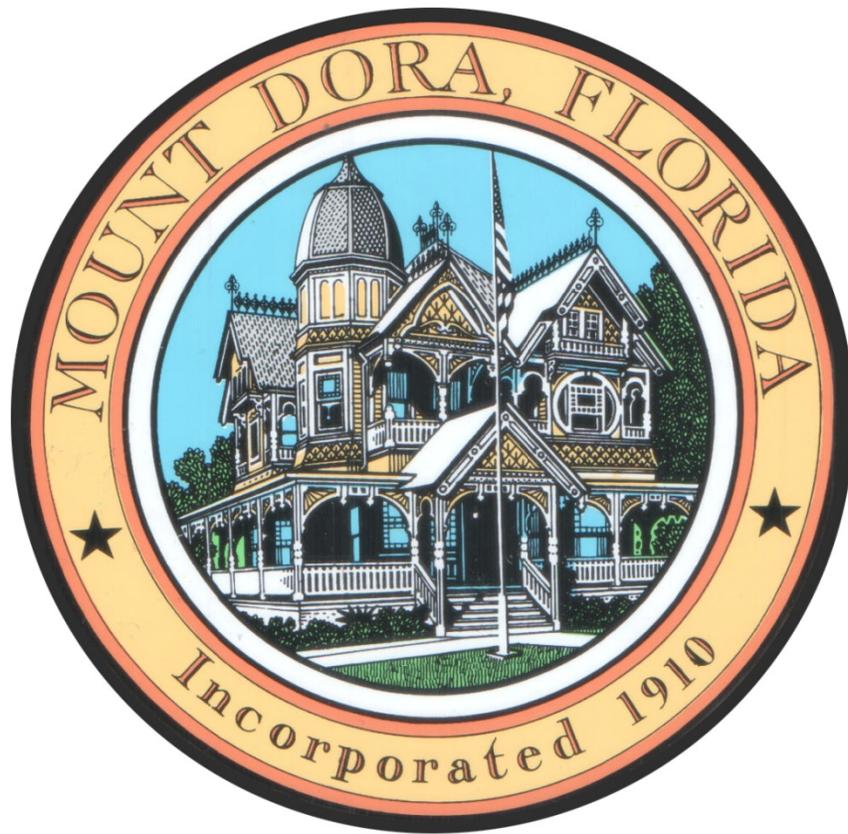


City of Mount Dora
2012 State of the City



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 101st anniversary of incorporation. As we begin the 102nd 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, confronts 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 be 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 decorating our city for the holidays. Mount Dora continues to look "prettier each year".

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 2010/2011. Mount Dora experienced over a 7% reduction in property values. Last year the City reduced its total debt by \$0.55 million, refinanced \$3.6 million in Bonds with a local bank saving \$56,000.00 per year over the life of the bond and received the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for the 17th 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. There were no salary increases for general employees for the fourth consecutive year.

The City is currently staffed with 206 full-time positions. In addition to managing Human Resource strategies with department goals, during 2011 the Human Resources/Risk Management Department entered into collective bargaining with the City's Fire, Police and General Employees Unions. In December, 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. The new Employee Health and Wellness Center had a very successful opening in mid January and utilization continues to increase as employees and their dependents develop a comfort level with the new concept.

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 632 work orders covering a wide variety of activities during the year. By far, the largest number of work orders involved street light repairs (192) that were typically initiated by a customer notification.

In 2011 the division supplied 5,691 customers with the yearly total of 89,857,216 kWh. The average monthly usage for residential was 879 kWh while the monthly commercial demand averaged 25,978 kWh. In 2010 the city was given a \$249,900 EECBG grant and the various tasks were completed or underway in 2011 are as follows;

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy – Retained consultant and provided initial facility and community data.

Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Energy Audits – Completed 72 residential audits, 32 commercial audits, and 3 large commercial audits

Solar Demonstration Project – Completed installation of a 5 kW solar PV system at the Donnelly Park Building

Distribution System Efficiency - Obtained GPS unit and completed configuration. Procured automatic capacitor controls.

Air Conditioning Upgrades- Planned upgrades to ten AC units at the Annex Building, the Donnelly Park Building and the Martin Luther King Center.

LED Street Lights- Procured LED fixtures to upgrade the parking lot lights at the Bland Library. Procured LED retrofit kits to upgrade antique lights in the downtown area.

