



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2017

# SUWANEEN EVENTS

NUMBER OF 2017 EVENTS 44

DAYS OF EVENTS IN SUWANEEN  
NOT COUNTING THE FARMERS MARKET 39

DAYS OF FARMERS MARKETS 28

OPPORTUNITIES TO STICK TO  
YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS BY  
PARTICIPATING IN A RUN / WALK 18

NUMBER OF BRAND NEW  
SUWANEEN EVENTS, INCLUDING: 9

- **Glow in the Park Community Lantern Parade**, which featured a strolling jazz band leading an illuminated pageant of light, music, and color through Old Town and down the Brushy Creek Trail, ending at Town Center Park for a concert starring 80s cover band Electric Avenue.
- **SculpTour Sip & See**, which included wine tours (hence the "sip") of the new art, an opportunity to meet some of the featured artists and discuss their work, and a performance of *Memphis* by the Aurora Theatre.
- **Suwanee Jazz Fest**, starring five of the area's smoothest and most electric solo and group jazz artists, together for an evening of sounds, tastes, and experiences under the stars!



# WAS 40 MORE TFUL 2017

## SUWANEE'S FRONT PORCH

We did everything from hosting a lantern parade to traveling to *Memphis*, sipping wine to filming a television show this year!

We're not the only ones who think Town Center is amazing – in September 2017, the cast and crew of CBS' remake of *Dynasty* took over City Hall for a week to film! Serving as "Atlanta City Hall," Town Center was decked out for Christmas to film an episode that aired in early December.



## YOU'RE HOW OLD?

SOME BELOVED EVENTS CELEBRATED BIG BIRTHDAYS IN 2017!

**13** RED, WHITE, BLUEGRASS & BACH  
MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT

**14** AUGUST CONCERT & WING FEST

**13** TREK OR TREAT

**14** SUWANEE FEST RUN

**24** JOLLY HOLLY DAY (FORMERLY THE CABOOSE LIGHTING)

**34** SUWANEE FEST

YEARS

# THE ART IS FOR THE PUBLIC, AND THE PUBLIC IS FOR THE ART

Twenty or so prominent new residents moved to Suwanee in April of 2017 with the fifth installment of the city's popular **SculpTour temporary sculpture exhibition**. Since 2011, the award-winning SculpTour program has brought 79 sculptures to a walkable one-mile area of downtown Suwanee, not to mention the 18 pieces in the city's growing permanent collection. Currently, each round of SculpTour lasts approximately twenty-two months.

The votes are in, and the 2015-17 Suwanee SculpTour People's Choice winner was... **The Herd** by Phil Proctor! The Suwanee Public Arts Commission purchased the eight charming goats that reside near the cemetery at the corner of Buford Highway and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, making them the newest additions to Suwanee's permanent art collection. Fan favorites **Dancer XX** and **Friends** were also given a temporary extended stay.

If you're enjoying the Brushy Creek Greenway or PlayTown Suwanee, keep your eyes open for our two new residents! Brushy Bear (who watches over the playground) and Old Man Suwanee (who resides on the trail) are creations of John Greindl from Timber Wolf Chainsaw Carving. Artistic coloration comes to us compliments of the kids who attended Suwanee Fest 2016!

## BALANCED ▲ GROWTH

In 2017, the city embarked on updating its **Comprehensive Plan**. This city-wide plan is an important tool for guiding future decisions about where and how to manage population growth and development – **intentionally painting the picture** of what Suwanee should be in the year 2040. Smart planning and balanced growth continue to be of utmost importance as Suwanee continues to grow at pre-recession levels:

**5,707** INSPECTIONS

**184** SINGLE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS

**424** RESIDENTIAL HOUSING UNITS PERMITTED

**\$839,755** IN BUILDING PERMIT REVENUE

The City of Suwanee Downtown Development Authority, along with developer Terwilliger Pappas and Carlyle Realty Partners, broke ground on **Solis Town Center**: a mixed-use public-private development situated adjacent to Suwanee Town Center. Set on six acres, the property will also feature 12,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, 71 townhouses, and a parking garage around which the mixed-use structure will be built.

