

City of Mount Dora  
2013 State of the City



Prepared by:  
Robert Thielhelm, Sr., Mayor

## Greetings

It is my honor and pleasure to address the citizens, community organizations and businesses of Mount Dora with the mayor's annual State of the City. Together we are working through one of the most tumultuous times in our nation's history. Last year marked the City of Mount Dora's 102<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of incorporation. As we begin the 103<sup>rd</sup> year of our incorporation we must continue to honor the intentions of the City's founders as we work together to create a legacy for future generations of Mount Dora residents.

Our community, along with the rest of the nation, continues to confront the harsh realities of a severe financial recession along with the continuing slump in the housing and real estate markets.

Adjustments and transitions are necessary during periods of turmoil and the City's government modified its business plans, expenditures and investments. Some of these modifications have been difficult while some have been opportunities for positive change. The City continues to plan for and invest in the future even during these times of economic hardship. Our duty as a council is to be responsible stewards with the resources and services available to current residents while planning for future residents.



Our business community saw several new businesses launched in the past year. Our community service organizations continue to address the needs within the local community that government can no longer afford to provide. We continue to have business and civic involvement in a variety of events including decorating our city for the holidays. Mount Dora continues to look

more picturesque.

The City's Department Directors continue to develop ways and means to do more with less. Last year the City of Mount Dora's ad valorem revenues were held constant. Our residents continue to pay the lowest ad valorem tax millage rate of all the Golden Triangle Cities while enjoying higher property values. The City Council must assess each year if we will be able to offer the safety, services, maintenance and amenities that our residents have come to expect with the current millage rate or if cuts in services are necessary and/or adjustments to our millage rate. Each year the City Council weighs the needs and priorities of the community against the available funding.



Other sources of revenue have been affected and most have been significantly reduced. The City's revenue from discretionary sales tax, grants, investments and service fees are down from the highs of several years ago. The City has planned well and kept a sharp eye on the trends effecting operating and capital improvement funds. The City administration continues to keep tight controls on all spending.

As is required, the City delivered a balanced budget for 2012/2013. Mount Dora experienced a 5.15% reduction in property values down from 7% the previous year. Last year the City reduced its total debt by \$768 thousand and received the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. The City of Mount Dora continues to participate in the Lake County Purchasing Consortium to take advantage of volume purchasing and expedited bidding process.



The City is currently staffed with 206 full-time positions. In addition to managing Human Resource strategies with department goals, during 2012 the Human Resources/Risk Management Department entered into collective bargaining with the City's Fire, Police and General Employees Unions. In November, the first of the three collective bargaining agreements were resolved with the City Council ratifying the General Employees collective bargaining agreement. Collective bargaining sessions with Fire and Police are well under way and continue to make progress as of this writing.



In 2012, the Human Resources staff conducted a comprehensive wage study of twenty-three (23) benchmark positions in ten (10) municipalities within the competitive market. The study provides yet another tool to gauge the competitiveness of our compensation to City employees and note trends and concerns for future hires.

The Employee Health and Wellness Center had a very successful year in 2012 and utilization continues to increase as employees and

their dependents develop a comfort level with the new concept. In the first 10 months of 2012, utilization is up just under 17% over 2011 at 76% vs. 59.5% respectively.

The City's Public Works and Utilities Department consists of five divisions and they are Electrical, Public Works, Storm Water, Water/Waste Water, and Engineering whose goals are to "Serving to Protect Public Health, Enhance Water Quality, Educate the Public and Protect the Environment".



The Electric Division completed 628 work orders covering a wide variety of activities during the year. By far, the largest number of work orders involved 166 street light repairs that were typically initiated by a customer notification.



