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January 2018

## Maintenance & Operations

### INSIDE:

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new workforce

Improving  
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# Welcoming the next generation of workers



Sarah Wright | Editor

**W**HILE MCKINSEY RESEARCH is suggesting as much as one-third of the U.S. workforce will be replaced by automation by 2030, some sectors — particularly skilled labor — are facing a knowledge gap as baby boomers march on toward retirement at a rate of about 10,000 per day. Cities are set to be especially impacted by this knowledge gap, with a 2015 Government Finance Officers Association report by Neil E. Reichenberg, “The Ripple Effect of Baby Boomer Retirements,” finding 37 percent of local government employees are at least 50 years of age. Conversely, only 12 percent of local government employees are younger than 30.

Having seen the trend, many cities are or have been taking steps to prevent this knowledge gap in their organizations with succession planning.

Reichenberg noted in his report, “Among those who indicated that their organizations have succession plans in place, the key components included:

- Developing employees.

- Identifying key positions where retirements are likely to occur.
- Identifying high-potential employees.
- Projecting retirement eligibility.
- Identifying skill gaps.
- Establishing knowledge-transfer programs.
- Developing mentoring programs.
- Aligning the succession plan with the organization’s business plan.
- Collecting performance feedback.
- Establishing job-shadowing programs.”

From job shadowing to leadership academies, cities are trying a variety of methods to attract new workers and develop/engage their existing workers. In this issue, writer Barb Sieminski will relay Columbus, Ga.’s, public works department’s unique program that was created to address and prevent skill gaps: namely, cross-training. While the program was met skeptically by workers at first, it has since been embraced and has even increased camaraderie between the city’s different public works divisions.

Writer Elisa Walker will be sharing information on how to create an engaging and empowering workplace across different generations, including pairing up younger and older employees to take advantage of all skill sets and trying new means of communications. She also explores the different expectations of millennials — the largest generation in the U.S. labor force as of 2015,

according to the Pew Research Center. Walker will continue with part two in our February issue, and it will focus on techniques that can encourage change within the workspace.

Other topics in our new “Maintenance & Operations” themed issue include the pitfalls of using requests for proposals for software purchases and taking a proactive risk-based asset management approach to stormwater infrastructure management. We will also be shining a spotlight on Murfreesboro, Tenn., which has been recognized for its financial reporting for the 19th consecutive year by the GFOA.

There is no time like the start of a new year to reflect on your workforce and examine where improvements in communications, retention, new hires and training can be made to ensure operations continue without hiccups for years to come.

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*Procurement professionals can save time by using cooperative purchasing, particularly when it comes to grounds maintenance. Land Pride offers contracts with many cooperative buy groups, including NJPA and BuyBoard. (Photo provided)*



# Make the most of your grounds maintenance dollars

by DEE WARREN | Land Pride Marketing Manager

**T**IGHT BUDGETS AND SOUND fiscal management of taxpayer dollars are big in today's world. It is essential that purchasing managers for cities, counties, municipalities and state agencies make the most of their grounds maintenance budgets. But how should managers approach that? Requests for proposals are time-consuming and expend precious dollars that are allocated in the equipment budget and simply negotiating your best deal is not how government works.

What if you could rely on someone else to do the bid work for you? That's where

cooperative buying has a place in a grounds maintenance department. Generally speaking, purchases in these departments are big ticket items that can be a budget buster if you're not careful.

For a grounds maintenance manager looking for equipment to accomplish the job at hand, cooperative buying can mean less time soliciting bids and more time actually doing the tasks associated with grounds maintenance. In 2018, many states and many more cities, counties and municipalities see value in utilizing a cooperative purchasing agency to maximize their limited tax dollars.

## So how does cooperative buying work?

The cooperative buying model is really quite simple. This type of purchasing model allows manufacturers like Land Pride or Kubota to respond to an RFP that covers a need, such as grounds maintenance. Once the contract is awarded to the manufacturers that meet the bid criteria, it permits a large pool of buyers with similar interests to leverage their buying power to get contract discounts on products or services, stretching their budgets. By using a cooperative model, government agencies also save time and effort because the process is simplified for them as the buyer.





*Land Pride dealers can help grounds maintenance managers by listening to their needs and recommending the right implements. (Photo provided)*



*Since Land Pride is owned by Kubota Tractor Corporation, municipalities can save time and money when it comes to purchasing a tractor implement package that will meet their needs. (Photo provided)*

Take for example a nearby state department of transportation that worked with Land Pride on a recent purchase. The fleet manager called Land Pride in need of rotary cutters for roadside maintenance. He was looking for a solution that saved him time and money while still getting the brand and model that he and his crew wanted. Land Pride suggested using the National Joint Powers Alliance cooperative-buying contract because the Land Pride products the customer wanted could be purchased easily and at a competitively bid price. In all cases, a dealer is involved for help with setup, delivery and after-the-sale service.

In fairly short order, Land Pride quoted the rotary cutters that the state wanted with substantial discounts as outlined in the NJPA contract. The state reviewed the quotes and issued purchase orders, and Land Pride built, shipped and invoiced the state. Within a few weeks, the process was complete. The process was so simple, the state has come back for repeat purchases, maximizing its dollar while getting a quality product.

### **What can cooperative buying do for you?**

Once a manufacturer like Land Pride responds to an RFP and is awarded a contract by a designated public agency, members of the cooperative can purchase any number of products at substantial discount and membership is usually free. Since not every state, city or county has a need for a fleet of folding rotary cutters, why would your department want to use cooperative buying? Many times, the manufacturer's complete product line is available on the contract. In the case of Land Pride, that's over 370 Land Pride-branded products as well as Kubota-branded construction attachments, which can be purchased by agencies across the United States.

And it's not just states, cities and counties. Many school districts participate as well. With education budgets in many areas shrinking fast, cooperative buying can stretch dollars further. The BuyBoard is a cooperative located in Texas that has a large number of schools and universities as members. For them, Land Pride's contract has been very beneficial.

In Texas, a school district contacted its local Land Pride dealer in need of a wide-area mower to care for its sports fields and a large tract it was maintaining for future expansion. The dealer sat down with the grounds maintenance manager for the district and discussed needs. Based on the information gleaned, the dealer recommended a Land

Pride AFM4211. The district was grateful for the direction in the buying process, was happy with the price and had the mower in time for the spring mowing season.

### **Package Deal**


Sometimes in the purchasing process, the need arises to buy an implement and a power unit to operate it. Often times that means two purchase orders, two checks and two manufacturers. Not so fast! Land Pride was purchased by Kubota Tractor Corporation in 2016. That is great news for municipalities that are looking to purchase a tractor implement package. It means only one PO. One check. One great team!

Consider this: A local municipal golf course approached its local Kubota and Land Pride dealer about a seeding solution. The dealer recommended a Kubota L Tractor packaged with a Land Pride All-Purpose Seeder. The pair were quoted together as a single purchase price for the golf course to consider. After reviewing the quote, the superintendent approved the quote. One PO was issued and one check was cut for a seeding package at a substantial discount thanks to Kubota and Land Pride's NJPA contracts.

### **Cooperative buying has options**

There are many cooperative buying groups that government agencies can be a part of. Land Pride offers contracts with several, including NJPA and BuyBoard—just to name two. But with so many cooperative contracts available, buyers need to choose the one that best meets their buying needs.

Organizations like NJPA and the BuyBoard make sure everything is transparent. They maintain all of the paperwork and they are competitively solicited, evaluated and awarded by a public agency that is bound by laws regulating the process. Everything is available for public review.

By purchasing through a cooperative contract, grounds maintenance managers in many government agencies can take advantage of the time- and money-saving benefits that the contracts provide. Buyers will have to do their homework, but they can certainly be confident that manufacturers like Land Pride are here to help with the process. Finding a contract and manufacturer that you like is better than trying to navigate the buying process alone. 



# Little Bavaria Frankenmuth, Mich.

*The Frankenmuth Visitor Center features a fountain with a maypole sculpture and a platz for convivial social congregation.*

by RAY BALOGH | The Municipal

*All photos provided by Frankenmuth Convention and Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce*

**H**IS NICKNAME WAS TINY. HIS INFLUENCE WAS GIGANTIC. William “Tiny” Zehnder (1919-2006) grew up in the restaurant business. When he was 8 years old, his parents traded in their family farm to purchase a hotel in nearby Frankenmuth, Mich.

They renamed the establishment Zehnders Hotel in 1928. Tiny’s mother did the cooking and the hotel quickly acquired a favorable reputation.

In 1941, at the age of 22, Tiny became general manager of the hotel while continuing to farm. Two years later he married Dorothy Hecht, a waitress at Fischer’s, the hotel across the street, which the Zehnders purchased in 1950, taking over that restaurant as well.

A national recession severely pummeled the profitability of the Zehnders’ businesses. Both restaurants lost money for several years in the mid-1950s and bankers advised the family to sell one of the hotels to avoid bankruptcy.

That plan was not on the radar of Tiny’s dogged vision for success. At his insistence, the family actually borrowed money to construct an addition in Bavarian style onto the Fischer’s Hotel. They renamed it Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn.

The addition highlighted the town’s German heritage with Bavarian exterior stucco walls, woodcarvings, flower boxes and other

ethnically focused accents. Waiters and waitresses sported traditional Bavarian garb.

The town celebrated the restaurant’s opening in 1959 with a week-long festival featuring German entertainment, food, dancing and music. The Zehnders served up bratwurst, beer and pretzels.

The Frankenmuth Bavarian Festival, as the annual event is now known, will celebrate its 60th occurrence June 7-10, 2018.

The Zehnders did not stop with the initial renovation of their hotels and restaurants. For the next decade they ventured continual remodeling and expansion, and in 1967, they added a 60-foot glockenspiel with a 35-bell carillon, which serves as a centerpiece of nostalgic entertainment.

Several times a day mechanically revolving figures depict the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, accompanied by recorded narration and carillon music.

Tiny’s vision carried him far beyond his businesses. He wanted to transform the small agricultural community into “Michigan’s Little Bavaria,” which he hoped would be a notable tourist destination.

For the next half century, he devoted his life to encouraging and assisting other Frankenmuth businesses to build or remodel their enterprises into a Bavarian theme with its distinctive use of timbers in square and X patterns.





*Visitors can enjoy a relaxing and scenic ride down the tranquil Cass River. On the right is the stately Bavarian Inn Lodge.*

His investment of money, time, heart and soul has yielded enormous returns. Approximately 3 million visitors a year spend time browsing the shops and dining at restaurants in Frankenmuth's historic downtown strip.

"We have about 5,000 residents, but on any given day, we get on the low end 50,000 visitors," said Bridget Smith, Frankenmuth's city manager.

For his leadership and influence, Tiny earned the moniker, "Mr. Frankenmuth." Poor health compelled him to retire in 2004. Surrounded by his family, he peacefully passed away on May 23, 2006.

The town has carried on Tiny's fervent legacy, with the historic downtown approximating a village in the kingdom of Bavaria.

"We have had a successful sister city relationship with Gunzenhausen, Germany, for 55 years," said Smith. Every five years a contingent of Frankenmuth dignitaries visits their German counterpart, and "we just hosted a group of 30 visitors from Gunzenhausen in September," she said. Every year the high school participates in a student exchange program.

Architectural regulations for the downtown have not been very stringent. The building codes merely contain guidelines, but the citizens of Frankenmuth have captured the spirit of the town's heritage.

"Other businesses, such as McDonald's and Kroger, which are outside the historic district, volunteer" to blend their establishments into the overarching Bavarian theme, according to Smith.

"Our population is diverse and it is getting harder and harder with out-of-town ownership to have that same commitment on a volunteer basis," she said, "and we are just now beginning to revamp our zoning ordinance to include some guidelines."

Nevertheless, the German heritage is still strong. "The German class at our high school, parochial school and public middle school are full every year," said Smith.

City personnel take an active role in Frankenmuth's many annual events.

"We are fortunate to have 26 dedicated full-time employees, including those in the police departments," Smith said. "We have a very active police reserve, with 10 recruits in this year's class. They take a year of training, and when they are finished, they help supplement our police department with crowd and traffic control."

Michigan's Little Bavaria is not all restaurants, shops and festivals, though.

"Our community is dynamic and friendly, and the whole city is very walkable," said Smith. "We encourage people to see Frankenmuth as a local does. Visit our historical museum. There are stories all through town."

For more information, visit [www.frankenmuth.org](http://www.frankenmuth.org) or call 1-800-FUN-TOWN (386-8696). 