In addition the division negotiated a one year extension to the existing Power Supply Agreement with Progress Energy that resulted in reduced electric rates as well as negotiating a 20 year extension of the territorial agreement between the City and Progress Energy. The agreement has been forwarded to the Florida Public Service Commission for approval. The division completed installation of the concrete containment systems for two transformers in the City's electrical substation.

In 2011 the Public Works Division completed 910 work orders, repaired 3,500 linear feet of sidewalk and 1,400 linear feet of curbing, while making 400 patch repairs to our streets. In addition over 5 miles of city streets were resurfaced, 300 plus trees were pruned and trimmed while more than 300 street signs were replaced with federal mandated "high intensity" materials.

In 2011 the Stormwater Resource Division completed eight major and 152 minor storm water projects, approximately 178 cubic yards of debris was collected and removed from the city's storm water system while continuing the GPS inventoring of the City's storm water system.

In 2011 the Water and Waste Water Division provided 1,098,592,000 gallons to 12,139 customers and 2,818 work orders were completed. The City's Sewage Facilities treated a monthly average of 45,000 gallons of septage/grease. A permanent Septage Receiving Station was installed at the City's Waste Water treatment Plant number 2.

In 2011 the Public Works Department completed four Capital Projects; the Consumptive Use Permit was obtained from the SJRWMD, the Reclaim Supplemental Water Well was drilled, a Community Development Block Grant build sidewalks and provided sewer service to six low rent duplex units and

Safe Routes to School build A.D.A. compliant sidewalks along Lake Center Drive to provide a better path for kids to walk to school. Three significant improvements to Water and Waste water Facilities were completed during 2011; improvements were made to the sewer collection system along Pine Ave and Old Eustis Road, smoke testing of the sewer collection systems in the Country Club of Mount and Loch Leven developments was completed and the necessary repairs were made, and a Telemetry/SCADA system for the Wastewater Plant #1 reuse water system was installed which will improve the management of the supply and delivery of reclaimed water to several service areas in the City.

At year end there were a number of ongoing capital projects and their status is as follows;

Supplemental Reclaim Well – Pump has been installed. City crew is currently working on connecting the well discharge piping to the tank inlet. Electrical panel is on order and expected **Eastern Water Plant** – The plans are 90% complete, the Consumptive Use Permit was approved and the project is moving forward. The contract for the two wells has been awarded to Southeastern Drilling, Inc. and drilling should start soon.

The Eastern Water Plant will even out pressures throughout the water system and help eliminate existing low pressure zones. Inter-connecting with the Eastern Water Plant will also provide continued water supply should an emergency failure occur at either water plant.

Thrill Hill Reservoir – A tract of 36 acres of land was purchased to build a reservoir. URS was selected as the engineering firm to move this project forward. A draft scope of work is being developed and discussions are occurring with SJRWMD concerning funding for the project. Eustis remains a possible partner, creating Thrill Hill Reservoir as a regional AWS project.

The reservoir will allow the City to store excess reclaim water in the winter months and use it in the dry spring months to help meet the demand for reclaim water. This should help alleviate the shortages customers are now experiencing.

In 2011 there were 51 personnel in the Police Department and 25 Fire Department employees. There has been 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 2011 your Police Department responded to 28,860 emergency calls for service roughly 79 calls per day. The overall crime rate in 2011 remained fairly flat. The Police Department conducted a number of major operations some on their own while others were as part of several regional task forces. Most of these operations were involved with drug trafficking and associated crimes of violence. In 2011 the Police Department continued an on-going evaluation of its operations with the goal of identifying new ways to cut costs without affecting its delivery of services. The Police Department approved manning level was reduced by two full time positions. To handle the staff cuts, the department went thru a major re-organization. Several positions were re-classified with regard to added duties and responsibilities.

The Northeast Community Policing continues to conduct a successful outreach to the community.

The Police Department increased its efforts in the areas of neighborhood awareness and safety education in 2011 by hosting a series of meeting in various neighborhoods throughout the City.

The City's Fire Department responded to 2532 medical calls and 908 non-medical calls. In 2011 the Fire Department expanded the fire hydrant maintenance program to insure compliance with regional ordinances regarding their testing and functional capabilities. The department is continuing the pre-fire plan program to insure that all commercial structures within the city will have a plan completed on them.

The department is continuously refining the regional dispatch system. This system allows the emergency dispatchers to automatically send the appropriate units to the emergency at hand. This assists in reducing duplication of services and enhances response delivery of personnel and equipment.

