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News Release

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Leon County Administrator Vincent S. Long Named 2013 Leadership Tallahassee Leader Of The Year

Recognized at 19th Annual Distinguished Leadership Awards

On Thursday evening, Leadership Tallahassee named Leon County Administrator Vincent S. Long as the 2013 Distinguished Leadership Awards' Leader of the Year, which recognizes an individual whose ideas, vision and hard work achieved significant, tangible benefits to the community within the past year.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this recognition from Leadership Tallahassee," said County Administrator Long. "I'm very fortunate to serve the community I love, to work for an exceptional Board of County Commissioners and to lead tremendously talented people dedicated to exemplifying the highest standards of public service."

A proven leader, dedicated public servant and accomplished professional public manager, Long has worked for Leon County since 1995. Since becoming County Administrator in 2011, he has received national, state and local recognition for leadership, transparency in government, citizen participation and fiscal stewardship.

"Vince is a true transformational leader," said Leon County Commission Chairman Nick Maddox. "Under his leadership, Leon County Government has reached a new level in demonstrating results, conveying relevance and strengthening partnerships. He has overseen a complete culture change in the organization that I believe best positions Leon County to face the challenges and seize the opportunities before us. We are very lucky to have him."

Leon County leadership quickly recognized that Long's appointment to County Administrator was one such opportunity. Taking the helm as County Administrator during the longest economic recession since the Great Depression, Long's vision could not have been more needed. Since 2011, Long has delivered impressive results despite facing perennial multimillion dollar budget shortfalls. Under Long's leadership, County leadership restructured county government operations and aligned the optimized resources of Leon County with the highest priorities of the County Commission. All of this required real – and rare – organizational culture change.

To put this into practice, Long launched the national award-winning Citizen Engagement Series. The workshops give citizens greater insight into County government operations and help highlight the role citizens play in the decision-making process that shapes policies, programs and services. Oftentimes attendees say they never knew a department did so much work on their behalf, and they never knew how much staff valued their input.

This commitment to citizens helped initiate, complete or make substantial progress on "game changing" core infrastructure projects such as the Public Safety Complex, Gaines Street and Cascades Park. The \$47.5 million state-of-the-art Public Safety Complex opened under budget and on time, and combines local first responder dispatch functions under one roof. Of the roughly \$30 million invested in construction and \$7 million in information technology, approximately 86 percent of the construction dollars were kept in the local economy.

Leon County also worked with the City of Tallahassee to renovate Gaines Street. The overall vision of the project was to create a vibrant urban corridor with public art displays, businesses and live/work spaces. While the vision continues to develop, the infrastructure improvements that followed have helped generate more than \$128 million private development. Also, other renovations done to Mahan Road and Buck Lake served to invite development and serve as welcoming thoroughfares for residents.

Cascades Park is a shining example of a large-scale project that can be produced with public input and local government coordination. The 24-acre Cascades Park exemplifies Long's vision of local government as an organization committed to preserving, protecting and enhancing the community's quality of life. It is anticipated that the park will be the social center of the community.

But Leon County does not wait for the future to happen. Under Long's leadership, the County has advanced one central theme in its vision statement: to be "the catalyst." Through the "Sense of Place" initiative, Long and his leadership team work to build areas with recognizable centers where the public can gather and everyone is welcome. Leon County invested in high priority projects that will serve and shape our community for generations – and did so when jobs were most needed and costs were most affordable for the taxpayer.

By renovating a vacant, big box store at Huntington Oaks, Leon County constructed an anchor for a catalytic sense of place initiative for the surrounding area. The Lake Jackson Branch Library moved into a new space to provide area residents an additional 5,000 square feet of space with an internal park complete with benches and trees. But that was not the end of the community project, only the first phase. The second phase involved citizen input, proving that government does best when citizens are co-creators, not just taxpayers.

Building on catalytic successes such as the Lake Jackson Town Center, Long and other leaders established the Leon County Sales Tax Committee, which consists of eighteen citizens representing a broad cross section of the community. The committee is charged with collecting public input and making recommendations regarding public policy for the extension of the infrastructure sales tax within Leon County. Multimillion dollar projects will be considered from stormwater updates to public facilities, the construction and use of which will last for many decades to come.

And this all returns to the transformational leadership of Vince Long. It may seem easy or commonplace for local government to build state-of-the-art facilities like the Public Safety Complex, or to open new branch libraries such as the Lake Jackson Branch Library. But, Long understands it also takes cultural transformation coupled with great energy and encouragement.

For more information on this recent recognition or Leon County's programs or services, please contact Jon D. Brown, Director of Community and Media Relations, at (850) 606-5300 or cmr@LeonCountyFL.gov.

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