

The 2022 Annual Report



MEMO
the office
MEMO

city of
suwanee, GA

DUNDER
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IT IS YOUR ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the Mayor

As you may have ascertained, this year's Annual Report is inspired by one of our favorite TV shows. Suwanee's cast of characters may not be as funny or quirky as the fictional ones, but we are much more enthusiastic and passionate about what we do: serve the citizens of Suwanee.

Creating a strong community is a team accomplishment. The City Council and I lead through setting policy, which staff then implements. Much like the President's cabinet, our staff is made up of subject matter experts in topics ranging from stormwater to finance, community policing to public art. We know the answer to 'how much money does it cost to pave a street,' as well as 'how many porta-potties do we use at Beer Fest.'

There are some complex topics in this year's Annual Report that just could not be fully explained in a brief paragraph. In order to give citizens access to the subject matter experts, we've included Deep Dive videos. You know the drill – just engage the QR code, sit back, and learn some interesting things about what goes on behind the scenes. Enjoy our episode of *The Office*, Suwanee-style.

Jimmy M. Burnette
Mayor Jimmy Burnette



Message from Mayor Jimmy Burnette



Better Buford Highway Project

2022 saw **substantial progress** towards the completion of the Better Buford Highway Project: medians, pedestrian lights, and street trees were installed, and on-street parking was added. The final layout of the redesigned road is now visible. The redesign provided transportation improvements in a manner that **didn't divide our downtown** with a higher-speed vehicular thoroughfare. Redesigned to accommodate walkers, bikers, and vehicles, Buford Highway is now a moderate-speed city street that **enhances the walkability** of the downtown area. Once the renovation is complete, residents will be able to enjoy this extension of Town Center in a way that would have been impossible with a standard four-lane divided highway.



Dive deeper with Josh Campbell, Director of Planning & Inspections



Town Center on Main Breaks Ground

In September, Suwanee **broke ground** on the highly anticipated expansion of Town Center on Main and DeLay Nature Park. The 25-acre site was purchased in 2002 through the community-driven open space initiative. The Suwanee City Council unanimously approved a master plan for a city park on the property in September 2019.

Closing the Main Street median on Suwanee Dam Road and **rerouting Main Street** to the light in front of Shadowbrook Church is a key element bringing different pieces together as one cohesive space. The campus-like environment will include PlayTown Suwanee and DeLay Nature Park on the northwest side of Main Street and Town Center on Main, the Suwanee library, and Evergreen Presbyterian Church on the southeast side of Main Street.

DeLay Nature Park will **remain mostly undisturbed** with Brushy Creek Greenway being the key amenity. Town Center on Main will be developed with a food truck court/plaza, a park-spanning pedestrian bridge, sand volleyball courts, a reflecting pond, a memorial, and other gathering spaces.

Fire Station 13

Gwinnett County and City of Suwanee officials celebrated the **re-opening of Gwinnett County's Fire Station 13** with a ribbon cutting at the station's new home at 105 Main Street in Suwanee in December.

The new facility **replaces the outgrown original** Station 13 on Buford Highway. While the facility was under construction, Fire Station 13 crews responded to calls from nearby stations.

BY THE NUMBERS

- **10,788** square feet of total space
- **2,550 FEET** of attack and supply hose line on apparatus
- **3 DRIVE-THROUGH** apparatus bays
- **\$7.8M** project funded by SPLOST
- **29,330 RESIDENTS** and **25 SQUARE MILES** served
- **2 ACRES OF LAND** provided by the City of Suwanee



Suwanee Youth Leaders

After a two-year hiatus (thanks, Covid), the City of Suwanee **relaunched** the Suwanee Youth Leaders program, naming its seventh class. SYL is a **nine-month leadership program** for select high school sophomores and juniors residing within the North Gwinnett, Peachtree Ridge, or Collins Hill clusters. Participants gained exposure to local initiatives, met monthly with various community and civic leaders, attended a variety of field trips, participated in planning a city-wide event, and planned and implemented a community service project.

Town Center Parklets

Two parklets were added to **provide more outdoor relaxation opportunities** for patrons of Suwanee Town Center. Sidewalk extensions that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces, these compact gathering spaces were specifically designed to offer more types of seating with an aesthetic that fits with the style and character of Town Center Park.



