

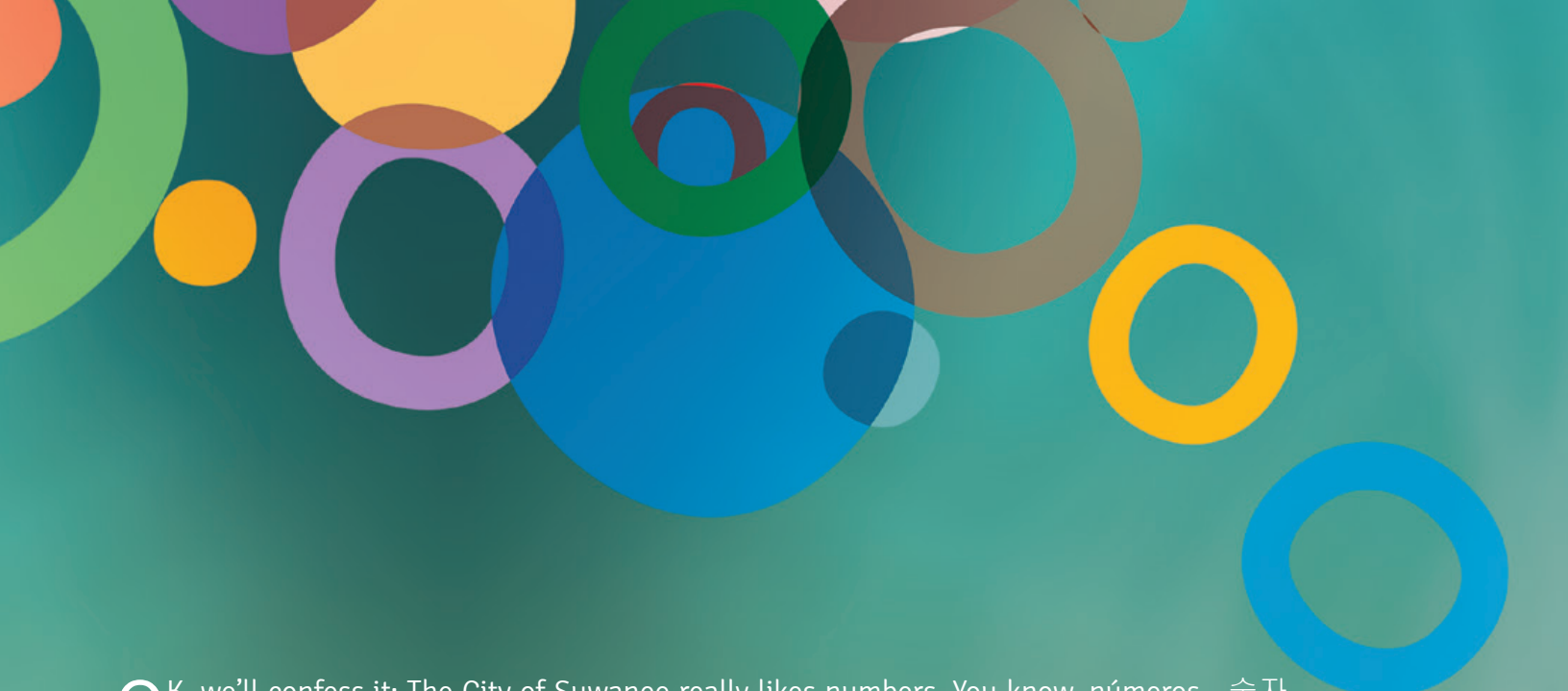
The background features a stylized illustration of the City of Suwanee clock tower and city building. The clock tower is a prominent white structure with a blue clock face and a white cupola. The city building is a curved structure with a blue facade and large windows. The scene is set against a dark green background with a large white circle in the upper left, resembling a sun or moon. The entire image is overlaid with numerous colorful circles in shades of green, orange, red, and blue, creating a vibrant, abstract pattern.

# ANNUAL REPORT

CITY OF SUWANEE, GA  
2013



**NUMEROUS  
REASONS TO  
LOVE  
SUWANEE  
IN 2013  
AND BEYOND**



OK, we'll confess it: The City of Suwanee really likes numbers. You know, números, 숫자, numere. There's the nearly **\$12.2** million approved 2013-14 budget; the **3,875** building, sign, and soil erosion inspections conducted during 2013; the **30%** decrease since 2008 in part-one crimes; and our **7,394** Facebook "friends." Mostly, we like those digits, percentages, and decimal points as measures of how well we're serving our people, Suwanee residents.

