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# The County Council welcomes five new members



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DISTRICT 5



GEORGE RECKTENWALD
COUNTY MANAGER



It doesn't happen very often.

In fact, before last year, a single election cycle ushering in five new Volusia County Council members hadn't occurred in 50 years. But it just happened again – in the 2022 election. This January, the seven-member County Council welcomed five new members. The Council's task now will be to establish legislative priorities for the next year and beyond.

The somewhat rare majority turnover on the County Council was at least partly the result of the national census that occurs every 10 years. Ordinarily, three or four of the seven County Council seats are up for election every two years. However, after the 2020 census, local, state and federal governments were required to redraw election boundary lines to maintain roughly equal representation by population in each district. And when that happens, the county's homerule charter dictates that six of the seven council seats go before voters in the very next council election – which was last year. The only council post not on last year's ballot was county chair. **Jeff Brower** still has two more years remaining in his term.

Following the 2022 election, the following five new members started their terms in office with a swearing-in ceremony on Jan. 5, 2023:

· District 1: **Don Dempsey** 

· District 2: **Matt Reinhart** 

· District 4: **Troy Kent** 

· District 5: **David Santiago** 

· At-Large: **Jake Johansson** 

After winning re-election, District 3 Council Member **Danny Robins** joined Chair Brower as the only two returning members of the council. Robins was unanimously selected by his peers to serve as the new council's vice chairman for 2023. And with so many new faces on the dais, Brower set the tone for the upcoming year during his remarks at the January swearing-in ceremony.

"The people that elected each one of you and me two years ago want to see a group that isn't homogenous – we don't all think alike – but it can come together and debate issues in a way that's respectful and productive," Brower said shortly after the new council was seated. "And I think we will do that. I'm looking forward to it."

Ordinarily, all council terms are four years. Again, in an anomaly of redistricting designed to stagger the terms, the District 2 and District 4 member will serve 2-year terms. Both seats will then be up for 4-year terms in 2024. The other three district members will serve 4-year terms. Those positions will be up for election next in 2026.

## **Constitutional Officers**



Larry Bartlett



#### **Larry Bartlett, Property Appraiser**

Volusia County saw record-breaking increases in 2022 property valuations following historic sales volume and sales price increases in 2021. Just values jumped from \$68.6 billion in 2021 to an overall just value of nearly \$85 billion in 2022! That makes the 23.7% year-over-year percentage-based increase the largest since 2006. The office launched a new GIS portal to improve mapping capabilities and data insights. In collaboration with Volusia County GIS, this new GIS portal is benefitting the public, county offices and municipalities. All staff members of the property appraiser's office are critical to the mission of government operations during natural disasters (and other emergency conditions) and are required to be available to respond to work throughout an emergency. Part of the office's responsibilities include conducting and coordinating damage assessments for emergency declarations and federal and state funding reimbursement, compiling damage assessment reports and conducting damage assessment team training for county and city staffs. During the 2022 hurricane season, the Property Appraiser's Office saw unprecedented flooding from Hurricane Ian followed by catastrophic beach erosion from Hurricane Nicole, totaling nearly a billion dollars in damage assessments and more than 7,000 properties affected. You can visit the office's website at vcpa.vcqov.org to search for properties, update your mailing address, file homestead online, estimate your taxes, look at historical tax roll data, download forms, report exemption fraud, apply for a job and so much more.



Mike Chitwood
VOLUSIA
SHERIFF

MICHAEL J. CHITWOOD

#### **Sheriff Mike Chitwood**

2022 was another year of firsts for the Volusia Sheriff's Office (VSO), from the first enforcement of Florida's new legislation addressing unsanctioned, out-of-control pop-up events to VSO's first cryptocurrency seizure following a major fraud investigation. At the 911 Communications Center, video 911 calls became available for the first time, along with a new mental health counselor embedded on the dispatch floor to help 911 callers in crisis. Those firsts all came before Volusia County faced two of its biggest challenges: Hurricanes Ian and Nicole. Dispatchers answered five times the normal call volume during lan, with deputies and first responders receiving more than 1,000 calls for high-water rescue. They were back at it during Nicole, helping to evacuate hundreds of residents from beachside homes and condos before the storm caused multiple coastal structures to collapse. As residents returned to their homes, deputies were out in force to prevent looting and other crime. Finally, late in the year, a long-term vision of Sheriff Chitwood became a reality. With federal COVID relief funds freeing up money in the general fund, the County Council was able to earmark \$5.4 million for the opening of a new, comprehensive facility sought by Sheriff Chitwood to address juvenile crime, behavioral issues, mental health and substance abuse. The Sheriff announced the opening of the new facility in November. The Volusia Family Resource Center combines the resources of the Sheriff's Office, Department of Juvenile Justice, Children's Home Society of Florida, Volusia County Schools and Halifax Behavioral Services all under one roof, with improved access for anyone seeking help or early intervention. A quote from Sheriff Chitwood on the facility's walls reminds every young person who sees it: "The opportunity to turn your life around begins now!"

# Volusia County FLORIDA

## **Constitutional Officers**

#### **Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections**

2022 was a busy year in the Supervisor of Elections office. The year started with the re-drawing of all precinct lines following redistricting. The process typically takes a year. This time, however, it was completed in less than a month due to the census data being received late. The staff worked day and night with Volusia County's Geographic Information Services to redraw every precinct boundary and create new maps just in time for candidate qualifying for the 2022 elections. The office conducted two successful countywide elections that gave voters the opportunity to vote on everything from governor to County Council and several municipal contests. Additionally, two new systems were purchased to help improve the office's operations. The first was a state-certified auditing system called Clear Ballot. This system allows for the verification of election results with just a few clicks. The second was a vote-by-mail sorter that allowed voters to know their ballot had been accepted sooner. The office continued to ensure that all voters wanting to vote can vote. with the use of a system called Democracy Live. The system provides those with disabilities the opportunity to vote independently from the comfort of their own home. Those in the military and overseas also had the option to vote through Democracy Live, giving them a quicker way to receive their ballot. As the Elections Office looks to 2023, the staff is ready for list maintenance and cleaning the voter rolls. Overall it was a great year, with the continued provision of open, secure, safe and transparent elections for the voters of Volusia County.



Lisa Lewis



#### **Will Roberts, Tax Collector**

During the second year of operation, Volusia County's first elected tax collector in 50 years continued to improve convenience for residents and taxpayers. An influx of new residents into Volusia increased the volume of customers in need of services provided by the office. New and returning customers no longer need to visit various agencies to receive driver license services, access tag and title services or pay property taxes. Combined services are now available in four, one-stop tax collector locations across our county. To further increase customer convenience and reduce in-office wait times, the office continues to improve its technology and access to online applications that enable customers to conduct business virtually. In 2022, a collaboration with the state allowed the tax collector to begin offering concealed weapon license services for the first time inside the county's borders. Customers have the convenience of filing a new application or renewing a current license. The office also received its second consecutive Legacy Award for Financial Operations from the Florida Tax Collectors Association in recognition of efforts to improve operational efficiency. In 2023, the office will continue to provide exceptional customer service and increase access to services, while seeking new opportunities to improve productivity and fiscal efficiency.



Will Roberts



#### Laura Roth, Clerk of the Circuit Court

The Clerk of the Circuit Court maintains important documents and provides services such as marriage licenses, official land records, passport processing, domestic violence injunction assistance, child support services, foreclosure and tax deed land sales, traffic citation processing, maintenance of all official court records and extensive free public records accessibility via **www.clerk.org**. The clerk offers Property Fraud Alert, an easy-to-use service to protect residents from land records fraud. You can sign up for this free service at www.clerk.org. In 2022, the Clerk's Office held a successful Operation Green Light event that reduced traffic citation fees, enhanced electronic payment methods and streamlined the office's remote customer contact processes. The Clerk's Office also received recognition for completing the Best Practice Excellence Program in 12 subject matter areas from the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers Association. Visit **www.clerk.org** and follow the Clerk's Office's official Facebook page for more information about future Operation Green Light events and other free programs and information.