In 2012 the division supplied 5,692 customers with the yearly total of 84,364,970 kWh. The average monthly usage for residential was 858 kWh while the monthly commercial demand averaged 25,959 kWh. In 2010 the city was given a \$249,900 EECBG grant and in 2012 completed energy audits on 145 residential homes, 71 commercial and 7 large commercial properties; installed a total of ten air conditioning units at the City's Annex Building, Donnelly Park Building and the Martin Luther King Center; completed field inventory and prepared system maps for the City's six distribution circuits, showing poles, conductors, street lights, switches, and other electrical equipment; an installed LED fixtures to upgrade the

parking lot lights at the Bland Library. Installed (150) LED retrofit kits to upgrade antique lights in the city's downtown area.

In addition the division negotiated a four year extension to the existing Power Supply Agreement with Progress Energy, developed a model of distribution system using data collected from field inventory to enable technical analyses to identify overloaded equipment and voltage problems, retained consultant to develop design standards for the city's electrical distribution system, replaced existing High Point direct-buried electrical cables that were prone to failure with new electrical cables installed in conduits,

along with pad-mount transformers and replaced 19 existing wood poles with concrete poles to comply with the Storm Hardening goals of the Florida Public Service Commission.

In 2012 the Public Works Division completed 1100 work orders, repaired 4,250 linear feet of sidewalk and 1,200 linear feet of curbing, while making 350 patch repairs to our streets. In addition over 6 miles of city streets were resurfaced, 275 plus trees were pruned and trimmed while more than 300 street signs were replaced with federal mandated "high intensity" materials.



In 2012 the Stormwater Resource Division completed eleven major storm water projects, approximately 3,283 cubic yards of debris was collected and removed from the city's storm water system while continuing the GPS inventorying of the City's storm water system.

In 2012 the Water and Waste Water Division provided 1,030,755,000 gallons to 28,810 customers and 2,800 work orders were completed. The City's Sewage Facilities treated a monthly average of 334,928 gallons of septage/grease, a 644.3% increase. Currently in the process of expanding the Grease Receiving Facility and planning to move forward with a green solution to bio-solids by converting them into a Class A slow release fertilizer. In 2013 the Department will be soliciting private firms about entering into a private public partnership with the city on a Bio-Diesel project to convert grease into diesel.

In 2012 the Public Works Department completed the following three Capital Projects; a Community Block Grant that build sidewalks and provided sewer service to six low rent duplex units, drilled two water wells for the East Side water plant and completed the installation of the supplemental reclaim water well.

At year end the Public Works Department was involved in a number of ongoing capital projects. The Reclaimed Water Reuse holding ponds building completed. Electrical control system design for the additional Variable Frequency Drives Pumps that will reduce fluctuations in water pressure and meet the water usage and demands of customers is on-going. The upgrades to the reclaimed water system should be operational early 2013. The Eastern Water Plant construction drawings are complete and are out for bid. There is one more easement along State Road 46 and Round Lake Road left to purchase. The Eastern Water Plant will allow the City to be positioned for future growth. The water plant is integral to the successful establishment of the Employment Center on SR 46. The Eastern Water Plant will also even out pressures throughout the water system and help eliminate low pressure zones in certain areas. Inter-connecting the City's existing Water Plant with the Eastern Water Plant will also provide a continuous water supply should an emergency failure occur at either water plant. The Thrill Hill Reservoir is on hold, city staff is investigating possibility of a Public-Private-Partnership. The repairs to the Dogwood Mountain Reserve stormwater system should be completed by January 2013. The inspection and GIS mapping of the City's sewer collection system lines is ongoing. The Department applied for a CDBG Grant to increase the size of the water lines on Lincoln Avenue, Robie Avenue and Clayton Street, which will increase water flow in those areas.



In 2012 there were 51 personnel in the Police Department and 25 Fire Department employees. There continues to be an increased emphasis placed on working cooperatively with neighboring agencies during these tight economic times. Both branches of our Public Safety Department have benefited from improved communications among fire, EMS and law enforcement agencies throughout the county.

In 2012 the Police Department responded to 27,427 emergency calls for service or roughly 78 calls per day. The department's primary goal remains the rapid response to emergency calls for service.



