City of San Luis Obispo
Maintenance Division Organization Review

May 14, 2024

bakertilly

May 14, 2024

Matt Horn
Public Works Director
City of San Luis Obispo
990 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Dear Mr. Horn:

Baker Tilly is pleased to transmit this report summarizing our assessment of the City of San Luis Obispo's Public Works Maintenance Division. The focus of this assessment was to evaluate the organization structure, work practices, and staffing of the Division as well as to provide recommendations for improvement.

The report presents our observations as well as a set of proposed recommendations to enhance the Division's performance and alignment with the City's vision of a "clean, safe and beautiful" San Luis Obispo.

We wish to thank City staff for their assistance in providing us with a variety of information and having candid discussions with our team members to inform this assessment.

Sincerely,

Carol Jacobs
Managing Director
+1 (949) 809 5588 | carol.jacobs@bakertilly.com

Table of Contents

Tables

Figures

Executive Summary

Baker Tilly was engaged by the San Luis Obispo (SLO) Public Works Department to conduct an assessment of the Maintenance Division's organization structure, work practices and staffing to ensure the division is contributing to a *clean, safe and beautiful SLO*.

This report provides 24 recommendations which are contained in Attachment A.

Major Areas of Focus and Recommendations

During our assessment, we interviewed staff, reviewed documents, reviewed best practices and conducted peer research. These activities informed the following major areas of focus and recommendations that we believe department leaders should focus on in the near term.

1. *Optimized Organizationl Structure and Staffing Distribution.* Recognizing the challenges posed by the current organization structure and staffing distribution, a major recommendation involves a reorganization to improve management and span of control. This includes dividing the Maintenance Division into two sections, led by superintendents, to improve the span of control, enhance management support, and establish a more refined operational framework. Simultaneously, strategic reallocation and creation of positions aim to balance managerial, supervisory, and line staff responsibilities. This will also improve succession planning.

2. *Leveraging Technology and Performance Measurement for Efficient Operations and Communication.* Emphasizing the importance of technological integration, we recommend the implementation of advanced communication tools and performance measurement systems. This initiative aims to enhance communication with city management, elected officials and the public, streamline work processes, and provide a data-driven approach to decision making. By harnessing technology, the Maintenance Division can effectively communicate needs, track performance, and ensure a more agile and responsive operational environment.

Organization of the Document

This report is organized into the following major sections:

- The Maintenance Environment and the Role of the Division,
- Project Approach,
- Organization Structure and Staffing,
- Performance Measures, and
- Technology and Tools.

The Maintenance Environment and the Role of the Division

It is important to appreciate the environment the Maintenance Division operates within. We learned about this from our extensive interview process, document review and comparison of SLO with other communities.

This environment is fundamentally shaped by the fact that San Luis Obispo is, within the context of California, a very old city. SLO was founded in 1772 and incorporated in 1856, the 16th city created in the new state of California. Therefore, much of the infrastructure that SLO is built on or around consists of antiquated construction or improvements. This generally complicates maintenance and makes institutional knowledge very important. Historically, it has always served as the hub for a much larger surrounding area. This is still true today and the downtown is a special maintenance challenge.

San Luis Obispo is very much a destination or residence of choice location. In other words, it is the sort of place that people tend to fall in love with and decide to relocate to. It engenders great affection from residents and its many visitors. People care deeply about its public places and "sense of place." It has many special events every year and has a deep sense of community. People place a high importance on how it is cared for, and thus maintenance is important and is a high community value. This puts extra pressure and focus on maintenance activities.

San Luis Obispo is also a county seat and, as such, is a locus of County human service programs. According to the 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Comprehensive Report, the City of SLO had a homeless population of 385 persons, the most of any city in the County. These populations can put extra pressure and maintenance demands on public infrastructure for which the Maintenance Division is responsible.

Finally, SLO is not located in a highly urbanized area;it is a somewhat isolated city. When it comes to maintenance this means that it does not have a high density of specialty businesses serving maintenance

purposes. This also complicates maintenance and means that the Division needs to be self-reliant.

All this adds up to a complicated maintenance environment, not only in terms of the infrastructure that must be managed, but also in terms of the expectations of the residents, businesses and visitors being served. It is even complicated in terms of being able to recruit and retain competent workers since the workforce in the area is limited.

As SLO is increasingly desirable as a place to live, housing is getting more expensive, and construction is growing denser. The downtown is more active, and its residential population is growing. All of this makes maintenance scheduling and work activities even more challenging.

While SLO was once thought of as a rather "laid back" place, we found that the Maintenance Division was anything but! It has many demands and a heavy public focus on what it does. The Division's role is absolutely fundamental to many core City functions, and it must function efficiently for the City to function well.

Project Approach

Baker Tilly obtained information to develop the recommendations in this report through a variety of activities as described below.

Documents	Interviews	Peer Research
• Organization Charts • Contracts • Reports and Assessments • Service Level Agreements • Standard Operating Procedures • Work Orders	• City Manager • Director of Public Works • Deputy Director of Public Works • Maintenance Supervisor staff • Downtown SLO CEO • Other department directors	• Davis • Goleta • Monterey • Napa • Santa Barbara • Santa Cruz • Ventura

Baker Tilly began by reviewing documents and data from the Maintenance Division, including historical staffing data, contracts, and service level agreements, among others. The team also gathered information by interviewing key stakeholders. Finally, the team surveyed peer agencies to benchmark the Maintenance Division's operations against other similar organizations.

Staff Outreach Themes

The Baker Tilly team interviewed 11 employees, including the City Manager, Department Directors, the CEO of the downtown business district (Downtown SLO), and Public Works Supervisors and Managers. Their comments generally surrounded three topics: communication, the Ask SLO application (app), and staffing and span of control.

Most interviewees indicated that communication generally works well in the Maintenance Division. Communication within the Division with

peers is effective. Similarly, there are well-developed relationships among senior leadership staff across departments as well as an increasing use of technology to facilitate communication. Generally, the maintenance staff and leadership are viewed positively by customer departments and clients such as police, fire, parks and recreation, and Downtown SLO. They find Maintenance employees to be hard-working, taking a great deal of pride in their work.

Interviewees indicated that the Ask SLO app is a great tool for understanding community concerns and engaging residents. However, the Ask SLO app is time consuming for staff, as identified in the Technology and Tools section of this report. Staff expressed feeling overwhelmed by the volume of requests, highlighting the lack of an effective prioritization process for addressing community needs. They felt this is in part because the Maintenance Division is understaffed.

Most interviewees believe that day-to-day work is generally getting done, but there are few opportunities to go beyond and pursue strategic objectives due to a lack of staffing. Staff are concerned that investment in new projects and facilities, like results of the Ask SLO app or homeless response, will put continuing strain on the maintenance function that will not be sustainable. In addition, staff believe that the Deputy Director has a wide span of control, and this contributes to the lack of staff resources.

