



# FROM THE City Manager

It is my pleasure to present the 2018 City of Valdosta Annual Report, our 23rd consecutive report, designed to inform our citizens, elected officials and other interested individuals of our city's activities, progress, challenges and accomplishments last year.

On March 22, 2018, The Valdosta City Council officially appointed me to the City Manager position. Prior to the City Manager position, I served as the Assistant City Manager from 2015 to 2017. With more than 30 years of experience in municipal government – 26 of them with the city of Valdosta, it is a wonderful privilege to serve Valdosta as the City Manager and to carry on the important business of the city. As my first full year is coming to an end, I am excited to look back on all we accomplished in 2018 and all the great things to come in 2019.

In 2018, the city continued to operate in a fiscallychallenged 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 32nd 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 22nd consecutive year--the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

Throughout 2018, 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

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Our Purpose



MAYOR
John Gayle
jgayle@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN
Ben Norton
At-Large
bnorton@valdostacity.com



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



Sandra Tooley
District 2
stooley@valdostacity.com



Joseph Vickers
District 3
jvickers@valdostacity.com



MAYOR PRO-TEM
Eric Howard
Councilman District 4
ehoward@valdostacity.com



COUNCILMAN

Tim Carroll

District 5
tcarroll@valdostacity.com



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.

## we invite you to attend...

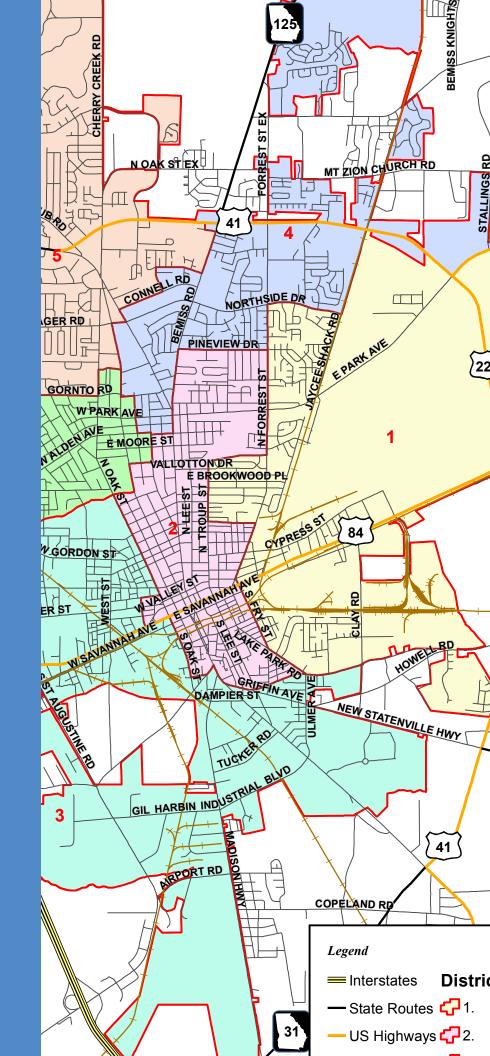
The Mayor and members of the City Council invite and encourage the citizens of the City of Valdosta to attend City Council meetings whenever possible, because good government depends on the interest and involvement of citizens.

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.

FIRST & THIRD THURSDAY
OF EACH MONTH,
FOLLOWING THE FIRST
SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

5:30 PM

CITY HALL
216 E. CENTRAL AVENUE



### MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL GOALS

The following goals and action items were approved at the March 16-17 Mayor-Council Strategic Initiatives Summit (SIS).

- Continue to work in partnership with the Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority and others to enhance economic development in the city and the community.
- 2 In collaboration with the Valdosta Housing Authority, develop a plan to gain public and private support for a mixed-use housing development.
- Continue to operate the city in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Collaborate with the 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 any potential future Base Realignment and Closure Commissions (BRAC).
- Hold meetings of city elected officials and staff with the city school system and parents to identify and encourage good life decisions for our youth and to help prepare them for future success.

- 6 Develop and implement a "saggy pants" ordinance to instill a sense of pride in the community.
- Research and recommend the implementation of a "Redevelopment Tax Incentive Ordinance" for council action.
- Appoint a facilities committee to study, evaluate, and recommend improvements to existing facilities or expansion/replacement of city facilities.
- Promote and encourage raising the median income by bridging with the K-12 and higher education to develop a workforce prepared to take advantage of higher paying jobs.
- 10 Develop a listing of SPLOST VIII projects.

## Administration

On March 22, 2018, The City of Valdosta Mayor and Council officially appointed Mark Barber as the city manager. As Manager, Barber oversees 10 departments, 600 employees, and a \$97 million budget.

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 public 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.

In 2018, 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 utilizing several national observances, such as

Law Enforcement Day
Police Week
Engineering Week
Arbor Week
Georgia Cities Week
Public Works Week
Neighborhood Development Week
Small Business Week
Downtown Restaurant Week
Drinking Water Week
Fire Prevention Week

Departments also host multiple events throughout the year to personally connect with citizens, share information and be accessible to answer questions and concerns.

Contact information for city department staff is listed on each department webpage, as well as the city staff directory located at the top left corner at www.valdostacity.com.

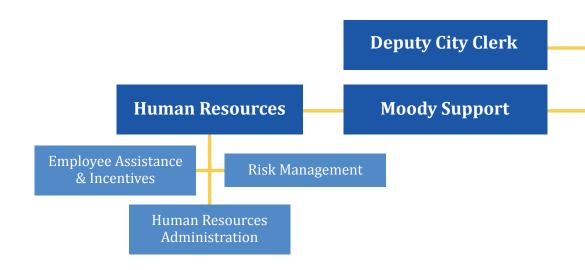


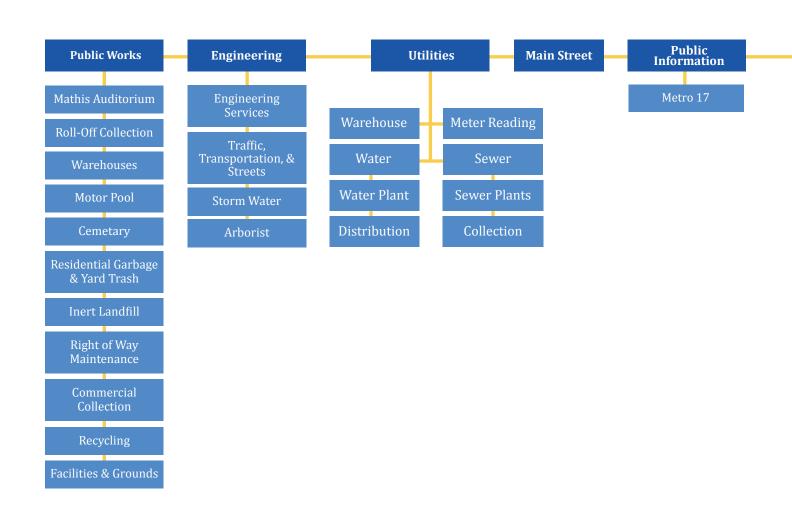
### DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP

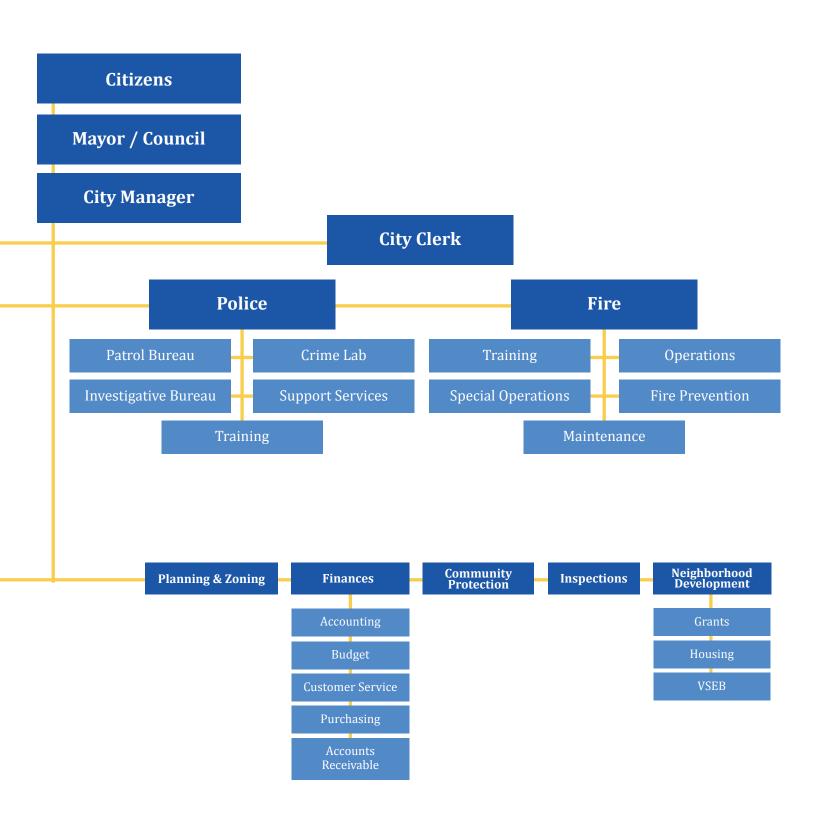
Pictured from left to right:

Fire Chief Freddie Broome, Police Chief Leslie Manahan, Public Works Director Richard Hardy, Utilities Director Darryl Muse, City Manager Mark Barber, Human Resources Director Catherine Nita, City Engineer Pat Collins, Finance Director Chuck Dinkins.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART







# Engineering DEPARTMENT

The Engineering Department has four key divisions, 40 employees/ positions, and an overall annual operating budget of \$6,557,130 including projects for FY2019. 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 and Street Management, Stormwater and Arbor.

The Engineering Services Division is responsible for providing a variety of administrative and technical sup-port 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. Construction project highlights include the completion of 17 Annexed Islands, resurfacing 33 streets, added 2595 feet of new sidewalks on Martin Luther King, Jr, Lee Street and Pineview/Chattooga Drive. The Engineering Inspectors inspected 30 private developments.

The Traffic and Street Divisions are responsible for the Traffic Management Center (TMC), traffic signs and markings, traffic signals and street maintenance. The Traffic Management Division was instrumental in the placement of a south bound left turn signal at



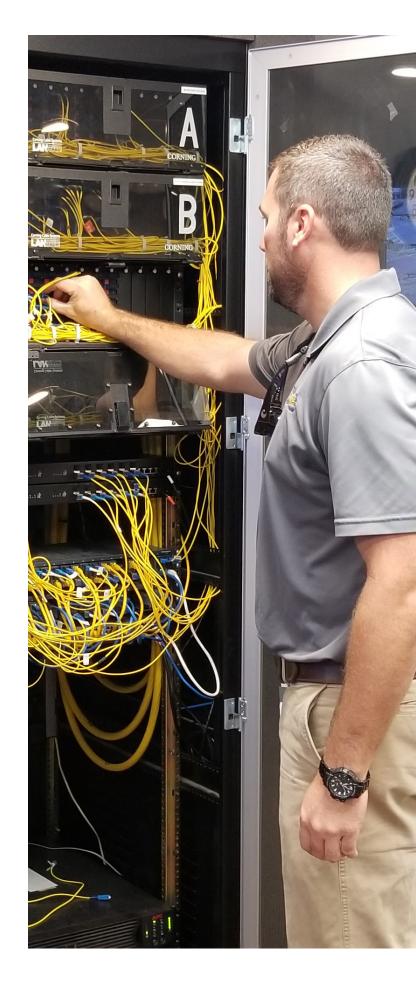




Ashley Street and Connell Road which improved the traffic flow on Ashley Street. The Traffic Management Division was also instrumental in the installing of protected turn movements (FYA) at the intersection of Lakeland Hwy and Inner Perimeter Road. Currently, we are working with the GDOT to install (FYA at the intersection of Inner Perimeter Road and Country Club Road. In addition to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) resurfacing and signalization upgrades on Ashley and Patterson streets, city staff performed signal timing evaluations, repaired 1000 potholes and road cuts, 1000 linear feet of sidewalk that will make driving and walking in the city a more pleasurable experience. The city purchased and installed the Applied Information's Glance Smart City Supervisor System which provides redundancy in communication capability between the 128 signalized intersections in the city with the Traffic Management Center which will also help with traffic flow for its citizens.