The Department is continuing to meet that goal and is usually on the scene in 1-3 minutes. Based on past years, the Department does not foresee any significant reductions in call load and more likely, increases as the economy recovers. The overall crime rate in 2012 has remained flat. The Department has conducted a number of major operations over the past year, as a single agency, and also, as part of several regional task forces. Most of these operations have involved drug trafficking and associated crimes of violence.

From a community standpoint, the Police Department has been able to retain funding from the Northeast Community Redevelopment Agency which allows continuance of the Northeast Neighborhood

Policing initiative. In the years since the inception of the unit noticeable positive results have been achieved in the entire Northeast portion of Mount Dora as a result of this valuable unit.

The Police Department is continuing to work on a community crime-mapping application for internal use in deployment of resources and also, to make available to the public, via the department's website, for their information and perusal. The goal is to have the application on-line before the end of 2013.

During the current budget year, and through to the end of 2013, the Police Department faces a number of challenges which include reaccreditation through the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA). The department is currently scheduled for a "mock" on-site inspection in January of 2013 with the actual team of CFA assessors doing their official on-site inspection before the end of the spring. This will be the Police Department's third re-accreditation since becoming fully accredited by CFA in 2004.

In 2013 the Mount Dora Police Department will undergo two significant changes in management. Chief Scoggins and Deputy Chief Rauth have both announced their retirement from the Mount Dora Police Department. Deputy Chief Rauth will retire at the end of 2012 and Chief Scoggins will follow at the end of 2013. Both men will be missed and they are wished all the best. During 2013, a candidate will be chosen by the City Manager who will initially come in as the Deputy Chief but will transition over to Chief of Police by the end of 2013.





In 2012 the Fire Department responded to 2,557 medical calls, 810 other calls and 32 fires. There was a slight increase in medical calls and a decrease in all the other calls from the previous year. Much of the fire department's efforts have been concentrated around the tri city consisting of Eustis, Mount Dora and Tavares. While there has been what appears to be slow progress toward this goal, many behind the scenes activity have continued. The three city fire departments have been continuing to work closely in every aspect of our duties, to move toward, at the least, a functional consolidation model of

efficiency. The three cities have continued with their combined training efforts while moving forward with such issues as combined promotional testing, review and rewrite of each department's policy and procedure manuals in an effort to bring them closer together, anticipating the eventual convergence of the departments.

The Fire Department has decreased external training costs by the use of an in-house EMS training officer, and by placing the entire department on the same EMS training schedule. This insures that no Paramedic's or EMT's licensure expires, streamlining the administrative process.

The Mount Dora Fire Department has continued to assist Eustis' Fire Department in accomplishing their goal toward Advance Life Support (ALS) status by offering EMS training opportunities, personnel support and I.T. support for report writing. We are also poised to assist Tavares Fire Department as they begin to prepare for offering ALS service to their citizens.

Some of the smaller items of accomplishment deal with issues such as how to increase emergency scene efficiency without increasing manpower. This has been accomplished via such avenues as purchasing more efficient fire hose with lower friction loss. This allows us to reduce the weight and kick back of firefighting hose, allowing for less manpower to handle it.

The addition of a part time fire inspector has been a great asset to the fire department and the city in that he has been able to assist the full time inspector in clearing up the back log of inspections, streamline the process by converting the inspection coverage areas into zones and move more quickly on the pre-fire plan program.



The Fire Department continues to apply for both local and federal grants for such items as replacement of watercraft, fire prevention materials and training expense coverage.

The fire department held its third annual fire prevention poster contest, which again was met with great success and involvement by all the local schools.