*The World Expo of Beer, a two-day annual celebration, features a worldwide brewery competition and more than 300 flavors to sample. The 2017 winner was Bonfire Brown, concocted by a brewery in Douglas, Mich.*



*Bronner's Christmas Wonderland, appropriately located at 25 Christmas Lane about two miles south of downtown Frankenmuth, hails itself as "The World's Largest Christmas Store." At the southern tip of the 27-acre campus sits a replica of the St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria, where "Silent Night" was first sung in 1818.*



*Frankenmuth's annual AutoFest — always the weekend after Labor Day — features more than 2,500 classic and muscle cars, plus hot rods. It draws upwards of 100,000 visitors.*





## Buckhannon, W.Va.

Native Americans have always figured prominently in the history of Buckhannon, W.Va., a city of 6,132 people in the center of the state.

The first native settlers were Mound Builders, also known as the Adena people, a contingent of related Native American societies sharing a common burial complex and ceremonial system. Their culture stretched across West Virginia and into seven other states: Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

During the late 1500s and early 1600s, Hurons occupied the West Virginia territory. They were driven out by the Iroquois Confederacy, which used the land for hunting.

Other Indian tribes, including the Shawnee, Mingo and Delaware, migrated to the area during the early 1700s.

In 1744 Virginia officials purchased West Virginia from the Iroquois and several skirmishes between Indians and settlers ensued.

As the number of settlers grew, the Indians moved further inland, ceding the region to white settlers.

Brothers Samuel and John Pringle were the first Englishmen to arrive in Buckhannon's county of Upshur.

They deserted their posts at Fort Pitt in present-day Pittsburgh and arrived in Upshur County in 1762, near the end of the French and Indian War.

Legend has it they lived in hiding in the hollow stump of a giant sycamore tree for three years. When John traveled to a nearby settlement for supplies in 1765, he found out the war had ended and he and Samuel were no longer wanted for desertion.

In 1769 Samuel and his wife, Charity, joined several other families to settle the present community of Buckhannon.

The first school was established 10 years later and the first postmaster was appointed in 1804. During the American Civil War, Union and Confederate troops clashed in and near the area and each seized control of the town during the conflict.

Buckhannon was established as a town in 1816 and was incorporated in 1852.

The city seal, created in 1998, depicts an imagined meeting between Samuel and Delaware chief Buck-on-ge-ha-non, the purported namesake of the town. Other historians speculate the town and nearby Buckhannon River were named for John Buchanan, a Scottish clergyman who served as missionary to the area in the 1780s.

Both Samuel and the chief are holding their rifles, but neither in an aggressive posture. Their hands are extended in either greeting or trade as the sun beams from behind. They are standing on the sycamore stump that reputedly served as the Pringle brothers' abode from 1764 to 1767.

For more information, visit [www.buckhannonwv.org](http://www.buckhannonwv.org). 



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Murfreesboro, Tenn., has earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance

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*Learn more about Murfreesboro's excellence in financial report on page 24.*

**17%**

The approximate percentage of growth from 2015 to 2016 in IT bids and requests for proposals in government contracting.



*Read more about software purchasing on page 18.*

**32 percent**



Only 32 percent of employees are engaged in their work, according to a Gallup News' report from 2015.

*Learn more about engaging and empowering your workforce on page 30.*

**140**



Roughly this many employees have been trained through Columbus, Ga.'s, annual training conference, "Up and Motivated."

*More on Columbus' innovative training methods can be found on page 28.*



**\$162 million**

Denver City Council approved a maintenance and operations contract in late November worth this much for the underground train system at Denver International Airport.



Source: <http://kdvr.com/2017/11/28/city-council-oks-162-million-contract-for-dia-underground-train-system/>

**22,400** square feet

Oklahoma City unveiled its 22,400-square-foot streetcar storage and maintenance facility, which has three main bays for maintenance. It is one piece in Oklahoma City's streetcar project, which is set to be completed by the end of 2018.

Source: [www.news9.com/story/36875425/city-reveals-new-streetcar-maintenance-facility](http://www.news9.com/story/36875425/city-reveals-new-streetcar-maintenance-facility)

**18-20 percent**

Based on surveys conducted between 2011 and 2017, on average, local agency spending through cooperative contracts has grown from around 12 percent to 18-20 percent — including statewide contracts from agencies.



Source: Onvia's "2018 State and Local Government Contracting Forecast"

**\$11 billion**

The amount needed over 20 years by Minnesota cities to address aging and deteriorating water and wastewater infrastructure.

Source: [www.startribune.com/cities-across-minnesota-are-racing-to-replace-aging-water-pipes-sewer-systems/459973313/#1](http://www.startribune.com/cities-across-minnesota-are-racing-to-replace-aging-water-pipes-sewer-systems/459973313/#1)

**\$20,176**

The starting pay of a general maintenance city employee in Jackson, Miss. A general maintenance worker in the private sector in Jackson could earn between \$31,455 to \$43,273. The city is working toward increasing employees' pay, with Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba commenting, "It shocks my conscience when you see city employees waist high in water in the middle of the winter making less than \$10 an hour."

Source: [www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2017/11/28/city-pay-raises-more-when-than-if-mayor-hints/851724001/](http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2017/11/28/city-pay-raises-more-when-than-if-mayor-hints/851724001/)





# RFPs can hinder software purchases

by SARAH WRIGHT | The Municipal

**The number of cities investing in cloud-based software is increasing, and it's not surprising given the ability to access the software and its saved data from anywhere and with any internet-enabled device. Beyond ease of use and access, going to the cloud also provides cities with the opportunity to show their constituents they are being proactive where the environment and taxpayer money are concerned by reducing the reams of paper and ink consumed.**

**ABOVE:** While requests for proposals are a staple of the purchasing process for municipalities, they can be inefficient when procuring software, often deterring software vendors from participating in the bidding process. (Shutterstock.com)

Onvia's "10 Hotspots in Government Contracting for 2017" shared IT bids and requests for proposals had grown approximately 17 percent from 2015 to 2016. These bids included both custom and transformative IT services like cyber, cloud, big data and data center/information architecture consulting. The report also noted when it came to IT purchasing "that many of the highest growing IT segments are in areas such as these where buyers typically lack the experience and knowledge to be highly specific about the bid language and look to providers for input."

This lack of experience can hamstring cities and towns when it comes to procuring

software, both when securing the best "deal" and the right software for specific operations.

Tammy Rimes, MPA a procurement consultant and former purchasing agent for the city of San Diego, stated procurement processes aren't necessarily as nimble and progressive as needed for IT purchases. A bid or RFP process generally outlines the specifications and scope of work for an intended purchase; however, in the IT world, procurement doesn't always know what they don't know. With limited resources and training, this is an area even the most progressive procurement professional would like to have more research time and knowledge.

Rimes suggested the solution for software procurement could be multi-fold: 1) issuing requests for information that are more "open" for the suppliers to propose the latest technology; 2) allowing procurement professionals to attend IT and leading edge conferences to learn more about this field, and 3) agency IT and procurement teams working more closely together on purchases rather than within "silo" processes where the two groups rarely combine efforts. In the end, the goal for both groups — IT and procurement — should be the same: to benefit the public good.





*Setting up a customized software demonstration with a software vendor can give municipalities an idea of what to expect on day one through day 301 and so on. (Shutterstock.com)*

For software vendors, RFPs can be a leading frustration as Bob Casey, vice president of operations at Aladtec, noted, “The one thing I’ve found is that the RFP process for software is not the most efficient.”

He shared he has seen RFPs up to 100 pages in length and contain anywhere from four to 700 questions. Cities have even copied terminology from a particular software firm’s website, which further discourages other companies from participating in the RFP process as the city seems to have already made its decision. A municipality can also disadvantage itself in a RFP.

“We’ve come across a section in the RFP that stated, ‘The maximum budgeted amount for this project is \$120,000 (a year),’” Casey said. “This will attract the bottom-feeders who will check yes to (all the requirements) without sharing their price. ‘Oh, coincidentally, we were going to charge that much!’”

While cities might think of using the RFP process to get a feel for pricing, most reputable software vendors already have that information shared on their websites for anyone to see. However, cities shouldn’t focus too much on prices both high and low as Casey noted, “Getting the best price and best deal are not necessarily the same thing.”

The bottom line comes down to usability and whether the software is the best fit — or can be customized — for the operations it is being purchased to do. Scalability can also be an important factor, especially if some features are not needed. These bottom line items can be lost or not come across in an RFP.

“What I would do is insist on a customizable demo using their data and people to get hands-on experience,” Casey said, adding, “Things don’t always come through (when using) a check list. A good software company would provide that for free.”

Casey stressed the need to make sure the demo is fully detailed and customized. “A generic demo will show you what they want you to see, not what you need to see. A customized demo gives you a feel for what to expect on day one, day 101 and day 301.” This enables employees who will be using the software day in and day out to determine its usability and intuitiveness.

“Typically there will need to be a presentation beforehand,” Casey said. “Software can be presented remotely and is very easily demonstrated.”

A demo can also give a city a taste of an intangible component of purchasing software: the level of customer service the software vendor provides. Employees shouldn’t feel intimidated or embarrassed to call the customer service line if something happens or they require guidance on certain aspects or features of the software.

This full introduction to the software and the software vendor can ensure municipalities aren’t handcuffed in a contract with a software that just doesn’t satisfy needs.

Rimes noted the typical government contract may last for three to five years and doesn’t reflect the rapidly changing IT technology environment. She said, “Another possible solution may be ►


***“Getting the best price and best deal are not necessarily the same thing.”***





Allowing procurement professionals to attend IT and leading edge conferences is one way to aid them in the technology/software procurement process. (Shutterstock.com)

to seek another agency's established contract or a cooperative contract that has already been solicited and ready to use. By leveraging the spend across multiple agencies and using already-conducted research, this can be an effective way for municipalities to gain the commodities and services needed in the rapidly evolving IT industry. The National Cooperative Procurement Partners Association is an excellent resource for educational materials on the concept of cooperative contracting."

Ultimately, Rimes said, "Government offices have to respect their duty to the public and spending of tax dollars. They can't necessarily take on a great deal of risk, and must choose proven technologies or standardize on certain products for maintenance and security reasons. It would be great if they were given the latitude to research and 'try' new ideas, but risk is not always rewarded in a government environment, particularly if things go wrong." 



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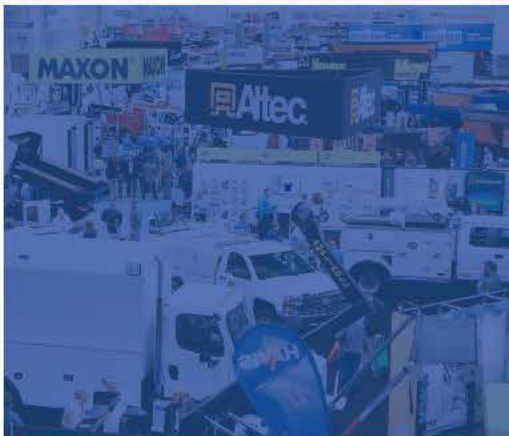


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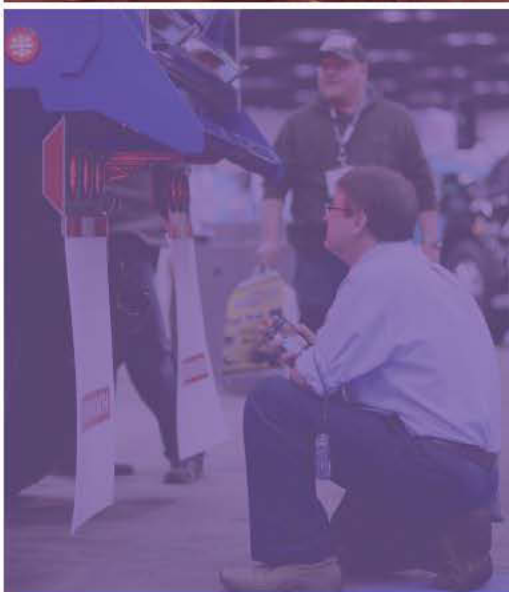
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# Assessing stormwater asset systems can head off larger problems

by CATEY TRAYLOR | The Municipal

**The best way to handle a catastrophic problem is to prevent it from the start.**

This popular adage is true for most things, but especially situations where millions of dollars are at stake if something goes wrong. Mark Van Auken, a stormwater practice leader based in Raleigh, N.C., has dedicated his time to teaching municipalities the importance of assessing their stormwater asset system and taking cautionary measures so as to avoid serious problems in the future.

The program is called Stormwater Strategic Asset Management. It uses risk-based analysis to investigate all facets of a community's current stormwater system; seek to minimize total cost of repair, maintenance and upkeep; and determine risk factors involved with each asset.

"The ultimate goal," Van Auken said, "is to get communities to be able to know more about the assets they have within their current system and use that information to be more cost efficient. We're also looking at what they can do to provide the level of service, safety and protection needed for their community."

