

Leaders: Valdosta is business friendly

City responds to business column

BY KAY HARRIS
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VALDOSTA — Valdosta Mayor John Gayle says that his focus since the day he took office in early January has been improving the city's reputation in the areas of code enforcement and building inspections and permits.

"This was the reason I ran for office. Since Jan. 5, the day I was sworn in as mayor, I've been fighting to

correct issues in that area," said Gayle.

"Since then, we've only had compliments, not complaints."

Gayle wants to ensure that the word gets out in the development community that Valdosta is very business friendly and willing to work with them. The mayor was concerned when a recent Times' business column addressed the city's negative reputation in working with businesses, saying, "That's all in the past."

Gayle said the work the city is doing hasn't been

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John Gayle
Mayor of Valdosta

discussed in an open meeting, as the issues are being addressed behind the scenes by a small group of council and employees.

"You can get things done more easily in small groups than you do in large ones," said Council-

man Tim Carroll.

One of the biggest changes Carroll cited is in how contractors and developers are treated.

"Our main focus has been on customer service. Instead of someone being told they can't do some-

thing, city employees are working with them to show them what they can do if there is an issue."

Carroll has been involved for several years in working to make the city's LDR (land development regulations) more business friendly, while ensuring that the city's vision for the future is not compromised. He has been an integral part of the Chamber of Commerce SORT (special ombudsmen response team) committee, whose goals are "to identify obstacles in the business development process and facili-

tate mutually beneficial resolutions," according to the Chamber's website.

Gayle points to very recent success stories as proof that the city's departments are focused on encouraging, not discouraging, local development. He provided The Times with several emails from landowners and developers, thanking the city for its assistance.

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