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Employment Practices of Department of Public Works

Town of Needham, Massachusetts



ICMA

International City/County Management Association
LEADERSHIP ICMA

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Introduction

The Town of Needham, Massachusetts, submitted a proposal to the International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) Leadership ICMA (L-ICMA) to evaluate staffing practices within its Department of Public Works (DPW) and develop recommendations, which could include drawing on staffing practices of comparable communities.

Leadership ICMA

The L-ICMA team includes the following members. Full biographies can be found in the Conclusion section.

- Megan Bourke, Assistant Director, Department of Finance and Budget; Loudoun County, Virginia
- Cori Burbach, Assistant City Manager; City of Dubuque, Iowa
- Kady Doelling, Deputy City Administrator; City of Lafayette, Colorado
- Sheldon Hudson, Town Manager; Town of Millsboro, Delaware

Town Overview

The Town of Needham is located in Norfolk County, Massachusetts, about 10 miles southwest of the City of Boston. Needham has a population of 32,485¹ and occupies a land area of approximately 12.75 square miles.

Established as a town in 1711, Needham is governed by a representative form of town meeting and a five-member select board who appoints the town manager, town counsel, and board and committee members. The town manager appoints the police chief, fire chief, director of public works, assistant town manager/finance director, and assistant town manager/director of operations, subject to approval by the board of selectmen. All other employees, excluding school district employees, are appointed by the town manager. The day-to-day management is under the direction of a town manager.



Needham boasts a high-performing school system that, based on information provided by town staff, makes it a much sought-after place for families to locate. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 75% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 42.9% in the state of Massachusetts.

¹ Source: <https://www.needhamma.gov/231/Needham-Demographics>

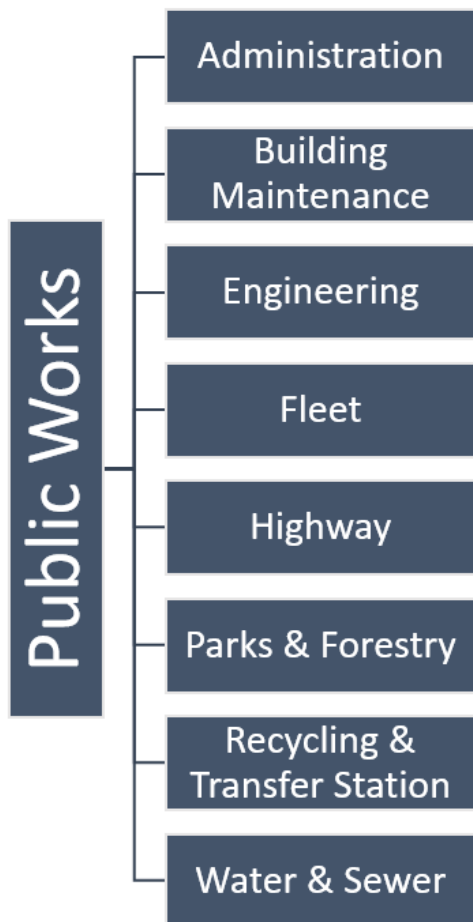
The median household income is \$153,032 compared to \$77,378 for the state and only 2.6% of the population lives in poverty compared to 10% for the state.²

The town is classified as an economically-developed suburb with above average wealth levels and higher education attainment³; this value is projected to exceed \$1 million in 2020. The cost of living in Needham is significantly higher than the national average, largely due to the cost of housing.

Because of the high cost of living in the town and in the greater Boston area, many town employees cannot afford to live within town limits. According to town data, approximately 8% of DPW staff live in town, with half of those being young adults who live with their parents.

Department of Public Works

The DPW plans, designs, constructs, operates, maintains, and manages all municipal physical facilities as well as school district grounds. Its eight divisions include administration; engineering; parks and forestry; building maintenance; highway; solid waste disposal; water, sewer, and drain; and fleet.



- Administration is responsible for the day to day management of DPW including providing customer assistance, preparing bills, monitoring expenditures and revenues, and providing periodic reports to stakeholders. The division has 12 staff to provide these support functions.
- The building maintenance division maintains all town and school buildings and building related capital improvements under \$500,000. In addition, the division manages rentals of building spaces and all custodial operations. The division is staffed by 54 employees.
- Engineering provides services such as site and subdivision plan review, surveying, inspection, capital planning, and consultation with DPW divisions, other town departments, and outside stakeholders such as contractors, developer, and government officials. The division is staff by 10 employees.
- Fleet provides service to all DPW vehicles and equipment including preventative maintenance and preparing season equipment. The services are all made available to the broader town departments. The division is staffed by 5 employees.

² Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/needhamcdpmassachusetts>

³ Source: <https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20195#CommunityProfile>

- The highway division maintains 260 lane miles of roadway, 160 miles of sidewalk and the traffic system in Needham including construction improvements and conducts snow and ice operations. The division is staffed by 12 employees.
- Parks, grounds, and forestry provides for the care and maintenance of public shade trees, parks and athletic fields. In addition, they provide support for outdoor athletic and recreational programming as well as special events. The division is staffed by 16 employees.
- Solid waste disposal division operates the town's transfer station where residents can drop off their recycling and waste disposal. The division is staffed by 10 employees.
- Water, sewer, and drain provides service to more than 30,000 residents, employees, students, and visitors each day. The water system includes supply, storage, treatments, and distribution. The sewer system maintains and cleans the system to minimize interruptions in service. The drainage system complies with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations to improve storm water discharge. This division is staffed by 26 employees.

Overall, the department has 145 full time staff and 21 seasonal/part time employees. The age range of the workforce is 21 to 78 with the average tenure of the employee base being 50 years. 57 employees fall within the DPW union contract.

Problem Statement

Front line staff within the department are represented by the Needham Independent Public Employees Association (NIPEA), an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. While management indicates it has undergone modernization and performance management enhancements, these improvements have not been extended to front line staff work practices.

The town is reliant on stand-by and emergency services to provide after-hours support for DPW programs. Stand-by and on-call programs were created when the majority of employees lived close to or in the community. Now, the high cost of living in the Boston metro area is seen as an obstacle that makes it difficult for DPW employees to live within the town limits (with the majority living one hour away). Additionally, the town depends heavily on overtime opportunities to provide ongoing services. Finally, it is important to the town that employees are invested in the community that they serve. Housing affordability prevents many DPW employees from living within the town, and the some leadership staff believe this challenges its employees' connection to the community.

DPW is undergoing a major staffing transition as a significant portion of its employees will be approaching retirement in the next five to seven years. For this reason, the town seeks L-ICMA to develop recommendations that could enhance work practices for front line staff up to and including changes in its labor contract. Research areas to explore include the balance of full-time employees, part-time employees, and temporary employees; work hours and flexible schedules; balance of employees to contractual services; and use of overtime and other incentives. Recommendations about staffing structure should consider impacts on future recruitment and retention and feasibility of integration with collective bargaining agreement(s).