The first step, Van Auken said, is for each community to collect data on the pieces of the system it already has in place and record that data in a way that is helpful to researchers. A large variety of data is required to make informed decisions and includes, but is not limited to, diameter of pipes, type of material used, year of installation and maintenance records.

"When they start out, a lot of communities look at the stormwater assets and simply see physical condition," Van Auken said. "We're trying to emphasize not only looking at the physical condition, but the criticality of its location within the system."



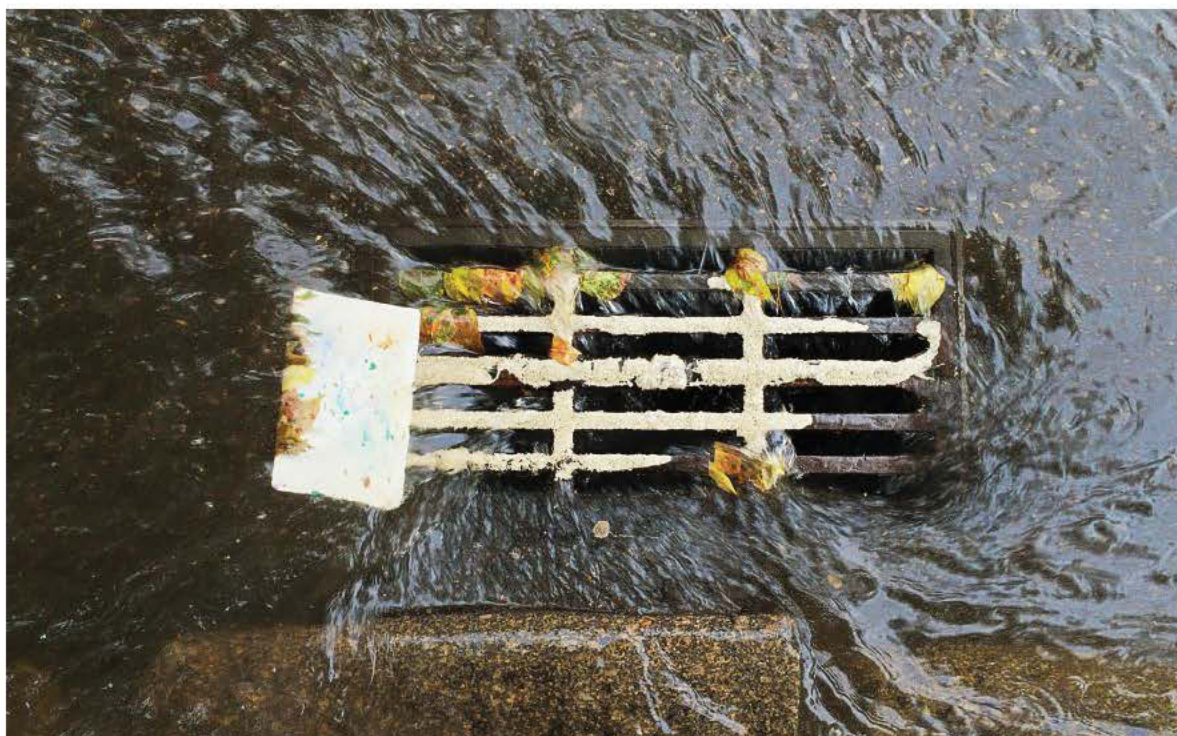
*With knowledge of existing infrastructure, cities can prioritize repairs based on their location and potential impact, particularly in highly populated areas. (Kenneth Sponsler/Shutterstock.com)*

For example, Van Auken said a community could have a pipe that's less than 10 years old that is in great shape condition-wise but sits in an area with a large stormwater flow and doesn't have the capacity to handle it. Those are the sorts

of situations asset management recognizes and works to correct before a massive failure occurs, costing cities money.

"We're looking largely at the critical infrastructure the pipe impacts," he said. "It makes more sense to make sure the assets





*A community could have a pipe that is in great shape but sits in an area with a large stormwater flow that it doesn't have the capacity to handle. (Shutterstock.com)*

in critical, dense locations that could affect thousands of people are in better shape than the ones that are in worse condition but impact a less populated area.”

In addition to infrastructure location and impact, cost, severity of effects if the system fails and environmental sensitivity are taken into consideration when recommending system upgrades or maintenance.


The asset management and risk analysis method Van Auken teaches is starting to be more widely used in communities and, when done correctly, assists city governments in deciding which issues to invest time and money into.

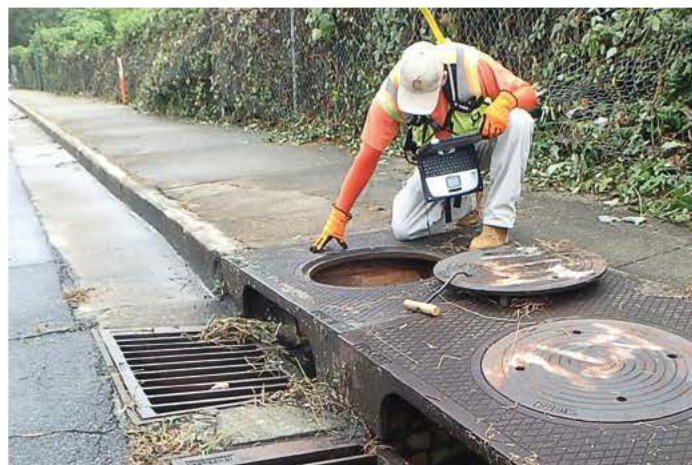
“It’s very beneficial for communities, if they’re going to be doing an evaluation, to develop a hierarchy that starts with the community at large and breaks it down into smaller subgroups,” Van Auken said. “By having a hierarchy, it gives municipalities the ability to look at material types, location — any single item they want to (related) to assets — and make evaluations and comparisons to see what your problems are and how to fix them.”

However, Van Auken isn’t blind to limiting factors in municipalities, mainly cost.

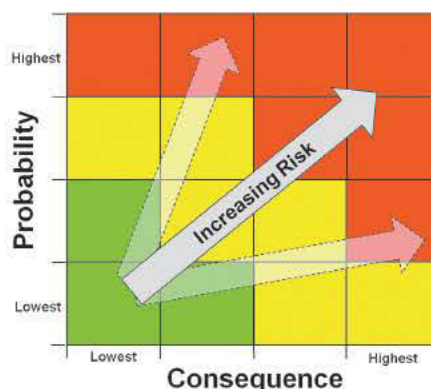
“I know it all comes down to cost,” he said. “The upfront planning and being able to spend a little bit of initial money to look at how to set up this risk analysis system, and then being able to set aside a little money to inspect your system each year is no easy task.”

Van Auken encourages cities to do what they can within their means, providing details on how to, at the minimum, set a framework for stormwater asset management in the future.

Any interested municipalities have the opportunity to join Van Auken’s latest project — a collaborative research project across cities looking to assess their stormwater management systems titled, “Stormwater Strategic Asset Management: Tools and Guidelines.” For more information, contact the Water Environment & Reuse Foundation at [www.werf.org](http://www.werf.org). 



*A worker inspects a manhole. Knowing more about the assets within their current wastewater system can allow cities to provide a high level of service, safety and protection for their communities. (Photo provided)*

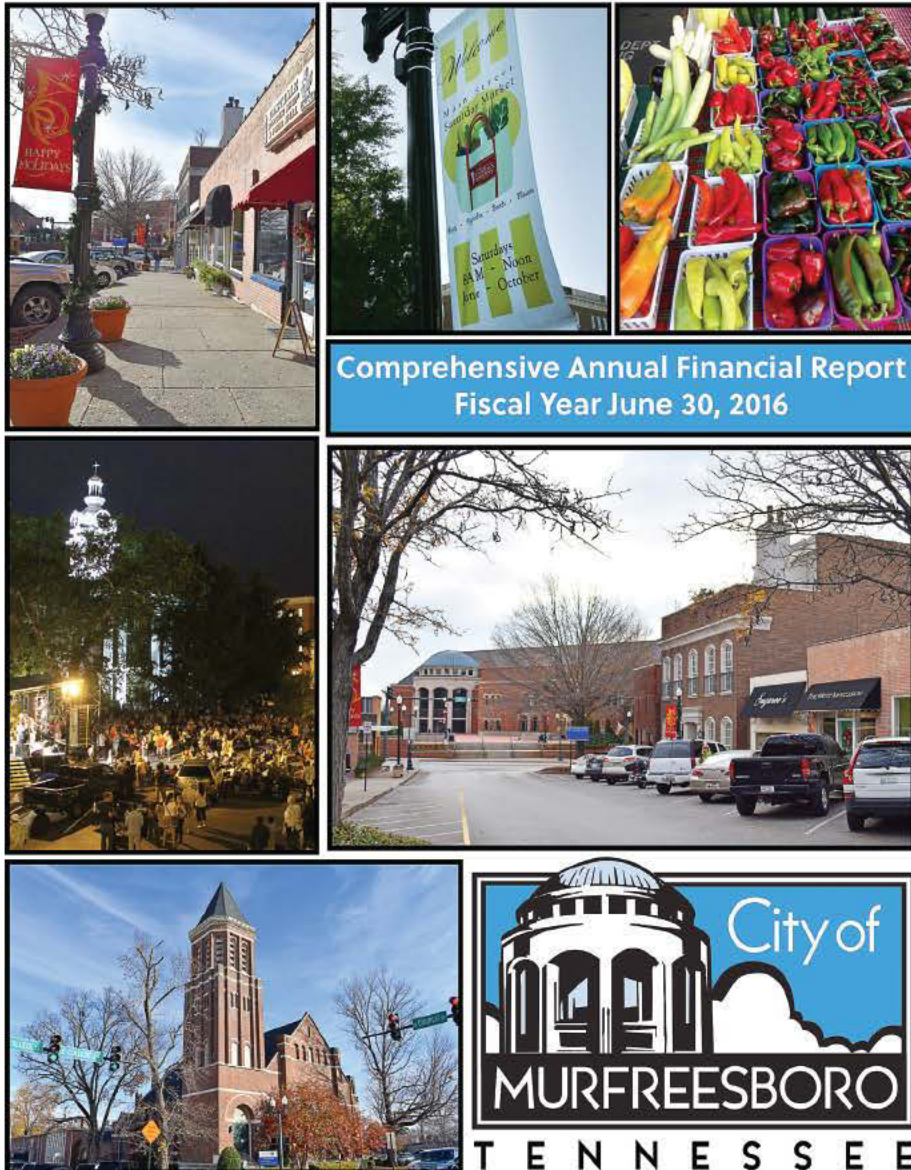


*This graph shows the relationship between probability and consequence when it comes to increasing risk. (Graph provided)*



# Murfreesboro 'excellent' at financial reporting

By DENISE FEDOROW | The Municipal



**Comprehensive Annual Financial Report  
Fiscal Year June 30, 2016**

*Murfreesboro's award-winning June 30, 2016, fiscal year comprehensive annual financial report highlights City Hall's proximity to the square and the regular interaction and support the city provides to the downtown area. It also features the city's selection of shopping, restaurants, personal service businesses and professional and governmental offices that are all located in the downtown core. (Photo provided by Murfreesboro, Tenn.)*

**M**URFREESBORO, TENN.'S, motto is "Creating a better way of life," and as far as the city's finances are concerned, it seems to be living up to that motto. The city has earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for 19 consecutive years. It has also received the GFOA's distinguished budget presentation award. Murfreesboro City Recorder and Finance Director Melissa Wright shared what she believes has contributed to this distinction.

"Our office has been dedicated to producing a comprehensive annual financial report each year that meets the standards as required to submit for the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting program because we believe it indicates management's desire to be transparent and to share information by giving the reader a better understanding of our financial performance and our community as a whole," she said.

"Throughout the year we make note of information that we may want to highlight or share in the report, and we encourage staff to share information that might be of interest to outside parties. Our audit firm has been instrumental in guiding us through the certificate program and making sure we hit all of the marks expected for a successful application," Wright said.

## GFOA's CFAR

The GFOA established the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting in 1945 to both encourage and assist state and local governments to move beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles. Additionally, GFOA encourages participants to show





*A city of 108,755, Murfreesboro, Tenn., has been awarded the Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting for 19 consecutive years. Pictured is its City Hall. (Photo provided by Murfreesboro, Tenn.)*

evidence of transparency and full disclosure — something successful governments are recognized for.

According to GFOA website, "The goal of the program is not to assess the financial health of participating governments, but rather to ensure that users of their financial statements have the information they need to do so themselves."

The more than 3,900 state and local governments that participate each year are asked to submit their reports within six months of the end of their fiscal years. The review process takes another four to six months. Reports submitted to the CAFR program are reviewed by selected members of the GFOA Special Review Committee, which consists of members with expertise in public sector financial reporting. Among these members are financial statement preparers, independent auditors, academics and other financial professionals.

