

CITY OF SWEETWATER

ANNUAL
REPORT
2018



SWEETWATER CITY HALL / POLICE DEPARTMENT

500



TABLE OF CONTENT

MAYOR'S MESSAGE	4
MAYOR'S OFFICE	5
FINANCIAL SOLVENCY	6
POLICE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION	7
FINANCE DEPARTMENT	8
GRANTS OFFICE	9
POLICE DEPARTMENT	10
HUMAN RESOURCES	12
PASSPORTS	13
CAPITAL IMPROVMENTS	14
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT	16
TREE PLANTING	17
PARKS DEPARTMENT	18
HOLIDAY EVENTS	19
BUILDING DEPARTMENT	20
PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT	21
UNIVERSITIES	23
HURRICANE IRMA	24



MAYOR ORLANDO LOPEZ

Orlando Lopez is the Mayor of the City of Sweetwater. Under the city's strong mayor form of government, Mayor Lopez serves as the City Manager, overseeing all of the city's departments and finances. A successful businessman, investor, and former member of the Sweetwater City Commission, Mayor Lopez brings a wealth of business and institutional knowledge to his role. He is dedicated to aligning all city efforts to the University City vision and to modernize the deployment of municipal services.

A natural entrepreneur, Mayor Lopez credits his keen understanding of budgets and finances to having being immersed in his family's business from an early age. As an adult, he went on to run several successful businesses, including most recently real estate investments. In 1999, Lopez moved to Sweetwater and shortly after, became involved in the community. His passion for public service led him to run for city commissioner in 2001. After serving 14 years, he was elected Mayor of Sweetwater on May 12, 2015.

Mayor Lopez was born in Miami Beach, Florida, and is the son of Cuban immigrants. He grew up mostly in Westchester and graduated from Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. He enjoys spending time in the Florida Keys surrounded by family and friends. He has been a resident of Sweetwater for 17 years and continues to live at the same address with his wife Belkys, step-daughter Abigail and their dog Luna.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

The principal focus of my administration has been on achieving true professionalism and accountability, and on fixing the city's historically flawed budgetary practices. To this end, we have reached out to State and Federal Agencies to ensure best practices are standard throughout all city departments. The results in just three, short years have been outstanding.

Upon taking office, we ascertained that the city had insufficient operating capital, no reserves, and over \$4M in past-due debt. In effect, Sweetwater was broke. We quickly implemented a vast array of cost cutting measures. Among these, the city quickly shed approximately 30% of a previously bloated and unnecessary labor force all without a loss of productivity or resident services. Over the course of my tenure, my administration has continued to find savings wherever possible, most recently with the hiring of a purchasing agent to centralize and coordinate all purchases.

The end result of all these measures is that the City of Sweetwater today has over \$3M in reserves and has paid off the previous past-due debts of over \$4million. After teetering on the edge of insolvency, the city is now financially sound and well-run.

Upon taking office, we also ascertained that the city's police department was in a state of decay and disorder with extremely low morale. With fewer than 25 full-time police officers, virtually no modern policies to speak of, and woefully inadequate command and control, the department was in jeopardy of losing its state certification. Shock therapy was in order.

The only remedy was to start fresh. To this end we brought in a police command staff comprised of retired, highly experienced and decorated officers from a neighboring, large municipality. This new command staff proceeded to modernize and restructure the police department from top to bottom. Today the police department has approximately 45 full-time officers and has achieved full accreditation by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation on its first attempt, a feat that is nearly unheard of.

The police department is now a completely different institution. It is professionally run, well-staffed, with policies and procedures in place, and the proud holder of CoLEA accreditation.

Being a City of Sweetwater Police Officer today is an honor and a privilege.

The City of Sweetwater government today is a wholly different, more efficient, more professional, and better organization than it was in May 2015 when we took office. With the help of my staff and our residents, we hope to finish the process and leave the City of Sweetwater with a government that is second to none.

MAYOR'S OFFICE

The nerve center of the City is the Mayor's Office, managed by Deputy City Manager and Chief of Staff Ralph Ventura and Assistant City Manager Roberto Herrada. The Mayor's Office coordinates duties and tasks between and among the various City departments and offices in order to ensure the timely and efficient provision of vital and necessary services to the community.

The Mayor's Office is also responsible for community outreach and constituent services.



