

CITY OF SUWANEE

2005-06

ANNUAL REPORT

Beyond Government as Usual

When one looks up the word “government” in *Webster’s* there’s no mention of terms such as bold...responsive...community-driven...hard-working...high quality...engaging. But “government” as practiced by the City of Suwanee is, we hope, each of these things.

Each year as we go about the challenging business of serving well our growing number of citizens, the City of Suwanee strives to do so more efficiently, more effectively, better than in the previous year. And while the City has enjoyed much success and a good deal of recognition over the past few years, its elected officials and dedicated staff members endeavor to never be satisfied with the status quo.

As the City of Suwanee has gone about its business of government over the past fiscal year, July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006, it has attempted once again to deliver beyond our constituents’ expectations, beyond government as usual. We proudly share with you highlights from a busy year filled with bold...community-driven...quality achievements.

“Suwanee is not perfect, but is GREAT!”

–Citizen comment on a park system survey



‘Downtown Suwanee’ comes alive

- **The first three businesses at Town Center opened** their doors in April. The businesses—Ameriprise Financial, Executive Barbers, and Sweet Temptations—are located in the Main Street Corners building, the first mixed-use facility to be completed at Town Center.
- **The fourth and final available parcel at Town Center has been claimed.** Within the past year, Madison Retail, which now has rights to three of the four parcels, signed a letter of intent for the Town Center Avenue/Lawrenceville-Suwanee corner tract, closed on another parcel at the site, and nearly completed construction on its first parcel, where businesses and residents are expected to move in this fall.

- **Initial planning for a new City Hall**, to be located at Town Center, got underway. Eighteen metro-area architectural firms submitted letters of interest in Suwanee's City Hall design competition. Three finalists presented designs for the City's consideration in July.
- For the third consecutive year, Suwanee's downtown revitalization efforts earned it accreditation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a **National Main Street community**.
- The City's **first Downtown Suwanee Manager** was hired in October. Her role is to support planning processes as well as development and re-development efforts in Downtown Suwanee, including in the historic Main Street area.

"If I went to bed and dreamed of a spot I'd like to be, I couldn't imagine a place better than Suwanee's Town Center."

–Dr. Gene Witkin,
Imagix Dentistry

Working toward a better tomorrow

- The City began undertaking efforts to **enhance and transform the I-85 interchange area**. City Council adopted in October the I-85 Business District Competitive Assessment and Development Strategy Report, prepared by the Bleakly Advisory Group. The complex, multi-year strategy calls for creating a transportation grid, encouraging development of a signature project, implementing streetscape and pedestrian improvements, attracting private sector investment, and creating a "brand" for the area.
- City staff members began training in June on S.E.E. (Suwanee Exceeds Expectations) Online, a **new web-based customer request management system** operated through RequestPartner. The new system, designed to provide increased convenience for citizens and enhanced efficiency in City response and response time, will be fully implemented in fall 2006.
- The Suwanee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) issued a **request for proposals for development of the DDA-owned historic Pierce's Corner building** on Main Street. The conceptual plan proposes the addition of a new building on the property.



"This is the most important thing in Suwanee that needs our attention. We now need to apply the award-winning approach that we've used at Town Center and through our Open Space Initiative in the I-85 area."

–Mayor Nick Masino

Suwanee continues to grow

- In May the City of Suwanee annexed a formerly unincorporated 270-acre island, which includes the Morningside and Avonlea Crossing neighborhoods, and its 1,053 residents into the City. With the annexation and additional growth, **Suwanee's estimated population rose to 14,500**.
- **The City added to its open space inventory** with the purchase in July of 8.5 acres on McGinnis Ferry Road, adjacent to the Suwanee Creek Greenway.
- Due largely to several new planned mixed-use developments currently underway, the number of building permits and building inspections nearly doubled. **Some 800 building permits were issued** in fiscal year 2005-06.

Events with heart

- Suwanee made a splash—and a difference—at the June 17 grand opening of the interactive fountain at Town Center Park. **Suwanee's Big Splash** raised nearly \$25,000 for **Long Beach, Mississippi**, which was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Richport Properties donated an additional \$30,560 to the Gulf community from anticipated proceeds from the sale of the Hurricane Relief House that it built in the new Stonecypher neighborhood.

Suwanee's Big Splash



"[Suwanee's Big Splash] auction was quite remarkable, and we were astonished at the many items donated and at the bid amounts.... It is with sincere gratitude that we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your compassion for our city will always be remembered. I hope you will continue to pray for Long Beach as we move forward to rebuild and develop."