Benefits to participating in the program include giving users access to high-quality reports that promote better transparency to citizens and other stakeholders. Credit rating agencies and others may view participation

and receiving the award as positive factors in decision-making. Also, as financial reporting standards evolve, participation helps governments implement those standards into their reports. A grade is assigned to each section of the report, with comments and suggestions for improvements being included as well.

#### **Murfreesboro's finance department**

Within the city's tax and finance department, there are four groups of staff members, according to Wright. The first group handles administrative duties, including phone calls, council agendas and minutes, packages, supply ordering and advertising. There are two members in the administrative group.

The second group of four staff members handles accounts payable, check issuance, filing of invoices, backup for phones and issuance of store credit cards. The third group of four staffers handles property tax collections, business license issuance and hotel/motel occupancy tax collections.

The fourth group of six staff members, including Wright, works with the general ledger; balances bank accounts; handles

accounts receivables; initiates journal entries; oversees internal controls; manages the budget, fixed assets and beer and liquor licenses; and works with both the independent audit firm and all of the city departments to maintain accurate information for the general ledger.

All levels have different experience needs when hired. Finance personnel accountants are required to have a four-year college degree with a major in accounting and, generally, at least two years of related working experience when hired.

"We have been fortunate and have had excellent applicants and currently have five CPA's in this department. Twice we were able to hire a CPA when the license was not required by the job description," Wright said. "This licensure often is tied to a candidate whose attributes include the ability to problem solve, research and reach out to assist others without constant supervision."

#### **Technology**

On July 1, 2015, the city went live with a new modern financial software package — Munis, sold by Tyler Technologies — which replaced the COBOL system. Wright said the city continues to add additional modules as the staff gains experience with the base general ledger software.

Although not really an instrumental part of the city receiving the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting Award, the newer system has been helpful.

"It has been helpful in allowing us to research information much easier when we are working on pulling the report together," she said.

The new software has also made it easier for department heads to be more involved with the general ledger aspect of their operations.

"We now are able to scan invoices into software and a department head can look and see what has been paid or what their staff purchased by looking at the invoice image. Previously, they had to scan and keep copies or call finance and ask for a copy of ►



invoices,” she said. “This new ability to see it from their office is certainly a time-saver and can help them make decisions a little faster if they are basing it on this type of information.”

Wright pointed out that the city received the CAFR award for 18 years while on the old COBOL system.

She credits working closely with the audit firm as a factor in the city’s consecutive awards. Though, she noted that not all of the individual reports included in the CAFR are done by their audit firm as the schools, the electric utility and a small cemetery are audited by two other firms.

“We recognize that our audit firm has been instrumental in pulling all of the information together into one report. We work closely with them and their expertise has had a major impact in getting the report complete on time and making sure all of the items on the GFOA checklist have been covered,” she said.

Wright advises that it takes a team of people working together to bring excellence in financial reporting and budgeting.

“I suggest making sure you have a good team both in your department and outside your department by working with your independent audit firm. Several of our staff are former auditors,

***“It takes a team of people working together to bring excellence in financial reporting and budgeting.”***


so we recognize that a good working relationship with our auditors is important,” she said. “The city’s auditors know we want to do it right and that sometimes errors will be found, but we want to learn from them so they won’t be repeated. If

you treat the auditors as an adversary, you are not open to learning or hearing suggestions of how to improve in the future.”

Wright said if the city or town is small in size, “sometimes it’s better to hire a firm to help get you to the point of closing your books and assisting with CAFR reporting, and then hire another firm to come in and audit the work.”

Although hiring two firms might at first seem costly, it’s likely less of an expense than hiring staff year-round if they’re not needed.

She also suggested hiring the best staff. “Never be afraid to hire someone who may be smarter and have more credentials than you do. I see that as a downfall so often — that the person in charge wants to be the brightest one in the room. The better your staff, the better your department will be.”

For more information on the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting program, visit the GFOA’s website at [www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org). 



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# Columbus Public Works pulls together with cross-training

By BARB SIEMINSKI | The Municipal

**Columbus, Ga., is the county seat of Muscogee County, and its public works department is making a name for itself and for good reason.**

The employees of Columbus are into enthusiastic cross-training and doing so with their employer's blessing — during work hours, no less.

This type of cross-training is just as much mental as physical. Pat Biegler, director of public works, goes into more detail about her successful endeavor that initially didn't arouse much enthusiasm.



Pat Biegler

"Cross-training is a program that our forestry and beautification division put in place, in which crews are moved around to learn each other's jobs," explained Biegler, adding that two of her supervisors were on the agenda at the 2017 National American Public Works Association Conference in Orlando, Fla.

One of her supervisors, Michael Jordan, assistant beautification manager, said that the at-first-reluctant employees are adjusting very well.

"Like any form of change in the workplace, they had a brief period when they doubted if this was the best way to conduct business," said Jordan. "They have since grown accustomed to the changes and look forward to learning about different areas of the division. This also created a greater sense of camaraderie among the crews. There was also a new-found respect for what the other crews had to do during the course of the work day. I guess the old saying of walking a mile in someone else's shoes is still true."

The public works department holds an annual training conference, titled "Up and Motivated," for leadership, management and self-improvement for operational staff.

According to Biegler, the department is in its fifth year with the conference having taken place Oct. 17, 2017.

"It started out just for the public works department but has now been extended to the whole city," said Biegler.

"Up until this year, we have put it together with the only cost being the catering of breakfast and lunch. We've now outgrown our 'free' venue, and this year we have to pay for use of space at the Columbus Trade Center. The theme changes every year — (along with) the speakers — with a slightly different focus. We'll have roughly 140 employees trained. This program won the Exemplary Diversity event in July 2016 in the Georgia Chapter of the APWA."



Employees talk with Keep Columbus Beautiful Executive Director Gloria Weston Smart about a program to reduce litter at an Up and Motivated conference

Additionally, Columbus has established a two-year leadership development program using in-house resources, replacing a contracted program. The sessions are taught by deputy city managers, department heads and other senior personnel and focuses on how things are done in Columbus.

"One of the great things about Columbus is that I have gotten tremendous support for my ideas rather than resistance both from management and from my staff," said Biegler, who teaches three of the leadership development classes.

"My staff has bought into my vision and really helped to pull the programs together. Probably the most difficult part was taking my half-baked ideas and working with my staff to turn them into something more concrete. Once we got through the first one, the others came more easily."

Each April the department has a program called "Workplace Athlete," which is an obstacle course based on safety and proper form rather than on speed and strength. Initially, it was just for the public works department but has now been expanded to include the parks and recreation department. This program also won the Georgia APWA award for the Exceptional Diversity program in 2017.





**ABOVE:** In the Workplace Athlete competition, employees complete a variety of physical challenges that are related to job safety. (Photo provided)

Workplace Athlete takes place in an open field adjacent to the public works building. Some of the challenges include:

- One of the obstacles is lifting weights to different heights as a team. Three vehicles with varying heights are lined up, and bins are filled with specific weights, which two people have to lift together. They are scored on their form and their communication.
- Another test is repeatedly entering and leaving a large truck. Drivers are trained to keep three points of contact as they go up and down, but often they do not.
- Still another exercise involves filling a wheelbarrow with sand, following a circuitous path and then unloading it at the other end.
- One favorite is the duck walk, which requires contestants to hold an egg on a spoon and move forward while in a stoop. Employees have to work close to the ground and focus on balance. The judge of this event tries to get them to quack while they waddle. Pat Biegler commented, "Our duck walkers lost points because they weren't squatted low enough."

One of the suggested events the first year was a tire pull. While it wasn't directly related to a job activity, a good competitive spirit adds to the excitement, according to Biegler.

"I told them I thought it was a great idea and to get the biggest, heaviest tire they could find, and they sure did," said Biegler.

"The first year we had teams of five trying to pull that tire, and only two teams were able to budge it, and the best team moved it about two inches. They used every technique they could think of without success. Everyone tried multiple times. The second year we allowed teams of six, and they were able to move it a few feet. Every big guy we have got recruited for that effort. It was great fun with everyone cheering them on."

She added, "We now have a rotating trophy for the winning team." **M**



A public works employee checks out some college opportunities at an Up and Motivated conference. (Photo provided)



Pat Biegler, director of public works, teaches a class at an Up and Motivated conference. (Photo provided)





# Creating an engaging and empowering workplace across generations — Part I

By ELISA WALKER | The Municipal

**The workforce today holds the largest generational gap that employers have experienced. For a long time, employees were expected to fit into a particular mold of the workforce, but now employees are demanding that the workforce fit them. One of the most difficult challenges in redeveloping the workforce, however, is accepting that change is only as good as the willingness to adapt.**

It's easy to become settled, complacent and refuse change, believing that "the way it's always been" will continue to work in the future. That limits employees' abilities,

resulting in them becoming disengaged. Many employers are taking steps to work with the changing workforce by attending workshops, talks and programs, which

give leaders tools to empower and engage employees.

## **Why change now?**

While many like to believe change is happening because of the millennial generation, they're only pushing for things that everyone else wants out of work: happiness, productivity and a sense of purpose. Unfortunately, according to Gallup News' statistics from 2015, only 32 percent of employees are engaged, which means the majority aren't feeling happy, productive or impactful. Reasons for



**LEFT:** Assigning teams to work on a project is one simple way to not only combine new viewpoints, but drive change. Teamwork can also build a sense of camaraderie that can be maintained long after the project has been completed. (Shutterstock.com)

**RIGHT:** This chart, from one of Cassandra Halls' presentations, displays different characteristics and ways each generation has been shaped by events during their life. (Photo provided)

Traditionalists 1925-1946 71-92	Baby Boom Generation 1946-1964 59-71	Generation X 1965-1979 38-53	Millennial Generation 1980-1999 18-37	Generation Z 2000 - 2015 2-17
WWII, Korean War	Vietnam War	Skeptical	Connected	Generation larger than Millennials
Great Depression	Sexual Revolution	Independent	Collaborators	Gen X parents
New Deal	Woodstock	Shaped by latchkeys	Shaped by 9/11	Loyal
Raised by parents that just survived the Great Depression	RFK	Watergate	School shooting trends	Compassionate
Experienced hard times followed by prosperity	MLK	Early PC's	Texting	Thoughtful
	Ambitious	Mom's work	Recession	Open-minded
	Idealists	Dual income families	Team oriented	More mature millennials
	Workaholic	Came of age when the USA was losing its status as the most powerful nation in the world	Desire for constant feedback	Look to Google
	Highest divorce rate and 2nd marriages in history	First generation to not do as well as their parents did.	Social minded	Competitive not patient
	"The American Dream" was promised to them and they pursued it. As a result they are seen as greedy, materialistic and ambitious.		Most studied generation to date	Less likely to job hop
			75% of the workforce by 2020	Have only ever known a smart technology
			Benefits over salary	Prefer face-to-face communication
			Multi-tasking master	Money, job security and independence important
			Most educated generation in history	Measure by merit

Cassandra Halls, president and founder of 2 The Top, worked within the local government and public administration for years before creating a business consulting service that offers a wide variety of specialties. For information, visit [www.2ttop.com](http://www.2ttop.com). (Photo provided)



disengagement can vary, but it's up to leaders to take initiative to change it.

Every employee brings unique skills to the table. Older employees can be filled with great advice and wisdom to share. Younger employees can have fresh ideas and be tech savvy. By combining the two together not only would work become more productive, but more enjoyable all around. Today's employees aren't just worker bees who come for the paycheck. There's some level of care a person feels toward their job.

"There are a lot of things influencing change, which isn't just new generations coming in," elaborated Cassandra Halls, president and founder of 2 The Top. "Baby Boomers are also exiting the workforce, and they have so much knowledge to share. The change is about managing the transition of the amounts of knowledge that's leaving and putting it some place for others to access. People could be

resistant to change but then where would we be? Even though it isn't comfortable, the results are usually positive.

"Our responsibility is to put our frustration aside, forget what we think we know and figure out how to groom all talent in the workplace to bring out their best. To be effective with all generations, you must be open to compromise, welcome the question 'Why?' and challenge people to drive solutions. All generations add value and each contributes to the workplace in their own way."

The main obstacle is resistance to change. When employees settle into a routine, it can be difficult to go another direction even if it's easier and less time-consuming. It's important to remember that while younger generations are entering a workforce, the entire market of who's being served is changing as well.

"The most successful companies and cities across the nation are those that are able to be open to change and implement new ideas that benefit all members of the workforce," continued Halls. "The next part of this is getting over the why, as in 'why do I have to do this?' We get so stuck in the ways we've always done things. That doesn't mean that what we're doing is the best or only way, it's just the level of comfort in how we've always done it. You can find better time savings and cost advantages if you embrace the process."

