

LOVE

in Suwanee, GA



PLAYERS
20,786+



AGE
0-99+

2021
ANNUAL
REPORT

city of
Suwanee
georgia



in Suwanee, GA

A LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

As a lifelong resident, sometimes I feel like the City of Suwanee and I have **grown up together**. Somehow, I knew when I went off to college that I would be back. Fortunately, my bride was willing to move back to Suwanee with me to raise our two boys. As the theme of this year's annual report aptly suggests - you can, and we did, do **Life in Suwanee**.

The City of Suwanee has spent years **laying the groundwork for the future** that is now our present. We've prioritized projects that reflect our **community's values** and focus on that which matters most and create an environment where all members of our community can thrive. These projects - developing world-class parks, providing a variety of housing types, fostering an arts and culture environment, and assuring amenities and services are available to all - have set us on a **solid path for a strong future**.

The job of **creating a strong community** is accomplished as a **team**. Our **City Council leads** through policy, shaping a vision for our community. **City staff brings that vision to life** through implementation, efficiently and effectively delivering services. **Engaged citizens invest their time and resources**, serving on boards and commissions and weighing-in on decisions affecting our city.

Yes, there certainly have been changes - both in my life and for the City of Suwanee - **good changes**. So put the top down, open the windows, and enjoy the ride.

Mayor Jimmy Burnette

INSTRUCTIONS

Players 20,786+
Ages 0-99+

OBJECT

To summarize and provide a public disclosure of the City of Suwanee's operating and financial activities for the year 2021.

