



Annual Report 2014

XOXO

lol :)

:-)

Hey!



Cover and this photo by Bill Mahan



A GLOBAL PAT ON THE BACK

Most the time you know when you've done a good job, whether it's a long-term project you've tackled at work or a "yes, I nailed it!" moment when you offered your child just the right words at just the right time – and you can tell that they really got it. Still, it's always more gratifying when others recognize your hard work – when your boss offers you a well-earned promotion or your now-grown child sends you a "now I get it; thanks, mom" text.

That proud, warm, fuzzy feeling? That's kind of how the City of Suwanee feels about its 2014 year, having been recognized by two well-respected global organizations. Enthusiastically stating (we imagine) that "We consider the City's economy to be very strong," Standard & Poor's (S&P) upgraded Suwanee's bond rating last spring to AAA, the highest level available. Suwanee is one of only four Georgia cities to receive a AAA rating from S&P.

In the fall, a multinational internet services and product firm — perhaps you've heard of it — called Google singled out Suwanee as having Georgia's strongest online business community. Google named Suwanee Georgia's digital capital and one of 50 e-cities around the country.

While the City is extremely proud of this recognition from Google, we realize that, like many of our achievements, much of the credit belongs to our community, in this case to our local businesses who actively use technology to enhance their business and their customers' experiences.

The nods from Google and S&P may be the most name-worthy acknowledgments earned by the City of Suwanee in 2014, but they are by no means the only recognitions and awards earned. We tally at least 15 more, several of them noted elsewhere in this annual report.

And like the Google and S&P recognitions, these achievements are more than the sum of the vision established by City Council and the day-to-day endeavor of staff to exceed expectations. All of the achievements noted in this report belong to the entire community — to the residents who work alongside us as volunteers, who offer suggestions for better ways to do things, who serve on boards, who inspire us with kind words, and who, often in small ways and sometimes in big ones, work to make Suwanee a great place to live. To all of you, we say: Keep it coming!



NEW IN 2014

- About 50 local high school students completed the inaugural **Suwanee Youth Leaders** program, meeting with a variety of community leaders, developing their individual leadership philosophies and skills, and logging in more than 700 community volunteer hours over an eight-month period.
- With hole names like “The Intimidator” and “Fairway to Heaven,” **a new disc golf course was opened** at Suwanee Creek Park. A tournament organized by the Gwinnett Disc Golf Organization christened the 18-hole course on May 3.
- Utilizing software implemented in 2013, the City was able to make online payments for taxes, water bills, and other miscellaneous charges available to residents. Links to these payment options are available at **suwanee.com**.
- Hollywood stars and motion pictures aren’t ubiquitous in Suwanee just yet, but the City is ready with a **commercial film policy** that seeks to balance the interests of Georgia’s burgeoning film industry with public accessibility to community facilities. Last year, a couple of reality TV programs, commercials, and an HGTV short program were filmed in Suwanee.



“What a wonderful surprise I had last evening with a group of friends. We were all enjoying a round of disc golf at the new course at Suwanee Creek Park when it happened. On hole 4, my disc came to rest near a tree just off the fairway and there it was. A wonderful gift from a program called Art on a Limb. This beautiful garden dish will certainly be used! Thank you so much for this gift!”

Mike McKennon, May 29 Facebook post regarding Suwanee’s annual Art on a Limb program

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 have 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, the financial information presented here summarizes and simplifies the presentation of information in the CAFR. Financial data provided is for fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014) unless otherwise stated.

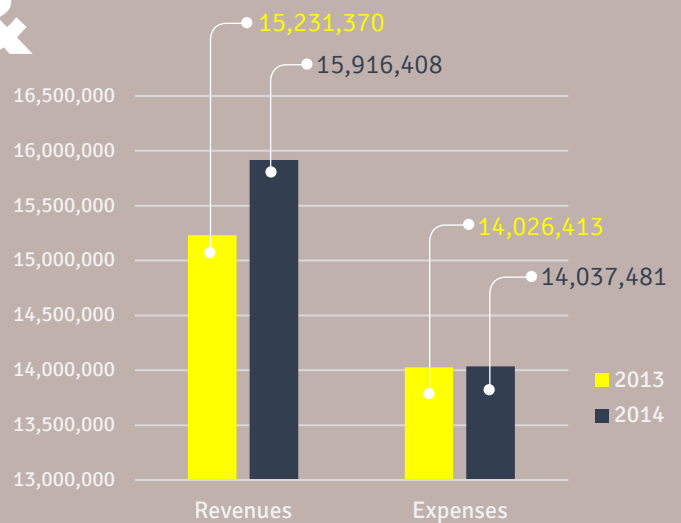
- For the first time, Suwanee employed border collies as a humane strategy to “evict” often messy, noisy, rude, and, sometimes, aggressive geese from Sims Lake Park. These four-legged **geese police** have proven effective in convincing geese to move on while not affecting other water fowl, such as ducks.
- Embracing technology, the planning department facilitated **online inspection scheduling** for the first time and acquired two tablets for use by inspectors in the field.
- The police department purchased and equipped a Dodge Ram ProMaster van to be used to process crime scenes and as an incident command center. The department’s **super-sized “Swiss Army knife,”** the van is equipped with two generators, a dual-monitor computer system, and high-definition antenna as well as a plethora of crime scene equipment, including cameras, finger- and footprint kits, tyvex suits, respirators, and measuring tools.



