



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 606-5300 www.LeonCountyFL.gov

YOUR TURN

2024 Leon County in Review: Serving Our Citizens, Shaping Our Future

Vincent S. Long, Leon County Administrator

In 2024, Leon County continued to progress while addressing significant challenges and maintaining its commitment to setting the standard for local government performance, fiscal stewardship, and best practices. From the opening of Amazon, the largest private sector job injection in the County's history, to reimagining the downtown library to meet emerging needs, Leon County has remained dedicated to advancing an ambitious vision for our community and delivering tangible results for our citizens.

Each year, I present an annual report to the Board of County Commissioners and our community that highlights Leon County's commitment to investing in infrastructure, creating places for people and businesses to thrive, and embracing innovation and co-creation — all of which makes our County one of the best places anywhere to live, work, and play.

We did this and so much more in 2024, staying focused on our strategic priorities and bold goals for the organization and the community, including growing our local tourism economy, addressing pressing issues like affordable housing, protecting our precious environment, and so much more.

While addressing the critical needs of our community, we stayed committed to our long-term strategy of building and diversifying our economy, resulting in Leon County's MSA being named the nation's strongest economy in 2024 by *Area Development* magazine. This top ranking reflects successful initiatives and transformative projects, including the opening of Amazon, which brought more than 2,000 full-time jobs, \$33 million in annual wages, and \$114 million in annual economic impact to our community.

With that same dedication to ensuring our community's brightest future, Leon County continued enhancing our quality of life and protecting our vital water bodies by leveraging more than \$50 million in County and state funding to remove more than 700 septic tanks on the southside to protect our springs and improving greenspaces for all to enjoy by adding another 15 miles of greenways, trails, and bike lanes in the past year.

As one of the South's best destinations, 2024 was another record-breaking year for our local tourism economy, generating more than \$1.3 billion in economic impact and more than 2.5 million visitors.

This year was particularly special as we celebrated the Tallahassee-Leon County Bicentennial with events and programs focused on 200 years of history and progress. Throughout the year, the County led Bicentennial planning efforts, resulting in more than 200 themed events.

And because building community is all about building connections with one other, we hosted hundreds of community events, including our award-winning Created Equal with a candid conversation about our 200-year history of race and equality in honor of the Bicentennial. Through collaborative partnerships with the Council of Neighborhood Associations and Knight Creative Communities Institute, we continued to engage residents and enhance neighborhoods through innovative programs, including revitalizing the home of a U.S. Army veteran in the Woodville community during our annual 9/11 Day of Remembrance and Service.

As a result of the County's sound fiscal policies and long-range planning, the County once again balanced the budget without raising the general millage rate for the 13th consecutive year and received Moody's highest-quality, lowest-risk credit rating. This commitment to fiscal stewardship has been key to keeping Leon County among the most efficient and affordable counties anywhere.

In 2024, Leon County EMS celebrated 20 years of providing exceptional, lifesaving care and treatment to the residents of Leon County. Over 20 years, our EMS team has become one of the best services in the nation, responding to nearly 800,000 calls for service, transporting a half a million patients, and most importantly, delivering a cardiac survival rate double the national average.

This same commitment to excellence, when it matters most, was tested again this year as the County led disaster response and recovery efforts following both historic flooding and a devastating tornado outbreak. County teams worked tirelessly to protect citizens after the Bicentennial Storm, a once-in-200-year event that brought three months' worth of rain in less than three hours. Just one month later, three tornadoes caused more damage in a half hour than any other disaster in our history. As with past emergencies, the County was at the forefront, spearheading recovery efforts, launching a \$1 million disaster assistance program for individuals and businesses, and providing critical relief to the community.

As we look ahead, we will continue to face the same challenges of communities and governments everywhere else, but at Leon County, we remain committed to listening to the people we serve, addressing the challenges we face together, and striving to be a place like nowhere else.

Take a look back at Leon County's progress in 2024 by viewing the annual report and video at LeonCountyFL.gov/AnnualReport.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vincent 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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