Previous city master plans – dating back to the 2002 Old Town Master Plan and through the 2015 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan Update – **created a vision for this property**, which will have a similar look and feel to the current Town Center area. The project also addresses several goals in the 20/20 Vision strategic plan, including extending Town Center, ensuring lifetime housing, and promoting a mixture of housing types.

The City of Suwanee **opportunistically purchased** the underdeveloped parcel adjacent to Town Center in 2010 to be held for future growth. The elements of design, connectivity, community, and sense of place will extend down a pedestrian-friendly Buford Highway, **setting the stage** as to what is expected of future development for the updated Buford Highway corridor.

## DOWNTOWN'S GROWTH SPURT

The City of Suwanee and Harvest Farm collaborated to develop the **first public orchard** and playground in the Southeast. Featuring a fully functional orchard open to the community, the Orchard at White Street Park was designed to provide families with a fun and engaging space that changes through the seasons, encourages creative and outdoor play, and grows fresh fruit.

All the hours of hard work put in by volunteers during spring, summer, and fall at the Orchard paid off big time in the winter – the Orchard was the recipient of not one, but TWO prestigious awards:

- The Georgia Urban Forest Council recognized the Orchard at White Street Park as its **2017 Outstanding New Initiative**
- Keep Georgia Beautiful chose the orchard for its 2017 **Community Beautification award**

# IT'S A MAJOR AWARD!

In 2017, the City of Suwanee voluntarily participated in its fifth **National Citizen Survey**, a statistically valid survey managed by the National Research Center that gathers resident opinions across a range of issues. As in previous years, residents' ratings put the city at or near the top in a variety of areas as compared to other communities across the country.

The overall quality of life in Suwanee was rated as **excellent or good** by 92 percent of residents, and 95 percent rated the city as an excellent or good place to live and raise children. More than nine out of ten respondents rated the City's overall image and appearance positively with almost all reporting that they would **recommend Suwanee as a place to live** (97 percent).



The Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council recognized Suwanee Municipal Court with the distinguished **Program of the Year** award for Suwanee's HOPE Court. The award honors courts throughout the state of Georgia that are making a difference. The awards committee selected Suwanee's HOPE Court for its efforts in educating first-time youth offenders and providing them with a second chance at maintaining their driving privileges.

The city was on a **winning streak** in 2017, hauling in nearly 25 awards and recognitions over the course of the year for financial reporting, publications, events, performance management, and more.

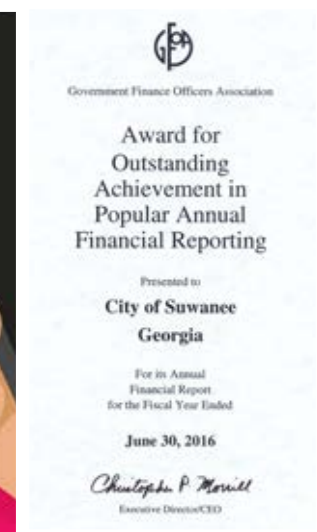
- #3 ON THE LIST OF MOST SUCCESSFUL CITIES IN GEORGIA** – Zippia
- PROGRAM OF THE YEAR** Hope Court, Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council
- BEST PLAYGROUND** PlayTown Suwanee, – *Atlanta Parent*
- #4 BEST SUBURB IN GEORGIA** – Niche.com
- 100 MOST GENIUS PLACES IN AMERICA LIST** – *Time* magazine
- BEST NEW EVENT** Silver, for Guess Who's Coming to Cocktails, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- BEST EVENT VIDEO** Silver, for Guess Who's Coming to Cocktails, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- BEST PRINT AD** Bronze, for Guess Who's Coming to Cocktails, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- MOST CREATIVE IDEA** Bronze, for Suwanee Youth Leaders/Suwanee Fest Transportation Collaboration, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- IMPACT HOSPITALITY AWARD** – Gwinnett Chamber
- CERTIFICATE OF DISTINCTION FOR SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT** International City/County Management Association
- OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN POPULAR FINANCIAL REPORTING AWARD** Government Finance Officers Association
- EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING** Government Finance Officers Association
- DISTINGUISHED BUDGET PRESENTATION AWARD** Government Finance Officers Association
- AAA Bond Rating** Standard & Poor
- MAIN STREET ACROSS AMERICA** Town Center Avenue, National Life Group
- BRONZE WORKPLACE HEALTH ACHIEVEMENT** SWELL Program, American Heart Association
- BEST IN SHOW** 2015 Annual Report, PIAG Print Excellence Awards
- AWARD OF RECOGNITION** 2015 Annual Report, Premier Print Awards
- 2017 OUTSTANDING NEW INITIATIVE** The Orchard at White Street Park, Georgia Urban Forest Council Award
- 2017 COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION AWARD** The Orchard at White Street Park, Keep Georgia Beautiful
- NATIONAL MAIN STREET ACROSS AMERICA** Town Center Avenue, National Life Group
- 2017 CROWN COMMUNITY AWARD** American City & County

