

**CITY OF OWOSSO
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 08, 2025
6:30 P.M.**

**Meeting to be held at City Hall
301 West Main Street**

AGENDA

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:
ROLL CALL:**

ADDRESSING THE CITY COUNCIL

1. Your comments shall be made during time set aside for that purpose.
2. Stand or raise a hand to indicate that you wish to speak.
3. When recognized, give your name and address and direct your comments and/or questions to the Mayor.
4. Each person wishing to address the City Council and/or attending officials shall be afforded one opportunity of up to four (4) minutes duration during citizen comments and questions.
5. In addition to the opportunity described above, a citizen may respond to questions posed to him or her by the Mayor or members of the Council, provided members have been granted the floor to pose such questions.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

COUNCIL COMMENTS

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. FY 2025-26 Goal Setting. Conduct a goal setting session for the upcoming fiscal year.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS OPENINGS

Building Board of Appeals – Alternate - term expires June 30, 2026
Building Board of Appeals – Alternate - term expires June 30, 2025
DDA/OMS Board – term expires June 30, 2028
Zoning Board of Appeals – Alternate – term expires June 30, 2027
Zoning Board of Appeals – Alternate – term expires June 30, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

The City of Owosso will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio recordings of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seventy-two (72) hours notice to the City of Owosso. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the City of Owosso by writing, calling, or emailing the following: Owosso City Clerk's Office, 301 West Main Street, Owosso, MI 48867; Phone: (989) 725-0500; Email: city.clerk@ci.owosso.mi.us. The City of Owosso Website address is www.ci.owosso.mi.us.

***PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT THE FOLLOWING MEETING
CAN ONLY BE VIEWED VIRTUALLY***

The Owosso City Council will conduct an in-person meeting on January 8, 2025. Citizens may view and listen to the meeting using the following link and phone numbers.

**OWOSSO CITY COUNCIL
Wednesday, January 8, 2025 AT 6:30 p.m.**

The public joining the meeting via Zoom CANNOT participate in public comment.

- **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88489152245?pwd=IVAaz7hkpeTLs9LVbzclL8Pofa3ko7.1>

Meeting ID: 884 8915 2245

Passcode: 441890

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,81130530177#,,,,*017514# US (Chicago)

+16465588656,,81130530177#,,,,*017514# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

- **For video instructions visit:**

- o Signing up and Downloading Zoom <https://youtu.be/qsy2Ph6kSf8>

- o Joining a Zoom Meeting <https://youtu.be/hlkCmbvAHQQ>

- o Joining and Configuring Audio and Video <https://youtu.be/-s76QHshQnY>

- **Helpful notes for participants:** [Helpful Hints](#)

- **Meeting packets are published on the City of Owosso website** <http://www.ci.owosso.mi.us>

Any person who wishes to contact members of the City Council to provide input or ask questions on any business coming before the Council on January 8, 2025 may do so by calling or e-mailing the City Clerk's Office prior to the meeting at (989)725-0500 or city.clerk@ci.owosso.mi.us. Contact information for individual Council members can be found on the City website at: <http://www.ci.owosso.mi.us/Government/City-Council>

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Owosso City Council FY 2025-26 Goal Setting Preliminary
Report

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Analysis of Council Responses

Key Accomplishments Highlighted by Council

1. Infrastructure and Grants:

- Completion of significant infrastructure projects, including water line replacements and road reconstructions like Stewart Street.
- Securing over \$4 million for the CIS Trail and other grants for infrastructure and community improvements.

2. Downtown Development:

- Progress in beautification initiatives, including decorative lighting upgrades and improvements to downtown parks and public spaces.
- Support for downtown businesses and developers in accessing funding to renovate buildings.

3. Community Events and Engagement:

- Increased community participation in events like National Night Out, Touch a Truck, and other city-sponsored activities.
- Continued focus on engaging the public to build stronger relationships between residents and city government.

4. Policy and Financial Decisions:

- Making sound financial decisions, particularly in pension funding and other long-term investments.
- Termination of contractor services like Safebuilt in favor of in-house staff to improve service delivery and cost efficiency.

5. Public Safety Enhancements:

- Securing \$1 million in federal funding for the Public Safety Building, demonstrating a commitment to safety and preparedness.
- Continued investment in public health and safety systems, including police and emergency equipment upgrades.

Identified Issues, Concerns, and Trends

1. Infrastructure Needs:

- Persistent concerns about aging infrastructure, including lead water lines, deteriorating roads, and wastewater treatment facilities.
 - Desire to prioritize infrastructure projects based on public impact and necessity, ensuring transparency in decision-making.
- 2. Community Livability:**
- Concerns about residential livability, including affordable housing, homelessness, and resources for vulnerable populations.
 - Focus on creating safe, accessible public spaces, including bike lanes, better lighting, and park upgrades.
- 3. Environmental Sustainability:**
- Calls for Owosso to lead in green initiatives, including renewable energy investments, urban farming, and sustainable development practices.
 - Strong advocacy for implementing curbside recycling as a visible and impactful sustainability effort.
- 4. Economic Development:**
- Concerns about slow business development potentially hampering residential growth and city vibrancy.
 - Interest in revising outdated policies, including the city charter, to encourage modern, business-friendly governance.
- 5. Public Communication and Engagement:**
- Acknowledgment of the need for better communication with residents to improve understanding of city policies and services.
 - Suggestions for public forums, town halls, and streamlined platforms for direct resident feedback.
-

Areas of Agreement Among Council Members

- 1. Infrastructure Investment:**
- Strong consensus on the importance of continued investments in water line replacements, road repairs, and wastewater system upgrades.
- 2. Curbside Recycling:**
- Shared enthusiasm for implementing curbside recycling as a key initiative to meet community expectations and sustainability goals.
- 3. Downtown Development:**

- Broad agreement on the need to enhance downtown aesthetics and support businesses to maintain economic vitality.
4. **Community Engagement:**
- Recognition of the value of public events and forums in fostering trust and transparency between residents and city government.
-

Areas of Divergence Among Council Members

1. **Focus on Historical Preservation:**
- Some council members emphasize enforcing historical district regulations, while others focus on broader infrastructure and economic development.
2. **Environmental Priorities:**
- Diverging views on the urgency of green initiatives like renewable energy and urban farming, with some council members less focused on these areas.
3. **Charter Updates:**
- Mixed opinions on the necessity and scope of city charter revisions, with varying priorities on modernizing governance structures.
4. **Economic Development Strategies:**
- Different perspectives on whether to prioritize business recruitment, policy revisions, or direct financial incentives to spur growth.
-

Significant Initiatives Suggested by Council

1. **Modernizing City Policies:**
- Updating the city charter to address outdated provisions, such as compensation structures and taxation limits.
 - Creating an ethics ordinance with enforcement mechanisms to ensure accountability among elected officials.
2. **Expanding Community Services:**
- Proposals for curbside recycling, increased leaf pickup for commercial properties, and enhanced public safety measures.
 - Suggestions for improved public engagement, including town halls, family-oriented events, and educational seminars.
3. **Supporting Downtown Development:**

- Continuing downtown beautification projects, including lighting upgrades, enhanced walkability, and business-friendly policies.
- Encouraging riverfront development, including kayak rentals and improved public access.

4. Sustainability and Green Practices:

- Initiatives to promote renewable energy, plant more trees, and develop a bike-sharing program to reduce the city's carbon footprint.
- Advocating for policies that encourage environmentally friendly building practices in new developments.

5. Infrastructure Projects:

- Focusing on high-impact capital projects like road reconstructions, water line replacements, and stormwater improvements.
- Incorporating pedestrian safety and bike lanes into road planning for greater accessibility.

Council Priorities

1. Infrastructure Development:

- Consistent focus on addressing critical infrastructure needs, including water, wastewater, and roads.

2. Community and Environmental Sustainability:

- A shared commitment to improving livability through recycling programs, green initiatives, and enhanced public spaces.

3. Economic Growth and Livability:

- Prioritizing downtown revitalization and business-friendly policies to attract residents and businesses.

4. Improved Governance and Communication:

- Calls for charter updates and better communication tools to streamline city operations and engage residents effectively.

