CITY OF LIVE OAK
101 SOUTHEAST WHITE AVE.
LIVE OAK, FL 32064

Garth R. Nobles, JR., Mayor
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www.cityofliveoak.org

"The Caring Community"

"Part of the Original Florida"

George Curtis, City Development Manager
101 White Ave. SE
Live Oak, Florida 32064

December 2014

Dear Interested Party:

We appreciate the opportunity to answer your questions and share relevant information for your consideration. The City of Live Oak, Florida is open for business, and we are excited for the prospects for an even better future ahead!

We are very well positioned for a prosperous economic outlook with accomplishments and indicators which demonstrate a recipe for success. We have a strong entrepreneurial spirit with a continual influx of new business endeavors. Our commercial vacancies are currently at the lowest point in over 5 years.

To supplement existing and new business improvements, we have a redevelopment district, where property owners can qualify for reimbursement grants for exterior improvements. In the last fiscal year, 42 grants have been awarded, spurring $304,315 of redevelopment projects. Of that, $126,164 was reimbursed back to the property owners from our redevelopment fund. If your proposed location is within this district, the location can potentially qualify for a similar exterior improvement grants or other incentives for redevelopment.

Because the downtown is a major part of this district, it has undergone a rebirth in recent years – both in private property investment, as well as publically funded improvements to public parks and rights-of-ways. We have a triangle of adjacent event-space parks in the heart of downtown, hosting weekly concerts, a recently relocated farmer's market, and major annual events such as Christmas on the Square, Fourth of July, and in October of 2014, the first ever Blues, Art and Jazz Festival - with all day free concerts and other activities. We draw from a multi-county area for these events, with attendance at times in the 10's of thousands.

There is a 300 acre State of Florida designated 'Catalyst Site' industrial park 8 miles west of the city. Within the city, we have over 100 acres of shovel ready land which abuts utility infrastructure and a comprehensive road network with direct access to Interstate 10, which has been attracting strong interest. Additionally, annexation initiatives are underway along the north/I-10 and east/US-90 corridors.

We have an efficient, professional and responsive staff and can offer expedited plan review and permitting with no building impact fees, and a pro-growth City Council and Land Development Regulations.

Our population base is trending with growth above the state average, and our employment base is well diversified. Live Oak is the County Seat for Suwannee County, which means we are the regional destination center for governmental operations, courts, schools, shopping, professional services, parks and recreation, and faith based institutions.

The current county population is 43,734, with a growth rate of 5.3% since the 2010 Census, and 25.5% since the 2000 Census, when the population was 34,844. By comparison, from 2010 to 2013, state growth averaged 4%. Our unemployment rate is 6.2%, well under the state average of 7.0%.

792 establishments provide employment in Suwannee County with the majority within the city limits. Some notable examples of our diversification are: Trade, transportation and utilities comprises 28.4%, construction 12.2%, professional and business services 12.1%, government 6.8%, education and health 6.6% and manufacturing 3%.

As far as growth trends and potential, tremendous attention and effort has been implemented by the city over the past 7 years to address deficiencies and effectively prepare for our future. We have completely rebuilt our wastewater treatment plant and then built a second plant onto it which has the capacity to treat double the current usage. At the same time, we constructed a re-use plant which cleans wastewater to drinking water standards and greatly reduces the need for costly spray-field operations. We have a recently completed elevated storage water tank along Interstate 10, which will serve future development along this important corridor.

Over 80% of our existing sewer infrastructure has been rehabbed and 3 new potable wells have been drilled and a new water treatment plant constructed which supplements the capacity for growth that we have in other utilities. Sewer and water line infrastructure expansions and upgrades are ongoing, and road resurfacing projects have moved from the planning stages to an approved Phase I project to important collector roads and related intersections and storm-water facilities.

Our city-operated Fire Department has just achieved an ISO rating of 3, which puts us equal to much larger municipalities – an achievement shared by just 4% of the departments nation-wide. The city and our contracted engineering firm has also partnered with the Department of Economic Opportunity, the Division of State Land Planning and the Army Corps of Engineers in the preparation of a storm water master plan which will guide projects to address flood-prone areas of the city.