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 Stormwater Division cleaned 51,283 feet of storm pipe, cut 503,433 feet of canals, cleaned 457 catch basins, swept 1,501 miles of streets, and inspected 407 outfalls, 4,257 catch basins, and 490,149 feet of pipe. The Division replaced several failing pipes, headwalls, and two large box culverts. One of the box culverts was replaced and repaired in-house, saving the City over \$86,000. Outside of the maintenance portion of stormwater operations; four Rain Barrel Lunch & Learns were held with a total of 58 attendees, eight rain barrels were given away at various events, hosted four curb marker events, and presented at five school events.

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. Highlights for the division include a very successful Arbor Week in which 1,000 trees were given away. The Division partnered with the Tree Commission to host two Lunch & Learns and Arbor Day. A program and schedule was developed to implement block pruning, which will show, document and map out all roads that have been inspected/pruned.



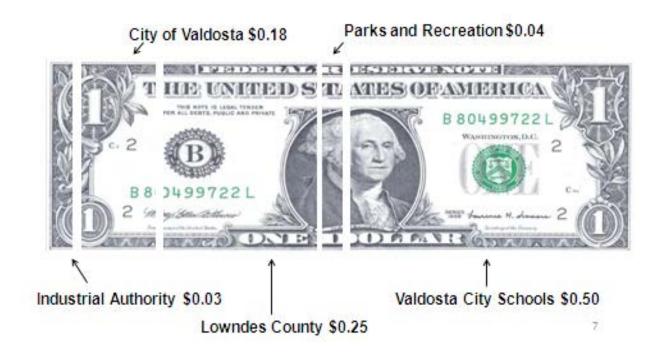
### Finance DEPARTMENT

In 2018, 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 FY 2018. This is the 32nd consecutive year the city has received this award. The department also received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2018, for the 22nd 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 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?

Although the city's FY 2019 budget was approximately \$97 million, approximately \$11.5 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.





#### **General Government Revenues**

The majority of General Government Revenues is generated by the collection of sales tax. The amount of this tax collected represents a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) that funds General Fund operations and a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) that funds various capital projects for the city. The continuation of the one-cent SPLOST revenue source through 2019 is expected to bring in over \$70 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.

### Meter Reading Department

- Meter Readers read over 23,100 meters each month which is equivalent to over a quarter million meters a year!
- Meter Readers pride themselves on maintaining a consistent error rate below 1.5%.
- Service Workers audited 15,419
   accounts. This means that last year, 5%
   of all bills were rechecked before being
   mailed out to ensure accuracy.
- Service Workers performed 30,421 work orders.
- The department hired two new faces after the positions became available.
- We participated in the Great Promise Partnership (GPP) program and employed two Valdosta High School students that worked within our office.

### **General Government Expenditures**

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.

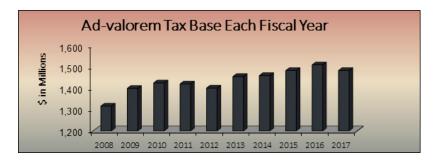
#### Public Works

Costs associated with street and road maintenance.



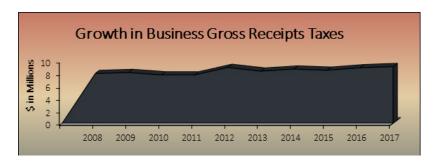
### **Optimistic Financial Outlooks**

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.



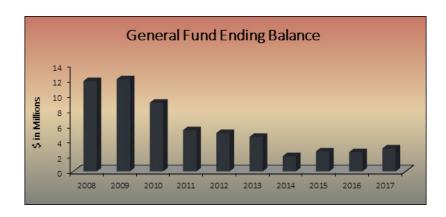
Ad-Valorem Tax Base

Property values represent growth in construction and development.



**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.



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.

Note: The graphs and charts on these pages reflect the FY 2018 actual information and the FY 2019 budget information.

## Fire DEPARTMENT

Valdosta Fire Department responded to approximately 4,081 incidents in 2018. Of the 4,081, there were a total of 338 fires, 1,185 alarms, 109 weather related calls, and 1,289 calls relating to emergency medical or rescue. There were 1,160 calls for service including motor vehicle accidents, smoke scares, and fuel spills.



In addition to responding to calls and training, firefighters also conducted over 1,000 hydrant flow tests and 3,560 hydrant inspections.

The GSAR team was deployed to Miller County after Hurricane Michael to assist with clearing roads and returning services. Several Valdosta members served in roles at the City of Colquitt/ Miller County Emergency Operations Center while others were clearing debris to allow local emergency responders access to the citizens and the citizens access to the Point of Distribution for food and water. The GSAR team assisted Miller County, Daugherty County, and Seminole County before

returning home. In December, the GSAR team was requested by Lowndes County for a trench collapse rescue and deployed to Cook County to assist in locating a pilot that was involved in a plane crash.

Each GSAR member participated in recertification training in 3 disciplines that were delivered regionally. The team participated in full scale drills involving natural disasters and rail car emergencies in Perry, Albany, and local industry. GSAR added 10 new members to the team from Valdosta in 2018 after completing over 180 hours of training.

Hazardous Materials training was conducted this year department wide as well as for the response team. Training drills for 2018 included decontamination procedures, atmospheric monitoring and chlorine release control by utilizing containment kits.

Valdosta Fire Department received a total of \$78,088. 84 in grant funding for Homeland Security. \$63,449.90 was received to support the GSAR truck and equipment. The remaining \$15,358.94 was received to replace Haz Mat detection and mitigation equipment.

Valdosta Fire Department personnel received over 21,000 hours of training in 2018. These hours consisted of training conducted and received at the local, state and national level. The training classes consisted of NPQ Fire Officer I, II, III, IV, NPQ Instructor I, II, along with various regulatory training classes to name a few. Members also attended trade conferences where they received valuable training in which on their return, shared the training they received with the rest of the members of the department increasing our skill sets to provide a better service to our community. On various occasions throughout the year area fire departments were invited and attended training conducted by our training division at the Valdosta Regional Training Center. While meeting the training needs of our fire department, senior members of the department also instructed at the state level as adjunct instructors of the Georgia Fire Academy. Subjects taught as adjunct instructors included basic firefighter through Chief Officer level courses.

