The County Administrator’s Annual Report recognizes some of the true difference makers in our organization of 1,900 public servants who perform work for this community each day of the year.
Welcome.

With the global COVID-19 pandemic and economic fallout, it would be easy to write 2020 off as a lost year for progress in Manatee County. But to do so would be to overlook not only our community response to the coronavirus but also the substantial strides we made in spite of it.

Nearly every aspect of our daily operations was engaged with the COVID-19 response in 2020. Many of us probably know the direct role our first responders had responding to patients, and if there was a silver lining to last year it’s that we all grew to appreciate the EMS crews, Department of Health team, hospital staff, and others on the frontline of our healthcare system who often put their lives at risk to serve us. Beyond our stellar Public Safety team, every department in county government was involved in transitioning to serve the community in very different ways, which you’ll read about throughout this report.

Despite the unprecedented challenges before us in 2020, we were able to achieve real progress and deliver substantial results planned long before the pandemic. In fact, we were able to fulfill our 2020 vision of rolling out our Results First initiative countywide, which we had been slowly introducing across the organization over the past few years.

The most profound aspect I’ve noticed so far about Results First is its impact on people who practice it. Simply put, it builds their energy and enthusiasm and moves their vision of achievement from individual success to the overall success of the County as a whole. Never has that been more important than in a year like 2020, when working together for the common good was imperative.

Our employees have shown that not even a pandemic can throw us off track when we have our minds set on results. We rose to the challenge in 2020, and I know Manatee County Government will continue to serve our growing community with grace, talent and fortitude in 2021.

Cheri Coryea
County Administrator

Results First

In 2020, Enhancing Communication, Expanding Innovation and Aligning Department Projects were among the County Administrator’s top Results First strategic goals. Here are a few ways we achieved these results:

- 100+ VIRTUAL BOCC MEETINGS supported via technical assistance and Zoom
- 78% INCREASE IN CITIZEN INQUIRES taken by 311 Manatee after consolidating 10 call lines into one
- 36 COMPLETED CAPITAL PROJECTS successfully managed across departments
- 1,976 VIDEO INSPECTIONS reducing in-person property inspections

OUR EMPLOYEES HAVE SHOWN THAT NOT EVEN A PANDEMIC CAN THROW US OFF TRACK WHEN WE HAVE OUR MINDS SET ON RESULTS.
MEET YOUR COMMISSIONERS
The Board of County Commissioners is comprised of seven members. Five members are elected from single-member districts, and two are elected county-wide.

The Board of County Commissioners — George Kruse, Vanessa Baugh, Kevin Van Ostenbridge, James Satcher, Misty Servia, Reggie Bellamy, and Carol Whitmore

DISTRICT MAP

DISTRICT 1 - James Satcher
DISTRICT 2 - Reggie Bellamy
DISTRICT 3 - Kevin Van Ostenbridge
DISTRICT 4 - Misty Servia
DISTRICT 5 - Vanessa Baugh
AT LARGE - Carol Whitmore
AT LARGE - George Kruse

In 2020, Commissioners James Satcher, Kevin Van Ostenbridge, and George Kruse were elected to Districts 1, 3, and At Large, replacing Commissioners Priscilla Trace, Stephen Jonsson, and Betsy Benac.

(Clockwise from top right): Commissioners Carol Whitmore, Vanessa Baugh, Reggie Bellamy, and Misty Servia.
It would be impossible to talk about 2020 without covering the outstanding efforts responding to the COVID-19 pandemic from all corners of our government, citizens and County Commission.

The County’s response to the crisis constantly evolved as new information became available, new guidelines and regulations were issued by state and federal agencies, and new decisions were made by the Board of County Commissioners in the best interest of the public.

Public Safety Director Jacob Saur filled an extraordinary role in leading the County’s response and coordinating with Manatee County Health Officer Dr. Jennifer Bencie and her team at the Department of Health.

With Emergency Management Chief Steve Litschauer at the helm, the Emergency Operations Center remained at a partial activation for most of the year, with the Board extending a declared state of emergency since mid-March.

Six weeks before the onset of the pandemic, Manatee County Commissioners confirmed Jake as our newest department director. Jake succeeded because of the strong relationships he’s forged with community health providers and the Department of Health, but also because of the strong team supporting him at Public Safety.

