



2012 CITY OF SUWANEE ANNUAL REPORT

Continually Striving for Better

Art blossomed. A new police facility opened. Older sections of the Suwanee Creek Greenway got better, and certain roadways were lengthened and landscaped. These are just a few examples of the many accomplishments in the City of Suwanee over the course of 2012.

It was another really good year for the City of Suwanee, and the residents it serves. It was a year marked by several significant changes and improvements as well as a plethora of everyday, high-quality City services and achievements that consistently help put Suwanee atop “best places to live” rankings in national publications. This past year, **Suwanee was ranked third by Kiplinger.com among “10 Great Cities to Raise Your Kids.”**

Despite the national ranking and our community’s many accomplishments, it may be that 2012 will best be remembered not so much for what was achieved but rather for what was dreamed.

Through the City’s **20/20 Vision strategic** planning process, more than 800 people engaged in conversations and activities designed to determine what kind of community we want to be tomorrow. Over a 12-month period, from June 2011 through May 2012, residents, community leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders engaged in the strategic planning process through interviews, committees, roundtables, and open house activities. The result is a single vision underscored by seven driving

principles, 33 goals, and 144 potential strategies – a vision that offers a clear indication of where Suwanee should go from here.

With the community-infused 20/20 Vision in hand, City Councilmembers and staff members are prepared to identify appropriate priorities and strategies as they set out to create the community that residents and business owners envision. We’ll need help. Just as creating the 20/20 Vision was a community process so will building the Suwanee of 2020 have to be a community effort.

The City of Suwanee encourages residents, community organizations, and other partners to find something in the 20/20 Vision plan that they can be impassioned about, champion, and make happen! Learn more about the 20/20 Vision plan by watching a fun, informative video; find something to be passionate about among the plan’s 144 potential strategies – both are accessible via links at the bottom of the www.suwanee.com homepage.

Be engaged with your community as we navigate through 2013 and eventually make our way to 2020. But first, here’s a glimpse of achievements from 2012 on which we can build.



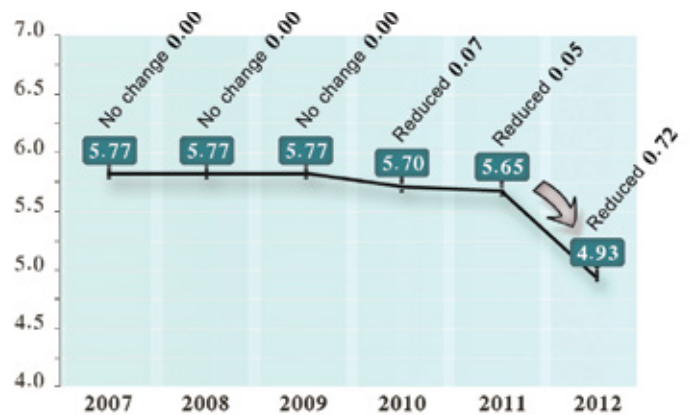


2012 STAND-OUTS

In September, the Suwanee Police Department opened a new 7,100-square foot **training facility and substation** in the Suwanee Gateway, transforming what had been the site of an abandoned gas station and Waffle House into a visible symbol of Suwanee's commitment to public safety and improving the Gateway area.

Utilizing SPLOST and the last of the 2002 bond-funded open space monies, the City **rehabilitated the oldest one-mile section of the Suwanee Creek Greenway**, widening and elevating the path and improving drainage so that the trail recovers more quickly from rain events.

City officials played a leadership role in **resolution of the Service Delivery Strategy disagreement** between Gwinnett County and its municipalities. After years of negotiation and litigation, a seven-year agreement was reached in February, which clarified who (Gwinnett County or the cities) provides which services in designated districts and ensured that municipal property owners would not be taxed twice for the same services.



In part because of the Service Delivery Strategy agreement, **the City reduced its millage rate** by almost three-quarters of a point. Suwanee has reduced the millage rate, and thus property taxes, for three consecutive years. In 2012, the millage rate was reduced by 0.72 to 4.93 mills, saving the owner of a \$216,000 median value home \$63 a year.

"When my family and I were looking at Suwanee last year as a possible place to live, the Harvest Farm Community Garden was a huge selling point... Community gardening has taught me about the value of patience and generosity, not to mention a keener appreciation for nature and resilience of plants."

Julie Chahboune via email



FACTS AND FIGURES

Public art is really beginning to take root in Suwanee. A handful of **private businesses and individuals purchased and installed public art pieces throughout the community**, making Suwanee even more remarkable. Cathy and Rob Rohloff purchased *Sunset* from the 2011 Suwanee SculptTour and donated it to the City in memory of her sister; the piece has been installed at Sims Lake Park. New to Suwanee, Advance Auto and Ultra Car Wash placed sculptures outside their businesses.



In addition to awards and accomplishments, financial data provides another critical indicator of the City's strength.