Stormwater Repairs and Utility



Dive deeper with Bob Dean, Director of Public Works



In 2022, Public Works inspected the miles of pipes and over one thousand drainage structures that make up the city's stormwater system. These inspections **identify emerging problems** and enable the city to prioritize repairs prior to failure.

With the assistance of stormwater professionals, a multi-year program was developed to **proactively replace or rehabilitate** several thousand linear feet of stormwater pipes throughout Suwanee.

The consultants identified over \$12 million in improvements that need to be completed in the near future, including repairing deteriorating pipes, which is **significantly less expensive** than replacing broken pipes in the future.

Concurrently, the city established a **Citizen Stormwater Committee** to study needs, service levels, and funding approaches to help ensure the city's aging stormwater system is **properly maintained and functional** for years to come. The Committee recommended a stormwater utility: an **equitable user fee** to help recover the costs of managing stormwater runoff and create a reserve for stormwater management services and projects, as well as compliance with state and federal regulatory mandates.



Dive deeper with Marty Allen, City Manager



Glass Recycling Program

The City of Suwanee Public Works department began **accepting glass recycling at its facility** on Swiftwater Park Drive in June. Many haulers stopped accepting single-stream glass recycling due to the damage incurred on their equipment, as well as the poor cost-to-revenue ratio. The new **drop-off service fills a gap** left by recycling providers serving Suwanee and Gwinnett County. This effort resulted in over ten tons of glass being recycled in the first three months of the program!



Dive deeper with Billqece Naqawe, Assistant to the City Manager



2022 USA Today Best Beer Festival

USA Today named Suwanee American Craft Beer Fest its **2022 number one beer festival in the country**. Taking place on St. Patrick's Day weekend since 2011, the festival boasts more than 350 craft beers from 100+ breweries, drawing an annual attendance of over 6,000 craft beer fanatics. Attendees come dressed head-to-toe in St. Paddy's green with kilts, shamrocks, green beards, and more, making for a truly unique beer festival experience. "It is more than just a few breweries and beer," said festival coordinator Tiffany Belflower. "Each aspect of the festival - from the breweries, beer, games, and entertainment to the vendors and sponsors - is **meticulously curated** to create a unique experience."



Suwanee Running Series

Seventeen different runs took place in Town Center Park and on the Suwanee Greenway in 2022, giving local runners the opportunity to run nearly 66 miles without ever leaving the city limits. In an effort to increase registrations for these races - and awareness to the causes these 5Ks benefit - the City of Suwanee and Big Peach Running Co. **partnered to launch** the Suwanee Running Series.

The Suwanee Running Series highlighted runners who participated in at least **five Town Center races** within one calendar year. **Twenty-two runners** completed the challenge in its first year, earning a limited edition Saucony t-shirt declaring their allegiance to running in Suwanee and unlimited bragging rights.



Dive deeper with Amy Doherty, Events and Outreach Manager



Expanded Events

The City of Suwanee hosted 42 events in 2022 and grew some old favorites with new creative thinking. Summer Porch Jam added two porches in June, hosting **18 acts on eight stages** in Old Town. August Concert got cooler with the addition of the **Brain Freeze**: 26 contestants were challenged to eat as much Rita's Italian Ice as they could in one minute! The Suwanee Farmers Market hosted **40 markets, each with 46 vendors** selling produce, meat, baked goods, jams, soaps, bread, and other delicious goodies.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The city adopted an update to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, adding new projects and **determining how to prioritize** those along with previously identified projects. The process included a feasibility study for several new projects resulting from community input, including a **pedestrian and bicycle bridge** over Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and multiuse paths that will **create a continuous loop** connecting the Suwanee Creek Greenway to more of the city. The updated plan prioritizes projects that fill gaps in the pedestrian network. The city **secured an \$800,000 grant** to engineer a significant portion of the loop project.



Dive deeper with Kimberly Towne, Events Coordinator



Glow in the Park + Atlanta International Night Market

Community-favorite Glow in the Park lantern parade and concert upgraded in 2022, partnering with Atlanta International Night Market and becoming a two-day event. The addition of the established Night Market brought multicultural vendors, entertainers, and new attendees (**a record attendance of 20,000**, second only to Suwanee Fest with 55,000!). Illuminate Georgia provided 35 glowing silk lanterns to further light up the park.



