

State of the County



Service Delivery Strategy

- Gwinnett County and 15 cities approved a Service Delivery Strategy on February 7, 2012

Local Economy, Finances, and Gwinnett's Excellent Credit History

- Population was 814,000 in 2011, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates
- Gwinnett had 300,800 jobs in June 2011, a 2.3 percent increase in employment over the previous year; the largest increase in Georgia and just outside the top 10 percent of the nation's largest counties
- Unemployment rate was 8.4 percent, compared to 9.4 percent statewide (December 2011, preliminary, not seasonally adjusted)
- County government authorized positions/1,000 residents: 5.85 (down from 6.27 in 2008)
- Gwinnett has maintained AAA credit ratings with Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investor Services, and Standard and Poor's since 1997
- Only about three dozen of the 3,068 counties nationwide have triple AAA ratings
- Refunded water and sewer bonds in 2011 resulted in interest savings of \$9.43 million

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)

- 2009 SPLOST expected to raise more than \$700 million over the five-year life of the program (April 2009 through March 2014)
- Gwinnett's cities will share an estimated \$100 million
- County proceeds are designated for transportation, public safety, park, library, and court-house expansion projects

2012 Adopted Budget

- \$1.3 billion balanced budget without using carryover funds (compared to 2011 reconciliation budget of \$1.5 billion)
- Operating Budget totals \$898 million
- Capital Budget totals \$430 million
- Budget highlights: preserves core services; maintains access to parks and libraries; no new or expanded services; no new positions or pay raises; continues 90-day vacancy policy for positions; complies with state and federal mandates
- Anticipates additional 8.3 percent drop in property tax digest in 2012 that would result in \$24 million less revenue for County-provided services
- Cost reductions, revenue enhancements, and efficiency improvements from the last four years will continue in 2012
- Five citizen reviewers assisted Chairman Nash and County staff in prioritizing needs and allocating resources



Planning, Economic Development, and Revitalization

- Created vacant structure registration
- Revised stormwater requirements to encourage redevelopment
- *Partnership Gwinnett* reports 282 business relocations or expansions, 12,366 jobs, and \$808 million in capital investment in four years (*Partnership Gwinnett 2011 Annual Report*)
- Began developing a Unified Development Ordinance, online plan submittal, and *Water/Sewer Master Plan* update
- Plans are underway for a housing task force
- New housing task force will analyze potential for public-private partnerships to address foreclosure crisis and its effects on Gwinnett neighborhoods

Community Services

- Park renovations and expansions completed: Bethesda Park Senior Center, Rhodes Jordan Park (new soccer complex opens spring 2012), Collins Hill and Mountain Park Aquatic Centers, new section of Ivy Creek Greenway in George Pierce Park
- Renovations and expansions underway: Vines Park, Rabbit Hill Park, and Harbins Park
- Opened privately funded Tree Canopy Exhibit at Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center (EHC)
- EHC Foundation secured \$785,000 in grants, sponsorships, and exhibits
- Gwinnett Parks Foundation raised more than \$24,000 for a playground at Little Mulberry Park
- 78,389 people attended 6,047 recreation classes, programs, and events; 575,000 visitors enjoyed County pools; and 31,660 seniors participated in aquatic exercise
- Launched a transportation voucher program, *Project Get In Gear*, for seniors and disabled persons using federal and private funding and issued \$26,450 in vouchers during first six months of operation
- Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services donated \$110,000 to Senior Services programs like Meals on Wheels
- Cooperative Extension Service presented 1,172 programs on youth, family, and environmental issues
- Gwinnett libraries checked out seven million items, the largest circulation in Georgia and an 11 percent increase over the previous year
- Elections conducted three special elections in 2011 and is preparing for eight elections in 2012; there are 441,637 registered voters in Gwinnett County



Public Safety

- Paramedic training program received national accreditation in 2011
- Performed 19,000+ inspections and presented 361 fire and life safety programs to 32,000 participants
- Began Rest Safe program with local hotel industry to promote fire safety
- Hired and trained 28 police officers and 24 firefighter/EMTs
- 911 Center answered 444,906 incoming calls and dispatched 898,954 police calls and 81,860 fire/EMS calls
- License plate readers scanned 294,978 tags, prompting 275 traffic stops, 616 citations, 18 misdemeanor arrests, six felony arrests, and recovery of nine stolen vehicles
- Crime decreased in most categories, including burglary and vehicle theft
- Solved 88 percent of homicides (national average: 64 percent)
- Investigators made first case after starting new metal theft unit
- Corrections provided 210,000 hours of offender labor worth \$2.2 million to County departments, cities, and community improvement districts
- Trial courts initiated one day/one trial jury duty method
- Implementing electronic ticket technology for police officers, code enforcement, animal control, and fire marshals



