



MAYOR'S UPDATE 2021



LAGRANGE
GEORGIA

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

It goes without saying that the past year was unlike any other. For most of 2020, our city, like communities worldwide, confronted the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic affected everybody, but our community pulled together and fought valiantly against the virus. As we begin 2021, more work is needed to overcome the pandemic, and I'm pleased to say that the work continues.

Even though the pandemic changed the way we do business, it did not stop the city or our businesses or our residents from moving forward. Instead, we supported each other and kept the city going. Many projects that were underway before the pandemic continued, and others restarted after a pause. We have seen housing developments, park improvements and trail expansions take shape during the year, and many of those will continue and others begin in the coming year. The city continues to make investments in infrastructure, public safety, and transportation. I'm pleased with the direction the city is moving.

While 2020 taught us not to predict the future, I am optimistic for LaGrange in 2021. I know that our local leadership is committed to making it a great new year for our city. Challenges notwithstanding, we plan to keep this city moving into a bright and prosperous future.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Thornton".

Mayor Jim Thornton

LAGRANGE CITY COUNCIL



The LaGrange City Council: front row (from left), Tom Gore, Mayor Jim Thornton, LeGree McCamey; back row, Willie Edmondson, Jim Arrington, Mark Mitchell, Nathan Gaskin

The council is the legislative body; its members are the community's decision makers. The council focuses on the community's goals, major projects, and long-term considerations such as community growth, land use development, capital improvements, capital financing, and strategic planning. The council hires a professional manager to carry out the administrative responsibilities and supervises the manager's performance.

City Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 208 Ridley Ave. Council work sessions are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 11 a.m. in the city manager's third floor conference room in City Hall, 200 Ridley Avenue.

COVID-19

On March 17, 2020 the LaGrange Mayor and City Council voted unanimously to declare a state of emergency reacting to the Covid-19 virus. Mayor Jim Thornton began Facebook live roundtable discussions with other local elected, health and educational leaders allowing the public to ask questions about the pandemic and get responses to their answers live online. The city's television station, LGTV, assisted Troup County, Hogansville, West Point and the Troup County School System in hosting Facebook live roundtable discussions and virtual meetings throughout 2020 as well as more than a dozen videos relaying important information about the pandemic. The City of LaGrange has hosted more than 25 Facebook live discussions.



#MASKTROUPCOUNTY

The City of LaGrange continues to promote the #masktroupcounty campaign providing face masks to all residents in LaGrange and Troup County. If you need a face mask, you can go to City Hall, the Utility Department's Customer Service or drive thru, the LaGrange Police Department or call (706) 883-2055.



COVID-19 VACCINES

City of LaGrange first responders began receiving their first round of the Covid-19 vaccine in late December 2020. LaGrange Police and Fire participated in District 4 Public Health's vaccine clinic. As of December 31, 2020 District 4 Public Health administered over 1,400 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.



Police Department Chief Lou Dekmar

CORONAVIRUS.LAGRANGEGA.ORG

The city created a website to share important information about Covid-19 with the community. This website provided ways for the community to report concerns, watch informational videos, read Georgia Governor Brian Kemp's latest executive orders, media releases, flyers and important information.

ANTI-LITTER CAMPAIGN

LEAVING LAGRANGE BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

The City of LaGrange continued its monthly litter cleanup campaign, Leaving LaGrange Better Than We Found It, in 2020 but because of the Covid-19 pandemic cleanups were temporarily put on hold. During 2020, the city strengthened partnerships with the community and held cleanups in the areas of Jones Street Park, the Hillside community, Vernon Road, North Greenwood Avenue and the first segment of The Thread Trail.

One of the biggest events was held Saturday, March 7th. The city partnered with the Bell Line community and LaGrange College to host a beautification, cleanup, and Arbor Day celebration event. Nearly 100 residents, college students, citizens and city staff picked up litter around the neighborhood, spread mulch around the playground, scattered pine straw around bushes and trees in Jones Street Park and cleaned park equipment. WellStar West Georgia Medical Center also provided wellness checks.

City Manager Meg Kelsey began this litter cleanup campaign in April 2018 hoping to send a message to the community that the City of LaGrange is serious about cleaning up our community. This initial event was so successful the city decided to begin hosting monthly litter pickups.