Background

Most divisions within the DPW operate on a traditional schedule of 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- The recycling and transfer station staff maintain a Tuesday through Saturday schedule to accommodate public drop-off, as there is no publicly-provided curbside collection in the community.
- The water treatment plant is currently staffed seven days per week with two people. An individual must be available at the water plant for a minimum of four hours, seven days per week, per state regulations.
- The asphalt crew, part of the highway division, reports for work at 5:00 a.m. during the summer in order to be “first in line” at the private asphalt plant, and typically works two hours of overtime per day to complete the required construction projects.

For the first time in 2019, most divisions piloted the use of summer hours, where employees worked nine hour days and then were off on Friday afternoons. This pilot was well-received and is recommended to be continued in the future. For those staff that complete work in the field, there is a significant loss of time experienced to break down a site, come back to their municipal building, and then go back to the site for lunch breaks.

Most employees are represented by an active union.

Use of Overtime

Because the department operates with a lean staff, the town has traditionally been reliant on standby and overtime to support after-hours emergency needs of the DPW. On-call staff is expected to be able to respond to an emergency such as a water main break within one hour. Sewer and highway activities currently utilize an on-call program. Individuals are paid time and a half for 10 hour on-call shifts. The state-mandated four hours of onsite staff time at the water plant on Saturdays and Sundays are filled with on-call staff. Overtime has also been a regular way to complete maintenance tasks such as hydrant flushing and tree pruning.

Some overtime practices are mandated by the NIPEA labor contract, while other needs have traditionally been met by volunteer overtime sign-ups. This practice has met the labor needs of the department, while, according to staff, also allowing individuals to supplement their wages without having to take on a second job to meet the high cost of living in the area.

Snow Removal Response

All DPW staff are required to be part of the town’s snow removal response. A phased approach allows the team to react to the severity of the snow event. For a light event, or one that pre-treatment of roads is the required response, twelve staff respond. A modified event, requiring some chemical pre-treatment and some removal, requires approximately 20 staff. A “full plow” event, for snow over two inches, requires 90 to 100 individuals and can only be achieved by adding contractors to the town’s staff.

This strategy requires all DPW staff to have a CDL or acquire one within six months of hire date. All staff receive \$1,000 compensation for the snow season on-call program. When responding to snow events overnight, staff transitions from their primary jobs directly to snow removal and then back to primary as needed. Time for rest breaks is allowed per union contract, and employees may sleep onsite in their vehicles or municipal buildings if travel time does not allow them to return home.

Stakeholder Review

During site visits on March 11 and 12, 2020, L-ICMA interviewed approximately 25 front line staff members and management from DPW divisions. These interviews were conducted in a combination of groups and one-on-one interviews. The intent of the interviews was to gain perspective on staffing practices, the use of overtime, and organizational culture and engagement. It is important to note that the L-ICMA team conducted site visits during the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the town had its first confirm case the day of interviews. As a result, the team met with less staff than originally planned. Should the town wish to continue conversations with staff not originally interviewed, the following were the core set of questions asked by L-ICMA:

- What attracted you to your current job? Why do you stay in your current job?
- What challenges do you have in your current job related to scheduling, response time, or similar things?
- How would you suggest improving your current work schedule to meet the service needs of the community?
- What technology, partnerships, or other creative ideas do you see that might help to meet those same service needs?
- Tell us about your personal connection to Needham and its residents. How does that impact the way you deliver services to the community?

Key findings based on common consensus from the interviews are summarized below and are the basis of the report's recommendations. A full list of findings can be found in the Appendix.

Key Finding #1: Create a Better Balance between Overtime and Additional Staff Resources

When asked if more staff resources were needed, most employees said divisions were staffed appropriately. Those employees generally agreed, however, that their divisions' work could not be accomplished in a regular work week. In addition to the monetary benefit of overtime, many employees shared that they simply would not be able to fulfill their job duties without being able to work additional hours.

Some employees whose supervisor had nearly eliminated all opportunities for overtime expressed serious concerns that limiting overtime greatly interfered with their collective ability to meet the expectations of their job and customer needs.

Key Finding #2: Evaluate Snow Operations Program

Many employees understand that snow operations are a critical service of DPW; however, they did suggest that the way the program is currently run should be restructured. Employee fatigue and time away from their families were cited as reasons why employees sought job opportunities with other municipalities or private contractors. They indicated that they were able to obtain jobs elsewhere where they were only responsible for completing work related to their professional training or interest (and not snow removal), and that the requirement to constantly be on call limited their ability to make personal commitments during the winter.

Key Finding #3: Implement Formalized Training and Mentorship Program while Measuring Employee Engagement

Many workers cited the two reasons they continued to work for the town were job security and career opportunities. One of the obstacles to taking advantage of career advancement opportunities cited by staff was the lack of dedicated resources to continuous learning and development. Some longer tenured workers remembered when staff would provide trainings to each other and remembered that experience positively. Many others said the trainings that were currently available were not impactful because they were offered by vendors rather than practitioners.

Comparable Community Research

A number of communities were selected for comparison based on their comparable characteristics to the Town of Needham including population size, quality of educational institutions, demographics, socio-economics, and services provided by the Department of Public Works in addition to recommendations made by the Town of Needham. Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered to inform L-ICMA's recommendations. Questions asked included:

- Tell us a little bit about your community?
- How do you staff your operations?
- What is working well within your operations?
- What staffing strategies are you thinking about for the next five years?
- How do you measure employee engagement?

The **Village of Hinsdale, Illinois**, has approximately 17,700 residents. The Village indicated that its public works budget was around \$10,890,000 and that it had 24 employees—19 of whom are “front-line” workers. The average front-line worker was in his/her mid-30s.

With regard to Hinsdale's overtime policy for public works, generally speaking, administration endeavored to give front-line workers an equal opportunity to earn overtime. When overtime is available, employees with the lowest totals were first given the opportunity to sign up.

For the most part, the Village's front-line public works employees worked a 7:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. schedule. There was no mention of “flexible” schedules being offered or of the schedule being different during the summer months.

Hinsdale identified the following as its main service areas: roadways (including electrical), forestry, water and sewer, buildings, parks (including garbage collection), and fleet. Municipal staff handle the majority of snow-related operations.

The **City of Lake Forest, Illinois'** population was 19,612 in 2017 according to ACS estimates. According to the City, in municipal fiscal year 2021, the Lake Forest public works department was expected to have 18 employees—four administrator, in addition to multiple mechanics, refuse collectors, and engineering assistants. The proposed budget amount was just over \$17,170,000.

The City's primary service areas were water and sewer (sanitary and storm), streets and bridges (including snow removal), trash/recycling/yard waste collection, fleet, building maintenance, and engineering.

