



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida
(850) 606-5300 www.leoncountyfl.gov

MY VIEW

Leon County Answers Big Challenges with Bold Changes:

Presenting the 2012 Annual Report

Vincent S. Long, Leon County Administrator

On behalf of the Leon County Board of County Commissioners and dedicated County employees who serve you, it is my pleasure to present the 2012 Leon County Annual Report. Please find the complete report at www.LeonCountyFL.gov/AnnualReport/.

This was another challenging year for Leon County government, and importantly, for the people we serve. Revenue continued to decline, making it difficult to both balance the County's budget and maintain quality services. The Fiscal Year 2012/2013 budget of \$223,090,504 is a \$12.5 million decrease from the prior year. The budget has been reduced by \$61.6 million (22 percent) since FY 2007/2008. The County again had the lowest net budget per resident and lowest number of employees per 1,000 residents among like-sized Florida counties, as a result of budgetary discipline and dedicated employees' hard work.

This was also a year of change. In response to continuously decreasing revenues and correspondingly increasing demands, the "new normal" in local government, Leon County implemented a new model of governance that reflects our focus on things we control and required us to take an honest look at everything we do, in order to build upon what works and change or abandon what does not.

This required a real cultural change. We introduced what we call our "*People Focused, Performance Driven*" culture, which guides everything we do and focuses on proving our value, conveying greater relevance and strengthening partnerships. The Board created a Vision for the Leon County community, which guided the new countywide strategic planning process. More than 140 citizens were involved in this process to identify changes, improvements, and actions to advance the Board's priorities. The annual report reflects considerable efforts to align optimized County resources with the Board's top priorities.

We changed how we engage citizens as stakeholders in their County government. We initiated the *Citizens Engagement Series*, which provides unique, hands-on opportunities for citizens and County government officials to learn from each other and build a better community.

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We changed how we respond and connect with customers. Our new website includes features like *Your Checkbook*, which conveys our belief that citizens have the right to transparent, accessible government, and *Citizens Connect*, which brought online customer service to a new level. We took *Citizens Connect* mobile with a new app. These changes brought national recognition, including Sunshine Review's "Sunny Award" for website transparency and open government, and being deemed a "Citizen Engaged Community" by the Public Technology Institute. What we cherish most is that citizens tell us they value these changes.

Times of great challenge have a way of focusing you on what's most important. We changed how we assist veterans by opening the Veterans Resource Center, thereby providing needed resources under one roof. We honored our military and veterans by launching the *30 Days of Thank You's* campaign, leading up to the *Operation Thank You* downtown block party.

Through the annual report, you will learn we saved \$3 million through energy retrofits, increased employees' share of health insurance costs and incentivized wellness to help slow rising costs. We created the Countywide Minimum Environmental Regulations Ordinance and instituted changes in the County's growth and environmental management process, streamlining development while protecting natural resources and quality of life. We invested in high priority projects which will serve and shape our community for generations – and did so when jobs were most needed and costs were most affordable for the taxpayer. We constructed the Lake Jackson Branch Library from a vacant, big box store, which will anchor a catalytic sense of place initiative for the surrounding area. We are constructing the Public Safety Complex, which demonstrates commitments to emergency response and readiness, while leveraging and strengthening partnerships. Other partnerships allowed projects like Mahan Drive, Cascade Park and Gaines Street revitalization to move forward and pave the way for significant private investment to follow. Such projects inspire confidence that Leon County government effectively engages citizens and efficiently executes projects. With this backdrop, citizens on the Sales Tax Committee, convened in 2012, can imagine the possibilities for the future of our community.

We faced big challenges and made bold changes in 2012. Through leadership provided by the Board of County Commissioners and the commitment of Leon County's employees, I am proud to report the County has proven itself as a government that citizens can believe in and others can benchmark against. Please take time to read this annual report and know that I welcome your feedback.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vince Long became County Administrator on July 1, 2011, and has worked for Leon County since 1995. He can be reached at (850) 606-5300 or LongV@LeonCountyFL.gov.

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