

# Apalachicola's best days are ahead

By Mayor Van W. Johnson, Sr.  
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Dear citizens of Apalachicola, I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your continued support. We know that not all of you can attend the regular monthly meetings of the City Council, for that reason, we want to use this newsletter to keep you informed as to the activities of your local government. Please take a moment to read about your City and the many changes that have taken place in the past few months.

As you can sense, there is excitement in the air and an awareness that the city is on the move.

During my campaign for Mayor, I promised that there would be no wasted opportunities in my administration and with the right leadership, we could work together to make Apalachicola a strong and vibrant place to live.

Well, it has been almost a year since the election and it gives me immense pleasure to report that the Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners, staff, appointed boards, and citizens have worked diligently to enhance the quality of life of all our residents.

I am encouraged that during the past nine-months we have undertaken and completed several major projects and are on target to finishing several more.

The list of completed projects includes a new playing surface at the Fourteen Street Tennis Court, the installation of ball field lighting at the Sylvester Williams Baseball Park. Repaired lighting at the Franklin Square basketball court and the realignment of the intersection of Highway 98 and Prado Street.

Projects that are in progress are the much-anticipated repairs to Battery and Lafayette Park Fishing Piers, the renovation of the Battery Park Marina and the placement of the Three Servicemen Statue at Veterans Memorial Plaza.

Scheduled projects include the transformation of the old Family Dollar Store into a home for our Police and Fire departments, repairs to the docks and seawall at Veterans Park and the installation of the Wastewater Reclamation

system. Another exciting project is the opening of the Arts and Culture Center inside the recently acquired Cotton Exchange building.

We have also taken the first step toward our visioning and planning initiative by soliciting the assistance of the University of Georgia's Project Riverway. We have created an active Community Redevelopment Agency to bring economic and housing redevelopment into our neighborhoods and commercial districts. We have formed a Community Pride Partnership Program to address the problems associated with late night loitering, loud music emanating from passing cars and the public consumption of alcohol and we have collaborated with the downtown merchants to implement a Main Street Program.

In addition, as you may already know, the unique appeal of our community has placed Apalachicola's Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Moreover, it has earned the city the recognition of being one of only three Florida Communities listed as a Distinctive Destination by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Furthermore, the Fry-Conter House Apalachicola Museum of Art's has, recently achieved recognition from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation in the Field of Adaptive Use.

What a difference leadership and teamwork can make, as you can see, the city's agenda has greatly enhanced the quality of life of all our residents. Although, we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go and we have challenges.

As we begin to lay the groundwork to meet those challenges, we must adopt policies that ensure the financial stability of the City. We have relied too long and too heavily on state grants, loans, and appropriations to survive. Within the next sixty-days, I will present to the City Commission a proposal to consider other funding sources such as exploring the possibility of annexing areas outside the city limits to expand our tax base, specifically those areas that are currently receiving city services.

Despite the challenges we face, I am very proud of where Apalachicola is and I know that our best days are ahead of us.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please give me a call.

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