

CITY OF SUWANEE

2004-05

ANNUAL REPORT

Exceeding Expectations

The City of Suwanee is gratified and proud that so many of our endeavors to create a vibrant, welcoming community and to exceed expectations when serving our more than 11,000 residents have been recognized over the past year as examples of excellence.

Our Open Space Initiative and parks, police department and financial services, emerging Town Center and downtown revitalization efforts all have been acknowledged. State and regional organizations, such as the Georgia Municipal Association, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the Georgia Planning Association have recognized Suwanee's bold efforts as trend-setting models. And national and state organizations have rewarded our hard work with seals of approval.

We confess that we've savored the accolades of our peers and admired the dozen or so awards that we've added to the City Hall trophy case this year. However, what really inspires us and satisfies us most is knowing that *you*, our citizens and others that we serve, believe that we are doing a good job, indeed that we are exceeding expectations. We are motivated by your enthusiasm when we take on exciting projects like creating Town

Center or opening four new parks in a nine-month period and by your appreciation when we handle adeptly the myriad mundane tasks that are essential to Suwanee's well-being.

We truly value and delight in your comments: "outstanding event...your police officers were so helpful...we really enjoy the Greenway...your office staff were very nice and well informed...we love living in Suwanee."

It's been an award-winning, community-focused, satisfying year for the City of Suwanee. We're proud to share with you highlights from our fiscal year 2004-05, which for you means July 1, 2004–June 30, 2005.



photo by M. Michael Farr

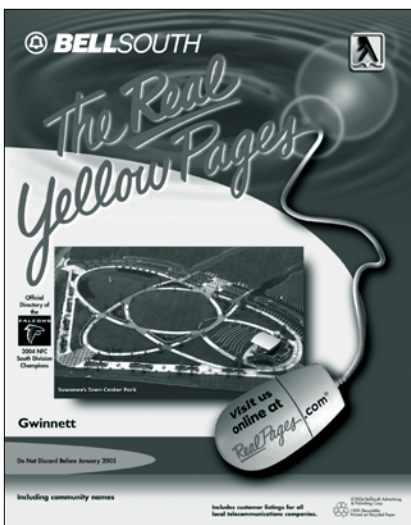
- The City of Suwanee has **sold two of four available parcels at Town Center** to developers willing to construct mixed-use buildings that fit within the vision created by the City's award-winning Town Center Master Plan. Income from those sales allowed the City to **pay off**—eight years early—the **urban redevelopment loan** used to purchase the original 13-acre property in 2002.
- The **first mixed-use building** at Town Center is well **underway**. Main Street Corners, LLC is constructing the 42,000 square foot retail/office/residential building. Madison Retail, LLC is set to begin construction on the second 31,000 square foot building, which will include two-story townhouse units and single-story flats above retail spaces.



"We're taking old town charm and redoing it. The end result is a downtown of which residents will be very proud. It will be a place where they can gather, eat, shop, and watch their kids run around the park."

G.K. Johnson
Principal, Madison Retail, LLC
Town Center Developer

- Thanks in part to the efforts of Mayor Nick Masino and City Manager Hardin Watkins, the City of Suwanee will receive approximately **\$6.6 million** in voter-approved **Gwinnett County SPLOST funds** over the next four years. "It's not an exaggeration to say that the availability of these SPLOST funds will allow us to accomplish goals that otherwise could require as many as seven to 10 years to achieve," says Watkins.
- Suwanee undertook a significant **rehabilitation project** to bring the **earthen dam at Sims Lake Park**, the former Rae Hewell property on Suwanee Dam Road, into line with current state standards. At the end of the fiscal year, the project was nearly complete and the City was poised to begin the planning process for its next new park.