The **Borough of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania**, reported that it had a population of approximately 6,400. The Borough's public works department had an annual budget of around \$450,000 and four full-time employees, none of which performed an administrative-type function. The average worker age was about 50. In addition, Swarthmore PW had part-time employees—a custodian (20 hrs./week), a code enforcement officer (about 6 hrs./wk.), and “a few” workers who assist with leaf collection.

In Swarthmore, overtime was used mostly in cases involving snow plowing and leaf collection. One employee was always close enough to respond to emergencies if needed and was paid overtime.

Swarthmore's public works department handles snow plowing, park maintenance, the clearing of blocked sewer lines, the preparation and delivery of leaf mulch, minor street repairs, painting parking spaces and crosswalks, storm drain cleaning, parking meters maintenance, and some vehicle maintenance. The Borough does not operate a sewer treatment plant of any kind, and trash and recycling collection, major sewer (sanitary & storm) work, street paving, major vehicle repair, and traffic signal and street light maintenance are all outsourced.

The **Town of Castle Rock, Colorado**, per the U.S. Census Bureau, had a population of around 64,800. According to the town, Castle Rock was growing rapidly.

The Public Works budget amount was \$43,300,000, with \$11,400,000 of the figure being associated with items related to the capital improvement plan (CIP). Service areas include CIP-related engineering, development-related engineering, transportation planning and traffic engineering, street operations and maintenance, public transit, and the management of the town's Internal Fleet Management Fund. In the case of Castle Rock, street operations and maintenance included snow removal.

The Town reported that it did not have enough resources (staffing or budget) to address a backlog that existed as a result of the aforementioned growth taking place. The town provided the 2020 Action Plan, which outlines service levels as a reference for Needham DPW (Appendix B).

In the summer, employee shifts were ten hours in length. In the winter, the number dropped to eight—except during snow events—in which case the shift length could be twelve hours. While there was some “flexible scheduling,” there was no formal process in place relative to overtime.

The town estimated its average worker age to be somewhere between 35 and 40. The workers were *not* members of a collective bargaining unit.

Recommendations

Introduction

The following recommendations have been developed for DPW, recognizing their current organizational culture, resource constraints, and desires to enhance work practices for front line staff. The L-ICMA team built the recommendations by using a combination of practical experience, leading research, and stakeholder review.

The team explored the balance of full-time employees, part-time employees, and temporary employees; work hours and flexible schedules; balance of employees to contractual services; and use of overtime and other incentives with a lens of recruitment and retention.

While the recommendations do not speak directly to the potential impacts on the collective bargaining agreement(s), it is important for management to ensure adequate planning and communication of potential changes with collective bargaining agreement(s) to successfully integrate changes. Stakeholder reviews indicated that negotiations oftentimes felt rushed, not providing ample time to discuss modifications so the team recommends allowing ample lead time for future negotiations.

Create a Better Balance between Overtime and Additional Staff Resources

Problem:

DPW regularly staffs its core operations with overtime. Based on generally accepted budgetary concepts, overtime should be expended for contingency purposes. Further, the Government Finance Officers Association has provided guidance to evaluate overtime actuals against 3% of a department, division, or individual’s total salary; meaning that if overtime exceeds 3% of one of those three categories, it could be an indication that a program is spending too much personnel budget on overtime.⁴

Findings:

L-ICMA found that DPW overly relies on the use of overtime to support regular operations.

Fiscal Year ‘21 budgeted overtime as a percentage of total salary budgets are as follows:

Division	OT Budget	Total Salary Budget	% of Total
General Fund Base*	\$348,891	\$3,433,343	10.2%
Water	\$210,824	\$1,360,541	15.5%
Sewer	\$148,458	\$1,057,938	14.0%
DPW, Aggregated	\$731,160	\$5,874,809	12.4%

*Parks & Forestry, Highway, Recycling & Transfer Station, Fleet.

This reliance has the following impacts on the operations of department.

- Many employees have become reliant on overtime to augment their salaries.⁵
- Management cannot depend upon overtime to meet its core service needs because, while some employees depend on the additional income, employees can take advantage of overtime opportunities when they are convenient.⁶ In essence, DPW depends upon voluntary staffing to provide core services.
- Overtime opportunities are not consistently available across divisions; because of its prevalence and employees’ reliance on it when it is available, the inconsistent access to overtime could be seen as inequitable.
- By providing regular operations through overtime, regular operations by definition are exceeding the authorized work week of DPW and/or the Town of Needham, creating concerns related to position control and authorized work hours allowed by the Town Council.

⁴ Source: https://www.gfoa.org/sites/default/files/GFOA_FFAD4EvaluateOvertime.pdf

⁵ L-ICMA cannot verify that DPW salaries do not constitute a living wage or that DPW employees expect a level income higher than what their positions demand in the market. While L-ICMA understands this engagement was not meant to offer recommendations on classification and compensation, based on feedback from group discussions, we do believe it is worth noting that many staff members expressed a dependence on either overtime or secondary jobs.

⁶ The exception is participation in the town’s snow response program.

Recommendation:

DPW should evaluate its current service and recommended service levels to determine the ideal staffing to meet its needs, including an evaluation of the ideal and operationally-sustainable balance of regular positions (FTE), overtime, and contractual services. While some level of overtime will always be needed for a twenty-four hour/seven day a week operation like public works, the use of overtime should be balanced with new staff resources (FTE) or contractual services. A staffing study could be conducted to evaluate service levels and develop workload measures by division and/or type of position. Further, DPW should attempt to classify overtime expenditures to differentiate between core service provisions and overtime unrelated to core services. In this way, DPW can begin to determine how divisions are funding their regular and enhanced operations.

Relatedly, there appear to be some services that are staffed with overtime that do not need to be, with hydrant flushing being the clearest example. Infrequent events such as hydrant flushing could be incorporated into employees' regular schedules and flex hours could be implemented to provide the service during non-typical business hours. Flex hours and flexible scheduling could address the "double bubble" the town currently experiences. Alternately, nearby municipalities indicate they outsource this service.

Resources Needed to Implement Recommendation:

Further analysis could be done to evaluate overtime expenditures versus personnel budgets to isolate particular divisions that exceed 3%. This analysis could identify divisions that could benefit from further workload analysis to determine if additional resources are needed.

Evaluate Snow Operations Program

Problem:

Existing snow removal staffing strategy requires all DPW staff to hold CDL and results in significant overtime during snow events.

Findings:

L-ICMA found restructuring snow removal staffing to be one of the largest opportunities to improve efficiencies and also address issues that hinder recruitment and retention efforts.

Most DPW staff are part of snow response, and so must have or secure a CDL within six months of hire. For technical positions that may become increasingly hard to recruit for outside of this requirement, this is an additional barrier to hiring and retaining staff.