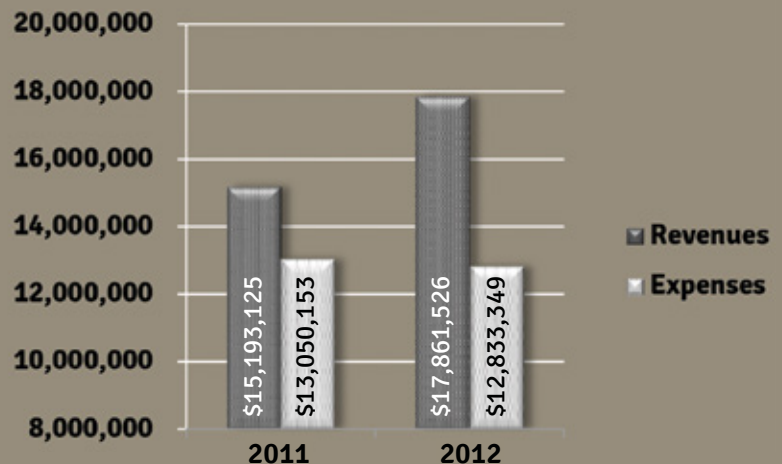
Each year, the City of Suwanee prepares an audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) that provides detailed information about the City's financial positions. Prepared using the financial reporting model prescribed by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), Suwanee's CAFR is available in its entirety on the Docs & Downloads page at www.suwanee.com.

In an effort to provide reliable, readily accessible, and easily understandable financial data (appropriate for the average citizen reading this Popular Annual Financial Report), the financial information presented here summarizes and simplifies the presentation of information in the CAFR. Financial data provided is for fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012).

REVENUES & EXPENSES

Revenues represent dollars received, and expenses can be thought of as costs associated with providing services to the citizenry.

The two-year history of revenues and expenses shows that revenues have increased by \$2,668,401 from 2011 to 2012 while expenses have decreased. The majority of the revenue increase is due to a one-time payment received from Gwinnett County through the service delivery agreement; the City plans to use these funds for community stabilization. Expenses have decreased by \$216,804 over the same time period.



WHAT'S NEW?

Suwanee received a **\$3.3 million Livable Centers Initiative grant** from the Atlanta Regional Commission to reconstruct Buford Highway as a context-sensitive roadway that will safely accommodate multiple modes of transportation. The City's plans call for Buford Highway to remain a two-lane road, but with the addition of sidewalks, landscaped medians, turn lanes, streetscaping, and other improvements.

The City offered a new service that provides residents with notifications related to emergency weather conditions and situations as well as events and other non-emergency information. By the end of the year, 1,144 residents and 56 businesses had signed up for the **CodeRed** service, which offers a more elegant, versatile, and effective alternative to tornado sirens. (Sign up is available at www.suwanee.com).



"It's super awesome... Everyone is really friendly."
 Sydney Vedore of Cumming regarding the 2012 Suwanee Day festival

FACTS

As 2011 came to a close, the Downtown Development Authority entered into a **lease-purchase agreement with Demming, LLC for Pierce's Corner**. Plans call for Suwanee's oldest commercial building to be renovated and used for a business that focuses on green building practices as well as business incubation space. The City currently is seeking to have a portion of Old Town included on the National Registry of Historic Places in order to allow property owners who renovate historic properties to access tax advantages.

Design has begun on a **half-mile trail along Brushy Creek**. The project also will include improvements to the Peachtree Industrial/Suwanee Dam intersection in order to enhance pedestrian accessibility and safety. The City has received a \$450,000 grant to help implement this project.

MAKING THINGS BETTER

The City undertook **two major streetscaping projects**, one along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB) medians and the other around the I-85 interchange. The PIB project, which experienced some grass-growing pains, is designed to be unique and to send a message that travelers have arrived somewhere special. This project will be completed in the spring. The I-85 project will help convey a positive image of the Gateway area and serve as evidence that public and private investments are being undertaken to improve the area.

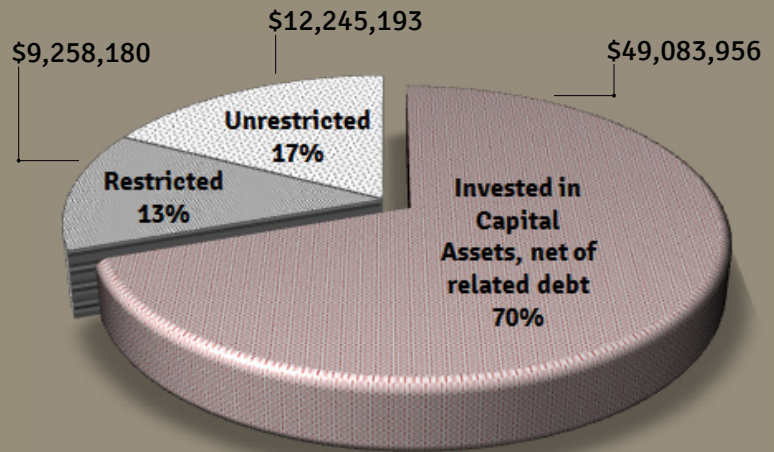


"I found a piece of Art on a Limb art on May 25th. I cannot tell you how excited I was to see it hanging from the fence separating the Greenway from McGinnis Reserve.... Once I realized what it was, I screamed like I had won the Publisher's Clearing House Sweepstakes..."

Michawne Clark via email

WHAT THE CITY OWNS & OWES

The Statement of Net Assets, or "balance sheet," summarizes everything the City owns (assets) and owes (liabilities). It provides a snapshot of the City's financial health at the end of the fiscal year.