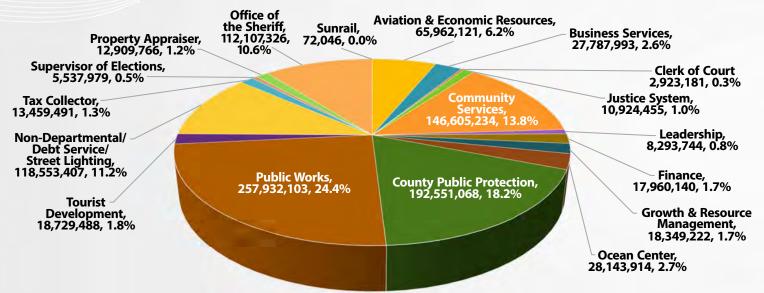


Laura Roth



# **Operating Expenditures by Department**

# **Total Operating Expenditures:** \$1,058,802,678



# **Budget Adoption**

A budget is more than just a bunch of line items documenting income and expense categories. It's a financial roadmap that sets priorities, funds programs and services and establishes a government's fiscal and taxation policies.

Assembled by county staff based on input and direction from the County Council, recommended by the County Manager and adopted by the council, the county budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year reflects the following priorities:

- · Responsible budgeting
- · Keeping property taxes low
- · Adequately funding programs and services, with an emphasis on protecting the public
- Ensuring appropriate fund balances and reserves as a financial buffer for emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances

Volusia's fiscal conservatism is exemplified by the fact that five of the nine property tax funds controlled by the county went to a full rollback this year. And that includes the general fund, which is the county fund that has the greatest impact on taxpayers because it finances countywide services. In fact, the county's general fund tax rate has gone down for five years in a row and is now at the lowest it's been in nearly 15 years. In addition to the general fund, the other funds that went to a full rollback in the current budget are the library fund, the Municipal Services District (MSD), the Ponce De Leon Port Authority and the Silver Sands Bethune Beach MSD.

The other four of county government's tax rates, which include voter approved Volusia Forever and Volusia ECHO levies, remained unchanged in the current budget.



# **Budget Adoption** (continued)

The current budget also exemplifies the county's continuing commitment to public protection. Of the 55 new positions in the current budget, 41 of them are in public safety. They include eight emergency medical technicians, seven paramedics and two ambulance supply technicians to address staffing relief, alternative transport and growth and demand for service. The budget adopted by the County Council also includes funding for 15 new firefighters. The fire fund also contains budgeted funds to pay for the relocation of two fire stations and purchase of two fire trucks, an ambulance and 27 replacement cardiac monitors. Plans also are in the works to renovate several other fire stations in future budget years.

Also included in this year's budget is funding for six corrections officers. This marks the second year of a three-year plan to add 18 new officers.

Responsible budgeting requires earmarking sustainable levels of emergency reserves. The availability of reserves for use in an emergency is one indication that a government is financially strong. Hurricanes lan and Nicole provided stark reminders of why that's so important. Emergencies, natural disasters and other unforeseen circumstances require readiness, response and recovery operations. Depending on the magnitude of the event, these things can be very costly – millions of dollars. While federal reimbursements can cover some of these costs, they often take many years to receive. In times of disaster, there's no time to wait. Residents count on their local government to take immediate action. Having adequate budget reserves on hand provides the financial capability and flexibility to quickly expend necessary funds to respond to emergencies and address the needs of the community.

Much like a family financial plan, all budgets must balance needs with available revenues and include contingencies for the unexpected. In budget year 2022-23, the county continues to fund needed community services with fiscally conservative taxation policies while planning for the future.





# **Fiscal Accountability & Transparency**

Checks and balances are an essential component of county government's operations. They help provide oversight and transparency, improve efficiency, and ensure accountability and adherence to fiscal and program policies and procedures.

Reporting directly to the county manager and the County Council, the office of internal auditor examines the county's operations to confirm compliance with established policies and laws. The audit process also helps strengthen internal controls and maintain public trust and confidence by acting as a safeguard against the potential for fraud, waste or abuse.

Last year, the office audited the following five areas:

- Capital improvement projects
- Economic development incentives
- · The inmate trust fund
- The Environmental, Cultural, Historical and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) program
- The Volusia Forever program

Pursuant to the voter-approved ballot language that extended ECHO and Volusia Forever for another 20 years, both programs are audited annually.

# lan and Nicole: Two unwelcome visitors leave their impact



Despite predictions of yet another busy and active year, the 2022 Atlantic hurricane season got off to a surprisingly quiet start.

Then came September. Then came lan.

Coming up through the Gulf of Mexico before making its treacherous right-hand turn, Hurricane Ian slammed into the west coast of Florida on Sept. 28 and then embarked on a cross-state rampage. Ian made its entry into Volusia County as a strong tropical storm on Sept. 29, leaving historic rainfall, devastating flooding and significant coastal erosion in its wake. The numbers tell part of the story. In Volusia County, Ian wrought:

- · Five deaths
- · Wind gusts approaching 100 mph
- Historic rainfall totals ranging from nearly 10 inches in Pierson to 21 inches in New Smyrna Beach and Ponce Inlet
- · Widespread power outages that impacted more than 247,000 customers
- · In excess of \$357 million in property damage

As with all disasters, the numbers don't tell the whole story. They don't tell about the massive coordination efforts that helped prepare the public for the storm's impact. They don't tell of the heroic rescues of both people and animals. They don't tell about the dedication of public workers who set aside their personal needs and, in many cases, risked their lives to continue serving the public before, during and after the storm. And they don't tell the story of the incredible coordination led by the county's Emergency Management team to mobilize resources on the local, state and federal level and jump start the recovery efforts.

That's the way things tend to go with disasters. They have a way of bringing out the best in people, in communities – and in government, where public safety and protection are always the first priority. Volusia County began its preparations early, even before the storm had an official name. As Ian inched closer, the county's Emergency Operations Center, or EOC, was activated. More than 13,000 sandbags were distributed, local governments joined forces to get the community storm-ready, plans for sheltering evacuees were initiated and a massive communications effort was launched to answer questions and let residents know what to do, what to expect, how to protect themselves and where to go for help. After all, communicating with the public is a critically important component of any disaster response.

Through the duration and aftermath of the storm, the EOC remained activated for 22 days to oversee and coordinate operations. The county's major pre-storm focus was on securing assets, assisting with evacuations, helping to staff shelters and then hunkering down. As lan passed through, it was an all-hands-on-deck response that included virtually every department and division in county government. The myriad post-storm tasks included clearing roads, debris removal, high-water rescues, damage and flood assessments, emergency street repairs, building safety inspections, coordinating community donations, and assisting impacted residents and businesses in filing for federal disaster assistance.



## lan and Nicole (continued)

lan's impact to Volusia County's shoreline – its seawalls, beach ramps, dunes systems and dune walkovers as well as coastal parks – was particularly severe. With the erosion from the wind, rain and pounding surf undermining the strength and structural integrity of the coastline, it wouldn't take much to send structures tumbling into the ocean. What came next was catastrophic to sections of the shoreline.

A little more than a month after lan, a rare, late-season storm – Hurricane Nicole – set its sights on Florida. Coming from the Atlantic side this time, the powerful storm made its unwelcome arrival in Volusia County on Nov. 10. The coast took the brunt of the impact. With its defenses and armoring already weakened, it was too much for the severely compromised shoreline to handle. Tragically, a number of residences and other coastal facilities either partially or completely collapsed. Meanwhile, the storm undermined several oceanfront motels and condominiums to the point that they were deemed unsafe to inhabit.

On top of the \$357.2 million worth of destruction from lan, the damage estimates in Volusia County from Nicole exceeded \$495 million – for a combined impact to the county of more than \$852 million. That amounts to a great deal of adversity for our community. But the adversity resulting from the 2022 storm season also created opportunities. The coordinated response efforts strengthened working relationships between the county, our cities and other community partners. Coastal recovery efforts also got a boost in December in the form of a \$5 million grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to help pay for beach and dune sand placement to address the impacts of the storms.