Work Order Review

Baker Tilly reviewed some limited work order data to understand the volume of demand and understand the backlog in completing work. We found that on average there was a significant delay in completing work orders in facilities, parks and streets, with a large degree of variability. Some types of work, such as DigSmart requests, infield servicing and park renovations were completed very promptly, typically on the day requested. However, the number of days to complete a work order in the three divisions averaged 64. While this may be acceptable in some cases, it is unacceptable for many types of maintenance requests and suggests that the units do not have enough resources to deliver timely services.

Table 1. San Luis Obispo Work Order Analysis July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Top Four Work Order Types	Number	Average Days to Complete[1]
Facilities		
1. General Maintenance	208	17

Top Four Work Order Types	Number	Average Days to Complete[1]
2. Lighting	176	51
3. Access Control	158	36
4. HVAC	157	75
Average Days to Complete all Work Orders	N/A	55
Total Annual Work Orders	1,632	N/A
Number of Work Order Categories	45	N/A
Parks		
1. Repairs	155	20
2. Infields	108	<1
3. Shop	57	8
4. Renovations	39	1
Average Days to Complete all Work Orders	N/A	68
Total Annual Work Orders	4,641	N/A
Number of Work Order Categories	68	N/A
Streets		
1. DigSmart	8,196	<1
2. Vacuum / Clean	827	34
3. Inspect	624	134
4. Install	422	18
Average Days to Complete all Work Orders	N/A	70
Total Annual Work Orders	9,715	N/A
Number of Work Order Categories	52	N/A

[1]Average days to complete reported in negative numbers not included in analysis
[2]Parks daily maintenance work orders for each park are not included in top work order listing

The Fleet Services Program has a different work order system that has somewhat more functionality than the system in place for the rest of the Public Works Maintenance Division. The table below shows data from that system for calendar years 2022 and 2023. The vast majority of fleet maintenance work orders are completed in one day or less (77% in 2022 and 59% in 2023). Total work orders increased significantly in 2023 relative to 2022 from 557 to 692. In addition to the number of work orders being completed in one day or less, decreasing fairly significantly in 2023 relative to 2022, the number of work orders requiring 10 days or more increased significantly from 34 in 2022 to 141 in 2023. Finally, the average cost of work orders more than doubled in 2023 relative to 2022. These

trends may suggest that vehicle maintenance was under some resourcing-related stress in 2023 relative to 2022, which the Fleet Division will need to explore in greater detail.

Table 2. Fleet Maintenance Work Orders Analysis Calendar Years 2022 and 2023

Work Order Metrics	Results
2022	
Total Work Orders	1,075
Number Completed in 1 day or less	429
Percentage Completed in 1 day or less	77%
Average Time (days) to complete Work Orders	3
Number of Work Orders > 10 days to Complete	34
Average Time (days) to complete Work Orders > 10 days	36
Average Work Order Cost	$312.72
2023	
Total Work Orders	1,290
Number Completed in 1 day or less	407
Percentage Completed in 1 day or less	59%
Average Time (days) to complete Work Orders	10
Number of Work Orders > 10 days to Complete	141
Average Time (days) to complete Work Orders > 10 days	44
Average Work Order Cost	$675.80

Peer Research

Baker Tilly distributed a peer survey to seven of San Luis Obispo's peer cities: Davis, Goleta, Monterey, Napa, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura. These peers were selected through discussions with San Luis Obispo staff because they have universities, are tourist destinations, or are aspirational communities. The survey covered topics ranging from budget and staffing, contractual services, homeless response, community maintenance request apps, maintenance management systems, city assets, and performance measures. However, only the City of Monterey responded to the survey, so Baker Tilly staff collected publicly available data from budget documents and annual reports, thus constraining the depth of our comparative analysis.

Table 3 displays the functions of each peer city. San Luis Obispo's Public Works Department, specifically the Maintenance Division, provides citywide maintenance functions that are sometimes provided by multiple

departments in other cities. For example, SLO's Maintenance Division provides parks and urban forestry services. Goleta provides parks and open space services, and Davis provides urban forestry services. However, the other peer jurisdictions provide those services through other departments. Similarly, Santa Barbara and Davis provide water utility services through their public works departments, so their full-time equivalents (FTEs) and expenditures will be higher per capita.

Table 3. Peer Cities Public Works Functions

Function	Monterey	Santa Barbara	Santa Cruz	Goleta	Davis	Napa	Ventura	San Luis Obispo
General Fund								
Engineering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Traffic Engineering				✓	✓			
Transportation		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Parking	✓	✓	✓					✓
Environmental				✓	✓		✓	
Facilities Maintenance	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Janitorial Services	✓							
Swim Center Maintenance								✓
Fleet Management	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Streets Maintenance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Street Lighting				✓				
Parks Maintenance				✓				✓
Urban Forestry								✓
Enterprise Fund								
Parking	✓	✓	✓					✓
Water		✓						
Wastewater		✓	✓					✓
Stormwater and Sewer	✓							
Solid Waste			✓	✓	✓			
Harbor	✓							

Many of these cities do not report data for their disaggregated maintenance functions, making it difficult to compare across peers.

Therefore, Baker Tilly collected staffing and budget data for public works departments as opposed to maintenance divisions, as displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Staffing and Operating Budget Data for Peer Public Works Departments, all funding sources

City	2022 Population[1]	Total Public Works FTEs[2]	FTEs per 1,000 Residents	Total Public Works Expenditures[2]	Public Works Expenditures Per Capita
Monterey	29,571	156.25	5.32	$32,083,247.00	$1,084.96
Santa Barbara	87,533	310.65	3.46	$227,536,017.00	$2,599.43
Santa Cruz	61,800	265.40	4.29	$77,588,692.00	$1,255.48
Goleta	32,432	36.00	0.93	$18,311,700.00	$564.62
Davis	67,048	122.25	2.81	$112,895,259.00	$1,683.80
Napa	78,315	86.00	1.10	$60,266,210.00	$769.54
Ventura	109,527	90.75	0.83	$73,436,984.00	$670.49
San Luis Obispo	48,341	93.72	1.94	$28,870,537.00	$597.23
Average	64,321	152.47	2.59	$78,873,580.80	$1,226.25

[1]Sourced from 2022 American Community Survey
[2]Sourced from 2023-2024 budget documents

As shown in the table above, San Luis Obispo has fewer public works FTEs per 1,000 residents and fewer public works expenditures per capita than the peer average. In addition, Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz collect and report on workload indicators. San Luis Obispo currently tracks limited workload indicators, which makes it difficult to measure whether work is assigned appropriately.