Miles of newly installed sidewalks have been completed which provide connectivity from residential areas to commercial corridors and downtown businesses. We have also just completed Phase I of a Rails-To-Trails segment, with Phase II of the trail to be funded in a coming cycle though a DOT grant award.

Another grant award, by the State of Florida, facilitated the acquisition of an 80+ acre regional park. Additionally, a newly established downtown event park, named Festival Park, is now open and will be the center point for many future events, as well as providing green space and pedestrian connectivity between our Courthouse and the Downtown Business District.

Some notable growth and development projects on the private-sector and job-creation side over the last 7 years include:

1. New state correctional institution completed on 400 acres east of the city (but served by city water and sewer infrastructure), providing 724 new jobs.
2. New retail construction: Lowes, O'Reilly Auto Parts, Dollar General, Economy Motors, Big Wood BBQ Restaurant, Pepe's Mexican Grocery and Restaurant, Zaxby's Restaurant, John's Lawn Equipment and Pro Arms Gun Shop, Love's Travel Truck Stop with Burger King and Duncan Donuts.
3. Just in the past few years in our downtown core, many re-purposing redevelopment projects have been completed which have resulted in several successful business establishments or relocations to include: Edward Jones, Re/Max Realty, B-Posh clothing and boutique shop, You Got Served coffee and smoothie shop, El Mezcal Mexican Restaurant, a home health aide company, Pomodoro's Italian Restaurant, Caribe Café, a security firm, Love Inc. non-profit, Merle Norman Cosmetics, PJ's Salon, an IT business, and more!
4. Shands Hospital has upgraded existing facilities, added specialized staff, and expanded their presence on their existing 33 acre site.
5. Major shopping center rehab projects: South Oaks Center/Publix store and related/adjacent tenant spaces; old K-Mart Center redesigned with several new stores – Save-A-Lot, Goody's, Fred's, Skinners Fitness, and opening soon – additional medical offices and Social Security office.
6. 2 new apartment complexes constructed – rentals are fully occupied with waiting lists for occupancy.
7. The Catalyst Site industrial park now has a newly constructed saw mill, the largest in the US, which will employ a workforce of 350, working a 24/7 – 4-shift schedule.
8. A few miles north of the city, on the historic Suwannee River, there is a privately owned 500 acre recreational camping park, Spirit of the Suwannee, who hosts large music festivals with nationally recognized artists. They draw tens of thousands of visitors from hundreds of miles to visit our community.

Strategic planning has taken place, not only internally with staff and the City Council, but also with related state and local governmental agencies and local stakeholders, so that future growth prospects are facilitated in a manner which will benefit all associated parties. The city contains 3 State Roads with direct access in all directions, including connectivity to Interstate 10 and Interstate 75, as well as CSX rail lines.

We are located in the center of a 'diamond' between the four major metropolitan centers of Valdosta, GA, Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Gainesville, FL, and within a 30 mile radius of the city, the population count is just under 150,000 indicating there is tremendous potential for local businesses to tap new customers.

We anticipate the demand for additional residences will result in new multi-family apartments and garden-style condo or townhome developments being proposed in the coming year. Local educational facilities and our technical center are expanding to provide additional job training programs to meet the needs of local employers. Shands Hospital has plans for growth on-site, as well as to anchor an existing shopping center with a walk-in clinic and pediatric services. We have commercial corridors with well positioned vacant land that is attracting strong interest nationally.

There is a DOT funded perimeter road project that has been in the planning stages for 5 years that will break ground in the coming months. This road will provide scores of opportunity for commercial, industrial and residential development which will have direct access to Interstate 10 to the north and US Highway 90 to the south.

The city is actively pursuing expansions to water, sewer and natural gas infrastructure to areas north of Interstate 10, along US Highway 129. We have also just been awarded a Department of Transportation grant of over $900,000 to construct a new road on the southeast side of the city, which will provide connectivity between County Road 49 and US Highway 129, leading directly into a major retail shopping center district, as well as a conglomerate of 6 different educational facilities.

Our Community Redevelopment District program has annual funding of $400,000+ for the next 25 years to improve, rehabilitate, incentivize and attract new investment to the city's core areas; and our new regional park, Heritage Park and Gardens, has plans for expansion to include a playground and a 5-clover athletic field addition.