For many residents, the fortunate ones, life after Ian and Nicole returned to normal fairly quickly. For others, it will take months or even years. But just as with the pandemic, the one-two hurricane punch of 2022 created a sense of unity – a sense that our community will once again come roaring back. Volusia County is strong and resilient and will continue to get through this as we always do – together, rising to the challenge and weathering the storm!









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# Water quality and conservation

It makes things live, grow and thrive.

We drink it and wash, clean, cook and irrigate our lawns, gardens and farms with it. We also boat on it and swim and fish in it. It's critical to wildlife, recreation and the economy.

Water really is our most precious resource. And when it comes to protecting, preserving, treating and conserving it, water knows no jurisdictional boundaries. Whether it's drinking water, stormwater or the water that fills our rivers, lakes, streams and springs, responsible management and stewardship of this irreplaceable resource is vitally important to the wellbeing of our community. And that's why issues surrounding water quality and protection took center stage for much of 2022.

#### **Water plans**

It takes sound science, a plan and teamwork to effectively manage water resources. The County Council commissioned two key water plans in 2022 that will help create the foundation for furthering efforts to meet water needs and protect delicate springsheds on the west side of the county.

The first is a study of strategies for meeting West Volusia's drinking water and water for household and irrigation needs over the next 20 years. Volusia County and the cities of DeLand, Deltona and Orange City are teaming up on the joint water supply study that's designed to lead to development of a new strategic plan to project the area's water consumption for the next two decades and identify the most efficient way to meet that demand. In addition to meeting future water needs, the plan also is designed to ensure that future groundwater withdrawals are consistent with state mandates related to minimum flow requirements for Volusia Blue Spring. Expected to take about a year to complete, the plan is being jointly funded by the county and the three participating municipalities.

The second plan involves a wastewater treatment feasibility analysis and septic system remediation strategy within the Blue Spring springshed. The goal is to establish strategies for reducing the impacts from nutrient pollutants that septic systems have on the springs. The plan is being funded by a \$250,000 grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In another significant step for water protection, the guidelines for Volusia County's voter-approved ECHO program were modified to make green infrastructure projects eligible for funding.

#### Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant

In yet another collaboration with the state, the Department of Environmental Protection awarded a \$1.1 million grant to the county to provide financial assistance to septic tank owners who live within the DeLeon Spring springshed's primary focus area. The grant is designed to support another part of the county's strategy to improve environmental water quality by encouraging residents who live close to delicate spring basins to upgrade their conventional septic tanks through the addition of more environmentally friendly, nitrogen-reducing systems.

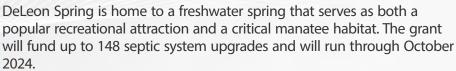






# Water quality and conservation (continued)



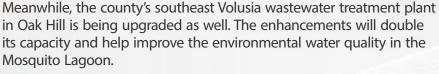


#### Central water and sewer lines

In more good news regarding efforts to protect delicate water basins in West Volusia, the county is installing approximately three miles of central water and sewer lines along the strip of U.S. Highway 17 from DeLand through the business corridor in DeLeon Springs. Connecting facilities with septic tanks in critical areas to a central sewage collection system that provides advanced wastewater treatment will reduce the amount of harmful nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus that are impacting the quality of the water being discharged at DeLeon Spring. Jointly funded by Volusia County and The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the \$10.4 million construction project is expected to be completed by August 2023.

#### **Water treatment facilities**

Upgrading wastewater treatment facilities to expand capacity and reduce harmful discharges through enhanced treatment processes is another of Volusia County's key strategies to improving environmental water quality. In 2022, major improvements were under way at county utility plants in southwest and southeast Volusia. The advanced level of treatment helps filter out nutrients that otherwise can end up in the groundwater. A major upgrade is being planned for the county's wastewater treatment plant in DeBary – the Southwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility. The upgrade will increase the plant's capacity, enhance the biosolids treatment process and increase the availability of reclaimed water for lawn irrigation. Once the project is completed, the capacity of the facility to provide an advanced level of wastewater treatment will nearly double. The plant improvements will boost water quality and conservation efforts in the region, which includes Volusia Blue Spring, Gemini Springs and Volusia Blue Spring Run.



#### Water interconnect

Another water-related project is ensuring redundancy for customers in the northeast part of the county. Construction of a 6,000-foot water interconnect for Volusia County's northeast utility service area commenced in June. The \$883,000 project will connect the distribution system in Halifax Plantation with the City of Ormond Beach's utility system. The interconnect will help provide a backup supply of water for the county's northeast service area and the City of Ormond Beach in the event of an emergency or service disruption. Completion of this project is expected by March 2023.





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# Water quality and conservation (continued)

#### **Stormwater improvements**

Improving the treatment of stormwater runoff is important to alleviating flooding and pollutants from runoff to reduce harmful discharges into the area's surface waters. Federal COVID relief funds enabled the County Council to earmark nearly \$10.6 million towards various stormwater and water quality projects throughout the county. The planned projects include the following:

- Pooser Pond stormwater improvements in Orange City
- North Beach Street resiliency in Ormond Beach involving raising the elevation of a portion of the road and installing storm drain pipes to alleviate flooding
- Buckingham Drive exfiltration system in Ormond Beach
- North and South Clyde Morris Boulevard stormwater conveyance improvements extending through Port Orange, Daytona Beach and Ormond Beach
- · Lake Monroe baffle boxes in Deltona
- B-19 Canal box culvert construction in Port Orange

These projects will be designed, bid and constructed to meet the federal American Rescue Plan Act funding guidelines.

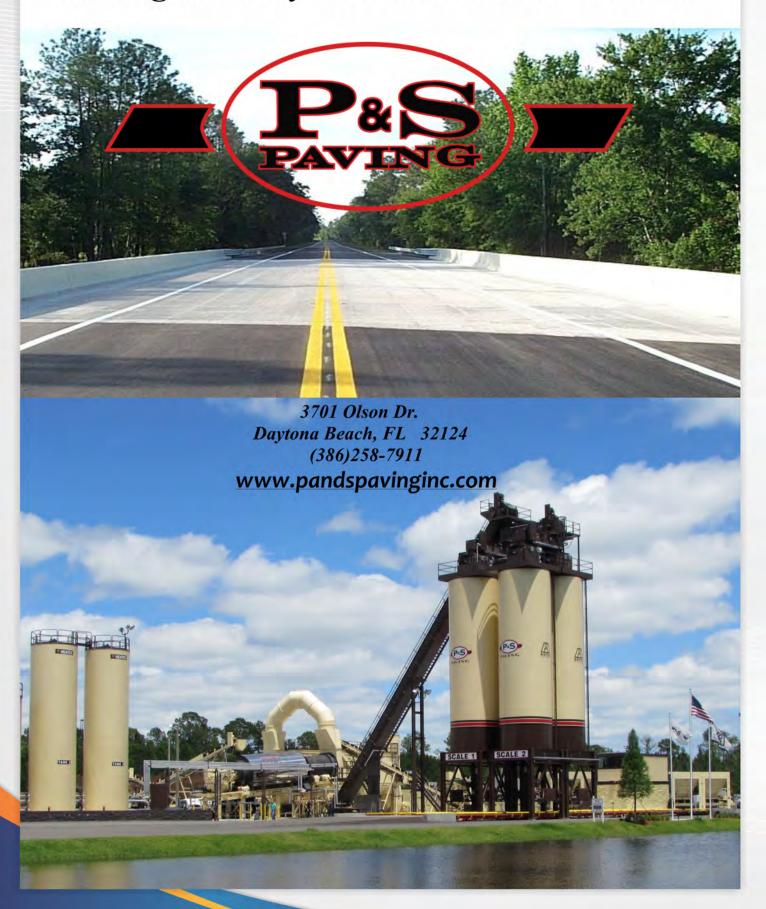
In the planning stages for years, an extremely ambitious project to improve water quality in the Mosquito Lagoon came to completion in 2022. The project involved construction of a treatment facility to divert stormwater from the Gabordy Canal in the New Smyrna Beach/Edgewater area into a 2-acre treatment facility, where detrimental nutrients are then removed prior to the water being discharged back into the canal and ultimately into Mosquito Lagoon. Identified in the Mosquito Lagoon Reasonable Assurance Plan, the project will result in the removal of thousands of pounds of nitrogen and phosphorus – among the primary causes of harmful algae blooms. Jointly funded by Volusia County, the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the grand opening of the new treatment facility was celebrated on June 17, 2022.

