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THE 2024 VOLUSIA COUNTY COUNCIL



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We, the Volusia County Council, are proud to share the remarkable strides that have been made in crafting and advancing the five strategic goals that impact the well-being and prosperity of our community. These goals, which are central to our mission and vision, are as follows:

Goal #1: CREATE A MORE EFFICIENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Our efforts are focused on reducing red tape, making processes cost-effective, and ensuring our decisions foster community growth. We have taken significant steps to simplify regulations, making them more accessible and less burdensome for our residents and businesses, and we plan to continue these efforts in 2024.

Goal #2: INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, PARTICULARLY PUBLIC SAFETY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RELATED FUNCTIONS

Prioritizing safety and community well-being, the county integrated advanced technologies to improve services and sustain crucial public safety functions. In addition, the County's Economic Development Division supported local business retention through a variety of programs and services.

Goal #3: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN FOR EXPANDED RECREATION AND SPORTS TOURISM SERVICES

We are committed to enriching our community's recreational landscape. This includes executing plans for new parks and trails, preserving our natural and historical treasures, and developing sports facilities capable of hosting major events. These initiatives will enhance our residents' quality of life and stimulate economic growth by attracting visitors.

Goal #4: CONTINUE AND ENHANCE FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

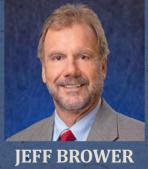
Upholding our commitment to fiscal prudence, we engage in partnerships, carefully monitor expenditures, and plan for future needs. We employ transparent methods to demonstrate our effective use of funds, ensuring the responsible allocation of taxpayer money.

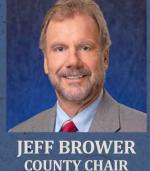
Goal #5: FOSTER AND SUPPORT A SOLUTION-ORIENTED CULTURE

As your Council, we strive to create a responsive, service-oriented, and adaptive administration. Keeping the community informed and engaged through various platforms, we remain committed to continuous improvement and responsiveness to community needs.

As your Volusia County Council, we are dedicated to governing and nurturing a stronger, more vibrant community. Our commitment to these strategic goals is a promise to always work toward enhancing the quality of life for every Volusia County resident and developing a business-friendly environment for our local community.







A message from County Council Chair Brower

As your Volusia County Council Chair, I am honored to share with you the strides we've made together over the past year and our vision for the road ahead in 2024. Our commitment to home rule remains a cornerstone of our governance, emphasizing that local governments are best positioned to make decisions that directly impact our residents, businesses, and visitors. We understand the unique needs of our county, and this principle guides us in tailoring solutions that are most effective for our community. The government that is closest to you is the best equipped to respond to rapidly changing local needs. Our desire is to be responsive to your needs.

Our county demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of adversity in 2023. The recovery efforts from Hurricanes Ian and Nicole were a testament to our community's strength and determination. I am proud to report that our beloved beaches, businesses, and coastal assets have significantly recovered, thanks to the tireless work of our teams and the support of our residents, the business community, our partners, and staff. As we look to 2024, we are excited about the further enhancements and protective measures we plan to implement to safeguard our natural treasures.

Operating with a fiscally conservative approach, we have judiciously managed our resources and cut unnecessary taxes and fees, providing much-needed financial relief for our taxpayers and ensuring that every dollar spent contributes to the well-being and growth of our county. Our prudent financial management is critical as we navigate the complexities of government, navigate the current economic climate of inflation, and remain steadfast in delivering high-quality and quantity services.

Collaboration also remained a crucial ingredient in our success. I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside my fellow County Council members and our dedicated staff. Their expertise, passion, and commitment to service are invaluable as we work towards a brighter future for Volusia County.

As we move forward into 2024. I remain deeply committed to serving our community. upholding the values of home rule, and ensuring fiscal responsibility. Together, we will continue to build a vibrant Volusia County that thrives and prospers, meeting today's needs while preparing for tomorrow's opportunities.



RECKTENWALD COUNTY MANAGER

A message from the Volusia County Manager

The year 2023 marked a significant journey of growth and achievement for Volusia County. We confronted challenges, celebrated our victories, and diligently worked toward a promising future. Our employees are your neighbors and friends, tirelessly striving to enhance government efficiency, responsiveness, and attentiveness to your needs.

I am continuously inspired by the strength, kindness, and resilience our residents exhibit daily. My role is dedicated to serving you and ensuring our county evolves into a community where we collectively flourish.

Financial management is always a key focus, ensuring judicious use of tax dollars while enhancing the quality and scope of our services. We've also demonstrated resilience in the face of Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, aiming to restore and strengthen our community for the future.

Our achievements reflect a collective effort toward making Volusia County a symbol of prosperity. As we look ahead, I see a future replete with possibilities for growth and improvement. I am committed to leading with empathy and dedication, ensuring every decision and action benefits the wonderful people of Volusia County.

This year's State of the County summary features the diverse range of services and functions offered by our divisions. Our goal is to highlight these functions, detailing their significant achievements from the past year while also outlining key initiatives planned for 2024.



The new Cici and Hyatt Brown Center for Aerospace Technology will build upon the success of Embry-Riddle's well-established Research Park.

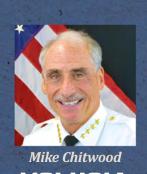
The Center will create high-paying jobs, facilitate an entrepreneurial ecosystem and strengthen our already highly recognized advanced innovation expertise. Embry-Riddle continues to support the future needs of the expanding aerospace and aviation industries in the State of Florida by providing companies with access to high-tech equipment, creating internships, and drawing top talented students, faculty and aerospace experts to Volusia County.

embryriddle.edu



Larry Bartlett





Volusia County Constitutional Officers

Larry Bartlett, Property Appraiser

Our office values all the property in Volusia County for the purpose of creating the annual tax roll. 2023 was another banner year for Volusia County's real estate market. Overall, market values jumped from \$84.8 billion in 2022 to \$97.7 billion in 2023, which represents a 15% increase. Growth continued as well, with over \$1.6 billion of market value in new construction!