The largest portion of the City's net assets (70%) represents capital assets such as land, buildings, equipment, and infrastructure (roads, bridges, and other immovable assets), excluding any related debt used to acquire those assets. The City uses these capital assets to provide services to citizens. Investment in capital assets is reported minus related debt because the resources needed to repay a debt must be provided from other sources since the capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate these liabilities.

Investment in Capital Assets, net of related debt – The difference between the amount paid for capital assets, such as buildings, and any debt used to acquire those assets, such as loans or mortgages.

Restricted – Funds that are not available for general use by the City because they must be used for a specific purpose or project as required by a law or regulation. Examples would include funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and future debt service payments.

Unrestricted – The remaining fund balance that is not invested in capital assets nor restricted.

"I have completed my 40 hours of community service. Most of all, I wanted to thank you and your staff for the common courtesy and respect they all extended to me while on assignment.... I have a greater appreciation for our City and parks knowing the hard work and planning that it takes to maintain them."

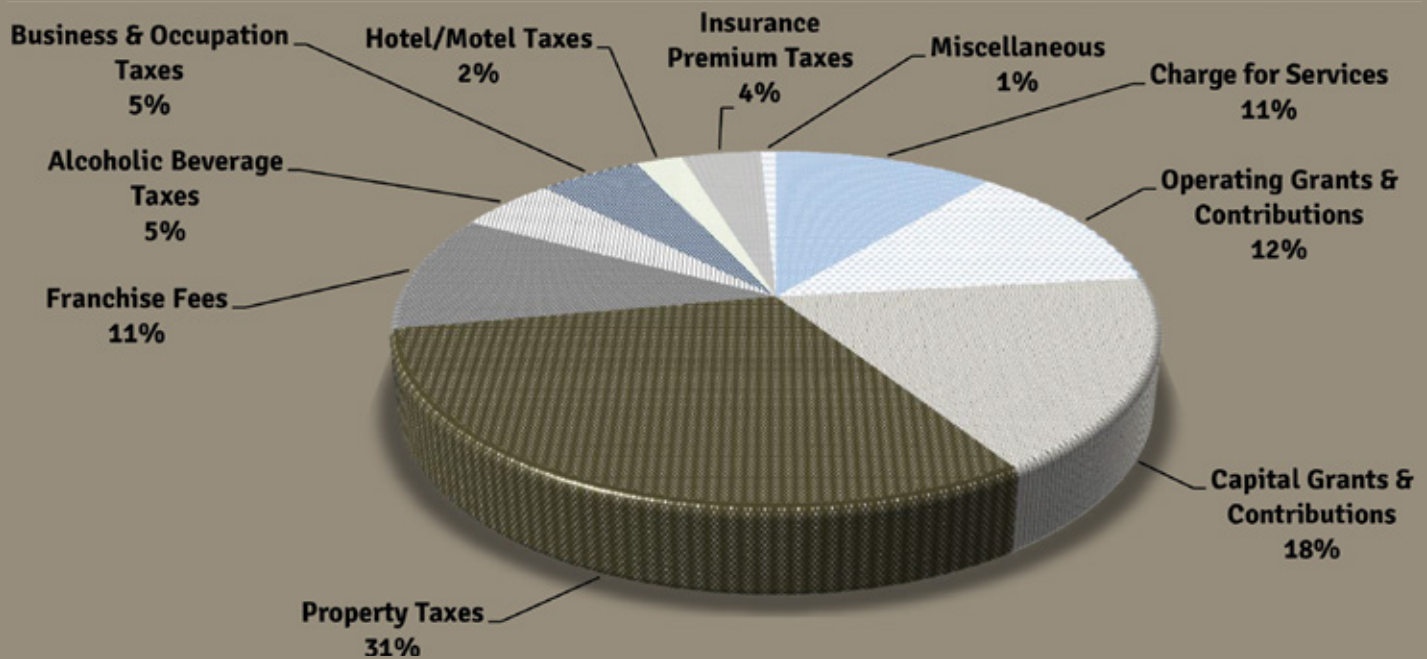
Excerpt from a July email from a Sugar Hill resident who performed court-ordered community service in Suwanee



AND FIGURES

WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

As the chart below shows, property taxes are the City's largest source of revenue. Total revenues for fiscal year 2012 were \$17,861,526, of which 31% was from property taxes, 18% from capital grants and contributions, and 12% from operating grants and contributions.



Charge for Service - Fees collected from individuals for services rendered, such as court costs, building inspections, etc.

Operating Grants & Contributions - These funds, which may be used for operations, include intergovernmental revenues received through the service delivery settlement with Gwinnett County as well as monies received through grant opportunities.

Capital Grants & Contributions - These funds, which may be used only for capital purposes, include capital grant contributions through the 2009 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), land and infrastructure donations, and monies received from grants.

Property Taxes - Taxes collected on real and personal property, motor vehicles, mobile homes, and intangible taxes.

Franchise Fees - The fees collected from utility companies for use of City streets and rights of way in order to deliver natural gas, telephone, cable television, water, and other fiber optics cable services.

Alcoholic Beverage Taxes - Taxes levied on the sale, distribution, or consumption of distilled spirits, malt beverages, and wine.

Business & Occupation Taxes - Revenues realized from occupational licenses issued to businesses and financial institutions.

Hotel/Motel Taxes - Excise taxes that are charged for hotel rooms or accommodations.

Insurance Premium Taxes - Excise taxes on insurance premiums written by companies conducting business within the City.