Water quality, protection and preservation will continue to be one of the highest priorities for Volusia County. Our collective welfare depends on it!





# Paving the Way to a Better Tomorrow....



# **Protecting natural resources**

We all rely on natural resources such as water, soil, vegetation, animals and marine life to live, thrive and keep our ecosystem in harmony.

While nature provides us with our daily needs, many natural resources are non-renewable and in limited supply. And that makes protection and conservation of our resources incredibly important not only for today, but also to ensure that there will be enough left for future generations. We must all do our part by being good stewards of our natural resources and ecosystems.

Volusia County undertook several key steps in 2022 to help protect our resources and natural environment.

#### **Anti-litter campaign**

January saw the launch of a major anti-litter campaign. Featuring the hashtag **#EveryLitterBitCounts**, the initiative included videos, social media posts and a web page all dedicated to promoting a collective effort to Keep Volusia Beautiful! Volusia County coordinated the effort with a variety of programs that include adopt a beach, adopt a trail, adopt a park, waterway cleanups, storm drain curb marking and household hazardous waste pickup and tire amnesty events. The public messaging for the initiative also encourages volunteer participation and the use of facilities provided by the county such as fill-a-bag stations, mermaid's lost treasure boxes and monofilament recycling containers. Here are just some of the results of these efforts:

- 284 volunteers collected 3,655 pounds of trash during the 26th Annual St. Johns River Cleanup. Boaters, kayakers and an airboat club also participated in the event.
- Through the monofilament recycling volunteer program, 201 pounds of monofilament line were collected from 45 recycling bins.
- · Another 1,810 pounds of line and fishing gear were collected during 10 underwater cleanups.
- Environmental Management coordinated the 2022 International Coastal Cleanup at 37 sites along the Halifax/Indian River and the Atlantic coast. 1,548 people participated, collecting a combined 8,315 pounds of trash.
- · Adopt a beach volunteers collected 1,594 pounds of trash from the beach. Independent, one-time beach cleanups attracted 149 volunteers who collected an additional 442 pounds of trash.

The community also responded last year in a big way to Volusia County's adopt a road litter reduction program, with 17 new groups added in 2022. That brings the total to 82 groups and 93 miles of county-maintained roads adopted. In 2022, a total of 440 volunteers participated in 90 cleanups – removing 12,680 pounds of litter from county-maintained roads.

When it comes to keeping our county clean, beautiful and litter free, EveryLitterBitCounts!





# **Protecting natural resources** (continued)



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#### **Marine Science Center**

Volusia County's Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet has been at the forefront of local conservation efforts since its opening in 2002. In June 2022, the sea turtle and bird rehabilitation center and environmental education facility celebrated its 20th anniversary. Since opening, the center has attracted more than 1.2 million visitors and cared for more than 25,000 sea turtles and 19,000 birds.

The Marine Science Center's next 20 years and beyond look to be equally bright and successful, with several major projects under way to even better serve marine life and visitors to the facility. They include a new raptor education and conservation exhibit, an upgraded artificial reef exhibit, and a turtle and aquarium commissary that will provide a vital food preparation and storage facility for the nourishment of sea turtles in rehabilitation and aquarium sea life in the exhibit space inside the main building. The artificial reef exhibit is themed after the Lady Philomena, a steel-hulled vessel that was scuttled in 2018. The project is scheduled for completion in late 2023.

With exciting progress and enhancements on the horizon, local marine life, resource management and environmental education efforts will continue to be in good hands at the Marine Science Center.

#### A resilient community

To further resiliency in Volusia County, staff entered the final year of a three-year partnership with Stetson University, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Florida Sea Grant to model land use and habitat change with future conditions and identify the value of the ecosystems services provided. Also, Green Volusia, the Lyonia Environmental Center and Volusia County IFAS/Extension staff partnered on two Climate Smart Floridians classes to provide education on climate change and promote actions we can all take to reduce our impacts. Additionally, a pilot low impact development maintenance class developed by the University of Florida was held in Volusia County.

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# **Protecting natural resources** (continued)

Meanwhile, a grant promoting green infrastructure to reduce flooding impacts for the Spring Hill community culminated in an entrepreneur fair, a green infrastructure study and the establishment of community led Resilience Team.

Volusia County staff also are actively engaged in the Regional Resilience Collaborative (R2C) through participation on the steering and advisory committees. To further these efforts, the county received a number of grants to advance resiliency. They include:

- \$288,000 from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Resilient Florida program for development of a comprehensive countywide vulnerability assessment. The exposure analysis will include identifying the depth of water caused by sea level rise, storm surge, and/or flood scenarios as well as a measurement of the impact that flooding will have on various assets. The process will include a community and stakeholder engagement program. The vulnerability assessment will prepare Volusia County to apply for state grants to adapt critical infrastructure and will also align the county with other jurisdictions in the state.
- Two Resilient Florida grant applications on behalf of the R2C for \$380,000 (2022) and \$440,000 (2023) to advance regional resiliency. Work completed last year included prioritizing natural resource areas, a housing needs and vulnerability assessment, a housing policy audit, education materials for nature-based solutions, developing methodology for a regionwide integrated climate vulnerability assessment, and advancing the work of the R2C committees.

#### Low impact development (LID)

Another hot button topic in the area of resource protection and resiliency is low impact development. The idea behind low impact development, or LID, is to integrate practices into the land planning, design and development processes that emphasize conservation and use of natural, on-site features to protect water quality and reduce pollution and flooding.

In August, the County Council accepted a \$75,000 grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. The money will be used to develop recommendations for a low impact development companion guidebook. The primary mission of the project is to develop recommendations for incorporating LID principles. As part of the process, research is being undertaken to identify best practices in the low impact development approach, including parking standards and retrofitting strategies for green parking lots and resilient, nature-based stormwater solutions. The LID guidebook that will be created as part of the project will be a useful tool to aid local governments and private property owners in implementing low impact development and green infrastructure principles.







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# Protecting natural resources (continued)

#### **Artificial reefs**

A healthy marine habitat isn't just an important ecological consideration. It's also a source of food, recreation and economic stimulation.

To help maintain a prosperous marine habitat and meet the growing demand for nearshore fishing destinations in state waters, Volusia County oversaw the permitting of three new artificial reef sites. Material was placed at one of the three sites in August of last year – approximately 2.75 miles offshore of Lighthouse Point Park in Ponce Inlet. The site consists of nearly 400 tons of concrete and granite. The project was a joint venture involving Volusia County, the Coastal Conservation Association, Shell USA, and OUC-The Reliable One (Orlando Utilities Commission). The two additional reef sites that were permitted are 10 miles north and 10 miles south of the inlet, and the Coastal Division plans to make reef deployments to these new sites this spring.

#### **Manatee Protection Plan**

Also, Volusia County's Manatee Protection Plan is in the process of getting its first update in some time. The plan, initially adopted in two phases back in 2001 and 2005, is designed to ensure the long-term protection of manatees and their habitat. Pending approval by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the goal of the portion of the plan that's being updated is to minimize watercraft-related injuries to manatees by setting standards for the location and design of boat slips in the county. It also created a manatee mitigation fund to support law enforcement and educational activities to protect manatees.

Look for lots more to come in the area of resource protection and conservation. It's a job that never ends!