While there are limitations in interpretation due to the different functions we found in these departments, the peer data suggests that San Luis Obispo's Public Works Department is not as well-resourced as its peers. The City is near the bottom in terms of staffing and budget per capita.

Clearly, San Luis Obispo seems to provide a level of services which, while different from the comparison agencies, is reasonably comparable in terms of complexity and diversity. Indeed, the many services delivered in San Luis Obispo appear to be more comprehensive than in some of the comparison agencies. For example, in SLO, parks maintenance is delivered via the Public Works Department. This is unusual and labor-intensive. Only one other City had parks maintenance reside in Public Works. Because this is a relatively large function and not common in other public works organizations it makes the fact that the staffing in

SLO's Public Works Department is below average relative to the peers, suggestive of under-resourcing.

As a result of the lack of consistency in the comparisons, Baker Tilly relied primarily on observations and best practices for developing the recommendations presented in this report. We are, however, recommending some staffing augmentations and to some degree these benchmarking findings do support those recommendations.

Organization Structure and Staffing

A major focus for Baker Tilly's engagement was to conduct a multi-faceted review of the organization structure and staffing of the Public Works Maintenance Division to determine whether functions are appropriately aligned, whether changes might improve efficiency and effectiveness, and whether staffing is sufficient. This included a thorough review of the hierarchical arrangement, reporting relationships, span of control, and the grouping of functions. We examined organization charts, job descriptions and titles, and gleaned information through interviews with employees and customers.

The Public Works Department is a vital component of the City of San Luis Obispo. As one of ten departments, it is pivotal in shaping the City's infrastructure and ensuring a high quality of life for its residents. The Department comprises several divisions, each with specific responsibilities. One of the key divisions is maintenance, which stands as one of three divisions within the Public Works Department. It plays a critical role in fulfilling essential functions and services crucial to the community, as depicted in Figure 1.

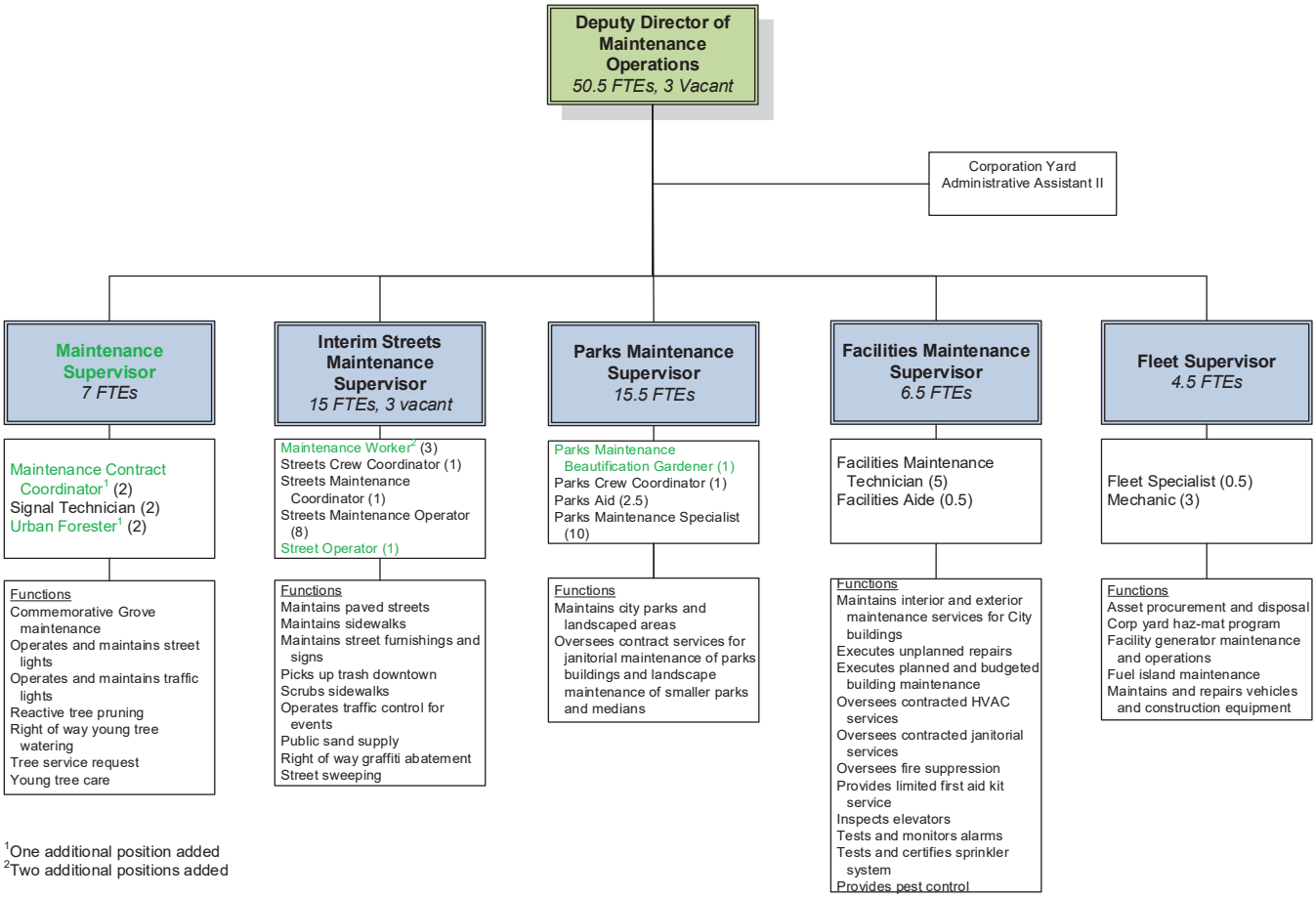
Figure 1. Essential Functions and Services

The Maintenance Division not only undertakes essential tasks in-house but also demonstrates exceptional cost-effectiveness and quality outcomes. For example, it has a proactive approach to the pavement program, where they are using City crews to do the preparation work necessary for the pavement rehabilitation, which is typically outsourced. This results in a higher pavement condition index (PCI) value, enhancing road quality at a lower cost for the City. It is worth noting that the City's average PCI is 76, according to the 2023-25 Financial Plan, surpassing the 2022 statewide average of 67.6 and significantly outpacing the county average of 58 according to the California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment April 2023 Final Report. This achievement underscores the Division's commitment to delivering superior infrastructure maintenance services efficiently and economically, setting a commendable standard within the industry.