And in 2013, the City of Suwanee scored some really great numbers. Among our favorites were **100** and **56** and **10** and **99%**.

As part of the City's 2013 advertising campaign, staff and citizens developed **100** reasons to love Suwanee, several of which are highlighted as section titles throughout this publication. Little did we know that reason **#56** (*National publications think we're hot and a great place to live.*) would be heavily underscored when, in its August issue, *Family Circle* named Suwanee among America's "**10 Best Towns for Families.**" And that's not all – once again in 2013, *Money* magazine named Suwanee "**One of America's Best Places to Live.**"

What is most satisfying is that it's not just national publications saying Suwanee is a great place to live – our citizens are saying so, too. Results from the 2012 National Citizen Survey, received in February 2013, indicate that **99%** of residents find Suwanee to be an excellent or good place to live. The National Citizen Survey is a statistically valid tool by which local government jurisdictions throughout the country can benchmark their community amenities and service provision against other communities as well as their own past performances.

You can find additional National Citizen Survey results on page **10**. By the way, our residents' ratings made Suwanee **#1** among all participating communities in four categories: land use, planning, and zoning; preservation of natural areas; city parks; and availability of affordable quality child care. There's nothing not to like about those numbers!

Throughout this annual report, we'll share with you more interesting numbers and additional information about specific City of Suwanee achievements in 2013.

If you'd like more information about the City of Suwanee  
or if you have questions related to this report, well,  
you've got our number: **770/945-8996**.

(You also can communicate with us through Facebook, Twitter,  
the "Contact Us" link at **suwanee.com**, and our new **Go! Suwanee** app.)

**REASON #6:**  
**BEING ABLE TO IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFY A FELLOW SUWANEETIAN BY THE S STICKER/MAGNET ON THEIR CAR.**



After using its lamp post logo for **15** years, the City of Suwanee adopted a **new logo** that according to its designer, is “bubbling with color, activity, and energy” as befits “an uncommon city.” The City officially launched its new **56**-bubble logo at the fall Suwanee Day festival with new car magnets, bags, lanyards, and t-shirts. We’ve received reports of Suwanee S car magnets being spotted as far away as Fort Lauderdale, which is **699** miles from home.



In June, Fitch Ratings confirmed **Suwanee’s AA+ bond rating**, a very strong grade for any community and an outstanding one for a community of Suwanee’s size. Among the numbers that Fitch was impressed with were **46%** (that is, the City’s fund balance or “savings account” equals **46%** of spending) and **14.6%** (that’s the decrease in the City’s millage rate from fiscal year 2012 to 2013.)

**Z**ero can be a good number, too. Zero represents the increase in the City’s property tax rate from fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2014 (which began July 1, 2013). Over the past **11** years, since the bonds for acquiring open space and creating parks were purchased and taxes increased significantly (in fiscal year 2003) as a result, **the City’s millage rate has been reduced or remained the same from year to year**, with an **11**-year total decrease of nearly **18%**.

**S**ometimes improvements can involve eliminating a problem rather than adding something new. Such is the case with the City’s purchase and subsequent **demolition of the 120-room former May Queen hotel** in the I-85/ Gateway area. As part of ongoing efforts to improve the Gateway area, the City purchased the **3.4**-acre property last year for **\$1.25** million. For the immediate future, the City plans to simply land-bank the property.



## FACTS & FIGURES

The City of Suwanee is proud of its financial polices and practices, which have been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and resulted in strong independent bond ratings. The City strives to share financial information openly with citizens and others.

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 financial reporting models prescribed by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), Suwanee’s CAFR is available in its entirety on the Docs & Downloads page at **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



*“I love your logo! ... I see a ton of logos in my business, and I haven’t ever made a comment before to a client so it grabbed my attention enough to say something to you.”*

*Suzanne Ruskus, senior training consultant with National Seminars Training in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. December 12, 2013, via email*

information in the CAFR. Financial data provided is for fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013) unless otherwise stated.

## REASON #23: WE FEEL SAFE.

The Suwanee Police Department was **nationally re-accredited** by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), recognized for “demonstrating a commitment to professional excellence in policy and practice.” Of the more than **18,000** law enforcement agencies in the country, less than **1,000** have earned accreditation, meeting CALEA’s **464** national standards. In addition, the police department also earned state re-certification from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police.