Our department hosted an EMT-Basic class at the Valdosta Regional Training Center where members of our department along with area fire department members increased their knowledge and skills in medical training. This training allows our members to better assist EMS and most importantly provide a higher level of care to our community. All personnel received their annual CPR and AED training, ensuring all personnel are certified and are aware of changes in cardiopulmonary resuscitation as outlined by the American Heart Association.



The training division held a recruit school for 10 candidates in 2018. All candidates were successful in achieving the status of Firefighter by completing the required training conducted by the training division. Each of the 10 firefighters graduated having completed NPQ Firefighter I, NPQ HazMat Core, NPQ Firefighter II, and NREMT – Basic.

The Fire Prevention Division is responsible for conducting 1501 non-residential inspections and over 350 community education programs. Over 100 smoke detectors were installed and over 40 car safety seats were properly inspected and installed.



### VALDOSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Valdosta Fire Department unveiled two new fire trucks on Dec. 21 that replaced both a 1993 and 2005 ladder truck in its current fleet at Stations 1 & 2. The trucks are Sutphen SPH 100 Aerial Trucks.





# Human Resources DEPARTMENT

The Office of Human Resources focuses on a comprehensive approach to managing the human capital and associated issues within the City of Valdosta. The Office of Human Resources strives to be the strategic business partner that provides a positive impact in the City of Valdosta in clear, concise and measureable ways that add value, support and abandon the idea of the traditional role of Human Resources as an administrative, personnel, and transactional role based department.

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.

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In addition, the Employee Relations Committee, comprised of representatives appointed from each of the city's departments, continued its work to recognize employees for milestones accomplished in their careers and for performance beyond the normal duties and responsibilities of their positions through the Employee of the Month program. Selectees are honored at the first City Council meeting of each month, given a framed certificate and a check for \$200, and their names are engraved on a plaque that is displayed in City Hall.

The Employee Relations Committee also coordinates the City of Valdosta Blood Drives and the annual Employee Thanksgiving

Luncheon, which was attended by 300 city employees in 2018. Additionally, the committee assists with Georgia Cities Week luncheon, held in April at Saunders Park.

Healthcare and Wellbeing have also remained a focus in 2018. 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 2017 plan year. The total number of appointments for the year was 5,866. Utilization at the clinic was 94.6 percent during 2018.

The CareHere Clinic 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 and is highly encouraged as it encourages Wellness initiatives. A participant may collaborate with a personal healthcare coach who provides education, management and guidance with health related goals and issues such as healthy eating, diabetes, hypertension, exercise and other objectives.

As an event sponsor of the annual Employee Health Fair, held in October 2018 at Mathis Auditorium, CareHere Clinic provided free influenza inoculations at this year's event that was coordinated by the Office of Human Resources. More than 35 vendors participated in this year's Employee Health Fair and approximately 300 employees attended. City retirees and dependents of current and retired employees also participated in the one-day event.

The Office of Human Resources continues its efforts to improve safety by the on-going effort to reduce workers' compensation costs and work related injuries and accidents. Risk management and safety continues to remain a top priority for the City of Valdosta. In 2018, Human Resources started revamping and providing a more enhanced safety program foundation which includes a new Safety Committee. Human Resources also offered Defensive Driving Course, safety training, and risk assessments. We look forward to 2019 in which the City of Valdosta will include more training for all employees as well as revamping the policies and procedures manual.







## Court

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 involving 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

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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 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to a full court schedule, the Municipal Court staff remained involved with the youth in our community 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 8,564 cases were docketed in the Valdosta Municipal Court in 2018. Dockets may have one citation or as many as seven citations included in one docket.

In 2018, Valdosta probationers completed approximately 13,451 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 3,697 pounds of food to the local food bank. CSRA Probation supervised approximately 1,900 cases (active, jail and tolled) monthly for the court. The Municipal Court had approximately 12 Work Alternative Program (WAP) participants. Since the WAP implementation in June 2001, approximately 112,328 work hours have been completed on various municipal projects, saving the city \$764,550 in jail housing fees.







# Police

The Valdosta Police Department (VPD) consists of 155 sworn personnel, 27 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.

The VPD maintains "Triple Crown Accreditation" by remaining in compliance with three voluntary accreditations, two for law enforcement and one for crime laboratory. The VPD received international re-accreditation in 2017 through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) two special statuses: "Accreditation with Excellence" and "Meritorious Distinction" for maintaining its accreditation since 1999. 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 department is scheduled for a re-visit in 2020.

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. In 2017, the department again received notice of a favorable recommendation for recertification and is scheduled for a re-visit in 2020.

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. In 2018, the department passed an accreditation site visit and another site visit is expected in 2019.

For the tenth 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 2,701 overall Part 1 Crimes in 2018, which is 14 percent lower than when compared to year 2017.

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







In 2018, the VPD continued issuing case cards to all citizens who filed a VPD police report to allow them the opportunity to complete a survey concerning the interaction with a VPD employee. The VPD received 367 total feedback cards, with only nine containing unfavorable comments - a 94 percent approval rating based on the surveys received overall.

Embracing programs such as the Community Policing, Citizen's Police Academy (CPA), Neighborhood Watch, Police Chaplain, Drug Education for Youth (DEFY), 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 department participates with the Shop with a Cop program, along with the Police Santa, where department personnel



deliver gifts to children in the community on Christmas Eve.

The VPD has demonstrated significant competence in 2018 by reducing crime, solving crime better than the rest of the country, engaging citizens in the community policing process, and striving for professional excellence.

## Public Works DEPARTMENT

### Caring for the Environment

The Public Works Department is responsible for the daily operation of sanitation services and repair and maintenance of city vehicles and equipment. The department's primary responsibilities are residential and commercial sanitation and recycling services. In recent years, the department has expanded its services to include: Residential Yard Trash, Right-of-Way Maintenance, Right-of-Way Street Maintenance, Neighborhood Recycling, Mosquito Control Program, Automotive/ Fleet Maintenance Center, City Fuel Center, Small Engine Repair, Mathis City Auditorium, Sunset Hill Cemetery, Property Abatements, Special Pick-Ups, the Compost Landfill, designated City facilities, and grounds.

