



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida
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MY VIEW

2013 Game Changing Projects, Strengthened Partnerships and Engaged Citizens!

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 2013 Leon County Annual Report. Please find the complete report at www.LeonCountyFL.gov/AnnualReport/.

2013 continued as a period of challenge and change – for Leon County government and the community we serve. Throughout the year, catalytic, game changing projects came to life, strategic partnerships were forged, and County employees lived our “People Focused, Performance Driven” culture through our core practices, taking innovation and customer service to the next level, and focusing on aligning the Board’s top priorities with the optimized resources of the organization. While the local economy began showing encouraging signs of recovery, such as improved employment rates, we are not out of the woods. With the Board’s steady leadership and consistent vision, Leon County will continue to pursue public policy and leverage opportunities that move our economy forward.

The economic recovery experienced by most Florida counties led to increased property values when those counties prepared their Fiscal Year 2013/2014 budgets. However, Leon County’s property values continued to decline, which made it difficult to both balance the budget and maintain quality services. Leon County’s Fiscal Year 2013/2014 budget of \$222,416,464 is \$674,040 less than the prior year’s budget. The County has reduced its budget six years in a row, cumulatively saving \$62.3 million (22 percent) since Fiscal Year 2007/2008. As part of the budget process, a Cross Departmental Action Team identified more than \$900,000 in cost savings and efficiencies that will be realized over the next several years.

Reflecting the Board’s focus on cost avoidance and efficiencies, and talented employees’ hard work, Leon County continues to have the lowest net budget per resident and the lowest number of employees per capita among like-sized Florida counties. When compared to Florida’s other 66 counties, Leon County has the fifth lowest net budget per capita and the third lowest number of employees per capita.

While efficiently providing high quality services is at the heart of everything we do, we understand that alone is sometimes not enough to convey the value of county government

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or to emotionally connect residents with their community. So, as you will learn through the Annual Report, we engaged citizens as co-creators of their community. We empowered citizens who comprise the Sales Tax Committee to imagine the possibilities for our community's future, evaluate projects for funding through a proposed infrastructure sales tax extension and present their recommendations to the Board early next year. We launched the *Citizen Engagement Series*, which received the National Association of Counties' 2013 Achievement Award. We partnered on powerful community events, such as the inaugural *Honor Flight Tallahassee* for WWII veterans; *Operation Thank You: Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans*; the *For the Love of Leon County + Tallahassee* community workshop with author Peter Kageyama; and The Village Square's events, including *Speed Date Your Local Leaders*. We opened the *Domestic Partnership Registry*, so adult couples may register their partnership and be extended legal rights, such as notification in emergencies, healthcare, funeral and burial decisions.

The Annual Report highlights game changing infrastructure projects, made possible through strong partnerships, such as the *Public Safety Complex*, with consolidated first responder dispatch functions; *Gaines Street*, which sparked revitalization and private sector investment in the urban core; and *Cascades Park*, which addressed chronic downtown flooding and is destined to become our community's "Central Park."

The Annual Report also highlights important strategic initiatives, such as *Leon County Apalachee Regional Park*, which hosts cross country events that drew visitors who spent more than \$1.85 million with local businesses in 2013; *Trailahassee.com*, a unique ecotourism website promoting nearly 600 miles of area trails; *Lake Jackson Town Center*, which houses Leon County's newest branch library and community center in previously vacant big box stores, with sidewalks to Springwood Elementary, anchoring a catalytic sense of place for the Huntington area; and the *urban incubator*, proposed for development in a currently vacant, County-owned warehouse in the Gaines Street district. If implemented, the urban incubator will provide needed resources to emerging local businesses, and become a catalyst for innovation and commercialization.

Through the vision and leadership provided by the Board of County Commissioners, and hard work of dedicated employees, I am proud to report that in 2013, Leon County has proven to be a government that our citizens can believe in, others can benchmark against, and as demonstrated through the pages of this County Administrator's Annual Report, a government that is people focused and performance driven. 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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