The City’s public works department completed **5,273 work orders**, from fixing water pipes to patching potholes to preparing Town Center for the next event.



Suwanee police worked **1,178 car accidents** in Suwanee. The number of accidents was up **1.8%** in 2013. The most accident-prone intersections in descending order are: Peachtree Industrial and McGinnis Ferry; Peachtree Industrial and Suwanee Dam; Lawrenceville-Suwanee and Satellite; Peachtree Industrial and Moore Road; and Lawrenceville-Suwanee and I-85.

Suwanee citizens can sleep soundly knowing that the City’s finances are well-managed and well-documented. In 2013, the City received **recognition** once again **from the Government Finance Officers Association** for its Comprehensive Annual Report, Popular Annual Financial Report (on which Suwanee scored an **87.80%**) and budget document. The International City/County Management Association also awarded Suwanee a certificate of distinction for its performance measures efforts.



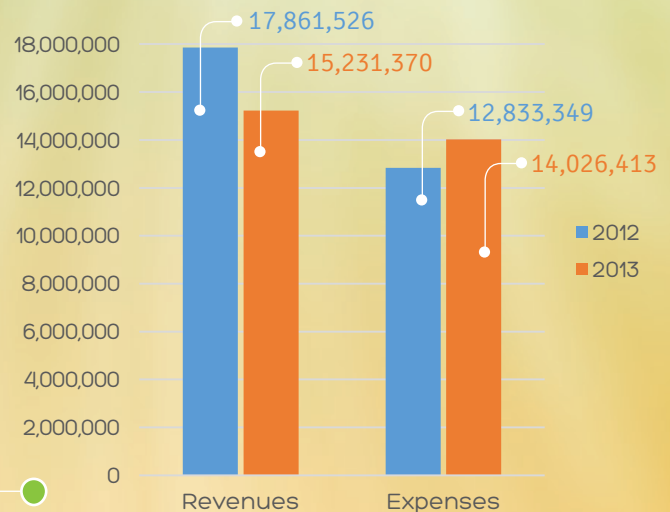
## REVENUES & EXPENSES

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

The two-year history to the right shows that revenues have decreased by \$2,630,156 from 2012 to 2013. That difference is due primarily to a one-time service delivery settlement payment received in 2012 (\$2,037,042). As part of the City’s ongoing, long-term efforts to improve the Suwanee Gateway, these funds were used to purchase a 3.4-acre tract at 2955 Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road.

The City demolished the dilapidated buildings formerly used for a hotel and cleaned up the site. One of the top community goals identified through Suwanee’s 20/20 Vision strategic plan is improving the Suwanee Gateway.

The two-year history also demonstrates that expenses have increased by \$1,193,064 from 2012 to 2013. The majority of this increase is due to additional street resurfacing and repairs undertaken in fiscal year 2013 (\$953,724).



During its first full year of operation the Police Training Facility in the Gateway was **host to more than 500 people** who participated **in 32 law enforcement-related training programs**. Among the training topics covered were firearms, use of asp/baton, judgmental use of deadly/non-deadly force, search warrants and affidavits, taser certification, defensive tactics, courtroom demeanor and testimony, field sobriety testing, child safety seat technology, and weapons of mass destruction. In addition to hosting agencies from across the Southeast, the center also welcomed trainees from as far away as New Jersey and Puerto Rico.

“I just wanted to... tell you how much I appreciate your police officers’ involvement with the COPS program at my son’s school... Officer [Elton] Hassell is my son’s mentor currently, and he has made a positive influence on my son’s life.”

Pam Briggs, October 31, 2013, via letter



The City’s **alcohol ordinance was rewritten and updated** to be more business-friendly and to reflect changes in state law. For example, restrictions on happy hours were eliminated and hospitality permits for nail salons and other non-food establishments added. At year’s end, some **61** businesses in Suwanee had a current alcohol license.