- An aerial photograph of Town Center Park is featured on the **front cover** of the 2005-06 Gwinnett edition of **The Real Yellow Pages from BellSouth**. Some 670,000 copies of the business telephone directory will be distributed, bringing Suwanee's "front yard" to homes and businesses throughout the county.
- Here we grow again: Suwanee experienced a **significant increase in** the number of existing **residential units** over the past year, adding 757 new housing units. By comparison, the City added 168 and 122 housing units, respectively, during the previous two fiscal years. In addition, the new units are tending largely to be part of mixed-use projects, rather than the conventional neighborhoods that represented so much of Suwanee's growth in the 1990s.
- The City of Suwanee issued a **full financial report** that for the first time **meets national standards** newly implemented for smaller local governments by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board's Statement 34 (GASB 34). The report, in compliance with generally accepted accounting practices, was delivered on time and with no audit findings.
- Despite Suwanee's continued growth, the police department reported a slight **decline in calls for service** for calendar year 2004. That decrease is partially attributed to the department's community policing philosophy, which supports several programs that provide specialized training to residents and enhance relationships between officers and citizens.

An award-winning year

Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association, 2003-04 comprehensive annual financial report, second consecutive year

The City of Suwanee was one of 96 Georgia local government agencies, of approximately 900 throughout the state, to receive a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for fiscal year 2003, Certificates for 2004, which Suwanee also has received, are still being presented.



Government Finance Officers Association

2005 Accredited National Main Street Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation, second consecutive year

Trendsetter Award in Economic and Community Development for Town Center, presented by the Georgia Municipal Association and *Georgia Trend* magazine

"It's exciting to see somebody take something off a piece of paper and actually implement it. Suwanee is at a point where other communities can look to it as a 'best practices example.'"

Joanie Perry

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Re-certification of the Suwanee Police Department by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police

"[The Suwanee Police Department] met and exceeded all standards for re-certification. This, plus the documentation submitted and the comments of the survey team indicate that Suwanee's is one of the best police departments in the state."

Frank Rotondo

Executive Director, Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police

CREATE Community Award from the Atlanta Regional Commission for the voter-approved Open Space Initiative (environmental sustainability category)



Georgia Downtown Award for Best Design Improvement for Town Center Park

Best Plan Implementation from the Georgia Planning Association for Town Center/Town Center Master Plan

"The initial successes of the evolving town center plan for Suwanee provide important inspiration and are highly transferable to local governments in the Atlanta region, the State of Georgia, and elsewhere. We need to recognize the best models for suburban redevelopment, and this is one of them."

Jerry Weitz

President, Georgia Planning Association

Silver Circle (second place) Awards from the City-County Communications & Marketing Association for the community playground brochure and Suwanee Soiree.

Occupant Protection Award and **First-Time Entry Award** from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety

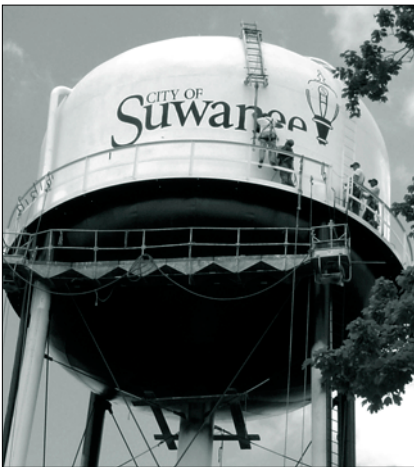


- Police and Citizens Together (PACT), a proactive, neighborhood-based community policing program, was extended to six new neighborhoods, bringing the total of PACT-certified neighborhoods to 16. In all, **49 PACT meetings were held** in neighborhoods throughout Suwanee. In addition, the Suwanee Police Department offered two Citizen Police Academies, conducted three PRIDE programs for teenage drivers and their parents, continued the COPS program at Level Creek Elementary, and taught ADVANCE classes at Level Creek and Suwanee Elementary.

"I am sure that I am one of hundreds of people that will e-mail you to tell you what an excellent job you and your force did with the concert in the park....Your police officers were so helpful...The officers on

bikes, on foot or wherever were respectful of the concert goes...and everyone had a fabulous time. There were probably thousands of people there and NO TRAFFIC PROBLEMS!!...My family will come to Suwanee more often when there is an event scheduled since I know you will be respectful and ready to rise to the challenge."