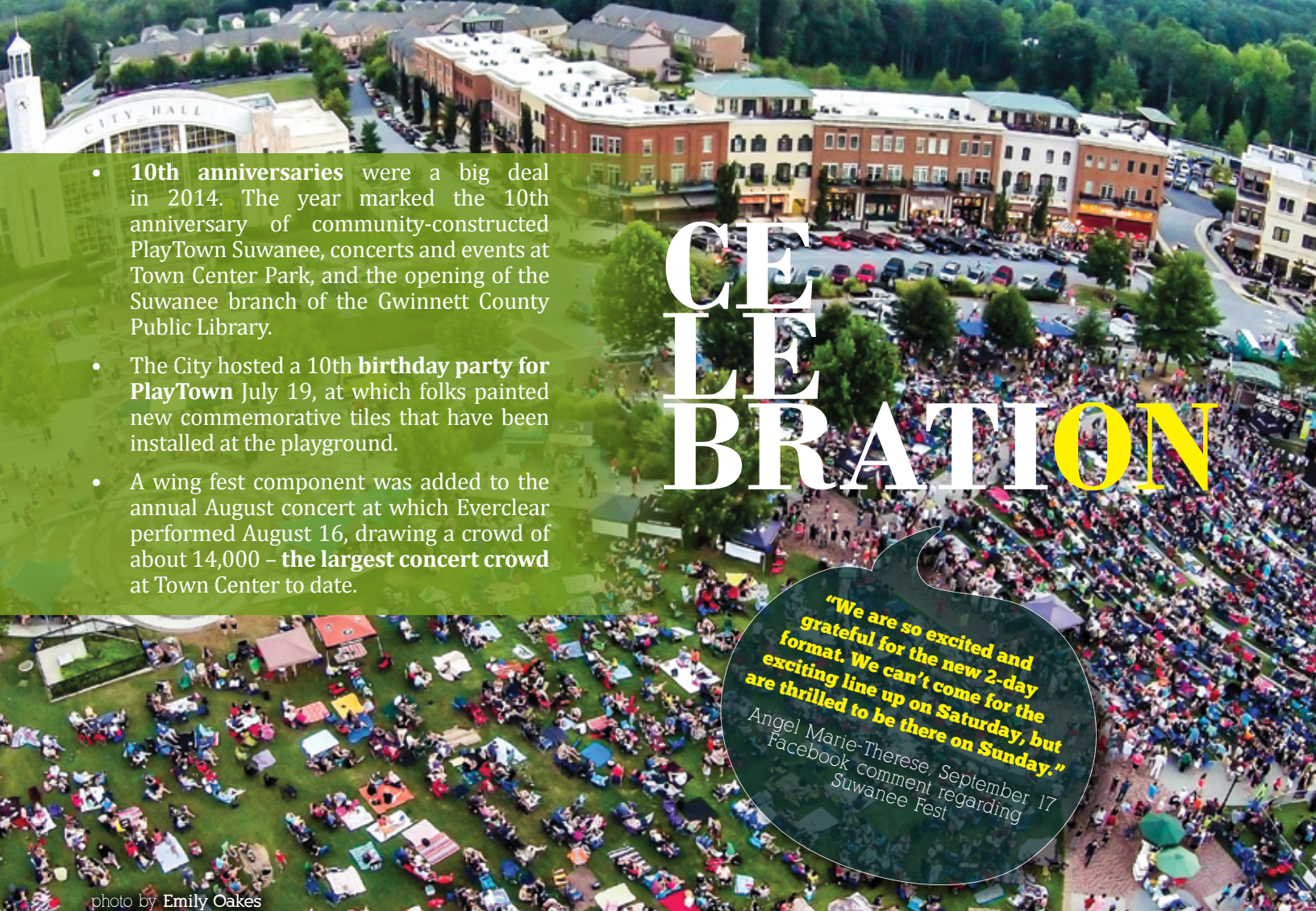
REVENUES & EXPENSES

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

The two-year history to the right shows that revenues increased by \$685,038 (4%) from 2013 to 2014. This difference is due primarily to a \$570,437 increase in municipal traffic fines. During fiscal year 2013, several police positions were unfilled due to injuries, deployment, and vacancies. With reduced manpower, special enforcement units were re-allocated to patrol resulting in a decrease in citations issued in fiscal year 2013.



The two-year history also demonstrates that expenses have remained stable over the two-year period with a slight increase (less than 1%) in expenses in fiscal year 2014 of \$11,068.



- **10th anniversaries** were a big deal in 2014. The year marked the 10th anniversary of community-constructed PlayTown Suwanee, concerts and events at Town Center Park, and the opening of the Suwanee branch of the Gwinnett County Public Library.
- The City hosted a 10th **birthday party for PlayTown** July 19, at which folks painted new commemorative tiles that have been installed at the playground.