With the increase in property values, the homestead exemption and "save our home" cap have become a valuable benefit. Our Exemptions Compliance Unit has been hard at work again this year to ensure permanent residency criteria of claimants are met and a single-family unit is only receiving one homestead exemption. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, their efforts have brought over \$1.5 million in taxes back to the county and returned almost \$27 million of value back to the tax roll! Additionally, we have rectified an ongoing problem of some violators letting a back tax lien remain on their property for up to twenty years. With the assistance of the County Attorney's Office, we have now begun to foreclose those liens.

Part of our office's responsibilities also include being prepared to conduct and coordinate damage assessments for emergency declarations and federal and state funding, in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency conditions. This would include house-to-house reviews, compiling damage assessment reports and conducting damage assessment training for county and city staff. Fortunately, Volusia County fared well this hurricane season.

You can visit the office's website at vcpa.vcgov.org to search properties and sales, update your mailing address, file for a homestead exemption online, estimate your taxes, look at historical data, download forms, and so much more.

Mike Chitwood, Sheriff

The Volusia Sheriff's Office (VSO) brought several key pieces of new technology on board in 2023 while advancing innovative programs and again solving crime at a rate far above the national average. When a change in state law required the Sheriff's Office to assume all law enforcement duties on Volusia County beaches, a newly formed Coastal Unit leapt into action. The agency quickly earned certification from the United States Lifesaving Association as an aquatic rescue response team.

Meanwhile, the VSO-established Volusia Family Resource Center (VFRC) approached 2,000 families served, part of an ongoing collaborative effort to stabilize home life and reduce youth recidivism. Those families were connected to services addressing mental health, truancy, and substance abuse, as well as access to help covering basic housing, food, and utility costs. On the street, VSO deployed Live911, giving deputies a live feed of 911 calls in their area, and the ability to respond even before they're dispatched. The number of deputies on the road kept increasing as the VSO Training Academy brought in its sixth class of brand-new recruits, plus many others with previous law enforcement experience entering the New Deputy Training program. The Academy excelled during an exhaustive national accreditation evaluation in 2023 that would make the agency only the third in Florida to achieve triple accreditation status.

Other advancements in technology (a brand-new Air One aircraft, a new ballistics lab connected to the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network, a new gunshot detection system designed to automatically report shootings, and a continued expansion of license plate reader technology) gave VSO staff more tools to fight, solve, and prevent crime across Volusia County. Following the arrest of a 29-year-old man who traveled to Volusia County to sexually abuse a 12-year-old girl, the agency held a series of community forums to educate parents about dangers on the Internet, social media, and elsewhere.

All these events of 2023, along with other high-profile cases (from the dismantling of major heroin/fentanyl distribution operations to the sheriff's outspoken campaign against neo-Nazis and other hate groups), kept the Volusia Sheriff's Office in the national news and at the leading edge of law enforcement.

Volusia County Constitutional Officers

Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections

The Supervisor of Elections Office is preparing for three elections in 2024 - the Presidential Preference Primary in March, the Primary Election in August, and the General Election in November. We have been processing initiative petitions for possible placement on the general election ballot. Ballot placement takes a total of 8% of the votes cast (statewide) in the last presidential election and must come from at least 14 of the current 28 congressional districts in the state. In addition, the congressional district must also have at least 8% of the votes cast in the respective district from the last presidential election.

A person must be registered to vote for the petition signature to count in the above numbers, and every petition must be verified. As of December 20, 2023, our office has received 90,613 petitions for verification, including candidate petitions.

We conducted three municipal elections in 2023. Although on a smaller scale than even-year elections, the planning and implementation are still managed in the same manner. There is poll worker training, securing polling locations, mailing ballots, early voting, and Election Day. Cyber security, as well as physical security, plays an integral role in conducting elections. We will continue providing open, secure, and transparent elections to the people of Volusia County.

Will Roberts, Tax Collector

The Volusia County Tax Collector reached a major milestone in 2023. Deltona residents now have a full-service tax collector branch in their city! The new, one-stop location not only improves access and convenience for Deltona residents, but it also has reduced foot traffic at the Orange City branch. In 2023, the Office of Will Roberts mailed 288,506 property tax bills in November totaling more than \$1 billion for the 2023 tax roll. The Office will collect the funds and distribute them to the taxing authorities.

In addition to property tax collection, the Office provides State of Florida identification cards, driver licenses and testing, vehicle and vessel titling and registration, concealed weapon licensing and renewals, hunting and fishing licenses, disabled person parking permits, and birth certificates. This year, the Office received its third consecutive Legacy Award for Financial Operations from the Florida Tax Collectors Association in recognition of efforts to improve operational efficiency. In 2024, the Office will continue to seek ways to change the way our customers experience government service while maintaining fiscal efficiency and seeking to improve productivity.

Laura Roth, Clerk of the Circuit Court

The Clerk of the Circuit Court maintains important court-related and official real property records and provides other services to the community. Services include issuing marriage licenses and performing affordable wedding ceremonies, recording official land records, passport processing, domestic violence injunction assistance, child support services, foreclosure and tax deed land sales, traffic citation and criminal fines processing, and maintenance of all official court records. The office provides extensive free public records accessibility on its official website, www.clerk.org. There are millions of document images to view or download online at no charge. The Clerk also offers Property Fraud Alert, a no-cost, easy-to-use service to protect residents from land records fraud. Someone can sign up for this free service on the office's website.

In 2023, the office held a successful Operation Green Light event that reduced traffic citation fees and received recognition from the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers Association for completing the Best Practice Excellence Program in 10 subject matter areas. Visit www.clerk.org and follow the Clerk's Office's official Facebook page for more information about future Operation Green Light events, records research workshops, specialty weddings, and other free programs and information.