Above and Below: March 2020 litter cleanup



The city is proud to support the efforts of Tribe Ujima, a group of concerned citizens which holds cleanups throughout the community.



On October 20th and 21st, the City of LaGrange was proud to partner with downtown LaGrange to join students and staff from Lafayette Christian School for their Community Work Days.

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?

Want to participate in a future cleanup? Call (706) 883-2055.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

GREENVILLE STREET BRIDGE

Construction of the the Greenville Street Bridge was completed in May 2020. The Georgia Department of Transportation project replaced an 81 year old bridge and cost roughly \$9 million.



GRANGER PARK PROJECTS

Crews will soon begin working on two major projects at Granger Park, including dredging the detention pond near the track and replacing a damaged storm pipe along The Thread Trail. Construction is expected to begin Spring 2021.



HIGHLAND AVENUE CROSSWALK

In order to address pedestrian/student safety after the construction of the new LaGrange High School Athletic Complex, the city constructed a marked pedestrian crosswalk. The following measures were implemented: rumble strips, crosswalk pavement markings, stop lines, school signage, and rapid flashing beacons. In addition to these safety measures, city staff landscaped the roadway to provide beautification and traffic calming.



THE THREAD

The Thread is a trail network consisting of 29 miles of multi-use trail connecting key destinations – downtown, neighborhoods, parks, the college and the hospital. The goal of The Thread is to enhance the health and overall quality of life for LaGrange citizens and visitors.

COMPLETED

SEGMENT 1

The Granger Park “Model Mile” opened July 2017

SEGMENT 2

2.1 miles stretching from Eastside Park to Mike Daniel Recreation Center completed in April 2018.

SEGMENT 3

This segment along Broad Street connecting the first segment to LaGrange College extends from West Haralson, North Greenwood Street, Broad Street, Panther Way to Vernon Street.

SEGMENT 3B

The LaGrange College segment, known as 3B, connects the southern side of LaGrange College’s campus to the north campus along Panther Way as well as the “Model Mile” by Granger Park. The ribbon cutting was held with LaGrange College April 2019.

SEGMENT 4

This segment includes 1.6 miles extending from the roundabout at Country Club Road and Broad Street to Cherokee Road. Friends of The Thread and Callaway Foundation held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Phase 4 in September 2019. The ceremony included a dedication to long-time Callaway Foundation employee Bruce Pearson whose name is also displayed on the boardwalk.

SEGMENT 5

The fifth segment begins at the trail head of Twin Cedars, runs through Calumet Park and ends at Union Street. This portion of the trail contains a very scenic greenway that meanders through the Twin Cedars-Wilcox property. This half-mile segment, connecting Eastside Park to Calumet Park, was completed December 2019.



Granger Park “Model Mile”



Segment 1

SEGMENT 6

The sixth segment of The Thread connects the Granger Park “Model Mile” to Southbend Park. It runs from West Haralson to South Lewis Street, meanders through the LSPA campus on Bull Street and then connects to Southbend Park. This segment was completed in April 2020 and features our first Thread logo photo opportunity behind LSPA.

SEGMENT 6B

Friends of The Thread Trail funded the construction of the trail from South Lewis Street up Haralson Street, continuing down Church Street to Sweetland Amphitheatre. This segment began in May 2020 and was finished in August 2020.

IN PROGRESS

SEGMENT 7

The seventh segment will continue the trail from the LaGrange College baseball field down Panther Way, through greenspace owned by Callaway Foundation, and across Dallis to the Coleman Center, where there will be a trailhead parking lot. There will also be a spur up Dallis to the intersection of Lincoln and Garner. Construction began in early December 2020 and is planned to last until Spring 2021.

SEGMENT 8

The eighth segment will continue the trail from Southbend Park to the Callaway Memorial Clock Tower. This segment will be broken into two phases. Plan designs for the first phase are complete. Phase one will take the trail to Kex Mill on Leeman Street where there will be a bridge across the creek to the Mulberry Street Cemetery, where legendary bridge builder Horace King is buried. Phase one of the project will start in late Spring 2021.



Segment 6 behind LSPA

To view the master plan in detail, visit [THETHREADTRAIL.ORG/MAPS](https://thethreadtrail.org/maps).
To learn more about The Thread go [Facebook.com/FriendsofTheThread](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofTheThread) or download The Thread Trail app.

