

City of Suwanee

2008 Annual Report

It's the economy, Suwanee

As our nation struggles to address historic economic challenges, the difficulties that began on Wall Street are being felt on Main Streets across the country. Suwanee is no exception.

Our community's rapid growth of the past 20 years has, at least for now, slowed tremendously. Residential building permits issued in 2008 numbered 71, a little less than half of what they were last year (153). Commercial development permits also were down – 12 were issued in 2008, compared to 25 in 2007. Both new and existing homes are selling more slowly than in years past. In addition, we are experiencing higher-than-normal commercial and office vacancy rates and fewer associated business starts. Suwanee continues to proactively monitor local and national economic trends that may impact the City, its residents, and businesses.

Despite the slowdown in new growth – and its associated new revenues – and in spite of the international economic downturn, the City of Suwanee remains financially fit. Largely because of the practical, conservative fiscal decisions made over the past decade, Suwanee is in a sound financial position relative to many other local governments across the country who are having to make difficult choices. Fortunately, Suwanee's fund balance (i.e., its reserves) is strong, and the City has not overextended itself nor unreasonably relied on new growth in order to fund operations.

This doesn't mean, however, that the City of Suwanee is immune from challenging economic conditions. The slowing economy impacts revenues while simultaneously bringing about an increase in calls for services in certain areas.

While other government agencies that the City works with struggle to address their shortfalls, their decisions may also impact us. Like many of you, the City will find ways to do more with less. Throughout 2009 and beyond, City staff will continue to be diligent about conserving resources while maintaining our highest standards of service and excellence. As households around the nation are doing, the City of Suwanee will tighten its belt in order to weather these uncertain times.

As we prepare to undertake – with optimism and determination – the challenges and opportunities of 2009, we look back with pride on the City's many accomplishments throughout 2008. Many of these initiatives have been in process – through planning and preparations – for several years, and we are now enjoying the realization of those efforts.

Like many of you, the City will find ways to do more with less.

Latest and greatest of 2008

A gem of a park

Considered the jewel of Suwanee's award-winning Open Space Initiative because of its natural beauty, **Sims Lake Park** was opened in October. The community christened the idyllic 62-acre park, which features a 7-acre lake, looping trail, playground, and stream-scape, with a grand opening celebration November 8.



"The Sims Lake Park is wonderful! Thank you so much for creating a well-designed park which preserves so much of the natural setting."

—Resident Randy Crutchfield

Art – it's not just for walls anymore

In March, City Council established a **Public Arts Commission**, charged with enhancing the quality of life in Suwanee through public art. The commission's seven members have been meeting since July and established as their top priorities identifying artwork for the new City Hall and encouraging developers to voluntarily incorporate public art into their projects.

Where excellence is an attitude

Suwanee's Exit 111 received an attitude adjustment with the launching of the **Suwanee Gateway branding initiative**. The branding campaign, which was kicked off at last year's January 24 State of the County address, is one component of the City's efforts to revitalize this key commercial area (which plays an important role in Suwanee's long-term economic viability) and to create a sense of identity for the business corridor – where excellence is an attitude.



Extending PACT's success

Hoping to duplicate the success of its residential PACT (Police and Citizens Together) program, the Suwanee Police Department formed a **Suwanee Gateway PACT**, the first in a business district. The program is designed to reduce criminal activity in the area and enhance relationships among the Suwanee Gateway's 400 businesses, police officers, and the City in general.

New digs

The City acquired a 12,000 square foot, 20-year-old warehouse on Windsor Park Drive for use as its **new public works facility**. This facility provides office, maintenance, and warehouse space for the City's public works crews who maintain streets, parks, trails, and the City's water system.

Best face forward

With a generous contribution from the Suwanee BB&T Bank, the Downtown Development Authority created a **Façade Improvement Grant Program**, through which Suwanee First United Methodist Church received a \$2,500 grant to help spruce up its exterior.

A second chance

Through the **Pre-Trial Diversion Program** implemented in May, 68 first-time defendants, mostly young offenders, have had the opportunity to have their criminal histories expunged by correcting their behaviors and completing court-instituted conditions. More than 1,250 hours of community service have been completed on behalf of the City of Suwanee through this program.

Hello, this is your water company

The public works department implemented its first **calling post system** as a way to communicate important information with City water customers.