Miscellaneous - These funds include monies earned from the investment of City funds, donations, and recovered costs.

"Suwanee Town [Center] Park really provides a sense of community and opportunities for shared experiences. This is something that is a thing of the past in most places these days."

Christopher Wall via Facebook

Public works staff dug in to **improve landscaping at two City parks**. At White Street Park, an arbor was constructed and more than 300 plants installed as 2011 came to a close. This past fall, with eight tons of stone, seven tons of concrete, and 250 plants, staff transformed a barren hill at Sims Lake Park into a lovely, terraced area, creating a setting fit for an artistic *Sunset*.



In order to better manage the pint-sized crowd at the uber popular Big Splash interactive fountain, the City instituted **a new reservation system** for daycares and other groups. The program received positive reviews from both group and individual splash-splashers.

The City has shifted gears as related to its parks. Rather than continuing to acquire properties in order to build new parks, Suwanee will, for the most part, **focus on improving existing parks and properties**. One such improvement has been the addition, by popular request, of shade structures at the playground area at Sims Lake Park. Shade structures also were installed over benches around Big Splash early in 2013.

SUWANEE, CULTURALLY

For the first time, Suwanee participated in the **Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers**. Partnering with Movie Tavern, the City brought six independent films and filmmakers to the community.

An estimated **nearly 150,000** attended the **39 concerts, movies, races, and other events** on the City of Suwanee's 2012 calendar. 2012's was the largest Suwanee Day ever, bringing an estimated 55,000 people to Town Center Park.

A new event, a team scavenger hunt that has participants racing through downtown Suwanee, on foot or bike, to complete a variety of high-energy mental and physical challenges, was "super incredible" fun and will return in April 2013.

The City offered **Suwanee S car magnets** for free to residents and other friends of Suwanee. The magnets are showing up on bumpers all over town and all over Gwinnett County. The City has even received reports of folks spotting the S magnets in South Carolina. Magnets are still available at City Hall.

Oooh, nice S!



The second SculpTour, a public art display in and around Town Center, was unveiled in May. The 2012 SculpTour exhibit included 15 sculptures as well as a guided audio tour/podcast. The City won **two awards for SculpTour and its other public arts efforts** – a Trendsetter Award from the Georgia Municipal Association and *Georgia Trend* magazine and a Community Arts Program Award from ArtWorks! Gwinnett.



"...[S]ince I have moved here, I have fallen in love with the whole area and with Suwanee and so much of it shows a unique blend of nature and the community living in harmony...."

Bob Adamson via email

"We moved to Suwanee in May, and we can't stop telling folks how much we love the community! The Greenway and walking to restaurants and concerts are some of our favorites."

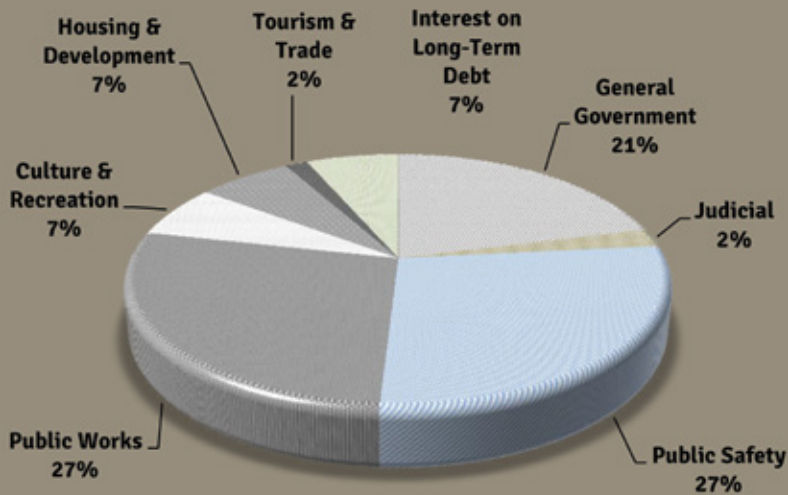
Jeff and CB Butler via Facebook



FACTS AND FIGURES

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The City's expenses totaled \$12,833,349 for fiscal year 2012. Twenty-seven percent of expenses were related to public safety and another 27% to public works. General government accounted for 21% of expenditures. All other individual expense categories each account for less than 10% of total expenses.



General Government - Cost of supporting legislative, human resources, city clerk, finances, legal, data processing, public information, and general government building costs.

Judicial - Cost to support the municipal court.

Public Safety - Costs associated with law enforcement, traffic control, and 911 dispatch functions.

Public Works - Cost of maintaining City facilities, rights of way, paved streets, storm drainage, and municipal water system.

Culture and Recreation - Cost of maintaining the City's park system and coordinating special events.

Housing & Development - Cost of planning, inspections, code enforcement, and economic development.

Tourism & Trade - Costs associated with tourism and promotion.

Interest on Long-Term Debt - Costs associated with interest payments on general obligation bonds for parks and open space and revenue bonds for construction of City Hall.

FUND BALANCE: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Fund balance is the excess dollars of what the City owns (assets) over what the City owes (liabilities). It is important for several reasons to maintain a healthy fund balance, considered by the City of Suwanee to be at least four months of operating expenses and transfers. Fund balance is a critical factor in financial planning and budgeting and provides funds for unforeseen expenses or emergencies. Fund balance reduces the need for short-term borrowing for operations by assuring sufficient cash flow. Finally, fund balance demonstrates financial stability, which enhances bond rating, and thus lowers debt issuance costs.

