

County Administrator's Quarterly Report

Third Quarter 2020



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I | County Administrator's Welcome Statement

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the first quarterly County Administration update to the Board of Commissioners. While it is impossible to highlight all of the great work happening day in and day out across the County, I hope that this report will give you a glimpse of the effort our employees put in to maintain the Gwinnett Standard on a daily basis.

2020 has been a uniquely challenging year to say the least. From virtual meetings, to facemasks, to self-imposed and externally mandated restrictions and much more; the COVID-19 pandemic and our response to it can be described as nothing short of unprecedented. While we may never have anticipated a public health emergency of this scale, I will tell you that I never doubted our ability to keep Gwinnett running smoothly throughout the course of it. That isn't a testament to me, but a testament to my faith in our employees to be the remarkable group that they are. With that in mind, this report is, by design, not entirely focused on COVID-19.

Instead, this report focuses on the Board of Commissioners' Strategic Priorities and the work happening within them. It also highlights some external recognition for our team, one special employee whose efforts led her boss to describe her as simply "a rock star," and several interesting metrics that help illustrate the complexity and scope of County operations. The goal is to provide you with a similar report each quarter that dives deeper than the projects and initiatives that you hear about on a regular basis.

I hope you find the information that follows to be both informative and inspiring, and I hope that you read it as I do with a pride in the team that we get to call our own.

Thank you,

Glenn Stephens, County Administrator

II | Strategic Priority Highlights

The Board of Commissioners' Strategic Priorities are broad-based statements that define the outcomes we strive for in our community. We see these as the foundational pillars of our decision-making and the keys to a Vibrantly Connected future. Each year the Chairman and District Commissioners participate in a strategic planning session where they define major initiatives within each priority. This report seeks to take that discussion further and show how the priorities are executed across County operations.

Mobility and Access

When we think of mobility and access, one of the first thoughts that comes to mind is the County's transportation network. This network is continually improved through a robust program of diverse and complimentary projects that improve the flow of traffic, enhance safety, and improve accessibility. A great deal of work is underway in the Department of Transportation program; below are updates on some of the more visible projects:

- Bridge construction is well underway and bridge beams are set for the SR 8 Dacula Road/Harbins Road Intersection Project. Road construction continues on SR 8 and paving is scheduled to start by early November. Forecasted completion is spring 2021.

- Construction continues on schedule for the Harbins Road at SR 316 Interchange Project. Currently, mass grading activities for the access ramps continue as well as bridge construction over SR 316. Forecasted completion is spring 2022.



- The Pleasant Hill Road Widening Phase I (Howell Ferry to the Chattahoochee River) project is nearly complete and final paving is underway. Project completion is forecasted for the end of the year.
- The Pleasant Hill Road Widening Phase II (Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to the Chattahoochee River) project will begin construction in November 2020 and will complete the widening of Pleasant Hill Road to six lanes. This project will also construct a multi-use path from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to the newly constructed pedestrian bridge over the Chattahoochee River (a partnership project between Gwinnett and the city of Johns Creek). The project is forecasted for a spring 2021 completion.
- The Spalding Drive Widening project is a partnership project between Gwinnett, the State Road and Tollway Authority, and the cities of Peachtree Corners and Sandy Springs. The project will widen Spalding Drive between Winters Chapel Road and River Exchange Drive and construct a multi-use path. Construction continues on schedule and is forecasted for a summer 2022 completion.



The Department of Community Services continues to execute the Countywide Trails Master Plan. While progress is being made, projects such as Singleton Park and Greenway have been impeded by the land/easement acquisition process. The County has made improvements to the process through education and awareness efforts with utility companies, but the acquisition of utility easements continues to create delays that slow project delivery in the early stages.

Aside from major construction projects the County continues to look toward the future of transportation with projects like the Gwinnett County Smart Corridor and GDOT Regional Connected Vehicle Project. Together, these projects will deploy both connected vehicle technology in traffic signals on major corridors in the County and emergency vehicle preemption, transit signal priority, and other safety and mobility applications that will become commonplace as automakers include connected vehicle technology in new vehicles. The Gwinnett Smart Corridor RFP is expected to be let through Georgia Department of Transportation by early in the first quarter of 2021.