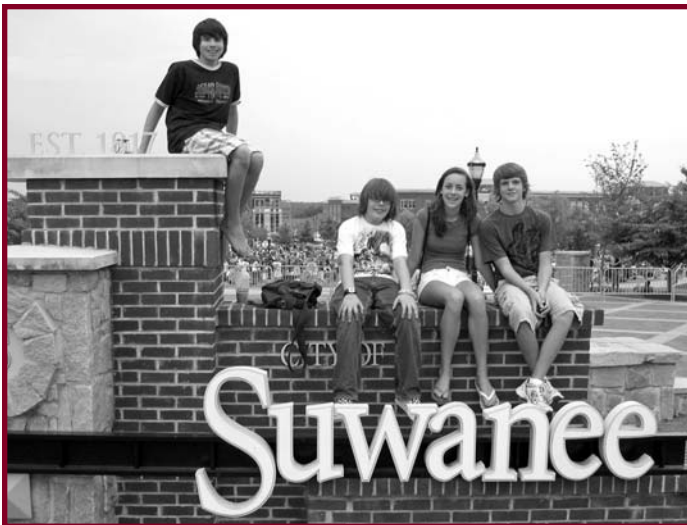
Help for seniors

The City established a **homestead tax deferral program** for homeowners 62 and older who have limited incomes.

Signs of the times

Bright new **City banners** were installed at Town Center and along Main Street. Banners with the new Suwanee Gateway logo and tagline were put up along the I-85/Lawrenceville-Suwanee corridor as part of the Gateway branding initiative. In addition, Suwanee installed classically designed signs at major entryways and other locations throughout the community to mark City limits and encourage community spirit.

Award-winning ways



Citizen satisfaction is the best indicator that the City of Suwanee is doing a good job, but awards from peer and professional organizations also signal the City's commitment to innovation and excellence. In 2008, Suwanee's initiatives in a variety of areas were recognized.

- Gwinnett Chamber Valor Awards **Public Safety Unit of the Year** – Criminal Investigation Unit; **Bronze Medal of Valor** – Sgt. Dwayne Black
- Park Pride: **Inspiration Award** – Suwanee Open Space Initiative



- Government Finance Officers Association: **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** (fifth consecutive year) and **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** (third consecutive year)



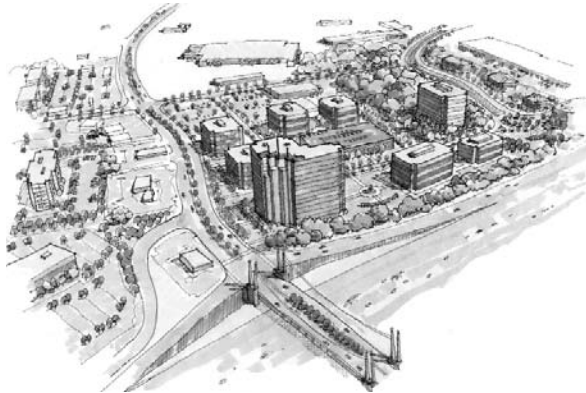
"The layout, format, and style of the [budget] document make a reader curious to spend time reviewing it. I found it inviting and interesting, prepared at a level that an interested reader will understand and follow.... Excellent work."

– Government Finance Officers Association Reviewer



- Gwinnett County Bar Association: **Officer of the Year** – Lt. Matt Scott
- City-County Communications and Marketing Association: **Savvy Award** – *Play hard. Live well. Smile more!*, Suwanee's resident guide; **Silver Circle Award** – America's Best Places to Live marketing strategies
- Georgia Downtown Association and Georgia Department of Community Affairs: **"Best Problem-Solving"** – Suwanee Town Center
- Southeast Festivals and Events Association: **Best Sponsor** – Primrose Schools of Suwanee; **Best Event within an Event** – Sail-A-Bratton; **Best Event Volunteer** – Kim Towne; **Best Event Photo** – Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert

Future tense



Road map to 2030

More than 100 people participated over a nine-month period in shaping Suwanee's **2030 Comprehensive Plan/Community Agenda**. The plan calls for preservation of existing residential areas and directs development and redevelopment to areas where it is most appropriate. The most significant changes are envisioned in the Suwanee Gateway area, along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, at Town Center, and along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. The 2030 plan, which currently is being reviewed by the Atlanta Regional Commission and Department of Community Affairs, is expected to be adopted by City Council later this year.