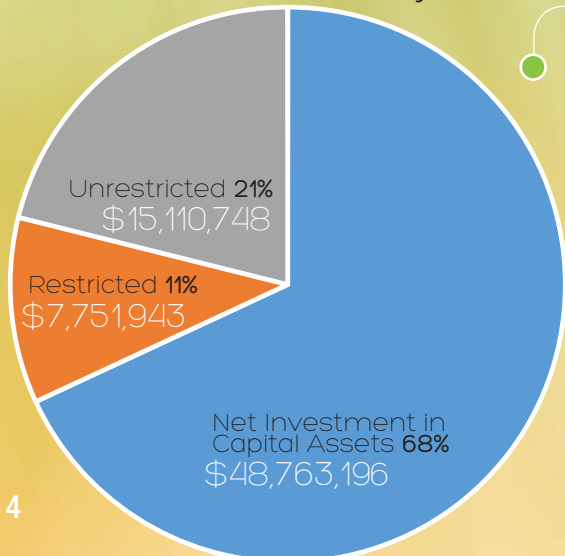
The police department and Level Creek Elementary celebrated the **10th year of the COPS (Caring Officers Providing Support) program** at the school. The one-on-one mentoring program has been in place even longer at Suwanee Elementary School. Since 2002, more than **150** fifth-graders have participated in the program.

The paper-free Suwanee Municipal Court processed **62% more citations** in 2013 than in 2012.

**Five City streets** – a total of **1.6** miles – were **paved** in 2013.

## WHAT THE CITY OWNS & OWES

The Statement of Net Position, 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 position (68%) represents capital assets such as land, buildings, equipment, and infrastructure (roads, bridges, and other immovable assets). The City uses these capital assets to provide services to citizens. Investment in capital assets

are reported net, minus any related debt, because the resources needed to repay the debt must be provided from other resources since capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate the debt.

**Net Investment in Capital Assets** - 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 law or regulation. Examples include Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and future debt service payments.

**Unrestricted** - The remaining balance that has not been reported in any other classification.



“Thank you so much for posting information that is very useful to people. That is when social media is at its best.”

*Susan Youngblood Gilbert, June 13, 2013  
facebook post*

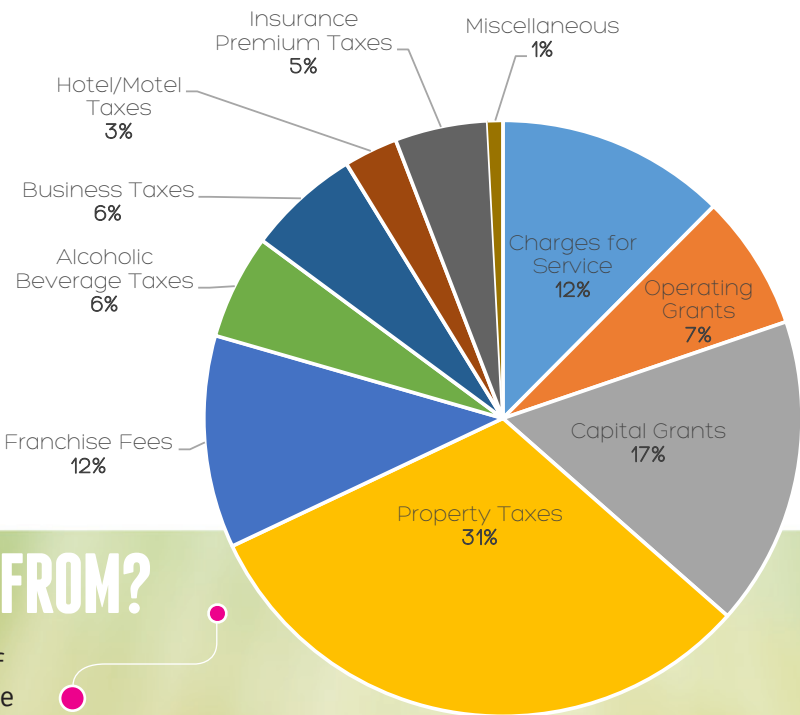
**REASON #21:**  
LOTS OF HIGH-TOUCH,  
HIGH-TECH WAYS TO COMMUNICATE.  
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

Go! Suwanee, the “Suwanee in your pocket” **mobile app**, allows users to report and track non-emergency requests for services and to access information about City events and parks as well as social media links. By the end of the year, Go! Suwanee, which hit app stores in September, had already been downloaded **1,066** times.



Public **wi-fi access**, providing data at speeds up to **30 MB/second**, was installed at Town Center Park and around the pavilion/playground area at Sims Lake Park.

For the first time in **10** years, the finance department adopted a new accounting software system through BS&A. The best thing about that for citizens is that it allows for secure credit card or **online payments** of water bills, taxes, and miscellaneous fees.



**WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?**

Total revenues for fiscal year 2013 were \$15,231,370, of which 31% was from property taxes. Other main revenue sources include capital grants (17%) and charges for service and franchise fees (both at 12%).

**Charges for Service** - Fees collected for services rendered, such as court costs, building inspections, etc.

**Operating Grants** - These funds, which are used for day-to-day operations of the City, include intergovernmental revenues received through a service delivery agreement with Gwinnett County as well as monies received through grant opportunities.

**Capital Grants** - Used for capital purposes, these funds include those received from the 2009 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), land and infrastructure donations, and monies received from grants.

**Property Taxes** - Funds collected on real and personal property, motor vehicles, mobile homes, and other property 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 fiber optics cable services.

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

**Business Taxes** - Revenues 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** - Taxes on insurance premiums written by companies conducting business within the City.

**Miscellaneous** - These funds include monies earned from investment of City funds, donations, and rental fees.



photo by Adventure Advertising

## REASON #75: LEARNING TO RIDE A BIKE IN ONE OF OUR GREAT PARKS

The City received a lot of positive feedback from residents about the **new Christmas tree** installed at Town Center Park for the holiday season. The **32-foot** non-traditional tree, made of **52** spheres, was created from approximately **18,000** lights, **9,000** feet of steel, and **6,000** feet of wire.

To address the **#1** park enhancement request from citizens (based on 2010 survey results), **shade**, in the form of six blue and green canvas-material structures, was installed around Big Splash at Town Center Park and the play structure at Sims Lake Park.

A **600-foot** deep **well and associated irrigation system** was installed at Town Center Park. This is anticipated to save the City from having to purchase more than **4** million gallons of water each year from Gwinnett County in order to maintain the park.



photo by Terry Chapman

Responding to citizen interest, the City began installing an **18-hole disc golf course** at Suwanee Creek Park. The course is expected to open in the spring of 2014.



## WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The City's expenses totaled \$14,026,413 for fiscal year 2013. Thirty-two percent of expenses were related to public works, 28% to public safety, and 17% to general government.

**General Government** - Expenses related to supporting legislative, human resources, city clerk, finances, legal, data processing, public information, and general government facilities.

**Judicial** - Cost to support municipal court.

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

**Culture & 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.





photo by Bill Mahan

photo by Terry Vegter

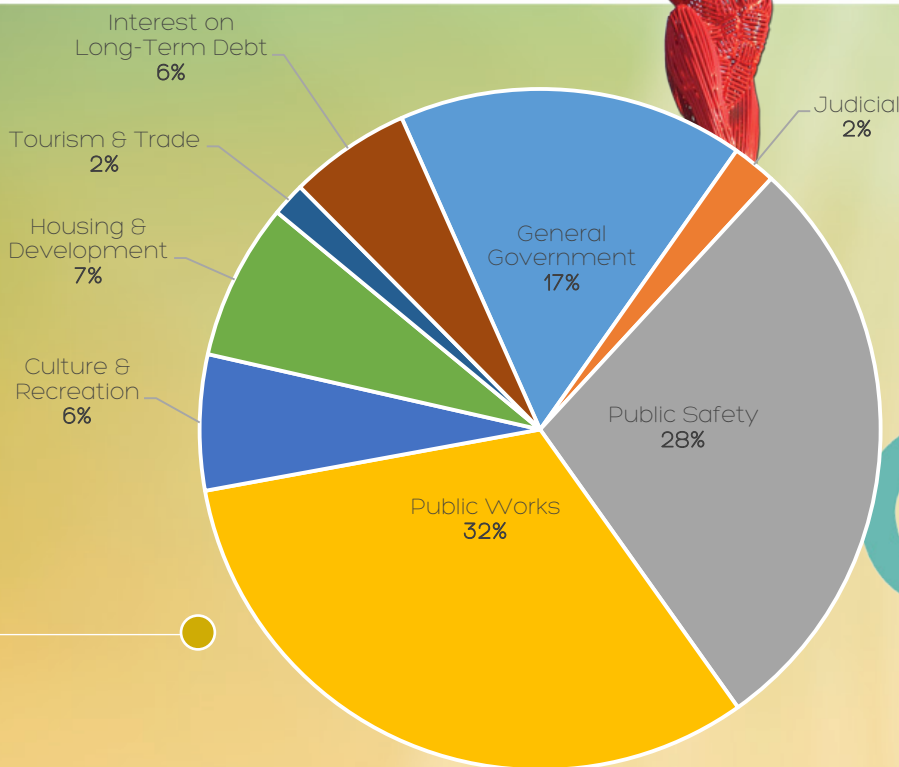
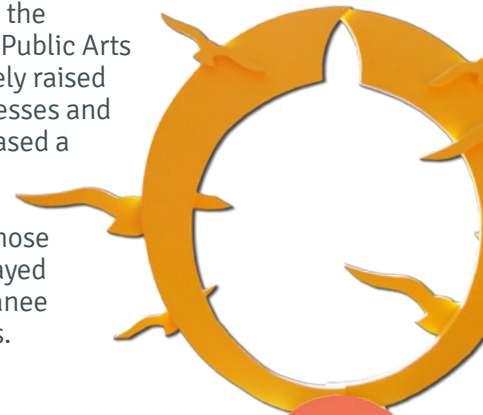
## REASON #62: WE HAVE AN ARTIFACT FROM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER TOWERS IN REMEMBRANCE OF 9/11