Livability and Comfort

Livability and comfort is all about how we support our community in their pursuit of an excellent quality of life. It takes collaboration and partnerships, and it requires engagement that goes above and beyond. Below are a few highlights of our team collaborating to promote livability and comfort in our community:



Live Healthy Gwinnett’s Harvest Gwinnett program has been busy expanding: new community gardens are under construction, onsite programming has begun allowing residents to ‘get their hands dirty,’ and students are working with staff to learn about Gwinnett’s food security challenges and initiatives helping directly decrease resident meal gaps. Almost 600 pounds of fresh produce and herbs have been harvested for community donation to date. Support for community gardens includes a contribution of 90 pounds of Ostara fertilizer from the F. Wayne Hill Water Reclamation Facility.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the challenges our community faces meeting some basic needs. In response, Community Services' staff, student interns, and volunteers are assisting community partner organizations that support residents with essential services such as food, housing, healthcare, and education.

- To date, 999,126 pounds of food and personal care supplies have been transported across the county for partners and residents.
- As of October 6, the Community Services team has partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank to conduct 24 mobile food distributions, providing 331,339 pounds of fresh and shelf-stable food to 6,510 households, impacting 27,015 residents.
- In October, the team will also celebrate another month of supporting organizations and residents with Georgia-grown produce. We are planning to distribute 10,015 boxes by October 22 to 67 organizations, impacting an estimated 35,000 food insecure residents.



Great programs are not the only part of supporting livability and comfort in our community; it takes investments in great places, too. The Department of Support Services is well underway with the replacement of the Norcross Branch Library and the replacement of the Duluth Branch Library. As of October, the contractor for the Norcross Branch continues with forming and placing rebar for the elevated plaza slab. The parking deck columns and shear walls are completed.

At the Duluth Branch, the contractor is continuing with metal stud framing, brick masonry, duct work rough-ins, and installation of exterior wall sheathing. Plumbing, fire sprinkler, and electrical rough-ins are underway.

Both of the new buildings will be approximately 22,000 square feet and will include a community room and larger areas for computer services, creative projects, and interactive programming and services.



Strong and Vibrant Local Economy

Gwinnett County has long focused on water and sewer development as a mechanism to grow and maintain a strong and vibrantly connected economy. One aspect of this is a phased regional sewer plan, which the Department of Water Resources continues to develop through initiatives including the Sewer Master Plan 2050 (completed September 2018), the Eastern County Sewer Master Plan 2050 (completed March 2019), and the Wastewater Collection and Treatment System Master Plan 2050 (completed August 2020).

Another aspect is continual maintenance, improvement and expansion of water and sewer services across the County through major infrastructure projects. Examples include a number of recently completed projects: providing sewer across I-85 to support the Exchange at Gwinnett project; upgrading the existing sewer running along West Park Place Boulevard to serve future development; and installing a waterline to serve constituents along Bailey Road in the eastern portion of the County. With aging infrastructure keeping up with routine maintenance while improving and expanding services is an ongoing challenge.

One beneficiary of infrastructure improvements is the new Amazon Facility near Stone Mountain, which is supported by improved sewer infrastructure in the West Park Place area. This facility is up and running and hiring has begun to fill hundreds of jobs. Another project in the area is the redevelopment of the Stone Mountain Tennis Center site. The now-cleared 26-acre site once held the 1996 Olympic Tennis venue at Stone Mountain Park. The County invited qualified developers to submit a request for information (RFI) for the redevelopment of the site and has followed that RFI with a request for proposal (RFP). An evaluation team is currently reviewing proposals as the process moves closer to completion.