Although there has been an increase in line staff in recent years (as illustrated by the positions in green in Figure 2, below), the impact of this growth is offset by new duties and reassigned work programs. Particularly, there is an increased emphasis on downtown maintenance. This includes the upkeep of bicycle facilities, which require higher maintenance due to the increased number of traffic devices. Most of these

facilities are too narrow for a sweeper and require regular manual cleaning. Additionally, the City's carbon-neutral goals will add workload to maintain the complex mechanical systems in buildings and additional trees to maintain, with ongoing installations of new streetlights, off-street path lights, downtown decorative "zigzag" lighting, and new traffic signals citywide places additional demands on the traffic signal and streetlight program, thereby requiring further staffing.

Figure 2. Existing Maintenance Organization Structure (Recent Additional Staff Emphasized in Green)



Baker Tilly noted the following observations about the existing organization structure.

Span of control is too broad in some areas. The organization faces a critical challenge as the span of control in certain areas is excessively broad. In recent years, there has been an increase in staff; however, a notable imbalance exists due to the insufficient growth in managerial and supervisory positions. This disparity is notably apparent in pivotal roles such as the Deputy Director and in the management of Streets and Parks

Maintenance. While there is no universal ideal number of direct reports, the current organizational structure of the Maintenance Division reveals work units where the supervisor has an overbroad span of control. The new work programs added to Public Works also compound the span of control issues.

This overbroad span of control is exacerbated by the lack of sufficient management system support within the division. These structural gaps impede the Division's capacity to allocate sufficient attention to strategic endeavors such as planning, process improvement and performance measurement. Addressing these gaps is crucial to strengthen the Division's effectiveness and focus on strategic objectives.

The organization has a relatively flat structure. As noted above, the Deputy Director directly oversees each of the five supervisors within the Division. While some work groups have coordinators to assist with the day-to-day responsibilities, others lack this support, spreading the Deputy Director and front-line supervisors too thin, therefore hindering effective management oversight.

Recognizing the need for a more refined organizational framework, we recommend reorganizing the Maintenance Division into two sections. The existing structure, with five workgroups and individual supervisors, has proven effective for specific tasks and projects. However, as the Division has grown and maintenance operations have become more complex, a new framework is essential.

This reorganization will involve establishing two sections, each led by a superintendent. This separation of responsibility and improved span of control will provide greater oversight and specific guidance within each section. One section will focus on streets and fleet management, while the other will oversee parks and facilities, as detailed in the organization chart later in this report. The proposed change aims to enhance day-to-day operations, long-range planning, and overall management support, fostering alignment within the Division. Additionally, this new management layer will create opportunities for staff advancement and better succession planning within the organization.

Most important, it will provide a more robust framework for the Division to grow and continue to develop.

Recommendation 1. Convert one Maintenance Supervisor to a Superintendent and add one Superintendent position to right-size the span of control for the Deputy Director of Maintenance Operations and increase management support for the division.

Recommendation 2. Add a Parks Crew Coordinator position to improve the span of control within the Parks function.

Administrative work is spread out among the work unit supervisors. Administrative responsibilities currently burden work unit supervisors within the Division. In interviews, Division staff emphasized dedicating a significant portion of their time to administrative tasks. The time spent on administrative tasks diminishes the supervisors' capacity for providing planning, coaching and mentoring of staff and other operational initiatives. Given the size of the Maintenance Division, it is imperative to address this challenge by introducing a dedicated business/analytical position, which is standard for organizations of similar scale.

This strategic addition will significantly enhance overall effectiveness. Moreover, the limited availability of administrative support staff amplifies the issue, with supervisors allocating considerable time to tasks such as approving purchase orders, requisitions, invoices, timecards, and other ERP duties. Introducing a dedicated position will also be essential for supporting the Deputy Director in implementing the performance management system, as outlined later in this report. Additionally, this role will play a pivotal part in enhancing the tracking and support for the Ask SLO app, ensuring streamlined operations within the Maintenance Division.

Recommendation 3. Create a Business Analyst position to assist with administrative duties and support the development and tracking of performance measures.

Current workload strains capacity. A consistent theme from the Maintenance Division interviews is that the Division is understaffed. For example, in both fleet and facilities, non-urgent repairs and preventive maintenance are often delayed as more urgent matters take precedence. This reduces the efficiency and effectiveness of operations across the City.

This was mentioned consistently despite the addition of several line positions in the last few years. In part because, as new staff have been added, new programs and responsibilities have been added at the same time providing no new capacity to handle existing workload. Continuous expansion of programs, facilities, and parks, such as the incorporation of protected bike lanes, installation of Farmers Market anti-vehicle barriers, and the impending development of additional parks have been notable. This growth, however, transpires without a corresponding augmentation in staff or resources. This unbalanced progression not only strains existing resources but also poses challenges to maintaining the newly added amenities and ensuring optimal service delivery. The continuing addition of facilities and programs and increasing community expectations strain current staff, limiting their ability to address non-urgent requests and longer-term projects.

The understaffing is also illustrated in the peer comparison data which show that SLO has fewer FTEs per 1,000 residents and significantly lower expenditures per capita than peer agencies. To exacerbate the strained capacity, four new parks are planned to be completed within the next six to twelve months and one large community park is planned in approximately two to three years. Additional staff will be needed to staff these parks. Because some of these parks are in a Community Facilities District, funding will be provided, which will offset the staffing costs.

Recommendation 4. Analyze the impact on staffing levels and resources before implementing any new programs.

Recommendation 5. Incorporate maintenance requirements (staffing, resources) in all capital project discussions as part of the Budget Review Committee process.

Using experienced staff to perform lower-level work tasks is an inefficient use of personnel resources. industry best practice is to assign lower-level work to a technician or aide, creating a developmental pathway for them to progress into higher-level positions as they gain experience. This approach not only optimizes resource utilization but also widens the pool of applicants by requiring a lower skill set for entry-level positions.

However, within SLO we observed numerous instances of highly skilled workers performing lower-level work. For example, in Fleet, trained mechanics are routinely used to transport vehicles from outside vendors and to handle lower-level duties such as oil changes. In Facilities

Maintenance, journey-level staff are used to perform lower-level work such as changing lightbulbs/ballasts, minor carpentry and plumbing repairs and troubleshooting minor work order requests.

To remedy this situation a Mechanic Helper position and a Facilities Aide position should be added to perform these lower-level tasks. This not only enhances employee development opportunities but also justifies the creation of a Lead Mechanic position, providing day-to-day guidance on the shop floor for improved operational efficiency.

Recommendation 6. Add a Facilities Aide in Building Maintenance.

Recommendation 7. Add a Mechanic Helper position in Fleet.

Recommendation 8. Add a Lead Mechanic position in Fleet.