Jenni Duncan, Lawrenceville



- The **new 150,000-gallon water tank** nearly triples the City's water storage capacity and maintains a more consistent water pressure for City of Suwanee water customers. In addition, the City upgraded the cross-connection with Gwinnett County.
- The City designated **more funds** than ever before (\$225,000) **for road maintenance projects**. Also, in part in response to citizen feedback, the City returned to overlaying or paving, rather than microsurfacing, roadways.
- In August, Suwanee **celebrated two** of its **new parks**. Suwanee Creek Park was opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 7 and the Town Center Park grand opening celebration was held August 14. More than 7,000 people came out to enjoy the park's inaugural concert featuring Drivin' N' Cryin' and Shawn Mullins. In October, the City hosted its first Trek or Treat event to celebrate the grand opening of Suwanee Creek Park.

- To ensure that the City's new public parks are appropriately maintained, the public works department implemented a **Comprehensive Grounds Maintenance Policy**. And to help keep pace with the City's busy community event schedule, the department hired **seasonal event staff** members who are "on call" to assist with weekend activities at Suwanee's new parks.



- Two bond rating companies, Standard & Poor and Fitch Ratings, reviewed the City's bond rating and **confirmed** its **AA-rating**.

- The financial services staff **improved** its **collection process** for real and personal property taxes, collecting 99 percent of the amount billed.

"[Y]our office staff were very nice and well informed. I was in and out in just a few minutes. I wish [a nearby] County could come to your office and learn how to conduct its business."

Randy Long, General Manager, Stephen Ross Plumbing

- In what one business owner deemed "a very positive move for the Old Town area," the **Downtown Development Authority** of Suwanee, which has re-focused its efforts specifically along historic Main Street, **purchased the Pierce's Corner property** in April.
- The City implemented in April a **Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy**. The policy, designed to ensure the safety of employees, citizens, and visitors, established procedures for pre-employment testing, random testing for personnel in safety-sensitive positions, post-accident testing, and testing when there is a reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use.
- An **office space programming analysis** conducted by Urban Collage, an Atlanta planning firm, found that the City's current 15,000 square feet of administrative space is about 10,000 square feet short of today's actual needs and less than half of what the City will require in 5-7 years. The final report recommends that Suwanee construct a 20,000-30,000 square foot new City Hall and 4,000 square foot public works facility.
- City Council appointed the **Jackson Street Cemetery Committee**, comprised of community members and City officials, to determine how to best restore and maintain the small cemetery that was deeded to the community in 1919 and is the final resting place for many African-American Suwanee natives. More than \$8,000 has been raised for improvements thus far.
- Suwanee Police detectives were instrumental in the **arrest of two suspects wanted in separate bank robberies**. In one of the cases, working with other law enforcement agencies and utilizing the news media, Suwanee detectives were able to identify a suspect wanted in the removal of ATM machines from a bank in Suwanee and several other metro banks.
- In a unique celebration of art and the first anniversary of the opening of the three-mile Suwanee Creek Greenway extension, the City hosted a month-long **Art on a Limb** program. Each day throughout the month of May, decorative orbs were placed along the Greenway for trail-users to find and keep.



"[M]y family was enjoying a walk on the Greenway and my son found one of the ornaments hanging from a tree...The ornament is beautiful. We really enjoy the Greenway. We have started taking family walks there several days a week and we love it!!"