The Mount Dora Fire Department has created and currently chairs a tri-city technology users group to coordinate efforts between the city, Eustis and Tavares. This group is responsible for bringing the three cities together regarding all forms of legally required reports including patient care reports, fire calls, inspections, and pre-fire plans just to name a few of the important responsibilities they are completing.

Along with this coordination of efforts between the three cities is our continued commitment to meshing the three fire departments in training, purchasing, and use of personnel and equipment. A portion of that cooperation can be seen in the paramedic provisional training that we are providing the Eustis Fire Department in their recent conversion to an Advanced Life Support (ALS) service provider. Recently graduated paramedics going through the program are required to spend time in the field learning from a trained paramedic instructor approved by the Medical Director to perform this training. Mount Dora has three such qualified individuals who assisted the Eustis Department.

In 2011 the department held its 2nd annual fire safety poster contest. Last year the program was expanded to include middle and high school students, along with a teacher recognition portion. The program was met with great response and success. The campaign was conducted during and in conjunction with Fire Prevention week. Prizes were awarded for first, second and third place posters. These prizes consisted of bicycles, pizza parties and fire truck rides to school for the winners.

Our City's W.T. Bland Public Library continues to be one of the City's most used and appreciated facility. In 2011 the library had 18,351 registered borrowers, a collection of 84,907 items with a total annual circulation of 286,672. A long planned and much needed library renovation was started in June and is expected to be complete by May 2012. Our library is another city resource that is a recipient of citizen contribution, involvement and volunteerism. There is no way the City could provide over 16 adult and 18 children programs without the support of the volunteers who so willingly give of their time and services. One example of a program our volunteers help provide is the adult literacy. In 2011, 18 volunteers provided over 996 hours of tutoring to 46 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. Various organizations conduct their meetings in both facilities.

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. Citizens are looking for events or activities that they and their families can enjoy without much

cost to them in these tough economic times. 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.

This approach has led to an increase in participant levels at all our activities and this past year we had an estimated participation level of over 9500 visits to our programs and events. The city has continued youth programs in spring and fall Soccer, and winter 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. These donations have given over 55 children a chance to be a part of our summer camp and sports programs with another 654 children getting a chance to use the community pool.

In conjunction with our citizen partners, we have been able to continue to upgrade and enhance our park experiences. The numerous individual volunteers and civic organizations such as 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 physical improvements to our Parks and Recreation facilities.

In 2011 the City's Parks and Recreation Department completed the Simpson Cove Docks, increased the number and variety of community programs, provided services to additional clients, completed the Community Building Operational Plan, updated the departments computer home page, updated the Leisure Guide, improved the Mountain Bike Trail in the Rec and Nature Park, completed the Disk Golf Course in Lincoln Park and opened an office in Gilbert Park.

Several capital improvement projects moved closer to completion with the 4th Avenue docks nearing construction, a company has been selected to complete the Lincoln Park Recreation and Nature Park this spring, and The Palm Island walkway renovation is out for bids and hopefully that work will begin this year.

In 2011 the City's Planning and Development Department completed the initial phase of the City wide visioning process, continued work on updating the CRA and NECRA master plans, worked on the MLK Center renovation and expansion feasibility study, developed the commercial property improvement and ad valorem tax incentive programs and completed the Brownfield Community wide assessment grant application.

The Planning and Development Department Building Division issued 795 permits in 2011 and conducted over 4,637 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. They continue working with Lake County and Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission 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.

In 2011, as part of the CRA and NECRA Plan Master Plan Updates to guide future redevelopment projects and programs, the CRA's adopted the legal framework for their master plans, establishing what types of projects CRA funds would be used for. The statutory required legal documents of the CRA Plans were adopted by City Council in July and August of 2010 as the first tier of the Plans. The preparation of the second tier, the Planning Documents, began in November 2011 and will take approximately six (6) months to complete.

The feasibility study and conceptual planning work for the Martin Luther King Center Renovation and Expansion was started in 2011. Completed tasks included: property survey, user needs assessment, contacted adjacent owners, hire architectural & engineering design team, conducted community workshops to prepare alternative conceptual plans. The study and conceptual planning work is about 80% complete. Project is on hold due to lack of funding.

Through an inclusive community-based visioning process, the project known as Envision Mount Dora focused on clarifying the City of Mount Dora's values, economic position and desired development characteristics. That clarity is needed to guide potential changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan and its Land Development Code. Those changes will help ensure compatible future growth and redevelopment that respects the community's unique character and assets, while positioning the City for long-term economic prosperity and the supporting services and public facilities to sustain it. The results of the visioning process entail a set of strategic design concepts, priority target areas and suggested policy changes that will be further defined and carried out through the City's planning and regulatory framework, as well as its capital budgeting process.