Operating traditional daytime shifts and then relying on overtime in snow events leads to high overtime costs and may lead to employee fatigue, depending on length of the event.

Recommendation:

DPW should invest in the restructuring of snow removal staffing:

1. Reduce number of DPW staff required to hold CDLs for snow response, taking into account positions that may be challenging to fill outside of this requirement. Staff who are not required to hold CDLs may still be able to operate small equipment to assist in clearing sidewalks and non-primary response areas.
2. Consider moving to nontraditional schedule during winter months that creates more reliability for staff and allows more flexibility in response. Two popular models include:
 - a. Alternating twelve-hour shifts that allow for 24/7 coverage with appropriate rest breaks for staff. These shifts can be scheduled as eight hour shifts and extended to twelve during snow events, with the four additional hours qualifying for overtime.
 - b. Shift to three eight-hour shifts during the winter for 24/7 coverage. This model typically reduces the need for overtime, but can be more challenging to assign work to the overnight shift when snow events are not occurring.
3. Beyond current practice, outsource clearing of parking lots, sidewalks, and other non-primary locations to reduce demand for overtime.
4. Continue to explore route planning software and investment in AVL equipment to optimize snow removal operations, minimizing time needed for clearing.



Resources Needed to Implement Recommendation:

Significant lead time will be needed to implement an alternative snow response staffing strategy. Prior to identifying a staffing strategy, route optimization should be performed, which should involve the use of existing or purchased software. Route optimization is the process of generating entirely new routes based on mathematical algorithms intended to minimize the time or cost of providing snow and ice control services and generally comprises the following five steps:⁷

1. Selection of project team and project tools
2. Preparation of input data
3. Utilization of optimization tool
4. Review and revision of routes
5. Implementation of routes

Based on results, administration will be able to identify efficiencies in staffing patterns and opportunities for contracted assistance.

⁷ Source: http://clearroads.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/FR_CR.14-07_Final.pdf

Implement Formalized Training and Mentorship Program while Measuring Employee Engagement

Problem:

A critical component to the department's – or any employer's for that matter – success is ensuring their employees are engaged. Employee engagement has become increasingly important for organizations; according to a leader in this field, Gallup, fostering employee engagement includes fostering a workplace where “emotional and social needs, like doing work that you are good at and connecting your work with a higher purpose.”⁸ Gallup asserts that a tightening labor market has lead employees to care about jobs that fit their lifestyles, give them opportunities to grow, and connect them to greater purpose in addition to a fair pay.

For Needham employees, this is especially important as many of the staff members do not live within the community, creating the potential for them to not be as invested in the services they provide since they do not share a physical or social connection to the community.

Findings:

When L-ICMA conducted the site visit in March, staff expressed strong commitments to the work that they did and services they provided to the community. Additionally, they expressed a desire to become even more proficient in their service delivery and encourage the town to offer trainings that align with their needs. They were cognizant that with training and mentorship programs, they could bring higher benefits to the community while also creating more professional development opportunities for themselves.⁹

Many cited that training was provided by tenured staff that have since left the organization creating a need/desire for informal mentorship.

Recommendation:

DPW does not currently measure employee engagement in any formal way. Our recommendation would be to begin using a consistent tool to monitor engagement and identify areas in need for improvement. Furthermore, we suggest specifically to utilize the *Gallup 12* questionnaire (Appendix C).¹⁰ This questionnaire is recognized as a leading tool to measure engagement and is not overly complicated to administer. If an engagement tool is chosen to be utilized, it is important to commit to conducting the survey on a regular basis and examine trends. The first survey will establish a baseline and future surveys will indicated the effectiveness of any changes made in the organization.

⁸ Source: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/243578/employee-experience-engagement-difference.aspx>

⁹ The creation of more professional development opportunities for town employees within DPW could increase retention.

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0510fox3.aspx>

This recommendation is consistent with Robert Lavigna’s Employee Engagement Process Model, a five-step, continuous process that begins with goal planning, then surveying employees, followed by analyzing and sharing results as well as taking and evaluating action to sustain engagement.¹¹



Furthermore, employee engagement can be measured in ways other than formal surveys. One-on-one discussion, focus groups, or “stay interviews” can help an organization understand the specifics of their culture and needs of the employees.¹² This is a low cost, high impact tactic that supervisors can undertake.

Based on feedback received during the on-site visit, the town should seek feedback on the trainings that staff would find valuable and begin implement a new program that balances hard and soft skill training. Staff indicated that DPW had a more robust mentoring program that allowed new staff to learn from more seasoned employees and built a culture of communication and trust. As many of those seasoned employees have retired, staff feel that this program has also become less of a priority. Mentors can not only provide technical knowledge but also help provide new employees feedback that may be better received coming from a peer rather than a supervisor and also help provide insights into the organizational culture.¹³

Management can assist in recreating a mentorship program that can be scaled, beginning with a low resource program that simply matches those that want to be mentors with those that are seeking a mentor. Enlist an employee that is interested in organizational development to help run this program and add resources, if needed or feasible.

Resources Needed to Implement Recommendation:

If DPW is interested in surveying employees related to engagement, L-ICMA recommends utilizing Gallup since it is nationally recognized and its surveying tools are replicable. Gallup has a scaled approach depending on the organizations size so the town could begin smaller – with just DPW – for a smaller cost or scale to the whole organization. While this might be an ongoing cost for the organization, this team believe that not addressing or understanding the level of employee engagement may actually cost the organization far more in terms of turnover and recruitment.

As noted above, there are also non-monetary ways to help engagement and training. Peer to peer mentoring is a great way to expand knowledge as is a job sharing program. Supervisors taking time to offer personalized notes of appreciation also make employees feel valued.

¹¹ Lavigna, Robert. (2013) *Engaging Government Employees: Motivate and Inspire Your People to Achieve Superior Performance*. AMACOM.

¹² Source: <https://www.cpshr.us/services/resources/org-strat/employee-eng/WhyEng-Matters.pdf>

¹³ Source: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/keys-find-and-make-most-your-professional-mentor>

Conclusion

In January 2020, The Town of Needham submitted a proposal and was selected by this L-ICMA team to evaluate staffing practices within its Department of Public Works (DPW) and develop recommendations, which could include drawing on staffing practices of comparable communities. Little did anyone know that the world would change so dramatically a few short months later and governmental services would become increasingly essential to the health and safety of our communities.

The Town of Needham is no exception to feeling the strain of a world pandemic and while priorities have shifted, the recommendations outlined in this report should serve the town after the crisis has subsided.

The L-ICMA team selected this project because of the potential impact it would have on the Town of Needham. Personnel expenditures are typically the largest cost center of an organization and therefore, it is important for organizations to consistently review their practices and procedures, especially as it interrelates with employee engagement. The Town of Needham is in a strong position to begin to shift their workforce to accommodate for the anticipated waive of retirements. Employees indicated a strong interest in staying with the town and helping being part of the solution. This report outlined key findings and recommendations for the following areas:

- Balance of overtime with staff resources;
- Optimal snow shift practices; and
- Formalized training and mentorship programs.