PARKS

Parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region. Parks provide space for neighborhood residents to interact with each other and meet new people. They're also great spaces for events and for people to engage in recreational activities. This allows people to develop a sense of community. In 2020, the Mayor and Council adopted a Master Parks Plan providing a 10 year plan to provide the highest quality of recreational opportunities. This section documents a few of those proposed and ongoing projects.

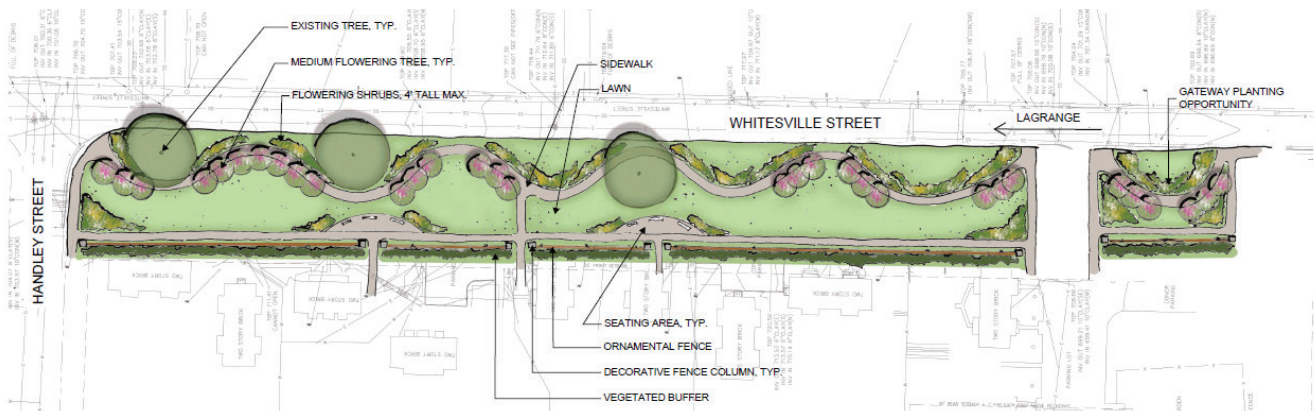


UNION STREET PARK

The Union Street Park will be relocated to a new location at Colquitt and Hamilton Streets due to the Department of Transportation widening project. The new park will include a walking trail, playground equipment, a fitness station, a grilling area, pavilion, a small amphitheater and lots of greenspace.

PHOENIX LANDING / WHITESVILLE ROAD LINEAR PARK

The LaGrange Housing Authority completed a 70-unit housing project located just south of the former Benjamin Harvey Hills homes on Whitesville Road. The city and Callaway Foundation are constructing a linear park along Whitesville Road near this new development. This linear park will provide a visually attractive green space with a walking trail.





GRANGER PARK PLAYGROUND

Granger Park is the city's largest regional park and provides a full array of recreational and greenspace experiences. A project identified in SPLOST V allocated funding to replace playground equipment. The concept plan below depicts improvements to provide recreational play to address various age groups. The plan also contemplates a loop trail, pavilion, plaza entrances, landscaping and new signage. The City anticipates a kick off date for project engineering in July 2021.

LAFAYETTE SQUARE STREETSCAPE

Construction began January 2021 on a streetscape project at the corner of N. Lafayette Square and Ridley Avenue. The project will include new signage with fencing, seating area, gas lanterns and new landscaping. The project is expected to be completed by May 2021.



SOUTHBEND PARK RESTROOM FACILITY

Construction of a restroom facility at Southbend Park began in April and opened to the public in November. The project was completely funded by Callaway Foundation. The new facility includes outside security cameras, motion sensing lighting, fire-proof design, vandalism-proof paint and automatic locking doors to secure the facilities when the park is closed.



HOUSING

THE LOFTS AT DIXIE MILL

Dixie Mill was built in 1895 and was in use until 2004 when West Point Stevens, which owned the mill at that time, announced that the mill would be closing. It has since been transformed into a residential loft community providing 1, 2 and 3 bedroom floor plans. Construction is expected to be completed in 2021.