As you can see, we as a city have worked diligently and proactively to take as many steps as possible to support existing businesses, facilitate economic growth, create a destination for visitors, a high quality of life for residents and to create a climate which will attract future investment and relocation to the city.

Economic development and job creation is job-one for us and we will welcome any opportunities which will provide lasting, positive and beneficial growth for the economic future to be effectively sustained and grown.

Members on our Leadership Staff Team stand ready to respond to the needs of the development community. We look forward to meeting with you and your company or associates pertaining to your relocation, redevelopment or expansion plans in the City of Live Oak.

If we can be of any service to you in those endeavors, please contact me at your earliest convenience, and I will coordinate and bring all relevant and appropriate staff to the table, or to meet on-site at any subject property. My direct line is 386-364-3717;
email gcurtis@cityofliveoak.org.

Sincerely,

George D. Curtis

George D. Curtis
City Development Manager

COUNCILMEN

JACOB GRANTHAM 716 PINE AVE SW (386) 208-3012	FRANK C. DAVIS 1341 COPELAND ST SW (386) 362-8537	KEITH MIXON 836 PEARL AVE SE (386) 249-0585	BENNIE L. THOMAS 1009 5TH ST SW (386) 364-5535	JOHN W. YULEE, Sr. 1711 NE DUVAL ST (386) 209-3047

As Seen In Florida Trend
December 2014

Florida's New Business Frontier

Suwannee County

Located in the North Florida and Suwannee River Valley region, Suwannee County is bordered by the namesake of the Florida state song on three sides. But you don't have to go down to the river to see that the future is bright for one of the Sunshine State's hidden treasures.

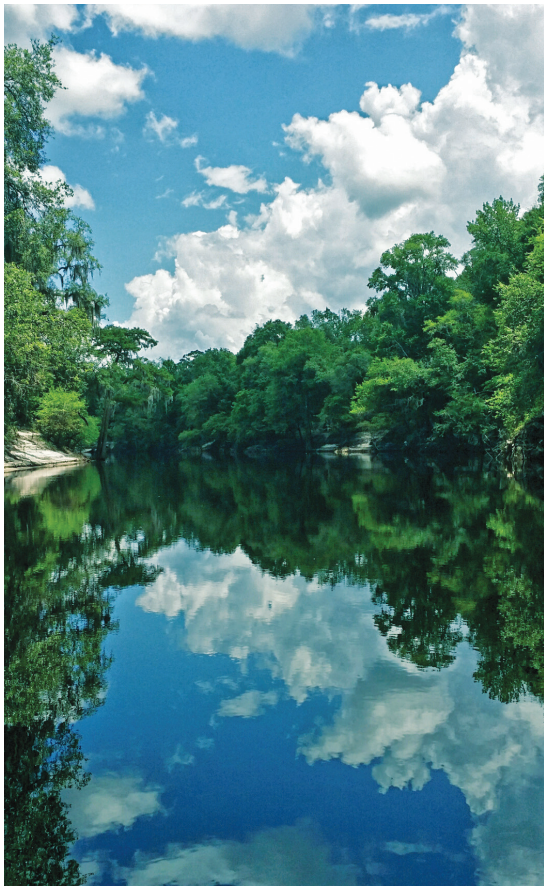


PHOTO: SUWANNEE DEMOCRAT

The people who live and work in Suwannee County will tell you a story of a region with a unique combination of natural resources, economic opportunities and a quality of life that is both attracting big companies and providing an enviable lifestyle for local residents. The truth is that while Florida has lots of attractive locations to advance a career and raise a family, there are certain advantages to doing business in this part of the state that simply can't be replicated in other locations.

If you need efficient transportation in and out of the area or need to move products across the country or around the world, Suwannee County offers close access to multiple interchanges, providing proximity to major metropolitan areas in every direction. Add a freight rail system, a deepwater port an hour away and plenty of developed infrastructure and affordable land, and it is no wonder this area continues to thrive.

If you want the peace and tranquility of the rural lifestyle but want to stay within a short drive to the shopping, dining, college football and art museums of some of Florida's (and south Georgia's) most exciting cities, Suwannee County offers that, too.