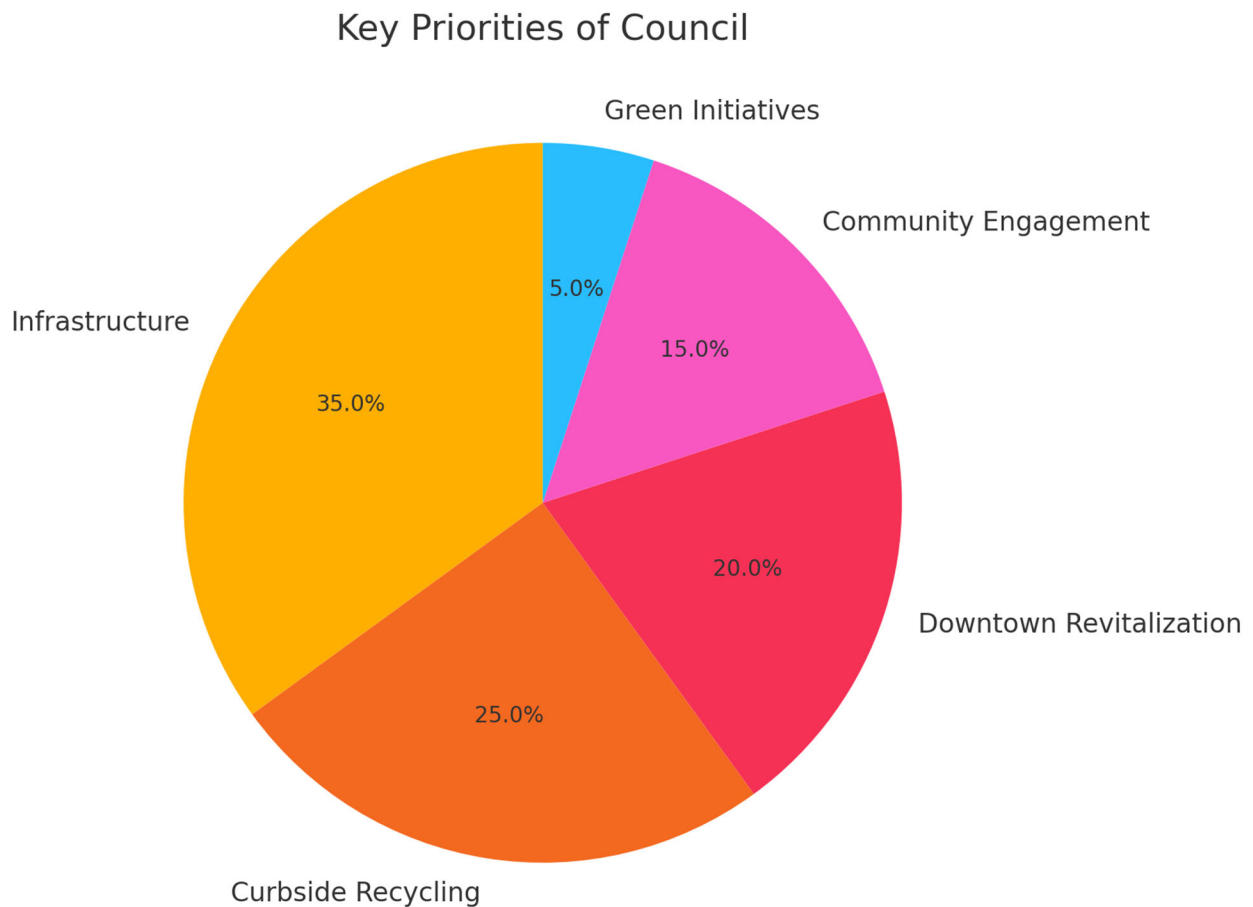
5. Public Safety and Accessibility:

- Emphasis on upgrading safety systems and creating accessible transportation options like bike lanes and sidewalks.

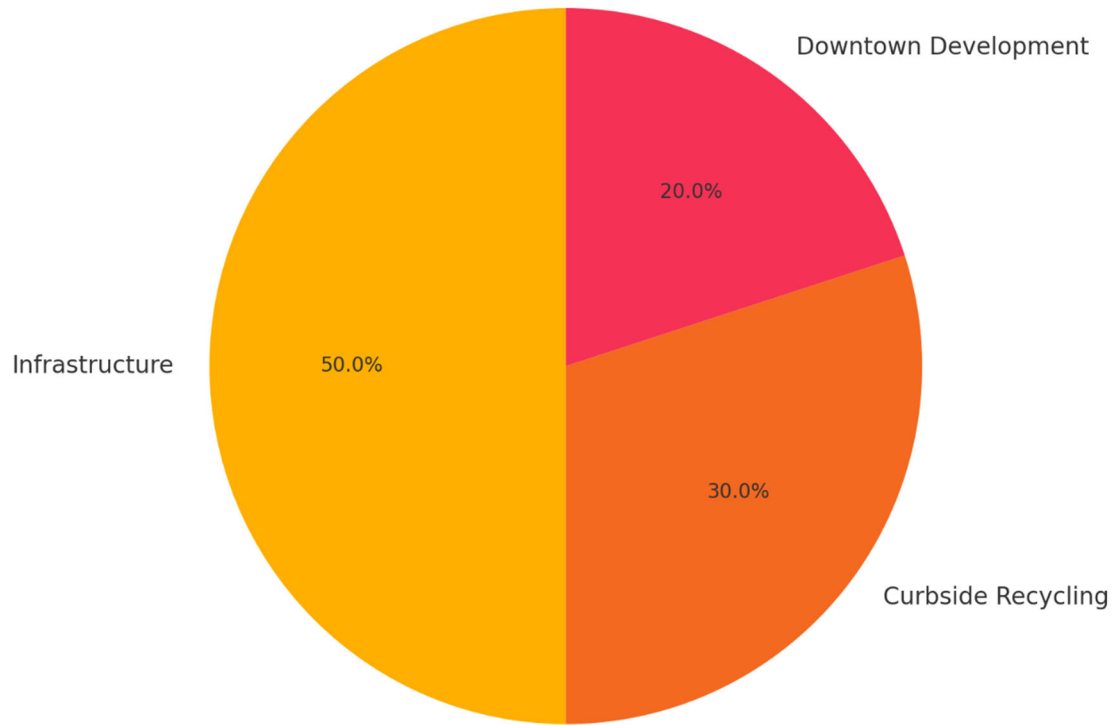
Conclusion

Council responses reflect a clear focus on infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. While areas of agreement, such as curbside recycling and downtown revitalization, show alignment on key issues, divergence exists in priorities like historical preservation and green initiatives.

By emphasizing shared goals and addressing differences through collaborative discussions, the council can create a cohesive strategy for the city's growth. Their insights underscore the importance of balancing long-term objectives with immediate community needs, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for Owosso.



Areas of Agreement Among Council



Analysis of Staff Responses

Key Accomplishments Highlighted by Staff

1. Infrastructure Successes:

- Replacing approximately 630 non-compliant water service lines and reaching the halfway mark for total replacements.
- Rehabilitation of the West Tower and Standpipe Tanks, ensuring long-term water storage reliability.
- Securing \$20 million in grants for infrastructure, including \$4.4 million for the CIS Trail and funds for critical lead service line replacement projects.

2. Operational Improvements:

- Implementing BS&A Enterprise Resource Planning system across departments, streamlining payroll, accounts payable, and reconciliation processes.
- Introducing a calling tree system at City Hall, improving internal and external communication efficiency.
- Enhancing transparency and decision-making through tools like ClearGov for capital improvement tracking.

3. Policy and Personnel Advances:

- Updating outdated city personnel policies, including improvements to vacation allowances and dental/optical insurance coverage.
- Increasing employee training opportunities, leading to higher success rates in state certification exams for technical staff.
- Transitioning IT and Building Official roles in-house, reducing costs and increasing departmental control.

4. Community Impact:

- Successful administration of MSHDA grants, aiding low-income homeowners in making essential repairs and improvements.
- Increased downtown beautification through streetlight replacement, consistent maintenance, and small urban grant projects for roadways.
- Facilitating the demolition of the Matthews Building, enabling future redevelopment opportunities.

5. Election Management:

- Executing smooth presidential elections, showcasing effective planning and operational capacity.
 - Implementing policy updates to improve compliance with state election laws and address rising election-related demands.
-

Identified Issues, Concerns, and Trends

1. Infrastructure and Resource Limitations:

- Persistent challenges with deteriorating nitrification towers and wastewater treatment plant equipment that require urgent action.
- Limited funding for essential road repairs outside of Act 51 allocations.
- Rising costs of infrastructure projects, exacerbated by inflation and supply chain disruptions.

2. Workforce Challenges:

- High turnover rates due to non-competitive compensation and lack of modern workplace policies.
- Difficulty recruiting skilled staff for technical roles, especially in departments requiring state licenses or certifications.
- Risk of institutional knowledge loss as experienced employees retire or leave for better opportunities elsewhere.

3. Financial Sustainability:

- Debt in enterprise funds is projected to constrain financial flexibility for decades, requiring careful prioritization of projects.
- Insufficient funding streams for street maintenance and improvements, with concerns about over-reliance on bonds and grants.
- Rising costs of goods and services challenge long-term planning and strain operational budgets.

4. Community Needs and Engagement:

- Growing demand for affordable housing, particularly for low-income and senior residents.
- Pressure to improve public-facing services like curbside recycling, single-hauler waste management, and enhanced public safety measures.
- Limited public understanding of city operations, creating potential for misinformation or disengagement.