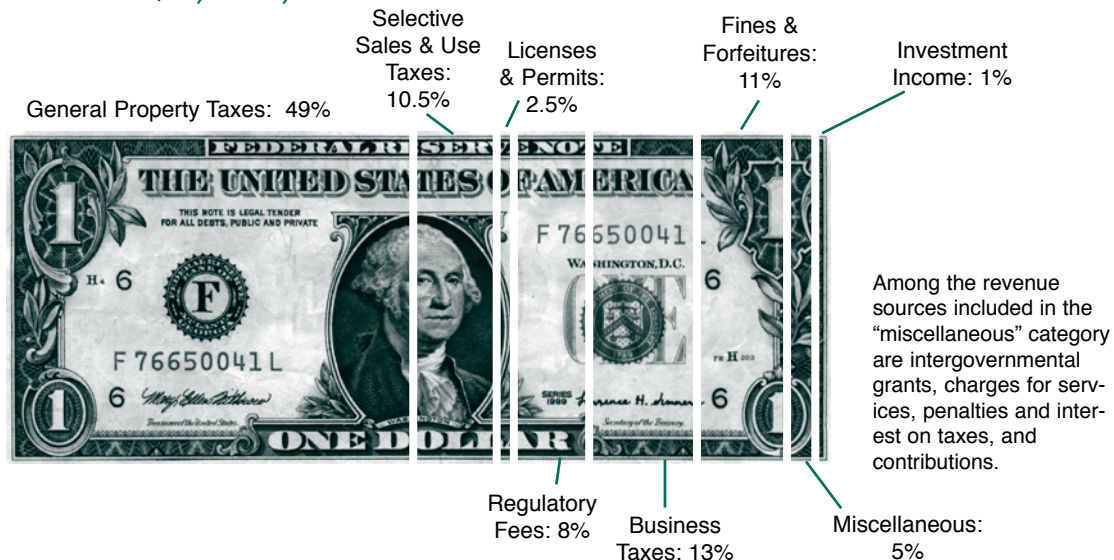
Helen Fernandes, Suwanee Resident

- Suwanee Municipal Court personnel **processed 10,540 tickets**, or an average of 879 each month. One-quarter of the citations were for speeding violations and 18 percent for seatbelt violations.
- The new **Town Center Park proved to be a terrific venue for Suwanee Day**. Although the arrival of Hurricane Ivan delayed the festival two hours, Suwanee's 21st annual celebration of community drew a record crowd of about 30,000.

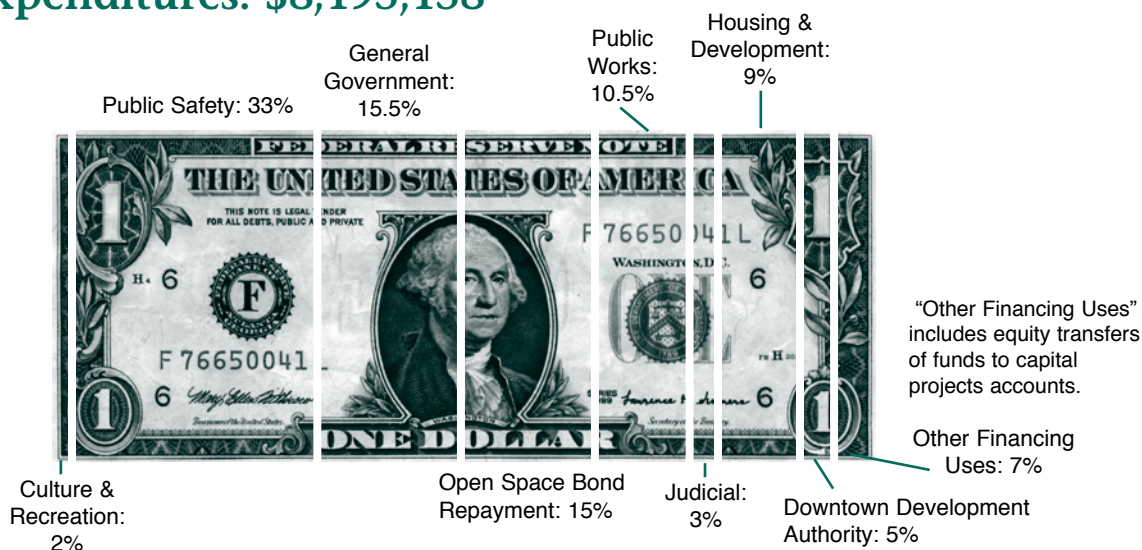
"My group of eight friends attended the America concert [in May] and I wanted to let you know what a great time we had. The venue was fabulous and we loved the fact that there was a wide variety of age groups that attended."

Margaret Robbins, Suwanee Resident

FY2004-05 Revenues: \$8,715,505



FY2004-05 Expenditures: \$8,195,158



**Financial data accurate as of July 1, 2005; may not represent exact year-end figures.

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City Council meetings generally are held at 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month at City Hall, 373 Buford Highway. A public hearing to discuss zoning matters that are on the agenda begins at 6:30 p.m. City Council workshops are at 5:30 p.m. generally on the first Thursday (following the first Tuesday) of each month.