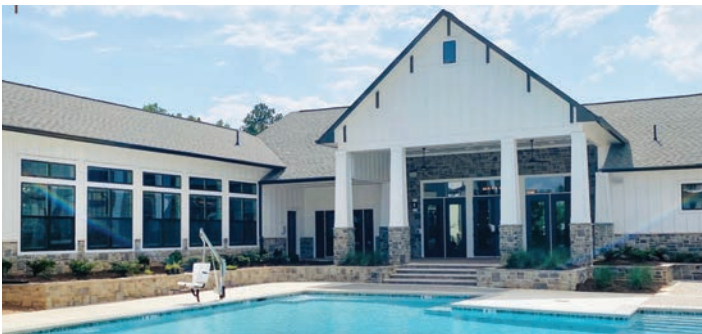
THE EXCHANGE AT 1105

The Exchange at 1105 is located at 1105 South Davis and will offer 1 to 3 bedroom apartments ranging in size from 672 to 1235 square feet. This project is still currently under construction and is expected to be completed in 2021.



THE YARD ON MILL

The Yard on Mill is a luxury suburban apartment community within the master planned mixed use community Mill Creek Station. Construction began in July 2019 and was completed in 2020.



LAGRANGE SOUL

The City of LaGrange is partnering with Groundswell to launch the SOUL, or Save On Utilities Longterm, pilot program. SOUL was created to help cut energy costs by making housing units more energy efficient. Eligible residents who enroll in SOUL will receive a free in-home energy assessment that includes the installation of basic energy efficiency measures such as new LED light bulbs and water heater insulation. Based on the results of the energy assessment, SOUL participants may have the option for additional improvements to be installed including attic insulation, weather sealing, and new heating and cooling equipment all of which will be paid for up-front by the SOUL program.



LAGRANGE HOUSING AUTHORITY

The LaGrange Housing Authority is investing \$45 million in the city with new housing projects over the next four years. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, approved a new funding model that will allow LHA to tear down both the Benjamin Harvey Hill & Lucy Morgan public housing complexes and replace them with newer, more modern construction. The HUD program RAD, or rental assistance demonstration, shifts units from the public housing program to the Section 8 program which authorizes government payments to private landlords so providers may leverage the private sector to make capital improvements.

PHOENIX WAY

Demolition began at Lucy Morgan in 2020 to make way for Phoenix Way. This first development invests \$82,000 for each of the 85 units, using a 4% RAD tax credit. The bright, efficient, and thoroughly modernized homes offer easy access to many LaGrange businesses via The Thread multi-purpose trail.

PHOENIX CROSSING

The Phoenix Crossing is the first off site development for housing authority residents. This is LaGrange's true mixed-income community and offers residents the ability to transition from renters to homeowners. Well-appointed, efficient homes with solar panels save money for residents by providing an energy efficient home.



Phoenix Landing

PHOENIX LANDING

Phoenix Landing opened in July 2020, creating a high-quality, safe, state-of-the-art apartment community. These were the first new construction units designed in over half a century. The apartments provide a stable neighborhood and created an anchor in a corridor of development that fosters a more connected community. Seventy high-quality, safe, state-of-the-art apartments were sustainably built using LEED-certified construction methods.

For more information about the LaGrange Housing Authority go to phalagrange.net

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The City of LaGrange received a \$2 million CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Innovative Grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) that will be used to help redevelop the community along the Whitesville Road corridor, invest in the aesthetics in the area and invest in residents through educational opportunities easily accessible to those in search of much-needed career opportunities in LaGrange.



Innovative Grant Partners

The project will center around a decades-long vacant commercial building at the 1100 block of Whitesville Road. The plan is to renovate the building and use it as the main training facility for residents to learn skills in HVAC, plumbing, electrical and masonry. These trade skills are not currently offered at the local technical college. Seven nearby residential homes will be reconstructed and rehabilitated for on-the-job training.

City staff reached out to the non-profit sector, business owners and school leaders to collaborate in creating this strategic plan. Jackson Heating and Air, the LaGrange Housing Authority, West Georgia Technical College and the Troup County School System have all committed to the goal of addressing the elimination of blight, creating potential jobs and benefiting this neighborhood's low to moderate income households.