Areas of Agreement Among Staff

1. **Infrastructure as a Top Priority:**
 - Staff universally agrees on the critical need to address aging infrastructure, including water systems, wastewater plants, and roadways.
2. **Workforce Retention and Development:**
 - There is consensus on the importance of investing in competitive compensation, training programs, and modernized policies to retain skilled staff.
3. **Modernization and Efficiency:**
 - A shared focus on leveraging technology to improve internal operations and public services, such as IT upgrades and workflow standardization.
4. **Recycling and Sustainability:**
 - Agreement on the need to implement a city-wide curbside recycling program and promote environmentally friendly practices.

Areas of Divergence Among Staff

1. **Compensation Strategy:**
 - Some staff advocate for immediate salary adjustments, while others emphasize broader benefit enhancements and policy revisions.
2. **Operational Focus:**
 - Diverging views exist on whether resources should prioritize internal efficiency improvements or expanding public-facing services.
3. **Project Prioritization:**
 - Differences arise in selecting specific infrastructure projects to address first, with some favoring water systems and others prioritizing road repairs.

Significant Initiatives Suggested by Staff

1. **Operational Efficiency:**
 - Establishing standardized workflows for council packet preparation and internal approval processes to save time and reduce errors.
 - Conducting a comprehensive IT audit to identify vulnerabilities, improve cybersecurity, and streamline technology use across departments.

- Implementing a city-wide asset management plan to prioritize maintenance and replacement schedules based on data-driven insights.

2. Recycling and Sustainability:

- Launching a curbside recycling program as part of a single-hauler waste contract to improve service efficiency and environmental outcomes.
- Developing educational initiatives for residents on recycling practices, reducing contamination rates and increasing participation.
- Exploring renewable energy options, such as solar panel installations on city buildings and incentives for green construction projects.

3. Workforce Development:

- Increasing training budgets for technical staff to maintain certifications and adapt to emerging technologies.
- Offering tuition reimbursement programs to encourage professional development and retain skilled employees.
- Revising personnel policies to improve work-life balance, including exploring four-day work weeks for applicable roles.

4. Public Services and Infrastructure:

- Expanding lead and galvanized water service line replacement efforts to accelerate progress and meet state compliance deadlines.
- Prioritizing major road reconstruction projects, with a focus on high-traffic and deteriorated areas like King Street and Dewey Street.
- Enhancing public safety through new equipment purchases, such as police vehicles, and modernizing public safety building facilities.

5. Technology Modernization:

- Upgrading the city website to improve user experience and accessibility for residents seeking information or submitting service requests.
- Implementing virtual servers and automated backup systems to ensure data security and disaster recovery capabilities.
- Introducing mobile-friendly tools for staff, allowing real-time data entry and communication in the field.

Staff Priorities

1. Infrastructure as the Backbone:

- Completing critical water and wastewater projects, including nitrification tower replacements and sewer upgrades.
- Advancing road repair initiatives to maintain safe and functional transportation networks.

2. Employee Retention and Development:

- Conducting a comprehensive wage study to benchmark salaries and improve recruitment competitiveness.
- Investing in employee benefits and workplace policies to reduce turnover and foster long-term commitment.

3. Fiscal Responsibility:

- Developing a multi-year financial plan to manage enterprise fund debt while maintaining essential services.
- Identifying new revenue sources, such as grants or local option taxes, to fund infrastructure projects sustainably.

4. Modernization Efforts:

- Digitizing internal workflows and enhancing IT infrastructure to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens.
- Expanding public engagement tools to facilitate greater participation and understanding of city operations.

5. Sustainability and Community Engagement:

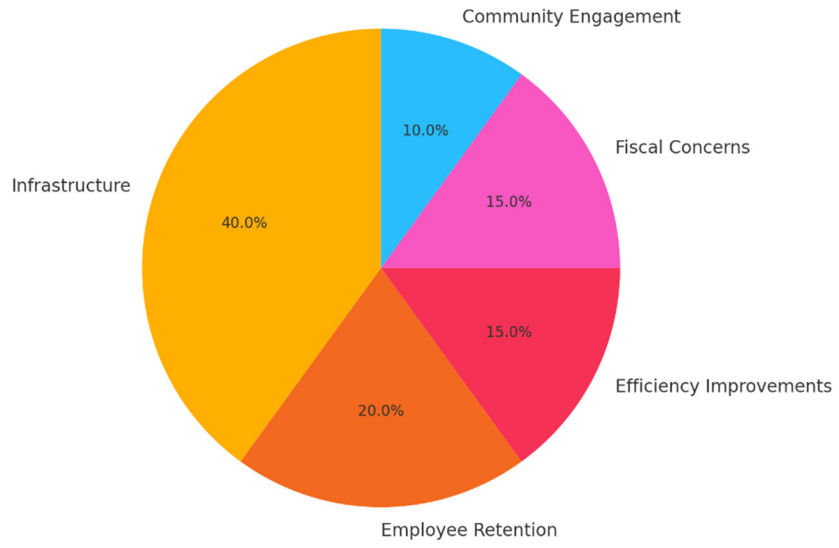
- Rolling out curbside recycling and renewable energy programs to meet community expectations and environmental goals.
- Creating public workshops and outreach programs to foster a stronger connection between residents and city operations.

Conclusion

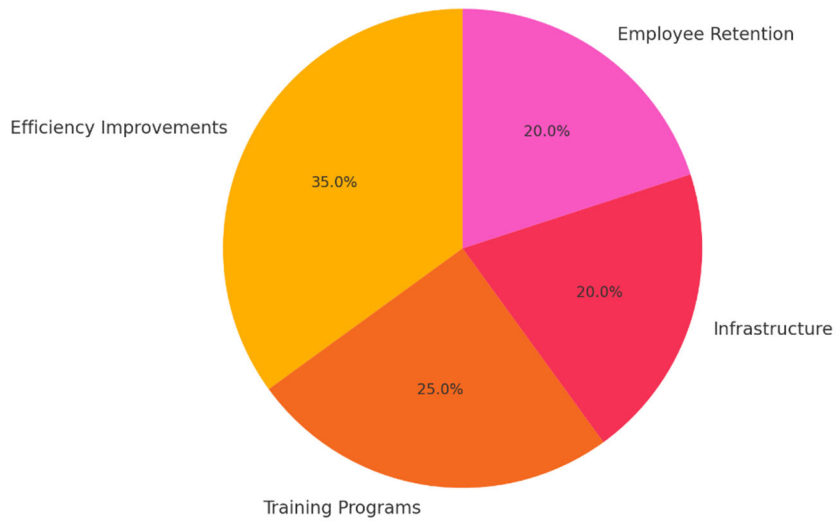
Staff responses reflect a thorough understanding of the city’s challenges and opportunities, emphasizing infrastructure, workforce stability, financial sustainability, and modernization. While staff largely agrees on overarching priorities like infrastructure and recycling, differences in compensation strategy and project prioritization suggest the need for focused discussions to align efforts.

By addressing these areas collaboratively, the city can enhance operational efficiency, sustain financial health, and strengthen community relationships. Staff insights serve as a strong foundation for developing strategic plans that balance immediate needs with long-term goals, ensuring a vibrant future for the community.

Key Priorities of Staff



Areas of Agreement Among Staff



Analysis of Staff and Council Responses Combined

Areas of Agreement Between Staff and Council

1. Infrastructure Priorities:

- Both staff and council recognize the importance of addressing aging infrastructure. Water service line replacements, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, and road repairs are highlighted as critical components of the city's needs. This shared understanding underscores the necessity of dedicating resources to maintaining and improving essential systems.

2. Grant Acquisition Success:

- Securing grants has been a major accomplishment and remains a shared focus for future development. Both groups understand the value of external funding to alleviate the city's financial burden while advancing significant projects.

3. Curbside Recycling Initiative:

- The introduction of curbside recycling is a shared priority, seen as both a service improvement and a step towards sustainability. It represents a clear area of consensus that could garner public support.

4. Employee Retention and Development:

- Staff turnover and the need for improved training programs are recurring themes. Both groups agree that retaining qualified personnel and investing in employee development are crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and institutional knowledge.

5. Teamwork and Communication:

- There is a mutual understanding of the importance of effective collaboration between the council and staff. Both groups stress the need for open communication, shared decision-making, and a unified approach to achieving city goals.

Divergent Perspectives Between Staff and Council

1. Addressing Employee Challenges:

- While council members emphasize diagnosing and addressing specific issues like DPW turnover, staff advocates for broader improvements, such as better compensation and benefits. This reflects a difference in framing solutions—one group focuses on systemic changes, while the other targets immediate problems.

2. Engaging the Community:

- Council members often propose direct engagement through events and public forums to foster relationships with residents. Staff, on the other hand, prioritizes modernizing tools like the city website to facilitate streamlined, efficient communication. These approaches reflect differing priorities in how to build community trust and transparency.