But you don't have to go anywhere to experience some of the best reasons to work and live in Suwannee County, according to Alvin Jackson, director of the Suwannee County Economic Development Office. He says that the quality of life offered in this region is special, with a warm, welcoming community that appreciates its natural resources, the arts and activities that make attracting new businesses easy.

"Suwannee County is open for business."

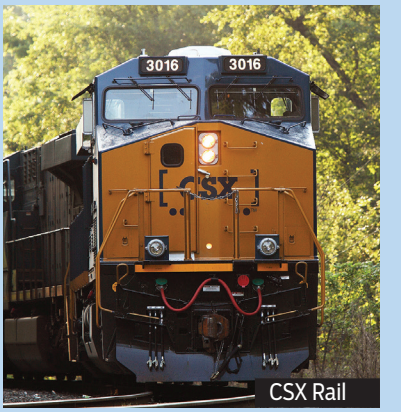
— **Dr. Alvin B. Jackson, Jr.,** Director, Suwannee County Economic Development Office

Access Is Easy

I-10 / Live Oak Interchange

Proximity to Markets

Gainesville	70 miles
Tallahassee	82 miles
Jacksonville	84 miles
Orlando	179 miles
Tampa	194 miles
Savannah	220 miles
Atlanta	273 miles



CSX Rail

A Business-Minded Community

Make no mistake, Jackson says. "Suwannee County is open for business. We have an attitude that asks, 'How we can make it happen?' Our leadership has made it very clear that we want to create jobs and expand our tax base by helping industry get through the processes so they can move in and get to work as quickly as possible."

Suwannee County is home to one of Florida's most diverse agribusiness communities that includes poultry production and sales; crop production and distribution; and light manufacturing. Currently under construction is one of the world's largest sawmills. Service-based companies also have a home in Suwannee County with companies in retirement and medical services as well as varied professional, financial and entertainment-based enterprises.

In 2007, the county's 500-acre industrial park was named as a Catalyst Site, one of four regional sites to be developed with the help of the state of Florida as a strategy for economic development in Florida's Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern. The Rural Economic Development Catalyst Project, led by Enterprise Florida in partnership with numerous state, regional and local organizations, is targeting industries such as logistics and distribution; building component design and manufacturing; biofuels and renewable energy. The Catalyst Site is eligible for increased state incentives along with other benefits and is also an Enterprise Zone and eligible for those additional incentives.

The first resident of the Catalyst Site is Klausner Lumber One, a high-tech facility that will create 350 permanent jobs and inject $130 million in capital over three years.

The draw to the area, according to Thomas Mende, president of international business development for Klausner, was the combination of forest resources, location to markets, access to ports, rail access and tax incentives.

"In the end, the state of Florida through Enterprise Florida, the North Florida Regional Development Partnership and the various government agencies have been extremely helpful in all kinds of aspects of the project," Mende says. "It was their commitment that made the difference over other states we were considering."

Klausner is happy to be the anchor tenant

What Leaders Are Saying about Suwannee County

"From one who has experienced growth and development in a large setting, I recognize that Suwannee County is a diamond in the rough. There is so much opportunity here to shape our future by properly planning our land uses and development while simultaneously preserving our natural resources and quality of life."

Randy Harris
Suwannee County Administrator

Suwannee County

Population: **41,551**

692 square miles, including 3.7 square miles of water

Formed in 1858, as railways were constructed to connect the area with Jacksonville and Tallahassee

"Our organization celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2013. The county is also poised to grow with many of the pieces now in place, including the Catalyst Site and governmental entities and the business community encouraging and supporting growth."

Craig Carter
President and CEO
Advent Christian Village

"Main Street is alive and well in Suwannee County. Residents support the small business community as a vital piece of the economic culture of the county. Suwannee County presents growth opportunities while never forgetting our small-town roots, creating the best of both worlds."

Mark Yarick
Consultant
Florida Small Business Development Center, University of North Florida

"SVEC works closely with economic development agencies during the recruitment process, assessing energy and reliability requirements and developing service plans and constructions schedules for prospective businesses. Our engineers ensure our service area has today the infrastructure it needs for the demands of tomorrow.