On 9/11, the City unveiled the permanent artistic/historic display of its **1,628**-pound, damaged, twisted **relic from the World Trade Center** towers. Created by Statesboro artist Marc Moulton, the *Remembrance* display also features an inverted, stainless steel sculpture and historical timeline.

**Fourteen sculptures** were installed throughout downtown Suwanee as part of the City's third Suwanee SculpTour rotating exhibit. A walkable public art encounter, the current exhibit will remain on display through March 2015.



Through the SculpTour program and buy-in from new private businesses coming to Suwanee, **public art is making noticeable appearances** throughout the community. The Suwanee Public Arts Commission, using privately raised funds, and private businesses and individuals have purchased a total of **7** pieces from the two previous SculpTour exhibits; those pieces now are displayed permanently at Suwanee parks and businesses.



## REASON #95: IT'S LIKE MAYBERRY, BUT COOLER

Forty-one properties within a **56-acre** area of Suwanee's historic Old Town District have been officially listed in the **National Register of Historic Places**. A "win" for the City, the designation allows contributing properties to be eligible for federal and state tax incentives for improvements that help preserve the property's historic value.



The first Friday of the month became many residents' favorite day when the City added **Food Truck Fridays** to its events calendar this past year. Some **33** food truck vendors participated in the four highly popular, well-attended foodie events. This popular event is being extended for the 2014 event season.

The inaugural Suwanee's Super Incredible Race was a **gold winner at the 2013 Southeast Festivals and Events Association's annual conference**. The high-energy, clue-sleuthing race requires teams to solve a dozen clues that take them to locations throughout downtown Suwanee where they must complete mental and physical challenges.



"Eve 6 is my favorite band, and I have always wanted to share their concert experience with my children, but have never found the right venue until your park concert. Our whole experience was wonderful. I appreciate you creating a family-friendly environment for my children..."

Tracie Cheeley, Prattville, Alabama,  
August 20, 2013, via email

## WHERE DID MY PROPERTY TAXES GO?

In 2013, the median home value in Suwanee was \$206,300, and the typical resident paid about \$407 in property taxes. The chart below answers a common question asked by residents: "Where did my property taxes go?"



"This weekend I had my daughters' 4th birthday at White Street Park, and I couldn't have been more pleased. In general, my family visits that park often because it is such a great place to get away from the bustle of the suburbs.... The staff and gardeners I encountered were so friendly, and the facility is so perfect that I had to send a note to tell the city thank you for building it and providing it for the community."

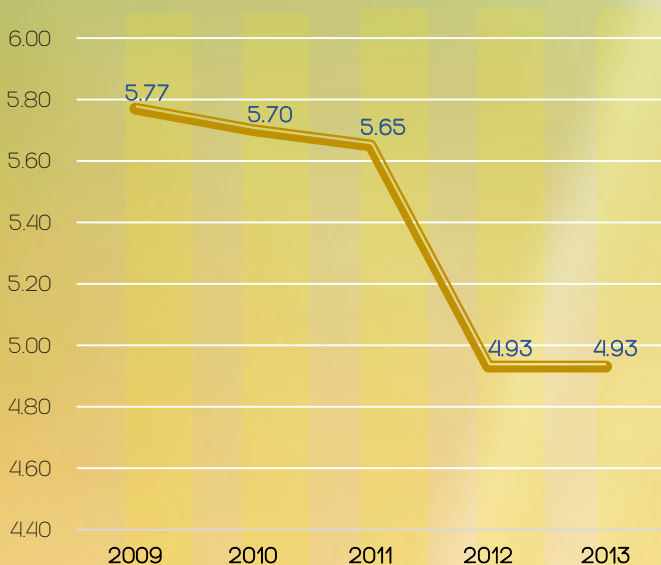
Nicole Puckett, June 24, 2013, via email

