

**Media Contact:**

Wayne Larson, St. Johns County Director of Public Affairs
Cell Phone: 904-426-2128
Office Phone: 904-209-0542
Email: wlarson@sjcfl.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**St. Johns County Celebrates Opening of \$4.6 Million Utilities Lab with Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony and Open House**

ST. JOHNS COUNTY, Florida, November 14, 2023 – Today, [St. Johns County held a ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) to celebrate the completion of the new \$4.6 million St. Johns County Utilities Lab. The new facility includes lab-specific, corrosion-resistant cabinets and countertops, a walk-in cooler for sample storage, lab sinks with de-ionized water on tap, and a backup generator for continuous power.

The ceremony began with remarks from St. Johns County Utilities Department (SJCUD) Interim Director Neal Shinkre.

"It's all about the customers for us at the Utilities Department," Shinkre said. "This project will provide a favorable return on investment for our customers and really reassures our customers that we invest in smart and efficient projects."

"We have a lab to make sure you and the 57,000 customers in this County have safe, reliable, clean drinking water," District 5 Commissioner Henry Dean said. "That's the key to all of this: safe drinking water that's sustainable and reliable when you turn the tap on, so you don't even have to think about it."

A ceremonial ribbon-cutting was conducted, which included Commissioner Dean, County Administrator Joy Andrews, Deputy County Administrator Brad Bradley, Interim Assistant County Administrator Colin Groff, Public Works Director Greg Caldwell, Interim Director Shinkre, and Utilities Environmental Division Manager Tony Cubbedge.

The new Utilities Lab will conduct 23,000 tests on water and wastewater samples for all the facilities throughout the County. The new lab's location will allow it to operate 24/7 and safeguard it from severe weather events. The previous Utilities Lab was located on Anastasia Island and was impacted during severe weather events due to the lab residing in a flood zone.

Matthews DCCM (formerly Matthews Design Group) and Fisher Koppenhafer were the design consultants on the project, with DiMare leading construction. This \$4.6 million project was funded by SJCUD Capitol Improvement Project Funds.

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Photo: From left to right, St. Johns County Utilities Interim Director Neal Shinkre, Deputy County Administrator Brad Bradley, Public Works Director Greg Caldwell, Commissioner Henry Dean, County Administrator Joy Andrews, Interim Assistant County Administrator Colin Groff, Utilities Environmental Division Manager Tony Cubbedge