Chief Joe Westerman’s Beach Patrol team was instrumental in the early days of the outbreak, conveying important local and state information to beachgoers on the Island, and to water lovers at public boat ramps.

Our brave paramedics and EMTs were among the first people to provide medical care and transport to COVID patients.

Chief Litschauer and his team coordinated the community response, helping to establish COVID-19 testing locations and to relay personal protective equipment (PPE) and face mask donations to first responders and long term care facilities.

Emergency Communications Chief Stacy Needham and her team not only provided reliable 911 call assistance to a community in crisis, they worked closely with IT Project Manager Art Stadlin to launch our new 311 call center, an invaluable resource for residents needing help throughout the pandemic.

EMS Chief Jimmy Crutchfield’s front-line team brought COVID-19 testing into nursing homes and our brave paramedics and EMTs were among the first people to provide medical care and transport to COVID patients.

Chief Sarah Brown and her dedicated team at Animal Services did a tremendous job of providing safe, healthy access to adoptable pets while doubling our pet foster network, offsetting the influx of pets being surrendered during the pandemic.

Deputy County Administrator Karen Stewart and County Administrator Cheri Coryea pay a visit to our frontline EMS team to thank them for their dedication throughout the pandemic.
Working together through crisis.

In the early stages of the pandemic, Public Works, Parks and Property Management teams mobilized quickly to help close — and later safely reopen — our facilities in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Meanwhile, our Neighborhood Services and Redevelopment and Economic Opportunity (REO) departments immediately began gathering resources for residents and businesses affected by the pandemic.

Neighborhood Services staff made “wellness calls” to more than 1,200 local seniors, veterans and residents with special needs to help connect them with resources and services during the state’s stay-at-home orders. They also volunteered at weekly Feeding Tampa Bay Mega Pantry events, getting food to up to 2,000 families a week.

The County was able to help provide employment for individuals who lost work during the pandemic through a partnership between our Property Management department and Suncoast Career Source, offering numerous new grant-funded positions to keep facilities sanitized. Property Management Director Charlie Bishop’s custodial crew did not miss a day of coverage, ensuring safe and sanitized work environments for everyone.

Meanwhile, we responded to the crisis in the community.

Collaboration was key as we responded to the crisis in the community.

Our Code Enforcement and Beach Patrol divisions took on task after task during the pandemic. Our team of lifeguards helped reopen public beaches when limitations were in place for social distancing. Code Enforcement Chief Jeff Bowman and his officers helped educate local business owners on the latest updates from the Governor’s Safer at Home orders and reinvented their roles on the Island by leading the way for public safety on our public beaches.

In short, Chief Bowman, Beach Patrol Chief Joe Westerman, and their teams were our front line of communication with thousands of Manatee County residents and business owners as quarantine periods were slowly lifted.

and hand sanitizer on board the bus, and our vehicles were sanitized daily to minimize exposure to germs. Kudos to MCAT Manager William Steele, Operations Chief Jim Egbert, and all the MCAT team for keeping this critical public service in motion during a very challenging time for our residents.
Adapting our services during uncertain times.

Manatee County Government staff hardly missed a beat in finding new innovative and adaptable ways to provide services during the pandemic.

While County buildings were closed to the public for several weeks in the spring in accordance with state and federal guidelines, operations never ceased. Manatee 311 served as a central point of contact for the public to conduct business with the County, while most programs and services were already accessible online or transitioned to virtual alternatives.

Our Financial Management, Human Resources and Information Technology Services departments worked hard to ensure an organization of 1,900 employees continued to function seamlessly despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Together these departments acquired, configured and distributed necessary equipment and technology to enable staff to immediately transition to teleworking.

HR Director Kim Stroud was quick to implement the Families First Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, a highly regulated federal policy put forth by the U.S. Department of Labor, and to ensure that critical employee resources were still available remotely. Recruitment and onboarding processes were streamlined and digitized.

The need to continue leadership development remained essential, so HR fully transitioned from in-person to virtual training without sacrificing access or quality.

While fitness centers and providers across the county shut down their services, Employee Health Benefits was able to quickly identify ways to continue to engage with our employees and their families to support their fitness, wellness and medical needs. Many of the advocates quickly moved to a telehealth approach where access to care was not impacted. Employees who couldn’t telework in their positions were quickly reassigned to other essential jobs, such as monitoring parking as the County reopened its beaches or working to review CARES Act applications.

