



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

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YOUR TURN

Leon County: Investing in Community, Welcoming the World

Vincent S. Long, Leon County Administrator

2025 was another year of great progress for Leon County and our entire community. Delivering on the Board of County Commissioners' highest priorities, we invested in infrastructure, created places for people to thrive, and advanced innovation through co-creation. And we did it with a clear focus on performance, fiscal stewardship, and the provision of high-quality essential services our citizens rely on every day.

Each year I present an annual report to the Board and our community that highlights Leon County's commitment to delivering results for the citizens we serve. This year's Annual Report underscores how our employees continue to set the highest standard in public service—across EMS, Public Works, Parks, Libraries, Emergency Management, and a whole lot more. That commitment is reflected in all we do. It is built into our infrastructure: safer roads, enhanced stormwater, and extensive water-quality projects to accommodate quality growth and serve our community for generations to come.

In 2025, we stayed focused on protecting and improving water quality in the Southside—leveraging more than \$60 million for septic-to-sewer projects, removing more than 700 septic tanks, and securing \$1.6 million to revitalize the Lake Munson Slough embankment. At the same time countywide, we managed and maintained more than 600 miles of roads and nearly 700 miles of stormwater ditches to keep people and neighborhoods safe.

From pipes and pavement to parks and public spaces, we raised the bar with more than 100 new acres of green space, adding to the County's 3,400 acres of parks and nearly 50 miles of trails. We transformed the historic Old Concord School into the nearly 8,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Miccosukee Community Center; celebrated another segment of the St. Marks Headwaters Greenway; opened the County's largest dog park at Apalachee Regional Park; launched the Fort Braden Family Resource Center with the Children's Services Council of Leon County; and delivered 18 streetlight projects and 15 bus-stop lighting upgrades, and added nearly 20 miles of new greenways, trails and bike lanes in 2025 alone.

Our ongoing efforts to make our community more vibrant and resilient included expanding affordable housing—the bedrock for economic stability, health and opportunity for everyone.

The County increased annual gap financing to \$500,000, paired with \$5.8 million in direct funding and \$183 million in bond financing—together delivering more than 1,200

affordable rental homes with many more on the way. And we did all of this while advancing the County's commitment to serving our veterans—helping Leon County veterans and their families secure more than \$40 million in earned benefits.

Because building community is also about building connections, the County engaged thousands of our citizens across hundreds of events as we revitalized a neighborhood during our 9/11 Day of Service; celebrated the 10th year of the County's transformative Leon Works Expo; and hosted our award-winning Created Equal event—using music as a living chronicle of race, resistance, and celebration.

Together, efforts like these make Leon County a premier destination—drawing more than 2.4 million visitors and generating over \$1.3 billion in economic impact. The County also delivered our most successful concert lineup yet, welcomed tens of thousands to the Amphitheater, and supported nearly 300 community events—all during a bicentennial year that brought our community together.

That momentum sets the stage for 2026, when Leon County welcomes the world to Apalachee Regional Park for the 46th World Athletics Cross Country Championships—the event's first return to the United States in more than 30 years. We expect 550 elite athletes from 60 countries, 10,000 spectators, an estimated \$4.3 million in economic impact, all broadcast globally.

Behind these achievements is a high-performing team committed to efficiency and results—guided by a strategic plan with a clear vision, bold goals, and measurable targets. This year, County employees earned dozens of state and national awards. And we did it while holding the millage rate flat for the 14th consecutive year, while maintaining one of the lowest budgets and one of the lowest employee-to-resident ratios among peer counties—even with more property off the tax rolls than nearly any county—underscoring our effectiveness and fiscal stewardship.

And with this momentum, we'll keep setting the standard in the year ahead—listening to the people we serve, addressing our biggest challenges together, and making Leon County a place like nowhere else.

Take a look back at Leon County's progress in 2025 by viewing the annual report and video at LeonCountyFL.gov/AnnualReport.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vincent S. Long, County Administrator, has worked for Leon County since 1995, and in 2022, earned the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Award for Career Excellence. Reach him at 850-606-5300 or LongV@LeonCountyFL.gov.

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