3. Budget and Financial Sustainability:

- Staff expresses concerns about long-term debt obligations and the sustainability of current financial practices. Council members are more focused on leveraging grants and external funds to achieve short-term progress. This divergence highlights potential challenges in aligning immediate goals with fiscal prudence.

4. Emphasis on Green Initiatives:

- While council members discuss renewable energy, sustainable practices, and green space development, staff mentions these topics less frequently. This discrepancy may indicate varying levels of urgency assigned to environmental issues.

Commonalities Among Council Members

1. Infrastructure Dominance:

- Council members consistently emphasize infrastructure-related projects, including road repairs, water system improvements, and lead line replacements. This shared priority ensures these projects will remain at the forefront of decision-making.

2. Desire for Modern Services:

- There is strong agreement on the need for services like curbside recycling, which aligns with public expectations and environmental goals. Some council members even suggest funding mechanisms, such as a dedicated millage, to support its implementation.

3. Support for Downtown Development:

- Council members universally value downtown beautification and development, recognizing it as a driver of economic growth and community pride. Proposals include improving aesthetics, enhancing safety, and supporting local businesses.

Differences Among Council Members

1. Historical Preservation Focus:

- Some council members prioritize enforcing regulations and activating historical districts, while others focus on broader urban development projects. This difference reflects varying perceptions of the city's identity and cultural priorities.

2. Charter Updates and Governance:

- Opinions on the need for charter updates vary. Some members view comprehensive updates as essential, citing outdated provisions, while others appear to place less emphasis on this issue.

3. Environmental Priorities:

- Not all council members equally emphasize green initiatives like renewable energy or urban farming. This divergence may lead to differing levels of support for sustainability-related proposals.
-

Staff Concerns and Priorities

1. Operational Efficiency:

- Staff consistently highlights internal improvements, such as streamlining processes, updating policies, and enhancing technology. These priorities focus on increasing efficiency and reducing administrative burdens.

2. Financial Challenges:

- Concerns about the sustainability of funding infrastructure projects and the city's reliance on external funding are prevalent among staff. There is apprehension about long-term debt obligations shaping future budgets.

3. Workforce Stability:

- Recruiting and retaining qualified staff remains a significant challenge. Staff identifies issues such as inadequate compensation, aging workforce dynamics, and insufficient training as areas requiring immediate attention.
-

Recommendations for Prioritization

Given the breadth of proposed initiatives, it is evident that not all goals can be achieved in a single fiscal year. The following recommendations offer a strategic framework for prioritizing efforts:

1. Critical Infrastructure Projects:

- Prioritize projects that directly impact public health and safety, such as lead water line replacements, wastewater treatment upgrades, and key road repairs. These projects should align with grant opportunities to maximize funding efficiency.

2. Community Services:

- Launch curbside recycling as a high-visibility initiative that addresses environmental concerns and fulfills a shared priority. Begin with a pilot program to manage costs and logistics.

3. Staff and Organizational Development:

- Address employee retention with competitive compensation packages, professional development opportunities, and improved workplace policies. This investment will enhance overall operational capacity.

4. Downtown Revitalization:

- Focus on beautification efforts and business support in the downtown area. These initiatives are universally valued and offer visible benefits to residents and visitors.

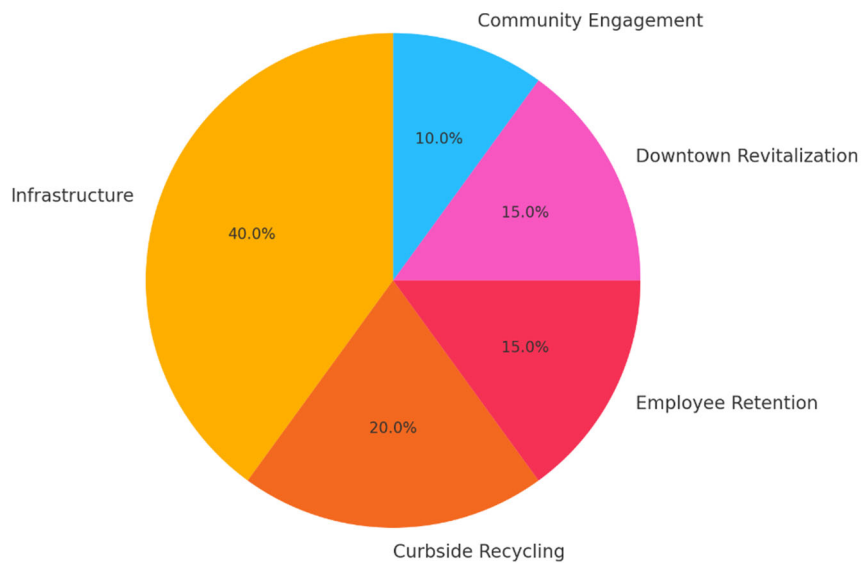
5. Fiscal Sustainability:

- Establish a long-term financial strategy that balances immediate needs with future obligations. Explore new revenue sources, such as a local option for road funding or a recycling millage.

Conclusion

While staff and council demonstrate substantial alignment on foundational goals like infrastructure improvements and curbside recycling, differences in approach and emphasis must be reconciled to create a unified strategy. By prioritizing critical projects, fostering teamwork, and addressing long-term challenges, the city can effectively allocate resources and achieve meaningful progress.

Combined Key Priorities of Staff and Council



Two-Year Master Plan Implementation Report (2023-2024)

Introduction

This report provides a generalized overview of the City of Owosso's progress in implementing the goals outlined in its Master Plan over the past two fiscal years (2023-2024). The focus of this report is on council agenda items from official business meetings, which have been tracked and labeled by city staff to align with the seven goals of the Master Plan.

Master Plan Goals

The goals tracked in this report include:

- **Goal 1:** Protect the health, safety, and general well-being of the community.
- **Goal 2:** Provide excellent customer service to residents and investors.
- **Goal 3:** Maintain fiscal responsibility and sustainability.
- **Goal 4:** Identify, preserve, and enhance the community's character.
- **Goal 5:** Increase quality of life and quality of place for all.
- **Goal 6:** Boost the local economy.
- **Goal 7:** Strengthen public and private partnerships.

Methodology

City staff reviewed all council agenda items from fiscal years 2023 and 2024 and categorized them based on their alignment with one or more of the Master Plan goals. This approach focuses solely on measurable council actions, as reflected in the business meetings.

Key Observations

- **Well-Addressed Goals:**
 - **Goal 1:** Numerous agenda items focused on infrastructure improvements, public safety enhancements, and health initiatives, directly addressing community well-being.
 - **Goal 3:** Fiscal responsibility is a recurring theme, with council actions including budget approvals, grant applications, and long-term financial planning.
 - **Goal 6:** Economic development initiatives, such as downtown revitalization and business support programs, reflect robust efforts to boost the local economy.
 - **Goal 7:** Public and private partnership strengthening is evident in collaborative projects and partnerships with businesses and community organizations.
- **Challenging to Measure Goals:**
 - **Goal 4:** While efforts to preserve and enhance community character are ongoing, their qualitative nature makes them less represented in this report.

- **Goal 5:** Quality of life and quality of place initiatives, though impactful, often lack concrete metrics and may not appear as frequently in labeled agenda items.
- **Goal 2:** Providing excellent customer service, while fundamental, is typically embedded in day-to-day operations rather than explicitly reflected in council actions.