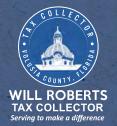


Lisa Lewis





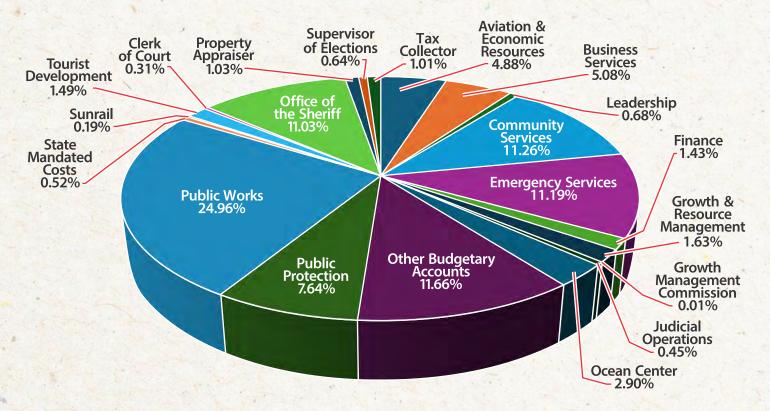
Will Roberts





Laura Roth

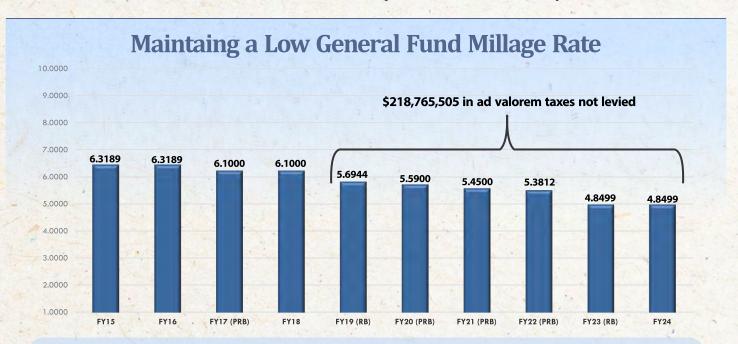




The 2023-2024 Volusia County Budget

Low Taxes and Superior Services

Volusia County's Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget exemplifies fiscal conservatism and effective governance, while investing in essential services and infrastructure. The budget addresses immediate needs and sets a foundation for smart growth and prosperity. Leveraging grant funding, the County has placed strategic investments in public infrastructure while maintain operational efficiency. In addition, funding for Environmental initiatives like ECHO and Volusia Forever reflects a commitment to environmental preservation and community enrichment.



Volusia County Council Eliminates Taxes For Residents and Businesses The County Council implemented significant tax reductions for residents and businesses in 2023 by eliminating the Communications Services Tax, saving residents in unincorporated areas approximately \$3 million a year, and abolishing County Business Tax Receipts, projected to keep over \$800,000 in the hands of local businesses each year.

PROUD SPONSOR 2024 State of the County Address



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Volusia County Economic Development

Nurturing Business and Fostering Local Job Growth

The Volusia County Economic Development Division continued its mission of enhancing the local business community and economy in 2023. This year, the program mentored 10 local businesses, counseled 88 entrepreneurs, and fostered a supportive business environment through workshops and the popular quarterly "Q" breakfasts with over 808 attendees. The division also assisted in business expansion projects, contributed to "Evolve Magazine," and published 52 "Economic Scene" issues, an essential business e-newsletter, enhancing their role as economic thought leaders and promoting entrepreneurial success in our community. Another notable achievement included a partnership with the Corrections Division to enhance workforce re-entry programs.

The Volusia County Ocean Center

Celebrating a Record-Breaking Year and Focusing on Live Entertainment

In a display of progress and community engagement, the Ocean Center outperformed its achievements and set new records in 2023. With 405 facility use days, the center generated an extraordinary 74,273 room nights and 441,182 attendee days, surpassing previous years and reflecting a healthy mix of new and recurring business. These figures mark a historic high and highlight its integral role in driving economic and cultural vibrancy. Embracing the County Council's directive, the Ocean Center also expanded its horizons by joining the Venue Coalition, a live entertainment consulting firm, and focusing on attracting diverse artists, attractions, and touring productions to enrich the community's entertainment landscape. Local entertainment already booked for 2024 includes live motocross racing. comedy acts, and the return of the world-famous Harlem Globetrotters. Keep an eye out for additional exciting announcements! As the Ocean Center continues its evolution in 2024, its contributions to the community's economic and cultural well-being will stand as a testament to its enduring significance and potential for future growth and success.

Volusia County's Daytona Beach Airport

Soaring to New Levels of Success in Operations and Customer Experience

In 2023, Daytona Beach International Airport (DAB) witnessed a recordbreaking increase in passenger traffic. From January to October, the airport saw 606,599 passengers, a 33% rise from 2022 and a 1% increase from the same period in pre-pandemic 2019. A significant development was the introduction of Avelo Airlines, offering nonstop flights to New Haven, CT, and Wilmington, Delaware, contributing over \$1.5 million to the local economy. Delta Air Lines and American Airlines also expanded their services, including resuming seasonal flights and adding special event flights for the 2024 Daytona 500. DAB also focused on a commitment to social responsibility and customer care by enhancing customer experience through new programs including the Blue Lightning Initiative to combat human trafficking and the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program, helping staff identify and assist passengers with hidden disabilities. Ranked as one of Florida's busiest airports, DAB's local economic impact is estimated at \$3.2 billion by the Florida Department of Transportation and its importance to the region is underscored by partnerships with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, several other flight schools, and the local business community.

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Rising from the Storms

Volusia County's Journey of Restoration and Recovery from Hurricanes Ian and Nicole

Volusia County set a precedent in disaster recovery and environmental conservation in response to the immense challenge posed by Hurricanes Ian and Nicole. On the administrative front, Volusia County excelled in efficiency and empathy, expediting permit processes to facilitate rapid reconstruction, resulting in a majority of the impacted properties and facilities being repaired or receiving assistance in 2023. In addition, the deployment of over 13,000 linear feet of TrapBags along the coast showcased an innovative approach to coastal defense. The County's swift action to secure a coastal construction exemption during the sea turtle nesting season allowed residents access to accelerated recovery while ensuring the protection of local wildlife. In addition, the County embarked on extensive sand replenishment projects, in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Florida Inland Navigation District, designed to restore dunes with over 1 million cubic yards of high-quality, beach-compatible sand. In 2024, we expect to complete the repairs of remaining coastal assets, including many of the damaged beach ramps, Ed Peck Park, Frank Rendon Park, and Sunsplash Park. As Volusia County continues its journey toward recovery, we remain acutely aware of future threats and challenges and will continue to pursue solutions to fortify the coastline and enhance resilience.