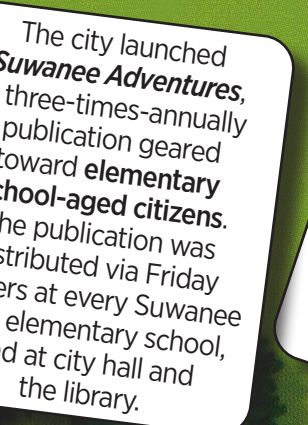
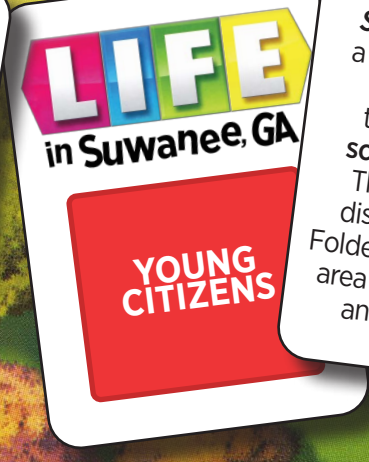
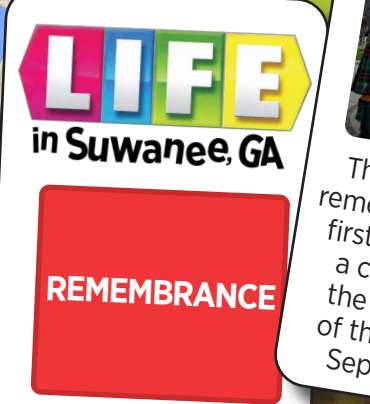
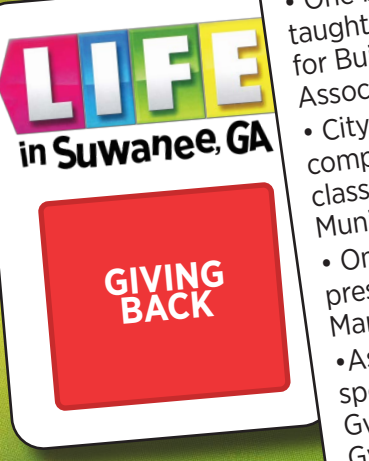
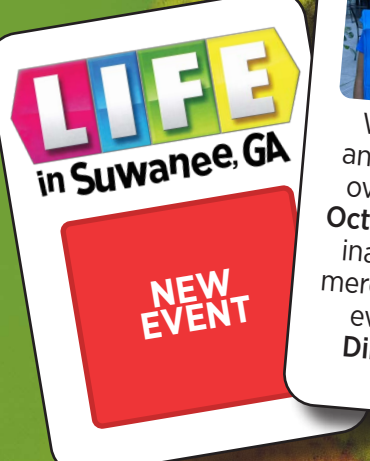
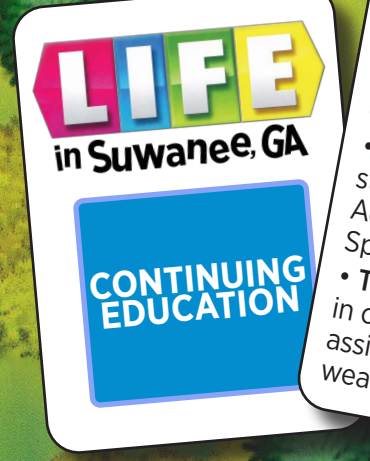
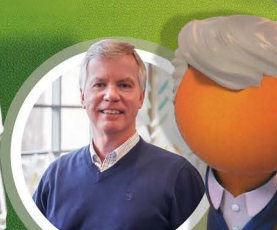
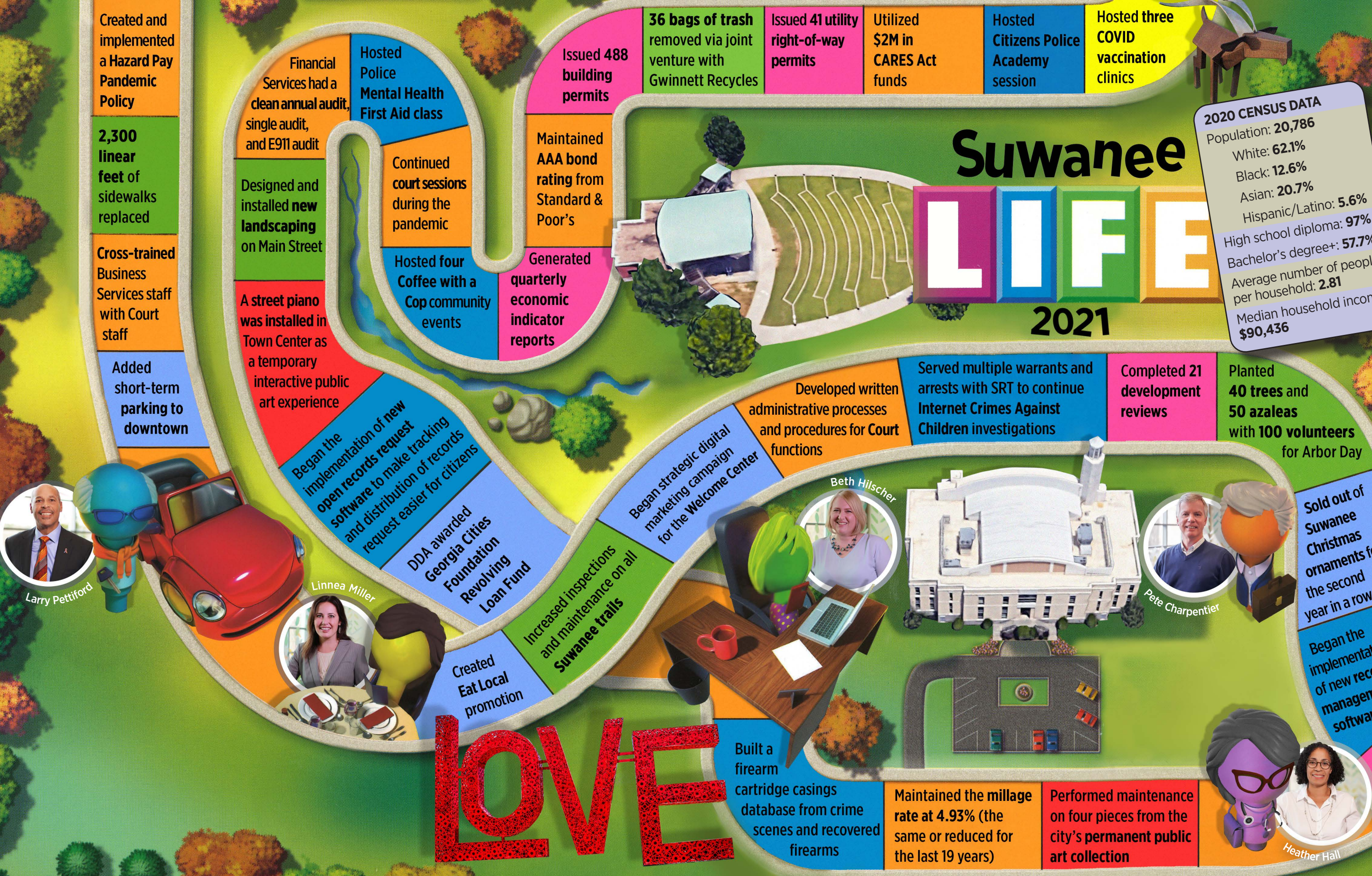
IN THIS GAME