The L-ICMA team is appreciative of this opportunity to partner with the town and looks forward to continuing our professional relationship in the future.



Leadership ICMA Project Team

Megan Bourke

Assistant Budget Director

Loudon County, Virginia

Megan Bourke, MPP, is an assistant director in the Department of Finance and Budget of Loudoun County, Virginia. Megan oversees the long-term financial and capital planning for Loudoun, which has been one of the fastest growing counties nationwide for the past decade. Her team is responsible for the development of the County's six-year Capital Improvement Program (totaling \$2.5 billion) as well as various demographic and economic analyses to support data-driven decisions of the county administrator and elected board.

Megan has a bachelor's degree in political science from Indiana University and a master's degree in public policy from The George Washington University's Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.

Megan resides in Reston, Virginia, with her husband and their new baby boy.

Cori Burbach

Assistant City Manager

City of Dubuque, Iowa

Cori Burbach has been Dubuque's assistant city manager since 2017. Prior to that, she served as the sustainable community coordinator since 2009. As assistant city manager, she assists the city manager in directing the day-to-day operations of the City government and plays a key role in creating a more data-driven, high performance organization focusing on outcomes, including cross-departmental cooperation and integration with performance measurement and evaluation.

Cori received her Master of Public Administration from the University of Delaware and worked for local and state governments in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Iowa before coming to the City of Dubuque. She is a member of the International City/County Management Association and Dubuque Young Professionals. Her community involvement currently includes serving on the boards of local nonprofits such as DuRide, Creative Adventure Lab, and Operation New View community action agency.

She is a mom to two beautiful children, Xander and Zoe.

Kady Doelling

Deputy City Administrator

City of Lafayette, Colorado

Kady Doelling, MPA, recently joined the City of Lafayette as their Deputy City Administrator. Prior to Lafayette, Kady was the executive budget officer in Boulder, Colorado. She joined the City of Boulder in 2013 as an analyst within the Parks and Recreation Department. Within the city, she moved through and up in the organization, serving as the business services manager in Parks and Recreation Department before ending her career in Boulder as the executive budget officer. As the executive budget officer, Kady translated organization vision into financial strategy while ensuring alignment with broader city objectives and integration with city services.

Kady holds a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in mathematics from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Colorado at Denver. She has worked for local governments in Colorado and North Carolina and has a passion for public service that brings additional value to the organization.

She is a mom to a beautiful, energetic child named Abigale.

Sheldon Hudson

Town Manager

Town of Millsboro, DE

Sheldon Hudson is the town manager of the Town of Millsboro (Delaware). He has served in this role for about three years after having served as the assistant town manager. Prior thereto, Sheldon worked as a budget analyst at the state and county (Queen Anne's, Maryland) levels. In addition, he has private-sector experience, including as a director of risk management in the logistics industry, and college-level teaching experience as an economics/US history instructor.

Sheldon has a master's degree in government from Regent University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Indiana Wesleyan University. He was selected to serve on the Regent University School of Government MPA Advisory Board. Sheldon is involved with the Delaware League of Local Governments and with the Sussex County Association of Towns.

Sheldon's wife, Kristan, is a native of Canada. They have two children—Zachary (17) and Eliana (9). Sheldon serves on the boards of Lighthouse Christian School and of The River—A Wesleyan Church.

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Appendix

A. On-site Stakeholder Summary

L-ICMA conducted six group discussions over a two-day period with DPW staff. The table below summarizes comments made during discussions and links them to high level consensus topics, referred to as “key findings” in the report.

Group (No. of Attendees)	Important Comments	Findings
Recycling and Transfer Station (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer needs should be the basis of DPW schedules. 	
Superintendents (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public service jobs are appealing for their stability/security, opportunities, and training. Young people in the department are driven by providing service to their community. Staff is adaptable. Training and cross-training are important. Promotional opportunities are important. Employees who leave for better opportunities is a good thing. CDL requirement makes recruitment extremely difficult, especially for “unrelated” jobs. Contracting or partnering with nearby towns could be an option for emergency response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPW could benefit from a formalized training (including cross-training) and mentorship program. Snow program staffing strategies should be improved.
Water and Sewer (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public service jobs are appealing for their stability/security, opportunities, and training. Pay structure and cost of living means many employees depend on overtime, with many preferring overtime to having to get a second job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPW could benefit from a formalized training (including cross-training) and mentorship program. Snow program staffing strategies could be improved. Balance between overtime and additional staff resources could be reviewed.

Group (No. of Attendees)	Important Comments	Findings
Water and Sewer (5) <i>Continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town takes on a lot of work without the commitment to hire additional staff. • Snow operations is not a mandatory part of the job in other public works departments. “There might be a better way to do snow.” • Training and cross-training are critical. • While customer service is a top priority, there is not enough capacity to do all that needs to be done. • Contracting or partnering with nearby towns could be an option. 	
Fleet, Highway (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary and benefits are important to retention, but “benefits are going away.” • Overtime is needed to supplement pay and to accomplish regular core services (because of understaffing). • Training opportunities are critical and are not considered highly available. ○ Town takes on a lot of work without the commitment to hire additional staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance of pay, benefits, and overtime could be reviewed. • DPW would benefit from a formalized training (including cross-training) and mentorship program.
Under age of 40 (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overtime is an opportunity but it is nice that it is voluntary. • The town could better fund training and licensing requirements. • Training is “on the fly,” and training and onboarding should be formalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPW could benefit from a formalized training (including cross-training) and mentorship program.

Group (No. of Attendees)	Important Comments	Findings
Water, Forestry (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Public service jobs are appealing for their stability/security, opportunities, and training.○ Level of service expectations continues to increase.○ The snow program could be improved.○ Mobile technology improvements are needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Balance between overtime and additional staff resources could be reviewed.● Snow staffing strategies should be improved.

B. Castle Rock Strategic Plan



Strategic Plan

(with 2020 Action Plan & 2021-2022 Planning Objectives)

Public Works Department



-Yogi Berra

“If you don’t
know where you
are going, you will
wind up
somewhere else.”