*--Long Beach, Mississippi,
Mayor Billy Skellie*



- Suwanee's unique **Art on a Limb** program flourished in its second year with small pieces of the City's original water tower, constructed in 1954, used as canvases for paintings that were hidden along the Suwanee Creek Greenway throughout the month of May.
- The City continues to **nourish a sense of community** by hosting and co-sponsoring a variety of events. Town Center Park in the past year has been the venue for 20 City- and privately sponsored events, including the rocking rhythm of Cowboy Mouth and the smooth jazz sound of several regional artists.

- Based on its past success, the 2006 Suwanee Day Festival was selected in the spring as one of **Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20** events for the month of September 2006.

"I felt compelled to let you know how much I enjoyed the concert.... Most of all your venue at the park was the best. The children could play and listen to their first concert without seeing unruly behavior or rude language. This was the first time that I was able to be so close to the stage without having a near-death experience. All of the adults in our family agreed that for performance and atmosphere this was the best concert we had ever attended."

—Sherry Shanklin



Exceeding expectations

- The City received a **totally clean audit** for fiscal year 2005. No findings nor management comments were presented by Mauldin & Jenkins, the certified public accounting firm that conducted the audit.
- In its day-to-day efforts to efficiently and professionally maintain City facilities and grounds, the public works department completed **more than 3,700 work order requests**.
- Suwanee's Municipal Court staff processed 13,684 citations, while going high-tech this year. The Court's computer system was upgraded to allow for **automated transmittal of dispositions** to the Georgia Department of Driver Services and Georgia Crime Information Center. In addition, the court now accepts online payment of citations.

"I am writing because I want you to know that doing business in Suwanee the past three years has been a pleasant experience. The set-up of our office was a simple process. The yearly requirements have been very simple issues.... I hope no matter how large Suwanee may become, please continue to make the experience a pleasant one for the businesses that would like to operate here."

—Janet Jones, Emer-X

- In an effort to better serve City employees, the administrative services department revised the employee handbook, making it much more comprehensive; developed a new employee orientation program; acquired a new benefits broker; and implemented a new defined contribution retirement benefit program offered through the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System.
- The finance department **re-formatted the 2007 budget document** to address all four Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) guidelines for effective budget presentations. Suwanee's reformatted budget document is designed to function as a financial plan, communications device, and operations guide.

"I just called in to pay a traffic fine and I spoke with a young lady up front.... She was extremely helpful and very friendly and made this a much easier process than I thought it would be."

—Robert Nazarowski



Suwanee continues its winning ways

- **Team Suwanee won a Sportsmanship Award** in the Lloyd-Bennett Gwinnett Corporate Challenge. Suwanee staff members squared off against teams from 17 other Gwinnett County corporations and agencies in competitive activities that included horseshoes, kickball, putt-putt golf, running, table shuffleboard, tennis, and trivia.
- The PlayTown Suwanee community-build effort was recognized with a **2005 Georgia Downtown Award** for Outstanding Organizational Outreach, presented in October by the Georgia Downtown Association.
- Suwanee took home a **2005 CREATE Community Award** for building a stronger community while creating better parks. The award in the Community Building category was presented by the Atlanta Regional Commission in November. This is the second consecutive year that Suwanee received a CREATE Award.
- The City and its residents were recognized in January as **Trendsetters** by the Georgia Municipal Association, also **for the second consecutive year**. This year's award recognized Suwanee residents' participation in building PlayTown Suwanee, Old Town Master Plan process, and Police & Citizens Together program.
- The finance department continues to make **improvements to the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report**, which has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for two consecutive years with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- The Suwanee Police Department was awarded third place in its class for **Overall Traffic Enforcement Efforts** by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

"Suwanee's approach to community input is impressive. When they got input that would change the scope of their project, instead of saying 'Too bad—we are too far along in our design,' they stopped, listened, and made the changes. The use of volunteers to create a sense of community and ownership is indeed trend-setting."

—Stacy Jones, Carl Vinson Institute of Government & Trendsetter Award judge

Park perks

- Big Splash, **Suwanee's community-funded interactive fountain**, was completed in June. The 150 x 100-foot elliptical-shaped fountain is the largest in Gwinnett County. It features 43 jets and uses up to 1,400 gallons of recycled water per minute. About one-quarter of the funds to build the fountain came from community donations.
- The **master plan for Sims Lake Park**, the 62-acre idyllic property located at 4600 Suwanee Dam Road, was adopted in February. Plans call for three miles of trails, display-only water features, picnic shelter, pavilion, children's play area, and outdoor lawn court area. City Council set aside \$2.6 million in open space bond funds for the park's initial development, to be undertaken over the next couple of years.