Ralph Ventura, JD

Chief of Staff & Deputy City Manager

Ralph Ventura, JD, is the Deputy City Manager and Chief of Staff. In these roles, he assists the mayor in the day-to-day management of the city and is the mayor's chief strategist. He is a graduate of the University of Miami Law School, class of '90, and the Florida State University, class of '86, where he obtained a B.A. in International Affairs. He is a member in good standing of the Florida Bar, the Bar of the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and the Bar of the US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Mr. Ventura previously served as city attorney for the City of Sweetwater from 2007 until 2015.



Robert Herrada, MPA

Assistant City Manager

Robert Herrada is the Assistant City Manager and reports directly to the Mayor and to the Chief of Staff/Deputy City Manager. He assists in managing a variety of the city's daily operations ranging from departmental oversight to large-scale economic development initiatives. Additionally, Mr. Herrada oversees the city's Grants Division as editor and strategist for grant applications, along with supervising procurement processes, strategic planning, and managing governmental relations. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from FIU and a Bachelor's Degree in International Affairs from Rollins College in Central Florida.



FINANCIAL SOLVENCY

We are proud to say that the City's financial status today is sound and healthy, a situation remarkably different from what we originally found.

In May of 2015 at the beginning of this administration, the City had insufficient operating capital, no reserves, and over \$4M in past-due debt owed to banks, pension funds, and the State of Florida. In effect, Sweetwater was broke. In response, the Lopez Administration implemented a vast array of cost cutting measures. Chief among these was a reduction in the workforce. The city quickly shed approximately 30% of a previously bloated and unnecessary labor force all without a loss of productivity or resident services resulting in a huge savings to residents. Since then, the Lopez Administration has continued to find savings wherever possible, most recently with the hiring of a purchasing agent to centralize and coordinate all purchases in order to streamline the process and obtain the most competitive prices possible.

The end result of all these measures is that the City of Sweetwater today has over \$3M in reserves and has paid off the previous past-due debts. After teetering on the edge of insolvency, the City is now financially sound and well-run.



POLICE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION

Mayor Lopez took over a Police Department in an extreme state of dysfunction and disorder, with very low morale, and fewer than 25 full-time police officers. The department had virtually no modern policies to speak of, woefully inadequate command and control and was in jeopardy of actually losing its state certification.

The new police command staff comprised of retired, highly experienced and decorated officers from a neighboring, large municipality proceeded to modernize and restructure the police department from top to bottom. Though their goal was lofty and many doubted its viability, the new command staff ultimately succeeded beyond anyone's best case expectations. This goal was both aided and speeded by the parallel goal of obtaining accreditation.

The Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc. has established a process for an in-depth review of every aspect of the agency's organization, management, operations, and administration to including: establishment of agency goals and objectives with provisions for periodic updating; re-evaluation of whether agency resources are being used in accord with agency goals, objectives, and mission; re-evaluation of agency policies and procedures, especially as documented in the agency's written directive system; correction of internal deficiencies and inefficiencies before they become public problems; and, crucially for Sweetwater, the opportunity to re-organize without the appearance of personal attacks.

In essence, CFA accreditation standards provide norms against which agency performance can be objectively measured and monitored over time to provide consistent and effective deployment of manpower and uniformity of services.

It is extremely difficult for any department to achieve certification on its first attempt, and many that do are approved with reservations. That the Sweetwater Police Department was able to achieve this in less than twenty-four months and during the middle of a financial crisis that imperiled the City's continued viability is impressive. That it was able to achieve this without any reservations at all is nearly unheard of, given the circumstances.

The police department is now a completely different institution. Today the police department has approximately 45 full-time officers and has achieved full accreditation by CFA. It has adopted and employs the very best practices in the profession for a department of its size and is professionally run, well-staffed, with policies and procedures in place. Being a City of Sweetwater Police Officer today is an honor and a privilege.

This transformation is directly a result of the process of seeking and obtaining CFA certification.



FINANCE DEPARTMENT

The City's Finance Department compiles and administers a budget of over \$25M. It is responsible for ensuring that all vendors and employees are timely paid and that all outstanding debts are timely collected. The Finance Department played an even more crucial role during the City's financial crisis of 2015-2017, a crisis so dire the department generated cashflow reports on a daily basis for consideration by Mayor Lopez and his staff. Today, that is no longer the case.