- Budget
- Debt Service
- Millage Rate
- Revenues & Expenses
- What The City Owes & Owns
- Pedestrian & Bike Plan
- Water System
- Downtown Development Projects
- Murals
- Fire Station 13
- Station Park



Suwanee LIFE 2021

2020 CENSUS DATA
 Population: 20,786
 White: 62.1%
 Black: 12.6%
 Asian: 20.7%
 Hispanic/Latino: 5.6%
 High school diploma: 97%
 Bachelor's degree+: 57.7%
 Average number of people per household: 2.81
 Median household income: \$90,436



2021 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

BUDGET

The fiscal year 2021 Budget was developed during the rapidly emerging pandemic.

The city took a series of rapid actions from both an operations and a financial standpoint to respond to an uncertain future.

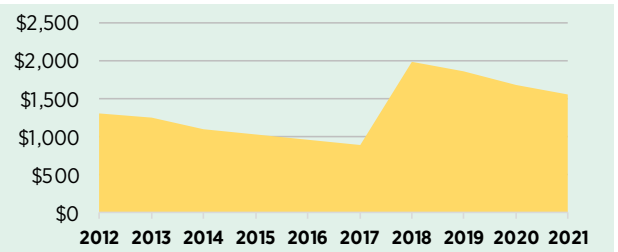
Those adjustments, along with funding from the federal government and a stronger-than-anticipated local economy, helped keep the city in a strong and stable financial position.

The city began the fiscal year with a balanced \$13.4 million operating budget. The final amended operating budget of \$16.7 million amounted to an overall increase of \$3.3 million.

Operational functions increased by \$1.2 million and capital transfers increased by \$2.1 million. Included in these increases is the \$2.7 million the city received in CARES Act funding from the federal government.

DEBT SERVICE

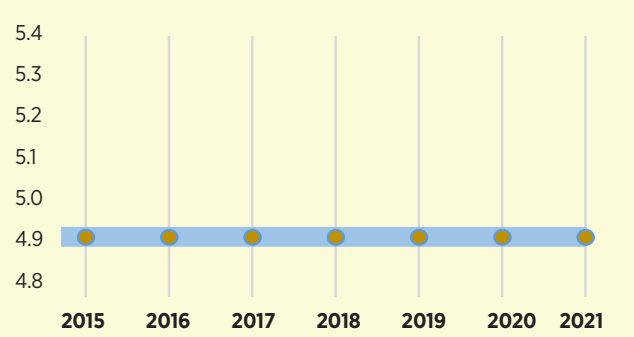
At the end of fiscal year 2021, Suwanee outstanding bonded debt totaled \$33.3 million, which is comprised of \$7.5 million in general obligation debt (backed by the full faith and credit of the city) and \$25.8 million in revenue bonds (debt obligated by the city through an intergovernmental agreement with Suwanee's Urban Redevelopment Agency). Suwanee owns a AAA long term bond rating from Standard & Poor's Global Ratings. This is the highest rating attainable, which allows the city to borrow at the best rates.



