



State of the City 2016

April, 2016

Preparing for the Future of Mount Dora

2016 "State of the City" prepared by Mayor Nick Girone.

It is my honor as the Mayor of the City of Mount Dora to present the annual "State of the City" to our citizens, businesses and visitors. Our community is unique in Central Florida due to its people - residents, businesses and city employees. Our many renowned festivals and events bring welcome visitors to Mount Dora. It is a tribute to Mount Dora that so many people return time and again, or decide to move to our city. Each day as I walk our streets and visit businesses, organizations and attend events, I meet more and more people who truly make Mount Dora "Someplace Special."

I want to recognize and thank our city employees who keep our services and facilities running smoothly, including our Police and Fire Departments who keep our city safe. The fact we don't have to think about our city services is a great tribute to their dedication. Our employees maintain our streets and sidewalks, and make sure our street lights are lit each night. They make sure we have clean, safe water to drink. And, they make sure that storm water and wastewater are handled efficiently. They maintain our many parks providing recreational oppor-

tunities for children and adults. Our library continues to be one of the best in the county thanks to its dedicated staff. The entertainment choices keep growing at our city's Community Building, and at the other city venues, thanks to our city employees, and many community volunteers.

Mount Dora's uniqueness in Central Florida is also due to its undeveloped waterfront areas where nature is enjoyed with a quiet walk along the lake, a picnic with a water view, or a boat ride along our shores. Mount Dora lakefront amenities include docks at 4th Street and Simpson Cove, a waterfront pavilion, the popular 'nature' boardwalk, and four parks on or near the water. Evans Park is a place to find the Village Market on Sundays, concerts or watch a game of Lawn Bowling. Gilbert Park is known for the children's play area and pavilions which can even be reserved for a group function. At Simpson Cove you can rent a 'cat boat', kayak or paddle board, or launch your own boat to catch some of the largest bass anywhere. The Lighthouse at Grantham Point is a popular photo spot, and a place to watch a beautiful sunset. Sunset Park and the Pedestrian Mall down-



town, lead to the docks at the end of 4th Avenue with its waterfront pavilion - another popular spot to relax and enjoy Mount Dora's beauty.

Our success as 'Someplace Special' is due in large part to our residents who are passionate about their city, its businesses, government and neighborhoods. Mount Dora has a long history of participation in its government through citizen advisory boards, appointed by the City Council. I asked members of our citizen boards to provide their own perspective of the State of the City 2016. Here are their thoughts and words.

**Michael Moecker,
Vice Chairman Historic Preservation Board**

“Our board has a strong sense of pride in preserving our city’s history and historic icons. Last year ordinances were streamlined, and software im-plemented to help as- sure renovations on historic properties com- ply with our historic preservation codes. Our volunteer board and others in our city volunteer their time to defend our treasure – the Mount Dora Historic District.”



“I am encouraged by the progress being made in this historical area of our city. During the past year, noticeable efforts have helped to improve the lives of this area’s citizens. Grants have improved home health and safety. Commercial property needs regarding safety,

**Janet Manchon,
member Northeast Community Redevelopment Agency (NECRA)**

storm water and site improvements are being addressed. The Community Relations Officer’s presence has resulted in free preventive health services, charitable assistance to families, and im- proved relationships between the neighborhood and law enforcement. Our NECRA meetings, once quarterly, were changed to monthly to encourage attendance of the community residents.”

Beth Miller, member Public Arts Commission

“Mount Dora enjoys the benefit that comes from having a vibrant arts community. Organizations like the Center for the Arts with its strong art education mission, and the Art League, give voice to local artists. Visit Mount Dora promotes art events. The Mount Dora Music Festival and Ice House Theater contribute to the image through performing arts. Over the years, several pieces of sculpture have been added to enhance spaces visited by the public and contribute to the quality of life we enjoy here.”