The City's financial status is healthy and sound by any measure. Today, the City of Sweetwater has over \$3M in reserves and has paid off the previous past-due debts. After teetering on the edge of insolvency, the City is now financially sound and well-run. The newly hired finance director, Carlos Cintron has used his decades of forensic accounting experience to bring financial stability to the City's finance department and to ensure the use of best practices in the field.



Carlos E. Cintron

Finance Director

Carlos Cintron has a long and distinguished career in public service attaining the rank of captain in the US Army and serving as a supervisory special agent and auditor with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) until his recent retirement. Mr. Cintron also holds a Bachelor of Business Accounting from Central University of Bayamon in Puerto Rico and a Master of Business Administration from the Oklahoma City University. He is also an Adjunct Professor in the Florida International University College of Law.



Anny Chez

Deputy Finance Director

Anny Chez is the City's Deputy Finance Director. In this role, Mrs. Chez supports the Finance Director in updating the City's finance procedures and ensuring the adoption of best practices in the field. Mrs. Chez has been with the City of Sweetwater for a period of eleven years and is a Certified Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable Manager with over 25 years of experience in Banking and Accounting.



Cesar Villafañá

Purchasing Agent

Never before in its history has Sweetwater had a purchasing agent, until now. As purchasing agent, Cesar Villafañá strives to unify and streamline the City's purchases in order to achieve and maximize economies of scale and also to ensure transparency in the purchasing process. Mr. Villafañá, has extensive experience in law enforcement, both in Puerto Rico and working for the US Department of Justice. Mr. Villafañá retired in 2010 and entered the private sector as a senior anti-money laundering and fraud prevention auditor until October 2018 when he joined the City of Sweetwater as purchasing agent. Mr. Villafañá is a graduate of Garrett Theological Seminary in Northwestern University.

GRANTS OFFICE

THE GRANTS OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Applying for and seeking new funding opportunities
- The daily administration of federal, state, and local grants for a variety of city-wide projects, programs, and capital improvement projects.
- Ensure that the City is reimbursed for all grant-related expenses in a timely manner
- Coordinate budgets, financial reports, reimbursements, and payments.
- Oversee the completion of capital improvement projects including drainage and roadway improvements, park improvements, and public building renovations.
- Meet with elected officials and agency representatives of funding sources to seek and apply for funds from the local, state and federal levels.
- Conduct all required procurement procedures for project implementation, includes creating Request for Proposals, advertising, hosting pre-bid conferences, scoring bid packages, and executing contracts.
- Review, edit and approve city contracts that are grant related.
- Responsible for managing the documentation process pertaining to post-Hurricane recovery efforts and submitting all documentation to FEMA to ensure the City is reimbursed.

Ian Vallecillo

Grants Administrator

As the City's Grants Administrator, Ian Vallecillo writes, manages, and administers all grants as well as some of the grant-funded projects and also assists with the procurement of contractors to complete grant-funded projects. Since 2017, he has successfully obtained nearly \$5M in grant funds into the City and managed several successful projects including the installation of 500 new shade trees, the installation of a comprehensive stormwater drainage system, the acquirement of bullet proof vests for every single Sweetwater Police officer, and the City's recovery from Hurricane Irma.

Mr. Vallecillo holds bachelors' degrees in both political science and international relations from Florida International University and is also a certified grant writer.



POLICE DEPARTMENT

At the beginning of the Lopez Administration in May of 2015, the Police Department was in an extreme state of dysfunction and disorder with very low morale culminating with previous chief of police and his entire police command staff having abandoned their posts. Leaderless with only 23 full-time police officers, virtually no modern policies to speak of, and woefully inadequate command and control, the department was in jeopardy of actually losing its state certification. Shock therapy was in order.

Believing it is impossible to reform a dysfunctional institution with people who are the product of the dysfunction, the only remedy was to start fresh with new officers at the top. Mayor Lopez hired a police command staff comprised of retired, highly experienced and decorated officers from a neighboring, large municipality. This new command staff proceeded to modernize and restructure the police department from top to bottom. This shock therapy and restructuring required that all police officers be retrained from the beginning as if they were rookie officers, regardless of age or years in service. Though

their goal was lofty, the new command staff succeeded beyond anyone's best case expectations.

The police department is now a completely different institution. Today the police department has approximately 45 full-time officers and has achieved full accreditation by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc. on its first attempt, a feat that is nearly unheard of. CFA accreditation establishes that the Sweetwater Police Department has adopted and employs the very best practices in the profession for a department of its size. It is professionally run, well-staffed, with policies and procedures in place, and the proud holder of CFA accreditation. Being a City of Sweetwater Police Officer today is an honor and a privilege.