Per Capita Debt

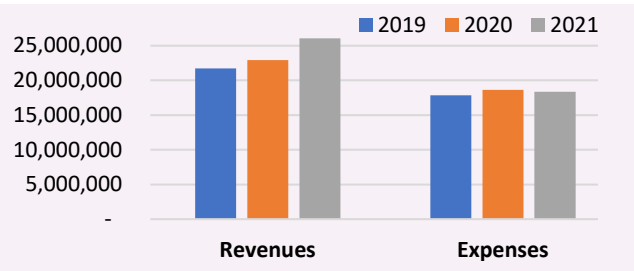
MILLAGE RATE

At 4.93 mills, Suwanee's millage rate remained the same or has been reduced for the past eighteen years.



REVENUES & EXPENSES

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



The three-year history above shows that revenues have increased by \$4.3 million from fiscal year 2019 to 2021. The majority of this increase is from intergovernmental grants from local, state, and federal governments (fiscal year 2021 includes \$2.7 million in CARES act funding), and donated assets from developers (\$1.9 million). Donated assets from developers include sidewalks, streets, curbing, street lighting, and storm drainage systems.

The three-year history demonstrates that expenses increased at a lower rate compared to revenues for the same time period. Expenses increased by \$528,000 from 2019 to 2021. The majority of the increase is related to expenses in Public Works. These expenses include repairs and maintenance of the city's roads and stormwater system along with increasing depreciation related to these assets.

WHAT THE CITY OWES & OWNS

Net position summarizes everything the city owes and owns; 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 (70%) 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. Investment in capital assets are reported net, minus any related debt. Resources needed to repay any debt must be provided from other resources, since capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate debt.

NET INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL ASSETS | \$71M

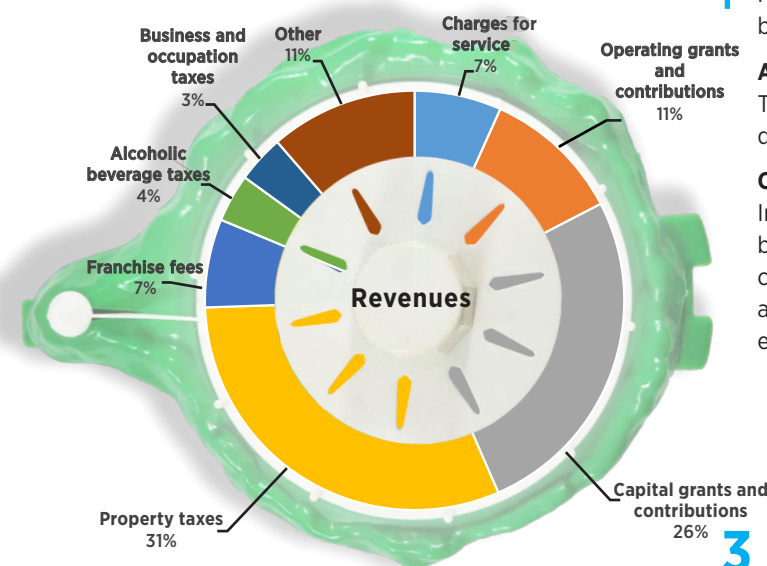
The difference between the amounts paid for capital assets and any debt used to acquire those assets, such as loans or mortgages.

RESTRICTED | \$8M

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 include SPLOST funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and resources collected for future debt payments.

UNRESTRICTED | \$22M

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



WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

Total revenues for fiscal year 2021 were \$25.6 million, of which 31% was from property taxes. Other revenue sources include capital grants and contributions (26%) which include revenues received from SPLOST and donated infrastructure from developers, operating grants and contributions (11%) which includes funding from the CARES Act, charges for services (7%), and franchise fees (7%).

PROPERTY TAXES

- Residential Property Taxes 15%
- Commercial Property Taxes 16%

GRANTS

Includes 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, buildings, etc.

CHARGES FOR SERVICES

Fees collected for services rendered, such as building inspection permits, water usage fees, park rental 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 optic cable service.

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.

OTHER

Includes taxes on insurance premiums written by companies conducting business within the city, excise taxes charged for hotel rooms or accommodations, donations, and investment earnings of city funds.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The city's expenses totaled \$18.2 million for fiscal year 2021: 35% was related to Public Works, 27% Public Safety (police services), and 14% general government.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Costs associated with maintaining a police department which includes maintenance of order, law, safety, and other matters affecting the public welfare.