- A wing fest component was added to the annual August concert at which Everclear performed August 16, drawing a crowd of about 14,000 – **the largest concert crowd** at Town Center to date.

CELEBRATION

"We are so excited and grateful for the new 2-day format. We can't come for the exciting line up on Saturday, but are thrilled to be there on Sunday."

Angel Marie-Therese, September 17
Facebook comment regarding Suwanee Fest

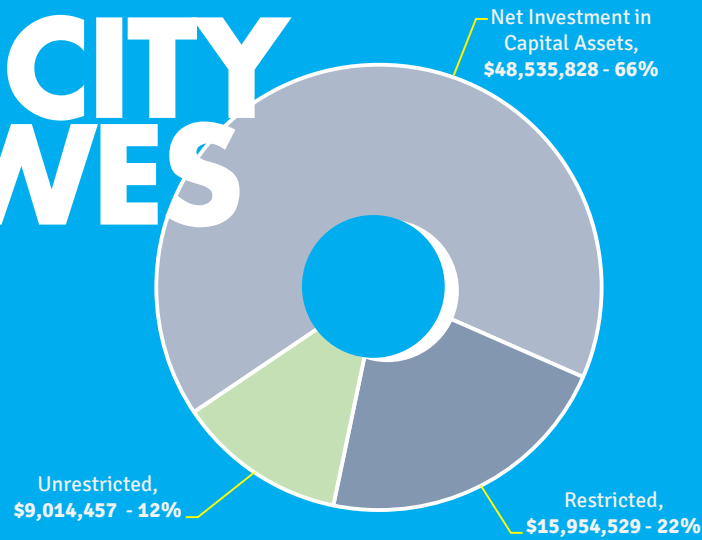
photo by Emily Oakes

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 Suwanee's net position (66%) 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, as resources needed to repay the debt must be provided from other sources; capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate 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.

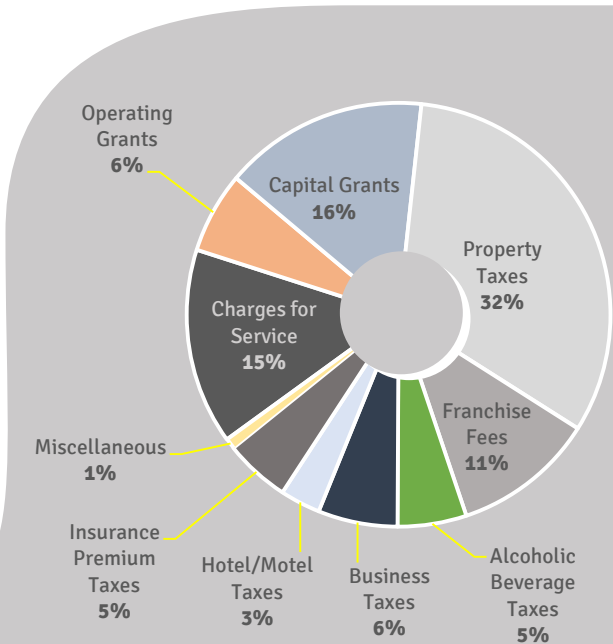


Restricted - Funds that are not available for general use by the City because they must be used for a specific purpose or project as required by law or regulation. Examples include Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and future debt service payments.