FUND BALANCE TYPES

The City's chief operating fund is the general fund, which accounts for all revenues and expenditures applicable to the general operations of the City. Overall, Suwanee's general fund balance increased by \$247,216 during fiscal year 2012 to a little over \$7.8 million. General fund balance has four classifications.

NONSPENDABLE (\$71,057)

Funds that cannot be spent because they are not in spendable form (an example of this would be prepaid expenses or purchases) or are required to remain intact legally or contractually.

RESTRICTED (\$2,276,207)

Funds constrained to a specific purpose as required by external parties (creditors or higher levels of government), constitutional provisions, or enabling legislation. In 2012, Suwanee restricted funds related to a legal case that eventually was settled in the City's favor; funds will be returned to the unassigned balance in 2013.

COMMITTED (\$4,000,813)

Funds constrained to specific purposes by a government agency, using its highest level of decision-making authority (Council/board action). Such amounts cannot be used for any other purpose unless the government takes action to remove or change constraints placed on the resources.

UNASSIGNED (\$1,478,613)

Funds available for any purpose. On June 30, 2012, Suwanee's unassigned fund balance was \$1,478,613, a decrease of \$1,930,268 from fiscal year 2011. This decrease was due to the court-ordered restriction noted above.

"Our students enjoy having a little splash time at Town Center Park!! We are so excited to have such a fab place so close! Great job City of Suwanee.... Crimson Academy loves you!!! :) "

Facebook posting

FACTS



1,157

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVESTIGATED

716

HOURS THAT POLICE DEPARTMENT-TRAINED PARK AMBASSADORS SPENT ALONG THE SUWANEE CREEK GREENWAY

721

MISDEMEANOR/FELONY ARRESTS BY SUWANEE POLICE OFFICERS

387

VOLUNTEER HOURS PUT IN ON EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS THAT IMPROVED SUWANEE PARKS

242

TRAFFIC-RELATED INJURIES, INCLUDING 3 FATALITIES



7,678

TRAFFIC CITATIONS ISSUED, OF WHICH 1,232 WERE FOR SPEEDING, 1,215 FOR NO SEATBELT, AND 66 FOR DUI

4,276

HOURS SPENT CLEANING CITY BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITIES AT PARKS

30

POTHOLES REPAIRED

33,511

CALLS FOR SERVICE TO POLICE DEPARTMENT

2012



BY THE NUMB3RS

50,499

GALLONS OF GAS PURCHASED FOR CITY VEHICLES



7,874

CASES PROCESSED BY SUWANEE MUNICIPAL COURT



3,425

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED, INCLUDING ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, HVAC, EROSION CONTROL, ETC.

\$1,407,152

FINES AND FEES ASSESSED BY SUWANEE MUNICIPAL COURT

5,675

HOURS SPENT BY PUBLIC WORKS STAFF MOWING CITY PROPERTIES, RIGHTS-OF-WAY, AND MEDIANS



1,754

BUSINESSES IN SUWANEE WITH ACTIVE BUSINESS LICENSES



224

NEW BUSINESS LICENSES ISSUED IN 2012, UP 25% FROM 2011

38,300

ISSUES OF CROSSROADS NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED

8,672

PROPERTY TAX BILLS MAILED

3,172

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE CHECKS WRITTEN

876

HOURS SPENT ON LITTER REMOVAL



6,181

LIKES FOR CITY'S FACEBOOK PAGE

542

APPLICATIONS AND RESUMÉS PROCESSED FOR 7 POSITIONS THAT WERE FILLED

3.22

MILES OF ROADS RESURFACED

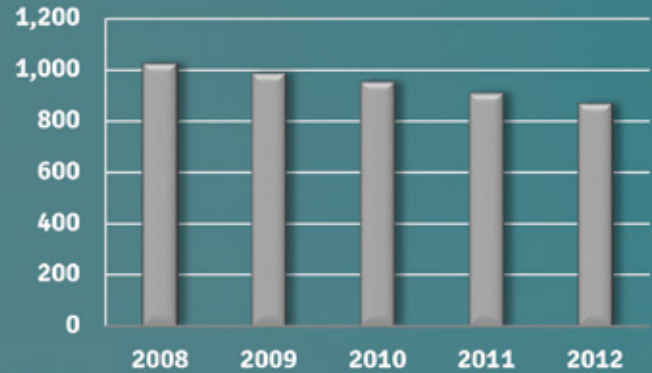
AND FIGURES

TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

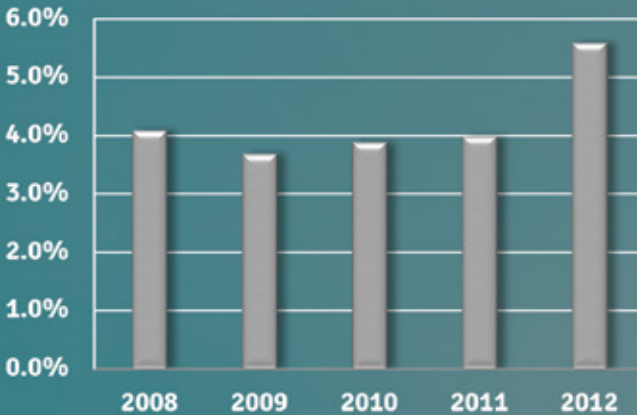
- Southeastern Freight Lines
- Walmart
- Meggitt Training Systems
- Dish Network
- Staffing Solutions Southeast
- Tatitlek Training Services
- Flowers Bakery
- Publix Supermarkets
- Kroger Supermarkets
- Quality Technology Services