"When it comes to having multiple generations in your workforce, you have the ability to work in teams. A more seasoned workforce will want to just tackle the assignment and be done with it, but through the use of

teams, you'll get multiple viewpoints and better results. They'll drive change, which will be influenced by peers rather than from the top-down."

### Refining work culture

Communication is a difficult issue for many employers, especially when reaching out to the community and employees in all departments. Each generation communicates differently—from newspapers to social media feeds. A common area of resistance is utilizing more technology and online sources, such as blogs and social media. Even though it will take effort in relearning a new way of doing things, the advancement in technology can make the job easier by saving time and effort—similar to the way faxing and emailing saves someone a trip for documents or time waiting for snail mail.

The way information is shared can create a positive transformative impact in the work environment and in community ►

## Long-term workplace changes

- Internships
- Give fresh varied experiences and challenges
- Hold info workshops to make sure every employee is on the same page
- Attend workplace development talks



relationships. Communicating effectively across all mediums appears to be a tedious task, but doing so has paid off for many places such as Carlisle, Iowa.

"Cassandra explained (the) different ways different generations look at things in the workplace and how they communicated in her talk," reflected Andy Lent, city administrator of Carlisle. "I asked myself if I was covering all of these; how can I communicate with them better; and how can I improve on what I'm doing to make sure everyone's getting the message. We put news items in the newspaper, our website, Facebook and Twitter, constantly maintaining the feed to hold interest."

Communication also evolved in the office, with Lent stating, "We needed to communicate more between employees, so we've implemented info sessions to keep them informed on projects and what's happening in the community. They want to be a part of what's happening. I involve them more and let them know

that their opinion matters. I've seen a lot of times (when) employees weren't sure what a project was; now they have increased knowledge. It's improved the workplace environment to know what's going on."

While there are rigid budgets and time constraints creating employee

engagement and setting a new tone for workplace culture can be done in small, meaningful ways until a budget can be created. This can include starting conversations, providing constructive feedback beyond yearly performance evaluations, having lunch or potluck events together and just showing care toward employees as individuals.

"Be more open and involved with your employees in seeking out their opinions," Lent advised. "We've become a place where teamwork is more important. We're doing more events to increase camaraderie like lunches where we just sit down and talk. It's brightened up the place and has made it much more enjoyable to work in."

**M**

*The second part will appear in the February issue of The Municipal, and it will focus more on techniques that can encourage change within the workspace and its culture.*

## Ways to implement change on a budget

- Provide more constructive feedback
- Give recognition for good work
- Coach
- Utilize every opportunity to work as a team
- Assign mentorships
- Overcome assumptions and perceptions of generations
- Show appreciation for employees as individual people

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# A small college town, Stevens Point, Wis., has a lot to offer



By BARB SIEMINSKI | The Municipal

**It's not just the residents of Stevens Point, Wis., who appreciate their city. It goes a little further than that. Stevens Point has been ranked in the 2017 Top 10 Small College Towns by Schools.com.**

So, fair warning, Stevens Point residents, others may move into your town when they see how nice it is and hear the siren song of its considerable attractions.

Some of the information considered for the Portage County city's ninth-place ranking included (1) proximity to larger towns; (2) shops, restaurants and art galleries; (3) it is the home to both the University of Wisconsin and the Mid-State Technical College; (4) the town has beautiful scenery and is located on the Wisconsin River; (5) the young adult population; (6) the median annual rent; and (7) the city's walkability and entertainment. The town's Wine Walk in the summer, Fall Festival in autumn and Holiday Parade in winter were given credit as well.

Who better to tout the city's praises than its own mayor, Mike Wiza, a University of Wisconsin communications major and a walking advertisement for Stevens Point?

"I think it is our diversity that makes us great," said Wiza, whose wife is also a UW grad and his daughter is currently a student there.

"We have the UW here, local businesses that take pride in their community and a fabulous park system with



Mayor Mike Wiza of Stevens Point, Wis. (Photo provided by Stevens Point)

**ABOVE:** Stevens Point's farmer's market is a huge hit with locals. (Photo provided by KT Elements)

trails (and) disc golf courses. Our K.A.S.H. (Kids Are Special Here) Playground (with 501c3 legal status) is a universally accessible recreation area with a soft rubber surface, which includes slides, swings, sand play, climbing areas and more for all ages and abilities."

The new fishing piers at the 56-acre Bukolt Park add to the beautiful waterfront scenery on the Wisconsin River, and other sporting opportunities abound. The park offers a lighted baseball diamond; bathhouse; boat ramp and docking area; Green Circle Trail; horseshoe pits; a lagoon; lodge; playfield; picnic area; skateboard park; swimming beach; and a volleyball court.

The town's public markets, including its newest winter market, are big hits as are the



**LEFT:** Kids play in the fountain at Stevens Point's farmer's market. (Photo provided by KT Elements)

Point Brewery, Sunset Park Winery and the O'so Brewing Company.

"The Point Brewery was built a year before we were a city," said Wiza. "It's said, 'If you brew it, they will come,' and Stevens Point Brewery will have its 160th anniversary this year (2018)."

Stevens Point, for trivia fans, was named after George Stevens who operated a grocery and supply business on the Wisconsin River during the extensive logging of interior Wisconsin circa 1850-1929. The river was used by logging companies to float logs to market.

According to Deaken Boggs, a senior at UW majoring in natural resources with a minor in soil and sustainable energies, what he likes best about Stevens Point is that it has a wealth of progressive and environmentally focused events to keep the city moving forward.

"I also enjoy the biking activities and the college hockey games and especially the hockey-centric nature of the community," said Boggs.

David Colthurst, a UW grad and Wausau resident, works in Stevens Point each day and favors the city's popular Riverfront Rendezvous, which is a grand three-day Fourth of July celebration.

"I always spend one full day here during that time," said Colthurst. "Also, the annual trivia contest always brings me back here as well as old friends from my college days."

A sister city to Gulcz, Poland, and Rostov Veliky, Russia, Stevens Point is also a partner city to Esteli, Nicaragua.

Arts and culture abound in the Performing Arts Center; Scarabocchio; Q Gallery; Sculpture Park; Noel Fine Arts Center; and CREATE Portage County. Then during the summer, the community is treated to family movies in the park.

How many cities under 30,000 people have their very own orchestra? Stevens Point not only has the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra, but a city band and other live music events like the Levitt AMP series and all those events hosted by local businesses' venues.

The town has plenty of winter attractions to draw college students as well as other visitors.



Pictured is the "Smile" sculpture by Jef Schobert. (Photo provided)

"We have four to five outdoor ice skating rinks in our parks each year, cross-country trails, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and ice fishing," said Wiza. "We're close to Standing Rocks ski hill and Rib Mountain for downhill skiing. And our very own Snow Art Zone is done by my friend Jef Schobert, who has new creations almost weekly."

Schobert, a disabled veteran and formerly an Army computer programmer, has been carving snow shapes since the late '70s and has a Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/snowartclark/](https://www.facebook.com/snowartclark/), where he shares photos of his work.

"I've been doing this for at least 35 years," said Schobert, "and I find that when other people watch me, it makes them happy and

motivates me to make even more sculptures. I have a contract with a guy who delivers snow to my yard from the sky, and I do the best I can with what I've got.

"I use food coloring and spray the color on the sculpture, but I don't like to use (too much of) the color on my sculptures though because it puts too much water into the snow, which makes it harder to recycle for the next sculpture. There seems to be a zen quality to snow carving, challenging and changing at every turn. I find it fun."

Schobert uses a mason trowel, a screwdriver and a machete; he also wears leather army surplus mittens, which get wet and help smooth the surface. ►



Wondering how much Schobert charges for a snow figure? For a single carving, he will charge \$500, which is “pretty pricey for most people, but I also do volunteer work if someone wants to raise money for a good cause.”

“The reason for such a high price is because it hurts to do what I do,” said Schobert. “I hurt daily, hourly from two accidents on active duty — back, neck, ribs, shoulder, hip, thigh, knees — and throw in a few concussions and a broken thumb. My snow carving is a necessary therapy.”

Schobert estimates that he has completed 3,000 or so snow art sculptures, or an average of 250 annually.

Among Stevens Point’s other attributes, Schobert notes the city is home of the world’s largest trivia contest and also of the world’s largest scavenger canoe race. It is also a safe community, with the biggest crime, as Schobert puts it, being “kids with nothing to do but speed in cars.”


He added, “As a bonus, the winds sheer around this town, due to the Wisconsin River on one side and little Plover River on the other side. This feature was looked at as a safer place to live in the event of a nuclear war in the late 1960s.”

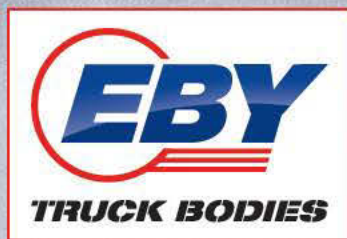
Stevens Point isn’t standing still, that’s for sure. The town is always seeking additional opportunities.

“There are people, right now, working on an indoor sports complex, talking about enhancements to our current sporting venues, adding to the thriving parks system and creating a Cultural Commons asset to showcase our rich heritage and ties to our sister and partner cities,” said Wiza.



*Green Circle Trail is one of many recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors of Stevens Point. (Photo provided by Nena Fisher)*

“Many of the great things you see in Stevens Point wouldn’t happen without passionate and determined volunteers. We owe a lot to the countless people who work on these projects.” 



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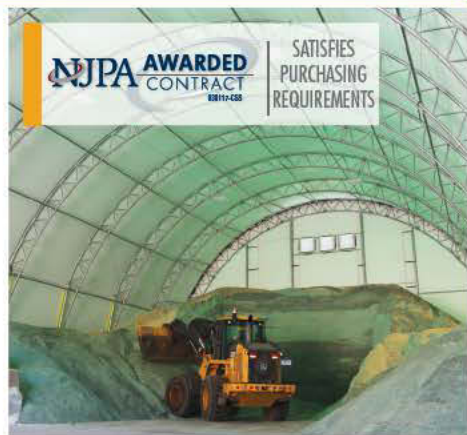
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# Laying new tracks:

## *Rail trails benefit local communities*

By JULIE YOUNG | The Municipal

**Once upon a time, the nation's complex system of railroads functioned as a super highway of sorts to transport people and products all over the U.S. While we still rely on these tracks today to move materials and passengers to and fro, we don't need as many of them, which has led to a number of abandoned rail lines waiting to be reused, repurposed and re-imagined.**

The solution has been to create rail trails, a multi-purpose, public pathway made from converted rail lines. Because these lines are typically flat or have a gentle grade as they run alongside communities throughout the U.S., they are ideal for walkers, cyclists, skaters and even equestrians who take advantage of these spaces on a regular basis.

Rail trails also provide municipalities with a number of benefits. According to the Rails to Trails Conservancy, although people tend to focus on the recreational and environmental aspects of rail trails and greenways, the total package of benefits extends far beyond that. Rail trails provide

communities with public health, economic and transportation benefits and they make an impact on community identity and pride. They don't cost as much as other projects, help preserve green space and encourage new opportunity for commerce.

### **A new train of thought**

In 1999, the city of Ogdensburg, N.Y., began creating the first portion of the Maple City Trail, which winds along the city's northern shore of the Oswegatchie River, then extends over the Spring Street Bridge and down the southern shore of the river before looping back around. Since 2001, there has

been a push to continue the trail over an old trestle bridge, but the community did not have the funds to make it happen.

"We applied for several grants, but things didn't pan out," said Andrea Smith, AICP, planning and development with the city of Ogdensburg.

In October of 2016, she applied for another grant, and this time there was good news. Last April New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that the city would receive \$1.6 million in order to convert the bridge and tie it into the existing trail.

"We are really only at the beginning stages of this, but we are very excited about it," Smith said. "Ever since we were awarded the money, the city has been going through the process of identifying an engineer to plan out the project and execute it. We hope to have that completed soon so that the project can get underway in early 2018."

The end result will convert the bridge into a pedestrian pathway that will loop back



**LEFT:** Many cities and towns are turning abandoned rail lines into community assets in the form of rail trails. Pictured is the Springtown Bridge, which crosses over the Wallkill River near New Platz, N.Y. It is a part of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. (Shutterstock.com)

**TOP RIGHT:** The townships that oversee the Enola Low Grade Trail are always looking for ways to improve and enhance trail usage while also finding ways to encourage trail-goers to explore local towns and businesses. (Photo provided)

into the city and double the length of the Maple City Trail. Smith said the rural community is also looking to create some natural exit points that will encourage trail users to stop in town for lunch and support local businesses at the same time.

"Even though we are a small community, we have an international airport, and since the trail will be located directly across from it, we hope passengers coming in to catch their flight(s) or stopping through on a layover will take advantage of the trail as well," she said.

Smith said studies show that rail trails not only encourage economic growth for businesses, but also cause property values to rise and make a municipality more attractive to residents and businesses while boosting visitor traffic on an annual basis.