Phil Bernard, member Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), (downtown & Highland area)

“This year has seen an opportunity for a new generation of residents and business owners to become involved in community advisory boards. Fresh ideas help our city stay vibrant. We can be proud that our city is now listed in international tourist guides. With the dedication of businesses, citizens, organizations and our city council, visitors continue to come to our area to keep it thriving. We need to continue to work on how to free up

parking spaces for shoppers downtown, and to make room for deliveries of daily supply trucks.”



Stephen Berger, member Library Advisory Board

“The Mount Dora Library continues to be a jewel in our community, even in today’s increasingly digital world. Our library is very much alive and well. Besides books, our residents can find computers, internet access and a variety of entertaining and educational programs offered for both children and adults. If you haven’t discovered your local library, I encourage you to do so. Visit the Butterfly Garden, go to a resume writing workshop, master computer skills, learn about drones, play chess, watch a film, learn basic photography. The library is located at 1995 N. Donnelly Street.”

Ken Robinson, member Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

“One of the reasons my family decided to locate to Mount Dora was the abundance of parks, open spaces and opportunities for an active life style – for people of all ages. Promoting healthy life styles is what the Mount Dora Park system provides. Besides our many waterfront parks in Mount Dora, we have pickleball courts and tennis courts downtown at Donnelly Park. Between Lincoln & 11th Avenue, Mount Dora also enjoys lighted ballfields, the city pool, tennis courts, dog parks, disc golf and an off road bicycle course and nature walk areas.”



Denny Wood, Chairman Planning & Zoning Commission

“This is the year that past city plans will start to become a reality for bringing in new industry along the Wekiva Parkway corridor. At our first meeting this year of the Planning & Zoning Commission, our board decided to use our collective experience and expertise in planning and zoning to contribute concepts and ideas that will help the City move forward in executing the goals set by the City Council for this future growth area of Mount Dora.”

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2016 “State of the City” prepared by Mayor Nick Girone. (continued...)

For the continued success of Mount Dora, we must honor the decisions of our previous leaders from times past to preserve our city’s history and its icons. Our historic downtown and residences, the natural waterfront, iconic tree canopies and green spaces are all part of our city’s soul and character. Adding to the historic and traditional neighborhoods are newer communities carefully planned by past city councils that will become a part of our city’s future history. Together, the residents of all of our city’s neighborhoods, whether they are here for their entire lives, for a few years or new arrivals, are who will continue to define us as ‘someplace special’.

As Mount Dora continues to grow toward the East and North, we are faced with two challenges:

1. Maintaining the quaintness and charm the founders of Mount Dora envisioned,
2. Initiating a set of goals that will allow controlled growth in response to the potential possibilities

ties coming our way with the Wekiva Parkway being built at our doorstep, now only a few years from completion.

Both challenges **can** be met. The first is not debatable. Without a flourishing downtown and solid business foundation, our city would become just another place with a major highway running through its boundaries.

Our second challenge is a priority for our Council: defining the goals and creating the action plans in 2016 for potential growth toward the North and East. A decade ago the City Council worked with the County to create a job-growth area at the northern and eastern edge of Mount Dora known as the “Wolf Branch Innovation District.” It is our responsibility as the City Council of 2016-2017 to turn those dreams into reality that will bring new tax revenues into our city operations. Actions well done will deliver not only jobs in our city outside of our traditional tourist based jobs, but will bring the educational and medical advances to Mount Dora that will continue

to define our city as the very best place to live. I am pleased we already have educational facilities, medical campuses, and high tech industries expressing interest in selecting Mount Dora as their future address. I have met with many of these corporations and I will continue to do so this year.

We need to continue to encourage planned, controlled growth by taking action steps to make it happen – we cannot just wait for new businesses to ‘discover’ Mount Dora. Our City Council, our citizen boards, our existing business owners, our citizens, our city organizations and our city staff need to work in unity to make our future happen in the way we plan.

I look forward to working with all our citizens, our businesses, our staff, our visitors and the City Council in 2016 toward achieving our shared goals and dreams.

—
Mayor Nick Girone, Mount Dora, Florida, April 2016