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# A safe community

Public protection is the cornerstone of any healthy, flourishing community. Above all, residents must be – and feel – safe where they live, where they work and everywhere they go. This is the top priority for all governments. Appropriately, a significant portion of the county's budget and workforce is dedicated to protecting the public.

#### **Public Protection reorganized**

With eight operating divisions and more than 900 employees, the Public Protection Department was by far the largest department of Volusia County government. To give each area more oversight, the County Council approved a plan in December to divide public protection in half by creating a separate Emergency Services Department.

With the reorganization, Animal Services, Beach Safety Ocean Rescue, Corrections and the Medical Examiner's Office remain in the Public Protection Department – headed by Director **Mark Swanson**.

Headed by Director **Jim Judge**, the new Emergency Services Department includes the Emergency Management, Fire Rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Emergency Medical Administration divisions. The County Council confirmed Swanson and Judge for their director positions in December.

#### **Animal Services**

A vulnerable group – animals – got enhanced protection from harm under a new animal control ordinance the County Council adopted in June. The culmination of about three years of work, the new ordinance includes many safeguards pertaining to the mistreatment and abandonment of animals. The ordinance also made it unlawful to hide an animal because of a lack of proof of ownership or to conceal it from an investigation. There's also protection from civil liability in the ordinance for anyone who damages a vehicle while breaking in to rescue an animal facing potential harm because it was left in a locked car.

Animal Services also launched a brand new quarterly community outreach program called Meet the Pack. Animal Services officers fan out into three county parks – Lighthouse Point Park in Ponce Inlet, Gemini Springs Park in DeBary and Barkley Square Park in DeLand – to meet with residents to answer questions and talk about the wide range of county programs and services Animal Services provides to the public. The program has been very well received and was featured in a video produced by Community Information.







# A safe community (continued)



With so much going on and their professional dedication to ensuring that pets live good lives free from cruelty, pain and suffering, it's no wonder that Volusia County Animal Services was named Outstanding Agency of the Year last year by the Florida Animal Control Association.

#### **Medical Examiner's Office**

Perhaps last year's biggest public protection news was a long time coming. A new, larger, updated headquarters to house the Medical Examiner's Office has been in the planning stages for years. And now, construction is underway.

Last year, the County Council awarded a \$16.1 million construction contract to Wharton-Smith to build the nearly 20,000-square-foot facility in Daytona Beach. The exciting milestone was celebrated in September with a groundbreaking ceremony. Construction is expected to take about a year to complete. The new site is a 3.3-acre parcel about a mile away from the current building on Indian Lake Road. The new, single-story building will provide more modern and spacious workspace, state-of-the-art autopsy stations and a family meeting room.

The facility is designed to meet the Medical Examiner's space needs for the next 20 years, with the site capable of supporting an expansion of the building should the need occur in the future.



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# A caring community







A caring community is helpful, supportive and inclusive. In caring communities, residents look out for each other and aid the vulnerable. They treasure and preserve the community's history and culture. And they come together in times of disaster.

Volusia County - the people, businesses, community organizations and government – demonstrated its caring side in many ways in 2022. First and foremost, the community came together and helped one another pick up the pieces and begin the recovery from Hurricanes Ian and Nicole. County government was right there, coordinating the response out of the Emergency Operations Center, sheltering residents, unblocking roads and removing debris, clearing storm drainage systems and conducting emergency street repairs and damage assessments. County staff also worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to help secure individual and public assistance for impacted residents. And the county in conjunction with the Florida Division of Emergency Management worked through its Community Information Division and local and regional partners to ensure timely dissemination of important messages critical to the community's safety and response. Given the magnitude and impacts of the storms, these efforts will continue well into 2023.

The county showed its caring side in other ways as well last year.

#### Help for homeless veterans

In May, the County Council approved \$1 million in funding for Halifax Urban Ministries to help a group of vulnerable residents – homeless veterans. The money, which came from Volusia County's share of federal COVID relief funds that freed up general fund dollars, will help renovate a facility on Derbyshire Road in Daytona Beach so it can provide temporary shelter and social services for homeless vets.

#### Affordable housing

Last year also saw the culmination of a year-long process to develop an affordable housing plan for Volusia County. Implemented as a collaboration with Community Services, Growth and Resource Management, community partners, industry experts and volunteers, the initiative entailed a great deal of research and community involvement focused around a series of webinars, a local summit and a series of affinity work groups.

Working with county staff, the affinity groups spent months in intensive study of issues and barriers to making more affordable housing options available to residents – issues such as funding, community land trusts and land development regulations. The result was a 60-page, five-year plan that outlines nearly a dozen key strategies for success. The County Council unanimously accepted the committee's report and will rely on it as a blueprint for expanding the availability of affordable housing. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to solving this national problem, the report provides a toolbox of strategies designed to help address the community's housing needs.

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# A caring community (continued)









Several of the strategies outlined in the affordable housing plan are already being implemented. For instance, proposals for the operation of a community land trust in Volusia County are being evaluated. A transparency dashboard has been created on the county website where residents can learn more about the strategies and action steps identified in the plan and see what has been accomplished so far.

Deciding the best way forward in implementing additional strategies outlined in the report will be the focus of this new and future County Councils

#### Helping people in need

Volusia County is launching two new ways to help people in need.

The first is a new app and website Volusia County is developing, called **Volusia Helps!**, that will enable residents to see the services being offered by agencies throughout the county. The other is a pilot program that places two social workers in county libraries to assist residents with getting connected to services. The social workers rotate at several library branches for appointments and walk-ins.

The Volusia County Public Library system is helping in other ways too. Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museums and Libraries, the library system acquired a van and equipment to provide **mobile STEM** (science, technology, engineering and math) programming in the community. The staff travels to schools, after-school programs and summer camps to provide hands-on STEM programs for school-aged children. The program has been operational for six months, with 427 students participating so far.

#### Celebrating Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

Although gone for more than 65 years, 2022 was a big year for national icon Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune. A passionate educator, civil rights pioneer, presidential advisor, charter member of the United Nations and founder of Bethune-Cookman University, Dr. Bethune was selected for the high honor of being one of Florida's two representatives to be enshrined in Statuary Hall in the nation's Capitol Building in Washington, DC. After a great deal of community support and outpouring of pride for the former Daytona Beach resident, a successful fundraising campaign resulted in the commissioning of a sculptor to create the majestic marble statue. The magnificent figure was unveiled at its rightful place of honor in National Statuary Hall on July 13, 2022. About a month later, a slightly smaller, bronze version of the statue celebrating Dr. Bethune's life and achievements was unveiled in its resting place – atop a pedestal in a special plaza in Daytona Beach's Riverfront Esplanade, facing the beloved university that bears her name.

The County Council helped bring the bronze statue to fruition by voting to authorize a \$25,000 direct county expenditure of ECHO funds toward the cost of the cultural and historic project. The statue serves as a beacon of community unity and is an indelible part of Volusia County's history. Fittingly, the inscription on the pedestal on which the awe-inspiring statue stands is an equally inspiring quote attributed to Dr. Bethune:

"INVEST IN THE HUMAN SOUL. WHO KNOWS, IT MIGHT BE A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH."



# **Quality of life**

For many people, a community's quality of life is largely measured by its abundance of parks and green space, trails and other recreational amenities. When it comes to outdoor facilities, Volusia County is blessed with both quality and quantity. And the inventory got even bigger and better in 2022.

#### Parks and boat ramps

March 18, 2022 was a banner day for residents who enjoy visiting Volusia County's coastal parks. That's because two new coastal parks, both in Daytona Beach Shores, opened to the public on the same day. **Edwin W. Peck Sr. Park** features more than 100 parking spaces, playground and fitness stations, a restroom, showers, bike racks, grills and an ADA-accessible dune walkover. A grand opening ceremony for the park was held in June, with Mr. Peck the special guest of honor. And **Dahlia Avenue Park** was expanded and improved with 60 parking spaces and new facilities that include a family-style restroom building, showers, two pavilions, a bike rack, off-beach parking and direct ADA access to the beach. Although both new parks had already proven to be very popular, they unfortunately suffered critical seawall failures from the impacts of hurricanes lan and Nicole. Repair efforts are already underway.