The City of Suwanee strives to share financial information openly with citizens and others. In an effort to provide an easy to understand summary of the City's financial activities, the City prepares a Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR). The data for this report was taken from our audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017 and includes financial data from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, unless otherwise stated.

Each year the City of Suwanee prepares an audited CAFR that provides detailed information about the City's financial position. 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.

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 PAFR for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. 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 PAFR 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.



**16,000+ FOLLOWERS**  
(12% INCREASE FROM 2016)

**7,100+ FOLLOWERS**  
(12% INCREASE FROM 2016)

**1,600 FOLLOWERS**  
(73% INCREASE FROM 2016)

# SO CI AL M EDIA

# PRETTY FUNCTIONAL

Did you know the high heel was invented for function, rather than fashion? (Persian warriors wore them riding horseback into war, as the heel allowed their feet to better fit the stirrups and allowed him to steady himself.) The perfect marriage of beauty and practicality can also be found in a number of projects the City of Suwanee completed in 2017 – purposeful, yet aesthetically pleasing:

- The I-85 overpass on Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road bridge received quite a facelift: where there was once old, dilapidated chain link fencing, there is now **wrought iron-style fencing** with multiple **illuminated Suwanee S's** to brand the area.
- Smithtown Road is now **connected** from one end to the other by a 1.3-mile long, six-foot wide sidewalk.
- The Ruby Forest neighborhood is now **connected** to George Pierce Park by an 800-foot long, five-foot wide trail, running from the Ruby Forest recreation area to an adult softball field at the park.
- Local scouts **contributed multiple projects** to Suwanee city parks, trails, and greenways, including new benches at White Street Park, an announcement board at the disc golf course at Suwanee Creek Park, a human sundial at Sims Lake Park, and Free Little Libraries at Suwanee Creek Park, White Street Park, and PlayTown Suwanee.
- Four miles of city streets were **resurfaced**, a project which consisted of milling, patching, resurfacing, shoulder work, and pavement markings, as well as a short section of milling and patching on Smithtown Road and correction of water ponding on a small section of Station Center Boulevard.
- In an agreement with Georgia Power, **712 city streetlights** were changed to LED lights.
- **Trail marker signs** along the Suwanee Creek Greenway from Suwanee Creek Park to George Pierce Park were refurbished or replaced.

## NOW HEAR THIS

In 2017, all **election materials were translated into Spanish**; allowing more residents to be informed voters and participate effectively in our representative democracy.

The Suwanee Municipal Court and Police Department began working together to identify those who may benefit from interpretation assistance during their court session and these customers are scheduled for our **Language Court**. During court, an online interpreter is on standby to provide services in over 240 languages so that our customers can easily communicate with the prosecutors, judges, and staff. Additionally, **two judges are bilingual** (fluent in Spanish and Korean). For our customers who speak languages other than English, this service provides a friendly, accessible environment and ensures they are comfortable in our court and can comprehend the proceedings. For the City, this innovative solution has proven to be an efficient and cost-effective alternative to hiring in-person translators.