Limitations

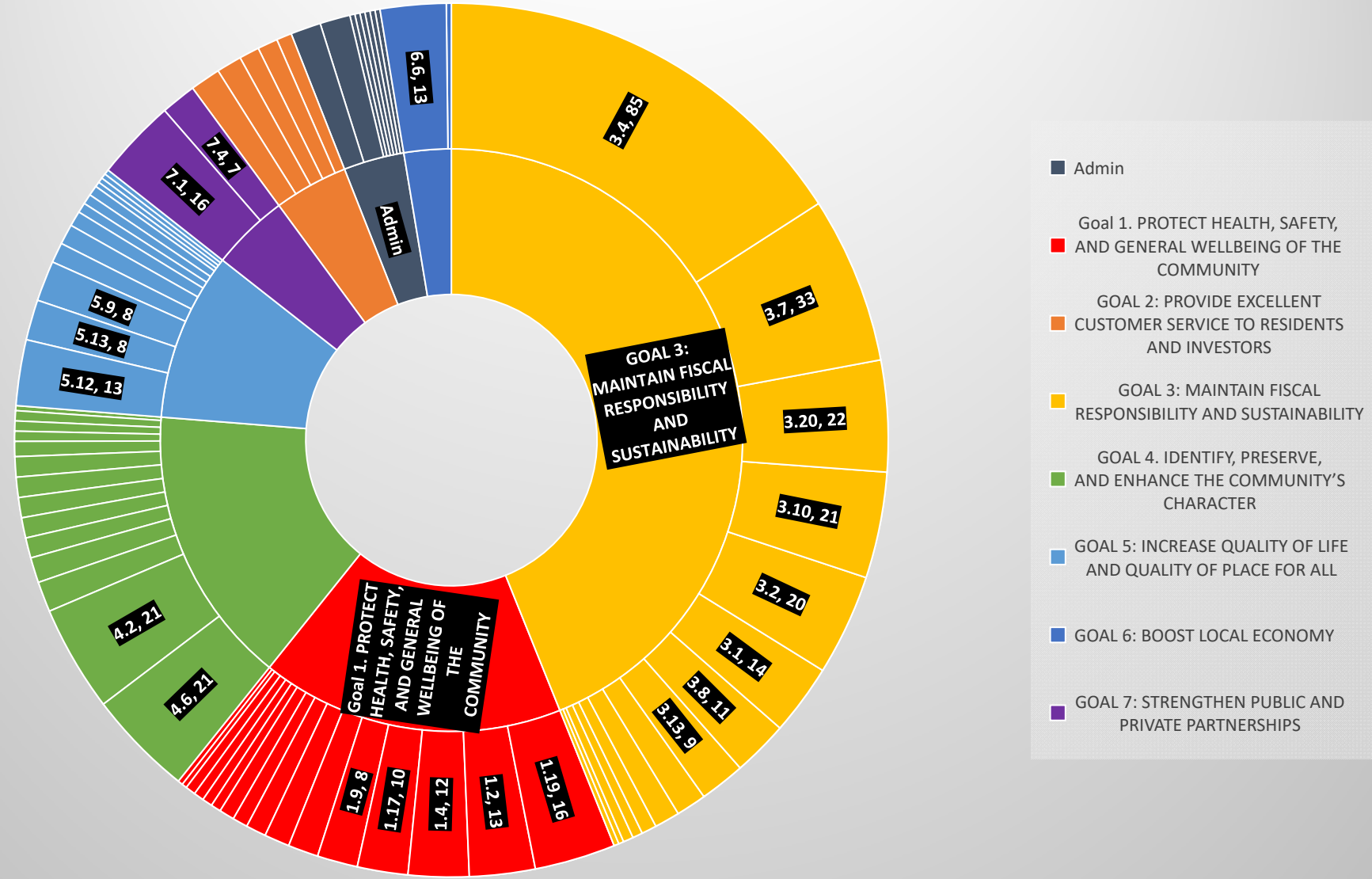
This report represents only what city staff could label based on council's official actions during business meetings. It does not capture informal efforts, operational strategies, or broader qualitative achievements. The absence of some goals in the report should not be interpreted as neglect; rather, it highlights the challenges of measuring certain objectives quantitatively.

Conclusion

The Two-Year Master Plan Implementation Report underscores the City of Owosso's ongoing commitment to its Master Plan goals. While progress in some areas is more easily measured through council actions, other goals require alternative methods of evaluation. This report serves as a preliminary assessment and emphasizes the importance of continued tracking and creative approaches to measure success across all goals.

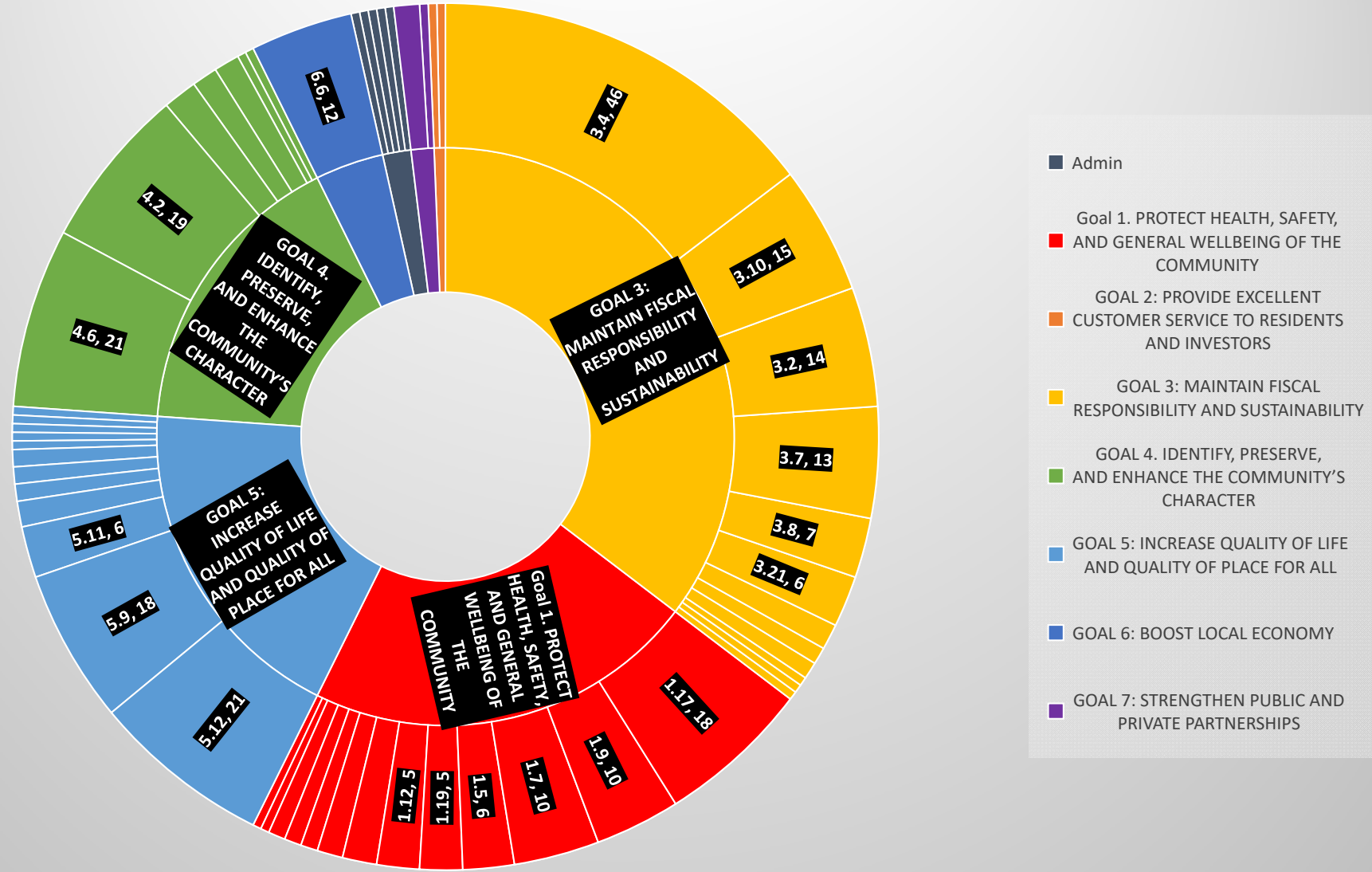
Master Plan Goals Achieved for City Council - FY 2023-