Baynard Ward
Community Relations Manager, Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative

Klausner Lumber One (left) and Pilgrim's (above) benefit from Suwannee County's pro-business climate, easy access, developed infrastructure and available, affordable land.

of Florida's first Catalyst Site. "We look most forward to other companies recognizing the great potential of Suwannee County as a business and industrial location," he says. "We will do our part to recruit complementary companies to our field, but the exciting part about the Catalyst Site is the development of an industrial area serving a variety of companies."

With hundreds of jobs being created, Mende appreciates that his plant had to be located in a place both he and his employees would enjoy living. He says he has found that in Suwannee County, "The more time I spend in the county the more I love it," he says. "The area is incredibly special and beautiful and has so many hidden gems."

A key factor that allowed Klausner to consider Suwannee County was the agreement to have freight rail available at the Catalyst Site. It was a requirement that one of the nation's largest transportation suppliers was happy to accommodate. "We are pleased to be part of what is happening in Suwannee County," says Stephanie Lane, director of industrial development for CSX. "Rail is a great amenity and usually necessary for industrial players who are interested in a park like this."

Adding rail service to the park, which already has key amenities such as water, electric and wastewater treatment, makes things faster and ready for additional users coming to the site, Lane says. "In a general sense, a rail user tends to be a larger company that comes in with a much bigger capital expenditure and plans on being around for 20 to 30 years creating long-term jobs," she says. "That is what is going to happen now in Suwannee County with rail being available. We applaud the state and Suwannee County for taking a part in making this happen. They had a big role in getting rail onto that site."

Strong Local Support

Helping to supply workers for Klausner and other area companies such as Pilgrim's Corporation, the world's second-largest poultry producer, and Precision Turning Corporation, maker of CNC Swiss Screw Machines, is Sheryl Rehberg, executive director of CareerSource North Florida.

"We have an educated, willing, trainable and flexible population," Rehberg says. "We work to identify what the companies need, and through outreach and identification of job seekers, help them locate the talent to fill their jobs."

The strength of the business community is another strong foundation for the future, according to Austin Richmond, executive director of the Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce. "Businesses like Suwannee County because of our great location with low land cost and natural resources for hobbies," he says. "The ability to live, work and play without having to deal with big city crime and high cost of living is a huge plus."

Suwannee County draws more than 600,000 visitors to the region annually, many of those to the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park & Campground, according to park president and CEO James Cornett. "Tourism helps to diversify our economic base, and we work hard to make sure visitors have a great experience so they will want to return."

The music park is a one-of-a-kind, world-class venue that has hosted artists from all musical genres – The Allman Brothers, Tim McGraw, Jason Aldean, String Cheese Incident, Widespread Panic and many others. "We've been investing in infrastructure, training staff and working with officials to prepare a turnkey operation for promoters seeking to produce shows at our facility." The park includes three outdoor and two indoor stages, hundreds of water and electric campsites, six bathhouses, general store,

restaurant, top-rated 18-hole disc golf course and group rental facilities.

With two miles fronting the historic Suwannee River, the Spirit of the Suwannee is the ideal destination for canoeing or kayaking the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail or hiking the Florida National Scenic Trail. Literally thousands of acres of equestrian trails are located in and around the park and throughout the region. "There truly is nothing like it," Cornett says.

It is the unity of community and elected leaders in pursuing a common vision for the future of Suwannee County that is creating excitement and momentum, says Alvin Jackson. "The business community and the rest of the community want growth, but they want it to be controlled, environmentally sound and responsible. The EDO, the chamber and the CRA are working closely together to provide the best environment and opportunities to encourage new business development and existing industry expansion."

What does Jackson see for the future? "I still see the small-town feel, which is what I think the CEOs and their families will be attracted to. We will continue to attract companies along our interchange system and create sustainable jobs, not only for Suwannee County but for the entire region."

> "I feel so blessed to call Suwannee home. Our strong, faith-based community is a laid-back, friendly place to live and work. Our county has a strong partnership with the local and state governments to boost economic development."
>
> **Ronnie Poole**
> Broker, Poole Realty

A Welcome Change

The county seat and largest city in Suwannee County is Live Oak, a "diamond in the rough" with plenty of forward-thinking business owners, available workforce and opportunity, according to Keith Mixon, city councilman, chairman of the Community Redevelopment Agency and a broker with Live Oak Realty.