PUBLIC WORKS BY THE NUMBERS

- **2.61 MILES** of roads resurfaced
- **750 CHRISTMAS TREES** recycled into mulch for parks
- **1,300 LINEAR FEET** of sidewalks replaced
- **1.2 MILES OF TRAIL** resurfaced in Sims Lake Park (the entire trail system!), as well as improved drainage and upgrades to the playground and facilities

- **25 TONS** of rip rap distributed to citizens at their request
- **377 MILES** of toilet paper used in Suwanee parks
- **13.5 TONS OF LITTER** removed from streets

SCULPTOUR PUBLIC ART ENCOUNTER



Dive deeper with Denise Brinson, Assistant City Manager

7th SculpTour Exhibit

The city launched its seventh temporary SculpTour sculpture exhibit in the spring of 2022, installing 17 new public art pieces in Town Center. Since 2011, the award-winning SculpTour program has showcased nearly 100 pieces in a walkable one-mile area of downtown Suwanee, in concert with the 18 pieces in the city's permanent collection. With goals to enliven Town Center, attract visitors, and stimulate interest in public art in Suwanee, SculpTour is essential to the energy, rhythm, and ritual in the city.

Suwanee Arts Center Co-Hosted Events

The city's partnership with the Suwanee Arts Center (SAC) brought two successful new events to Town Center Park last year. In April, the two-day Suwanee Arts Festival filled the park with beautiful art, available for purchase. Activities included live artist demonstrations, stage entertainment, an animation academy, and a public art scavenger hunt for young art enthusiasts. SAC also co-hosted The Dam Dinner in October. This delightfully named event featured an al fresco chef-curated dining experience on the dam at Sims Lake Park, as well as live entertainment from a Grammy Award-winning artist, signature cocktails, and a wine pull.

Chinese New Year

The City of Suwanee collaborated with honors art students from North Gwinnett High School to add a colorful new mural to a drab utility enclosure. Located directly behind city hall, Chinese New Year consists of animals representing the twelve Chinese zodiac signs painted in bright, fun colors. The Suwanee Public Arts Commission chose North Gwinnett sophomore Li Lin's design. Accompanied by honors art teacher Dallas Gillespie, 19 students worked approximately 50 hours to complete the mural, which is part of the city's seventh SculpTour exhibit.



Explore Gwinnett Creativity Grant

Explore Gwinnett chose the City of Suwanee as one of ten recipients of a Gwinnett Creativity Fund project grant. This \$15,000 matching grant funded the Town Center Amphitheatre Stage Wings Project.

Runoff from the stage roof was causing two 840 square foot grass "wings" on either side of the stage to erode and in constant need of maintenance. When Suwanee's public works department decided to hardscape the area, the Public Art Commission stepped in with a creative approach.

The left stage wing features concrete squares with quotes from musicians embedded in metal text.

The right wing includes a design created by city staff member Paul Bara and painted by artist Meg Mitchell. The design features the longitude/latitude coordinates for Town Center Park along with "Stand in the place where you are," from Georgia band R.E.M.



Beautiful Music

An upright street piano was installed in Sims Lake Park under the pavilion near the playground. Fine Arts for All (FAFA), a student-led nonprofit dedicated to art- and music-based community service, donated the temporary interactive public art experience. The North Gwinnett High School Arts Honor Society completed the Wassily Kandinsky-inspired piano design.



Mental Health Clinician Co-Responder Program

In an effort to provide a well-rounded public service approach to mental health or related incidents not necessarily in the criminal realm, the Suwanee Police implemented a behavioral health unit, also known as Suwanee Cares.

Suwanee Cares partners police officers with trained mental health clinicians from View Point Health. When a call is received that involves a person with possible mental health issues, both the officer and clinician are dispatched together. This partnership frees up officers to handle criminal behaviors, and helps the mentally ill members of our community to get the help they might not otherwise receive. Clinicians are enabled to provide essential follow-up with patients and provide specific resources.

"This program provides much-needed assistance for police officers to cope with the rise in homelessness and people dealing with mental health issues; issues police officers aren't traditionally trained to handle," said Suwanee Police Captain Dwayne Black, who oversees the program. "The program enables us to handle these potentially explosive incidents with care and compassion while also keeping everyone safe."