Beyond infrastructure, the County supports the local economy by supporting local business through efforts like the Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center and Small Business Loans utilizing CARES Act Funding. At the Entrepreneur Center, a contractor is on site and approximately 50% complete with the interior demolition portion of the building's renovation. A draft charter, management agreement, and other organizational documents for the Entrepreneur Center are currently being circulated internally for review and is expected to be presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval in November. The management agreement establishes a

partnership between the County and Georgia Gwinnett College for the school to provide a center manager to be the daily presence at the center to handle its operations. The manager would also work with our regional partners to develop programming and events available to both members and other local entrepreneurs. Additionally, the Georgia Gwinnett College Business School's current entrepreneurship professor would act as the center director and would devote part of his time to the center to both supervise the manager and bring other resources from the college to the center (e.g., faculty expertise, interns). To date, the County's Grants team has coordinated the issuance of nearly \$7.3 million in loans to local small businesses with CARES Act Funds.

To continue to support development and redevelopment, the Department of Planning and Development is working to advance several amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance. Staff is refining amendments to the R-TH and OSC zoning districts, with plans to submit R-TH for the October public hearing and OSC in November. Staff continues to work with the Law Department to refine the Redevelopment Ordinance, and a draft should be ready by the November public hearing.

Of course, the biggest news in economic development recently was the launch of Rowen, a visionary knowledge community that will include a combination of offices, research facilities, public spaces, and residences. The goal of Rowen is to cultivate the entrepreneurial intersection of business and innovation with an active focus on the environment, agriculture and medicine.



As a major consumer in the local market, Gwinnett County seeks to engage local businesses and provide opportunities for them to compete for County business. In normal years the Purchasing Division holds an annual supplier networking event, but that event was cancelled this year due to the pandemic. To help compensate for that lost opportunity and to expand outreach overall, the Purchasing Division launched virtual clinics beginning in October and will participate in Small Business Week events with the Gwinnett Chamber in November. Note that anyone interested in learning more about doing business with the County doesn't have to wait for one of these events. The Purchasing team welcomes questions from any vendor interested in doing business with the County and can be reached at 770.822.8720.

Communication and Engagement

Our purpose, first and foremost, is to serve our diverse community. To do so effectively, we must listen, engage, and communicate. As an organization, we recognize that we must partner with our community, listen to their story, and be willing to tell ours. Listed below are several highlights in our efforts to communicate and engage with the community that we serve:



Following a resolution by the Board of Commissioners, Police Chief Brett West announced the establishment of the Gwinnett County Police Department Community Affairs Section. This section will incorporate many of our existing community relations teams, which include the Crime Prevention Unit, Police Explorers, Youth Police Academy, and others. However, the section will look to expand our outreach efforts in order to connect with as many citizens as possible. We are excited about the prospects of expanding and connecting with our community.

Recognizing the challenge of building relationships with the community, Gwinnett County Police Department continually seeks opportunities to participate in outreach events. Recently the department engaged in the statewide community outreach event called National Faith & Blue during the weekend of October 9 – 11.

This event brought houses of worship, law enforcement agencies, and the community together during a weekend filled with various events. Each of our six precincts and the Training Section held events that included construction projects, food and coat drives, and other activities.

Gwinnett Voter Registrations and Elections office is providing opportunities to vote before the November 3 General and Special Election. Advance voting runs from October 12 to October 30 at eight sites from 7:00am to 7:00pm daily, including weekends. Gwinnett Voter Registrations and Elections offered secure ballot drop boxes to provide eligible voters a way to return their voted absentee ballots for the November 3 General Election and Special Election. The ballot drop boxes feature 24-hour surveillance and are available 24/7 through Tuesday, November 3 at 7:00pm.



The magnitude of voter turnout and absentee-by-mail ballots received for the 2020 election coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has put a significant strain on the staff and processes of Voter Registration and Elections. This strain has been amplified by ongoing difficulties in recruiting poll officials to staff precincts on Election Day. Through October 21, approximately 200 poll officials were still needed to staff precincts on Election Day. However, with over 100 County employees volunteering to work the polls as a result of a concerted effort by Human Resources and Community Services, the County is pushing to mitigate that gap.