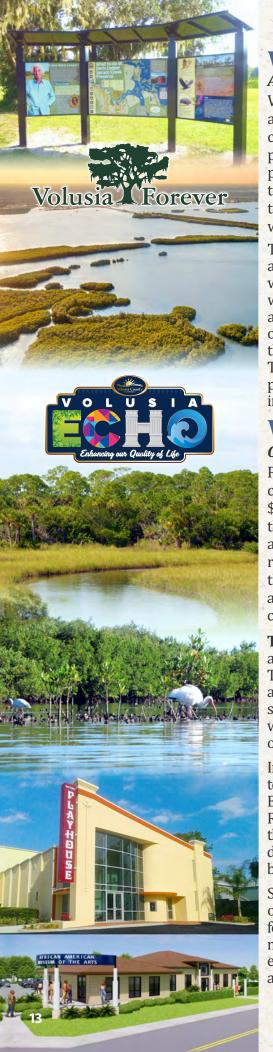
Transform 386

New Program Charts a Path to Recovery and Resiliency

Hurricane Ian's devastation led to a significant response from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which awarded the County \$328.9 million in Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds. This financial aid, designated for a range of recovery and rebuilding efforts, formed the basis of the Office of Recovery and Resiliency and the Transform386 initiative. Transform386 will address disaster relief, infrastructure rebuilding, housing, economic recovery, and robust mitigation measures. In 2023, Transform386 conducted extensive community engagement with a series of meetings across the county focused on the critical need for infrastructure and housing and launched the Hurricane Ian Homeowner Recovery program, which provides financial assistance to homeowners for repairs. Transform386 will advance in 2024, prioritizing housing while broadening its scope to include other crucial areas, including rebuilding infrastructure and revitalizing the economy by supporting local businesses, encouraging new investments, and fostering job creation through training programs. Furthermore, it includes efforts to mitigate future disaster risks by improving coastal defenses, implementing advance warning systems,







Volusia Forever

A Legacy of Land Preservation

Volusia Forever, embodying the essence of environmental stewardship, acquired 148 acres of pristine conservation land in 2023. The remarkable collaboration between the County, contributing \$3.6 million, and various partners, adding \$1.9 million, represents a significant stride toward preservation. Volusia Forever is more than land acquisition; it's a promise to conserve, maintain, and restore our natural environment. It opens gates to the public for enjoyment and education, ensures the sustainability of water resources, and preserves habitats and water recharge areas.

The **Lake to Lagoon** regional conservation partnership program received a \$25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in November, with Volusia County expect to receive \$18 million in match dollars. This funding will be pivotal in conserving sensitive agricultural lands and implementing activities to bolster climate resiliency. Volusia County's significant match of \$20 million through Volusia Forever exemplifies its leadership role in this innovative partnership. This collaboration with the Alachua Conservation Trust and Stetson University's Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience promises sustainable alternatives to land development, with a special investment in our agriculture community.

Volusia ECHO

Cultivating Community and Heritage

Parallel to these efforts, the Volusia ECHO program was a catalyst for community enrichment in 2023. Investing \$6.8 million, with an additional \$4.2 million from partners, the program funded 15 projects to enhance the county's environmental, cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational aspects. These projects preserve significant archaeological and historic resources and promote heritage tourism. Volusia ECHO's impact improves the quality of life for Volusia's residents by providing access to cultural arts and encouraging the revitalization of downtown and urban areas through cultural arts projects.

The Riverside Conservancy Living Shoreline Project marked a notable achievement last year by adding a vital stop on the Mosquito Lagoon Blueway. This project introduced an ADA-accessible kayak launch, enhancing inclusivity and accessibility for visitors. Additionally, it featured the creation of a living shoreline, which not only combats coastal erosion but also supports local wildlife. The project further enriched the area by establishing a primitive outdoor classroom, fostering environmental education and awareness.

In 2023, the Volusia County Council demonstrated its continued commitment to cultural enrichment and community engagement by approving two important ECHO projects. **Daytona Playhouse, Inc.** was awarded \$600,000 for its Renaissance Phase II project to construct a two-story structure for various theatrical needs, including a permanent workshop, costume preparation area, dressing rooms, and rehearsal space. This grant is matched dollar-for-dollar by Daytona Playhouse, enhancing its potential impact.

Similarly, the **African American Museum of Arts, Inc.** received a grant of \$498,060, earmarked for a substantial expansion from 800 to 2,000 square feet. This expansion will allow for a greater array of art exhibits and increase the museum's capacity for programming and educational outreach. The museum's expansion is further supported by an additional \$521,540, which includes a significant contribution from a Department of State Cultural Affairs grant.

Volusia County Environmental Management

Rebuilding, Progress, and Preservation

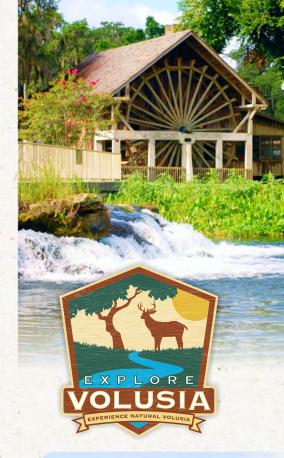
Volusia County Environmental Management emerged as a critical player in the community's recovery following Hurricanes Ian and Nicole. Staff expedited and reviewed almost 600 beaches and dunes permits. Their efforts proved crucial in assisting oceanfront residents and businesses to rebuild. The division also secured a \$2.2 million Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant to upgrade conventional septic tanks to nitrogen-reducing systems in the DeLeon Springs area. The program offers up to \$10,000 per household for upgrades that improve the quality of life for homeowners and promote environmental sustainability.

Additionally, the division started monitoring two new stormwater systems installed by Volusia County Public Works at Gabordy Canal and Ariel Canal. This proactive approach to managing stormwater systems highlights the division's dedication to preserving the county's ecological health and advancing environmental management strategies.