"I was blessed to find a wonderful piece of pottery...during Art on a Limb. I actually passed it along as a gift to a captain in the U.S. Army who oversees the training of our soldiers, one of whom was my only son. I included a note with the pottery saying like my son it was a very special offering from our hometown and how like all the soldiers it was unique, one of a kind, beautiful, useful for its purpose, strong but breakable..."

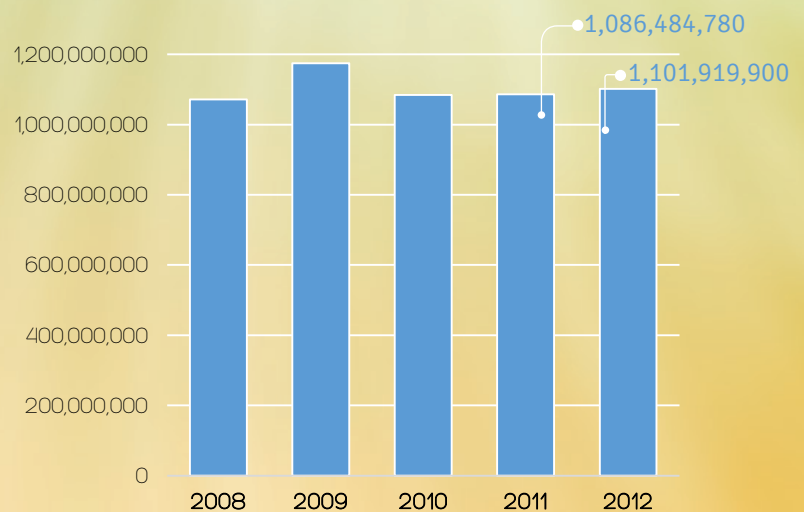
Sharon Macpherson, April 15, 2013, via email



## MILLAGE RATE 2009 - 2013



## TAXABLE ASSESSED VALUE OF REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BY CALENDAR YEAR



Source: Consolidated Digest Reports provided by Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner's Office.

# 2012 NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Residents' responses made Suwanee **#1** in four categories:

- land use, planning, and zoning
- preservation of natural areas
- city parks
- availability of affordable quality child care

**99%** said Suwanee is an excellent or good place to live.

**97%** rated Suwanee's overall quality of life as excellent or good.

**89%** said they are pleased with the overall direction Suwanee is taking (putting Suwanee second among **300** communities surveyed).

**76%** felt that the value of services for taxes paid was excellent or good, ranking Suwanee fifth among **366** communities that asked their residents that question.

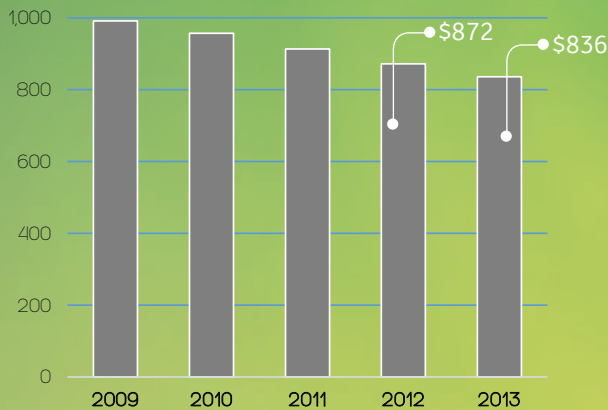
Of **31** community characteristics for which comparisons are available, Suwanee residents rated their community above the national benchmark in **30** areas.

**98%** of respondents rated Suwanee's overall image as excellent or good.

**48%** of survey respondents had moved to Suwanee within the past **5** years. Among the factors most important to their decision were police/public safety, community appearance, overall community feel/vibe, neighborhoods, park system, and Suwanee's image/reputation.