"We live in a winter climate, so we definitely get a lot of snow and ice, but the existing trail is maintained all yearlong, and we think that will give the extended trail additional advantage and encourage usability throughout the year," Smith said. "We're only at the beginning at this point, but we are excited about the possibilities."

### **A well-oiled machine**

The Enola Low Grade Trail in Pennsylvania is a more established trail that began in 2008 when the townships adjacent to the Enola Low Grade in Lancaster County came to an agreement with the leading rail lines and other entities to assume ownership of the path to create a then 8.27-mile, mixed-use rail trail.



*Ogdensburg, N.Y., received \$1.6 million in order to convert an old trestle bridge and tie it into the existing trail. (Photo provided)*

According to Providence Township Manager Vicki Eldridge, when it was first proposed, the trail got a tepid reception; however, after a change in community leadership, there was more enthusiasm for the project. The townships worked together to apply for some grants and sketched designs for it, and over time, the state showed enthusiasm for the trail as well. Today, the Enola Low Grade Trail

is a 27.6-mile converted rail line that extends through both Lancaster and Chester counties.

"At this point our goal is to make the trail a tourist destination," Eldridge said. "People can take a train to Philadelphia then go to the eastern most portion of the trail (just off of Valley Avenue) and ride to and along the Susquehanna River to the Turkey Hill Overlook in Conestoga." ►



She also hopes that the trail will interconnect with other trails throughout the state, giving folks the chance to take advantage of smaller communities throughout the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Of course, with any trail that winds through more than one township or county, it is important that the communities have similar rules regarding trail usage. There was some controversy in 2013 when portions of the Enola Low Grade Trail in Manor Township prohibited equestrians from using the trail, which caused some riders to mount their steeds in protest.

"We've never allowed horses on our part of the trail," Eldridge said. "It isn't because we don't love horses, but there is a safety issue there, and horses have been known to tear up portions of the trail. Unfortunately, if you have some portions of the trail that allow them and others that do not, riders don't always know when they have crossed a line. It's better to have consistent rules across the board."

As they continue to look for ways to improve and enhance trail usage, Eldridge said they are working with businesses in the borough of Quarryville to see how they can get trail-goers off the trail and into their restaurants and shops.

"We know that there is a significant impact on the business community when riders feel they can get on and off the trail easily to take in the local sights, and the more we work to promote this idea, the more all of our communities along trail networks throughout the country will benefit." ■



Two walkers enjoy the Enola Low Grade Trail, which nowadays connects Lancaster and Chester counties in Pennsylvania. (Photo provided)

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# Cops just want to have fun raising money for charities

By NICHOLETTE CARLSON | The Municipal

**In times of tragedy or disaster, it is important for people to rally together and help one another. This can be shown in a variety of ways, including monetary donations, item donations and many forms of service. When it came to Hurricane Irma, a post from three police officers at the Gainesville, Fla., Police Department happened to spark donations for Hurricane Irma relief in what became the Hot Cop Challenge.**

## Hot Cop Challenge

According to Darrell DeBusk, Knoxville, Tenn., Police Department public information officer, the original idea for the now infamous “hot cop” picture from Knoxville came from Sgt. Samuel Henard, the second officer from the left. The department discussed both the positive and negative

aspects of doing a photo to challenge the Gainesville Police Department.

Ultimately, DeBusk stated, the deciding factor was “it just happened that the University of Tennessee was playing the University of Florida in Gainesville that Saturday. We thought we would take that huge rivalry and use it as an opportunity to help those suffering from the devastation of Hurricane Irma.”

This challenge between the two departments prompted people to donate money to a hurricane relief fund of their choosing in the name of whichever police department they liked best.

When the department issued the challenge on Sept. 13, it never expected the response it received. The challenge between departments ended up being a huge success both in terms of money raised and positive relations between the public and law enforcement during challenging times.

The post from the Knoxville Police Department ended up generating over 10.5 million visits to the department’s Facebook page, 102,000 likes, 44,800 comments and the addition of 33,000 new Facebook followers within the first 24 to 36 hours after they issued their challenge. DeBusk explained, “Almost immediately we began receiving



**LEFT:** The photo that the Knoxville Police Department chose to challenge the Gainesville Police Department included a K-9. While this not only caught many people's attention, it also helped to bring awareness to many of the animal shelters and other animal relief agencies that needed help following the hurricane. Pictured, from left, are Officer Brayden Hanson, Sgt. Samuel Henard, Officer Garrett Fontanez and Officer Christopher Medina. In front is the K-9, Nash. (Photo provided)



Pictured from left to right, Gainesville Police Department Officers John Nordman, Michael Hamill and Dan Rengerling. (Photo FB Gainesville Police Department)

private messages and emails from citizens sharing screenshots and confirmation receipts of their donations to Florida relief charities of their choice. What was interesting is that many of the citizens making donations made two donations — one in the name of each agency."

Five weeks later the Knoxville Police Department continued to receive thank you cards from a wide range of Florida organizations that had received donations as part of the challenge. Since neither department designated a single charity to receive donations, the total amount of donations made thanks to the challenge remains unknown. This also means there is no definitive winner of the Hot Cop Challenge. However, after talking with the Gainesville Police Department as well as multiple Florida organizations, DeBusk feels confident stating the amount donated reached seven figures.

However, Knoxville's photo, including a K-9, did bring awareness to the number of animal agencies also needing relief from the hurricane. DeBusk said, "In our picture we included a K-9 to make it a little different than the Gainesville Police Department picture. That turned out to be a difference maker. More than half of the comments mentioned the K-9. Including the K-9 resulted in a large number of donations being made to Florida and southeast area animal relief agencies that had previously been overlooked."

Many concerned citizens also were curious whether a calendar would result from this challenge as a way to raise more money.

## On The Web

Knoxville Police Department's Thriller Challenge  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=INmHbgJEqaY&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INmHbgJEqaY&feature=youtu.be)  
 Tarpon Springs Police Department Thriller Challenge  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ6bbpCgIs0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ6bbpCgIs0&feature=youtu.be)



In the Knoxville Police Department video for the Halloween challenge, the actress discusses the importance of the teal pumpkin. A teal pumpkin symbolizes that the person will be distributing allergy-friendly candy or non-candy items to make Halloween more enjoyable for children with food allergies. (Photo provided)

DeBusk admits that there is a calendar planned for 2019. However, it will only feature the K-9 officers.

Referring to a comment the Knoxville Police Department received, DeBusk said, "Even though there were a few inappropriate comments, I believe this comment sums up what the 'hot cop' challenge did for law enforcement: 'Laughs and inappropriate comments aside. I love watching police departments from all over the U.S. come together. This may seem small now but with all the cop bashing, cop hunting, etc., THIS fun and light-hearted competition is doing more than it seems. It's showing the rest of America who police officers are. Real people with great humor just trying to help. So, I thank you guys. It's about time some positive vibes were sent to that thin blue line.'"

## Halloween Teal Pumpkin Challenge

Since Knoxville Police Department had participated in the Hot Cop Challenge, the Tarpon Springs Police Department in Florida challenged them to a Halloween challenge. This challenge had two parts. The goal was to both raise awareness of the Teal Pumpkin Project as well as raise money for the CURED Foundation. Since it was Halloween, both departments were to make a video to Michael Jackson's song "Thriller."

The Teal Pumpkin Project promotes giving away items on Halloween other than candy or allergy-safe candy for children suffering from food allergies. Detective Lara Scarpati from the Tarpon Springs Police Department had asked her department to "go viral" for a cause very close to her family. Her 1-year-old son suffers from severe eosinophilic disorder, which makes it difficult for him to eat. The CURED Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to find a cure for pediatric patients suffering from eosinophilic disorder.

DeBusk stated they were more rushed in the Halloween challenge. After receiving the challenge on Wednesday, DeBusk said, "We quickly got our tech services unit and our safety education unit together to come up with something quick. We shot it that Sunday and edited it on Monday."

The Knoxville Police Department hopes to get an earlier start on the Halloween challenge for next year so they are able to raise more awareness and better prepare. 





# Buffalo Grove, Ill., recognized for winter maintenance plan

By LAUREN CAGGIANO | The Municipal

**A plan is only as effective as its implementation. The village of Buffalo Grove, Ill., has made great strides in terms of planning and executing its winter maintenance plan, so much that its efforts were recognized with a national award.**

**ABOVE:** Buffalo Grove, Ill., updated its winter maintenance plan to include simple routing assignments, compared to the 40 plow routes and nine salt routes previously assigned. (Photo provided)



According to a statement from the American Public Works Association, “The Snow and Ice Control award was established to promote excellence in the management and administration of public works snow and ice operations, and to promote the best practices in snow and ice removal while minimizing environmental impacts.”

Located in the north suburbs of Chicago, Buffalo Grove’s public works department is responsible for the winter maintenance of 114 center road line miles of roads, requiring 522 plowing miles to effectively clear all streets. The Village of Buffalo Grove averages more than 38 inches of snow each year.

Bryan Beitzel, public works maintenance superintendent, is the brains behind the plan. He said it was a matter of making sure the approach was relevant. “The plan itself as it was originally written 20 years ago was written in a way that responded to the expectations of the community.” Although at one time it was “cutting edge,” it stopped being that at some point, he added.

Expectations changed alongside the size of the community, which has grown in recent years. Something had to give. Beitzel said he and his team started working on developing a new plan, following his first winter in the post. He was met with some resistance first by what he referred to as the “old guard.”

“(O)utwardly, our maintenance program still worked. Public perception was that it worked great,” he said. But the reality was that internally there were a lot of moving pieces that needed to be addressed.

First and foremost, he wanted to design an actionable plan and not just recommendations that would be ignored or abandoned in a short time.

“I wanted the plan to be a plan — something that reflected an approach to storm management that could be consistently employed,” he said.

He and a few peers attended the AWPAs winter maintenance conference, which he said was helpful in learning about best practices and technology pertaining to storm management. Following the conference, they assembled a team, which included Beitzel, the street department manager and the plow manager. They bounced ideas off each other in a round table discussion, and in time, they had developed a five-year plan from scratch.

Among the overhauls were simple routing assignments, compared to the 40 plow routes



*A liquid anti-icing truck is ready to go out. The village has invested in targeted trucks, specifically designed for snow removal; this has allowed for an increase in the amount of liquid application, which has reduced the amount of road salt applied. (Photo provided)*

and nine salt routes previously assigned. So that amounted to 49 routes that required training and personnel. He said this volume contributed to a great amount of confusion, and there was a lack of accountability among some of the drivers. By paring down the number of routes to 10, he said there was more consistency and familiarity on the part of employees. It was a win-win.

Along with a reliable workforce, equipment can make or break the job. That’s why Beitzel said they also made an investment in “targeted trucks” specifically designed for snow removal, compared to the standard plow trucks used in the past. They also retrofitted some older equipment, which allowed them to increase the amount of liquid application and, thereby, reduce the amount of road salt applied, he said.

But the equipment is only as good as its operators. That’s why staff development was critical to the plan’s success. “We dedicated a lot of time to employee training.”

Beitzel said there have been a lot of changes to the plan since its inception in 2014, calling it an “evolution.” One of the most significant outcomes has been development of a cost-benefit analysis. In his analysis, he has found a significant reduction in costs. He estimates the village uses about a third less salt in its applications and more liquids, which are cost-effective. On an annual basis, he estimates the village enjoys an annual savings of upwards of \$50,000.

While costs are one part of the equation, Beitzel said he knows that political and



*Pictured is a Bobcat that Buffalo Grove uses to clear parking lots of snow. (Photo provided)*



*Pictured are Buffalo Grove’s Beet Heet, brine and blend tanks. (Photo provided)*

environmental concerns can drive action in other municipalities.

“My experience has been that the really good changes end up touching on several of those factors,” he said. **M**



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### **Streets, Highway & Bridges**

Deadline Friday, Dec. 29

**MARCH 2018**

### **Fleet Service & Management**

Deadline Monday, Jan. 29

**APRIL 2018**

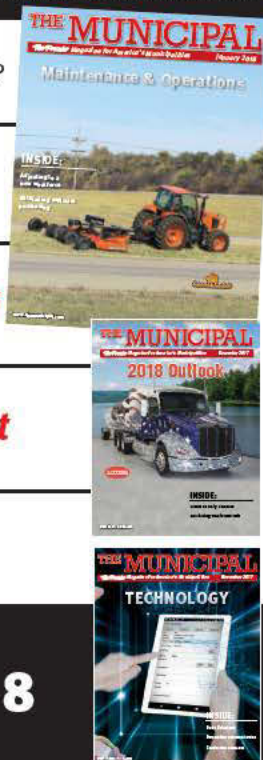
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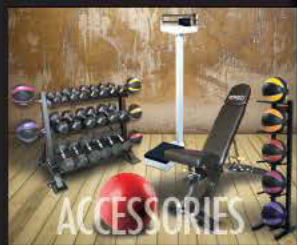


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# Plant straight out of a B-horror movie proves nigh invincible

by CATEY TRAYLOR | The Municipal

**With the ability to grow clear through roadways, survive up to 20 years in total darkness and uproot the foundation of homes, Japanese knotweed sounds like something out of a movie.**

The invasive species, which has already been wreaking havoc across the United Kingdom for decades and causing about \$212 million worth of damage per year, has made its way to America — and researchers like Hannah Hudson are working tirelessly to find a way to slow the plant's expansion.