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

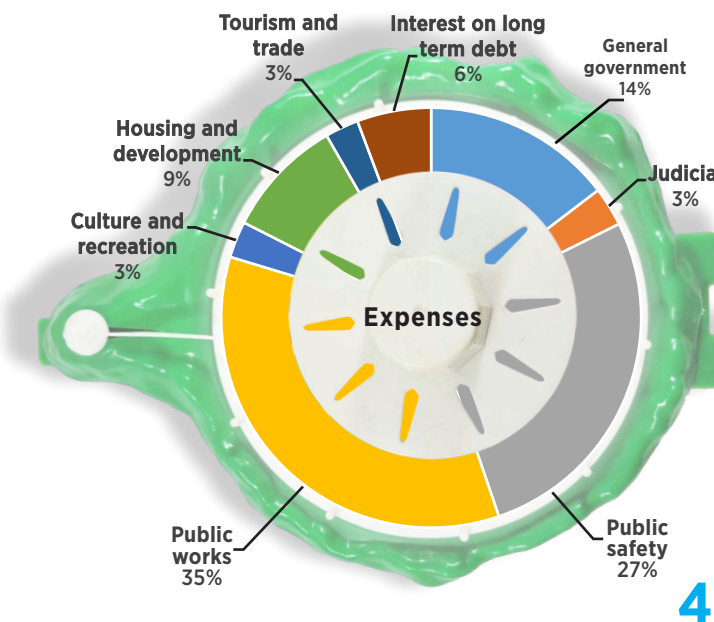
Cost of maintaining the city's park system and coordinating special events.

INTEREST ON LONG-TERM DEBT

Interest payments for parks, open space, and construction of city facilities.

OTHER

Cost of municipal court operations and tourism.



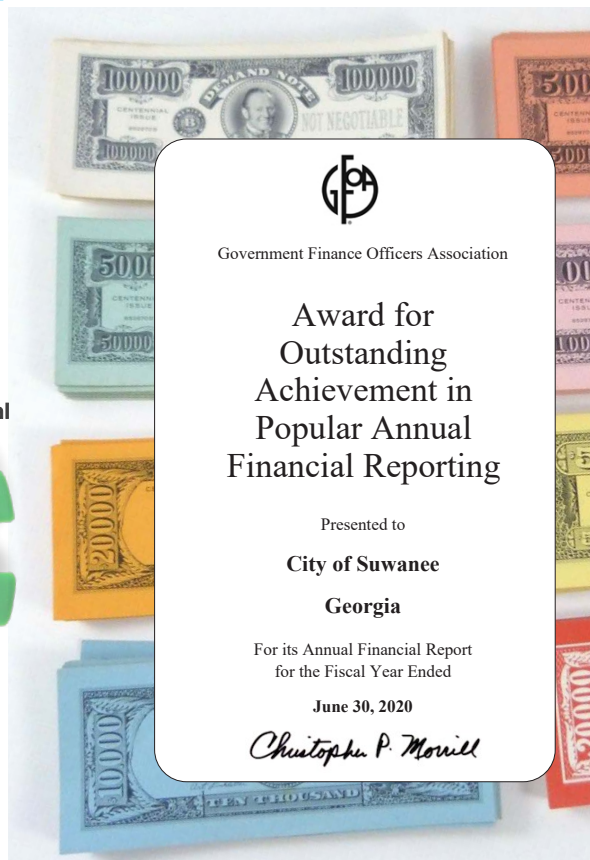
PROGRAM REQUIREMENT STATEMENTS

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 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, and includes financial data from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, unless otherwise stated.

Each year the City of Suwanee prepares an audited ACFR that provides detailed information about the city's financial position. The ACFR is prepared using financial reporting models prescribed by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB). Suwanee's ACFR is available in its entirety on the Docs & Downloads page at suwanee.com.