Additional parks have been added without additional staff. By the end of 2024, the City's total park inventory will have grown to 28. These 28 facilities are comprised of 596 acres with 114 acres of improved surfaces. This growth accounts for the addition of the North Broad Street Park, Parks A, B, and C in Avila Ranch, but not any future parks in Availa Ranch or the community park within the Righetti Ranch development. The recent additions have not been accompanied by new Parks Maintenance staff to maintain the acreage. The addition of new parks coupled with City Council's focus on remediating encampments in public spaces, leaves Parks Maintenance staff spread very thin.

Recommended Parks Maintenance staffing varies significantly based on climate, park size and utilization. National Data from the 2021 National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Parks Metrics report suggests that on average one maintenance FTE cares for approximately nine acres of active-use parkland. Actual California staffing ratios reported in the publication "Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards" for Anaheim and Burbank vary significantly from 4.39 per acre in Burbank to 10.52 per acre in Anaheim. If we take the average of the two California data points reported above, we get a staffing ratio of approximately one FTE for every 7.45 acres of improved parklands.

Based on San Luis Obispo's current maintenance staffing of 15.5 FTE it falls very close to this 7.45 per acre level of staffing for the 114 acres of maintained parkland. However, it also should be noted that SLO has

several smaller parks that typically require a higher commitment of FTE time, so we would suggest a staffing ratio of closer to 6.5 to 7.0 per acre of maintained parkland be used for staffing maintenance projections.

According to the Parks and Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update from July 2021, on average, parks costs range from $7,500 annually to $12,000. Adjusting this cost for inflation to the current date yields a range of $8,925 to $14,280. The current parks maintenance costs from the 2022–2023 Financial Plan was reported at $3,478,282, which works out to $16,885 per acre. Overall, it appears that the staffing may be somewhat on the low side, but costs are high. Among other factors, this may reflect high costs in California relative to the rest of the United States.

We recommend that given the existing high per acre cost, that it would be better to add contract services for tasks such as mowing, irrigation repairs, if possible, rather than adding lower-skill classifications such as parks maintenance workers until additional parks are added to the system. This strategy provides a scalable solution that can accommodate the current size of the parks system without overburdening it with unnecessary overhead costs.

However, as more parks and landscaped areas are added to the system, approximately one FTE for every approximately 7.00 acres of parks should be added. While the general guideline of one FTE for every 10 acres remains relevant for larger parks, smaller sites may necessitate a more nuanced approach, with staffing levels adjusted based on factors such as anticipated usage patterns, terrain complexity, and specific maintenance requirements. This recommendation of 7.00 acres of park is an approximation and should be adjusted based on the type of park and anticipated use.

Recommendation 9. Add staff to the Parks Division as parks are added to the system.

To assist in analyzing the tasks in the Parks Division that would be best served by contract staff, maintenance plans should be created for each park. The purpose of maintenance plans is to identify and develop standards and frequency for all City park property and facilities. These standards would be provided to current Parks Maintenance staff and contractors to inform them of the expectation and serve as guidelines in the completion of all park-related maintenance work. The plans should reflect the expectations of City management and maintain flexibility for modifications.

Recommendation 10. Create a maintenance plan for the parks system and update the plan as new parks are brought online.

Homelessness response is a new and necessary function. As mentioned above, one coordinator position being proposed as an addition to Parks staffing is to improve the span of control in Parks operations. This strategic addition aligns with our findings from interviews, where it became evident that homelessness issues were consuming a substantial amount of Parks Maintenance staff time. To address this pressing concern, we recommend one Parks Maintenance Specialist be reassigned to deal with homelessness issues and vandalism. This targeted reassignment will not only contribute to more effective span of control in Parks operations but also directly address the resource-intensive challenges posed by homelessness, aligning operational priorities with the community's evolving needs.

Recommendation 11. Assign one Parks Maintenance Specialist to specifically respond to homelessness issues and vandalism in the parks.

Acknowledging the broader impact on staff workload and operational efficiency, it is imperative to recognize that environmental factors play a pivotal role in shaping the working conditions of Parks staff. As part of our comprehensive approach to enhancing staffing and organizational structure, we recommend the implementation of a lockable dumpster ordinance to address the challenge of debris accumulation in public spaces and mitigate the impact of homeless encampments. This proactive measure aims to reduce the availability of debris that can be utilized in makeshift encampments, fostering a cleaner and safer community environment.

The lockable dumpster ordinance should require property owners, businesses, and public entities to secure their dumpsters with lockable mechanisms. This will serve as a deterrent to unauthorized access and scavenging, limiting the resources available for homeless encampments. Additionally, the ordinance can include guidelines for regular maintenance checks by the business owner to ensure the functionality of lockable mechanisms and facilitate swift action in case of malfunctions.

Recommendation 12. Create a lockable dumpster ordinance.

Use of contract versus in-house staff appears to be balanced. Having a reliable base of in-house staff is crucial for ensuring continuity and maintaining high-quality services, and the incorporation of contract coordinators exemplifies a best practice in workload management. To further optimize this balance, we recommend a comprehensive assessment of ongoing tasks to identify areas suitable for contract work. This evaluation should include an examination of specialized tasks, work that can be performed with limited instruction, and tasks where external contract services may offer increased efficiency when available on the Central Coast. By conducting this analysis, the Division can refine its approach to staffing, ensuring that the utilization of both in-house and external contract resources is aligned with the specific demands of various projects and operations. This proactive strategy will contribute to enhanced operational flexibility, efficiency, and overall service quality. This work can be a priority for the recommended analyst staffing.

Recommendation 13. Analyze the tasks within the Maintenance Division that would be best served with the use of contract staff.

Consideration should be given to how staffing is assigned to the maintenance of parks. Rather than assigning individuals to specific parks, exploring a team-based approach offers several advantages. In such a model, collaborative efforts among team members foster operational efficiency, allowing for the sharing of skills and resources. A parks employee with specialized skills such as irrigation may be able to assist with other parks. A trial section should be implemented as a preliminary step before adopting this approach citywide. This phased introduction allows for the identification of the most optimal implementation strategy, ensuring that the City leverages the benefits of enhanced collaboration, resource optimization, and improved maintenance outcomes offered by the team-based approach. Most medium and larger cities use this type of maintenance approach to parks maintenance.

Recommendation 14. Evaluate dividing the parks into sections and utilizing a team-based approach to parks maintenance.

There may be benefits from the integration of golf maintenance within the Parks Division. Beyond the shared similarities between golf and parks maintenance work, consolidating these functions under one department could uncover numerous benefits. One notable advantage is the potential for combined resources, allowing for the efficient allocation of equipment, tools, and expertise between golf and parks maintenance operations.

Additionally, a unified structure could enhance operational flexibility, enabling the strategic deployment of workers during peak times across both operations. This recommendation, while requiring further analysis, not only optimizes resource utilization but also streamlines operations and bolsters overall maintenance effectiveness within the integrated framework.