As employees returned to the office, HR worked with Public Safety to establish guidelines to ensure employees could remain at work, serving the community while also being safe. The team established rapid testing options for employees that helped reduce absenteeism, and they created access to emergency childcare options for Public Safety employees so they could remain working when schools were closed.

We were even able to adapt our successful Results First Internship Program to proceed over the summer, hosting 20 interns across 11 different departments. To help ensure safety and success for all interns, we modified the program to allow for socially distanced events and remote working capabilities. These internships not only provided experience and government insight to students, but their projects resulted in expanded programs and services, increased communication, improved visibility for underserved populations, and financial savings.
Making a difference in the community

Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) staff also worked with the Information Outreach team and Mask Up Manatee Coalition to help with the design, ordering and distribution of 50,000 “Mask Up Manatee” masks for adults and children. Spearheaded by County Administration, along with the Health Department and the School District, the Mask Up Manatee Coalition unites more than 40 government agencies, businesses, medical providers and non-profit organizations to fight together against the spread of COVID-19.

From the onset of the pandemic, it was clear that statewide stay-at-home orders and other precautionary measures were going to take their toll on residents and business owners throughout the state. New programs to cover food, rent, legal services, worker retraining, and hygiene stations in response to COVID were facilitated by REO’s new Community Development Project Manager, Jennifer Yost.

When state funding assistance became available through the CARES Act, our REO team, led by Director Geri Lopez, quickly transitioned the office into the local assistance headquarters for those suffering losses from the pandemic. As notification of expanded federal funding of $70.5 million became available, Deputy County Administrator Karen Stewart led the way to establish the protocols while Financial Management Director Jan Brewer and Grants Manager Hunter Foxwell established reporting and distribution standards. The CARES Act team has worked countless hours to fairly and efficiently award CARES relief to Manatee County’s eligible residents and business owners who needed it most.

REO created the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) and the Safety First Small Business Grant Program, providing over $20 million in assistance to more than 1,600 residents and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through both CARES Act Funding and other state funding sources.

At the same time, Neighborhood Services Director Ava Edhe, Compliance Coordinator Elaine Maholtz and Susan Ford with Children’s Services approved more than $16 million in CARES Act funding for local nonprofit programs promoting community health and wellbeing and economic recovery for residents in Manatee County.

The end of 2020 marked more than 300 days since the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Manatee County. That’s 300 days of our staff adapting, innovating and working hard to respond to the pandemic and keep our residents safe. Our local government has responded exceptionally to a crisis that has impacted the lives and livelihoods of all Manatee County residents.

The team worked countless hours for residents and business owners who needed it most.

CARES Act funding helped local businesses and nonprofits adapt to continue operating during the pandemic.

The Mask Up Manatee coalition distributed more than 50,000 custom masks for adults and children.

Deputy County Administrator Karen Stewart works during a Board of County Commissioners meeting.
Achieving Results

In early March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning, Manatee County departments helped residents and business navigate state-mandated stay-at-home health orders while maintaining record service levels.

While 2020 required a great deal of readjustment, it did not completely alter the course of our organization. Many planned projects and initiatives were completed, and our 13 departments celebrated a number of accomplishments outside of their COVID-19 response.

Despite the unprecedented challenges before us in 2020, we were able to achieve real progress and we delivered substantial results that were planned long before the pandemic.

Each of our departments worked together to support County residents and businesses.

Building and Development Services

The building and construction industry continued to meet the demands of a community growing by 10,000 people a year in 2020. Residential building permits surpassed any total from recent memory, and our Building and Development Services Department processed more than 31,000 building permits last fiscal year. Commercial building permits, issued for new businesses in unincorporated areas, experienced only a very slight decline compared to last year. In addition to those record totals, our inspections officers processed nearly 130,000 building permit inspections.

Led by director John Barnott, our Building and Development Services Department is keeping pace with an outstanding team, innovative approaches and new technology that's reshaping the way local contractors do business with our government.