As in previous years, staff continued to monitor mosquito activity in our area through a joint mosquito surveillance program—partnering with key local and state experts from Lowndes County, the South Health District, and the Valdosta State University. The Public Works Department used every resource available to protect its citizens this past year from mosquitoes through a spraying and larvicide program. The Director and staff attended several seminars on the Zeki and West Nile Viruses to stay current on control measures. The information obtained was used to brief local officials and the community on the threat to the local area. The department also worked closely with the City's Public Information Officer to produce educational releases and media opportunities to educate the public about personal protection and responsibility.

### Anti-Litter Educational Campaign

The Public Works Department installed twenty trash receptacles throughout the City last year to help provide an avenue for pedestrians to dispose of their litter. Litter still continues to be a major problem today. This year, the Public works Department focused its efforts towards educating the communities' youth on the benefits of clean surroundings. Presentations on litter control were provided to the members and advisors of the Valdosta Youth Council which coincided with Earth Day. Students of the Valdosta State University's Social Media Class were involved in creating the social media anti-litter campaign outreach. To continue our efforts, The Public Works Department

and Neighborhood Development Department partnered together to kick off the "Love Where You Live "campaign at W. G. Nunn Elementary School. Staff from both departments performed a small skit of what littering can do to the environment and educated the students on the benefits of keeping their surroundings clean. Two trash receptacles painted with Wildcat themes were installed at the entrance of the school to help motivate the students to pitch in and promote the "Love Where You Live "campaign.

### The Fleet Maintenance Center

The Maintenance Center employs fifteen individuals who completed over 7,300 maintenance work orders during 2018. To provide this level of production, the Maintenance Center used a multifaceted approach. Four Service Technicians completed nearly 1,700 preventative maintenance services. Two Light Vehicle mechanics took care of slightly over 300 on road vehicles. Four Heavy Equipment Mechanics primary responsibilities are to repair all heavy on road and off road vehicles/equipment. One Small Engine/Welder Mechanic services and repairs over 400 pieces of light equipment. This person also is responsible for commercial dumpster repairs and welding repairs to vehicles and equipment. One Tire Repair Technician is responsible for tire repairs on all wheeled vehicles and equipment. One Administrative Technician is responsible for invoice reconciliation, bulk oil inventories, fuel inventories and maintaining accurate vehicle work order history. One Warehouse Technician is responsible for maintaining the inventory of the most required parts needed to keep the fleet operational and one Fleet Superintendent directs and oversees all operations of the Maintenance Center.

### **Facility Management Division**

In 2018, the Facility Management Division maintained the highest standards for the continuity of city operations and rental property satisfaction. The Facility Management Division is responsible for general maintenance, contract management, property management, project management, procurement, and custodial services for twelve City owned buildings. These services include but are not limited to: plumbing, HVAC, electrical, landscape, renovation, and repairs of approximately 195,288 square feet of city property.

The Facility Management Division completed over 150 work orders. Mathis Auditorium hosted 92 events. The Facility Management Division also participated in a citywide evaluation of the city streets with the Engineering Department.







### Significant Events

In 2018, the department is also proud of the following:

- Celebrated National Public Works Week (The Power of Public Works) May 21st -25th with a variety of events.
- Public Works Director was appointed member of the national American Public "Works Association (APWA) Small Cities/Rural Communities Committee.
- Public Works hosted a Tractor Mower Operator Safety Training (TMOST) at Mathis Auditorium sponsored by GDOT Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP).
- Public Works Director conducted a Litter Survey of the City with the Director of KLVB.
- Three Valdosta High School students who were employed in Public Works graduated from the Great Promise Partnership (GPP) program.
- Held a Mosquito class at Public Works providing instructions to 10 City employees.
- Updated the mosquito spray routes for better coverage and targeting positive pools.
- Anthony Musgrove, Operations Superintendent,
   attended Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Training
   Preparation for Storm and Recovery Workshop in Albany,
   Georgia.
- The department initiated clean-up efforts of debris left by Hurricane Michael. Using modified equipment which provided 24-hour day operations over 640 tons of yard debris was removed from streets and right-of-ways throughout the City.
- Participated in Career day at Pinevale Lomax
   Elementary School by showcasing the "Tiger" Mower..
- Danny Carter, Jr., Crew Leader, Yard Trash Division and Julian Folsom, Fleet Service Technician received their Commercial Driver's Licenses through training provided by the Fleet Maintenance Center.
- The Public Works department and Neighborhood division kicked off the "Love Where You Live" campaign.
- City of Valdosta Facilities Manager position was created and Facilities Division relocated to City Hall.
- The Public Works Department continues to participate in the Government 101 Orientation Program, Georgia Cities Week, and other public information opportunities, while also maintaining important information for customers on Metro Valdosta Channel 17 and the web page located at: www. valdostacity.com.