Our City's W.T. Bland Public Library continues to be one of the City's most used and appreciated facility. The much needed library renovation was completed sufficiently to allow the library to reopen in



August after being closed for a five week period in the summer allowing the contractor to finish his work. The renovation increased the library's square footage from 15,000 sq feet to 22,666 sq feet. The additions consisted of a larger community room with seating for up to 150, a children's program room for up to 100 children, 3 individual study rooms, increased the number of internet access computers available to the public from 17 to 38, a new circulation desk, a technology room, additional parking was

added and the original parking lot was resurfaced and striped. Thanks to the generosity of the Mount Dora Library Association and the Friends of the Library, a electronic notice board was added along with a new taller flag pole and a new lawn was planted all to the front of the library along with a Butterfly garden for the enjoyment of all the library patrons.

In 2012 the library had 17,669 registered borrowers, a collection of 83,839 items with a total annual circulation of 225,689. All of these numbers were down from the previous year due to the five week period the library was closed. Our library is another city resource that is a recipient of citizen contribution, involvement and volunteerism. There is no way the City could continue to provide over 58 adult and 108 children programs without the support of the volunteers who so willing give of their time and services. One example of a program our volunteers help provides is the adult literacy. In 2012, 19 volunteers provided over 842 hours of tutoring to 28 adults. We are all grateful for their time and passion to the causes that increase the sense of community and the cause of literacy.



The Simpson Farmhouse next to the Library has been a welcome addition to the communal space available within the City. Over 16 civic organizations conduct their meetings in both facilities.

The City of Mount Dora Parks & Recreation Department is committed to providing high quality programs and services that meet and exceed expectations. Their #1 priority is to meet the needs of the citizens. They are dedicated to creating a comfortable environment that encourages a sense of creativity, teamwork, and achievement. The department is committed to provide service with integrity and the highest degree of professional standards.



This past year the Parks and Recreation Department, like other departments in the city, has wrestled with providing quality programs and services to the citizens while at the same time doing more with less. The challenge we faced with this type of compression of services is that the needs are greater now more so than ever before especially during the current recession.

Citizens are looking for events or activities that they and their families can enjoy without much cost to them. With that in mind the

Parks and Recreation has transitioned into a more service level department with many of the events costing little or nothing to the participants who come to them. Some

examples are the Halloween Spooktacular, the Movies in the Park every month, Holiday Concerts in the newly renovated Community Building, the Summer Kickoff Splash Bash at the pool, the Leprechaun Treasure Hunt at Gilbert Park, the Fall and Spring Trash to Treasures Yard Sales, Christmas in the Park, Coed Softball Programs and the Lincoln Park Disc Golf course to name just a few.



This approach has led to an increase in participant levels at our all our activities and this past year we had an estimated participation level of over 9500 visits to our programs and events. In youth sports we continue to strive to build a fun and skills orientated environment with such sports as spring and fall Soccer and winter youth basketball. For those children who cannot afford our programs we have increased our efforts to gather support through donations to our scholarship program with outstanding results. Because of those donations we have been able to give over 42 children a chance to be a part of our summer camp and sports programs with another 621 children getting a chance to use the community pool this past summer.

This year the Cultural and Special Events Coordinator position was added to department. This addition allows for one stop shopping when it comes to scheduling an event or activities in any of the cities facilities or Parks.

In conjunction with our citizen partners and the 23 city staff members, we have been able to continue to upgrade and enhance our park experiences. The numerous individual volunteers and civic organizations such as the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Kiwanis Club, UCAN Leaders of Lake County, Library Association, Mount Dora Community Trust, Ocala Mountain Bike Association, various garden groups and many, many more have helped the City offer increased programs as well as providing physical improvements to our Parks and Recreation facilities.



In 2012 the City's Parks and Recreation Department completed repairs to City Hall, updated the department's Home Page, in partnership with the Ocala Mountain Bike Association made improvements to the Mountain Bike trail in the Lincoln Avenue Park, completed the roadway and playground area at the Recreation and Nature Park, upgraded the security with heavier

doors and an alarm system at the city pool, Frank Brown Sports Complex and Cauley Lott Park and a new landscaping contract was finalized.