At the end of the summer, Stephanie Raucci took over as Building Official for retiring CJ Dupre' who served in that role since 2008. Stephanie is a former construction business owner who will carry on the Building Department's long standing reputation for stellar customer service.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Lisa Barrett led the effort to revamp our development review process to come in-line with state mandates. Staff recently implemented Part II of the Development Review Manual to provide a streamlined process for submitting planning applications, including detailed instructions for submitting each application type, how they are to be submitted in our online services, and what is required in order for each application to be compliant with the Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan.
Local tourism figures continued to break records in 2019 when 772,500 visitors came to our family-friendly destination. Despite a global pandemic and statewide travel restrictions, our annual tourism revenues did not sustain the kind of drop we initially projected. Overall, tourism numbers declined 13 percent from last year. But our CVB team, led by Elliott Falcione, worked with local partners to ensure Manatee County continued to be a regional leader in sports events.

IMG Academy in Bradenton hosted the 2020 WNBA season over the summer when the world-class athletic training institution became home for each of the league’s 12 teams and served as the WNBA’s home court for training camp, games and housing.

Our community was also awarded the USA Baseball (under 18) World Cup which will be held in the U.S. for the first time since 1995. The County’s Premier Sports Campus hosted a one-week training camp and friendly games between the U.S. Soccer Federation (under 17 National Team) and Turkey and Netherlands National Teams in 2020.

Late in the fiscal year County Commissioners invested in an exciting new regional tourism facility, committing $5 million in tourism revenues over the next five years to the Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium. That investment will go to promote Manatee County in Mote Marine facilities, including the new Science Education Aquarium at Nathan Benderson Park.

While 2020 required the Admin team to focus many of its efforts on the pandemic response, County Administrator Cheri Coryea ensured staff also worked toward meeting her Strategic Goals for the year.

The administrative team collaborated on cross-departmental teams to digitize numerous processes and implement new agenda and travel/training authorization systems, online forms and electronic signature capabilities, resulting in expanded innovation, automation conversion, aligned department projects and updated administrative policies and procedures.

The department also welcomed Nicole Knapp as the county’s new Impact Fee Administrator, leading the way on a new impact fee update study to propose a new set of fees for new developments in the coming year.

The Information Outreach division enhanced communications related to COVID-19 as well as the County’s ongoing programs and services. The team doubled its communications on social media, leading to a 40% increase in social media followers. The website became a central point for coronavirus-related information and updates, resulting in a 42% increase in public pageviews.
Financial Management

Manatee County’s Financial Management team is among the best in the state of Florida. Led by Director Jan Brewer, FMD worked with the Administrator’s Office, the Clerk of the Court, and a group of independent professional financial advisors to present the Commission and public with a clear, thorough and transparent explanation of the County Government’s finances, reserves and cash balances in August.

That public work session was the most comprehensive, transparent presentation of government fund accounting and reporting in many years in Manatee County. It gave our taxpayers a clear understanding of how their taxes, fees, reserves and investments are planned to provide infrastructure and service to the community.

FMD also led County Commissioners on a months-long budgeting process that culminated with the 2020-21 budget. The net $740 million budget included funding for 12 new Sheriff’s Office deputies, de-escalation training for law enforcement and a host of long-needed transportation improvements throughout our county. The budget includes two new ambulance units to serve East Manatee: one based in Lakewood Ranch and another to serve Myakka City. The two additional ambulances will help shave minutes off response times to residents in those areas.

The budget invests $186 million in several high-profile road projects including the final phase of the 44th Avenue Extension, 50th Avenue improvements near the Ellenton Premium Outlets, improvements to Canal Road and Whitfield Avenue and funding to widen Moccasin Wallow Road.

Human Resources

Under first-year Director Kim Stroud and Compensation Manager Ashley Burton, our Human Resources department rolled out the first ever Total Compensation Statement and a Beyond Compensation Booklet for employees. Together those materials highlight the benefits and resources for employees related to their total rewards package, which is a critical component in recruiting and retaining high quality employees.

A large focus during the first year under Kim’s direction has been HR processes and workflow, with the support of Employment Manager Julie Bassett. Supported by the Administration’s desire to innovate and move beyond the status quo, HR made significant customer service, workflow and process changes this year that have created transparency, reduced “time to hire” and reinforced the expectation of accountability in our workforce.

With help from our IT Project Management team, Human Resources began to implement a new Human Resources Information System that will modernize the way our County recruits, hires, pays, and manages our workforce. This fully integrated system will significantly reduce the time it takes to hire a new employee, remove inefficiencies, reduce risks and automate manual and paper-based processes. HR has also begun implementing a new Performance Management system to generate a comprehensive view of the skills, abilities and attributes of employees across the organization that will support workforce planning.