"Knotweed grows through roads, housing foundations and causes legitimate structural damage to our infrastructure, which is expensive to repair and build," said the Kalamazoo, Mich.-based knotweed researcher.

Hudson's first encounter with the weed was in 2015 when she received a call from city hall that a woman had been complaining of a strange plant in her alleyway that was tearing through the concrete. Hudson

went to investigate and came across a sight she'd never seen before.

"That was the first I'd ever heard of it," Hudson said. "I saw how it broke through the asphalt, blocked the alley and started to grow up the house. After that, I started seeing it everywhere around the city and did some serious research."

Since her initial encounter with the plant, Hudson has documented its presence in a variety of locations: stormwater drains, houses, parking lots and alleyways, just to name a few.

In her extensive research, Hudson discovered that the plant originally comes from volcanic regions of Japan, where it would frequently be covered by molten rock and has adapted to survive in pitch blackness and extreme temperatures. It

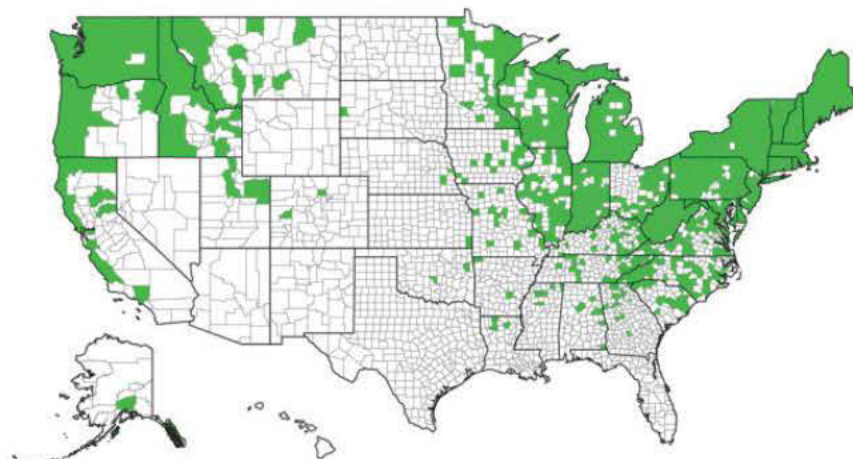


*The U.S. is currently unprepared to handle Japanese knotweed, and spreading awareness is key to preventing its spread. Pictured is Japanese knotweed that has grown through a building's wall. (Photo provided)*



**LEFT:** Naturally occurring in Japan's volcanic regions, Japanese knotweed is a tough invasive plant to remove, and it is also costly, especially since it can grow through roads, buildings and vital infrastructure. (Photo provided)

**RIGHT:** This map shows the areas of the U.S. that are being invaded by Japanese knotweed. In addition to being hard to remove, knotweed also spreads easily. (Map provided)



is extremely resilient, and cutting it back or pulling it up only causes it to grow back more aggressively. It grows quickly and causes serious damage as it works its way through structures and pavement.

The species can be found in nearly every county in the state of Michigan as well as the Northeast and Northwest coasts and all but two provinces in Canada. It grows resiliently and spreads rapidly.

"Knotweed is routinely, unknowingly transported by municipalities," Hudson said. "When soil is moved for construction projects and knotweed is present, that automatically starts another outbreak. In most of the places we're being asked to treat, contaminated soil comes in from the outside. This comes back to haunt municipalities to the tune of billions of dollars, if we're not careful."

Rivers and other waterways are also a large transporter of knotweed since the branches can break off easily and a piece the size of a pea can start an entire colony of the plant.

With the species rapidly spreading and researchers scrambling to keep up, Hudson breaks some somber news:

"We're not prepared for this — we've never seen anything like it," she said. "There are millions of invasive species, but none of them break through roads and buildings and grow so quickly. We're very unprepared as a nation for it, so it's crucial to spread awareness so people start paying attention."

Cities can spread information about knotweed, including what residents can do to help prevent its spread. Hudson said there are a few options, including an app for the more technologically savvy users.

"The Midwest Invasive Plant Network has an app where you can drop pins to map where knotweed is found," she said. "That

way, we can track where it travels and how the species progresses."

The real solution, however, comes down to prevention.

"The number one thing we can do as municipalities is prevent the spread of knotweed," Hudson said. "If you treat it like you would any other weed, it just grows back faster and stronger. Doing things like cleaning our equipment before moving to a new construction site will stop not only knotweed but other invasive species."

Hudson advises that when knotweed is identified, residents or city workers should cordon it off and immediately call a professional to discuss a prevention plan, then follow up with regular monitoring of the plant.

"Touching knotweed won't hurt a person, but it spreads so easily that it really shouldn't be disturbed," she said. "Especially if you're digging, know if knotweed is within 35 feet of where you're at, you need to make special arrangements for the handling of the soil."

Since knotweed roots can grow as far as 10 feet deep and 64 feet in diameter, the soil must be taken to a Type II landfill, where it is buried 15 feet deep so as to avoid further growth.

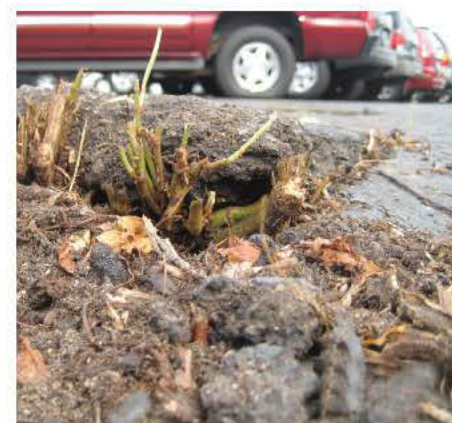
In addition to encouraging citizen action, Hudson said the job of researchers is to stay on top of the latest knotweed news.

"Treatment with this invasive species is so variable," she said. "There are a lot of factors that go into deciding how to handle knotweed in any given area, so it's important that we dedicate time and resources to understanding exactly what we're dealing with."

For more information on Japanese knotweed or to file a sighting with the MIPN, visit [www.mipn.org/plantlist](http://www.mipn.org/plantlist). ■



*Japanese knotweed pokes through a sidewalk in Michigan. Knotweed can be found in almost every county in Michigan and in a wide swath of other U.S. states. (Photo provided)*



*Knotweed roots can grow as far as 10 feet deep and 64 feet in diameter and requires care when removing. Treating it like another weed will only causes it to grow back more aggressively. (Photo provided)*



# Sewage overflows after 2017 hurricanes:

## What happened and where to go moving forward

By ANDREW MENTOCK | The Municipal

**In 2017, the United States experienced one of the worst hurricane seasons in its history. It will take years for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, southeast Texas, southern Florida and other areas to recover from the damage and devastation caused by the catastrophic hurricanes that hit their shores and flooded their communities.**

During the powerful storms, winds blew at over 100 mph, whipping debris everywhere. However, for as catastrophic as the eye of the hurricane was, many public health issues occurred thanks to the heavy rain that fell before, during and after the storm.

"Two weeks before Irma hit Florida, we experienced a significant amount of rainfall from a tropical depression that sat over us and dropped an average of 14 (inches) of rain," Jeremy Fisher said in an email. He is a project manager for Florida Utility Solutions, which serves the Naples, Fla., area. He has been with the organization for two months and has been in the utility operation and maintenance field for almost 14 years.

"Since (southwest) Florida has a lot of low-lying areas, we experienced a lot of issues with flooding. We were already trying to dry out from that event when Irma hit us. We had a storm that covered the entire state from one end to the other. We had thousands of people without power for weeks after the storm hit."

A particularly troubling issue was the overflowing sewage, which people had to wade waist deep through. This resulted in serious infections and even death.

As reported by the Naples Daily News and USA Today on Sept. 23, one woman watched her husband die as the result of an infection while another man's leg was amputated because of a small cut that became severely infected. Both of these men were infected from wading through contaminated floodwater that carried toxic sewage and bacteria.

There was so much sewage in the floodwaters because of overflowing sewers throughout much of southwest Florida. Since much of the state's landscape is flat, its sewer system is reliant on pumps to keep its waste moving.

"In my city of 67,000 people, we have nine pump stations," said Nancy Gallinero, who is currently the manager of Portland, Maine's, Water Resources Division and has spent over 12 years working in



*Due to Florida's low-lying areas, the state is more prone to experience flooding, which in turn can cause sewage overflows when power is knocked out to lift stations. Pictured is damage caused by Hurricane Irma. (Photo provided)*

Florida. "In Florida, a community of 67,000 people is likely to have about 200 pump stations because it's flat, so they can't take advantage of gravity."

Thus, when the area lost power, the majority of the home pumps were unable to move the sewage so instead it overflowed into many homes and floodwaters.

"Along with the power issue, we had another (big) issue (that) we had to overcome," Fisher said. "That issue was the shortage of fuel in our area. Since some of our areas were so badly hit, we were not able to get fuel locally. We were driving up to 100 miles each way to get fuel for generators and pumps."

That's not to say that wastewater workers and organizations didn't respond quickly.

"The response was swift and tireless," said Fischer. "We worked along with other utilities non-stop using diesel bypass pumps, septic trucks, generators and any other means possible to keep our systems going."

Response crews also worked to disinfect any contaminated areas.

"The cleanup process is pretty standard," Fisher said. "Retrieve as much of the spill with septic trucks and then disinfect the area with lime or bleach."

It's unfortunate that these efforts weren't enough to keep everyone safe.




*In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, wastewater workers in Naples, Fla., retrieved as much of the sewage spills as they could with septic trucks and then disinfected affected areas with lime or bleach. (Shutterstock.com)*



Going forward, water waste utility companies like Florida Utility Solutions will be doing what they think is best to prepare for future hurricanes. However, some of the significant changes may be difficult.

“(You could) raise the state of Florida about 10-15 feet,” Fisher said. “Since that won’t happen, the best thing we can do is prepare for anything that can happen. We are using this storm as a learning experience and taking into consideration everything we did and designing our response plans based on that. We have numerous generators on hand and are preparing to add more to our arsenal along with adding additional bypass pumps. This way we can better prepare for anything that can or will happen.”

There are other things that can be learned from the major storm events that took place in the United States this year. It’s imperative that anyone who is going to remain near the storm is made aware and is cautious of the dangers associated with flooding. Assume any flood water might lead to infection and avoid it as much as possible.

Obviously, when it comes to storms as deadly as hurricanes Harvey and Irma, there is only so much in a person’s control. Before, during and after major storm events, utility and maintenance workers need to do the best that they can to keep people safe and clean up any potential dangers. Hopefully, the next hurricane season isn’t as catastrophic as it was in 2017. 



*Drivers travel through water left by Hurricane Irma in the Bonita Springs, Fla., area. Floodwaters can contain sewage making them dangerous for people wading through them. (Photo provided)*





# Improving communications and PR with the community you serve

by TROY KIDDER | TROY ... Pure Blue Creative LLC

**If there wasn't enough to do already as a municipal manager, the list just got longer. There is one issue quickly jumping to the top: improving communications and public relations with the community you serve.**

You can talk all day about the new world economy and the internet that connects us all, but the reality is that most people's lives function within the limited borders of towns and cities. It's the roads we travel to the store to purchase groceries and hardware supplies. It's trips to the local school to pick up little Susie or Junior, and it's those same roads that take us to the local park on the weekends, where the kids love to play while we parents sip sodas in the shade.

Yes, it's in the midst of this international, information overload that we as municipal managers need to get our message out, louder and clearer than ever before. There is much to communicate: services, where to get them and how they function; safety issues for the good of our community; and information

about the parks and recreational facilities available for everyone. All this with a little PR twist to show what a great job our civil servants are doing. Hey, if you don't show them and tell them, how will they know?

I'm sure you could make an even longer and more accurate list and you should do so of what's not clearly articulated to your community but should be. For now, let's look at the number one rule of communications: The medium is the message.

## Professional vs. frugal

Never has this adage been truer. As mentioned above, you are competing with the world at the doorstep. The old "just have Betty, the secretary, put something together and run out a bunch of copies" won't cut it.