PUBLIC SAFETY / FIRE

LFD SMOKE ALARM CAMPAIGN

In 2020, LFD installed smoke detectors and replaced batteries in more than 100 homes, including in the Cherry Valley Community which experienced a deadly fire in October. Firefighters canvassed this community to make sure each home had a working smoke detector.

LETTER OF REVIEW

LFD was awarded the Letter of Review by CoAEMSP, or the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions in Spring 2020. This letter was given to the department based upon a rigorous review of LFD educational policies and procedures. With the Letter of Review, LFD was able to start the first consortium of paramedic students in August 2020.

FIRE INSPECTION PREVENTION FEES

LFD began assessing a fee schedule for businesses requesting repeated fire inspections in 2020. The fee schedule dissuades failing inspections. Annual inspections and first reinspections are free, but second and third reinspections carry fees. For more information call (706) 883-2655.

EMT & PARAMEDIC TRAINING

The LaGrange Fire Department conducted numerous in-house EMS courses including two EMT Basic courses that successfully graduated 39 students and two AEMT courses that will graduate a total of nearly 30 students.



FIRE TRAINING CENTER / BURN BUILDING

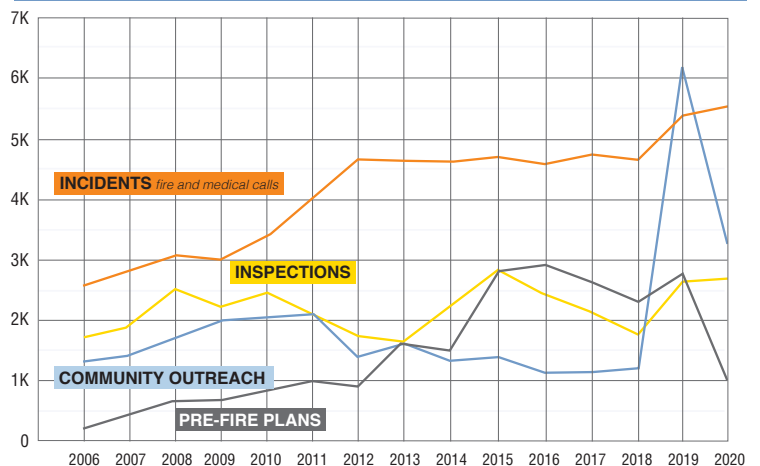
LFD held a ribbon cutting/grand opening for its Fire Training Center September 2020. The new facility is named for the late LFD Deputy Chief Raymond L. Stewart, who led training for the fire department. The family of Stewart was honored at the ceremony. This facility will provide training opportunities for staff and provide a regional training site for the Georgia Public Training Center. The project was funded by SPLOST and Callaway Foundation.



Family of Raymond L. Stewart is honored at the ceremony



FIRE DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY 2006-2020



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Conducted 60 public education events
- Installed 122 smoke detectors
- Conducted 294 blood pressure checks
- Issued 46 burn permits

PUBLIC SAFETY / POLICE

FAITH AND BLUE

The LaGrange Police Department, along with the Troup County Sheriff's Department and Georgia State Patrol, hosted a local Faith and Blue event in October at the First Baptist Church on the Square in downtown LaGrange. The purpose of the event is to create safer, more inclusive communities by connecting law enforcement officers and the residents they protect and serve through houses of worship.



VIRTUAL RECORD RESTRICTION

The LaGrange Police Department hosted a virtual Criminal Record Restriction event July-September. The record restriction means eligible records on a person's official criminal history report that may hinder job opportunities are restricted from public view and are only accessible to law enforcement for criminal justice purposes.

NO KILL SHELTER

The City of LaGrange Animal Shelter received 'no kill' status in 2020. A city must have a 90% save rate to be considered a no-kill shelter, and in 2020 the City of LaGrange Animal Services achieved a 91% save rate. The shelter received a \$20,000 grant from the Petco Foundation to pay for individual pens for nursing moms and their puppies. The shelter also received a lifesaving grant from the Atlanta Humane Society in the amount of \$10,000.



#MASKTROUPOCOUNTY

Police officers continue to pass out free face masks while on patrol and offer free face masks in the front office of LPD.