## SAFE & SOUND

The Suwanee Police Department equipped 27 of its patrol officers with **body-worn cameras** in an effort to improve transparency and enhance the credibility of the police. Footage can be used as evidence, to improve the accuracy of report writing (equating to fewer cases going to trial and less time spent in court), and to show the officer's line-of-sight point of view, providing realistic information about the situation the officer was in at the time.

Other 2017 police accomplishments include recertifying every P.A.C.T. (Police and Community Together) neighborhood, completing **5,554 officer training hours**, growing the Youth Explorers program, and **a reduction in street accidents** for the first time in seven years.

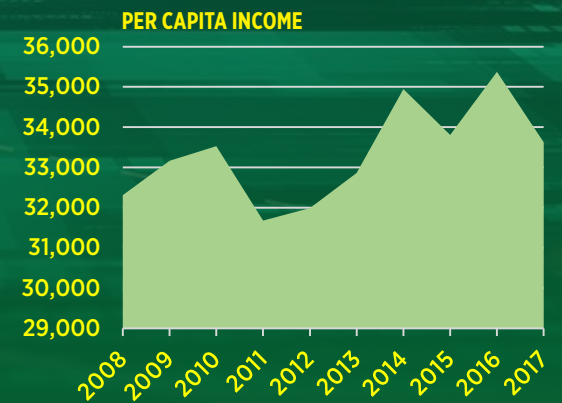
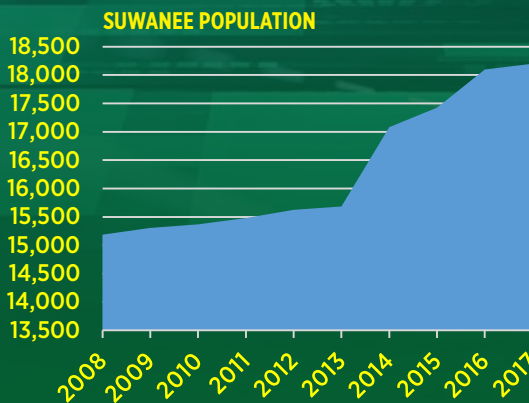
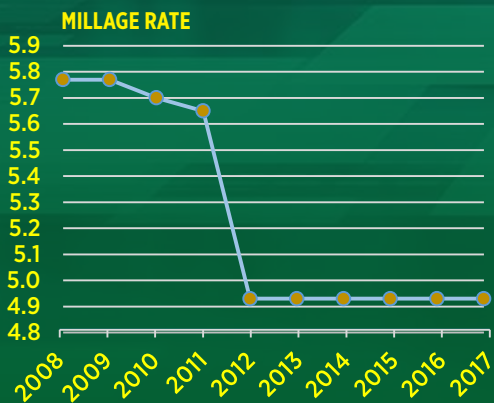
The City of Suwanee also partnered with Atlanta-based Street Grace to provide a comprehensive path to **end sex trafficking in metro Atlanta** and throughout the United States. Since the City Council's unanimous vote to partner with Street Grace, the entire city staff has participated in their Demand an End training which included how to recognize and report suspected cases in the community, with the goal of protecting our youth from sexual exploitation.

# FINANCIALS

The City of Suwanee began FY2018 July 1 with a \$12.9 million balanced operating budget. This year's budget represents a 4.2 percent increase over the \$12.4 million adopted budget for the recently ended FY2018. The FY2018 budget is based upon a millage rate of 4.93 mills; Suwanee's **millage rate has stayed the same (or lowered)** for the past 14 years.