CITY OF SUWANEЕ'S DEBT PER CAPITA



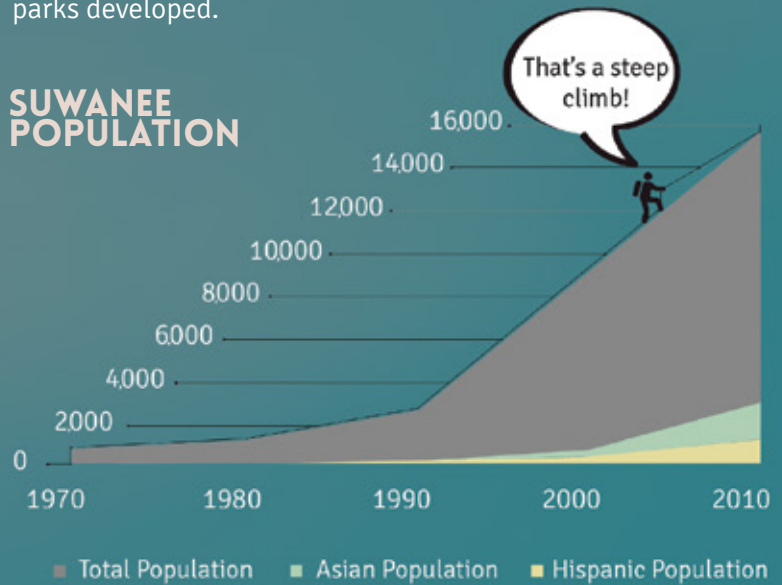
UNEMPLOYMENT



The Suwanee-area estimated unemployment rate increased by 1.6 percentage points over 2012 closing at 5.4% in December. Throughout the economic recession, Suwanee's unemployment rate has remained significantly lower than other parts of the state and nation. Even with the past year's increase, Suwanee still compares favorably to Gwinnett County (7.6%), metro Atlanta (8.4%), Georgia (8.6%), and national (7.8%) unemployment figures for December 2012.

Suwanee's debt per capita has declined over time. This reduction is due to a combination of the City's growing population and annual payments on the total debt. The City of Suwanee assumed debt in the form of general obligation bonds to finance construction of City Hall and the 2001 voter-approved, award-winning Open Space Initiative through which greenspace was acquired and parks developed.

SUWANEЕ POPULATION



WHERE DID MY PROPERTY TAXES GO?

In 2012, the median home value in Suwanee was \$216,200 and the typical resident paid about \$426 in property taxes. The chart to the left answers a common question asked by Suwanee residents: "Where did my property taxes go?"

NOTEWORTHY

Travel along **McGinnis Ferry Road** on either end of the City limits got a lot easier thanks to completion of a widening project to the west and an extension project on the east end. The projects were completed by the state and Forsyth and Gwinnett counties, and the extension of McGinnis Ferry over I-85 is another example of investments taking place in the Gateway area.



The City of Suwanee issued **115 single-family residential permits** in 2012 (up from 59 in 2011), including a permit for the last buildable lot in the McGinnis Reserve neighborhood. In addition, the City issued 335 multi-family permits.