YEAR OF TRANSITION

After 23 years of service to the city, Police Chief Mike Jones retired in January 2021. Deputy Chief **Cass Mooney** was sworn in as Suwanee's new police chief, effective February 2021. Chief Mooney has spent 23 of his 26 years in law enforcement at the City of Suwanee. City Clerk Elvira Rogers retired in 2021 after 22 years with the city. Administrative coordinator **Robyn O'Donnell** assumed the role of City Clerk in January 2021. James Miller also retired in early 2021 after 16 years heading up the Public Works department; **Bob Dean** was hired to fill the role.

LICENSE CREDITS

The Suwanee City Council voted to approve **business and alcohol license tax credits** in an effort to offset hardships to businesses created by COVID-19. This provided up to \$500 in tax credits applied to business license renewals in either 2020 or 2021. In addition, alcohol license tax credits provided up to \$6,000 in credits for businesses that held alcohol licenses, applied to 2021 renewals. This program also applied to new businesses that opened through March 2021.

"With citizens practicing social distancing and other restrictions, an enormous economic strain was placed on our local businesses," said Suwanee Mayor Jimmy Burnette. "The city council developed this program in hopes of helping businesses make it through these difficult times."

DDA

After years of planning and aligning, many Downtown Development Authority projects **came to fruition** in 2021. Leasing for the 12,000 square foot mixed-use space in Solis Phase I (Siena) was finalized, resulting in two restaurants, a small farmers market, and office space. The 10,000 square foot space in Solis Phase II (Skye) has been leased to a coworking facility and is scheduled to open Q4 2022. The DDA also continued to lease space to StillFire, a successful downtown brewery.

PUBLIC ART



Watch Video



Adding to its reputation as a hub for public art, the City of Suwanee completed installation of two murals in the heart of downtown. Decatur artist Corey Barksdale painted a 180' long, 10' tall **floral mural** on a brick retaining wall near the intersection of Buford Highway and Town Center Avenue. The Suwanee Public Art Commission funded the mural, along with a \$10,000 grant from Explore Gwinnett's Gwinnett Creativity Fund.

In keeping with the city's goal for developers to commit one percent of construction costs toward public art, the city commissioned a large mural which was painted on the three-story wall of the newly-renovated courthouse. The Suwanee Public Art Commission selected Lauren Pallotta Stumberg to paint **colorful, abstract magpies**. The mural is augmented by two free-standing, five-foot-tall metal magpie sculptures.

STORM WATER

The Public Works department increased its efforts to **inspect and identify problems** in the stormwater system, allowing potential issues to be identified prior to failure and significantly reducing repair costs.

Public Works increased the frequency for street sweeping, cleaning storm inlet catch basins, and right-of-way litter removal to **reduce contaminate runoff** into nearby streams within Suwanee.

Additionally, Main Street in the Old Town area received **significant upgrades**, including an underground stormwater detention facility and a larger stormwater pipe along the railroad tracks.

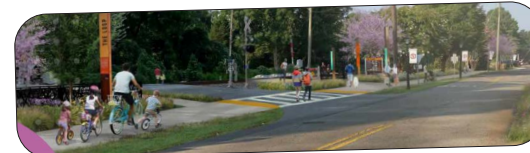
WATER SYSTEM

After nearly 70 years of being in the water business, the Suwanee water system was **officially transferred** to the Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources in December 2021. With a limited number of customers (just 360 located in the historic Old Town area) and little opportunity to grow or expand, the City of Suwanee's aging water system was simply **not sustainable or cost-effective in the long term**. As part of the expected agreement, Gwinnett County committed to making \$500,000 in beneficial upgrades in the coming years, including pipe replacements and more fire hydrants.

PEDESTRIAN & BIKE PLAN



More Info



Originally completed in 1999 as the Alternative Transportation Plan, the City of Suwanee's Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan was updated in 2021 and serves as a guide for **prioritization and implementation** of projects to make Suwanee more walkable and bikeable. During the planning process, several potential projects and issues were identified, generating the need for a feasibility study.

