

City Operations and Public Works

Context

The category of City Operations includes a range of essential core functions that affect all departments, particularly Information Technology and Human Resources. The Public Works Department, in taking care of everything from trash and recycling pickup to street repairs, interfaces with more residents on a daily basis than perhaps any other City department. Residents have shared concerns about customer service and ease of access to public information held by City Hall. Sidewalk and road maintenance is also a perennial issue, particularly the timeline for obtaining repairs and the lack of transparency about the sequence in which repairs are made. The administration can improve residents' satisfaction by emphasizing customer service, establishing systems to make public information readily accessible, and facilitating improved public communication around public works repairs and maintenance.

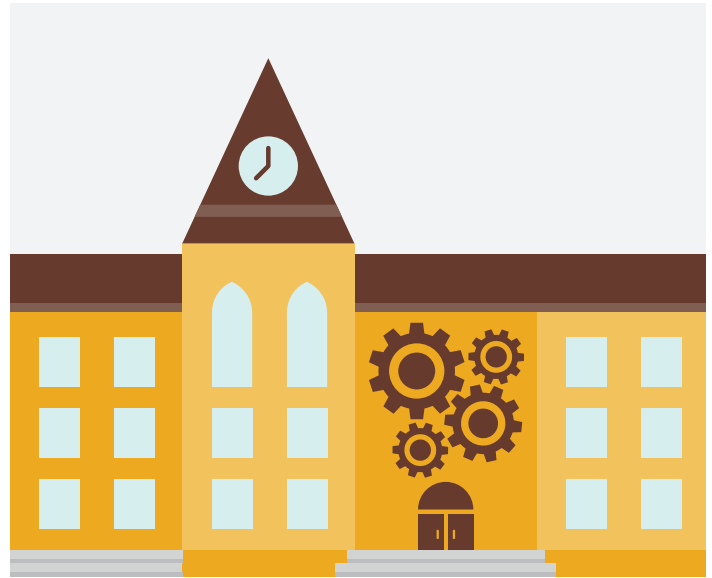
First 100 Days

Recommendation 1: Provide equitable access to City jobs.

Create the expectation that all jobs, internal and external, will be posted on the City's online jobs posting system.

Recommendation 2: Establish the expectation that departments dealing directly with residents prioritize customer service.

Distrust in government is often built on not just government's inability to address a problem but government's inability to communicate effectively about why it can or cannot address a problem. City



employees should respond in a timely manner to resident requests, even if the answer is simply further information, reasons for delay, or an accurate timeline.

Recommendation 3: Plan for labor contract negotiations.

Contracts with two of the City's largest unions will expire in 2020. The negotiation of these contracts allows for a review of policy options like updating job specs and adopting the state Municipal Employees' Retirement System pension program. The administration should work collaboratively with the unions to ensure that the personnel structure meets the City's needs.

Two Years

Recommendation 1: Establish a communications protocol for City employees.

Begin planning for a uniform ticket-tracking system for all requests by residents. Deploy a callback

system for departments with call queues, and impose a uniform voicemail policy so that City voicemail identifies the recipients and uses out-of-office notifications. Update the City website and implement a process for resolving technical issues that impede reaching that goal. Continue digitization of City operations, including requests for bulk trash pickup. Explore new ways to inform residents of impactful City activities in their neighborhoods.

Recommendation 2: Create a transparent tracking system for repairs to City property, including street and sidewalk maintenance.

There is currently no system for finding out where one's request is in the queue or for estimating a timeframe for completion. This information should be accessible to those who request a service, as well as to the public, so that overall progress can be tracked by anyone interested.

Recommendation 3: Evaluate the current system of single-stream recycling and expand recycling.

Improve public awareness about recyclable materials. Assess and seek to resolve underlying causes of the high cost of recycling in our current single-stream system, which combines plastics, paper, metal, glass and other materials in a single curbside bin. Extend recycling to all City departments, all parks, and the New Haven Public Schools.

Recommendation 4: Ensure strong ethics and conflict-of-interest rules.

Review existing rules and processes as they apply to City staff and members of boards and commissions, and refine them as needed.

Recommendation 5: Audit capital equipment and the vehicle fleet.

Assess usage needs for equipment and vehicles. Examine the option of paying for vehicles out of

general operating funds instead of in the capital budget, since the equipment and vehicles last for a shorter time than the ten-year bond repayment period. Explore the cost-effectiveness of electrifying City vehicles.

Recommendation 6: Convene regional mayors for shared planning.

Explore how to save costs through shared services, such as animal shelters, public works, and public health.

Recommendation 7: Review the security posture of City Hall and the Hall of Records.

Review security protocols to ensure the safety of staff, elected officials, and the public at City Hall. Evaluate the safety of City staff and the Board of Alders during sessions.

Recommendation 8: Formalize an appeals process for blight violations issued by the Department of Public Works.

The process is already mostly designed and simply needs to be reviewed and finalized.

Longer Term

Recommendation 1: Assess data access and capacity for internal technological support.

Explore unifying Police, Board of Education, and Information Technology staff for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Create a cross-trained on-call rotation for the IT Department, which is already prepared to support different technologies across departments, in case of an emergency. Review the City's cybersecurity posture to ensure that City departments are protected from ransomware and other network threats. Improve data sharing and real-time access to data across departments.

Recommendation 2: Research road maintenance funding needs.

Evaluate whether funding is sufficient to keep City roads in a reasonable state of repair. Work with the Board of Alders to allocate increased funds if needed.

Recommendation 3: Simplify the online system for tax payments.

Most residents avoid the cost and hassle of using the current online platform. An improved electronic process would save dollars, since online payments are cheaper to handle than in-person payments and will lead to more individuals paying their taxes. If possible, the City should set up a single portal for all outstanding taxes and citations.

Recommendation 4: Use automated license plate readers to find out-of-state vehicles.

Collaborate with the state to make sure that vehicles are properly registered at their local addresses. Following Waterbury's example, identify residents who should pay the car tax, and enforce payment of unpaid taxes.

Recommendation 5: Create a municipal utility to buy power in bulk from area utilities and provide an affordable municipal broadband service.

This would have the added advantage of allowing City residents and businesses to buy more low-cost renewable energy than they do now and would serve as an alternative and/or interim step toward Community Choice Aggregation (see Economic Development recommendations), which requires state legislation to implement. Once the relevant state lawsuit is resolved, explore options to allow high-quality, low-cost internet access across the City.

Recommendation 6: Explore establishing a stormwater authority.

Such an entity would ensure the City's ability to effectively manage stormwater and related fees. Evaluate the feasibility of such a service, including a review of any required exemptions or rebates for small nonprofits.



Photo: Sarah Miller