At year end the Parks Department was involved with several operational and capital projects including the Community Building operational plan, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Docks scheduled to be completed in January 2013 with dedication later in the same month and the long awaited much anticipated Palm Island Boardwalk Replacement currently under construction with completion set for spring of 2013.



In 2012 the City's Planning and Development Department completed the initial phase of the City wide visioning process, completed the Ruthie Watson Park, continued work on updating the CRA and NECRA master plans, developed the commercial property improvement and ad valorem tax incentive programs, completed the Brownfield Community wide assessment grant application and through the

hard work and dedication of the Public Arts Commission, the Community Building Sculpture Garden was completed. Three sculptures have been acquired by the commission through the generous support of the Mount Dora Community Trust and the McLin Foundation. The Community Trust assisted in the funding of the Sculpture Garden construction and the McLin Foundation funded the acquisition of the sculptures.



The Planning and Development Department Building Division issued 926 permits in 2012 and conducted over 4,717 inspections. The Department provides support and regulatory oversight to the citizen committees and boards of the Northeast Community

Redevelopment Agency, the Downtown CRA, the Public Arts Commission, the Historic Preservation Board and the Planning and Zoning Board. In addition the staff represents the City regionally and keeps us apprised of the issues impacting the community from outside Mount Dora. The Department continues working with Lake County to brand, market and seek financial partners for the Employment Center along State Road 46. The Department is working with the Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Lake and Sumter counties relative the Wekiva Parkway, the Rails to Trails plan, the Tremain Street Greenway and the Donnelly Street Projects.

The feasibility study and conceptual planning work for the Martin Luther King Center Renovation and Expansion is on hold due to lack of funding.

One of the statutory functions of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is to undertake activities that facilitate the redevelopment of property. In an effort to encourage investment into commercial properties, the Mount Dora CRA administers two redevelopment incentive programs, the development fee reimbursement and façade grant.





The objectives of the Development Fee Reimbursement Incentive Program are to: Add commercial space, Renovate existing commercial space, Increase property values, and accelerate other private investment in properties in close proximity to properties receiving grants. The goal of the Façade Grant Program is to improve the appearance of the business buildings in the commercial zones of the CRA district by providing financial assistance. The City has also waived impact and development fees for commercial properties in the CRA districts. This initiative is intended to

assist in and encourage redevelopment in both districts.

In 2010 the electorate of the city gave the City Council the authority to grant ad valorem tax exemptions to new and expanding businesses in the city. The impetus of this was to provide incentives to encourage employment based businesses to locate in Mount Dora.

The City Council adopted legislation that will allow the implementation of the tax exemptions. Development eligible for the exemptions include new or expansions of existing businesses that include 10 or more employees in manufacturing or target business industries as defined in the Florida Statutes; existing businesses that expand by 25 or more employees outside of the categories; any business located in a Brownfields area that increases operation; new businesses that further the vision of the city as defined in the Citywide Visioning Plan; an office space newly domiciled in the state consisting of 50 or more employees; a business that is situated on property annexed into the City and that, at time of the annexation, is receiving an economic development ad valorem tax exemption from the county.

The exemption may be granted for up to one hundred (100%) percent of the assessed value of all improvements to real property made by or for the use of a new business and of all tangible personal property of such new business, and up to one hundred (100%) percent of the assessed value of all added improvements to real property made to facilitate expansion of an existing business and the net increase in all tangible personal property acquired to facilitate such expansion of an existing business, provided that the improvements to real property are made, or the tangible personal property is added or increased, on or after the day the exemption.

The tax abatement does not apply to the underlying property, only improvements to the property and tangible personal property.