"We have truly enjoyed the fountain at Town Center Park ...this summer! When we had company...our trip to the fountain was the highlight of our time together. We enjoyed a picnic and relaxed while the kids had an awesome time splashing and playing. What a great addition to an already wonderful park!"

—Brenda Everson

- Results of a park system survey indicate that **Suwanee loves its parks**. Seventy percent of more than 180 respondents rated Suwanee's park system as "excellent;" another 27 percent rated it as "good." The survey also provided City officials with information about usage and concerns related to each park, including shade and parking.

"On behalf of my family, I would like to both commend and congratulate you on the superb job you do at keeping Suwanee Creek Park and the accompanying Greenway looking so attractive and pleasant. This sentiment translates into 'Thank you for faithfully cleaning up after us sloppy and oftentimes careless citizens!'... You folks obviously do your job very conscientiously and very consistently."

—Beauston Family



A safer Suwanee

- In an effort to improve traffic safety, Suwanee installed its first **red light camera system** at McGinnis Ferry Road and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard in February. A second system at Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Satellite Boulevard went live in April. From March through June, more than 2,700 red light camera-generated citations were issued.
- Suwanee's 31 sworn police officers responded to **25,187 calls for service**, including 1,167 traffic accidents. They also issued 10,570 traffic citations and made 821 arrests. Suwanee's criminal investigation division cleared 56 percent of the 313 cases it was assigned.
- The Suwanee Police Department participated in a coordinated **homeland security drill** in April. The simulated sarin gas release at a fictitious Suwanee High School tested city, county, and state agencies' ability to respond to and work together in emergency situations. The drill employed many of the training principles of the National Incident Management System, which City Council adopted in March.

"I'd like to take a moment to tell you...how absolutely wonderful we think the Suwanee Police Department is.... Our neighborhood...has been keeping your department quite busy lately (unfortunately). The people I've dealt with at the police department have been, without exception, attentive, helpful, polite, and provided information, suggestions, and sometimes humor."

—Carolyn Narreau

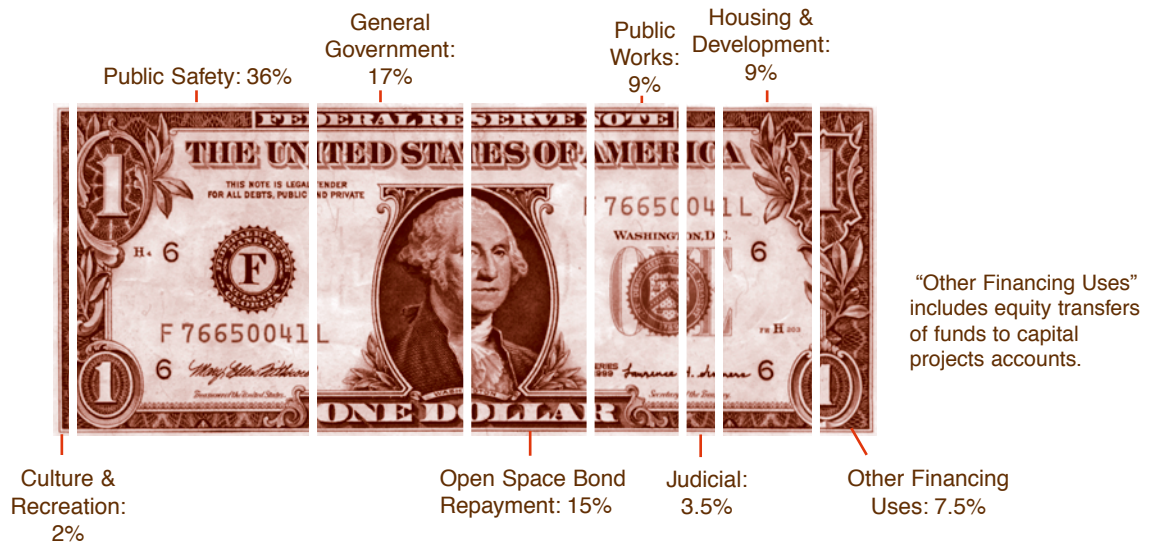


- All but one of Suwanee's 23 neighborhoods have been PACT certified. PACT, or **Police and Citizens Together**, is a community-action program that enables officers and residents to build relationships and enhance the quality of life within neighborhoods.
- Working cooperatively with Gwinnett and Fulton county police departments, **Suwanee detectives helped identify and arrest suspects** in two separate strings of armed robberies, solving a total of 15 cases.
- Suwanee officers conducted **104 car safety seat inspections**.

FY2005-06 General Fund Revenues: \$9,404,895



FY2005-06 General Fund Expenditures: \$8,101,744



*Expenditures total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

**Financial data accurate as of July 6, 2006; 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.