In 2021, the City of Suwanee embarked on a feasibility study to evaluate the cost, impact, and viability of these potential projects before including them in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan update. Funded through a \$160,000 Livable Centers Initiative grant, the feasibility study developed a concept plan for a **continuous multi-use path** around Suwanee that includes the Suwanee Creek Greenway, downtown Suwanee, and connections to other regional trails. The study also identified a location for a potential pedestrian and bicycle bridge to make it **easier and safer** to cross Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. This study will be used to make **informed recommendations** for the projects to be included in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan update.

Since 1999, the city has **invested over \$25 million** in trail and sidewalk creation and pedestrian improvements. This has resulted in approximately **70 miles of new sidewalks and 40 miles of new trails and greenways** (existing and/or under construction) exclusive of those inside neighborhoods.

EVENTS

After a nearly non-existent event season in 2020 due to COVID, the City of Suwanee returned to **safely hosting outdoor community events** in 2021. Though it was a comparatively abbreviated schedule, 28 events successfully took place in Suwanee Town Center, Old Town, and on our streets, trails, and greenway, not to mention 35 Farmers Markets.

FIRE STATION 13 BREAKS GROUND

Officials broke ground September 14 at the site of the new Gwinnett County Fire Station 13, which will be located at 105 Main Street in Suwanee. The new 11,000-square-foot fire station will house a fire engine, ambulance, and a minimum of five firefighters and paramedics daily. Designed with **future growth in mind**, the station will be built to accommodate up to 11 personnel.

The city donated land for the county fire station, while the county is providing related road improvements at the intersection of Suwanee Dam Road and Main Street, which will be realigned to shift around the expansion of Town Center Park and exit onto Suwanee Dam Road at the existing traffic signal at the library entrance. This shift will allow the existing **median break at Main Street to close**, greatly improving the safety and traffic flow on Suwanee Dam Road.

STATION PARK

The Suwanee City Council cut the ribbon for the **renovated and renamed Station Park** on April 27. Formerly known as City Hall Park, this public park is located between the Suwanee police station and a brewery. Renovations began in the fall and include artificial turf, seating, and a refurbished playground. The restructuring also **improved the alignment of the trail** linking Buford Highway and Main Street, visually linking Town Center and the location of the future Town Center Park expansion on Main Street.

HALL OF FAME



Suwanee **Mayor Jimmy Burnette** was inducted into the **Georgia Municipal Government Hall of Fame** during the Georgia Municipal Association Annual Convention in August. The Hall of Fame recognizes city officials who have made extraordinary contributions to the cities they serve and have exhibited strong support of GMA. Burnette has served Suwanee as mayor for ten years, and as a councilmember for the previous 16 years.

AWARDS



Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting | Government Finance Officers Association

Certificate of Excellence for Superior Performance Management | International City/County Management Association

Best Leadership & Best Represented | Suwanee Police Department, Georgia Advocates for Crime Prevention

Gold Award - Illustrations | Annual Report, ARC Awards International

Silver Award - Non-Profit Category | Annual Report, ARC Awards International

Honors - Written Text | Annual Report, ARC Awards International

Safest Cities in Georgia #13 | Safewise

Grand Winner - Annual Report Design & Print | Annual Report, NYX Marcom Awards

International Gold Award | Annual Report, GOV Design Awards

Platinum Winner - Publication | Annual Report, Muse Creative Awards

Silver Winner - Marketing & Promotional | "Spring Fake," Muse Creative Awards

Silver Winner - Event | Top This!, Muse Creative Awards

Best COVID Community Response | Southeast Festivals & Events Association

Best Social Media | Top This!, Southeast Festivals & Events Association

Best T-Shirt | "Spring Fake," Southeast Festivals & Events Association

CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR Jimmy Burnette 770-868-7115
COUNCIL Pete Charpentier 770-757-3323
 Heather Hall 410-979-7905
 Beth Hilscher 678-546-3388
 Linnea Miller 678-592-4150
 Larry Pettiford 678-464-3651

MANAGEMENT TEAM

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ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER Denise Brinson 770-904-3385
CITY CLERK Robyn O'Donnell 770-904-2790
FINANCIAL SERVICES Amie Sakmar 770-904-2797
PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS Josh Campbell 770-904-3372
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PUBLIC WORKS Bob Dean 770-904-3373