The new integrated system focuses on reducing risks and automating paper-based processes.
Information Technology Services

Cyber threats are a constant risk in today’s world, especially for local governments. Manatee County’s cybersecurity team takes these threats seriously. Our cybersecurity team works daily to protect the privacy and security of our employees and the thousands of people who do online business with the County each day. In 2020 our IT cybersecurity team, led by Mike Hotaling, completed a Payment Card Industry (PCI) Compliance Certification Process. That team helped more than 200 internal PCI coordinators demonstrate proficiency and understanding of data security standards and best practices for protecting customers’ credit card data by completing interactive training.

The network for first responders is now more reliable than ever before thanks to the region’s new Public Safety Radio System. The new radio system replaced outdated radio towers and equipment in Manatee and Sarasota counties. It will improve emergency response times along the University Parkway corridor and in other areas with historically poor radio signal reception.

IT Director Paul Alexander oversaw complex negotiations among nine local fire districts to reach an interlocal agreement with the County to provide products and services to maximize their efficiencies and interoperability. The Fire Districts in Manatee County currently operate without the benefit of uniform standards. Under the new agreement the fire districts have improved economies of scale, along with greater consistency and stability of their emergency operations.

Emergency Operations and new radio system improves consistency and stability.

Neighborhood Services

Led by Director Ava Ehde, our Neighborhood Services Department made tremendous results-based strides in the area of managing contracts with local non-profit agencies who offer community programming for our residents in most need.

Our Human Services division developed a Nonprofit Agency Contract Management procedure and process for compliance and fiscal desk review of Department Nonprofit Agency files.

Manatee Libraries, now under the leadership of Elizabeth Partridge, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Rocky Bluff Library and the 50th anniversary of the Palmetto Library in early 2020. Community engagement increased in library planning with a new East County Library Task Force, a new East County Friends of the Library group and multiple community surveys. This input will help influence the Library Master Plan, to design the new East County Library and to expand the Braden River Library.

Debbie DeLeon and our Neighborhood Connections division continued to show real leadership in the community throughout 2020. That dedicated group helped 16 local neighborhoods receive Neighborhood Enhancement Grants. Makayla Lindecamp and the Connections team also led Manatee County’s Census 2020 efforts to educate residents and businesses on the importance of completing the Census.

Our outstanding Veteran Services office, led by Lee Washington, launched a Female Veteran Recognition program to recognize female veterans. The program aims to bring more awareness of Veterans Services service options and under-used benefits and services available to our female veterans.

The team’s new office offers ground level parking within steps of the building, enhancing access for veterans and seniors to the benefits they earned in service to our country.
Outdoors lovers had so many new opportunities to experience in our parks and conservation lands in 2020. Our Parks and Natural Resources team, under strong leadership from our longest-tenured director Charlie Hunsicker, worked closely with our Property Management department to bring about needed renovations and improvements at our most popular parks in north, west and east Manatee County. Parks and Property Management worked closely to keep County preserves and parks open with healthy safeguards throughout the pandemic.

Outdoor spaces at G.T. Bray Park received a complete makeover with investments from the infrastructure Sales Tax. Throughout 2020 park visitors and local leagues began to see a new soccer concession space with a meeting space, restrooms, shade canopy, and storage. Softball and baseball fields received similar upgrades along with new dugouts and backstops. There’s even new space for food trucks.

Charlie led the way on restocking the sands of Anna Maria Island during the largest beach renourishment project in a decade. The $20 million project, restored beaches along five and a half miles of Anna Maria Island, from Holmes Beach to Longboat Pass. The project helped save island properties from significant loss during Tropical Storm Eta in November. One final small section of sand along Coquina Beach will be completed in coming months.

A new family-friendly Canopy Zone opened in August, giving Robinson Preserve a new place for kids to explore boardwalks, rope bridges, climbing nets, and slides. The Canopy Zone is part of Robinson’s ongoing habitat restoration in 2020 and 2021. When it’s complete, 135 acres on the western side of the land will enhance fisheries habitat and native plants. The expansion also includes new pavilions, restrooms, kayak storage tubes, benches and trailside shade structures.

Property Management

The large majority of our voter-approved half-cent Infrastructure Sales Tax funding goes to investments in transportation maintenance and improvements. However, there’s also a substantial investment in our parks and other public facilities. Our Property Management team, led by director Charlie Bishop, leads many of those “above ground” projects, many of which were completed in 2020.