The Explore Volusia program was also a notable success. It offered programs that engaged residents in exploring the County's parks and conservation lands, deepening their connection with the environment, including Adopt-a-Trail, beach cleanups, and wildlife conservation activities. The volunteers of Habitat Conservation Plan Washback Watchers helped save washbacked baby sea turtles, while the Marine Mammal Stranding Team responded to nearly 50 stranding calls. The Monofilament Recycling program and beach cleanup initiatives, including the International Coastal Cleanup and Adopt-a-Beach, removed more than 4 tons of trash from coastal areas.

ReGrow the Loop: Educating and Empowering Residents

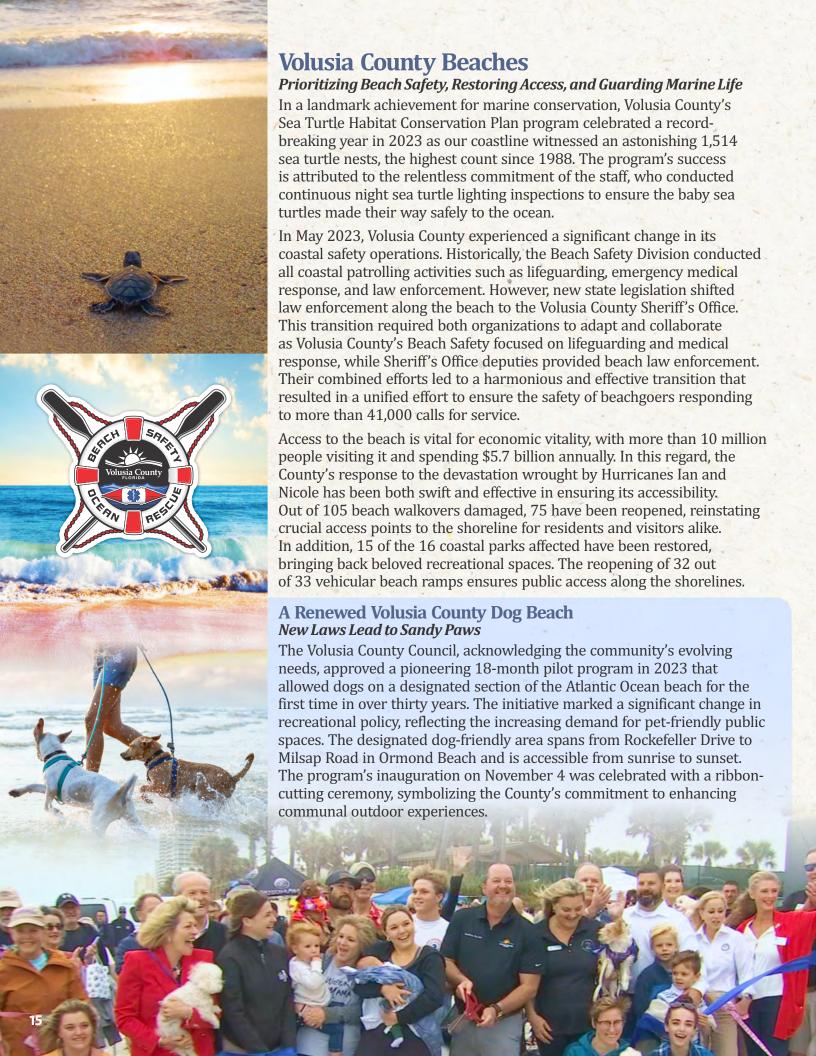
The ReGrow the Loop was developed in 2023 and has made remarkable strides in environmental education and awareness in just a short amount of time. With over 250 individuals educated through workshops and trail walks, the program has delved into various ecological aspects, from Florida Friendly Landscaping principles to wildlife attraction techniques. The ReGrow the Loop pledge, taken by 165 residents, symbolizes a collective commitment to environmentally friendly practices. This initiative, a brainchild of the County Council, aims to enhance the 30-mile Ormond Beach Scenic Loop through collaboration with UF/IFAS Extension Volusia County and other local organizations. Its goal to eradicate invasive species, increase native vegetation, and promote sustainability practices is not just an environmental mission but a movement toward a greener, more sustainable Volusia County. The program will be formally evaluated in summer 2024 with high hopes and the probability of similar initiatives being expanded across the county.



Financial Wisdom and Public Trust

For every dollar the County invested through ECHO and Volusia Forever, the community reaped a \$1.59 return on investment. This impressive figure underscores the County's commitment to environmental stewardship and fiscal responsibility.







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Volusia County Parks and Recreation

Serving Up Outdoor Recreation for the Mind, Body, and Soul

In the sun-drenched expanses of Volusia County, a transformation is underway, ushering in a new era of outdoor community recreation. Recognizing the importance of outdoor activities in enriching the lives of its residents, Volusia County is redefining the leisure landscape with new recreational facilities, passive parks, and natural areas. In 2023, key projects included the replacement of five aging playgrounds at Spring Hill Park, Sylvester Bruten Park, Seville Park, Spruce Creek Park, and Chuck Lennon Park. These new playgrounds now offer children safe, modern recreational spaces, fostering physical activity and social interaction.

In addition to playground renovations, the division completed refurbishments at Spruce Creek Park, including a revamped restroom and a refreshed pavilion. A trailhead was also constructed at the Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach, featuring a new restroom and a trail connecting to the North Causeway. Concluding these advancements, the county also updated its Trails Master Plan, ensuring future developments align with community needs and preferences.

Volusia County also emerged as a trailblazer in the surging popularity of pickleball, one of America's fastest-growing sports. To meet the soaring demand, the County unveiled new courts at DeLeon Spring's Chuck Lennon Park and Michael Crotty Bicentennial Park in Ormond Beach.