24

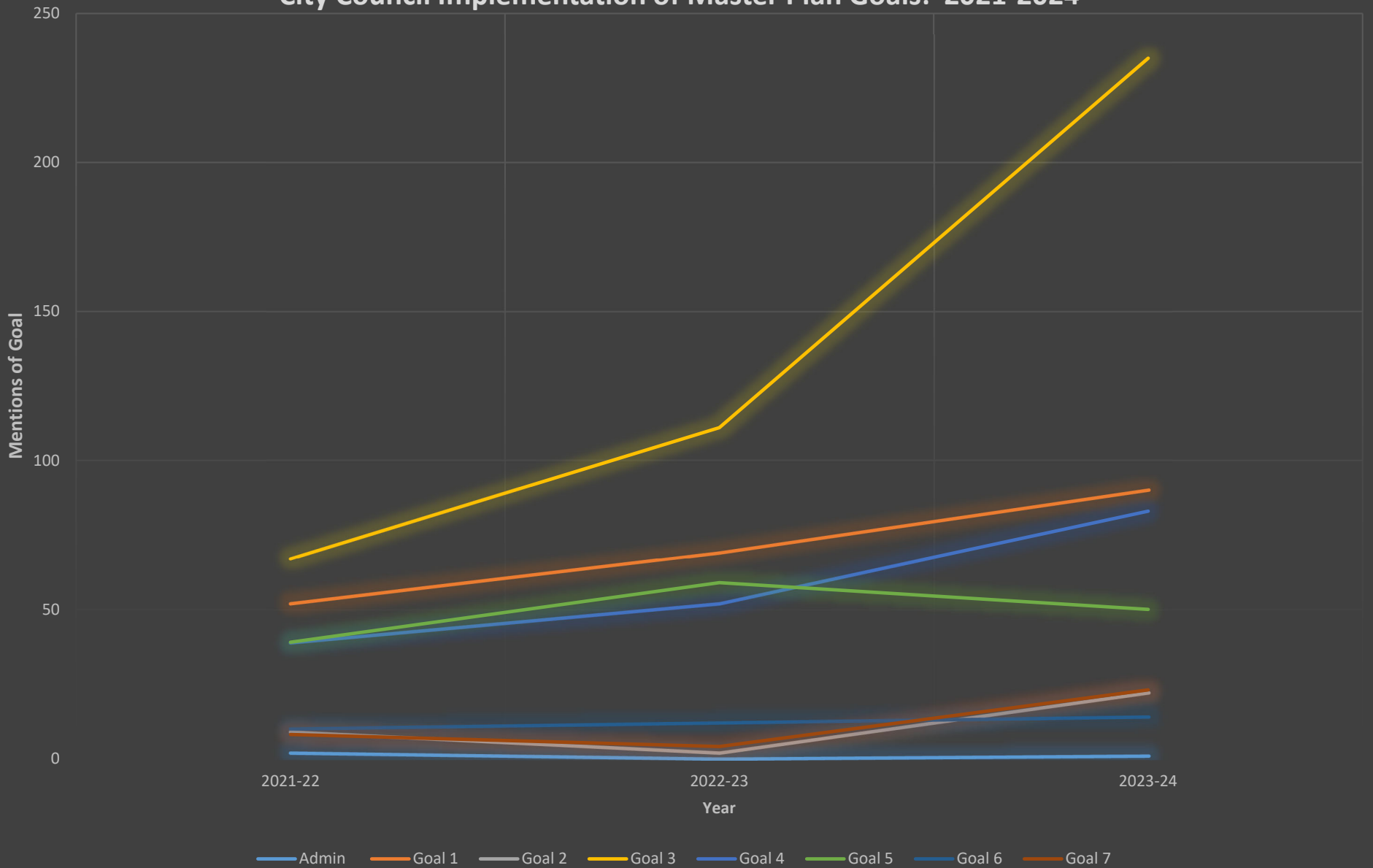


Master Plan Goals Achieved for City Council - FY 2022-

23



City Council Implementation of Master Plan Goals: 2021-2024



City Council Goal Setting Session – 2025-26

Owosso, MI

Preliminary Questionnaire

CITY COUNCIL RESPONSES

Introduction

The purpose of this process will be to identify and prioritize the City's overall goals and objectives for the next fiscal year (FY 25-26). In order to prepare for this process, you have been asked to help identify key issues and potential objectives that will be reviewed by the Mayor and City council prior to the ranking of any goals for the City. It is requested that you list your responses to the following questions.

I. Major Accomplishments

Please list the top five major accomplishments of the City of Owosso over the past two years. These accomplishments could be as large as a street project or as simple as a newly adopted city policy. The items do not need to be in any particular order.

- Selling the Gould House
- Chairman light upgrade on Washington, Comstock, and Main St
- Stewart Street upgrade
- Securing grants for City improvements and also for businesses and homeowners
- Matthews Building progress
- MIHope grants are awesome
- Lead line upgrades and grants
- Continuation of infrastructure repairs and downtown decorations and infrastructure improvements
- Recruitment of new residents and business to leadership roles
- Successfully secured funding for finishing the bike trail
- Continue to make sound financial decisions regarding pension funding and investing
- Selling the Gould House
- Woodland Trails/Washington Park
- Updated city zoning ordinance
- Termination of Safebuilt replacing with permanent employee
- \$4.4 million grant for CIS/Miner Trail
- DPW state certifications
- \$1 million congressional appropriation for public safety building
- MI Hope grants

- The work and additions to the wastewater treatment plant to make it more efficient and reduce overflow frequencies into the river
- Repaving and replacement of water lines on Stewart St. between Washington and M-52
- The increased “beautification” of Downtown Owosso: decorations, garbage/trash pick up days, the pocket park, etc.
- Increased grant funding for the James Miner Trail and connection to the trail via Corunna, including the over \$4 million grant from the State of Michigan
- The increase in events that engage with the entire community (Either ran by the City or the City is a partner), like National Night Out, Touch a Truck, etc.

II. Issues, Concerns, Trends, and Opportunities

Please list specific issues/concerns that you have regarding future city services, policies, or operations. These issues/concerns can relate to such things as an aging population, loss of state revenues, homelessness, crime, infrastructure, etc. You do not need to identify the potential answers or solutions to your concerns.

- Curbside recycling
- Homelessness
- Downtowns appearance to include buildings, weeds, trees, general upkeep
- Continue to upgrade infrastructure as needed – including lead line replacements and roads)
- Concern that Owosso is not focused on leading the way in green initiatives
- Business development, or lack thereof, will hamper residential growth
- Outdated and regressive social policies will keep Owosso mired in attracting new residents and businesses.
- Much needed infrastructure costs are causing added strain on our residents’ budgets and with nearly no safety net for them to rely on we risk creating more instability for them.
- Concerns about residential livability and resources
- Loss of middle-class jobs due mainly to the loss of the manufacturing base (loss of tax base)
- Other than bonds and grants, no funding for our gaining infrastructure (streets, water, sewer)
- DDA funding not adequate to maintain maintenance of downtown (parking lots, street lights, landscaping)
- Westown
- Building on south side of exchange between Washington and Ball. Fifth Third Bank, City Club.
- Middle School
- Curbside recycling and garbage - navigating how to get this in Owosso without upsetting all the residents
- Structural needs at the Wastewater treatment plant - how to prioritize this and get the funding
- The lack of emergency homeless shelters (and warming centers) in the community, especially during the winter months when there are below freezing temps
- Prioritization of which roads are getting fixed when, and how that is communicated with the public
- Overall communication with the residents of the City of Owosso - how to effectively get folks to

engage with their local government and how to communicate policies that may not be understood by all

III. Significant Initiatives, Programs, or Policies

It is requested that you list any initiative, program, or policy that you think the City should consider in the next year. Examples of such items from other cities have included such things as updating employee job descriptions, recycling service, short-term rental ordinances, city website projects, etc. These suggestions should not include construction projects as these will be listed in the following section.

- Figure out why such a high turnover of employees at DPW and address the issue
- Curbside recycling
- A program or policy to help eliminate weeds downtown – maybe “adopt a block.”
- Leaf pickup for commercial business that are on the leaf pick-up routes – not including landscapers
- Create and activate more use of river frontage lighting on bridge, kayak rentals, etc)
- Rewrite the charter to uncouple City Council compensation and increase payment for future members.
- Enforce historical district regulations and activate historical.
- Develop green spaces, invest in renewable energy sources (solar panels, wind turbines) and create efficient waste management systems.
- Plant trees, encourage urban farming, and develop a city-wide bike-sharing program
- Promote friendly building practices for new development
- Updating the city charter as a whole and to specifically address the limitations we have on taxation
- Organize an annual city picnic/bring the family together
- Curbside recycling
- Hold public seminars on specific topics such as the state of our roads, water mains, sewer, stormwater system, water filtration plant, and waste water treatment plant.
- Curbside recycling and a potential mileage to support it
- Updates to the charter that are completely out of date, ie: things about women serving on council
- Simplified communication platform between residents and City of Owosso staff
- Better upkeep and renovations for our current parks, potential for another splash pad due to its popularity in the summer at Bentley Park
- Accessible ways to navigate the City without a vehicle - ie: Bike Lane prioritization, sidewalk improvements, sidewalk additions in areas without sidewalks, and streetlight maintenance in areas that are not well-lit at night (ie: Stewart St. area between Chipman and Cedar)

IV. Capital Projects, Construction Projects, Equipment Purchases

The city updates its 6-year Capital Improvements Plan annually. Please review the latest adopted CIP and indicate which listed projects are a priority for you. If your project is not listed, feel free to add it to this list. These capital projects could include things like street construction, utility replacements, policy patrol vehicles, etc.

- Water line upgrades to help eliminate all lead water lines
- Continue on road reconstruction as possible
- Continue on WWTP updates and water treatment plant updates
- Continue downtown chairman light upgrades so all lights match
- IT upgrades, downtown cameras, city hall cameras, public safety upgrades to equipment and vehicles as needed
- Park development – River access project
- Parking lot resurfacing and improvement
- Reconfigure the road markings to include bike lanes
- Pedestrian access and safety downtown
- Strengthen public health systems and promote healthier lifestyle
- Downtown chairman light replacement project
- Public building replacement
- Splash pad enlargement
- Sanitary sewer river crossing at M-52 bridge
- Storm water improvements, Westown, Chestnut
- HVAC replacement in the City Hall building
- Safe Routes to Schools - sidewalk projects
- All projects related to water and wastewater plant to ensure the River is not used as a dumping area, and that the residents have a safe/effective wastewater plant
- Road repair in the M-71 & Washington st. area

V. Teamwork

In order to accomplish the selected goals and objectives, it is important that the City's elected officials work as a team and have good decision-making skills. Please list some suggestions that the Mayor and City Council members could do in the future to improve the Council's teamwork, decision-making process, and ability to accomplish the stated goals and objectives.