Recommendation 15. Evaluate the consolidation of golf maintenance with parks maintenance.

The proposed staffing and structural changes detailed above are shown below in Figure 3. The realignment and proposed positions address the span of control and workload capacity concerns, while additional resources ensure the efficiency of the Division. Additional positions recommended immediately are shown in Table 5, but it should be noted that this table does not include those additional positions that will be required as new parks are integrated.

Figure 3. Proposed Maintenance Division Organization Structure

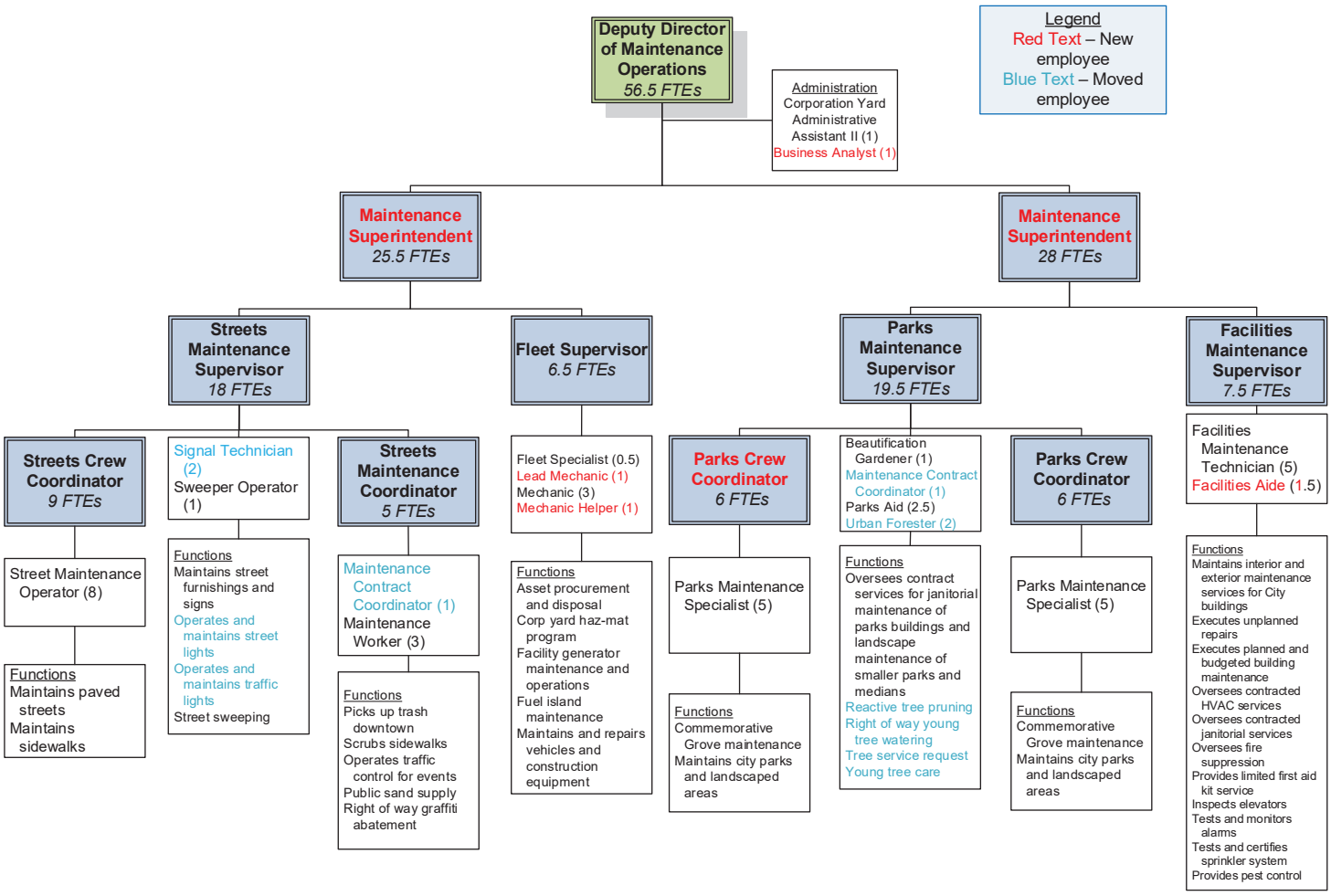


Table 5. Recommended Immediate FTE Additions

Title	FTE Count
Business Analyst	1.0
Facilities Aide	1.0
Lead Mechanic	1.0
Maintenance Superintendent[1]	1.0
Mechanic Helper	1.0
Parks Crew Coordinator	1.0
TOTAL	**6.0**

[1]One additional Maintenace superintendent position is recommended to be upgraded from a Maintenance supervisor.

Performance Measures

Performance measurement is a vital tool for evaluating service effectiveness, involving continuous data collection and reporting on selected services or programs. Numeric indicators provide a clear picture of accomplishments, costs, value for residents' tax dollars (or fees), and service quality. These measures also may be used to quantify employee productivity. Currently, the use of performance measurement is not present within the Division.

To enhance service and efficiency, there is a need for the Maintenance Division to optimize the use of Cityworks. While Streets, Parks and Facilities utilize Cityworks for work orders, Fleet uses Asset Works. Automating metric reporting through Cityworks can significantly streamline the process. However, there does not seem to be a centralized system of collecting the data from Cityworks.

For the budget process, performance indicators such as miles of streets maintained, trees trimmed, square footage of buildings maintained, and the recent inclusion of the number of work orders are utilized. To maximize the benefits, the Maintenance Division should ensure consistent and thorough use of Cityworks through all work units. This approach will facilitate the identification of service gaps and areas requiring improvement. Of course, the Division must first identify and establish relevant metrics focused on the core service areas.

Baker Tilly prepared an outline (Attachment B) of typical performance metrics that are necessary for managing a maintenance division. The City should use this outline to customize a performance measurement program for San Luis Obispo. More specifically, the City should identify the types of reports and data it will need to manage the Division, and then ensure these data points and reports are implemented within the Computerized Maintenance Management System.

Recommendation 16. Establish relevant performance measurements for department operations, collect data, and create a system for analyzing and reporting.

Technology and Tools

In the realm of municipal public works maintenance, the effective utilization of technology and tools plays a pivotal role in enhancing operational efficiency and service delivery. San Luis Obispo demonstrates a commendable commitment to technological advancements and customer outreach, as exemplified by the Ask SLO app; however, it is crucial to underscore the importance of thoughtful consideration before deploying new processes and applications.

Our assessment revealed that the integration of innovative solutions, particularly Ask SLO, has significantly impacted workflow, resulting in a substantial increase in service requests. While the app has brought about numerous benefits, it has also presented challenges in managing workload and setting resident expectations effectively.