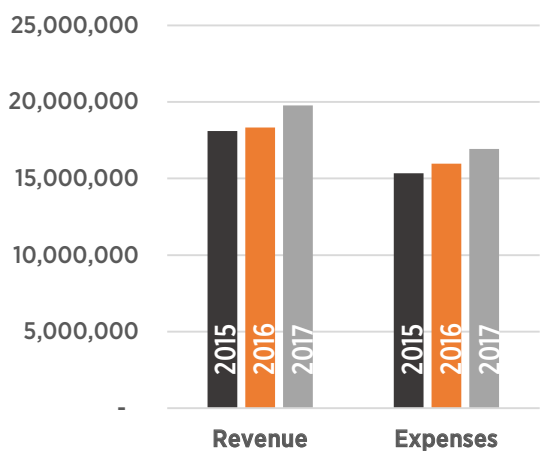
During the summer of 2017, the city received a **AAA long-term bond rating** from Standard & Poor's Global Ratings. This is the highest rating attainable and allows the city to borrow at the best rates possible in order to undertake a series of planned projects sooner. The city leveraged an excellent bond rating while rates were at near-historic lows.

Suwanee's Urban Redevelopment Agency **issued approximately \$21.4 million in bonds** at an all-in true 3.31 percent interest rate for **urban redevelopment projects** such as parks, transportation, and administrative facilities. The primary project associated with these bonds will be the development of a large, 25-acre extension of Town Center Park.



## REVENUES & EXPENSES

Revenues represent dollars received, and expenses are costs associated with providing services.

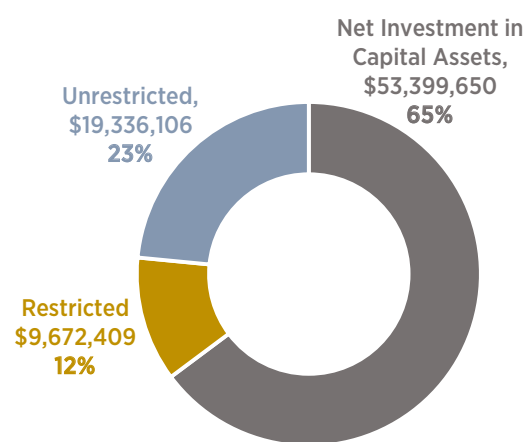


The three-year history above shows that revenues have increased by \$1,663,939 (9%) from 2015 to 2017 and by \$1,427,324 (8%) from 2016 to 2017. The majority of the difference between 2016 and 2017 is due to 2017 increases in capital grants and contributions (\$1,679,647) and property tax revenues (\$448,923).

The three-year history also demonstrates that expenses have increased at a similar rate as revenues over the three year period. Expenses increased from 2015 to 2017 by \$1,588,557 (10%) and they increased by \$951,873 (6%) from 2016 to 2017. The majority of the increase from 2016 to 2017 is due to street repairs and resurfacing.

## WHAT THE CITY OWNS & OWES

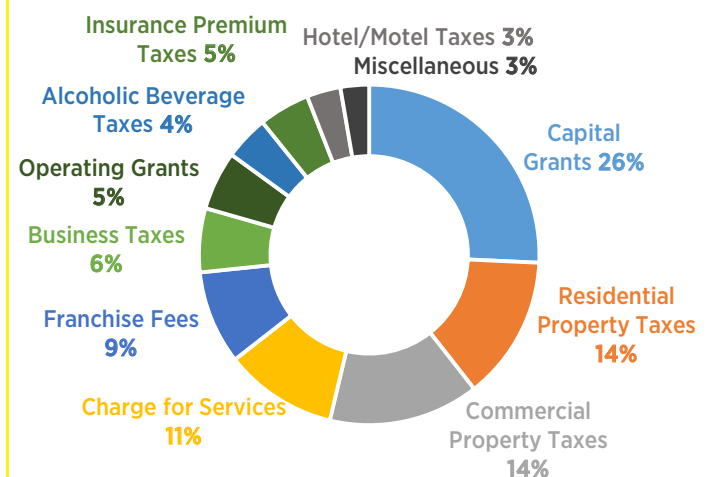
Net position summarizes everything the City owns and owes. It provides a snapshot of the City's financial health at the end of the fiscal year.



The largest portion of Suwanee's net position (65%) 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. Resources needed to repay any debt must be provided from other sources, since capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate debt.