Residents and businesses alike participated in a series of small group discussions, large community-wide workshops, a three-day community design charrette, open forums and presentations at meetings. The City created a project web site, www.envisionmoundora.org, as a means of gathering input, surveying preferences and posting interim and draft study work products. Participation exceeded expectations. At one community workshop, more than 200 people attended to share their ideas about Mount Dora's future. A project steering committee comprised of 12 Council-appointed citizens met monthly throughout the 10-month study to guide the work activities and recommend priorities to the City Council. On October 18th, the Mount Dora City Council voted to adopt the Citywide Vision, with the next steps to entail a series of workshops to further discuss the vision elements and priorities that will be carried out through the City's budget process and Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Envision Mount Dora examined development patterns throughout the City, including the two Community Redevelopment Areas and the Joint Planning Area with Lake County that lies outside the current municipal boundary. However, the visioning process centered on the downtown redevelopment area and historic district, Highland Street corridor, Northeast redevelopment area, Lake Dora lakefront, Golden Triangle shopping center area, US 441 corridor and the future employment center located east of the city limits where future development or redevelopment is expected and generally more desirable than in other established residential or more natural areas of the community:

Those target areas represent a combination of historic, cultural and natural assets, established redevelopment areas, declining commercial areas and emerging opportunities for job growth. The visioning effort quickly focused on guiding appropriately scaled and compatible development to these

target areas, while strengthening and building upon the features that make them valuable to the City's long-term future and quality of life. In addition, the vision addressed the needs of residential areas outside of these target areas by improving connectivity, access to parks and recreational opportunities, diversifying the economy in the area, and ensuring responsive public services to foster a more unified City identity.

Ultimately, the visioning process affirmed much of the City's prior planning and development activities, while highlighting some new strategic concepts and ideas that can better position the City for future prosperity while respecting its unique character and historic charm. Exercises with community participants to define a core set of values centered on the topics of the Environment, the Economy, and the Social Equity of a vibrant, diverse and welcoming community. The values statement played a central role in defining and evaluating concepts for future development. They also shaped the project's vision statement.

One of the statutory functions of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is to undertake activities that facilitate the redevelopment of property. Incentive programs aimed at encouraging investment into properties have proven to be a successful activity to carry out this redevelopment function, 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, encourage other private investment in properties in close proximity to properties receiving grants. The goal of the CRA Facade Grant Program is to improve the appearance of business properties 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 city electorate 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. Additionally, as discussed during the Visioning process, tax exemptions can be used as an incentive to encourage the type and location of development that has been envisioned through the extensive public input provided in this process.

In 2011 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 maybe granted for up to 100% 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 100% 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.

In 2011, the City submitted a Brownsfields Community-wide Assessment Grant Application for \$400,000 that is 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. Half the grant will be utilized to assess sites contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants and the other half will be utilized to address sites contaminated by petroleum or petroleum products. The 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 environmental challenges from properties. A decision on the grant is expected by May 2012 and if the grant is awarded 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 will not be available until August 2013. The Donnelly Street between 4th and 5th Avenues Sidewalk and Streetscape Project construction drawings are scheduled to be completed by February 2012 but FDOT's funding for construction will not be available until August 2013. The Downtown Sidewalk and Streetscape Project is in the conceptual design phase and it is expected to be completed by the June 2012. The Tremain Street Greenway which extends from Fifth Avenue north to Lincoln Avenue is a priority project in the Mount Dora Trails Master Plan. Preliminary Design is complete but FDOT funding for the remaining work will not be available until either August 2013 or August 2014. The Grandview Street Commercial Redevelopment is a project to redevelop the street from Lincoln Avenue to Grant Avenue into a neighborhood business district. The property owners have been contacted but no agreements have been reached at this time. The Ruthie Watson Park located at the southwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and Grandview Street is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in January 2012. The park dedication is scheduled for February 11, 2012. The Community Building Sculpture Garden through the hard work and dedication of the Public Arts Commission is nearing completion and is expected to be complete in January 2012.

The past year has seen significant changes in our economic and political outlooks, and in the concerns expressed by both our residents and our businesses. The issues that confront our city are the same as those confronting cities all 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 your City Council and City Manager. 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.

Robert Thielhelm, Sr., Mayor