Yin and yang of downtown Suwanee

In partnership with citizens and other stakeholders as well as design consultants, Suwanee initiated a **downtown master plan** process, expected to be completed around the middle of this year. This initiative focuses on both the Town Center and Old Town areas.

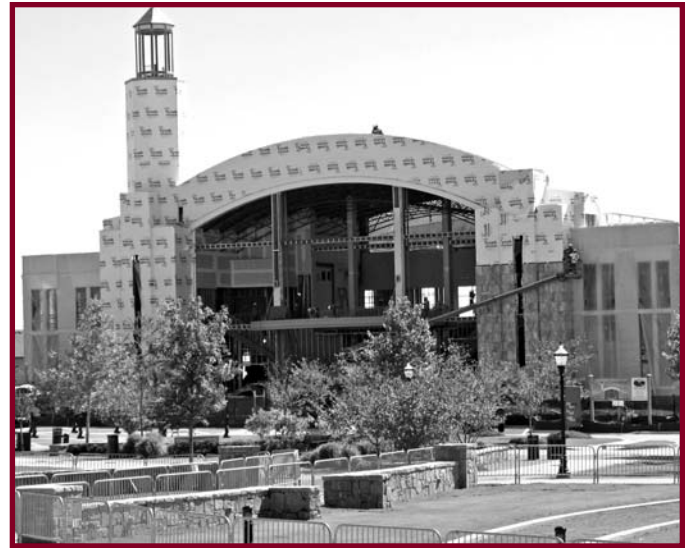


Better roadways

The City began work in November on a SPLOST-funded **road improvement/traffic calming project** on Eva Kennedy Road from Stonecypher Road to approximately the Brushy Creek subdivision. This project also includes installation of a traffic speed table on Martin Farm Road at the Suwanee Creek Greenway.

H₂O

Suwanee is working with a consultant to conduct a **comprehensive study of the City's water system**. The City anticipates receiving study recommendations early in 2009.



Going up and going green

Construction of Suwanee's new 23,600 square foot City Hall has progressed throughout the year. The building is expected to open early in 2009 and to be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified. The \$9.6 million project is funded through a low-cost loan, the general fund, and proceeds earned through the sale of Town Center properties to private developers.

"City Hall will be a meaningful, significant, and distinct landmark of public service that responds to the history, tradition, and future of the City of Suwanee."

– K. Scott Gordon, BRPH principal-in-charge for design of City Hall

"I live in Cumming, and I drive through Suwanee every day on my way to work. I am so impressed with the community spirit in Suwanee, the rebirth and revitalization that is going on, the inviting outdoor facilities.... I can't tell you enough how warm and inviting it looks from the outside...."

-Phil Hord

Employee excellence

Courting credentials

Suwanee Municipal Court Supervisor Mariza Abdeljawad became the first court clerk in Gwinnett County to complete the **Georgia Council of Court Administrators' 40-hour educational certificate program**. Also, court clerks Eva Parker and Annette Phelps completed the Atlanta Regional Commission's first-ever Administrative Professional Certificate Program.



Working up a sweat

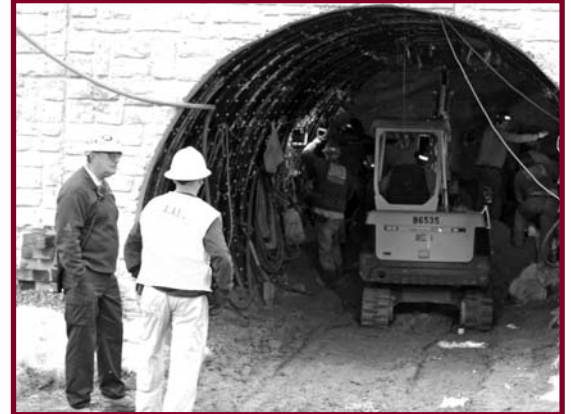
To boost employee health and morale and help reduce insurance expenses, the City initiated an **Employee Wellness Program**. In addition to an employee wellness bank that helps fund healthier lifestyles, the employee-run program has offered a variety of activities, including screenings and health fairs, lunch-and-learn sessions on healthy lifestyle topics, flu shots, competitive and recreational physical activities, and in April the first annual four-mile David Maddox Fun Walk.