With visible representations from vehicles to postcards, implementation of the County brand continues to be a challenge. The Communications Division continues a deliberate rollout of branded material countywide with 67 high-level projects currently underway that support and enforce brand integrity. Of note, Fire and Emergency Services will be placing the first fire apparatus with the new branding in service in October – Truck 11 at Station 11 in Norcross.

Smart and Sustainable Government

Maintaining a smart and sustainable government requires sound reasoning and a dedicated focus on long-term decision making. Gwinnett's employees are the backbone of our organization and the key to maintaining our smart and sustainable government moving forward. Below are several highlights focused on our efforts to build and maintain a smart and sustainable workforce for the future.

With a large portion of our staff eligible to retire by 2025, a large-scale effort to improve succession planning is underway, including the Department of Human Resources' recent launch of a succession planning tool within three pilot departments: Human Resources, Water Resources, and Financial Services. The creation of this tool is an early step in a long-term project focused on identifying and addressing gaps in depth and talent. Human Resources expects this initiative will document a detailed process and sustainable succession planning practice, creating a clear plan that preserves Gwinnett County's business goals, corporate culture, and core values; furthering our reputation as the public sector employer of choice.



A specific challenge in succession planning is building future leaders that embody the culture of excellence we call the Gwinnett Standard. In an effort to address that challenge, the County created an Internal Management Academy, whose first class is set to graduate at the end of October. The IMA is an executive-level leadership program designed to prepare leaders for success in their current roles and as they potentially move into higher-level positions. The 13 participants were hand-picked to represent their departments as current and future leaders.

Another challenge we continually face is the recruitment and retention of public safety employees. In recent years, targeted recruiting efforts have led to sustained improvements in hiring. To date, Gwinnett County has hired 120 police officers. We are on track to exceed our previous record for hiring police (134) that occurred last year. Human Resources continues to partner with Police in hosting hiring events through the end of the year.

Beyond employees, we also must focus on making smart decisions that improve the way we do business such as our recent efforts to improve the way we manage open records requests by implementing a new system and naming an open records officer. Law welcomed Meagean Diaz to the department as the County's Open Records Officer, as designated by the Board of Commissioners on October 6. The open records officer position was created to serve as the open records liaison between open records requestors and County departments. GovQa, the open records portal, went live on August 17.

Financial integrity is another linchpin of the County's efforts to be a smart and sustainable government including the effective management of grants. The County typically expends between \$35 million and \$45 million in grant awards annually but is managing well over \$200 million in grant funds this year. As a direct recipient of \$192 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allocations the County has navigated a myriad of challenges while working to address critical COVID-19 related needs in our community. To ensure the timely expenditure of CARES Act grant funds the County had to begin building our program offerings as the federal government was (and is) still determining the program



requirements. Working in tandem to assess and address critical needs throughout our organization, and the community overall, we have had to balance the need to move quickly while safeguarding the County from any future audit findings. The Grants team has done a tremendous job managing this workload; however, they have been and remain stretched and continue to rely on support from across the County to meet the demand.

Taking the concept of sustainability even further are efforts by departments working together, such as Water Resources and Fire and Emergency Services teaming up to identify water leaks in the community by handing out blue tablets during home safety surveys. The tablets are meant to be put in the toilet tank for 20 to 30 minutes to detect dye in the lower bowl. If dye is detected, it means a leak is present and the occupant needs to change the toilet flapper. Ultimately, efforts like this will serve the County by reducing the amount of water wasted through leaks and serve customers by lowering their water bills.