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

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

- With fresh photos and data, Suwanee **updated and redesigned several brochures** that have been key pieces in its marketing toolbox, including a piece that typically goes to prospective residents, a visitors guide available at Visitor Centers around the state, City map, SculpTour/public art brochure, and downtown brochure.
- Anticipating the kind of information that its citizens and others on the go are searching for, the City of Suwanee revamped its **mobile website** to function much like a downloadable app. Check it out at m.suwanee.com.
- The Suwanee Police Department incorporated the City's new logo (adopted in 2013) as well as a retro look in a **motor pool makeover**. The department's redesigned black-and-white vehicles offer a throwback to policing tradition. Officers also are wearing new patches on their uniforms that reflect the City's updated logo.
- In addition to the August concert, **Suwanee revamped other events** in its popular repertoire. Suwanee Day, the City's annual "celebration of community" was rebranded as Suwanee Fest and expanded to two days. Based on feedback, the decision to go two days appears a popular one with vendors as well as area residents. The City also rebranded the annual caboose lighting in Old Town as Suwanee's Jolly Holly-day and, after careful consideration and with pangs of bittersweet nostalgia, moved the event to Town Center Park.



WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

Total revenues for fiscal year 2014 were \$15,916,408, of which 32% was from property taxes. Other main revenue sources include capital grants (16%), charges for service (15%), and franchise fees (11%).

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 and 2014 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.

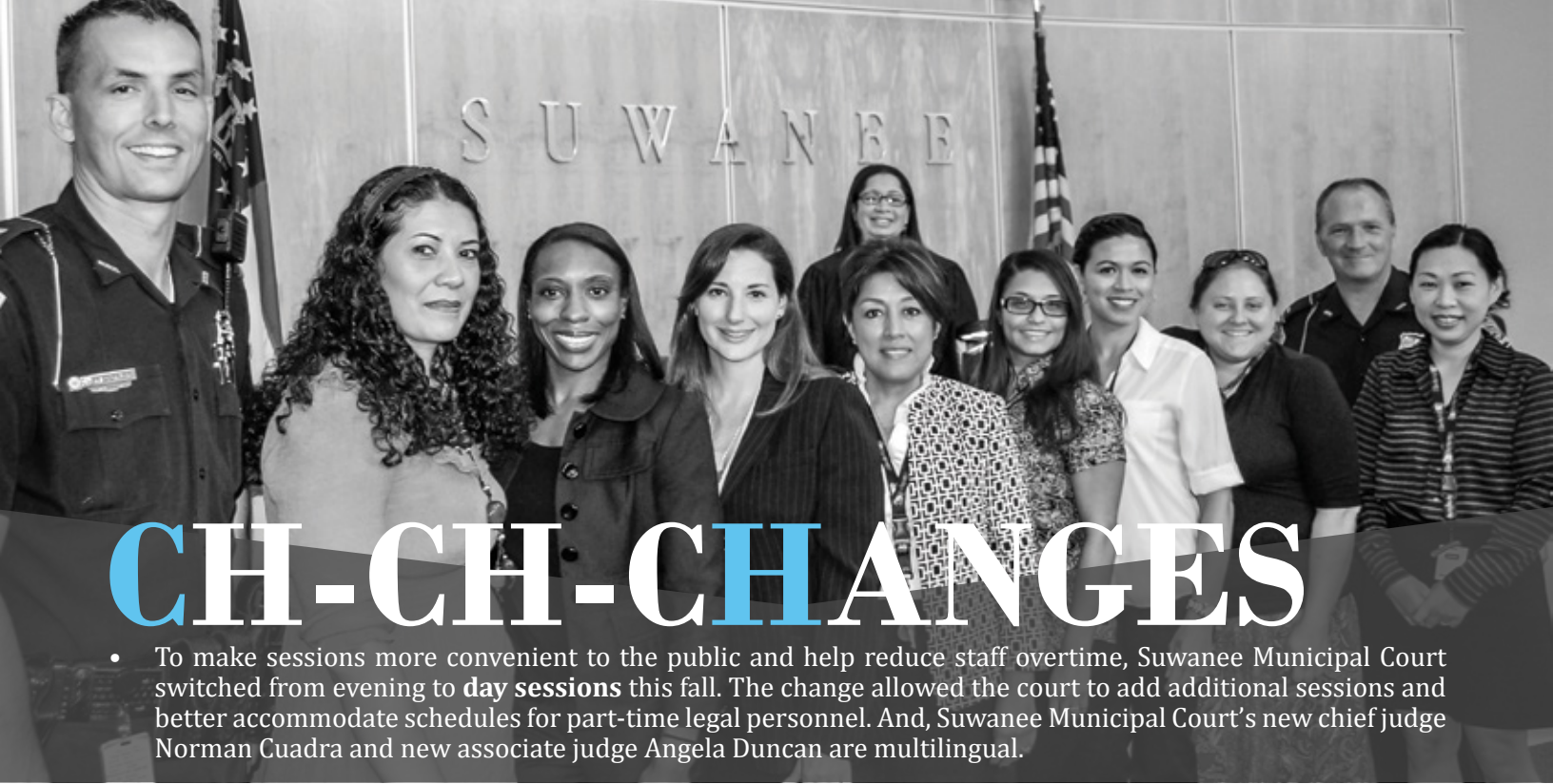
Alcoholic Beverage Taxes - Taxes on the sale, distribution, or consumption of distilled spirits, malt beverages, and wine.