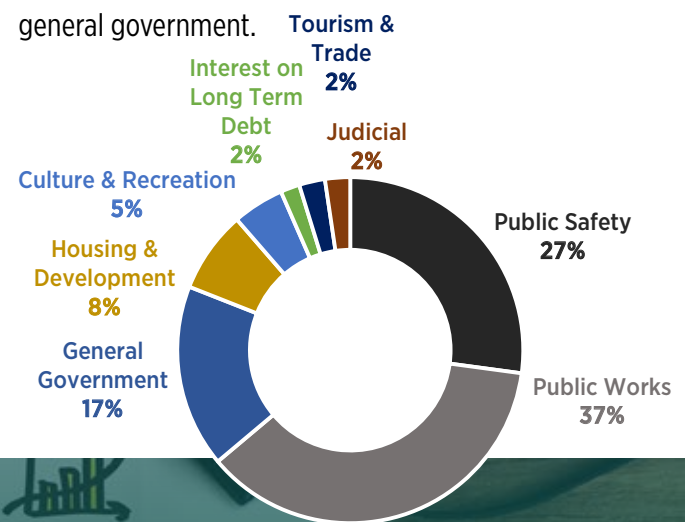
## WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

Total revenues for fiscal year 2017 were \$19,766,232, of which 28% was from property taxes. Other main revenues sources include capital grants (26%), charges for services (11%), and franchise fees (9%).



## WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The City's expenses totaled \$16,923,293 for fiscal year 2017: 37% was related to public works, 27% to public safety (police services), and 17% to general government.



## GLOSSARY:

### WHAT DOES THE CITY OWN AND OWE?

**Net Investment in Capital Assets** - The difference between the amounts paid for capital assets 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 projects as required by law or regulations. Examples included Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and resources collected for future debt payments.

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

### WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

**Grants** - Include operating and capital grants. Operating grants are used for day-to-day operations of the City. Capital grants are used for capital purposes, such as building roads, sidewalks, facilities, etc.

**Charges for Services** - Fees collected for services rendered, such as court fines, building inspections permits, water usage fees, etc.

**Franchise Fees** - Fees collected from utility companies for the use of City streets and right-of-ways, in order to provide services, such as natural gas, telephone, cable television, and fiber optics cable services.

**Business Taxes** - Revenues from occupational licenses issued to businesses and financial institutions.

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

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

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

**Other** - Includes monies earned from investments of City funds, donations, and rental fees.

### WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

**Public Safety** - Costs associated with maintaining a police department which includes maintenance of order, law, safety, and other matters effecting the public welfare.

**Public Works** - Costs of maintaining City facilities, right-of-ways, paved streets, storm drainage, and municipal water system.

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

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

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

**Interest on Long-Term Debt** - Cost of interest payments for parks, open space, and construction of City Hall.

**Other** - Cost of municipal court operations and tourism.

The City of Suwanee made an intentional choice to use recycled paper on this year's annual report, resulting in a reduced environmental impact:



**1,737** lbs of landfill



**257** lbs CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gases



**6,002** gallons of water



**1,356** kWh of energy



**2,822** lbs of wood

# LIVE where

# You love.

# LOVE where

# You live.

# GO where you

# feel alive.

city of  
**SUWANEE** Georgia

## CITY COUNCIL

**MAYOR** Jimmy Burnette 770-868-7115  
**COUNCIL** Dan Foster 678-404-9641  
Dick Goodman 678-446-7520  
Beth Hilscher 678-546-3388  
Doug Ireland 770-265-0880  
Linnea Miller 678-592-4150

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

**CITY MANAGER** Marty Allen 770-945-8996  
**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER** Denise Brinson 770-904-3385  
**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES** Elvira Rogers 770-904-3376  
**BUSINESS SERVICES** Jessica Roth 770-904-2789  
**FINANCIAL SERVICES** Amie Sakmar 770-904-2797  
**PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS** Josh Campbell 770-904-3372  
**POLICE CHIEF** Mike Jones 770-904-7611  
**PUBLIC WORKS** James Miller 770-904-3373

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