General Government

- 4,811 authorized positions: 67 percent are allocated to public safety/courts and 17 percent to water/planning/transportation departments (total vacancies as of January 30, 2012: 368)
- Cut health insurance costs by \$5.2 million through negotiations with insurers
- Reduced fleet maintenance costs by \$100,000/year through GM contract to perform warranty work
- Redesigned County website to improve user experience and added property tax calculator to help property owners understand the value they receive in services for what they pay in taxes
- Adopted new ethics ordinance and land acquisition policies to improve transparency
- Paid off 1986 general obligation bond for roads and libraries, allowing commissioners to lower millage rate from 13.25 to 13.02 mills
- Launching *Volunteer Gwinnett* to help the County provide valuable services and reach one million volunteer hours/year; volunteers contributed 470,850 hours in 2011 (www.volunteergwinnett.net)

Water Resources

- 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that water supply is an authorized purpose of Lake Lanier
- Expanded Yellow River Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) and closed older, less-efficient plants
- Digitized septic tank records (with East Metro Health District) available free to the public via Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Produced 27.1 billion gallons of water; treated 18.1 billion gallons of wastewater; and completed 2,119 stormwater service requests in 2011
- Upgrading Crooked Creek WRF: increase capacity, lower operating costs
- Upgrading Beaver Ruin Pump Station for better reliability, redundancy
- Began replacing water lines in 18 subdivisions to improve reliability

Green Government

- ARC Green Communities Program *Bronze Certification*
- Energy savings of up to \$400,000/year expected after completion of retrofits at 42 buildings (four remain)
- Five parks facilities and Five Forks Trickum Branch Library are getting energy efficiency upgrades
- Gas-to-Energy facility uses waste methane at F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center to generate up to 40 percent of plant's heat, electricity
- Opened receiving facility for food service fats, oil, and grease to reduce sewer clogs and help generate energy
- Toilet rebate program has replaced 9,500 old toilets (saving 600,000 gallons/day) and recycled 24 tons of porcelain since program began
- All traffic signals and flashers now use LED lights to reduce operation/maintenance costs; federal stimulus funds used for conversion, saving 200,000 kWh/year and reducing maintenance costs

Transportation

- Opened Sugarloaf Parkway extension section three and started connection to State Route 316
- Carried more than two million passengers on Gwinnett County Transit; ridership up 7 percent over 2010
- Connected 25 miles of fiber-optic cable, 27 cameras, and 28 traffic signals on Sugarloaf Parkway and Buford Highway to the Traffic Control Center and upgraded links to 109 other traffic signals and 15 cameras
- Timed 50 traffic signals in six corridors, opened more than 30 road improvement projects, resurfaced 80 miles of roads, and built new bridges on Patterson Road over Pew Creek and Arcado Road/Indian Trail Road over Jackson Creek
- Used state and federal stimulus funds to complete major projects (McGinnis Ferry Road extension)
- Began I-85 Alternative Analysis Study using \$1.2 million federal grant
- Awarded contract for Pleasant Hill Road widening (Buford Highway to Howell Ferry Road) and continued land acquisition/planning final section of State Route 20 widening to Chattahoochee River
- Began design and land acquisition for diverging diamond interchanges at I-85 and Pleasant Hill Road/Jimmy Carter Boulevard



Award-Winning Government

- 2011 *Achievement Awards* for Gas-to-Energy project, *Growing in Gwinnett* television production, Unclog the FOG (fats, oil, and grease) education campaign, and Utility Interface project from the National Association of Counties
- 2011 *CREATE Community Award* for Gas-to-Energy Project from the Atlanta Regional Commission
- Gwinnett Parks and Recreation named *Agency of the Year* by Georgia Recreation and Park Association
- Graphic design, electronic newsletters, and special projects *Awards of Excellence* to Gwinnett Communications Office from National Association of County Information Officers
- *Excellence in Restoration* award for Freeman's Mill Park from Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
- Recycling public service announcement was a finalist in the *Government Programming Awards* from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors
- Gwinnett Police Officers Jeremy Bailey and Darin Mitchem received *Governor's Public Safety Award*
- *Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting* and *Distinguished Budget Presentation Award* from Government Finance Officer's Association and *Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award* from National Purchasing Institute