Ask SLO

Ask SLO, deployed in late 2022, serves as the City's resident engagement platform. The platform is available online as an app. The tool is very popular but has had a large impact on the Maintenance Division's workload. From November 2022 to the end of October 2023, there were 1,986 public works requests for service logged. Over 80% of the public works requests for service pertained to the Maintenance Division. And, of the top ten public works categories, all but one request type (general parking questions) fall under the maintenance Division's responsibilities. This concentration of inquiries within their domain underscores the heavy demand for maintenance-related inquiries and the strain on the Division's capacity. Table 6 outlines the top public works categories, excluding the single request type outside of the Maintenance Division's scope.

Table 6. Top Maintenance Division Requests via the Ask SLO App

Request Type	Number of Requests	Percent of Total Requests
Streets Maintenance Program		
Street Maintenance	201	10%

Request Type	Number of Requests	Percent of Total Requests
Sidewalk/parkway damage	167	8%
Potholes	112	6%
Defaced or damaged city signs	108	5%
Maintenance Program		
Traffic signal issues	175	9%
Trees and Urban Forestry	107	5%
Parks Maintenance Program		
Parks Maintenance	87	4%
Encampment in Parks	84	4%

These requests for service are typical for a public works agency that maintains public rights-of-way and parks. While the Ask SLO app brings valuable benefits to the residents and the City, allowing residents to promptly report issues they observe and informing public works of concerns, managing resident expectations poses a significant challenge. To address this, it is essential to incorporate a strategic communication approach in the Ask SLO marketing effort. Residents should be informed that certain work items follow a routine cycle, and the requested item may be part of that scheduled work. Administrators responding to requests should have a standardized response for items that are part of routine cycles.

Recognizing the varying urgency of requests is crucial. Timely matters such as potholes, malfunctioning traffic signals, or missing signage require immediate attention. On the other hand, tasks like curb painting may be scheduled as part of routine maintenance cycles, potentially spanning up to five years. Strengthening communication strategies and setting clear expectations will contribute to more effective utilization of the Ask SLO app, enhancing the overall resident experience and facilitating a smoother workflow for Public Works.

Enhancing the tracking of Ask SLO service requests through Cityworks is crucial for enhancing workload and staffing management. It is our understanding that this enhancement has been requested from the GoGov company. This integration aligns with the proactive approach of maximizing Cityworks' potential. It also streamlines communication, empowering division leaders to monitor workloads and address staffing needs more effectively. The result is a more responsive and efficient Maintenance Division, poised to meet and exceed community expectations.

Recommendation 17. Develop standardized responses to work that is done as part of a routine cycle.

Recommendation 18. Engage GoGov with developing and implementing software to seamlessly integrate Ask SLO with CityWorks.

Recommendation 19. Strengthen the Ask SLO app marketing by clearly articulating expected responsiveness tailored to the nature of each request.

Service Level Agreements

Service level agreements (SLAs) are formal agreements between a service provider (in this case, the Maintenance Division or an individual program) and a customer that define the expected level of service. These agreements outline the specific services to be provided, the quality standards to be met, and the metrics used to measure performance. SLAs are commonly used in various industries to ensure that services are delivered in a consistent, reliable, and satisfactory manner. They can also be built to be as prescriptive or as flexible as needed, allowing for customization based on the unique requirements and preferences of the parties involved.

They play a crucial role in many functional areas, serving as essential tools to manage internal or external customer expectations and promote accountability. These agreements encompass a range of parameters including initial response time, priority level, type of issue, escalation processes and guidelines for handling urgent or emergency situations.

While many public sector organizations do not have operational SLAs, SLO's Maintenance Division has demonstrated commendable foresight by already implementing SLAs that cover services to police, fire, community development, stormwater and the Downtown SLO business association. The existing SLAs contribute significantly to the clarity of communication within the Division, preventing potential misunderstandings and fostering a more transparent operational environment. This proactive approach positions the Maintenance Division favorably, showcasing a commitment to delivering services with defined expectations and standards.

While the existence of these SLAs puts the Maintenance Division in a good position, review and potential revisions could further increase their

effectiveness. To further maximize the benefits of these SLAs, it is recommended that a comprehensive review be conducted. This review should involve all employees affected by the conditions outlined in the SLAs, ensuring their perspectives are considered. By engaging the workforce in this evaluation, potential updates and refinements can be identified to strengthen the existing SLAs. In addition, it is suggested to evaluate current operations thoroughly to identify any areas that might not be adequately covered by existing SLAs. This proactive assessment will help in addressing potential gaps and ensuring that all aspects of Maintenance Division operations are appropriately accounted for within the SLAs.

Recommendation 20. Review existing SLAs by all employees affected by the conditions of the SLA to evaluate potential updates.

Recommendation 21. Evaluate current operations to determine if there are areas that are not covered by existing SLAs.

The Maintenance Division's commitment to operational transparency through SLAs serves as a model for effective service delivery. By actively reviewing and refining these agreements, the division can further enhance its efficiency, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and consistently meet or exceed community expectations.

Strategic Communication

The strategic use of technology extends beyond operational efficiency; it serves as a powerful tool for communicating the Maintenance Division's narrative and justifying budget requests. Leveraging technology enables the Division to transparently showcase its achievements, challenges, and plans to both internal stakeholders and the community. By utilizing data-driven insights and visualizations, the Maintenance Division can effectively communicate the impact of its initiatives, fostering a deeper understanding of the value it brings to the community.

Technology plays a pivotal role in substantiating budget requests. The ability to present comprehensive data on maintenance activities, their outcomes, and the overall contributions to community well-being enhances the division's credibility during budget discussions. Integrating advanced analytics (using Cityworks and performance measures) and reporting features into the technology toolkit ensures that budget justifications are not only persuasive but also aligned with the Division's strategic goals.

The integration of technology serves as a powerful tool, transparently conveying the Maintenance Division's narrative and compellingly justifying budget allocations. This approach strengthens internal communication, builds community trust, and reinforces the Division's commitment to excellence in Public Works Maintenance.

Recommendation 22. Implement a strategy to utilize technology in transparently showcasing the Maintenance Division's achievements, challenges, and plans to internal stakeholders and the community.

Recommendation 23. Leverage advanced analytics and reporting features to effectively communicate the impact of maintenance activities and their contributions to community well-being.

Recommendation 24. Integrate technology to substantiate budget requests with comprehensive data, aligning them persuasively with the Division's strategic goals and enhancing credibility during budget discussions.