The City of Mount Dora has submitted a Brownsfields Community-wide Assessment Grant application funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The assessment grants will provide funding for the City to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct planning and community involvement related to Brownfields sites. The City will apply for \$200,000 to assess sites contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants (including hazardous substances co-mingled with petroleum) and \$200,000 to address sites contaminated by petroleum or petroleum products. The \$400,000 grant will provide the City with



funds for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments on public and private owned properties, redevelopment planning, program management, and community outreach. Leveraging this grant with other state and federal funding opportunities will provide opportunities throughout the community to create jobs and remove environmentally challenges from properties. A decision on the grant will be made by May 2013. The City will have two years to complete the assessment.

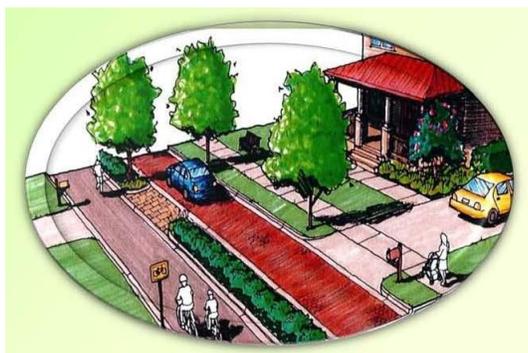


At year end the Planning and Development Department was involved with several capital projects. The Lincoln Avenue Trail Project will install a safe pedestrian and bike route along the south side of Lincoln Avenue between Tremain and Unser Streets. The construction drawings are complete but the construction funding from FDOT-LAP Safe Routes to School Grant will not be available until August 2013. The Donnelly Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues Sidewalk and Streetscape Project construction drawings are complete but FDOT's funding for construction will not be available until August 2013.

The Downtown Sidewalk and Streetscape Project is in the design phase. The project will improve pedestrian movement throughout the CRA, with the initial focus on the downtown commercial core area. The City Council approved a phasing plan that will include Childs Park, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the Lake to Alexander Street and Alexander Street from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Third Avenue. In addition the City is looking at adding additional parking along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue from McDonald to Alexander Street. Construction is scheduled to take place in the Summer of 2013. The Tremain Street Greenway which extends from Fifth Avenue north to Lincoln Avenue is a priority project in the Mount Dora Trails Master Plan. Final design is complete and a FDOT Transportation



Grant has been approved. Construction is scheduled to begin the Summer of 2013. A driveway connection between the existing parking structure on Donnelly Street to the surface lot on Tremain Street is under construction. It is anticipated that this connection will significantly increase the utilization of the Tremain Street Parking lot and effectively increase the parking supply for the downtown area.



Gateway monuments are to be constructed at major and minor entrances to the City which will include an updated wayfinding system to assist in directing people to points of interest within the City, with the primary destination being downtown and the lakefront. The primary gateway monuments are proposed at Round Lake Road and SR 46, US 441 and 1st Avenue, US 441 and Limit Avenue, US 441 and Donnelly Street, and at Eudora Road and Old 441. The secondary monuments are proposed at US 441 and Lincoln Avenue, Donnelly



Street and Lincoln Avenue, Highland Street and Camp Avenue, 1st Avenue and 5th Avenue, and at US 441 and Eudora Road.

The City will phase the construction of these signs with the signage on Donnelly Street south of US 441 and at the intersection of Highland Street and First Avenue

being constructed this year. Construction is anticipated the Spring of 2013.

The past several years has brought significant changes in our economic and political outlooks, and in the concerns expressed by our residents and businesses.

Even in these economic times, cities must continue to move forward. The issues that confront our city are the same as those confronting cities across our nation. Achieving a balance between what we can afford and the quality of life we have come to enjoy and expect will continue to be the major challenge confronting all of us. There will be shortcomings and there will be successes. We will learn from



our shortcomings and we will celebrate our successes. We are very fortunate to have active and engaged citizens in Mount Dora.



I encourage you to be involved, to be confident that your city is well-managed, that your city is financially sound and to be proud that Mount Dora is "Someplace Special".

Thank you,

Bob Thielhelm  
Mount Dora Mayor