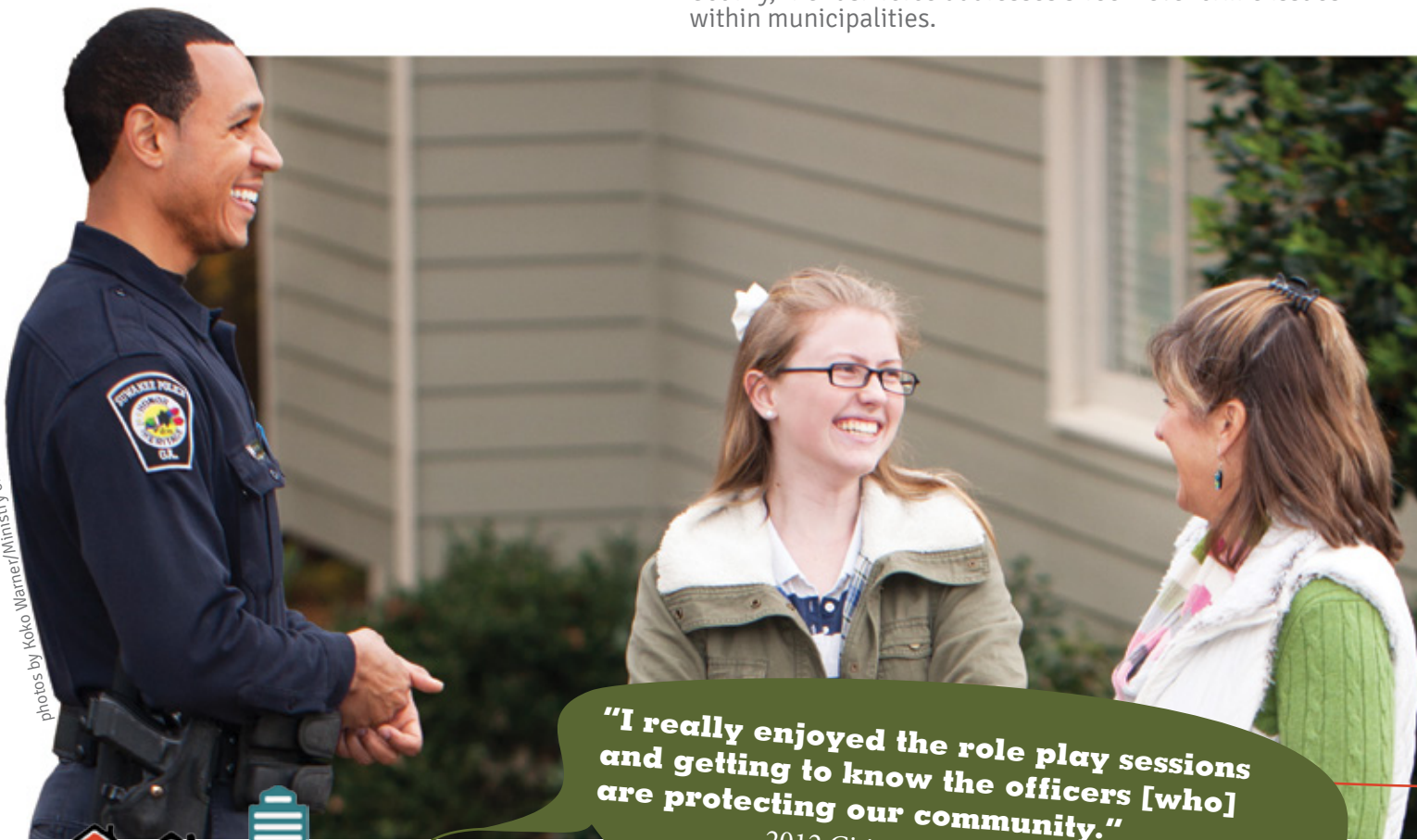
The police department **upgraded dispatch services** by installing a switch that allows for 911 calls and information to be immediately transferred from Gwinnett County to the City's police communications center. This will help streamline the call-taking process when citizens dial 911.

The City **repaved 3.22 miles of road** and undertook two road projects, improving the railroad crossing at Russell Street and widening a section of King Street.

The police department **made tasers available** to officers who wished to carry them as another non-lethal tool. Tasers have been demonstrated to reduce officer and suspect injuries. Before being allowed to carry a taser, officers must first be subjected to the high-voltage tool themselves.

For the fourth consecutive year, Suwanee was recognized by the International City/County Management Association for **superior performance management**. One of 15 jurisdictions throughout the country to receive a Certificate of Distinction, Suwanee has demonstrated leadership in continuous improvement and community engagement. In addition, the City's budget, which perennially receives recognition from the Government Finance Officers Association, earned special recognition for the first time in 2012.

The Suwanee Police Department joined about a half-dozen other law enforcement agencies in August to form the **Gwinnett Metro Task Force**. An example of ongoing cooperation among cities and police agencies in Gwinnett County, the task force addresses street-level crime issues within municipalities.



"I really enjoyed the role play sessions and getting to know the officers [who] are protecting our community."

2012 Citizens Police Academy participant in an evaluation of the program

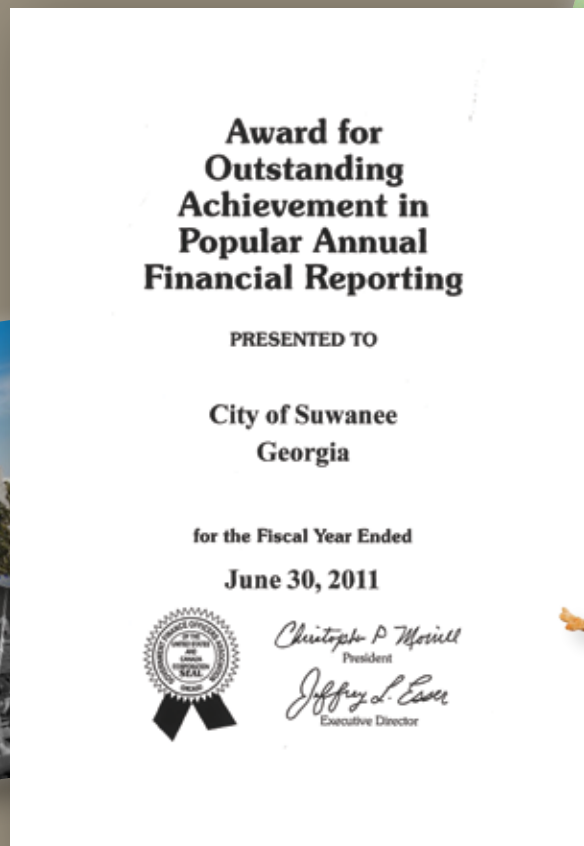
photos by Koko Warner/Ministry of Design



AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN POPULAR FINANCIAL REPORTING