Safe and Healthy Community

Safety and health are essential components of a thriving community that require both proactive and reactive efforts. The County is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment through ongoing engagement and collaboration along with enforcement and response. Some recent highlights focused on a safe and healthy community include:

On September 3, 2020, the Police Department's Special Investigations Section began Operation Enterprise in direct response to an increase in gang and narcotics related violence. The department believes the ongoing pandemic and shift in police operations nationwide contributed to this increase. Operation Enterprise was strategically designed to minimize the impact on law-abiding citizens while focusing on illegal, criminal behavior. The operation has been a success and to date the following statistics related to the operation were recorded: 27 guns recovered; 3 stolen vehicles recovered; 173 arrest warrants taken; 40 physical arrests; and over 2 pounds marijuana, 279 prescription pills, 11 grams meth, 38 grams MDMA (Ecstasy/Molly), and \$2,800 in cash seized.



An ongoing challenge for Fire and Emergency Services is effective response to the medical calls that make up the majority of their call volume. In response to this challenge, the department is developing a Rescue Truck Program for implementation in 2021. Incorporating pickup-style trucks as a replacement for larger fire apparatus on medical calls will put smaller, more economical, vehicles in place while leaving fire apparatus available for more appropriate call types more often. The department is currently operating one rescue unit as a pilot program when staffing allows in the Norcross area to help gather data on the impact the vehicles may have and the types of calls to which they should respond.

Fire and Emergency Services continues to advance community risk reduction efforts with community initiatives like the Touchless Carbon Monoxide Detector Blitz planned for October 24, 2020, at Parton Court in Peachtree Corners. The area was identified as a priority through maps from the Department of Water Resources that were shared with Fire and Emergency Services. Carbon monoxide detectors and fire safety information will be distributed to the community.



Pursuing a safe and healthy community goes beyond our public safety departments. With early voting starting on October 12, message signs have been deployed to direct voters to the voting location at the Gwinnett County Fairgrounds. Department of Transportation traffic engineering staff also monitored traffic signal operations near advance in-person voting locations and made adjustments to signal timings to facilitate safe and efficient ingress and egress to these sites during the early voting period.



The prevalence of technology in all that we do has added another layer to the discussion of a safe and healthy community. While information security may be seen as an internal concern, it is no stretch to say that safeguarding the County's technology assets and the vast array of information that we gather and store is a critical measure in ensuring the safety of not just our organization but our community. The County has a significant number of old systems and old business processes that are not yet adapted to a world where cybersecurity is a priority. With new threats emerging weekly, it is no exaggeration to

say that the IT Security team has to get involved with everything IT-related, from system configurations to contracts, in an effort to keep the County's systems secure. This effort is an ever-evolving challenge that requires not only a team of dedicated IT professionals but a culture shift among County staff to focus on security.

Speaking of cybersecurity, one project currently underway in Water Resources is the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system conversion. This project is ongoing at Lanier and Shoal Creek Filter Plants, F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center, and Crooked Creek Water Reclamation Facility. This incredibly challenging project will convert several different legacy systems into one while improving cybersecurity and operational awareness. Likening it to rewiring a car while continuing to drive down the highway, the project requires a team of County staff, consultants, and contractors to completely change out the control system while keeping the plants operating. The project has had some difficulties along the way, including continually evolving cybersecurity requirements, existing fire suppression systems being activated erroneously during wiring, and contractors being impacted due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, the Yellow River Water Reclamation Facility is slated to begin in 2022 and will be the final facility to undergo the conversion process.



III | Recognizing the Gwinnett Standard

The Gwinnett Standard is the expectation of excellence in service, stewardship, and integrity. In simple terms it means that we strive to be the best in all we do. At times, the standard of excellence that we pursue is recognized outside of our organization. This section highlights some of our recent recognition of excellence.

Gwinnett County –Atlanta’s Healthiest Employers

Gwinnett County was recently recognized as one of Atlanta’s Healthiest Employers by the Atlanta Business Chronicle. Ranking number 12 in the extra-large market, competing with the likes of firms such as Delta, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, and Georgia Pacific.



Achievement of Excellence in Procurement

For the 22nd consecutive year, Gwinnett County’s Purchasing Division has been awarded the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement from the National Institute of Purchasing. Out of 188 total recipients, Gwinnett is one of 40 counties to receive the award. Only 11 organizations have received the award for more consecutive years than Gwinnett.