### PUBLIC WORKS STATISTICS



**21,253** 

Residential Sanitation Customers



1,595

Commercial & Small Business Customers



22,743

Number of Bulk Items / Special Pick-Ups



(37,728

Tons of Recyclable Material **Processed** 



**m** 29,916

Tons of Solid Waste Collected



**9**,288

Tons of Yard Waste Collected



40,083

Pounds Collected from **E-Recycling Events** 



6,562

Fleet/Maintenance Work **Orders Completed** 



1,669

**Auto Services Completed** 



1,556

Street Miles Swept



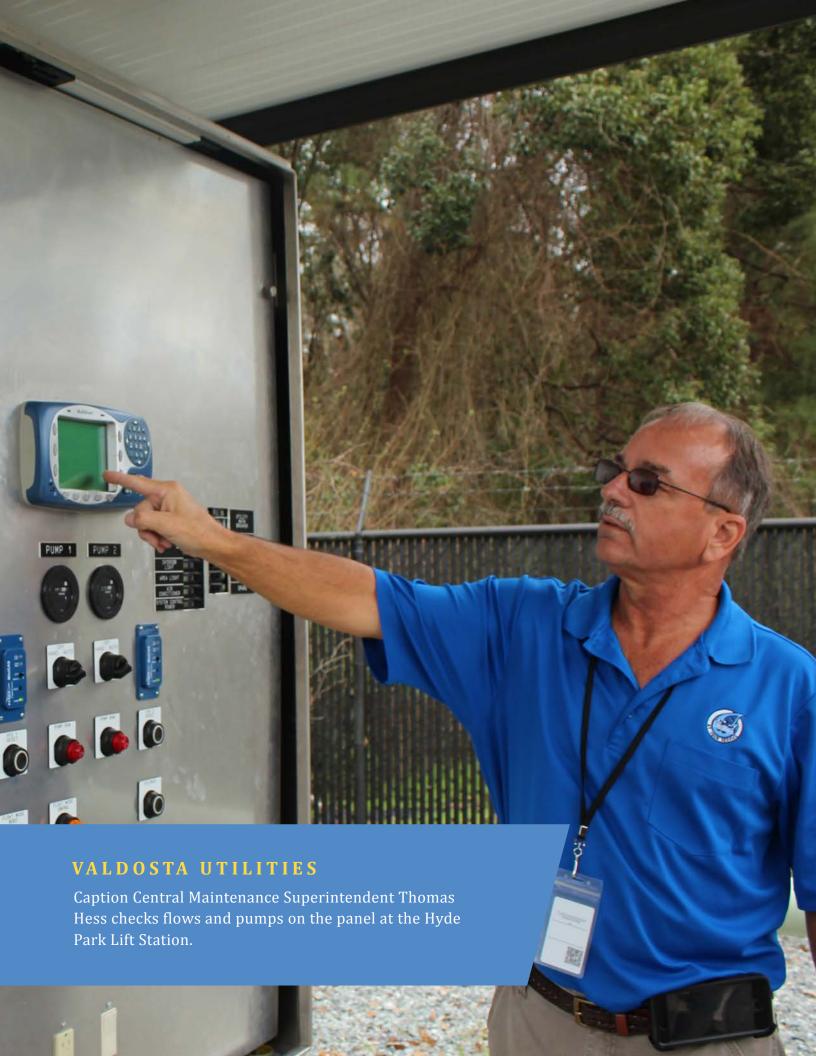
2,512

Bags of Litter Collected



15.92

Mathis City Auditorium Rentals



# Utilities DEPARTMENT

The Utilities Department would like to thank the Valdosta, Lowndes County 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. Throughout these events on account of extensive investments, the women and men of the department maintained, without interruption, water and sewer and fire prevention services. These investments include power generation through emergency generators, as well as enough on-site solar power to sustain operations at both wastewater treatment facilities. Together, the seven divisions comprising the Utilities Department stand ready to meet the uncompromising expectations our community deserves.

In 2018, the sewer lift stations rehabilitation program completed its final year with 20 stations upgraded and improved. The utilities department began the Wireless SCADA System project which allows Secure, real-time remote monitoring and control using cellular data transmission. This system will replace aging and unreliable radio systems. The project is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2019. The rehabilitation of over 15,840 feet of sewer pipe was also completed in 2018 utilizing Cured-In-Place-Pipe (CIPP). This process renews old terra-cotta pipe which has cracked or collapsed, thus restricting sewer flow. The renewal extends the life of the pipe for an estimated 30 years and is a fraction of removal and replacement costs. In 2018, the city approved the acquisition of ten emergency generators. These generators will power pumps at ten lift stations in case of utility power grid failure. The city also

### 2019 Goals & Objectives

- Rehabilitate & Upgrade Sewer Collection System to eliminate all sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs).
- Upgrade Systems & Facilities Processes to maximize potential – Lift Stations, Mud Creek WWTP, Withlacoochee WWTP, Water Treatment Plant.
- Implement Advanced Technologies to optimize operations and increase efficiency – SCADA, AMI.
- Expand Water Quality Initiatives
   to enhance overall water quality tank maintenance
   and management, flushing program, system
   looping, well rehabs.
- Rectify Water Only & Sewer Only Accounts in compliance with City Ordinance.

### WITHLACOOCHEE SEWER PLANT 2018 Accomplishments

- Installed state-of-the-art water level warning and alarm system for plant headworks
  - System warns operators of high flow/water levels without requiring them to climb stairs and view levels in potentially dangerous weather conditions.
- Increased control capability to influent channel screens at headworks
   Allows for quicker operation of screens during high flows. Minimizes risk of sewer overflows from channel.
- Improved hydraulics of influent channel gate at headworks

  Minimizer rick of sower overflows from channel

Minimizes risk of sewer overflows from channel. Provides additional protection for vital electrical systems.





### MUD CREEK SEWER PLANT 2018 Accomplishments

- Replaced both influent wet well mixers with more durable, simpler, and less expensive units. New units reduced mixer failures from 100% to 0.
- Overhauled 2 of 3 influent wet well pumps.
   Upgraded impellers to a more durable, longer lasting alloy to extend impeller life to more than 10 years.
- Installed higher efficiency screens for effluent from clarifiers
   Prevents flow restrictions from excess debris.

#### 2018 WATER PLAN

- Engineered a heat exchanger flushing system for ozone generator. Eliminated costly & timeconsuming need to ship heat exchangers for cleaning.
- Replaced aging end-of-life hypochlorite generator power supply with new efficient unit. Raised new system off the floor to minimize exposure. Eliminated costly corrosion issues with the power supplies.



# Community

The face of Community Protection changed in 2018 with the retirement of two City Marshals, with a combined total of 31 years of service and the introduction of a new position, the Community Sustainability Coordinator. We wish both Rick Folsom and Mike Meyer the best in this new chapter in their lives!! Teresa Turner has joined the City as the Community Sustainability Coordinator, which will focus on the community engagement activities for Code Enforcement (neighborhood clean-ups and action associations) and the administrative portions of our new automated Code Enforcement process. We welcomed two new Marshals, but not new faces to the City of Valdosta. Brandon Corbitt joins us from the Engineering Department and Winston Williams joins us from the Utilities Department as our new City Marshals for Zones 1 and 3.

During this transition of personnel, the Community Protection Division has experienced some changes to the way code cases are administered and managed. The manual process used to handle code cases in the City that once took up to 10 man-hours to process will be cut down to 1-2 hours, with our new software application for Code Enforcement. Marshals will now be equipped with a computer tablet to both enter and maintain active code cases, making our division more efficient, effective and proactive in code duties/ responsibilities in the City, than reactive. With the decreased administrative hours for the Marshals in the field, this has created the need for a Senior City Marshal, who is now the sole representative in court cases, abates nuisances, arranges for court-ordered demolitions, and manages the administrative portion of the new automated system. This technology will also allow our staff to be more accessible to educate and guide our citizens on how to avoid code cases and citations, leading to a place where we all will "Love Where You Live"!