GANG INITIATIVES

Gang Investigators and the Special Investigation Unit completed more than 20 presentations about gang activity and drug investigations to local healthcare workers, educators, civic and church groups. Many of these presentations were virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING/EVENTS

- Peer Intervention Training
- Spousal Support Training
- LPD Mental Health Checkups
- Vulnerability Assessments at Troup County Schools
- Active Shooter Training

CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

LPD continues to offer the Citizens Police Academy, a free class open to the community. This class offers a better understanding of police conduct and legal authority. Classes are held in the spring and fall.



LPD BUILDING RENOVATION

LPD completed the first phase of its building renovation in 2020 which provided an additional 5,000 square feet of usable work space.



PART I CRIME	2019	2020
HOMICIDE	4	7
RAPE	5	5
ROBBERY	33	39
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	107	79
BURGLARY	179	178
LARCENY THEFT	1,331	1,464
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	112	125
ARSON	4	5
TOTAL PART I CRIMES	1,775	1,902

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH COUNCIL

In 2015, the Mayor and Council created the LaGrange Youth Council to provide the youth of our community with a more formal role in decision making, offer real world experiences with elected bodies, provide leadership opportunities and enhance civic education. The 2020-2021 youth council is composed of 24 juniors and seniors representing LaGrange High, Troup High, LaGrange Academy and Springwood School. While many meetings are now virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the group is still planning to work on two projects addressing mental health and mentoring. The group will present their projects to the Mayor and Council in April 2021.



LYC 2020-2021 Officers from left to right: Secretary Katy Beth Bedingfield, Vice Chair Caroline Shelton, Chairperson Zoie Mitchell and Historian Mary Francis Smith



New LYC members take their oath of office at the September 2020 LaGrange City Council Meeting

INTERNS

The City of LaGrange hosted five interns in 2020. Chloe Harrell, Jordan Perrotti and Wynton Heard interned during the summer. Harrell and Perrotti learned more about the City of LaGrange Animal Shelter and Heard shadowed Community Development Director Alton White and learned more about LGTV, the city's television station. Haylee Ward and Emma Strickland interned in the fall of 2020. Ward learned about the many different departments of local government and Strickland continues to offer assistance as a LaGrange Youth Council Advisor. Strickland was the LaGrange Youth Council Chairperson in 2019-2020.



Summer Interns pictured from left to right: Jordan Perrotti, Chloe Harrell and Wynton Heard



Fall Intern Emma Strickland



Fall Intern Haylee Ward

LGTV

The city's television station, LGTV, added another segment in 2020 called "The Story of LaGrange." In this series, we feature interviews that give a short glimpse into an individual's life that helps show a greater story of our city.



VISIT LAGRANGE



DIRECTOR SEARCH

Visit LaGrange had a busy first year in 2020. The Board of Directors, led by Chairman Bobby Carmichael, launched an extensive search for a president and CEO and after several months, Kathryn Tilley was hired and started in her new position in April 2020.



Visit LaGrange President/
CEO Kathryn Tilley

COVID-19

In late Spring of 2020, following the Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 guidelines, local businesses began to open with limited services. Visit LaGrange shifted its marketing efforts to encourage residents to shop local and dine local. They worked with the Chamber and other economic development organizations on how to best support local businesses during this unprecedented time.

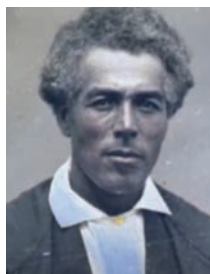
STRATEGIC PLAN

During the early summer, Visit LaGrange contracted with Neville Bhada and Tourism Skills Group to craft a Strategic Plan for the organization. Surveys and focus groups were held with more than 50 local officials, tourism partners and businesses to determine the future strategic direction for Visit LaGrange. The next step will be a comprehensive Brand/Marketing Plan through which the Strategic Plan will be carried out.

Visit LaGrange Board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month at LaGrange City Hall, 200 Ridley Avenue at 9:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

MULBERRY STREET CEMETERY RENOVATION

In the Fall of 2020, Visit LaGrange partnered with the City of LaGrange and The Thread Trail to create the first tourism attraction celebrating our African American and Civil War Heritage. Mulberry Street Cemetery will be renovated and updated to share the story of the people who are buried there and shed light on the times in which they lived. Planned improvements include access to the cemetery from The Thread; a new pavilion with comprehensive interpretive signage and an enhanced gravesite of Horace King and his son. Currently, research on the cemetery is being conducted with experts from across the South in order to tell the story of this amazing place in our City.