POLICE DEPARTMENT



Placido Diaz
Chief of Police

Mayor Lopez's goal of reforming and modernizing the City's Police Department could only be accomplished with outsiders who would bring with them a fresh approach. Chief Diaz was a crucial in achieving this goal. A veteran of the City of Miami Police Department, Chief Diaz brings over 25 years' experience and a wealth of hard-earned knowledge to the City's Police Department. Under his guidance, the Police Department has shed its inept past practices and achieved in full accreditation by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation on its first attempt, a feat that is unheard of for a department that had previously been riddled with incompetence. Under this leadership, the department has effectively been reborn.

Chief Diaz holds a Masters' Degree from St. Thomas University and a Bachelors' from Barry University. He has been the City's Police Chief since May, 2015.



HUMAN RESOURCES

Under Mayor Lopez's Administration, the Human Resources Office has been completely revamped and professionalized. For the first time in the City's history, both the HR Manager and the Deputy Manager hold Certificates in Human Resource Management from the Florida International University College of Business. The HR Office has updated and rationalized all personnel files, streamlined the processing of workers' compensation claims, and updated and systematize the file retention systems in order to fully comply with the document retention policies of the State of Florida. The HR Office has also coordinated with the Mayor's Office and the Finance Department for collective bargaining sessions and employee disciplinary matters.



Lourdes D Mantecon, JD
Human Resource Manager

Previously in private practice as an attorney, Lourdes Mantecon, JD is the City of Sweetwater Human Resources Manager. Ms. Mantecon holds a certificate in Human Resource Management from the Florida International University College of Business, a B.B.A in Business Economics from Georgia State University, class of 2011 and a Law Degree from Nova Southeastern University, class of 2014. She is an active member in good standing of the Florida Bar, and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.



Lorena Uribe, BS
Deputy Human Resources Manager

Lorena Uribe is the Deputy Human Resources Manager. In this role, Ms. Uribe assists the HR Manager. Ms. Uribe holds a certificate in Human Resource Management Certificate from the Florida International University College of Business and a BS in Criminal Justice from Florida Gulf Coast University, class of 2012.



PASSPORT OFFICE

As a public service to its residents and the surrounding community, the City of Sweetwater maintains a Passport Office under the auspices of the United States Department of State.

Staffed by eight certified agents all of whom are dedicated to helping U.S. citizens obtain their American passports, the Passport Office accepts and certifies all materials necessary to process applications and ensures that the applications are complete and correctly submitted. It is also the only one-stop-shop in the county where individuals can apply for passports, obtain photos, and purchase money orders all under one roof.

During the fiscal year 2018, the Sweetwater Passport Agency processed 18,103 passport applications and took 9,672 passport photos for applicants. The Office has received numerous awards including two certificates of superior achievement for a perfect score on an acceptance facility oversight compliance inspections, a certificate of appreciation for excellent fraud referral, and a certificate of achievement for acceptance facility "Top 10" producer. It is generally considered one of the most active and passport offices in the county and one of the very best.



Amelia Chao
Passport Office Manager

Amelia Chao has been an employee of the City of Sweetwater since June 2008 where she has worked as a summer camp counselor, Passport Agent, and since 2015 manager of the Passport Office. As manager, her responsibilities are to oversee all facility operations and ensure the office and personnel are complying with the program requirements. Since Amelia's arrival, the Passport Office has received numerous awards including two certificates of superior achievement for a perfect score on an acceptance facility oversight compliance inspection, a certificate of appreciation for excellent fraud referral, and a certificate of achievement for acceptance facility "Top 10" producer. Mrs. Chao is a graduate of Miami-Dade College and is currently pursuing a higher degree through the University of Florida.



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

With the safety and health of our residents being top priorities, Mayor Orlando Lopez's administration has embarked on a robust annual capital improvement plan. The Administration's mission is to bring about upgrades and maintenance, many long overdue, to our community's facilities and parks. This on-going capital improvements plan will make our community safer and enrich our community pride.



THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS WERE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH THIS ADMINISTRATION'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN DURING 2018-19:

- 700+ linear feet of citywide sidewalk repairs.
- 40+ blocks of roadways improvements/repairs throughout the city in the last fiscal year.
- A new stormwater drainage system installed in the Southern half of the city between SW4 Street and Flagler, and SW 109 and 112 Avenues.
- Remodeled Ronselli Park (bathrooms, floor and walls).
- Ronselli Park playground upgrades (benches, basketball hoops, water fountains and blue mulch).
- Carlow Park playground upgrades (benches, water fountains, garbage cans and blue mulch).
- Linear Park lights converted to LED to improve illumination and safety.
- 500+ trees planted throughout the City to improve air quality and facilitate pedestrian traffic.
- Remodeled the exterior tile (walls) of City Hall.
- Remodeled the exterior walk way tile of City Hall (in progress).
- Remodeled City Hall Commission Chamber (floor, seats, lighting, and walls).
- Installed a modern-day security system for all of City Hall (cameras, key card doors).



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The Public Works Department is involved in nearly every aspect of Sweetwater's infrastructure, from paving roads to painting walls. With a staff of over 18 full-time employees Public Works ensures that City buildings and property function properly. The Director, Alan M. Abolila is a hand-on director who is often seen working side-by-side with his employees and who demonstrates a keen interest both the aesthetics and the functionality of his department's projects.



Alan M. Abolila

Public Works Director and Interim Parks Director

A graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a degree in Business Administration with an emphasis on economics and marketing, Alan M. Abolila is the City's Public Works Director and also its interim Parks Director. In his spare time, Mr. Abolila enjoys boating, tennis, racquetball and spending time with family.



TREE PLANTING



In order to facilitate an environment where the residents, visitors and stakeholders of our community may enjoy more walkable routes and minimize energy, use City staff conducted extensive research on forestry programs implemented in other urban areas. As a direct result, in the last three years 440 trees were added to the City increasing the City's urban canopy, and providing shade as well as aesthetic beauty. These improvements have resulted in the City of Sweetwater having the honor of being named a Tree City USA for the first time in its history.

Residents, businesses and students alike should be part of an atmosphere that speaks to its reputation as a sustainable and environment-friendly place. The City of Sweetwater hopes to be a model in the South Florida region by implementing this idea as well as integrating it with our partner university.

The trees have been mostly planted along the City's most driven and walked roadways which include along, West Flagler street from 109th Ave to 114th Ave, SW 102nd Ave, SW 106th Ave, SW 109th Ave, SW 110th Ave, SW 112th Ave, SW 113th Ave, SW 114th Ave, SW 115th Ave, NW 114th Ave, NW 17th Street, SW 2nd St, SW 4th St, SW 5h, SW 6th St and SW 7th Terrace.

The species of trees that we have planted have been:

LIVE OAK TREES

SILVER BUTTONWOOD

GREEN BUTTONWOOD

WILD TAMARIND

ACACIA

SATINLEAF

CRAPE MYRTLE TREES

ROYAL POINCIANA

TABEBUIA

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Parks Department oversees four City parks, their maintenance, activities, and rentals. The Parks Department, with assistance of Public Works, also plans, prepares and executes all arrangements for the City's July 4th celebration, Halloween haunted house, and Christmas festival. The Department also coordinates all events at City Parks. The Department is lead day-to-day by its Assistant Director, Yuraima Montenegro, with supervision from Alan Abolilla.



Yuraima Montenegro
Assistant Parks Director

Starting as the administrative assistant to a previous director, Yuraima Montenegro is a hand-on supervisor who prides herself on knowing all facets of her department and matters that are currently scheduled.



HOLIDAY EVENTS

Under Mayor Orlando Lopez's tenure, the City has traditionally hosted a variety of holiday events for its residents. Chief among these are the July 4th Fireworks Celebration, the Halloween Haunted House, and the Christmas Party and toy giveaway to children. These events are well-attended and give the public a chance to interact with their neighbors and with City staff and elected officials as well.



BUILDING DEPARTMENT

The Building Department is responsible for overseeing most construction projects within City limits, excluding roads, drainage, and certain minor projects. To this end, the Department is headed by a Building Director and also comprised of building inspectors, building clerks, the Zoning Official and the Building Official.

The Department prides itself on accessibility and speedy service. Applicants ranging from homeowners to major developers can readily gain access to the Building Director and staff in order to obtain guidance and input on their projects all the while ensuring public safety and compliance with zoning codes.