Last year also saw completion of the popular **Lemon Bluff boat ramp** in Osteen. The facility includes a pavilion, restroom, parking, a canoe/kayak launch, a floating dock system, a boat launch, landscaping and signage. Funding was provided from the Florida Inland Navigation District, park impact fees, the Florida Boating Improvement Program and an ECHO grant.

Volusia County also partnered with a nationwide vendor to provide a canoe/kayak rental service at Lake Monroe Park in DeBary. If the test site proves successful, the program will be expanded to other appropriate waterfront park facilities throughout the county.

#### **Trails**

The county's highly-popular trails system also grew in 2022.

In January 2022, a 2.9-mile section of the Spring-to-Spring Trail was completed in DeBary. This trail segment is a part of the St. Johns River to Sea Loop and runs from Benson Junction Road to West Highbanks Road at Rob Sullivan Park. Funding was provided by the Florida Department of Transportation's SUN Trail program and the Volusia County ECHO trail set-aside program.

In August, a new nature trail was opened at Chuck Lennon Park in DeLeon Springs. This new, one-mile trail features markers to guide hikers along the path and handrails leading down to a natural seep. The trail was designed and built utilizing in-house staff.

And then there was the development of a nature trail on the 36-acre tract adjacent to the Plantation Oaks subdivision. This trail section hugs the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail and is the first leg of a larger trail that will extend north to Ormond Tomb Park. This trail development also was performed by in-house staff.









# Quality of life (continued)









On behalf of the City of New Smyrna Beach, Volusia County is having a trailhead built at the Marine Discovery Center as well as a trail extension connecting the center to the city trail at the North Causeway. The project consists of a trailhead with restroom facilities on the Marine Discovery Center site. The paved trail starts at the trailhead and runs along the southern part of the site to the west side of Barracuda Boulevard and then down to the south side of the causeway.

#### **Volusia County Fairgrounds**

In 2022, the County Council earmarked \$750,000 in federal COVID relief funds that freed up General Fund dollars, to improve the Volusia County Fairgrounds. The site of the annual Volusia County Fair & Youth Show as well as a weekly farmers market, the goal is to transform the facility to serve as a bustling hub of local history, agricultural exhibition, conservation education, entertainment and sporting events. But the question is how best to do that.

So the county commissioned a team from the University of Florida's School of Architecture to develop a vision for the site, at a significant saving of tax dollars when compared to the cost of hiring a private consulting firm. What came out of the process was a nearly 400-page master plan that includes everything from a unifying green core or central lawn, shaded promenades, an open air arena and outdoor stage to rain gardens, a walkable perimeter, and erection of an early Florida village and Volusia Forever conservation center. In addition to approving the master plan, the County Council unanimously green-lighted the first phase of the enhancements – basic infrastructure needs such as road and drainage improvements utilizing green infrastructure approaches, solar-powered exterior lighting, landscaping and signage designed to set the stage for what will follow.

The results of a survey that was conducted as part of the process for developing the master plan underscored just how important the Fairgrounds is to our community, with 77% of the respondents indicating the facility is important to their quality of life. Moving forward, the next steps in the process will include seeking grant funds to support the improvements needed to enhance this strategic and diverse asset that serves residents in so many ways.

#### **Culinary literacy**

For lots of folks, food and cooking also are a measure of their quality of life. With that in mind, the Volusia County Public Library system obtained grant funding to provide comprehensive culinary literacy programs. The programs include hands-on demonstrations of food and nutritional literacy, food acquisition methods, food handling, hygiene and safety, consumer cost-saving techniques, and meal stretching. Funded by a grant from the Florida Division of Library and Information Services, the program has already been presented to nearly 4,000 attendees. Called Recipes and Reads – Family Culinary Literacy Labs, the program was the recipient of the 2022 Northeast Florida Library Information Network Innovation Award.

Bon appetite!



## **ECHO and Volusia Forever**

Volusia County voters know a good program when they see it – actually, two programs.

**ECHO** and **Volusia Forever** have been inexorably linked since 2000, when local voters first said "yes" to both highly-acclaimed county programs and the small property taxes that fund them. The money is used to preserve environmentally sensitive, water resource protection, forests, farmlands and outdoor recreation lands and enhance Volusia County's environmental, cultural, historical and outdoor recreational facilities.

The initial voter mandate in 2000 – 57.5% in favor of ECHO and 61.3% for Volusia Forever – gave birth and a 20-year lifespan to the dual programs. They were so popular and successful that when given the chance in 2020 to renew them for another 20 years, voters gave their resounding approval to both with even greater margins of support – 72.4% for ECHO and 75.5% for Volusia Forever.

The County Council spent much of 2021 working with each program's citizen advisory committee to update the policies, procedures and criteria. In 2022, both programs got down to business in a major way. A key focus of both programs is to leverage partnerships to stretch the funds and maximize the return on the investment the taxpayers are making. Due to this strategy, the county and taxpayers are receiving a \$1.16 return on investment from project partners for every \$1 invested through ECHO and Volusia Forever.

With enough money for two grant cycles, \$6.4 million in ECHO funds were allocated in 2022 by the County Council for 14 projects. The awarded projects include planned improvements to Bill Keller Park in DeBary, Jackson-Lane Memorial Park in DeLand, Magnolia Park in South Daytona, Mary DeWees Park in Oak Hill, Holly Hill's Pictona, the Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center, the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet, and the YMCA in Ormond Beach and DeLand.

One of the awarded projects will help fulfill a long-time dream of a new pedestrian plaza overlooking the Halifax River to honor our area's military veterans. In the planning and design stages for several years, the plaza will be near the foot of the Tom Staed Veterans Memorial Bridge in Daytona Beach. Plans call for the plaza on the northwest side of the bridge to include a fire feature, a dramatic, raised amphitheater sitting area overlooking the river for quiet reflection, a flag and plaque representing the various branches of the U.S. military and raised plaques containing the names of Volusia County residents who died in battle. A veterans group is planning to place an invisible wounds memorial and purple heart monument in the plaza. A World War I memorial now on display at Tuscawilla Park in Daytona Beach also will be moved to the new plaza.











# **ECHO and Volusia Forever** (continued)









The plaza will serve as a tie-in to the **Tom Stead Veterans Memorial Bridge**, which contains a series of scenic overlooks with plaques commemorating conflicts in America's military history. The \$600,000 in ECHO money awarded to the plaza project completed a successful fundraising campaign to pay for construction. The next steps will be to hire a contractor and then break ground.

The ECHO program also awarded a \$208,000 grant to help the Marine Science Center pay for the **new raptor education and conservation exhibit**. Additionally, ECHO launched a community survey to assess how the program ties into the county's quality of life, examine satisfaction with current projects and find out what residents' preferences are for future ECHO projects.

Proposed by county staff, the veterans plaza and Marine Science Center ECHO projects are true public-private partnerships. Veterans groups and citizens raised more than \$200,000 for the veterans memorial plaza project, while the Friends of the Marine Science Center contributed \$175,000 to the new exhibit.

The ECHO program contains a special provision for exceptional projects considered to have countywide importance and that serve large numbers of people throughout the county, making them eligible for larger grant awards. In a first for the newly reorganized program, ECHO helped fund just such a project last year – expansion of the City of Holly Hill's heavily-utilized **Pictona pickleball facility**. The \$2.5 million grant helped double the size of the complex by adding 24 new courts, a championship court, a stadium and an education center. The city and private partners provided a \$3.4 million match to help bring the project to fruition.

Another \$1.5 million was awarded to the City of DeLand to help extend the city's Alabama Greenway with a new, approximately 1.3-mile trail segment along Garfield Avenue from East Minnesota Avenue to U.S. 92. The new trail segment will complete the city's goal of having a trail network extending to the north, south, east and west sectors of DeLand through the center core that loops the trails around the perimeter of the city.