We won't settle for 'good enough'

Better connections

The City of Suwanee is making better connections. A **pedestrian bridge** linking the Town Center area and the Suwanee Creek Greenway opened in November 2007. Also, this past fall, construction of the **pedestrian underpass** behind City Hall was substantially completed; the underpass will link the Town Center area with Main Street and historic Old Town. With completion of the underpass, the City plans to begin work in early 2009 on enhanced pedestrian-controlled crosswalks between the current City Hall and Town Center Park.



Marvelous makeovers

The first **Swan-ee Awards** were presented in December 2007, recognizing four projects that achieved excellence in creating aesthetically attractive facilities. The 2008 awards honored four other renovation projects as well as construction of a new building. The improvements created by these "modern makeovers" enhanced the entire community.



Heart and soul

More than 40 representatives from communities from across the state traveled to Suwanee's Town Center in April as part of the Georgia Cities Foundation's three-day **Heart & Soul** tour of thriving downtowns.

Better connections II

The police department used SPLOST funds to **upgrade radio and dispatch equipment**. The new equipment includes portable radios, mobile vehicle radios, and two dispatch consoles, all of which allow for digital capabilities and monitoring of the "officer down" radio button. Also, the department acquired a system that provides access to a judge in order to obtain electronic warrants.

Quantifying quality

Survey says...

Using a comprehensive, **scientific survey** of 1,200 residents, mailed in November, the City of Suwanee will obtain a measure of citizen attitudes and satisfaction levels. The data was collected and is being analyzed by the National Research Center, an independent group. Suwanee's results will be compared with national norms.

In another survey conducted at this year's Suwanee Day festival, **100 percent** of those surveyed said that, given the opportunity, they would plan to attend the 2009 festival – an unprecedented endorsement, according to pollsters.

Compare and contrast

The City of Suwanee is one of just 17 local government agencies in Georgia participating in the International City/County Management Association's **Center for Performance Measurement program**. This is Suwanee's third year to be part of the program, which helps local governments measure, compare, and improve service delivery in 15 areas. More than 220 cities and counties in the United States and Canada currently participate in the program.

"Just wanted to comment...on the 25th Suwanee Day celebration this past weekend. I just have to say that the organization and how the staff event workers handled everything with the amount of people that were attending, was fantastic. This was the first event that I have attended since I moved here last year from Virginia, and I really enjoyed it."

–Phyllis Mayfield

In control

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission completed its assessment of Suwanee's **Erosion and Sediment Control Program**. The City earned an "exceptional" rating, scoring 455 out of a possible 500 points.

Leadership beyond City Hall

Chief of chiefs

Suwanee **Police Chief Mike Jones** became chief of chiefs when he took over the helm of the 500-member Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP) in July. Throughout his year-long tenure, the GACP will work to improve traffic safety throughout the state.



A metro mayor...and manager

Dave Williams took over the reins as Suwanee's mayor in January with plans to "raise the bar on civic engagement." The mayor also serves as vice chair of the Gwinnett Municipal Association and as a member of its executive board and recently was appointed to the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) Legislative Policy Committee.

Also, Suwanee **City Manager Marty Allen** was appointed to serve along with 19 other city managers from around the state on GMA's City Managers Advisory Group.

Call of duty

Mayor Pro Tem **Jimmy Burnette** was appointed to a four-year term on the state's Industrial Buildings Advisory Committee.

Days gone by

Past is prologue

Suwanee dug deep this year – into its history. Graduate intern Kimberly Larson spearheaded the City's efforts to uncover and feature highlights from **Suwanee's past** as part of a permanent display for the new City Hall. (One of the items uncovered was the 1908 minute book.) In August, residents were invited to stop by the Crossroads Center to share their stories and memorabilia from earlier days. In addition, a history videotape is currently in production.

E-tix

Handwritten traffic citations have become a thing of the past in Suwanee. At the end of 2007, the Suwanee Police Department began issuing **electronically generated citations**. The electronic tickets help make officers more efficient, improve customer service, and save City resources.



All in a day's work

Saving lives

Thanks to an increase in police staffing as well as proactive monitoring of traffic patterns and selective enforcement programs, automobile accidents in the City are down 6.8 percent – that's **83 fewer crashes**.