In the days before the global pandemic, our Property Management team completed improvements at Blackstone Park just in time for the Manatee Youth Soccer season. Improvements there include a new dog park, new soccer field and new concession buildings for both soccer and softball fields and six new baseball dugouts.

Parks & Grounds Operations Manager and ADA Compliance Coordinator Carmine Demilio led our grounds team in improving the accessibility of County facilities by adding ADA-compliant parking at the County’s Downtown Parking Garage, Palma Sola Park, and Manatee Beach. The team also installed ADA boat trailer parking at the Ft. Hamer boat ramp.

The County assumed ownership of the Palma Sola Boat Ramp in 2019 and spent much of the year upgrading the popular launch. Property Management’s Deborah Levenworth oversaw the project to lower and modify the docks to prevent sand buildup beneath them. The renovation project also included grading and smoothing the parking lot, improving landscaping around the grounds.
Public Safety

Despite being almost entirely consumed by COVID-19’s impacts in Manatee County during 2020, our Public Safety team accomplished plenty of notable results they had planned for the year. So much progress was made because of the calm and strong leadership style of Jake Saur who proved to be one of our strongest leaders over the past year.

Jake worked closely with Emergency Communications Chief Stacy Needham to oversee two important projects that provide a direct benefit to Manatee County residents. In February, our 911 call center launched new technology designed to pinpoint a caller’s location whenever they call us with an emergency. The new Radius Plus technology gives our 911 call operators a caller’s exact location, offers real-time traffic and video feeds and even gives them the ability to text message the 911 caller.

Stacy also headed the team that launched our new 311 call center for residents who have questions or want to request help from the County. The new system replaces 10 county call lines and simplifies efforts to receive information. The 311 call center proved to be a critical resource throughout a busy summer of state travel and business restrictions and for residents who had questions on the County’s face covering order.

Animal Services Chief Sarah Brown made the most of a very difficult situation in 2020. Animal Services strengthened its volunteer workforce to protect those in vulnerable age ranges and to better align duties with needs at the division. Animal adoptions were up by 25 percent in 2020 and many changes made because of the pandemic are slated to stay at Animal Services in order to serve the public and animals better.

Public Works

Under strong leadership of one of our newest department directors Chad Butzow, our Public Works team did not miss a beat in 2020. Our field teams continued to fill potholes, repair traffic signals, maintain County vehicles and to maintain our stormwater system with limited resources.

Many Manatee County residents have seen the progress our Public Works team made over the past year on the expansion of 44th Avenue, now renamed the Bill Galvano Parkway. With Florida Senate President Galvano’s help, Manatee County obtained $20 million in state funds over the past two years to advance construction of this long-awaited thoroughfare. In 2020 part of that funding was used to begin a new segment of the road, crossing the Braden River to eventually connect Morgan Johnson Road to Caruso Road and Creekwood Boulevard on the east side of the river. Our state legislative efforts also helped secure $3.5 million for Moccasin Wallow Road in 2020, funding that will go to widen one of north Manatee County’s busiest roads.

Also in 2020, our Public Works team took the lead on the Coquina Beach Drainage Improvement project to create more modern concrete parking areas and proper drainage at one of Manatee County’s most popular public beaches. The first phase of that project was completed late last summer and a second phase starting soon will help stormwater drain more quickly, helping to address frequent flooding and standing water at Coquina Beach.
Redevelopment and Economic Opportunity

REO’s Community Development Division, led by Denise Thomas, worked with local builders to bring on new affordable housing units for working class families through our Livable Manatee incentive program. In 2020, Livable Manatee helped bring about the construction of 308 affordable rental units and 12 new single family homes for low to moderate-income families. Revenues from our Southwest District paid impact fees for these developments in an area where the County is reinvesting in its infrastructure.

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Southwest District revenues were also used to complete a second phase of the Bayshore Gardens Parkway median pilot project. In 2020 County Commissioners approved the first infrastructure reimbursement agreement for Sandpiper Place Apartments, a clear sign that County investments in the District are starting to drive business and housing investment in that area.

Businesses continued to show strong interest in Manatee County particularly in the areas of light industrial, warehouse, and logistics. Commissioners approved Economic Development Incentives for five businesses last year, projecting 500 new jobs and $250 million in capital investment. Those businesses will create jobs that pay an average wage of $59,657 over the next five years, giving local residents more chances to find a high quality local job.

