1000 students who came.

7.4 TONS
DEBRIS COLLECTED
DURING LOVE YOUR
CITY CLEAN-UP

921 LBS. OF TRASH
COLLECTED
DURING THE LOVE YOUR
RIVER CLEAN-UP

Community Sustainability Through Clean Up Events

The City of Valdosta and Lowndes County held the Annual Love Your River Clean-Up. During the event there were three locations in the City of Valdosta, Salty Snapper, Lee Street and Drexel Park.

- 60 Volunteers
- 8 City Employees
- 921 Pounds of Trash
- 5 Tires
- 35 Buckets of Paint
- 48 Bulk Items Collected

Later in the year, The Love Where You Live Community Clean-Up was held in District 3 between River Street and Hill Avenue and from North Oak Street to St. Augustine Road. The week leading up to the event crews from Public Works, Engineering and the City Marshal's office picked up trash and trimmed shrubbery along the right of way.

- 35 Tires
- 7.4 Tons of Debris Collected
- 20 Volunteers
- 13 City Employees

In November, the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County hosted the Annual Fall Electronics Recycling Event at Mathis Auditorium.

- 16 Volunteers
- 6 Employees
- 52 TVs
- 18 CRTs
- 14,325 pounds of other electronics collected

Valdosta and Lowndes County residents were able to dispose of their used Christmas tree. "Bring One for the Chipper" event was successful this year sponsored by the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

- 4 Collection Sites
- More than 100 Trees Collected





ANNUAL “DRIVE THRU” BACKPACK GIVEAWAY

This back to school event normally hosts over a thousand children each year with school supplies and valuable family resources. Instead of having a big event in the park for everyone to attend, we shifted to a “drive-thru” event and were still able to give out book bags, supplies and informational resources to more than 1000 students who came.





VALDOSTA BY THE NUMBERS



51,368

Feet of Storm Pipe Cleaned



55

Land Use Cases



4,753

Tons Yard Trash & Organic
Material Collected/Mulched



5,500

Code Enforcement Cases



250

Trees Given Away During
Arbor Week



775

Tons of Recyclable Material
Collected



5,608

Appointments at the
City Carehere Clinic



36,223

Tons of Solid Waste Collected



400

Employees Attended Annual
City Thanksgiving Luncheon



1,180

Street Miles Swept



4,144

Bags of Litter Picked Up



7,350

Maintenance Work Orders



153

Historic Reviews



1,450

Street Signs Upgraded

2020 ACCOLADES & AWARDS

Downtown is a GEM!

Valdosta was once again designated as a Georgia Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) program by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and National Main Street Center. Valdosta is one of 17 cities to receive the designation from a list of 118 Main Streets that participated in the highly competitive annual assessment process.

Innovative Marketing!

In December, Valdosta Main Street was one of 5 other communities to be awarded the Georgia Main Street Innovation made possible in part by Main Street America and a grant from The Williams Family Foundation of Georgia.

The Georgia Main Street Innovation Grant Program will provide five Georgia Main Street Programs \$10,000 each to help fund innovative revitalization efforts to address the current and/or legacy impacts of COVID-19. The goal is to provide our programs with flexible funding to allow for innovative and out-of-the-box ideas around COVID-recovery.

In addition to the grant funding from the National Main Street Center, Georgia Power generously agreed to award Valdosta and additional \$10,000 to subsidize the grant.

Top Metro Status

In March, Site Selection Magazine named Valdosta-Lowndes County as one of the country's top 10 metro areas with the most economic development projects. Valdosta's No.5 ranking on the Top Metro List by Site Selection Magazine represents the hard work of our dedicated economic development team. We have talented and trained professionals who constantly showcase the great resources that our community has to offer.



TREE CITY USA®

35

YEARS TREE CITY
USA COMMUNITY

#1

ISO CLASS RATING:
HIGHEST FIRE
insurance rating in the nation

7.974

CURRENT MILLS
one of the lowest in GA

33

YEAR
CONSECUTIVE
AWARD for excellence in
financial reporting





Smart Cities!