Roadwork ahead

Through the state's Local Assistance Road Program and with an assist from SPLOST funds, nearly 1.2 miles along Dollar Circle, Rising Fawn Trail, and Swiftwater Park Drive were **patched and resurfaced** this year. **New sidewalk** projects along sections of Buford Highway, Smithtown Road, Tench Road, and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard also have been substantially completed.

Order in the court

In 2008, Suwanee Municipal Court processed about **14,531 citations**. The top three offenses are camera-generated red light violations, speeding, and failure to use seatbelts.

Eventful Suwanee

Suwanee's front yard, **Town Center Park**, continues to be a hub-bub of fun and activity. Last year, the park hosted the 25th celebration of Suwanee Day and a *Life is good* festival, which raised about \$14,000 for Project Joy. The park also was the stage-five start site for the Tour de Georgia in April. In August, platinum-selling singer/songwriter Edwin McCain brought his soulful sound to Suwanee. In all, the City of Suwanee hosted 35 community events last year, 11 of which were privately organized.



Unsung heroes

Suwanee's public works staff completed **4,043 work orders** in 2008.

Follow the code

The City's **Municipal Code Book** was updated for the first time in seven years and made available online at www.municode.com.

Policing by the Numbers

37,511

Calls for service,
up 33 percent in 2008

29

Certified PACT communities,
including new ones
in the Suwanee Gateway and
Three Bridges neighborhood

2,993

Speeding citations issued
out of 10,627 total citations

112

DUI arrests, up nearly 44 percent
this year

1,181

Residents and business partners who
participated in 2008 PACT meetings

1,136

Total number of traffic accidents,
down 83 from last year and the
lowest number in four years

"I just wanted to drop a quick note to tell you what a great job your officers did on a motorcycle accident we ran last shift.... When we arrived on the scene, your officers were attending a critically injured patient by holding c-spine control and stabilizing a severely injured leg. It was refreshing to see police officers giving the public care that I felt was above and beyond their duty."

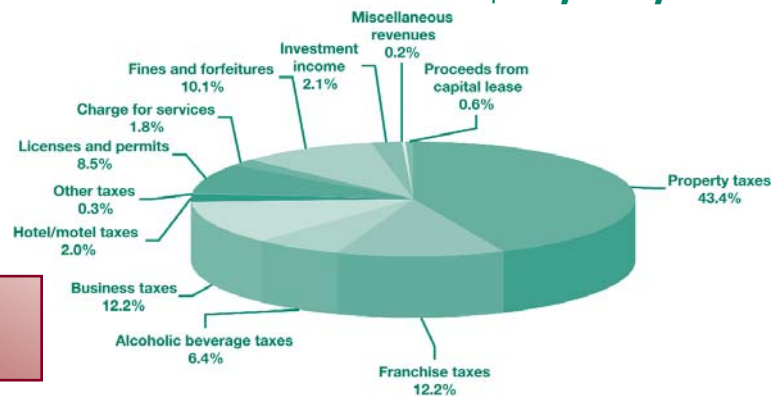
–Fireman Pete Keane, Station 13

2008 General Fund

Data presented is for fiscal year 2008,
July 1, 2007-June 30, 2008

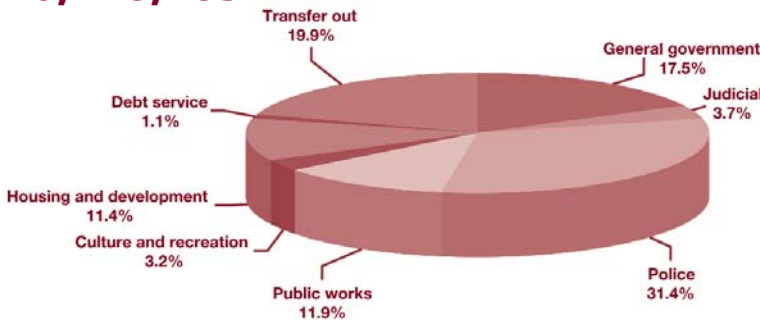
Revenues

\$12,352,984



Expenditures

\$10,428,183



"Transfer out" category includes debt service funds and transfers to capital projects. Monies for 2008 included:

- \$1.89 million for debt service (open space bond funds; City Hall bond)
- \$100,000 for paved streets
- \$70,600 for the water system
- \$11,000 for a cemetery study

The excess of revenues over expenditures for the year was added to the City's unreserved fund balance.

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