The Marine Science Center

An Educational and Compassionate Sanctuary for Both Fins and Feathers

In a remarkable year of growth and community engagement, the Marine Science Center (MSC) emerged as a hub for environmental education and wildlife conservation, attracting more than 75,000 visitors in 2023. MSC's community educational component played a role in shaping future environmental stewards, hosting 10 weeks of summer camps for young campers. Additionally, staff delivered almost 300 presentations to nearly 10,000 guests, offering insights into local habitats and conservation efforts. A cornerstone of the MSC's conservation efforts, the Turtle Hospital, cared for sea and terrestrial turtles, which exceeded previous annual averages. In addition, the Raptor Education and Conservation Exhibit opened in December. This is a sanctuary for permanent raptor residents unable to return to the wild and serves as an educational tool, emphasizing the importance of raptors in the ecosystem. The conversion of the raptors' former homes into rehabilitation spaces for over 1,100 sick and injured birds annually highlights the MSC's commitment to avian conservation.







The Lyonia Environmental Center

A Beacon of Eco-Enlightment

Lyonia Environmental Center continued to serve as a pillar of environmental education and community engagement as 2023 marked an exceptional phase in the center's journey, with 362 public programs attracting more than 2,400 participants. These programs, ranging from educational workshops to immersive nature experiences, enlightened and inspired attendees. The Center's staff also participated in dozens of community events, extending their knowledge to nearly 3,000 individuals, and the gallery drew in an impressive 12,000 visitors. Additionally, LEC's annual Wildlife Festival in February 2023 was a resounding success, engaging over 600 people in guided hikes, exhibits, and environmental programs. The LEC provided 10 full weeks of camp programs, providing children with exposure to environmental stewardship. A significant milestone was achieved in March 2023 when the LEC received a \$150,000 ECHO grant. This funding is allocated for revitalizing the center's environmental education exhibits, with construction slated to start in 2024.

DeBary Hall

Where History Comes Alive

In 2023, the DeBary Hall Historic Site welcomed thousands of visitors. This 19th-century hunting estate, once belonging to European-born wine merchant Frederick DeBary, boasts beautiful grounds adorned with native Florida plants and a captivating mansion registered on the National Registry of Historic Places. Guests frequently explored the estate or participated in one of the 142 programs and events held onsite. Highlights included Living History Day, a yearly homage to history, Spooky Candlelight Tours for Halloween, Breakfast with Santa, and festive Holiday Tours during Christmas. Additionally, each month, the staff engaged visitors with Lemonade Lectures, line dancing lessons, children's story time, and more.



Host Your Next Event at DeBary Hall! Surrounded by nature's beauty and a trove of history, our stable and pavilion offers the perfect setting for weddings, family reunions, community events, and business meetings. Make your special occasions unforgettable at this picturesque venue. For details on rental opportunities, call 386-668-3840.

Volusia County Libraries

Young Minds Flourishing with Learning and Engagement

In summer 2023, the Volusia County Library Services Division, with its 14 branches, became a beacon of learning and community engagement. It championed literacy and education, through the Summer Library Reading initiative which successfully combated the "summer slide" by engaging more than 2,000 children in reading activities, resulting in a remarkable total of 59,812 days of reading. Boasting over 480,000 collection items, the libraries also conducted 49 outreach events, creating thousands of community connections. In partnership with the Community Assistance Division, 12 library branches provided over 9,000 free and nutritionally balanced meals to children under 18. This effort highlighted the importance of both mental and physical nourishment. The libraries also collaborated with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Division to integrate reading into its summer camp program. This innovative approach led to the distribution of literacy kits and books to camps, benefiting 717 campers who engaged in reading activities on 74% of their camp days.

Volusia County Community Assistance

Beyond Books: Social Workers Extend Empathy and Support in the Libraries

The Community Assistance Division serves underprivileged residents to alleviate crises, obtain resources, and achieve self-sufficiency. The division's Social Worker in the Libraries program launched in 2023 as a groundbreaking initiative that puts more "boots on the ground" at some of the most accessible buildings throughout the county. The program leverages the accessibility of public libraries to provide a wide range of services that include assistance with food programs like SNAP and WIC, legal aid, mental health support, housing information, employment searches, and health insurance obtainment. Through the program, social workers in the libraries offered personalized, one-on-one guidance to more than 600 residents facing various challenges.

Volusia County Veterans Services

Honoring Veterans and their Service Through Strategic Assistance

Volusia County's Veterans Services Division exemplifies commitment and respect for and gratitude toward our veterans for their service. In 2023, the division strategically relocated the Orange City Veterans Services office to the Deltona Regional Library, placing it an area where more than 7,000 veterans reside. The division operates four offices in Daytona Beach, DeLand, Deltona, and New Smyrna Beach, serving as hubs of assistance for veterans and their families and actively advocates for veterans through the Stand Down event at the Volusia County Fairgrounds that provided a range of services, from basic needs to health care and employment opportunities, to over 160 veterans and their families, bolstered by partnerships with over 40 local organizations. Additionally, the division took steps to support incarcerated veterans transitioning back into society. In collaboration with Volusia County Corrections and Tomoka State Prison, staff offers presentations and seminars in correctional facilities, aiding these veterans in reintegrating into society.

All veterans in Volusia County are encouraged to reach out to the Veteran Services Division to ensure they are receiving all the VA benefits they are entitled to. The division's staff, who are also veterans, is dedicated to providing assistance in navigating and assessing their benefits, ensuring that they fully utilize the entitlements earned through their service.

Volusia County Transit Services

A New Era of Convenient and Budget-Friendly Public Transit

The Transit Service Division manages Votran's public transportation service, encompassing fixed-route buses, the Gold Service for medically-dependent individuals requiring transportation to appointments, and the Flex Service in New Smyrna Beach. In 2023, the division launched VoRide, a new rideshare initiative offering residents an affordable, efficient,

on-demand travel option. VoRide will provide enhanced service quality at reduced costs. Initially rolling out in DeLand, this program is set to extend across most of western Volusia by the summer of 2024. Offering curb-to-curb service, VoRide ensures passengers are picked up and dropped off at their desired locations within the service region. The VoRide app facilitates easy ride organization, while alternative booking methods are available to those without smartphone access. Looking ahead, VoRide is planning an expansion into eastern Volusia in the near future.