- Continue to support downtown business and developers as they try to secure monies to improve their buildings
- Help and support any new business in downtown Owosso as needed to help them open
- Continue to get and approve any grants that are available – this past year looks amazing.
- The city council and staff should value each other's expertise. Council members bring knowledge of their constituents and the political landscape, while staff bring technical expertise and experience in running city operations.
- Staff and council should work together to ensure that public input is incorporated into decision-making. This may include public hearings, surveys, or community workshops where both staff and council members engage with residents.
- Staff should provide comprehensive reports that outline the pros and cons of different options, cost benefit analyses, and community impact studies. This helps councilmembers make informed choices.

- Ensure that both city staff and council members understand each other's roles. Council members may not always be familiar with the technical complexities of municipal operations, while staff may not fully understand the political dynamics/pressures of decision making.
- Study the packet and then speak or meet with city staff to answer any questions you may have
- Attend committee meetings. Example: attend the planning commission meeting that is addressing the rezoning of Chipman Street. Should attend a meeting of all boards once per quarter
- Attend City/DDA events together to become a team.
- Potential for hiring an outside mediator for navigating decision making
- Prof. Development training regarding Robert's Rules and procedures for members unfamiliar with the process
- Creating a time/space for a town hall that allows residents to speak/complain/preach at City Council that isn't a City Council meeting to keep City Councils' focus on the agenda at meetings
- Multiple group training sessions throughout the year related to team-building, working together, etc.

City Council Goal Setting Session – 2025-26

Owosso, MI

Preliminary Questionnaire

STAFF RESPONSES

Introduction

The purpose of this process will be to identify and prioritize the City's overall goals and objectives for the next fiscal year (FY 25-26). In order to prepare for this process, you have been asked to help identify key issues and potential objectives that will be reviewed by the Mayor and City council prior to the ranking of any goals for the City. It is requested that you list your responses to the following questions.

VI. Major Accomplishments

Please list the top five major accomplishments of the City of Owosso over the past two years. These accomplishments could be as large as a street project or as simple as a newly adopted city policy. The items do not need to be in any particular order.

- 4.4 million in funding for CIS Trail
- MSHDA grants the building department has received and administered to help low income home owners make housing improvements
- Significant progress (and grants) to identify and remove lead service lines
- Passed a new Parks and Recreation millage
- Forcing action on the Matthews Building so that it could be purchased and developed.
- \$4 million trail grant
- Conducting successful presidential election
- Plowing ahead with improvements to water and wastewater
- Reaching the halfway point in the lead/galvanized water line replacement project
- Implementing the use of the city's ERP (BS&A) more in daily functions and among departments AP/Timesheets/PO
- Bank reconciliations no longer take weeks to complete...can complete in 1-2 days
- Cleargov program has increased communication / presentation options / tracking of capital improvement requests
- Special assessment payments are posted directly in the General and Street Funds
- Misc Receivables / Loan process is SO MUCH better
- Completion of two small urban grant street projects (North St and Stewart St)
- Replacement of ~630 non-compliant water service line
- Replacement of ~1 mile of water main
- Implementation of a process to internally verify water service line materials
- Continuation of the PASER rating program
- Half of water service lines are replaced or confirmed compliant

- Infrastructure grant awards and projects
- Assistance to homeowners for repairs through MSHDA grants
- Smooth 2022 and 2024 elections
- Lots of success with infrastructure improvements but we cannot stop the progress. Lots more to do
- Working towards the completion of updating and solidifying our vertical infrastructure (well water supply) for the next few decades.
- Working towards the completion of updating our control system to enable the plant to operate with two shifts.
- Completed the rehab of the West Tower and Standpipe Tanks.
- Working to complete an essential rehab of the filters at the WTP.
- Establishing the priorities and needs of our horizontal infrastructure for our drinking water supply.
- Updated vacation policy for General City employees.
- Matthews building tore down.
- Hired IT to in-house, adding additional hours of work.
- Implemented a phone calling tree at City Hall.
- Switched to BS&A Timesheets, has helped streamline payroll.
- The city came into compliance with state law regarding property tax admin fee and interest, which generated additional revenue.
- City changed to BSA Payments as our credit card and electronic payment processor, reducing cost to customers and allowing the use of chip readers and tap and pay.
- Treasury took over the processing of MR invoices and loans. The process has been streamlined and is kept up to date
- Receivables are balanced in a timely manner allowing for any discrepancies to be identified and corrected.
- Optical and Dental insurance has improved coverage and vacation time has been increased.
- Initiate long term refurbishment projects at City Hall and P.S. Building.
- Continue process to go 100% paperless, almost there.
- All PD Policies are updated and online.
- 2025 Washington St. street repair, much needed.
- Started COSSUP Program, assist in the OPOID fight in the city and county level.
- Downtown Grants: RAP 2.0, Match on Main, and 2 Optimize Main Street Grants
- Downtown streetlight replacement & consistent streetlight maintenance
- Selling the Gould House
- MSHDA grants for low income home owners
- CIS trail grant
- Securing over \$20 million in grants and principal forgiveness for past due needed infrastructure projects.
- Training employees, and seeing them succeed in passing their State certification exams.
- Fixing/replacing equipment and infrastructure that was well past it's useful life.
- Updating outdated policies, some that haven't been touched since 1992.
- Fixing the massive water main break winter December of 2022.

- Updated zoning ordinance
- Obtaining grants for renovating homes in the city
- Utilizing employees for IT and the Building Official position, eliminating the contracts and overall savings
- Upgrading the admin cars
- Solids handling improvements at the wastewater treatment plant
- Infrastructure improvements leading to the reduction of sanitary sewer overflows
- Multiple street improvements
- Park updates.
- Running of a leaf and brush site @ a low cost.
- Doubling inventory for water service and water main repair and replacement
- Dead end & low usage main flushing program.
- Maintenance program started for equipment

VII. Issues, Concerns, Trends, and Opportunities

Please list specific issues/concerns that you have regarding future city services, policies, or operations. These issues/concerns can relate to such things as an aging population, loss of state revenues, homelessness, crime, infrastructure, etc. You do not need to identify the potential answers or solutions to your concerns.

- Lack of a plan/options for funding street improvements
- The water system needing significant improvements and how to fund those improvements
- Challenges with staffing, especially where licenses and certificates are required
- Need for curbside recycling
- I am very concerned that older people with very little money will have nowhere affordable to live
- Possible loss of further revenue sharing if the gas tax is shifted entirely to fix the roads
- I am very concerned about the City's limited ability to attract and retain good employees
- Stagnate personnel benefits / policies
- Funds not available for street improvements
- The city is taking on debt in its enterprise funds...such debt will not drop off until 20-30 years from now.....debt payments will begin to control the financial/budget conversation for these funds
- Additional checks and balances in the building department and/or segregation of duties
- Review of parking ticket processes / policy / state law
- Renegotiate the township's water charge backs
- Unwillingness of property owners to allow city personal to verify water service line materials on their property
- Continuing increase of water and sewer rates
- Lack of road funding outside of ACT 51
- Hazardous sidewalk replacement criteria policy approval
- Lack of cooperation between city employees/departments

- Backlog of criminal cases at prosecutor's office
- Development projects lagging. Consider canceling any tax incentives for projects that are not showing steady progress after 2 years
- Increased regulations/work for elections
- I'm worried about an unworkable solution being adopted for garbage and recycling. I don't want to see staff set up for failure.
- Street funding is broken. City should consider local option to fund streets (i.e. local income tax)
- Infrastructure needs exceed the available funds.
- Staffing is a revolving door.
- State or Federal funding is essential for large projects.
- Aging IT infrastructure.
- Brain drain - when employees retire/leave.
- Aging infrastructure in general (streets, water mains, etc.).
- Employees are more transient and don't stay.
- Employee turnover.
- Some departments have trouble finding, hiring and keeping qualified employees
- Lack of productive communication between departments
- Low income and aging population together with rising costs
- Lack of community pride
- No incentive for people to move here
- Inflation has dramatically increased cost of goods and services. The long term outlook for major purchases is very alarming.
- Aging housing stock will cause continued housing violations and blight issues in the city.
- Will need to think long term on possibility of shared services across other local communities.
- Condition of sidewalks, streets, and parking lots
- Traffic calming, walkability, and bike lanes
- Enforcement of codes, laws, and ordinances
- Understaffed departments/staff capacity
- Single hauler trash with curbside recycling
- Challenges in attracting and retaining high quality employees due to inadequate compensation.
- Insufficient staffing to meet operational demands. Additional staffing is needed to meet current and ongoing workloads.
- The State continues to impose additional requirements on a regular basis.
- Aging infrastructure is frequently experiencing failures and breakdowns, some of which is unable to meet current State requirements.
- Infrastructure repair and replacement projects have seen significant increases year over year since the onset of the pandemic.
- Deteriorated nitrification towers at wastewater plant - will experience a catastrophic failure at some point
- Major improvements needed at water filtration plant
- Difficulty hiring and retaining qualified staff
- Homeless population increasing (anecdotal)

- Infrastructure project costs increasing at alarming rates. Concerned about lack of future funding sources.
- Enforcement of rules and laws / speed limits, parking, vandalism
- Homeless camps

VIII. Significant Initiatives, Programs, or Policies

It is requested that you list any initiative, program, or policy that you think the City should consider in the next year. Examples of such items from other cities have included such things as updating employee job descriptions, recycling service, short-term rental ordinances, city website projects, etc. These suggestions should not include construction projects as these will be listed in the following section.