Strategic Plan

(with 2020 Action Plan & 2021-2022 Planning Objectives)

Public Works Department

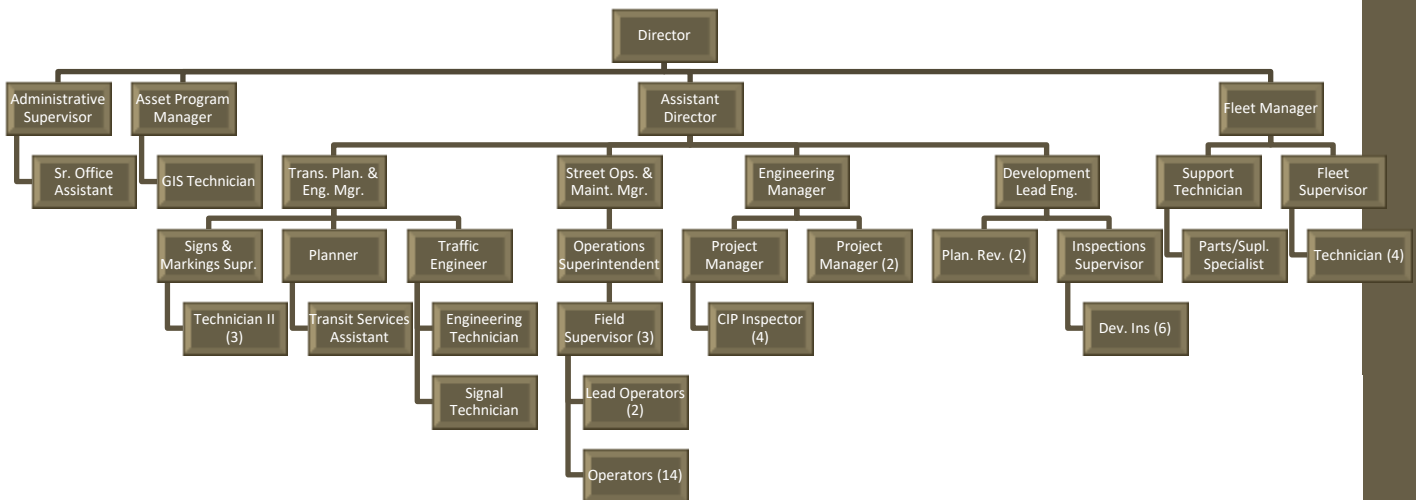
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Organizational Background

The Town of Castle Rock, located 28 miles south of Denver, founded in 1874 is the county seat of Douglas County, Colorado and named for the prominent castle tower-shaped butte near the center of town. Castle Rock is governed by a council-manager form of government, with seven council members elected to four-year terms and one of which serving as mayor.

The Public Works Department, in its current form, was created in 2001 via Town Council Resolution 2001-101. The Department was accredited by the American Public Works Association in 2016. The Town Manager administers the day-to-day responsibilities of each department, and the current charge of the Public Works Department is to deal with the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operations of the Town's public transportation infrastructure, and public transportation related services.



Definition of Strategic Plan

The Public Works Department has entered into a very competitive evolutionary cycle. Public demands continue to increase, while dollars and other resources continue to be constrained. These trends place increased pressure on the modern managers, policymakers, and staff to develop ways to be more effective and more efficient. In many cases, the public is demanding the accomplishment of specific services with fewer resources.

What is a Strategic Plan?

It is a living management tool that:

- ✚ Provides short-term direction
- ✚ Builds a shared vision
- ✚ Sets objectives and goals

Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process; one with no clear beginning and no clear end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. The planning process should be flexible and dynamic, with new information from community members, like-providers, all levels of employees, and life changes factored in appropriately.

All elements of this plan are in conformance with, and build on, the Town strategic planning documents including:

- ✚ Vision 2030
- ✚ Comprehensive Master Plan
- ✚ Transportation Master Plan
- ✚ Strategic Asset Management Plan

*-William
Hastie*

“Strategic
planning for the
future is the
most hopeful
indication of our
increasing social
intelligence.”

Department Commitments:

- ✦ Customer service focus
- ✦ Properly, and well trained personnel
- ✦ Professional service
- ✦ Qualified people in the right positions
- ✦ Well-developed organizational processes and programs integrated with town services.
- ✦ Properly equipped to do the job
- ✦ Equipment that works
- ✦ Competent employees
- ✦ Presence in the community – visibility
- ✦ Respectful employees
- ✦ Safety and good keeping of the environment
- ✦ People on the job with the right attitude
- ✦ Use of cost effective products
- ✦ Fiscally responsible
- ✦ Efficient use of resources

Mission

To provide outstanding service, safety and support for transportation infrastructure and maintenance.

Vision

Support the Town's vision by creating and maintaining world class transportation services through a positive employee culture and personal excellence.

Values

The employees of the Town as a whole have developed and adopted a high standard of values. The Department strives to emulate these in our daily activities.

Our Town Values

Clear, direct, honest communication is the essential vehicle by which the following values are demonstrated:

- ✚ We are accountable for behaviors, work products, successes and failures.
 - ✚ We are committed to integrity, honesty and the highest standard of conduct and professionalism.
 - ✚ We are adaptable and open to change.
- ✚ We work as a team toward common goals with a spirit of cooperation.
- ✚ We respect others. We listen to ideas and are considerate of time and priorities.
 - ✚ We encourage creativity and innovation.
 - ✚ We recognize and celebrate accomplishments.

- ✚ We support balance between our professional and personal lives.
- ✚ We practice responsible care for our resources, assets and environment.
- ✚ We provide exceptional public service to internal and external customers.

Philosophy

***We are committed to doing the job right with a positive attitude.
Meeting the needs of our Town, while staying dedicated to our values
and continually searching for new opportunities to improve.***

Motto

CAN DO

Department Services

In order for the Department to be able to plan for the future, we must establish services to the community for each of the Department's functional responsibilities.

Administration

Administration is geared toward directing and supporting the efforts of all of the Department divisions and is responsible for planning of the Capital Improvement Projects Program. Administration also oversees three Town funds: Transportation, Transportation Capital, and Fleet along with ensuring the integration into overall Town systems. Administration includes the Director, Assistant Director, Asset Program Manager and support staff, and an administrative support staff.

Engineering

Engineering is committed to managing and coordinating the planning, design, and construction of capital improvement projects including the annual Pavement Maintenance Program (PMP), Bridge Improvements Program, and Facility Parking Lot Improvement Program. The PMP consists of various contracts to provide the following maintenance:

- ✚ Slurry sealing
- ✚ Chip sealing
- ✚ Asphalt patching, overlay, and reconstruction
- ✚ Joint and crack sealing
- ✚ Pavement Reconstruction
- ✚ Concrete joint sealing
- ✚ Concrete sidewalk, curb, and gutter repair

The Bridge Improvement Program includes a biennial inspection of all Town-owned bridges (with spans of 20-feet or longer) and culverts over or under public roadways or railroads conducted in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Transportation. Engineering staff collaborates with a variety of stakeholders to develop efficient and cost effective projects and services.

Development Engineering

Private development accounts for the design and construction of a majority of the public transportation assets. These assets are conveyed to the Town for operations and maintenance once constructed. The conformance of these improvements to the Town's standards are imperative in order to ensure these assets most effectively serve our transportation stakeholders over their full lifespans. It is the responsibility of this division to ensure that quality engineering plan review of public improvements designed by private developers occurs. In addition, this division ensures that the construction of these improvements are also of a quality nature, in line with standards.

Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering

We are committed to responsible planning of the public transportation system along with the operation of transportation services and traffic control systems. Responsibilities include:

- ✚ Maintaining the Town's Transportation Master Plan, coordinating with outside agencies to integrate the Town's system into the regional network, identifying grant opportunities, and preparing grant applications.
- ✚ Planning and development of the Town's pedestrian and bicycle sidewalk and side path system.
- ✚ Planning, engineering, installation, and maintenance of all traffic control signing on public roads within the Town.
- ✚ Operation and maintenance of traffic signals and public street lighting.
- ✚ Management of capital projects related to traffic operations and streetlights.
- ✚ Management of traffic control planning for projects operating within the public rights-of-way.
- ✚ Managing the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

Street Operations & Maintenance

Street operations is committed to the maintenance operations involving public streets and rights-of-way, such as snow plowing, asphalt and concrete patching, crack sealing, street sweeping, road shoulder mowing, gravel road maintenance, and bridge maintenance.

Public Transit

We are committed to providing Council approved transportation services for Town residents who do not have access to personal transportation or who are unable to drive.

Responsibilities include management of transportation services dedicated to meeting the needs of the transit dependent population of the Town; this involves working with Douglas County and other regional agencies on ways to collaborate on these services.

Public Fleet Management

We are committed to performing maintenance on the Town's fleet of vehicles and equipment as well as overseeing the purchasing and disposal of vehicles and equipment.

We strive to do each in an efficient and cost effective manner to ensure that our customer's time and money is maximized.

Levels of Service

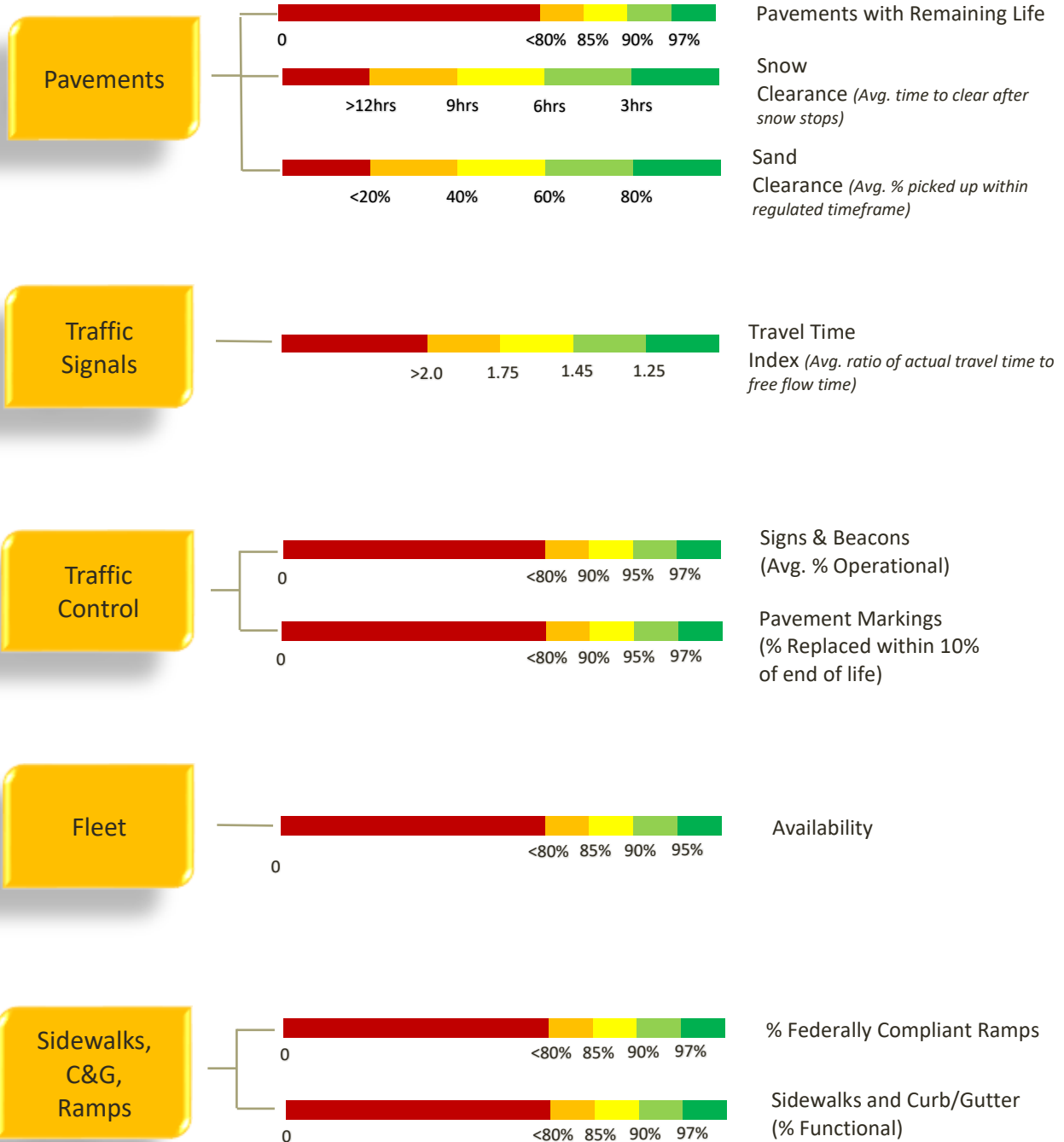
Service levels are important components of the Department to assess how well the value received from transportation assets are maximized based on the available resources provided. Quantifying these service levels is critical to establish a common definition. This also enhances the ability to assess potential changes. The Department has developed a Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) that provides management direction to every infrastructure asset class the Department is responsible for managing. This direction is associated with the value that the majority of our transportation stakeholders are requesting to be maximized from each transportation infrastructure asset. Each asset class has at least one primary service level that is quantified utilizing a five-star rating system:

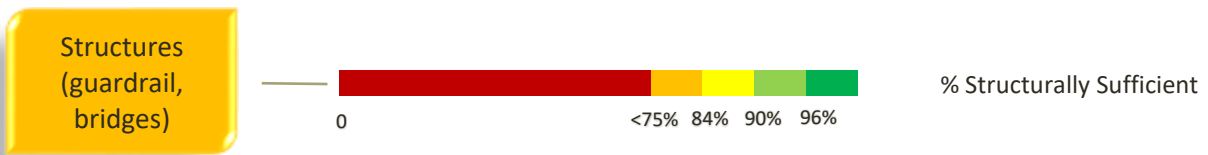
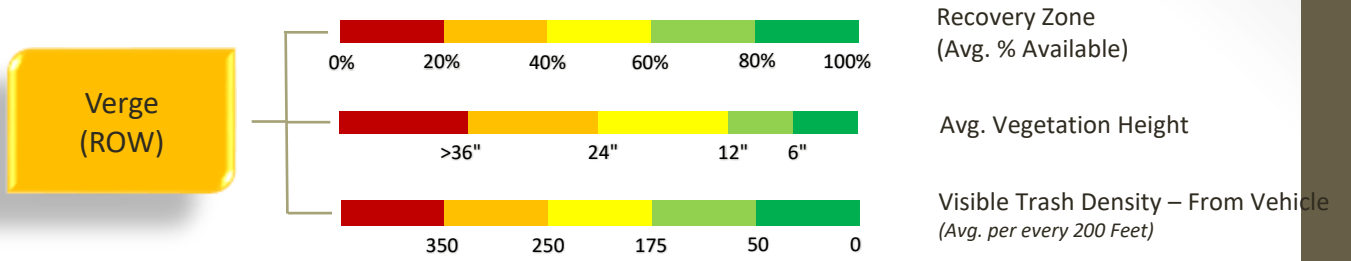
The image shows the cover of the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) document on the left and a grid of eight asset classes on the right. The SAMP cover features the Town of Castle Rock logo, the title 'STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN', a collage of six images representing various infrastructure assets (road, bridge, pavement, building, streetlights, sidewalk), and the 'Public Works Department' logo. The asset classes are listed in yellow rounded rectangles:

Pavements	Traffic Signals
Traffic Control	Fleet
Sidewalks, C&G, Ramps	Streetlights
Verge (ROW)	Structures (guardrail, bridges)



The established primary service levels for each of these eight asset classes are:

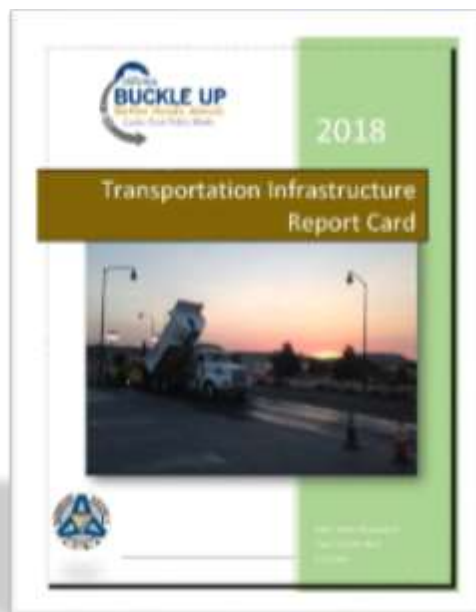




**Owned/Operated by Town (most streetlights are IREA owned)*

Actual performance for each of these service levels, as well as the cost to provide the current performance levels, are reported to stakeholders on a biennial basis within the Department’s Transportation Infrastructure Report Card. The most recent report is available on the Town’s website: www.crgov.com

The most current service levels have been updated since this first report was created.



2020 Action Plan

In order to achieve the mission of the Department, realistic objectives and goals must be established. Objectives and goals are imperative to provide individual members with clear direction and to meet customer expectations. By following these objectives and goals carefully, the Department is directed to its desired future while reducing the obstacles and distractions along the way.

-Peter F. Drucker

“Objectives are not fate; they are direction. They are not commands; they are commitments. They do not determine the future; they are means to mobilize the resources and energies of the business for the making of the future.”

Objective	2020 Goal	Budget
Downtown Railroad Quiet Zone	Obtain approval of four quadrant gate designs at the 2 nd and 3 rd Street crossings.	developer
Public Works Facility Expansion	Complete construction and have all staff moved in by 1 st Qtr 2020)	Carryover from 2018
Plum Creek Parkway – Gilbert St. to Eaton St. Improvements	Complete construction by end of 2020	\$3,660,000
Highway 86 at Fifth Street – Roundabout	Begin design and ROW acquisition work.	\$1,200,000*
Wilcox at South Street – Roundabout	Complete design and all needed ROW acquisition to allow for construction to occur with adjacent development.	\$1,900,000
Crystal Valley Interchange	Acquire all remaining ROW acquisitions	\$4,600,000
Complete Pavement and Bridge Maintenance Programs	Complete full scope of work for maintenance and reconstruction by end of year. Includes Bridge maintenance	\$10,900,000
Craig & Gould N. Infrastructure	Contribute to Water Department led project to upgrade utility and transportation infrastructure.	\$3,100,000
Downtown Alley Improvements	Reconstruct the pavement of two alleys within the downtown area	\$315,000

* This is a funding partnership between the Town, Douglas County, and a Federal grant received through Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

Objective	2020 Goal	Budget
Signal Installations	Install a mast-arm style signal by end of October at the intersection of Meadows Blvd @ Cherokee Dr	\$610,000
Illuminated Street Name Signs	Continue the four year plan (2019 – 2022) of installing illuminated street name signs at existing signals	\$56,000
Transit Feasibility Study	Complete study by 4th qtr 2020	2019 Carryover
Downtown Alleys Masterplan	Begin this federal grant supported project with projected completion date in 2021	\$220,000*
Maintain Established Service Levels Reported in 2018 Infrastructure Report Card	Meet, or exceed, reported 2018 service levels. Continue implementation of new levels established in per SAMP. Complete 2020 Report Card	Not applicable

* This is a funding partnership between the Town, and a Federal grant received through Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

2021-2022 Planning Objectives

The following are current planning objectives for 2021 and 2022. The funding estimates are programming figures to complete each objective and will be spread across the estimated timeframes listed. **Funding for these objectives, along with the objectives themselves, are subject to further refinement and Town Council approval of project priorities and individual annual budgets.** Adjustments to each will be reflected in next year's plan. These objectives are based on current revenue projections and are also subject to change each year.

Objective	2021 Goal	2022 Goal	Funding Estimate (total)
Ridge Road Widening	None	Obtain easements	\$4,540,000
Highway 86 at 5 th Street – Roundabout	Complete all ROW acquisition needs	Complete construction	\$5,300,000*
Downtown Railroad Quiet Zone	Establish Quiet Zone	Not applicable	Developer funded
Plum Creek Parkway Widening – Eaton St to Ridge Rd	Complete construction	Not applicable	\$4,050,000
Crystal Valley Interchange	Begin design	Have design complete	\$2,600,000
Fifth Street Widening	None	Complete Design	\$1,300,000
Wolfensberger Rd Widening & Roundabout	None	Complete Design	\$2,400,000

* This is a funding partnership between the Town, Douglas County, and a Federal grant received through Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

Plan Approval

Approved: _____
Public Works Director

C. Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Questionnaire

Note: These are trademarked questions, used in this report for reference only, and cannot be used without the consent of Gallup.

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities to learn and grow?