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Volusia County Growth Management

Building a Blueprint in Customer Service Excellence

The Volusia County Building and Code Division redefined excellence in local government service in 2023. The division's Permit Center served an astounding 75,000 customers through a blend of walk-ins, phone calls, and emails. In a testament to their commitment to safety and compliance, building inspectors performed almost 45,000 inspections, with an additional 5,000 inspections carried out by private providers. The division enhanced its commitment to improving the customer experience by integrating advanced technology, which streamlined the processing of nearly 21,000 permit applications online in 2023. This further underscores the County's dedication to leveraging digital solutions for more efficient and user-friendly services.

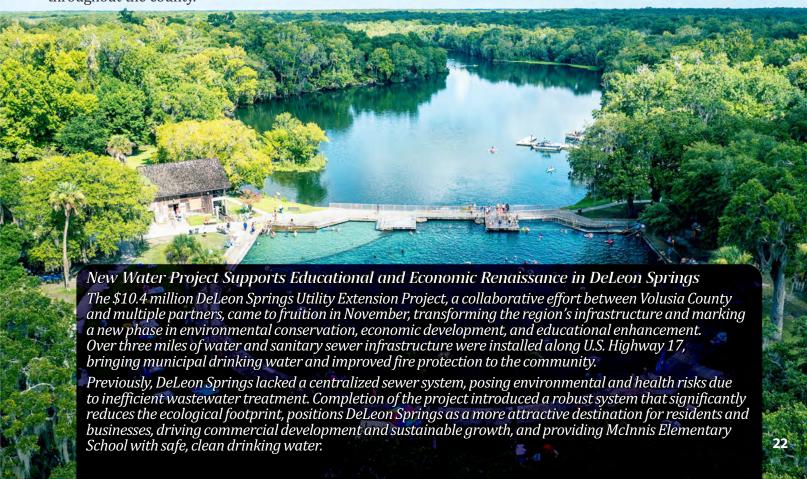
Volusia County Public Works

Paving the Way for Progress and Infrastructure Improvements

The Volusia County Road & Bridge Division has markedly improved the county's infrastructure through a series of strategic and impactful projects in 2023. Key among these was the resurfacing of 26 miles of county roads, carefully selected based on traffic volume, pavement condition, and maintenance requests. Heavily supported by grants from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and St. Johns River Water Management District, the Ariel Canal Water Quality Improvement project stands out as a major environmental milestone as it was crucial in reducing nutrient loading into the Mosquito Lagoon. Nine sidewalk repair projects throughout the county to boost pedestrian safety and meet ADA standards. Six stormwater and water quality projects are also underway, all funded by \$10,560,500 from the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funding under the American Rescue Plan Act. When completed, these projects will significantly improve drainage throughout the county.

Fleet Management
Accelerates Cost
Savings and
Operational
Efficiency

Volusia County's Fleet Management Division achieved significant savings and operational efficiency through a strategic partnership with NAPA in 2023. By privatizing the auto parts function, the County is leveraging NAPA's buying power, saving an estimated \$400,000 annually. This partnership reduced vehicle downtime, minimized the need for outsourced repairs, and simplified administrative tasks. This transformation demonstrates the County's dedicated approach to resource management, fiscal responsibility, and operational excellence.





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Volusia County Fire Rescue

Receiving National Recognition and Setting the Standard for Public Safety

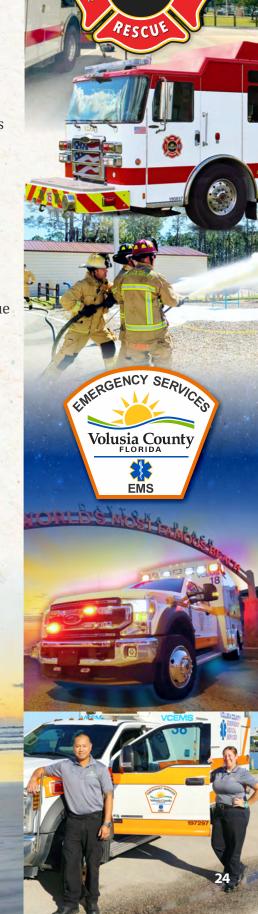
In an exceptional display of dedication, Volusia County Fire Rescue (VCFR) responded to more than 17,000 incidents in fiscal year 2022-23. This performance highlights their pivotal role in ensuring public safety and responding to emergencies in Volusia County. Their swift actions have been instrumental in saving lives and reducing property damage, reinforcing their status as a cornerstone of community security. Further enhancing their operational capabilities, VCFR received the Florida Urban Search and Rescue grant. This grant enabled the acquisition of crucial equipment, significantly strengthening their preparedness for statewide disasters. Complementing these advancements, VCFR also remodeled three fire stations, improving staff's work and living conditions. These upgrades have boosted morale and ensured firefighters are optimally equipped to protect life and property.

Marking a decade of successful collaboration, VCFR was also recognized by the U.S. Forest Service for its state-of-the-art training facility in 2023. The facility offers a comprehensive learning experience for firefighters from across the nation to receive the crucial skills needed to protect the residents they serve. It provides a blend of theoretical and practical learning, including tabletop exercises and hands-on demonstrations with the latest equipment and simulated scenarios. This immersive approach prepares firefighters to tackle various challenges effectively and positions Volusia County Fire Rescue as an attractive option for those aspiring to join the firefighting profession. Volusia County remains dedicated to equipping its firefighters with the best tools for success

Volusia County EMS

A Dedicated Team, a Modernized Fleet, and Cutting-Edge Technology

In the past year, Volusia County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has made significant strides in enhancing community safety and the efficiency of emergency response. The EMS fleet modernization program replaced 10 ambulances in 2023 and is expecting 10 new ambulances this year. EMS also acquired an innovative EMS ASAP utility response/transport vehicle. This specialized vehicle enhances the EMS capability to respond effectively to special events, crowded areas, and difficult-to-access locations. The County secured a three-year collective bargaining agreement with the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics Local R5-77 that stands as a testament to the value and respect Volusia County EMS places on its employees and represents a deep commitment to ensuring fair working conditions, competitive compensation, and opportunities for professional development.