New Multi-Jurisdictional Public Safety Academy

The Suwanee Police Department collaborated with other police agencies to develop a local police training academy in an effort to streamline the training process. Housed at the University of North Georgia, the academy is staffed by seasoned officers from participating agencies including the City of Suwanee and the Forsyth, Hall, and Pickens County Sheriffs' offices. This new regional academy provides the traditional 11-week basic training period, and an additional six-week training period to have new officers ready to hit the ground running. Additional training includes advanced patrol rifle, speed detection, standardized field sobriety, and Taser certification.

Community Policing

The Suwanee Police Department embraces the philosophy of community policing - a partnership in which the police and the community share responsibility for identifying, reducing, eliminating, and preventing problems that impact community safety and order. The Suwanee Police hosted numerous community outreach events in 2022, including Coffee with a Cop, Pops with Cops, and Cops on a Donut shop. The police hosted a spring and fall Citizen Police Academy and expanded the Police and Citizens Together (PACT) program to include community outreach events.



Dive deeper with Cass Mooney, Chief of Police

POLICE BY THE NUMBERS

- 174 HOUSE CHECKS, requested by residents who were out-of-town
- 22 CAR SEAT checks
- 200 LBS. of unwanted medications destroyed
- 78,496 CALLS FOR SERVICE
- 28,065 AREA CHECKS

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, 2022 and includes financial data from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, unless otherwise stated.

Each year the City of Suwanee prepares an audited ACFR 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 ACFR is available in its entirety on the Documents & Downloads page at suwanee.com.

BUDGET

Over the past year, many municipalities eased their way back into a sense of normal, and Suwanee is no different. **The City of Suwanee sustains a high quality of services and remains in a strong and stable financial position.** The city began the fiscal year 2022 with a **\$15.1 million balanced operating budget.** The final amended operating budget of \$17.1 million amounted to an overall increase of \$2 million. Operational functions increased by \$148,100 - less than 1% - and capital transfers increased by \$2 million. Included in these capital transfers are funding for future police headquarters, street paving, stormwater pipe repairs, and facilities maintenance.



Dive deeper with Amie Sakmar, Director of Finance

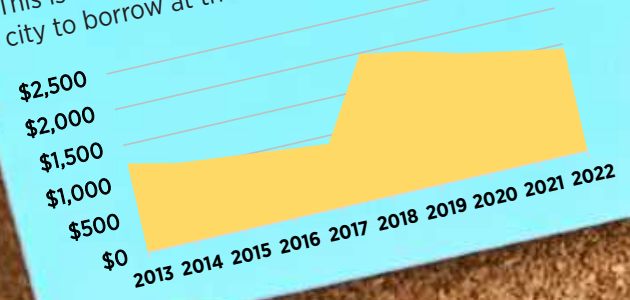
MILLAGE RATE

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



DEBT SERVICE

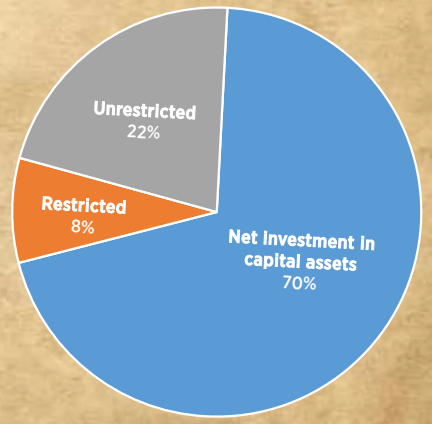
At the end of fiscal year 2022, Suwanee had total bonded debt outstanding of \$31.6 million comprised of general obligation debt \$6.3 million (backed by the full faith and credit of the city) and \$25.3 million in revenue bond bonds (debt obligated by the city through an intergovernmental agreement with Suwanee's Urban Redevelopment Agency). Suwanee has 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 possible.



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 (68%) 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 resources, since capital assets themselves cannot be used to liquidate debt.



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.