Conclusion

This organizational assessment underscores the need for targeted improvements to strengthen the Public Works Maintenance Division. By addressing structural and staffing challenges, enhancing operational efficiency, and strategically allocating resources, the proposed recommendations aim to create a more agile, responsive, and effective division. As the city continues to evolve, these recommendations provide a pathway for the Maintenance Division to enhance its already commendable practices, meet growing demands, foster a supportive work environment, and continue to deliver exceptional services to the community. Implementation of these strategies is envisioned to not only resolve current challenges but also position the Division for sustained success and adaptability in the future.

Attachment A – List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1. **Convert one Maintenance Supervisor to a Superintendent and add one Superintendent position to right-size the span of control for the Deputy Director of Maintenance Operations and increase management support for the division.**

Recommendation 2. **Add a Parks Crew Coordinator position to improve the span of control within the Parks function.**

Recommendation 3. **Create a Business Analyst position to assist with administrative duties and support the development and tracking of performance measures.**

Recommendation 4. **Analyze the impact on staffing levels and resources before implementing any new programs.**

Recommendation 5. **Incorporate maintenance requirements (staffing, resources) in all capital project discussions as part of the Budget Review Committee process.**

Recommendation 6. **Add a Facilities Aide in Building Maintenance.**

Recommendation 7. **Add a Mechanic Helper position in Fleet.**

Recommendation 8. **Add a Lead Mechanic position in Fleet.**

Recommendation 9. **Add staff to the Parks Division as parks are added to the system.**

Recommendation 10. **Create a maintenance plan for the parks system and update the plan as new parks are brought online.**

Recommendation 11. **Assign one Parks Maintenance Specialist to specifically respond to homelessness issues and vandalism in the parks.**

Recommendation 12. **Create a lockable dumpster ordinance.**

Recommendation 13. **Analyze the tasks within the Maintenance Division that would be best served with the use of contract staff.**

Recommendation 14. **Evaluate dividing the parks into sections and utilizing a team-based approach to parks maintenance.**

Recommendation 15. **Evaluate the consolidation of golf maintenance with parks maintenance.**

Recommendation 16. **Establish relevant performance measurements for department operations, collect data, and create a system for analyzing and reporting.**

Recommendation 17. **Develop standardized responses to work that is done as part of a routine cycle.**

Recommendation 18. **Engage GoGov with developing and implementing software to seamlessly integrate Ask SLO with CityWorks.**

Recommendation 19. **Strengthen the Ask SLO app marketing by clearly articulating expected responsiveness tailored to the nature of each request.**

Recommendation 20. Review existing SLAs by all employees affected by the conditions of the SLA to evaluate potential updates.

Recommendation 21. Evaluate current operations to determine if there are areas that are not covered by existing SLAs.

Recommendation 22. Implement a strategy to utilize technology in transparently showcasing the Maintenance Division's achievements, challenges, and plans to internal stakeholders and the community.

Recommendation 23. Leverage advanced analytics and reporting features to effectively communicate the impact of maintenance activities and their contributions to community well-being.

Recommendation 24. Integrate technology to substantiate budget requests with comprehensive data, aligning them persuasively with the Division's strategic goals and enhancing credibility during budget discussions.

Attachment B – Sample Performance Measures

A performance measurement program for the Maintenance Division will help the Division understand if work efforts and financial investment in programs and facilities are having the desired effect. Results provide staff with concrete data that can be used to explain and justify future goals and budget requests. San Luis Obispo would benefit from formalizing a program and taking it from a data collection process to a data driven decision-making process. A program should include the following components:

- **Workload** measures that focus on the amount of work produced and help to monitor fluctuations in that workload. Workload measures do not assess how efficiently or effectively work is performed.
- **Efficiency measures** that compare inputs and outputs, e.g., the amount of work produced compared with the cost or staffing required to produce it.
- **Effectiveness** measures that assess how well an organization performs, such as measuring the quality of services it delivers. These measures look at outcomes and include feedback from internal and external customers.

A summary of the performance measurement process is provided in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Performance Measurement Process

Step	Summary
1. Identify what to measure	Identify strategically important aspects of department work efforts. You want to measure those things that help you understand if you are achieving success. These should align with annual goals.
2. Set target goals	Decide on a numeric target such as the number of new participants in a program, attendance level at an event, or time to completion of specific tasks. Set them ambitiously but not so ambitiously that they are unattainable. These can be based on industry metrics such as APWA or developed in-house depending on the measurement.
3. Measure results	Have a system in place to collect data regularly and accurately. This should be a combination of report data from recreation management systems, work order systems, city financial systems and resident and participant surveys.
4. Report results	The department should have a visually clear dashboard-style report that tracks progress using comparison data for similar periods in previous years. This gives stakeholders a better picture of the department's performance over time.
5. Review regularly	You should review performance measures annually to both remove indicators that may no longer be needed and add indicators for new programs to track success.

Suggested Performance Measures are included in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Sample Performance Measures

Function	Effectiveness/Outcome Measures	Efficiency Measures	Workload Measures
Street Maintenance	• Percent of work orders responded to within 24 hours • Average lane miles maintained per year (or average Pavement Condition Index) • Percent of survey respondents rating streets as good or excellent • Potholes filled • Pavement markings • Sidewalk repairs	• Number of work orders per FTE • Number of lane miles paved per FTE • Cost per lane mile paved • Number of potholes filled within three days • Number of lanes striped per FTE • Number of priority sidewalk repairs completed per FTE	• Number of work orders completed • Number of lane miles paved • Number of street miles swept • Number of pothole service order requests completed • Pounds of thermoplastic applied or lineal feet installed • Number of priority sidewalk repairs completed
Function	**Effectiveness/Outcome Measures**	**Efficiency Measures**	**Workload Measures**
Fleet	• Percent of work orders responded to within 24 hours • Fleet availability ratio • Percent of repairs needing rework	• Number of work orders per FTE • Number of equipment pieces maintained per FTE • Amount of downtime per vehicle	• Number of work orders completed • Number of vehicle repairs completed
Function	**Effectiveness/Outcome Measures**	**Efficiency Measures**	**Workload Measures**
Parks	• Percent of work orders responded to within 24 hours • Average amount of acres mowed per year • Percent of survey respondents rating parks cleanliness as good or excellent • Graffiti abatement	• Number of work orders per FTE • Number of parks (or acres) maintained per FTE • Number of facilities maintained per FTE • Cost per acre mowed • Number of graffiti-related work orders completed within two days	• Number of work orders completed • Number of trees trimmed • Acres of park mowed • Number of graffiti-related work orders completed
Function	**Effectiveness/Outcome Measures**	**Efficiency Measures**	**Workload Measures**
Facilities	• Percent of work orders responded to within 24 hours • Square footage of buildings maintained • Percent of internal user respondents rating facilities as good or better	• Number of work orders per FTE • Square footage of buildings maintained per FTE • Number of facilities maintained per FTE	• Number of work orders completed • Number of city facilities maintained