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.



CH-CH-CHANGES

- To make sessions more convenient to the public and help reduce staff overtime, Suwanee Municipal Court switched from evening to **day sessions** this fall. The change allowed the court to add additional sessions and better accommodate schedules for part-time legal personnel. And, Suwanee Municipal Court’s new chief judge Norman Cuadra and new associate judge Angela Duncan are multilingual.
- If the number of **building-related inspections** is any indication, 2014 marks the year that Suwanee emerged from the economic and development doldrums of the last few years. Since 2009, annual inspections have totaled less than 2,000. In 2014, the planning department conducted 4,614 such inspections, nearly as many as the 4,687 conducted in 2008.
- The Reserve at Moore Road represents the **first new neighborhood** to start development in the City in more than five years.
- To provide more direct and efficient services to the many customers who seek to undertake financial and other transactions with the City, **a new department was formed**. The Business Services Department manages the Suwanee Municipal Court and assists businesses with licenses and fees as well as residents with paying City of Suwanee water bills and taxes.
- Through legislative annexation during the 2014 General Assembly, **North Gwinnett High School** officially became part of the City of Suwanee limits.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The City’s expenses totaled \$14,037,481 for fiscal year 2014. Thirty percent of expenses were related to both public safety and public works, and 16% 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.

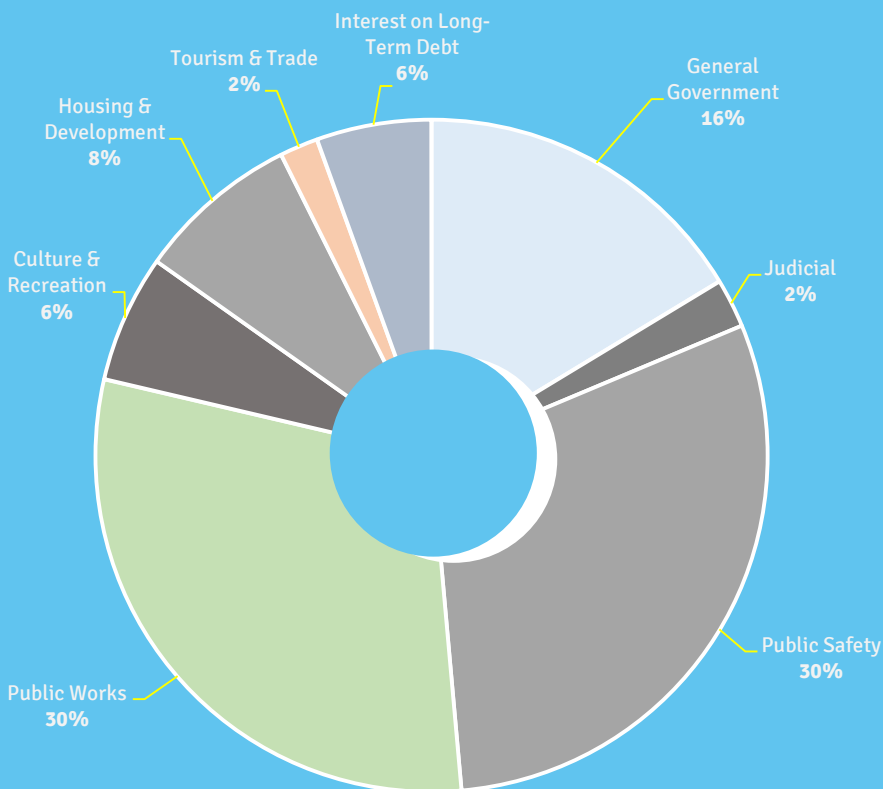
Interest on Long-Term Debt - Costs associated with interest payments on general obligation bonds for parks and open space and revenue bonds for construction of City Hall.



EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY SERVICE

The City's employee-managed and employee-targeted **wellness program**, SWELL, shifted into high gear in 2014. Through the program, the City purchased a tread desk and employees participated in Dietbets, biometric screenings, Lunch and Learn sessions, Yoga in the Park, Walk Across Georgia, races, and other efforts to improve individual health.

- The context-sensitive, multi-modal roadway **reconstruction of Buford Highway** continues to move forward, with construction expected to get underway sometime in 2016. In October, about 50 residents attended a project open house at which broad concept plans were shared.
- A survey of 167 individuals who attended Suwanee Municipal Court in February found that those who visit the court **feel safe** and believe that their cases are handled fairly.
- The police department obtained **new software that permits forensic analysis** of cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices. Using the Paraben software, Suwanee officers found photos of stolen items being sold via Instagram on suspects' phones and were able to make arrests in a string of automobile break-ins.
- Suwanee Municipal Court introduced an **additional, multilingual payment solution** through nCourt that allows citations to be paid 24/7 via telephone.



"Thank you for clearing the roads so quickly in our neighborhood!"
 Karen Tevis in a February 13 Facebook comment, following the second of metro Atlanta's winter 2014 snow/ice events

EXPANDING HORIZONS

The City partnered with several groups this year to further share the Suwanee story and generate excitement about economic development opportunities:

- Joe Minicozzi, an economic analysis consultant from Asheville, North Carolina, shared findings of his firm's study of Gwinnett County's development patterns with about 60 residents and business owners who attend his City Hall presentation on March 11. That study by Urban³ found that **Town Center presents an "excellent example** of how managing and focusing growth can exponentially enhance the financial efficiency of development."
- 39 planners attending the American Planning Association's national conference in Atlanta were **wowed by Town Center** – the vision and the reality – when they road-tripped to Suwanee to participate in a mobile workshop.
- On August 18, the City partnered with the Gwinnett Chamber's Small Business Resources Coalition to offer tips and resources for entrepreneurs through a **Small Business Essentials seminar**. It was the Chamber's best attended seminar of the year.

WHERE DID MY PROPERTY TAXES GO?



$$\$7 + \$20 + \$4 + \$15 + \$21 + \$13 + \$103 + \$14 + \$57 + \$21 + \$124 + \$45 = \$444$$

* Non-Department = law, data processing, general government building

photo by Lesa Kelley Osborne

ADDITIONAL NOTE - WORTHY NODS

"I just wanted to let you guys know how much I appreciated your parks and rec staff today! I was at Sims Lake Park and ended up with a completely flat tire. While I was trying to change it, [Jarred], Juan, and [Graeme] all came to my rescue and changed it for me.... I'm so thankful you guys have such a caring staff. It makes Suwanee parks such a nice place."

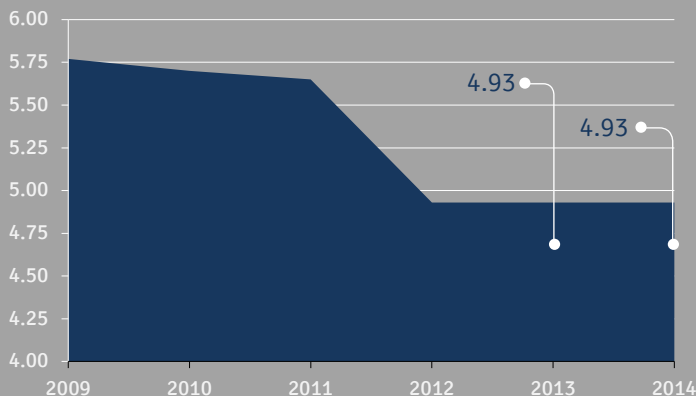
Sugar Hill resident Taylor Roberts via the "Contact Us" link at suwanee.com

- Along with Sharon, Massachusetts, and Sherwood, Oregon, Suwanee was named one of three **"Best Small Cities to Raise a Family"** by RealEstate.com.
- Suwanee was re-certified as a **green community** by the Atlanta Regional Commission. One new green effort initiated by the City this year was the installation of containers for recyclable materials at Town Center Park.
- The City of Suwanee is in the inaugural class of 10 Georgia communities to be recognized for planning excellence. **PlanFirst designation** from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs allows Suwanee to take advantage of various incentives, including public visibility, eligibility for funding, and certain reduced interest loans.