**ABOVE:** *Picking the right mediums for communications can keep residents and visitors attuned to a city's offerings, including local parks, services and events. (Shutterstock.com)*

I've known many public servants over the years who actually thought that a job poorly done communicated frugality and sensitivity to taxpayer funds. In reality, what their thrown-together piece was saying is "This wasn't important enough to do well, and we don't really know what the heck we're doing anyway. Period." Everything must be done in excellence.

I know ... you have a hundred other things you're required to do, and now I'm telling you that you're not doing your job because you're not a communications expert. The answer? Subcontract.

Just as you are an expert in your field, find experts to help you communicate your message. They are out there, and the price may be way less than you imagined. I know, because I'm one of them.





*An effective chain of communication can inform your community about different services, such as a new bike-sharing opportunity, and how they function. (Shutterstock.com)*



*Don't just have Betty, the secretary, put something together and run out a bunch of copies; instead, create a well-crafted quarterly newsletter to get your messages out. Large, professional photos and short, well-written articles are key to a successful newsletter. (Shutterstock.com)*

### **Newsletter, website and video**

The project I suggest first is a quarterly newsletter. This should be no more than four pages in length, printed in four-color process on glossy paper. Photos should be large and taken professionally, and articles should be short, well written and well edited. If your budget can afford it, this should be mailed to every taxpayer. If your city is too large to mail to everyone, print off thousands of copies and get it into as many hands and institutions as possible.


The next medium of great importance is an excellent website. This is the digital age: Folks can visit your town from anywhere in the world. What kind of impression does your site make?

As with the newsletter, I suggest large, professional photos and short, well-written articles that are expertly edited. The website should be simplified in its message so that it's easy for newcomers to navigate. It also should be updated on a regular basis. You have to give people a reason to come back to your site.

This leads to the next medium, which is videos. These should be no more than two or three minutes in length. Have several produced, and release them one at a time; again, to give people a reason to come back to your site. Don't go "old school" and produce some 10-minute piece with a boring voiceover. There should be happy, upbeat music with plenty of footage of folks enjoying your clean, safe and well-run town. That's a powerful message.

You'll be amazed at how a great video catches fire on smartphones and other digital devices. Your web hits will go up by thousands.

These are just three examples of ways to improve communications and PR with the community you serve. Remember that public relations is just that: It's a relationship, not salesmanship. You're making the statement with these mediums that you care enough about the members of the community to communicate with them, and that everything you do is done in excellence.

When people see and hear about good things happening in their community, they're friendlier, towns are safer and the economy thrives as folks want to be a part of this kind of synergy. Now that's a job well done. 

**Troy Kidder is a former assistant town manager, former school teacher and a communications and PR professional. He serves communities across the country with communications and public relations solutions. His website is [www.purebluecreative.com](http://www.purebluecreative.com), or contact him by email at [troy@purebluecreative.com](mailto:troy@purebluecreative.com).**



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## JANUARY

### Jan. 5-9 American Correctional Association 2018 Winter Conference

Marriott World Center, Orlando, Fla.

[www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org)

### Jan. 9-11 Landscape Ontario Congress

Toronto Congress Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

[locongress.com](http://locongress.com)

### Jan. 14-19 NRPA Event Management School

Oglebay Resort and Conference Center, Wheeling, W.Va.

[www.nrpa.org/event-school](http://www.nrpa.org/event-school)

### Jan. 15-16 FDSOA 30th Annual Apparatus Specifications and Maintenance Symposium

Scottsdale, Ariz.

[www.fdsOA.org](http://www.fdsOA.org)

### Jan. 17-18 FDSOA Annual Health and Safety Forum

Scottsdale, Ariz.

[www.fdsOA.org](http://www.fdsOA.org)

### Jan. 17-20 Fire-Rescue East

Ocean Center, Daytona Beach, Fla.

[www.ffca.org](http://www.ffca.org)

### Jan. 17-20 2018 Piedmont Fire Expo

Twin City Quarters/Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, N.C.

[www.forsythcountyfire-rescue.com/expo.php](http://www.forsythcountyfire-rescue.com/expo.php)

### Jan. 22-25 Heavy Duty Aftermarket Week 2018

The Mirage, Las Vegas, Nev.

[www.hdaw.org](http://www.hdaw.org)

### Jan. 23-26 World of Concrete 2018

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev.

[www.worldofconcrete.com](http://www.worldofconcrete.com)

### Jan. 24-26 U.S. Conference of Mayors 86th Winter Meeting

Washington, D.C.

[www.usmayors.org/meetings](http://www.usmayors.org/meetings)

### Jan. 26-30 ATSSA's 48th Annual Convention & Traffic Expo

San Antonio, Texas

[expo.atssa.com](http://expo.atssa.com)

### Jan. 30-Feb. 1 2018 Indiana Parks and Recreation Association Conference & Expo

Grand Wayne Convention Center, Fort Wayne, Ind.

[inpra.evrconnect.com/conference](http://inpra.evrconnect.com/conference)

### Jan. 30-Feb. 1 Underground Construction Technology International Conference and Exhibition

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, La.

[uctonline.com](http://uctonline.com)

## FEBRUARY

### Feb. 11-14 DRI 2018

Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, Nashville, Tenn.

[driconference.org](http://driconference.org)

### Feb. 21-23 EMS Today: The JEMS Conference and Exposition

Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, N.C.

[www.emstoday.com](http://www.emstoday.com)

### Feb. 21-24 WWETT 2018

Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Ind.

[www.wwettshow.com](http://www.wwettshow.com)

### Feb. 26-March 1 2018 ARFF Chiefs & Leadership

Orlando, Fla.

[arffwg.org](http://arffwg.org)

### Feb. 27-March 2 Missouri Park & Recreation Association Conference and Expo

Tan-Tar-A, Osage Beach, Mo.

[www.mopark.org](http://www.mopark.org)

### Feb. 27-March 1 Wildland Urban Interface 2018

Peppermill Resort, Reno, Nev.

[www.iafc.org/events/wui](http://www.iafc.org/events/wui)

## MARCH

### March 5-7 MSTPA 2018 Annual Conference and Trade Show

Embassy Suites, Huntsville, Ala.

[www.mstpa.org/annual-conference.html](http://www.mstpa.org/annual-conference.html)

## MARCH

### March 5-8 TMC Annual 2018

Atlanta, Ga.

[tmcannual.trucking.org](http://tmcannual.trucking.org)

### March 5-9 International Wireless Communications Expo

Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.

[www.iwceexpo.com](http://www.iwceexpo.com)

### March 6-9 NUCA Annual Convention and Exhibit

San Antonio, Texas

[www.nuca.com](http://www.nuca.com)

### March 6-9 The Work Truck Show and Green Truck Summit

Indianapolis, Ind.

[www.worktruckshow.com/greentrucksummit](http://www.worktruckshow.com/greentrucksummit)

### March 11-14 NLC Congressional City Conference

Washington, D.C.

[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

### March 11-16 Facility Managers' Revenue Development and Management School

Oglebay, Wheeling, W.Va.

[www.revenueschool.org](http://www.revenueschool.org)

### March 22-24 Mid-America Trucking Show

The Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, Ky.

[www.truckingshow.com](http://www.truckingshow.com)



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### 2012 INTERNATIONAL 4300

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# Five ways to use data to transform your operations

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**LAURA FAUGHTENBERRY** | Guest columnist  
*Industry Manager for Government  
 at Dude Solutions*

**I**F YOUR MUNICIPALITY IS STILL RELYING ON PAPER OR SPREADSHEET-based systems to manage its operations, here's a word that can drastically transform the way you work: automation. Imagine being able to access every part of your operations in an instant — every work order submitted, citizen request, hour logged on a task, dollar spent and more right at your fingertips. The operational headache of filling out stacks of paper forms or having to manage and track countless spreadsheets could vanish, instead replaced with a cloud-based operations management solution.

Cloud-based automation is the undeniable future for any municipality. It means all of your operational data is reportable and can be laid out in front of you with one click. No more hours of data entry or guess work. The ability to pull data at the click of a button or tap of a screen is a strategic advantage when it comes to building a range of business cases for your operational needs, both big and small.

Here are five key ways your department can utilize operations management data to transform your municipality for the better.

## Demonstrate the value of existing staff

With software-based operations management, you have a platform that allows you to see exactly what everyone on your staff is doing. Time spent on each task can be instantly logged even from out in the field, helping increase visibility for your staff and prove the value of those working on your team. Having this information is invaluable when it comes to giving credit where it's due, administering performance reviews and developing employee career-track plans.

## Justify new hires

Another benefit to being able to see who is doing what is recognizing when there isn't enough manpower to properly complete all the tasks your department needs to get done in a day. Being armed with this kind of data allows you to make a clear, fact-based case when requesting more staff members or justifying new roles. You'll be able to prove how much more can get done with new members on the team, which equals how much more successful your municipality can be.

## Improve employee morale and citizen communication

When you can use data to demonstrate your staff members' productivity, it makes the true value of their work transparent, including hours spent, value delivered and money saved. For example, when you have a crew of employees who handle water, sewer, streets, etc., the amount of work and effort they perform on a daily basis can be forgotten by upper management and the public. With a smarter dashboard, you can provide a clear picture to administration and to your citizens of how much work your crew is actually doing. In addition,





**ABOVE:** Software-based operations management can enable managers to better recognize the efforts of current employees or even justify adding new hires to cover workload. (Shutterstock.com)

**RIGHT:** With data, a concrete case can be made for certain city projects like finally replacing a road after repeatedly patching its potholes. (Shutterstock.com)




each staff member can see what he or she has done, whether that be by day, week or month. Your team can be proud of the effort it puts in to serve citizens and help keep the municipality beautiful and well-functioning.

#### **Use historical data to your advantage**

Having your department's actions spelled out in data you can access instantly goes a long way in a variety of situations. Imagine your road foreman has patched 10 potholes on the same street in the last year, yet no plan is in the works for replacing the road and drivers are becoming increasingly frustrated. If that work was tracked on paper (or not at all), it would likely end up forgotten about. However, when you have the historical data of what's happening in your town, you can show instead of tell those in charge of city projects what needs more time, money and attention.

#### **Increase your budget**

Justifying budget requests to administration or the city council is a lot less intimidating when you've got the data in hand to prove your case. For example, having data on deferred maintenance of big ticket items, such as a roof or boiler, can help justify the budget dollars for a replacement. With a software solution, you can report on the hours and budget dollars that have been invested versus the actual cost of a replacement. Having data on new citywide construction projects in the pipeline that cannot be completed without additional budget dollars can also make that conversation with management or written request for funding more data focused, rather than motivated by gut feelings, which often get you nowhere.

When you rely on to-the-minute intelligence to drive your business strategy, getting your municipality's needs met becomes as simple as pressing a button. Data doesn't lie, and it can be your best ally in transforming your department from good to great. With automated, cloud-based operations management software, you can start putting data to work for your department and your citizens today. 

**Laura Faughtenberry is the industry manager for government at Dude Solutions, a leading software-as-a-service, or SaaS, provider of operations management solutions to education, government, healthcare, manufacturing and membership-based organizations. Faughtenberry currently serves as a member of the 2018 International City/County Management Association Planning Committee.**



# M

# TOP 10

## The top 10 best run cities of 2017

In the middle of 2017, WalletHub released its list of “2017’s Best- & Worst-Run Cities in America,” highlighting cities’ efforts to balance the public’s diverse interests with their limited resources. The cities at the top of the list could help other cities with their New Year resolutions as we enter into 2018.

To put together its list, WalletHub sought to determine a city’s operating efficiency — or “how well city officials manage and spend public funds by comparing the quality of services residents receive against the city’s total budget.” WalletHub analysts compared the operating efficiency of 150 of the largest U.S. cities to reveal the cream of the crop.

Analysts compared the cities across six key categories: 1) financial stability,

2) education, 3) health, 4) safety, 5) economy and 6) infrastructure and pollution. WalletHub’s website states, “We evaluated those dimensions using 33 relevant metrics... Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale, with a score of 100 representing the highest quality of service.”

For there, the analysts calculated an overall “Quality of City Services” for each city based on its weighted average across all metrics. The website adds, “Finally, for each city, we divided the Quality of City Services score by the ‘Total Budget per Capita’ (dollar amount) in order to construct a ‘Score per Dollar Spent’ index — displayed as ‘Overall Rank.’”

Overall Rank	City	Quality of City Services Rank	Total Budget per capita rank
1	Nampa, ID	20	1
2	Provo, UT	3	2
3	Boise, ID	6	3
4	Missoula, MT	63	4
5	Lexington-Fayette, KY	55	5
6	Las Cruces, NM	36	7
7	Billings, MT	44	9
8	Bismarck, ND	2	40
9	Fort Wayne, IN	69	8
10	Louisville, KY	87	6

Source: <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-run-cities/22869/>



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