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Volusia County Animal Services

Driving Animal Care Forward with a New Mobile Veterinary Services Clinic

In 2023, Volusia County's Animal Services Division set a new standard in animal welfare and community service. A significant highlight was the introduction of their mobile clinic, which brought various non-emergency services, including spay/neuter procedures and microchipping, directly to residents and pets across the county. This innovative approach has exponentially expanded the division's reach and effectiveness in animal care. The division performed 2,115 procedures under the trap-neuter-return program for cats, demonstrating a commitment to controlling animal populations and promoting animal health. The microchipping service was also a success, with 3,919 animals microchipped, which aided in reuniting lost pets with their owners. Additionally, the division facilitated the adoption of many dozen cats and dogs. Volusia County Animal Services remains committed to fostering a healthier, happier future for animals and their human companions in Volusia County.

Volusia County Corrections

A Mission to Empower and Prepare Inmates for Community Reintegration

In 2023, Volusia County's Correctional Division distinguished itself by transforming the traditional concept of detention and rehabilitation into an opportunity for positive change. It focused on preparing inmates for a successful return to society by equipping them with the necessary resources, such as helping them obtain a driver's license or, a Florida identification card, and a Social Security card. In addition, the mowing

program saved taxpayer money and provided inmates with the opportunity to contribute

to community beautification, while the forklift operator training program helped 68 inmates earn their forklift licenses to boost their post-release employment prospects.

Volusia County Emergency Management

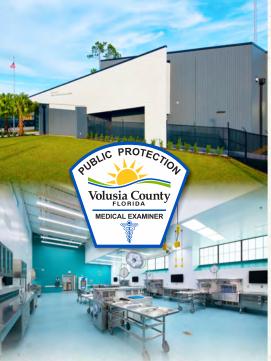
Enhanced Preparedness and Elevated Responsiveness

The Emergency Management Division continued its recovery efforts from Hurricanes Ian and Nicole into 2023. Collaborating with the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the team provided logistical support and community outreach to inform impacted residents about the myriad of assistance programs available. They also played a crucial role in helping FDEM and FEMA identify areas to place temporary housing trailers, offering refuge to those displaced by the storms.

Recognizing the need for enhanced awareness after the 2022 hurricanes, the division prioritized educating the public on the importance of flood insurance, regardless of their property's location relative to flood-prone areas. Additionally, they highlighted the proper use of sandbags, emphasizing that placing a tarp or similar material beneath sandbags ensures optimal protection.

Beyond responding to significant events like hurricanes, the division also addresses other critical needs. Staff was pivotal in organizing emergency heating and cooling shelters during extreme temperature fluctuations. They coordinated with various partners and organizations capable of operating these shelters, arranged transportation through Votran, and ensured the availability of essential supplies, such as bedding and food, for those seeking shelter.





Volusia.org flydaytonafirst.com votran.org oceancenter.com floridabusiness.org marinesciencecenter.com

The Volusia County Medical Examiner's Office

On the Forensic Frontier with a New Facility and Innovative Technology Completion of the Volusia County Medical Examiner's Office's new facility in 2023 marked a significant milestone in enhancing the community's forensic science capabilities. Spanning nearly 20,000 square feet, this state-of-the-art building replaces the outdated 25-year-old facility, offering advanced autopsy stations, a dedicated family meeting room, and improved working conditions for staff. This upgrade was pivotal to improve operational efficiency and propel the office toward meeting the standards required for accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners, a goal set for 2024. Additionally, the new facility serves as a crucial resource for local students and health professionals, offering them an opportunity to observe and learn from real-life forensic work. Designed with future expansion possibilities if warranted, the building ensures that the Medical Examiner's Office is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of public health and forensic investigation for many years to come.

Volusia County Community Information

Leading the Charge in Transparency, Communication, and Engagement

The County Manager's Office and Volusia County Community Information are dedicated to service, transparency, and public engagement. The office undertook significant initiatives in 2023 to ensure residents were wellinformed and actively involved. An extensive hurricane recovery campaign educated residents about rebuilding efforts, assistance programs, and long-term projects using a variety of websites, social media, news releases, and newsletters.

In tandem with these efforts, the County's social media presence saw remarkable growth, now engaging nearly 240,000 followers with a digital expansion that widened the reach and fostered a more interactive public forum. Moreover, the office issued more than 400 news releases covering vital county news, meetings, and events that kept the community up to date about County initiatives, programs, facilities, and services. In 2024, Community Information will continue this trend with the launch of GovQA, a new open records resource, redesigned websites, an augmented social media prescence, and a new county-wide newsletter to ensure residents, businesses, and visitors have open access to all of the Volusia County information they need.



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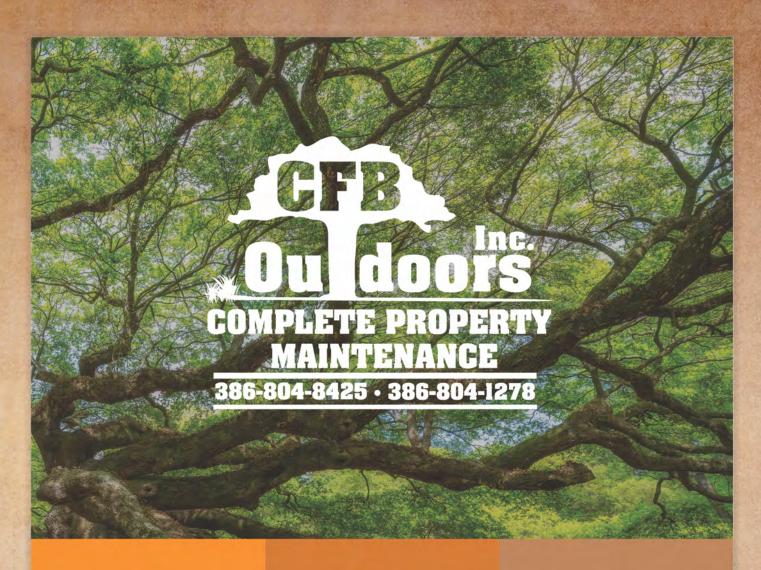






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