- Amend the charter. Specifically to allow for longer millage requests but our council is also underpaid.
- Curbside recycling
- Place more emphasis on training for city staff at all levels
- Please update the city website!
- Update City website
- Improving cyber-security
- Improving workplace security
- Update the Council Chambers
- IT / Technology audit
- Update website and personnel policies
- Streamline/standardized/ create an approval/review workflow for the city council packet/agenda process
- Lead and galvanized education program
- Security upgrades to buildings
- City website overhaul
- Contracted trash, recycling, brush, and leaf pickup
- Retention of DPW, WTP, and WWTP employees
- Single Hauler and Curbside recycling contract
- City website overhaul
- Negotiate conveyance of library building to district library
- Ethics ordinance for city council with enforcement procedure
- Update non-union employee wage study
- Consider implementing a working Asset Management Plan as recommended by EGLE.
- Update city website.
- Update Personnel Policy Manual for General City employees.
- Recycling
- Lateral transfer agreement for all unions (for new hires).
- Abide by new paid sick leave law that is effective Feb., 2025.
- Update general city personnel manual
- better health insurance

- recycling service
- update and make city website more user friendly
- Update city website, hopefully put out RFP in next budget year.
- City wide waste and recycling pickup
- New City website that's more user friendly
- Change TCO timeline to accommodate large scale event and project planning (120 days is too short of notice)
- Credit card that can be checked out like a library book and can used for stores/items that are not travel related
- Partnership with Baker College and/or nearby education institutions for providing interns or student led projects
- Four (4) day work weeks
- Review organizational structure, to see if Deputy Director(s) are needed.
- Work/Life Balance of Employees
- Update the Tuition Reimbursement Policy, as it currently maxes out at only \$600 per semester.
- Update City of Owosso Personnel Policy Manual
- Update employee work rules (discharge and serious violations)
- Holiday pay rate for part-time employees working on holidays
- Any benefit increase that will help attract/retain quality staff
- Updated work rules
- Written SOP's of the various task and jobs that require specialized training.
- Safety training, CPR, active shooter, Catastrophic event training.
- Employee handbooks

IX. Capital Projects, Construction Projects, Equipment Purchases

The city updates its 6-year Capital Improvements Plan annually. Please review the latest adopted CIP and indicate which listed projects are a priority for you. If your project is not listed, feel free to add it to this list. These capital projects could include things like street construction, utility replacements, policy patrol vehicles, etc.

- Grand Avenue Park Playground Project
- CIS Trail Connection
- Street Construction
- City Hall improvements
- Public Safety Building Improvements
- storm sewer maintenance/improvements
- continue investment in water & sewer plants/systems
- street projects
- lead/galvanized water service line replacement
- Cloud based Enterprise Resource Planning system
- King Street Reconstruction
- Dewey Street Reconstruction w/ sanitary sewer replacement

- Woodlawn Ave Rehabilitation w/ sanitary sewer replacement
- Sanitary Sewer Interceptor cleaning and televising
- Sanitary Sewer River Crossing at M-52 Bridge
- Chipman Drain improvements (Westown and Chestnut RR Xing)
- Drinking Water Plant improvements
- Library heating system and windows. Make these improvements contingent on conveyance of ownership of the building to the library district.
- Public Safety Building improvements
- Expand the splash pad
- 2024-29 CIP Water - Total Amount \$57,075,900
- Completion of current and approved DWSRF projects.
- Design work on Membrane Plant
- New Reservoir/Transfer Tank/HS PMP BLDG/Chem BLDGS
- Booster Pump Upgrade (Basis 2008 Permit)
- Virtual server with management.
- IT upgrades
- Cyber security intrusion detection.
- Wifi improvements
- Backup automation
- Security at City Hall
- Replace City Hall Generator
- Water main replacements
- virtual server
- Cyber security
- Remodel the the P.S. Building either complete rebuild or remodel.
- Yearly purchase of police vehicle(s).
- Continued purchase of EMS equipment.
- Water main replacement
- Sidewalk, street, and parking lot replacement
- Streetlight replacement
- Castle and City Hall HVAC
- Public Safety Building replacement
- WWTP - Towers Replacement
- WTP - Reservoir Replacement
- WWTP - Retention Basin & Collections - Main Interceptor Clean/Camera/CIPP Lined/Repair
- Lead and galvanized service lines - identify and replace
- WTP - New Plant
- Security upgrades for city hall
- WWTP Nitrification Tower Replacement
- WWTP Retention Basin
- Sanitary Sewer Interceptor Cleaning
- M-52 bridge sanitary sewer river crossing rehab
- WWTP auxiliary roof rehab/replace

- Paving / resurfacing streets, alleys, park parking lots.
- Lead service line replacement
- Water main replacement both D.E. and Feeder mains
- Building a water sales and filling station.
- Building a winter / event area at Holman pool Ice skating hockey

X. Teamwork

In order to accomplish the selected goals and objectives, it is important that the City's elected officials work as a team and have good decision-making skills. Please list some suggestions that the Mayor and City Council members could do in the future to improve the Council's teamwork, decision-making process, and ability to accomplish the stated goals and objectives.

- Make an effort to look for shared goals. At this point, we are all pretty aware of where Council disagrees but I am not sure where they have common ground
- Attend city board and commission meetings (at a minimum, read meeting minutes) to have a deeper understanding of issues the city is dealing with. Things happening at these meetings often end up on later City Council agendas.
- Schedule a phone call or meeting with staff prior to council meetings to get a better understanding of issues that are important to you.
- Have real conversations with residents and read less Facebook comments.
- Attend city events together – Have a city council float in parades, go to National Night Out, attend Curwood events together, participate in the spring park clean up or downtown cleanup.
- Ask staff to schedule tours for you of the water plants, public safety building and DPW facilities.
- consider accepting when someone offers a compromise; don't make it all or nothing
- make consideration of compromise part of the decision making process; when members disagree, ask what each side would be willing to give up to reach a decision that has buy-in from all members; ask yourself "What can I live with to accommodate someone else?"; a compromise that all members support on some level is stronger than a split vote where there are distinct winners & losers
- They may benefit from doing a group exercise like a ropes course; help them see each other as teammates working toward the same goal
- Quarterly workshops to review goals
- Restrict / commit fund balance for long term goals
- Read the meeting packets
- Ask questions regarding council items and suggest alternatives
- Assist city staff with public outreach regarding projects
- Actively participate in the annual budget workshop
- Positively debate council items at meetings to increase transparency
- Respect decisions by the majority of council and staff's implementation of those decisions
- Stop moralizing. It is not conducive to productive conversation and won't convince anyone to change their mind.
- Don't be easily swayed by social media keyboard warriors. Stop engaging on facebook with constituents and have real conversations with them.

- Respect and follow city policies even if they were adopted prior to your time on council
- Don't wait until a council meeting to try to debate an issue. Engage with fellow members more often than at meetings.
- Attend events in the city (curwood, OHC parties, DDA events, Chamber and SEDP events).
- Have an official "Owosso City Council" presence in all city parades. Could be as simple as a sign on a car and all of you walking together handing out candy.
- Awareness of current state of infrastructure needs and priorities.
- Awareness of funding capacity.
- Teambuilding activities
- Council attend MML Elected Officials training.
- Utilize staff - we are all working towards the common good.
- Have an open mind and admit when you don't know.
- Don't bully or manipulate!
- Min & Max that Council Members serve on 1 Commission. Helps avoid them over committing, diversifies representation on the Boards and they then have an additional source to ask questions specific to each Commission
- Attend events in pairs when possible. Look at the City, downtown, and Commission event calendars and select 1 to attend with another Council Member
- Pick 1 activity or project to work on as a group (river/park/downtown cleanup, National Night Out station, etc.)
- Council Member Comments = plug your project/commission/staff/volunteers. now's the time to say something positive happening or that you know about! Helps you end on a good note
- Put differences aside, and focus on helping and doing what's best for the residents and community.
- If you disagree on an item, focus on the reasoning, and/or the alternatives, as to why this is being proposed.
- If you have questions, bring them to the City Manager/department heads prior to the City Council meetings.
- Utilize and leverage data driven insights and expert opinions to guide decisions, ensuring that the Council's choices are informed and grounded in sound evidence.
- Be realistic!