The Department is headed by Manuel A Salazar. During his tenure, Mr. Salazar has transitioned the Department into the digital age. He has initiated a program to digitize all the department records in order to enable quicker and more accurate access to records. He has also implemented a system of redundant backups to cloud storage in order to ensure the long-term safeguarding of these valuable documents.

The Building Department is mostly self-funded through building fees.



Manuel A Salazar
Building Director

Besides performing as the chief mechanical plans reviewer and inspector for the City of Sweetwater; Mr. Salazar is the Building Director for the City of Sweetwater Building and Zoning Department. Mr. Salazar has spent approximately thirty years in the construction trade. He has worked on everything from residential, commercial and high rise commercial construction. Specializing in high rise smoke control testing, he has worked on many buildings in the South Florida area.



PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS

Mayor Orlando Lopez is proud to be presiding over a construction boom and series of vital capital improvements that are unprecedented in the City of Sweetwater's history. These construction projects represent an injection into the city's economy, as they will be occupied by a variety of new businesses and offices that will generate new commerce and jobs. This large-scale economic development is largely attributable to the efficient and personalized attention granted to the business community by Mayor Lopez's administration. From the Mayor's Office to the re-structured Building Department, Mayor Lopez's Sweetwater has earned a reputation for seamless execution of projects from inception to close-out.

Most of these new buildings are "mixed-use," a land use designation that allows for a combination of offices, residential and commercial uses. Our administration is extremely proud of the construction of three buildings near the Dolphin Mall (between NW 14 Street and 25th Street, and 107th Ave and 112th Ave) that combine offices with commercial establishments. Additionally, a hotel and University are anticipated to be built in the following years within this same area.

In the Southern area of the city (between Flagler Street and SW 8th Street, and 107th Avenue to 109th Avenue), there are currently two high-rise, mixed-use buildings geared towards University students and faculty under construction. In addition, construction of a third building is expected to begin in the year 2020. This is a total of three new University student/faculty buildings that will revitalize the city and boost its economy.

UNIVERSITY BRIDGE RESIDENCES SWEETWATER

Another milestone for our University City: A monumental 20-story, 886-unit residential tower geared towards university students and staff broke ground this year. This project is located West of 109th avenue between SW 7 Terrace and SW 7th Street. Amenities will include a resort-style pool and a rooftop sundeck with dining areas, a yoga lawn and a performance stage. The building will augment Sweetwater's retail mix through its 7,000 square feet for retail stores or restaurants. The expected completion date is summer 2020.

Identity Building



IDENTITY RESIDENCES

Redefining the skyline in the heart of Sweetwater, the 170-foot-tall, 15-story high-rise building includes 187 fully-furnished one-, two-, and four-bedroom apartments. Located at 400 SW 107th Ave, the 470,487-square-foot project features five levels of secured structured parking, commercial spaces, a colonnade with bus stop, pool deck and landscaped courtyards. This building has an expected completion date of fall 2019.



DOLPHIN PARK COMMERCE III

Dolphin Park of Commerce III is comprised of retail showrooms and offices set in a two-story building adjacent to NW 17th street and 110th Avenue, plus three one-story buildings of light industrial warehouse space. Situated within walking distance of the Dolphin Mall and the International Mall, the project is slated to have 32,500 sq. ft. of Storefront Retail/Showrooms & Retail/Offices, 57,600 sq. ft. of finished street level warehouses with 35% finished offices, and spaces available from 1,290 square feet. Construction has been completed for this project.



DOLPHIN PROFESSIONAL CENTRE

The Dolphin Professional Centre is an elegant, modern commercial condominium three (3) story building located at the intersection of NW 17th Street and 110th Avenue. The project is slated to have 54,000 sq. ft. of Class A offices, 26,000 sq. ft. of ground-floor retail and spaces available from 700 square feet. This project will feature retail and restaurant spaces, offices with unique balconies and outdoor dining. This project, scheduled for completion in the summer of 2019, is a remarkable expression of modern design that also includes a variety of condominium options.



RESIDENCES AT DOLPHIN CITI CENTER

The Residences at Dolphin CitiCenter is a mixed-use, modern, eight-story, 113-unit luxury building located at the intersection of NW 17th Street and 108th Avenue. This building is expected to satisfy a strong market for short and medium-term stays in the area with several studio options. It will also include commercial space on the building's ground floor. This project is expected to be completed by the first half of 2021.