Meanwhile, the County Council, the Volusia Forever Advisory Committee and county staff in the Resource Stewardship Division were busy in 2022 identifying, reviewing, vetting and ranking properties for acquisition based on established criteria and how well each site fits into the overall purpose and intent of the land preservation program.

Notably, three acquisitions achieved fruition last year. The biggest was a 1,303-acre expansion of the **Palm Bluff Conservation Area** near Osteen. The property contains an ecologically-sensitive mix of forest and wetlands that are important for preservation, habitat protection, recreational use and groundwater recharge. Part of the Volusia Conservation Corridor, the newly-acquired property means the county along with its partners have conserved more than 40,000 acres of this corridor that runs through the center of the county. To seal the deal, the County Council green-lighted a cost-sharing agreement with the St. Johns River Water Management District.



# **ECHO and Volusia Forever** (continued)

Nearly \$1.9 million of the acquisition costs came from the Volusia Forever fund, with the St. Johns River Water Management District contributing \$1.5 million. Officials cut the ribbon on the new expansion in August.

The Volusia Forever program also teamed up last year with the St. Johns River Water Management District and the City of Ormond Beach to purchase 18.5 acres of conservation lands along the Tomoka River. The parcel expanded the city's Riverbend Nature Park and was acquired for passive recreation uses in the future. Volusia Forever contributed approximately \$150,000 towards the purchase, with our partners contributing more than \$600,000. Also through Volusia Forever, a 4.3-acre parcel surrounded by the Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve was acquired for \$405,000. Along North Dixie Freeway in New Smyrna Beach, the western boundary of the site provides 650 feet of waterfront on Murray Creek – a tributary of Spruce Creek. The property creates an opportunity for passive recreation, a canoe/kayak launch and outdoor environmental education.

ECHO and Volusia Forever also initiated web enhancements to promote greater program transparency. These enhancements improve ease of access for residents by providing committee meeting agendas with linked supporting documents, features that allow all previous agendas and minutes to be searched using keywords, and the ability for residents to watch live broadcasts and access recordings of committee meetings. In addition, new transparency dashboards for each program provide real-time information on completed and in-progress projects, land purchases, funding sources, web links and maps the public can navigate.

Thanks to the voters, the ECHO and Volusia Forever programs will continue to preserve land and expand environmental, cultural, historic and outdoor recreational opportunities for Volusia County residents and visitors to enjoy – now and into the future!









### Infrastructure









The built infrastructure: It's how we do virtually everything – from communicating, getting around, transporting goods and treating wastewater to transacting business and generating water, power and energy services.

Among the many highlights for Volusia County government in 2022 were five major infrastructure projects. One got under way in 2022 and four others crossed the finish line last year.

#### **Broadband service**

In July, the County Council inked an agreement with Spectrum to bring broadband internet service to certain areas of the county that either don't have a reliable, high-speed internet connection or have no service at all. While most of the new service area will be in northwest Volusia, the full list of areas gaining more access under the agreement include Astor, DeLand, DeLeon Springs, Pierson, Seville, Daytona Beach, Deltona, Edgewater, Mims, New Smyrna Beach, Oak Hill, Osteen and Port Orange. Some of those unserved or underserved areas could see new broadband service as early as January 2024.

Volusia County is chipping in \$4.57 million to help put the infrastructure in place that's needed to provide the service – things such as engineering and design plans, permitting, labor cost and materials like fiber and poles. The county's financial support is coming from federal COVID relief funds.

#### Stormwater treatment facility and road project

Also last year, the county celebrated completion of two major infrastructure projects in the New Smyrna Beach-Edgewater area – the Gabordy Canal stormwater treatment facility (see page 14) and the widening and resurfacing of the eastern most section of 10th Street from Myrtle Avenue east to U.S. 1.

#### Other transportation projects completed

Major road improvement projects on Howland Boulevard in Deltona and Orange Camp Road in DeLand were finished in 2022. With completion of the widening project from Providence Boulevard to Elkcam Boulevard, Howland Boulevard is now four lanes from the west end of Deltona to the east end. The project also included the upgrading of pedestrian facilities, intersections and utilities for the entire length of the project. In DeLand, in addition to widening the eastern end of Orange Camp Road and segments of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Beltway north and south of its intersection with Orange Camp Road, this project also greatly improved the operation of the Orange Camp Road and Dr. MLK Jr. intersection by converting the intersection from a traffic signal to a roundabout. Wait times for drivers at the roundabout are drastically lower than when the intersection was signal controlled.



## Infrastructure (continued)

#### **New Community Services offices**

In a project started in 2021 and continued through last year, the county began work on moving Community Services offices to the former DeLand Health and Environmental Services building (the old DeLand Library). This move not only allowed the county to vacate leased space at the Bank of America building in downtown DeLand, but it also consolidated the Community Assistance group and allowed the county to expand space for Veterans Services. The project required creation of new offices in the old building, upgrading the electrical and mechanical services, security, and controlled access systems, and updating the entire building with new paint, flooring and furnishings. The Facility Management team also created an Emergency Management Services (EMS) respite room with a dedicated entrance and parking for EMS staff. With the facility now known as the West Volusia Annex, work is ongoing on the next phase of the project.

#### **New Volusia County Sheriff's Juvenile Assessment Center**

Last year, the county identified a building strategically located in the center of Volusia County on West International Speedway Boulevard that became available for purchase. The site was the former headquarters for the United Way of Volusia/Flagler Counties. At the time, Sheriff Mike Chitwood was looking for space to establish a Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC). After acquiring the building, the county partnered with the Sheriff's Office to renovate it and convert it into the Juvenile Assessment Center. Due to tight deadlines, the facilities team performed most of the renovations, starting construction on Sept. 1, 2022. Building upgrades included a secure card reader badging access system, hi-tech interior and exterior cameras, new IT infrastructure and wireless access points, secure holding cell rooms, ballistic rated walls, windows, doors and furnishings and new flooring. Upgrades also were performed on the air conditioning system's electrical service and plumbing in bathrooms and the kitchen. Including purchase of the building, the entire project was completed in three months at a total cost of approximately \$1.1 million – and within the fast-track schedule. Sheriff Chitwood inaugurated the new JAC on Nov. 17, 2022 (see page3).









# Airport, economic development and the Ocean Center



Signs of economic recovery are everywhere. Volusia County's tourism sector bounced back. The county's impact fee collections are up. At the Ocean Center, events and attendee days rebounded last year to above levels. At Daytona Beach International Airport, aircraft are operating at 90% capacity or above and the airlines once again have renewed seasonal flights. The county's Economic Development Division continues to leverage resources and engage in robust outreach initiatives in the business sector to support the community's fiscal vitality. And by the end of 2022, Volusia County's growing commercial and economic ties to the spaceflight industry got a big boost with the announcement of plans for an **83-acre industrial park in Edgewater** devoted to the business of space launches.

#### **Daytona Beach International Airport**

Daytona Beach International Airport (DAB) continued to enhance the customer experience in 2022 with new services and programs, such as a postcard mailing service for passengers – a **K9s & K9s program** where deputies hand out plush dogs to passengers to help make them comfortable around the airport's security K-9s; and the DAB Library in the concourse, with free access provided to Volusia County Public Library's electronic books, magazine and more.

Meanwhile, parking lot improvements are continuing at the airport, with the next phases of construction to include new canopy covers, **wayfinding signage** and new LED lighting fixtures. Upgrades to the airport security system are getting ready to enter the construction phase. The airport also conducted its Federal Aviation Administration-required, triennial test of its emergency plan. The training exercise brought together more than 35 local, state and federal agencies and strengthened and fostered the county's relationships and response coordination with these agencies. The airport also passed its 2022 Federal Aviation Administration annual safety and certification inspection with zero discrepancies.

Air travelers received good news last year, as American Airlines launched new seasonal flights between Daytona Beach and Washington, D.C. The airline also renewed seasonal flights to and from Dallas-Fort Worth and Philadelphia. To help boost passenger traffic, the airport's FY 2021-22 branding/marketing campaign included billboards, digital advertising and paid social media. The campaign achieved 31.2 million impressions. As we embark on a new year, the airport team has continued to meet with a number of route planners about the opportunity and demand for additional service, with high hopes of landing new routes, destinations and airlines for added travel options for our customers.