In 2020, the Engineering Department received a \$100,000 grant from Georgia Tech. The grant project envisions a connected community with a smart traffic management system to transform the City into the only City in the State of Georgia, outside metro Atlanta, that all traffic lights communicate with vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and other signals. This smart network will consist of an effective traffic management and control system, which offers increased road safety for all motorists and road-users in the City.

Through this project, all of the 128 major traffic signals in the City will be equipped with smart technology, enabling the possibility of connecting all modes of travel to traffic infrastructure and one another. This will include the installation of advanced transponders (and associated hardware and software) in emergency fire response vehicles, and a smartphone application, Travel Safely, available to anyone that downloads it. The project, in collaboration with the TMC, Georgia Tech, and industry, will make it possible for VSU to develop at least two Engineering courses related to traffic engineering.

2020 Actions Completed

- Emergency Vehicle Preemption panels and harnesses have been installed in all 128 Valdosta signal cabinets;
- Valdosta Fire Department and Traffic Management Center have determined 40 high-priority intersections for first stage of traffic box installations;
- Travel Safely application approach zones maps have been drawn for all 40 high-priority intersections.

2021 Future Actions

- Activate signal upgrades and enhanced connectivity for remaining 88 intersections;
- Configure and map out the remaining City of Valdosta traffic network for use in the Travel Safely Application;
- Complete Fire Department Emergency Vehicle Preemption installs in ten vehicles;
- Signal phasing data to be loaded into controllers for each Emergency Vehicle Preemption approach.

General Accolades

- Delivered a balanced \$114 million budget for Fiscal Year 2020 that met the expectations of Valdosta citizens.
- Maintained one of the lowest millage rates in the state for the citizens of Valdosta, currently 7.974 mills.
- Maintained an ISO Class 1 rating—the highest fire insurance rating in the nation. Valdosta is the first local government in South Georgia to ever receive a Class 1 rating in 2016.
- Maintained the VPD's "Triple Crown Accreditation" for attaining three voluntary accreditations, two for law enforcement and one for the crime laboratory. The Valdosta/Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory remains the only locally-operated crime laboratory in Georgia to obtain crime laboratory accreditation.
- Received national accreditation for the Valdosta Main Street Program for the 34th consecutive year for meeting commercial district revitalization standards set by the National Trust Main Street.

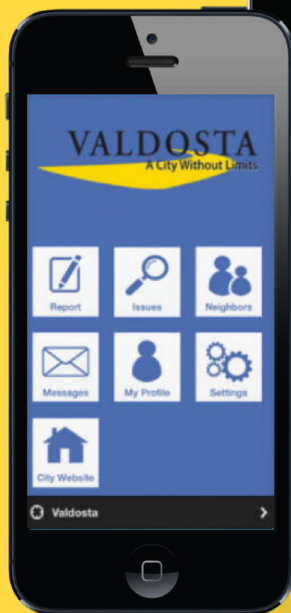


There's An App For That!

To download the app, search Valdosta Click N Fix through the Google Play or the App Store

975

NEW APP
REQUESTS
OPENED IN
2020



- Pay Utility Bill
- Read City News
- Contact VPD for non-emergency calls
- Visit City's Website
- Report Potholes & Overgrown Grass
- Report Street Sign Issues
- Report Parking Violations

The Valdosta Click 'N Fix app makes reporting local service requests - such as potholes, damaged street signs and other issues that need attention - easier than ever.

Free to download on any iOS and Android device, the app is an online reporting system that allows residents to report issues in real time and see the progress as city staff work to fix it.

The app also features buttons on the home page where users can pay their utility bill online, read city news, visit the city's website, and contact VPD for non-emergency calls.

Questions?

Questions about the content of this publication or use of the content may be directed to the Public Information Office at 229-259-3548.



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Social Communication 2020 IN REVIEW



11,385

Facebook Followers

63%

Follower Growth

1,059

Post in 2020

1,671

Twitter Followers

171

New Followers

376

Tweets in 2020



359

Youtube Subscribers

73%

Subscriber Growth

285

Videos Produced

2,429

Instagram Followers

67%

Follower Growth

294

Post in 2020



#LoveWhereYouLive



To be
known by our
customers and
others for high
quality municipal
services.