"Live Oak is very aggressive and open to growth," Mixon says. "We are not afraid of change and are really pressing hard for economic development. Anything you are looking for from shopping to entertainment, we've got it. It is a community that is looking optimistically at the future."

One of the primary reasons for the optimism is what Mixon describes as a totally resurrected downtown. "In the past two years we have completely transformed the city of Live Oak," he says. "We are trying to think outside the box and create a new atmosphere to create economic development that we haven't had in the past. Employers who come into a community take a risk, so we all realize that we have to work with each other. We have to grow our base, and we have the adequate land and space to do it."

Nestled against the Suwannee River in the southwest corner of the county is the town of Branford, known as a premier ecotourism destination for activities on and around the river and many nearby springs. "We have all the rivers and springs where you can go fishing, canoeing, kayaking, cave diving, or go bicycling on the Green Way Trail," says Ken Saunders, president of the Branford Town Council. "It's very different than going to other parts of Central Florida."

Advent Christian Village

Little River Springs

Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park

At A Glance

Live Oak

- Home of Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranch and Annual Jazz Arts and Blues Festival
- Population: **6,919**
- Median Age: **34.2**
- Median Household Income: **$22,592**
- Cost of Living Index: **80.3**

Branford

- Major hub on the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail
- Home of Branford Springs
- Population: **718**
- Median Age: **32.9**
- Median Household Income: **$32,726**
- Cost of Living Index: **82.3**

For more information about how you can be part of Florida's new business frontier, contact:

Suwannee County Economic Development Office
386-364-1700 · floridasnewfrontier.com

Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce
386-362-3071 · suwanneechamber.com

PHOTOS: SUWANNEE DEMOCRAT (LEFT)

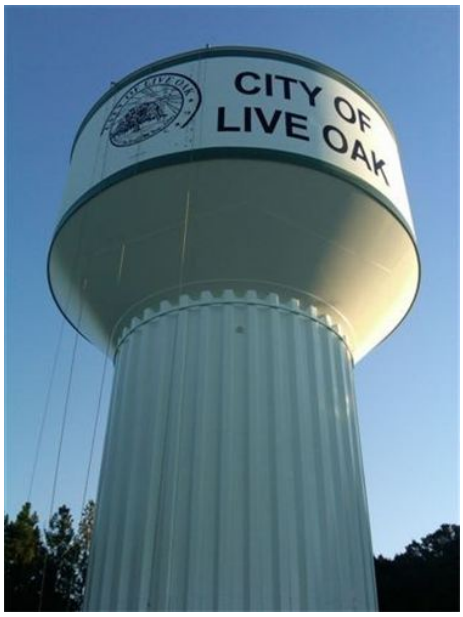
These organizations and businesses contributed to this report and support Suwannee County's economic development.

Suwannee County
City of Live Oak and Community Redevelopment Agency
Town of Branford
Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative
Advent Christian Village
Poole Realty
First Federal Saving Bank
Windstream
Pilgrim's Corporation
Suwannee County Development Authority
Florida Small Business Development Center, University of North Florida
Florida Public Utilities
CSX Rail
Klausner Lumber One
Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce
Florida Power & Light
Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park & Campground

CITY OF LIVE OAK

UTILITIES INFORMATION DATA

The City of Live Oak provides full utilities services to our citizens to include water, wastewater, natural gas, and sanitation.



WATER –

The City is permitted to withdraw 2.5 million gallons of water per day with the capacity to produce 24.681 million gallons per day.

The water consumption average is 1 million gallons per day.

There is an estimated excess production capacity of 23 million gallons per day.

Current customer count is: Commercial - 573; Residential - 2,446.

WASTEWATER –

The City is permitted to treat 3.5 million gallons of wastewater per day.

The wastewater treatment average is 1.25 million gallons per day of which approximately 750,000 gallons per day is targeted for re-use.

This leaves an estimated excess capacity of 2.25 million gallons per day.

Current customer count is: Commercial - 462; Residential - 2,177.

NATURAL GAS – The City provides natural gas service to commercial, residential and industrial users at very competitive rates.

Current customer count is: Industrial - 1; Commercial - 171; Residential - 859.

SANITATION – The City provides sanitation and garbage service to commercial and residential users within the service territory.

Current customer count is: Commercial - 475; Residential - 2,387.

*Data as of September 2014