#### **Economic Development**

It was another busy and active year for the Economic Development Division. One of the division's chief economic development tools is the Volusia Business Resources (VBR) initiative and related website, **VolusiaBusinessResources.com**. VBR is a countywide public-private partnership that includes government economic development agencies, cities, chambers of commerce, universities, colleges and business support organizations. Originally formed to assist businesses during the pandemic, VBR continues to work collaboratively with all economic development stakeholders to help new and existing businesses grow and thrive in Volusia County.

# **Economic development, Ocean Center (continued)**

Last year's activities included an annual survey analysis and upgrades to the website to transform it into a true, one-stop business resource. The upgrades include a modernized aesthetic design, improved navigation, and integration of new technology for faster and better accessibility to data.

In November 2021, the Florida Planning and Zoning Association's Surfcoast Chapter recognized Economic Development with the Outstanding Private and Public Partnership Award for the development of a countywide economic development plan through the Volusia Business Resources initiative.

Last year, Economic Development also developed a marketing outreach event that included live-streamed lunch and learn sessions, partnered with CareerSource Flagler Volusia to create Volusia County-specific jobs software, and funded a diversity program in partnership with Stetson University and Main Street DeLand.

Other Economic Development initiatives included an innovative workforce re-entry program in conjunction with the Corrections Division that connects local businesses with hiring needs to individuals as they're released from incarceration. The Economic Development Division also partnered with SCORE to promote business counseling services and workshops and is currently assisting 14 active commercial expansion projects. The partnership with the University of Central Florida also continued with the extension of the contract with the UCF Incubator for another year.

Meanwhile, Economic Development maintains its business recruitment collaboration with Team Volusia and the CEO Business Alliance. The continuing partnership resulted in 94 active, open projects and four completed projects. These ongoing efforts are sure to generate more results and more success stories in the years to come.

#### **Ocean Center**

Things were looking up at the county-owned convention center, entertainment and sport complex. The Ocean Center hosted 137 events in FY 2021-22, with attendee days totaling 412,307. The number of events and attendee days exceed FY 2018-19 figures, which was the last year prior to any COVID-19 impacts. The facility's business in FY 2021-22 was largely unaffected by COVID-19 – signaling a return to pre-pandemic levels.

The Ocean Center also continues to reinvest in the building to maintain a first-class facility and remain competitive in the industry. In FY 2021-22, the projects that were either completed or in progress included a new sound system, room directory signage and deck repair and drainage restoration to level six of the parking garage. Additionally, work began on new LED lighting for the arena and ballroom.

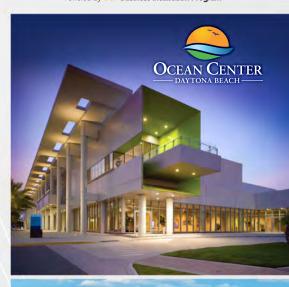
The outlook for the current fiscal year looks bright as well. The venue continues to enjoy a strong calendar, with 68,000 firm room nights associated with Ocean Center events already scheduled for FY 2022-23. The Ocean Center also commissioned a study that will provide insight into the facility's current utilization compared to similar markets, its economic impact and the feasibility of expansion. Scheduled to be completed in FY 2022-23, the study will be used to help guide future decisions.



Powered by Volusia County Economic Development









# **Awards and recognitions**



Author Horace Jackson Brown, Jr., famously said: "Don't do work for recognition, but do work worthy of recognition."

In that spirit, government service isn't motivated by a wish for credit. Rather, it's done out of a desire to serve residents and help the community. Still, it's gratifying when organizations conclude that Volusia County's employees, programs and services are worthy of recognition. The awards are but one measure of our staff's professionalism, creativity and dedication to exceptional public service. With that in mind, Volusia County Government was proud to receive the following awards and honors in 2022:

- Animal Services was named Outstanding Agency of the Year by the Florida Animal Control Association
- Volusia County Government received an achievement award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the rapid and comprehensive implementation of changes required by the passage of Amendment 10 in 2018.
- The county earned bronze Telly Awards for the following three
   Community Information video productions: Volusia County EMS: Join the Team; Volusia County Animal Services: Join the Team; and Volusia County: State of the County 2022.
- The Purchasing and Contracts Division received a 2022 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Procurement Institute.
   The division has won the award 15 times, including the past nine years in a row.
- **Library Services** received the 2022 Innovation Award for the "Recipe and Reads: Family Culinary Literacy Labs" program series from the Northeast Florida Information Network (NEFLIN). This was the third year in a row Library Services has been selected for the NEFLIN Innovation Award.
- Votran won a first place award from the Florida Public Transportation Association in the interior/exterior signage category for its "Gas Prices Got You Down? Let Votran Pick You Up" campaign.



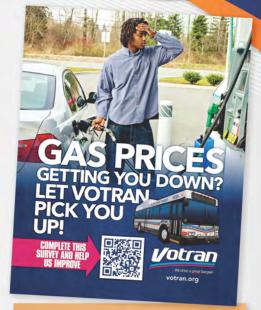






# Awards and recognitions (continued)

- **Votran** received the Bus Safety Excellence Award from the Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged.
- **Votran** received the Gold Safety Award from the Florida Public Transportation Association.
- **Votran** driver Davidson Abraham won the third place Operator of the Year Award from the Florida Public Transportation Association.
- Volusia County was named a 2020 Triple Crown Winner by the Government Finance Officers Association for having received the association's certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting, popular annual financial reporting award and distinguished budget presentation award during a single fiscal year.
- **Beach Safety** Officer Brian Serio was awarded the "Spirit of Law Enforcement" by Central Florida Crimestoppers.
- **Extension** Agent Chelsea Woodard was awarded the Excellence in Urban 4-H Programming Award from the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents.
- **Extension** Agent Karen Stauderman received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.
- **Extension** Agent Lisa Hamilton won the Extension Housing Outreach Award from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.
- Volusia County's Medical Examiner, Dr. James Fulcher, was named the 2022 Outstanding Community Faculty Educator by the Florida State University's College of Medicine.
- **Emergency Management** was presented with the 2022 J. Hyatt Brown Enterprise Award by the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce.







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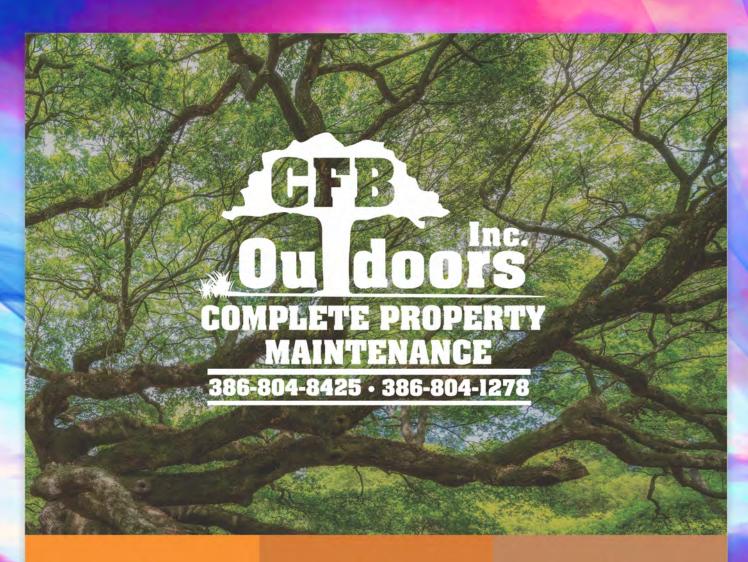


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Whole Health Hub makes it easy for you to connect with quality organizations that can provide help when it's needed most. You can refer a friend or family member, and all your personal information is kept protected and private. Find the free and low-cost services in your area including the following categories:

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