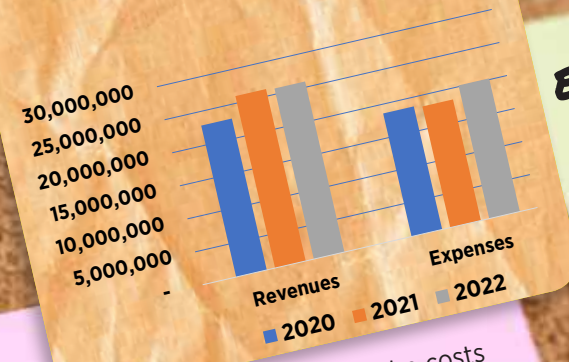
RESTRICTED Funds that are not available for general use by the city because they must be used for a specific purpose or projects as required by law or regulations. Examples include SPLOST funds set aside for capital projects, unspent grant funds, and resources collected for future debt payments.

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

REVENUES

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

The three year history above shows that **revenues have increased by \$2.9 million** from fiscal year 2020 to 2022. The majority of this increase is from intergovernmental grants from local, state, and federal governments; revenues received from SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax); and donated assets from developers. Fiscal year 2021 and 2022 included large federal grants: \$2.7 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding and \$1.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Donated assets from developers include sidewalks, streets, curbing, street lighting, and storm drainage systems.



WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

Total revenues for the fiscal year 2022 were \$25.8 million, of which 32% was from property taxes. Other main revenue sources include capital grants and contributions (22%) which include revenues received from SPLOST and donated infrastructure from developers, operating grants and contributions (7%), charges for services (9%), and franchise fees (7%).

PROPERTY TAXES Residential Property Taxes 16%
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, facilities, etc.

CHARGE FOR SERVICES Fees collected for services rendered, such as building inspection permits, development reviews, 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.

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 and donations.

EXPENSES

The three-year history also demonstrates that **expenses have increased at a lower rate as compared to revenues** for the same time period.

Expenses increased by \$1.5 million from 2020 to 2022. The majority of the increase is related to expenses in Public Safety and Public Works. These expenses include increases in salaries and benefits due to increases in staffing, along with repairs and maintenance of the city's road and stormwater systems. The difference in the total revenues as compared to the total expenditures is due to the recognition of capital grant revenues when the funds are received but expenditures are not recognized at the time they are expensed. Instead, expenditures are depreciated over the life of the asset.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

The city's expenses totaled \$20.2 million for fiscal year 2022: 34% was related to Public Works, 25% Public Safety (police services), and 16% general government.

PUBLIC WORKS Costs associated with providing maintenance and repair of city-owned facilities, grounds, streets, stormwater system, and the city's right-of-ways.

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

INTEREST OF LONG-TERM DEBT Interest payments for parks, open spaces, and construction of city facilities.

OTHER Cost of municipal court operations and tourism.

LIFE in Suwanee



GFOA
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, 2021

Christopher P. Morrell
Executive Director/CEO



**PARKER AWARD
BUSIEST BEAVER**



- **Starr Award** | Mayor Jimmy Burnette, Georgia Municipal Association
- **Award of Excellence** | LIFE in Suwanee: 2021 Annual Report, PIAG Print Excellence Competition
- **Georgia Downtown Excellence Award** | LIFE in Suwanee: 2021 Annual Report, Outstanding Promotional Campaign
- **3CMA Savvy Award** | 2021 Annual Report
- **Best of Division - Gold Finalist** | Mr. Eggwards 2022 Calendar, PIAG Print Excellence Competition
- **Best of Category** | Suwanee Connects newsletter, PIAG Print Excellence Competition
- **Best Cities to Live in the South #32** | 24/7 Wall Street
- **Best Event over \$75,000 (Silver)** | Suwanee Fest 2021, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- **Best Mascot** | Parker, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- **Metro Atlanta Redevelopment Summit - Large Redevelopment of the Year** | Solis I and II, Partnership Gwinnett and Council for Quality Growth
- **Best Program or Brochure** | Suwanee Fest 2021 Suwanee Magazine insert, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- **Best Volunteer** | Kate Fanale for Suwanee Fest, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- **Best Marketing** | Suwanee Adventures, Southeast Festivals & Events Association
- **Georgia Downtown Excellence Award** | Glow in the Park with the Atlanta International Night Market, Creative New Event
- **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
- **No. 1 Beer Festival in the Country** | Suwanee American Craft Beer Fest, USA Today



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