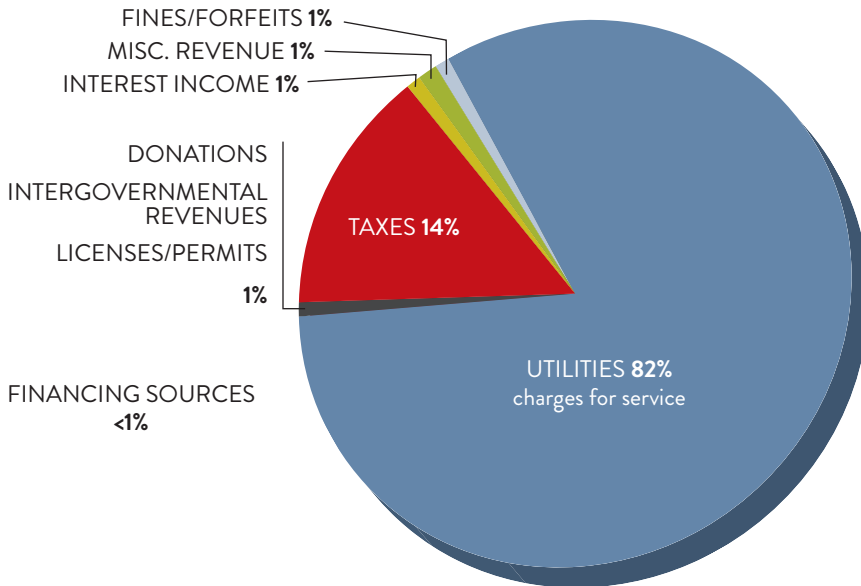
Horace King Grave Enhancements

WHAT DOES IT COST? HOW DO WE PAY FOR IT?

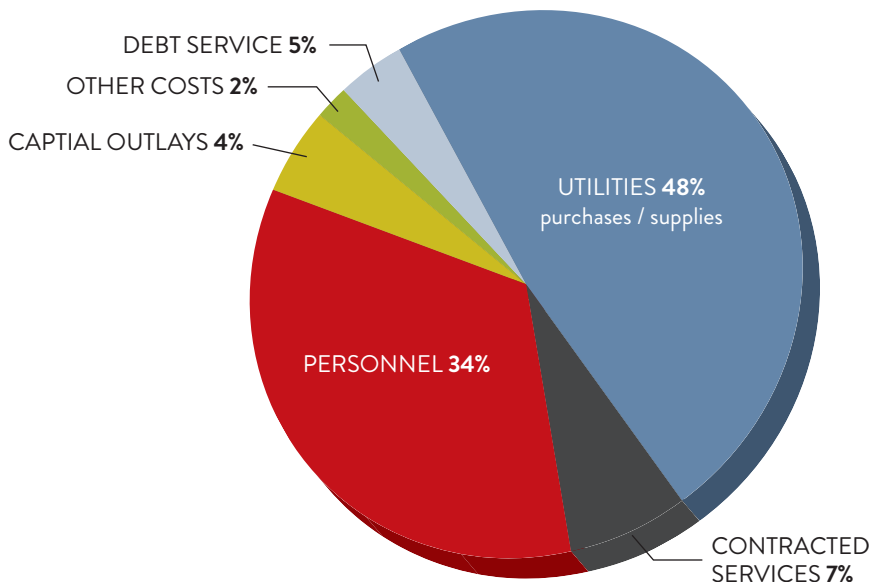
The City's operational and financial performance is very strong. Since 1998, municipal operations have been financed largely by sales tax and utility revenues. This allows the City to operate entirely without property taxes. Businesses and homeowners in LaGrange enjoy a lower tax burden and higher level of service than other comparable communities throughout the Southeastern United States.

The City has historically offered utility rates that are very competitive when compared to other area suppliers. Tax exempt financing and efficient operations help us maintain low rates for our customers.

2020-2021 REVENUES \$105,531,853



2020-2021 EXPENSES \$105,511,382



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