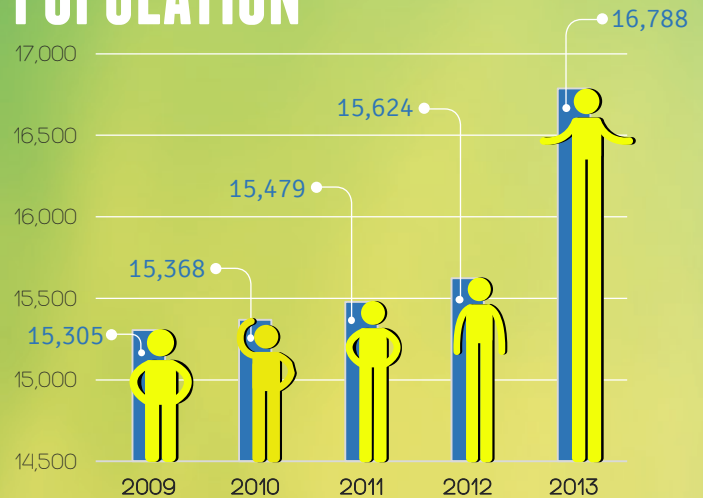


## CITY OF SUWANEЕ'S DEBT PER CAPITA

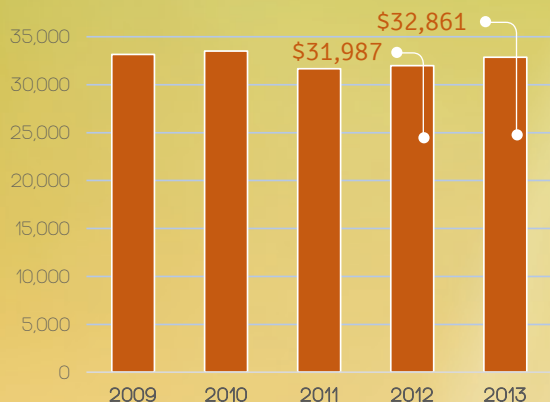


Debt per capita is a measurement of the value of a government's debt expressed in terms of the amount attributable to each citizen under the government's jurisdiction. Suwanee's debt includes bonded debt which is a local government's pledge to use legally available resources to repay bond holders.

## SUWANEЕ POPULATION



## PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME



### 10 TOP PROPERTY TAX PAYERS, 2013

- AMLI Residential Properties LP
- Hewlett Packard Company
- Landmark at Grand Oasis LP
- Flowers Bakery of Suwanee
- Carlyle Centennial Suwanee Station LP
- Wal-Mart
- Google
- Ecosphere Corporation
- Lowes Home Centers, Inc.
- James Campbell Company LLC

### 10 TOP EMPLOYERS


- Southeastern Freight Lines, Inc.
- Wal-Mart
- Meggitt Training Systems, Inc.
- Staffing Solutions Southeast
- Dish Network/Echosphere Corporation
- 3-Mentors, Inc.
- Bay/Dean LLC
- Flowers Bakers
- Kroger Company
- Publix Supermarkets

# 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, 2012. 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 it will be submitted for GFOA's review.



photo by M. Panebianco



Government Finance Officers Association

## Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting

Presented to  
**City of Suwanee**  
**Georgia**

For its Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended  
**June 30, 2012**

*Jeffrey R. Ennis*  
 Executive Director/CEO





## CITY COUNCIL

Mayor	<b>Jimmy Burnette</b>	770/945-3492
Council	<b>Dan Foster</b>	678/404-9641
	<b>Dick Goodman</b>	678/446-7520
	<b>Beth Hilscher</b>	678/546-3388
	<b>Doug Ireland</b>	770/265-0880
	<b>Linnea Miller</b>	678/592-4150

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

City Manager	<b>Marty Allen</b>	770/945-8996
Assistant to the City Manager	<b>Jessica Roth</b>	770/904-2789
Administrative Services	<b>Elvira Rogers</b>	770/904-3376
Economic and Comm. Dev	<b>Denise Brinson</b>	770/904-3385
Financial Services	<b>Amie Sakmar</b>	770/904-2797
Planning and Inspections	<b>Josh Campbell</b>	770/904-3372
Police Chief	<b>Mike Jones</b>	770/904-7611
Public Works	<b>James Miller</b>	770/904-3373

330 Town Center Avenue, Suwanee, GA 30024  
**SUWANEE.COM**

city of  
**Suwanee**  
georgia