Master Plan Spotlight

The Department of Water Resources won the Master Plan Spotlight Award from the Georgia Association of Water Professionals. This award recognizes a member for their dedication to planning for the future, as demonstrated by the development of the Distribution System Master Plan 2050 (completed November 2019).



GRPA District Awards

Three Parks and Recreation employees won Georgia Recreation and Park Association District 7 Awards including: Chris Estes (Facilities and Grounds Professional), Sandy Aceto (Programmer of the Year), and Juan Perez (Parks and Outdoors Professional).

IV | Employee Spotlight



Jeanie Donaldson is a rock star employee who has already made significant contributions to our organization during her short tenure with Gwinnett County. She began her career here as a Senior Public Relations Specialist in the Communications Division in February 2016.

In this role, Jeanie coordinated proclamations and award presentations for the Board of Commissioners, helped develop guidelines for the County's social media strategy, and assisted with many high-profile projects such as the Chairman's annual State of the County address and Human Resources' annual Wellness and Benefits Enrollment periods. She also played an important role in executing County's yearlong bicentennial celebration, coordinating the production of marketing materials, providing staff support at various activities like the torch run, and posting on the Gwinnett 200 social media channels.

With her outstanding work ethic, positive attitude, dedication to serving our community, and stellar attention to detail, it was no surprise when she received a promotion to Public Relations Supervisor after just two years of service to the County. As a working supervisor, she now leads a team of PR professionals who provide public relations and marketing counsel and work closely with our visual communications, web, and video production teams to ensure departmental clients have all the tools needed for successful public education campaigns.

Jeanie continues to make a positive impact as a key member of two critical countywide committees: the Gwinnett County 2020 Census Complete Count Committee and the COVID-19 Internal Task Force. In addition, two of the most visible projects to which she contributes research, writing, editing and design are the GJAC Campus Construction Bulletin and Employee Health Bulletin COVID-19 Update. The former keeps County employees abreast of the status of the courthouse expansion and overall GJAC campus improvements, while the latter informs employees of the latest news, resources, and policies about the coronavirus pandemic.



A long-time resident of Gwinnett County, Jeanie graduated from Brookwood High School. She claims "Double Dawg" status, having earned a master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication and bachelor's degree in Public Relations from the University of Georgia.

V | Notable Numbers

- Gwinnett has over **5,700** active full-time employees, over **4,200** of which are within the County's Administrative departments
- Gwinnett has hired **904** employees in 2020 despite significant modifications to the interview and hiring process as a result of the pandemic
- Gwinnett's August turnover rate was **1.04%** significantly better than the **4.4%** average reported nationally for that month (latest national data available)
- **31%** of the County's current workforce will be eligible for retirement through the end of 2025
- More than **3.5 million gallons** of fuel were dispensed through September 2020. Due to school schedule changes, this is a decrease of more than **1 million gallons** compared to the same period in 2019
- Through the first two quarters of 2020, Fire and Emergency Services calls were down **5.5%** compared to the first two quarters of 2019
- Call volume increased in the third quarter of 2020 outpacing third quarter 2019 calls by nearly **3%**
- In September, Moody's Investor Services, Fitch Ratings, and S&P Global reaffirmed Gwinnett County's Triple AAA bond rating, the highest possible, placing Gwinnett in the **top 2 percent** of counties in the nation for fiscal soundness
- SPLOST collections have remained strong amidst the pandemic and are currently tracking **7.6%** better than forecasted for the program
- To date, Gwinnett County has awarded **\$23,940,000** in CARES Act funding to **145** nonprofits; **42** of these organizations have requested and received reimbursements totaling **\$1,460,158** for their eligible COVID-19 related service provisions
- Through September, the County has paid approximately **\$11.3 million** in hazard pay to support employees working in the field during the pandemic
- Through September, residential building permits issued are up **10%** compared to 2019 while commercial permits issued are down **23%**, with residential permits making up about **80%** of total building permits issued