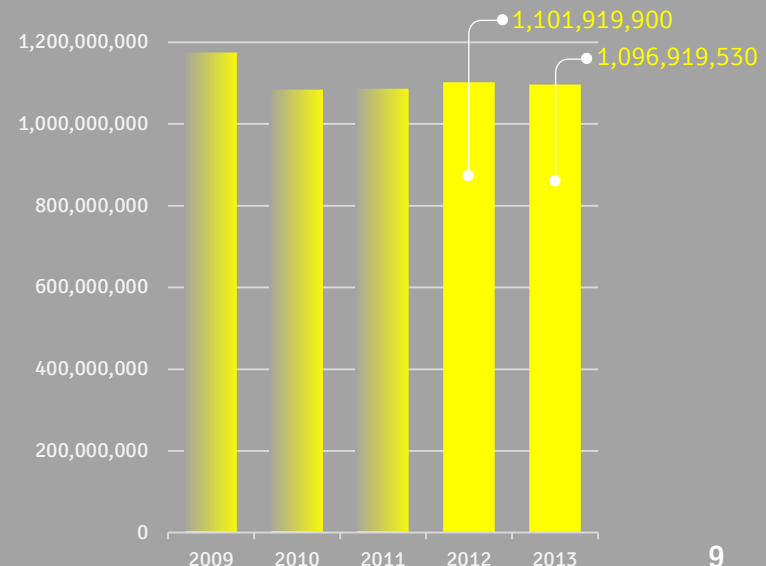


In 2014, median home value in Suwanee was \$225,000, and the typical resident paid about \$444 in property taxes. Suwanee's millage rate for fiscal year 2014 was 4.93, the same as in fiscal year 2013. The chart on page 8 answers a common question asked by residents: "Where did my property taxes go?"

MILLAGE RATE 2010-2014



TAXABLE ASSESSED VALUE OF PROPERTY BY CALENDAR YEAR



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

2014 BY THE NUMBERS



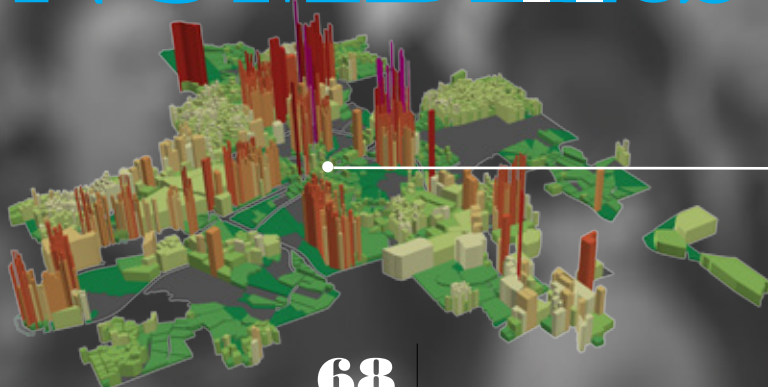
17
Public art pieces added to Suwanee's permanent collection since public arts initiative was begun in 2007. This includes publicly and privately acquired pieces.

\$30,243

Per acre property tax generated by Town Center (as reported in a study of Gwinnett County's development patterns); a typical Walmart generates about \$5,008 per acre.

55

Number of lots to be developed in the Reserve at Moore Road, the first new neighborhood to be started in Suwanee in more than 5 years



68

DUI arrests

16,929

Total citations issued by Suwanee Police Department

729

Participants in 99 Police & Citizens Together (PACT) meetings in neighborhoods throughout Suwanee

990

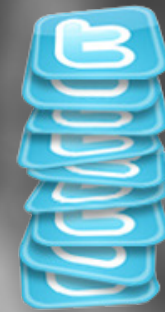
Roadway crashes, UP 4.9% OVER 2013

5,506

Training hours logged by 521 individuals from other law enforcement agencies at the police training center in the Gateway

260

Accident-related injuries, DOWN 4.4% FROM 2013



4,171

@CityofSuwanee
Twitter followers, UP 48%

9,335

City of Suwanee
Facebook followers, UP 26%



3,488.3

Miles "walked" by Suwanee employees participating in Walk Georgia, a statewide wellness initiative. That's the distance from Suwanee to Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada



37.5%

People who access suwanee.com via a mobile device

920

Hours spent by public works staff picking up litter

4.9

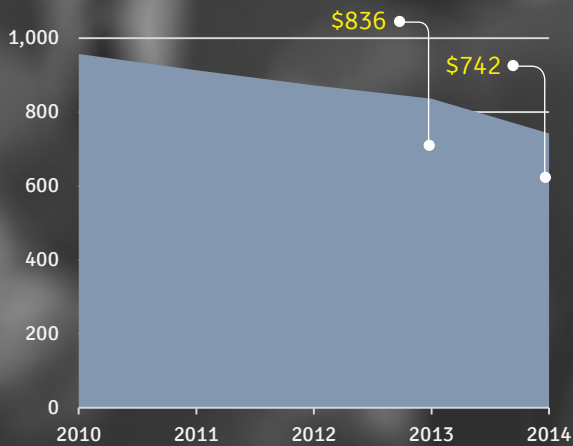
Miles of City roadway resurfaced in 2014.



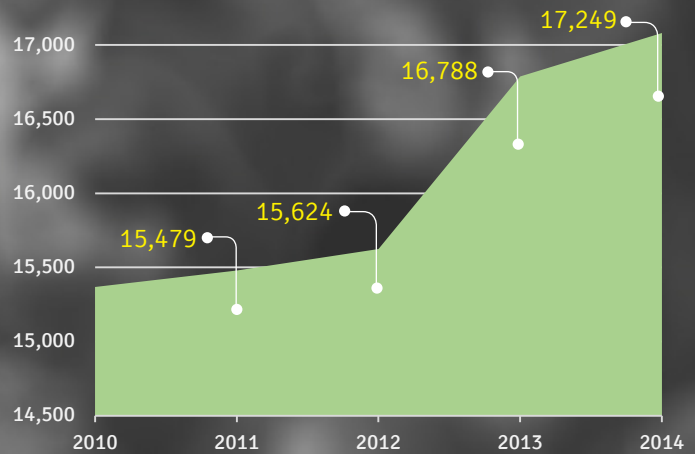
"I have to tell you I just LOVE the City of Suwanee. No one anywhere would believe the amazing service our City provides and it isn't the first time. Consistently Suwanee is the most responsive and proactive city I have ever lived in or heard about.... I've attached the notarized request form along with the sketch as to where to place the two loads of rock. Believe it or not, the City has already met with my neighbor and discussed where to place it. You have to admit that is amazing."

Sue Hyzer in a January 16 email

CITY OF SUWANEES DEBT PER CAPITA



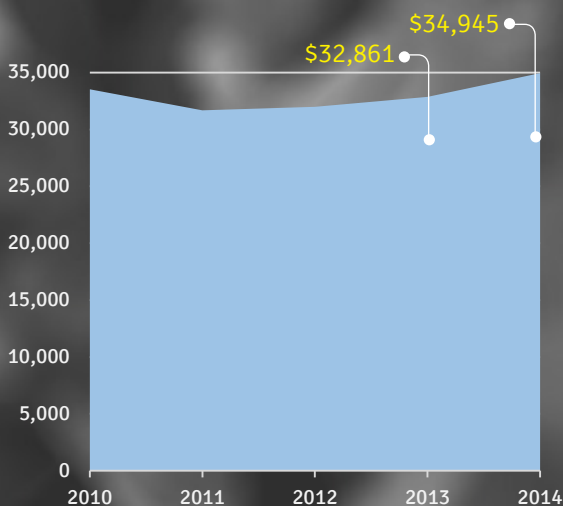
SUWANEES POPULATION



Suwanee's estimated population as of 12/31/2014; up 5,632 since 2005

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.

PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME



10 TOP PROPERTY TAX-PAYERS 2013

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

10 TOP EMPLOYERS

- Southeastern Freight Lines, Inc.
- Meggitt Training Systems, Inc.
- Wal-Mart
- Staffing Solutions Southeast
- Kroger Company
- Flowers Bakers
- Publix Supermarkets
- Quality Technology Services
- Lowes
- Blockbuster Textiles, Inc.

Source: City of Suwanee Financial Services Department



Join the BEST
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Chicago
WILLARD
BINDERS
The Chick-fil-ly
poseygraphix.com
FRANK CARROLL
ASSOCIATES



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, 2013 and, in non-financial areas, for the 2013 calendar year. 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.



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, 2013

Jeffrey R. Egan
Executive Director/CEO



Wow!!!

See you!

Thank you :)



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
	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