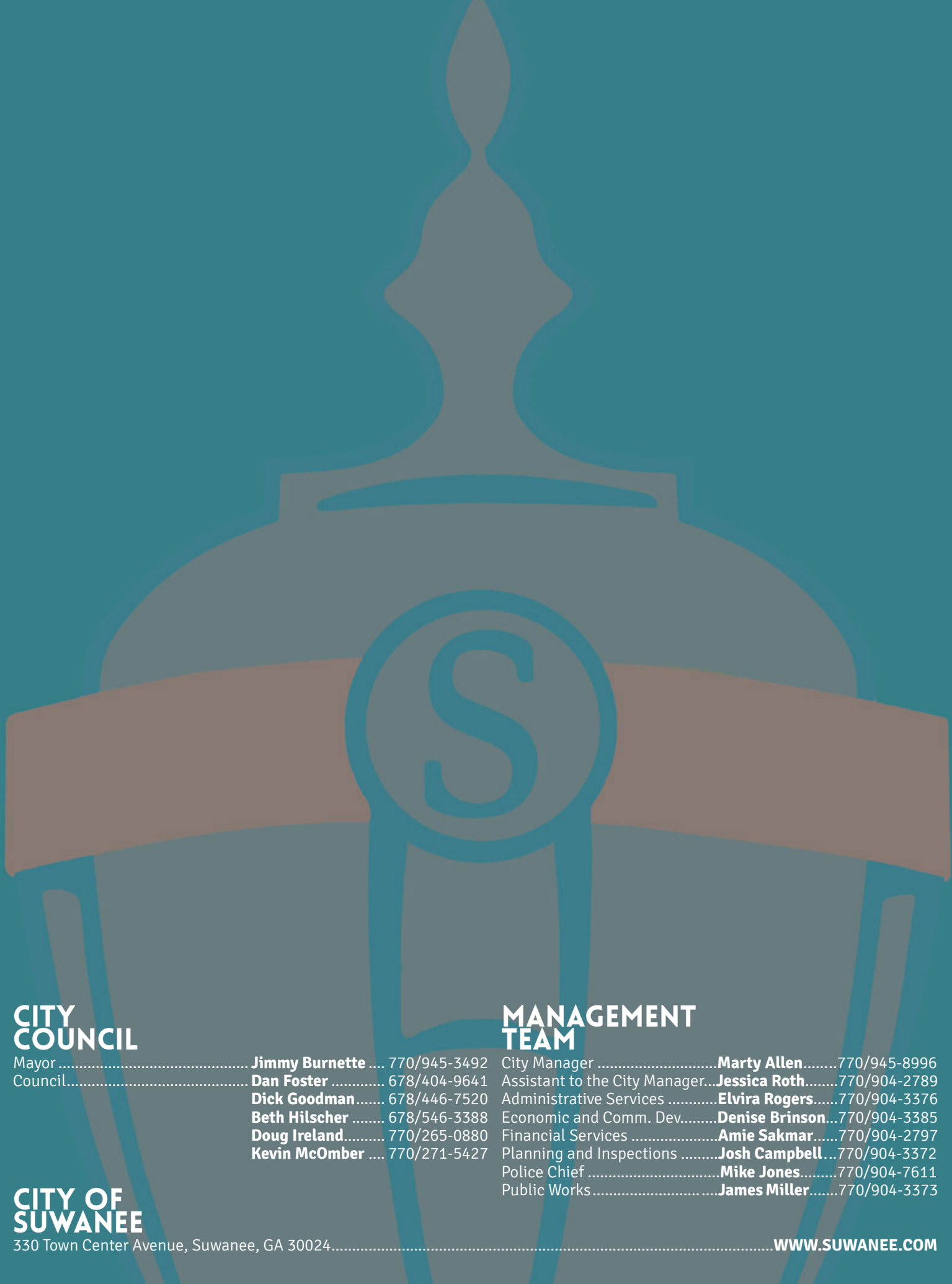
Last year, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) presented an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting to Suwanee for its Popular Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2011. The Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting is a prestigious national award recognizing conformance with the highest standards for preparation of state and local government popular reports.

In order to receive an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting, a government unit must publish a Popular Annual Financial Report that conforms to program standards of creativity, presentation, understandability, and reader appeal. This award is valid for a period of one year only. We believe that this current report continues to meet Popular Annual Financial Reporting requirements, and we are submitting it for GFOA's review.



"The program is very informative, and it helps bridge the gap between the community and law enforcement."
 2012 Citizens Police Academy participant
 in an evaluation of the program

"Thank you very much for checking on our house. The neighbors noticed how well you did this service, and we all appreciate it and all that you do."
 Sam and Cathy Sligar – about the police department's house-check program



CITY COUNCIL

Mayor **Jimmy Burnette** 770/945-3492
 Council..... **Dan Foster** 678/404-9641
Dick Goodman 678/446-7520
Beth Hilscher 678/546-3388
Doug Ireland..... 770/265-0880
Kevin McOmber 770/271-5427

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City Manager **Marty Allen**.....770/945-8996
 Assistant to the City Manager... **Jessica Roth**.....770/904-2789
 Administrative Services **Elvira Rogers**.....770/904-3376
 Economic and Comm. Dev..... **Denise Brinson**...770/904-3385
 Financial Services **Amie Sakmar**.....770/904-2797
 Planning and Inspections **Josh Campbell**...770/904-3372
 Police Chief **Mike Jones**.....770/904-7611
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CITY OF SUWANEE

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WWW.SUWANEE.COM