## Inspections

The Building Inspections Department is to ensure public safety, health and the general welfare of the public related to building construction both Residential and Commercial for Valdosta, Lowndes County, Lake Park, Dasher and Hahira. By reviewing plans, issuing permits, and conducting inspections under the mandatory requirements and guidelines of the current Georgia state building codes and local ordinances in a fair, professional and courteous manner. These minimum standards include public safety, health and general welfare through structural strength, stability, sanitation, adequate light and ventilation, and safety to life and property from fire, hurricane, and other hazards attributed to the built environment. These include:

Alternation Removal Use **Demolition** Repair Occupany

The Building Inspections Department also regulates the installation and maintenance of all electrical, gas, mechanical and plumbing systems. This provides for a safer community for all citizens through proper construction methods and also provides for enhanced neighborhood livability and property values. The Department has two permit clerks, five inspectors, and one plans coordinator that are dedicated to ongoing training, in the pursuit of excellence and customer service. In 2018 the Building Inspections Department performed a total of:



**11**,639

Buildings, Electrical, Plumbing and Mechanical Inspections



7,243 Permits Issued

In January 2019, the Building Inspections Department implemented a digital plans review process that will help to cut the cost of printing plans and increase the turnaround time for plan review. We feel your business is our business and want our community to grow in a safe and healthy manner.



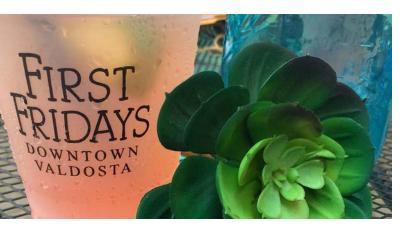








# Main Street DOWNTOWN



The heart of downtown alive and is quickly becoming an economic and entertainment hub for Metro Valdosta. Downtown is a place where people are surrounded by the walkable amenities and unique experiences that employees, residents and visitors crave. Interest in downtown investment opportunities has grown. Downtown also continues to employ a growing share of the city's workforce, boasting a stable office market with shrinking vacancy rates. Interesting and engaging places and spaces are bringing employees out of their offices and into the streets. In 2018 downtown welcomed 6 net new businesses that brought approximately 138 net new jobs and \$10.5 million of private investment to downtown. Additionally, 6 businesses either relocated to a new location or expanded in downtown.

In 2018 the Valdosta Main Street Program hosted 166 events/event days— which include:

First Fridays

Art Walk

Downtown Easter Egg Hunt

Movie Nights

Farm Days

Brown Bag Lunch Concert Series

**Build A Bouquet** 

Picture This

Taste of Downtown & Restaurant Week

100 Black Men BBQ

14 Days of Christmas

The Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade

Small Business Saturday

Annual Valdosta Christmas Tree Lighting

Girls Night Out

Flower Gallery's Christmas Open House Our events have attracted thousands to downtown and we have initiated a purposeful and strategic approach to placemaking with support of public art and streetscape improvements. In 2018 the Valdosta Main Street Program hosted 166 events/event days— which include First Fridays, Art Walk, the Downtown Easter Egg Hunt, movie nights, Farm Days, Brown Bag Lunch Concert Series, Build a Bouquet, Picture This, Taste of Downtown and Restaurant Week, 100 Black Men BBQ, 12 Days of Christmas, the Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade, Small Business Saturday, the annual Valdosta Christmas Tree lighting, Girls Night Out, Flower Gallery's Christmas Open House and more.

Valdosta Main Street continues to be recognized as a leader in downtown development across the state. Downtown Valdosta's continued selection as a Georgia's Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) certification program will continue this year to help strengthen our organization and we are confident it will continue in to the foreseeable future. The GEMS communities represent some of the best of the best Main Street Programs in the state. We are proud to be distinguished among Main Street Programs that have gone above and beyond expectations by making a strong and positive impact in their communities as measured by the Georgia Office of Downtown Development.

Valdosta Main Street and the Central Valdosta
Development Authority are constantly looking for
new ways to build value downtown, from supporting
investment and business recruitment to developing
new marketing initiatives, activating public spaces and
improving the built downtown environment. We invite you
to partner with us in 2019.

Central Valdosta Development Authority Board meetings are held the second Tuesday after the first Sunday of every month in the City Hall Annex located at 300 N. Lee Street.

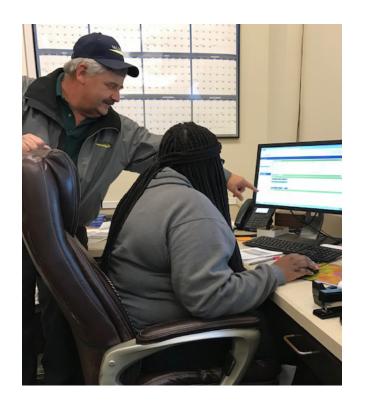




## Customer SERVICE

- City of Valdosta currently has an estimated 23,000 accounts.
- Average water bill is 7 units of usgae for \$73.03.
- The city has four alternative payment methods available:
  - www.valdostacity.org Estimated payments received monthly is \$3,441.
  - Auto Debit Estimated payments received monthly is \$1,700.
  - Electric Payments from outside sources Estimated payments received monthly is \$1,400.
  - IVR Phone Payments Estimated payments received monthly is \$1,161.





## **BUSINESS LICENSES** RENEWED



Professional



167
Alcohol



Regular



Miscellaneous

# Neighborhood DEVELOPMENT



As we reflect on 2018, the Neighborhood Development Division was fortunate to continue our established partnership with community organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Great Promise Partnership Program and Goodwill of Southern Rivers, but was also able to forge some new ones!! The new relationships were not with outside organizations or groups, but with the great departments that form the City of Valdosta! Our division, along with the entire City have kicked off a new campaign called "Love Where You Live". We started with a concerted effort to clean up our community, but it has become so much more....ending with our first "Love Where You Live - Community HotSpot" neighborhood cleanup. Public Works, Utilities, Inspections, Planning/ Zoning, and Community Protection came together with Neighborhood Development to show residents of the Wisenbaker Lane/Pinevale Community the resources we offer our citizens and how much we care. It is anticipated that we will sponsor several of these events throughout

the city on multiple occasions. Next, we look forward to re-organizing Neighborhood Action Associations (NAAs) in the seventeen neighborhoods that make up the Designated Revitalization Area (DRA) of the City, which was suggested by several of the citizens when asked "what will make our city a better place to "Love Where You Live?".