UNIVERSITIES & HIGHER EDUCATION

With nearly 10 universities, colleges or trade schools located within its boundaries or within a two-mile radius, the City of Sweetwater has rightfully earned this title of University City.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Located just across the Tamiami Trail, the City of Sweetwater has enjoyed a fruitful and long-standing partnership with neighboring FIU. The Lopez administration has continued internships and academic collaborations, leveraging investments of historic proportions through projects like the University Bridge Residences.

KEISER UNIVERSITY

Keiser University is a private, regionally-accredited, not-for-profit University serving nearly 20,000 students pursuing associates through doctoral degrees. Over 60% of Keiser University students graduate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and healthcare fields, providing the talented workforce necessary for South Florida.

Keiser University has partnered with the City of Sweetwater to help increase the quality of the lives of its residents. This multifaceted partnership has been highly beneficial to the community through the provision of programs for Senior citizens, volunteering for community food distributions, and internship programs where students offer their professional skills to the City while gaining invaluable experience.

SAN IGNACIO UNIVERSITY

Yet another addition to Sweetwater's educational niche, San Ignacio University ("SIU") recently purchased a lot located at 1401 NW 110 Avenue in Sweetwater. SIU is planning to build an 8-floor building with a capacity to serve more than 400 students, including international students.

Based in Lima, Peru, SIU is part of the San Ignacio de Loyola Corporation, a prestigious institution with almost 50 years of experience in the field of education and more than 260 partners throughout the world. San Ignacio's academic offerings include: Associate of Science in Culinary Arts, Associate of Arts in Business, Associate of Arts in Hospitality, Bachelor of Arts in Business, Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality, Masters of Business Administration, Masters of Education and Masters of Hospitality Management.

URBE UNIVERSITY

URBE University, which established itself in Sweetwater in 2019, offers Bachelor's and Master's Degrees to adult learners. The University also offers classes for professional and personal growth. Educational programs are offered on campus and online. In addition to the classrooms, the University's space will be utilized for administrative services to assist students with their various needs.

CESAR VALLEJO COLLEGE

Comprised of 11 branches throughout Peru, Cesar Vallejo College opened its City of Sweetwater location in 2018. Cesar Vallejo College offers Bachelor's degrees in Management and International Business, making Cesar Vallejo College a premier educational institution for entrepreneurs. Cesar Vallejo seeks to train professionals with entrepreneurial attitude through the rendering of services and development of activities of service to their communities.

GOLD COAST SCHOOLS

Gold Coast University is Florida's leading provider of classroom and online career in Real Estate, Insurance, Construction, Mortgage, and Appraisal Course. Gold Coast has helped more than a million students obtain and renew their professional licenses through classroom and online learning.

UNIVERSAL CAREER SCHOOL

Universal Career School (UCS) is an institution dedicated to developing beauty and/or spa professionals that enter their fields with the knowledge needed to secure a job. UCS offers beauty programs in Cosmetology, Barber, Full Specialist, Nail Technology, Skin Care and more.

HURRICANE IRMA

On the morning of September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck Florida as a Category 4 storm. Irma was the strongest observed in the Atlantic in terms of maximum sustained winds since Wilma, and the strongest storm on record to exist in the open Atlantic region. Irma caused widespread and catastrophic damage throughout its long lifetime, particularly in the northeastern Caribbean and the Florida Keys. But Sweetwater was prepared.

In the days before Irma struck, Mayor Orlando Lopez implemented the City's hurricane emergency plan. This included:

- Activating the Police Department's Emergency Operations Command;
- Changing the Police Department's scheduling to alpha/bravo shifts;
- Securing all City buildings to ensure survival in case of a direct strike;
- Distribution of sandbags to residents in order to control flooding;
- Ensure all City generators were properly working and fueled;
- Coordinate with all City departments to ensure the documenting of all extra costs and expenses, including employee hours, to secure FEMA reimbursement;
- Securing of all crucial data to ensure the continuation of government functions;
- Coordinate with the Governor's office.

After the storm passed, Mayor Lopez and his staff were busy on the streets of Sweetwater clearing debris, draining flooding, and distributing food and water to residents in need. As a result of all these actions, the City weathered the storm with minimal damage.

These actions were made possible because of Mayor Lopez's careful administration of City funds. Even though the previous administration had left the City with broke and with no reserves, Mayor Lopez was able to accumulate sufficient reserves to provide vital and necessary services during this terrible storm.