Utilities

Manatee County Utilities continued work in 2020 on several projects to improve the quality of drinking water that reaches Manatee County homes. First, we’re upgrading our water treatment filtration process by replacing aging surface water treatment filters with submerged ultrafiltration membranes. This innovative project was brought forth by Director Mike Gore and Deputy Director Mark Simpson, and when it’s complete in 2021, it will be the first of its kind in Florida.

Also over the past year, Utilities Deputy Director Jeff Goodwin oversaw a pilot program that uses a mobile centrifuge to de-water alum sludge, a byproduct of our water treatment process. The new more efficient and reliable process will be made permanent in 2021 when two centrifuges to process alum sludge will be added at our water treatment plant.

Water Division Manager Katie Gilmore began the process of updating our cross connection ordinance, manual and resolution. The proposed changes provide clarification, simplify the process, and require more properties to comply with backflow regulations.

Deputy County Administrator John Osborne took the staff lead to find a property for a centrally located county government complex to improve efficiency of services in the central and eastern parts of the county. One of the site’s first uses will be for a new law enforcement fleet maintenance facility, allowing the Sheriff to leave cramped quarters that have been MSD’s fleet maintenance facility since 1983. We explored 20 different sites for the Sheriff’s facility alone, but no others matched future needs as well as the 161-acre parcel. The site is located apart from dense residential areas and allows the proposed more intense uses to be located adjacent to the landfill.

The strategic location of the land purchase allows the County to prolong the useful life of the Lena Road Landfill by six years, a $75 million value in landfill air space to the existing landfill. Ultimately, the County will use the site as a field operations facility for water distribution, meter readers, wastewater collection, underground locator crews, equipment and materials storage, and a warehouse.

Lake Manatee, our primary source of drinking water, covers nearly 1,800 acres and holds 5.9 billion gallons of water.
Awards & Recognition

The pandemic gave opportunity for people to show what they could do and prove their decision-making abilities with changing workplaces and virtual telecommuting.

Building and Department Services Director John Barnott was presented with Accela’s “Civic Hero: Building Communities” Trendsetter Award in 2020, which highlights individuals who are leveraging technology to reimagine the citizen experience and enabling efficient processes.

Fleet Tech Supervisor David Alligood was named 2020 Technician of the Year by the Association of Equipment Management Professionals. David is the senior fleet technician and supervisor at the Manatee County Landfill. He is responsible for maintaining and repairing the county’s heavy construction equipment.

The Public Works Fleet Division was awarded for top performance including the APWA Top 50 Leading Fleets, Top 100 Fleets in the Americas with an overall score of 4th, the Association of Equipment Management Professionals prestigious Fleet Masters Award for large fleets, and the Association of Equipment Management Professionals Technician of the Year award.

Property Management’s Parks and Grounds team, led by Carmine DeMilio, was recognized for our Florida Friendly Landscaping at the Gold and Silver levels—with 6 certifications awarded and more to come. Additionally, eight of the staff became certified as Parking Enforcement Specialists.

Manatee County’s Traffic Engineering Division was awarded the Public Agency Council Achievement Award by The Institution of Transportation Engineers for their Active Arterial Management Program (AAMP).

Sarasota-Manatee Regional Traffic Management Center (RTMC) won the District 10 Institute of Transportation Engineers “2019 John W. Barr Transportation Achievement Award” for its Smart Traffic website.

2020 ACE COIN WINNERS

The ACE coin is bestowed by leaders of Manatee County Government on employees who exemplify our organization’s dedication to Accountability, Civility and Ethics (ACE). These qualities are the foundation for a principled workforce committed to excellence.

- Joy Leggett-Murphy
- Hans Wohlgebraht
- Tammy Boggs

2020 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Rich D’Alessandro was named our 2020 Manatee County Employee of the Year. Rich has been with the county for four years and works as a library assistant at the Rocky Bluff Library. His coworkers describe him as compassionate, personable and hardworking. Rich’s everyday duties include handling face-to-face transactions with patrons as well as performing circulation duties like checking in and out materials, creating new accounts, handling cash, and other related tasks. However, his favorite part of his job is the customers and coworkers he gets to interact with on a daily basis.

Building and Department Services Director John Barnott received Accela’s Civic Hero award.

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