Changes were made to the Single Family Residential Rehabilitation (SFRR) Program provided through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement funding given to the City year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The changes will allow the City to assist more people in the program with the addition of an additional category for service (Emergency Repair), will increase the number of individuals/families assisted, and will continue to keep the local program in compliance with HUD program regulations.

## Public INFORMATION

The high-performing Public Information Division continued to provide accurate and timely information in 2018 to city leaders, citizens and the media about city news, services and programs. In 2018, staff wrote and produced 178 press releases, 52 weekly E-newsletters, five City Beat newsletters, an Annual Report, several articles for community magazines, the Water Quality Report, and other materials and reports as requested. Speeches, talking points and other verbal and visual support for public presentations were also provided monthly throughout the year.

The division increased the effectiveness and integrity of its Twitter, YouTube and Facebook platforms, partnering with a VSU Social Media class for mutually-beneficial educational projects. E-news distribution grew by 20 percent, increasing its reach with more than 750 city news stories sent in 2018. Leading a team of 32 content managers representing all city departments, the division facilitated website management refresher training. Refresher training was also facilitated for Valdosta Click 'N Fix mobile app managers, as well as two events for citizens to participate in to highlight their important use of the app tool. Staff developed the city's social media/communication policy, which is now being shared with other municipalities as an example to follow. Social media presence increased significantly over all platforms.

**f** 4,568 Facebook Likes Grew By 127%

7,311 Twitter Followers Grew By 25%

NOW ALSO ON INSTAGRAM & NEXTDOOR!



Public Information Staff coordinated 37 tours and public education events during 2018. Staff also continued to manage the Mayor's Valdosta Youth Council and serve as VYC Advisory Board members, coordinated the Valdosta Government 101 Citizens Orientation, People's Choice Photo Contest, Essay Contests, Dumpster Art, Georgia Cities Week activities and dozens of other citizen focused outreach events in the city. Staff also coordinated the annual Bird Supper held in Atlanta to increase awareness of and participation in the state legislative process. The division provided photo and video support for countless events, meetings, services, etc. throughout the year.

Metro Valdosta Channel 17 continued to serve the community through video, producing 25 quality news shows throughout the year, and a dozen short programs. Metro 17 rolled out a new series this year called 'Keeping You Informed' which is aimed to let citizens know about what's going on in the city each week. 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 and –coupled with all other areas of service—made a positive impact on the quality of life in our city by informing and engaging youth and adults in local government.

# Planning & Zoning

The Planning & Zoning Division, which serves both the City of Valdosta and the City of Hahira, ensures quality growth and development consistent with the Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan in order to preserve our unique quality of life.

The division's 4-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 includes the participation in the Valdosta High School Job Shadow Day and Lowndes Youth Leadership League events, conducting Historic walking tours of downtown for both VSU students and the Learning in Retirement classes, and



















## 35 Overhead Banner Requests

being guest speakers at Valdosta State University's Urban Planning class and the VHS International Baccalaureate Program. Division staff maintained records for three of the City's appointed citizens advisory boards, coordinated the city's annual Historic Preservation awards in May and the annual Community Planning Month activities in October, and attended several statewide Planning and Historic Preservation related conferences and workshops. 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.

## 2018 ACCOLADES & AWARDS



- Delivered a balanced \$97 million budget for Fiscal Year 2019 that met the expectations of Valdosta citizens.
- Maintained one of the lowest millage rates in the state for the citizens of Valdosta, currently 7.95 mills.
- Awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting in 2018 for 32 consecutive years and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 21 consecutive years, which is the highest forms of recognition in governmental budgeting and financial reporting.
- 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.
- for attaining three voluntary accreditation, 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 through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD).
- Received national accreditation for the Valdosta
   Main Street Program for the 32nd consecutive year
   for meeting commercial district revitalization
   standards set by the National Trust Main Street.

 Designated a Tree City USA community by the National Arbor Day Foundation for its 32 consecutive years of commitment to community forestry, which was celebrated at a community event in February 2018.

#### AWARD PRESENTATIONS

### **Cornerstone Community Award**

The City of Valdosta neighborhood development division received the Bronze Cornerstone Community Award for the city's Great Promise Partnership Program. The city has committed to providing local young people up to two years of employment, job training, life skills, mentoring and income as incentives to finish high school.

## Keeping Lowndes / Valdosta Beautiful Chairman's Award

The City of Valdosta Youth Council received the 2017-2018 Keeping Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful 'Chairman's Award' from KLVB Chairman Kimberly Hobbs.

## Celebrating EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEES

Each Month, the Employee Relations Committee, composed of representatives appointed from each of the city's departments, recognizes employees for performance beyond the normal duties and responsibilities of their positions. An Employee of the Month is selected among those nominated by their department leadership, and selectees are honored at the first City Council meeting of each month. Mayor John Gayle gives each a framed certificate and a check for \$200, and their names are engraved on a plaque that is displayed in City Hall. Congratulations to all 2017 Employees of the Month.



JANUARY
Ronnie Lancaster

Utilities Department



FEBRUARY
Joe McKinnon
& Joseph Thornton
Public Works Department



MARCH Charles Brantley, Lawrence McCoy, & Gloria White

Public Works Department



APRIL Christin Holtzclaw Utilities Department



MAY

James Turner

Valdosta Police Department



JUNE
Terrial Small
Utilities Department



JULY Ken Taylor Fire Department



AUGUST
Mark Schulte
Fire Department



SEPTEMBER
Edward Riley Black
Public Works Department



OCTOBER
Jason Woods
Police Department



NOVEMBER Michael Crump, Jay Carter, & Brandon Jebed

Fire Department



Shelley Miller & Allen Carter
Fire Department



# Questions?

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 abecton@valdostacity.com.

ASHLYN BECTON
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

abecton@valdostacity.com

AZHIA SMOTHERS
PUBLIC INFORMATION SPECIALIST

asmothers@valdostacity.com



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

