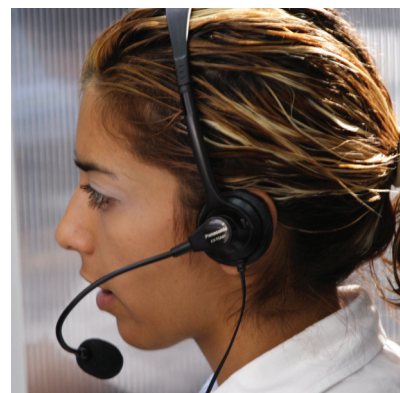


**ICMA**

# Call 311:

Connecting Citizens to Local Government  
Case Study Series



## Lynwood One Call City Hall

By Bryan Barnhouse

*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

## In This Report

- Community and System Profile
- Brief History of the city of Lynwood's "One Call City Hall"
- System Costs
- System Functionality and Major Features
- Citizen Engagement and Public Outreach
- Performance Measurement
- Staff Training
- Methodology and List of Study Participants



ICMA is the premier local government leadership and management organization. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advocating professional management of local government worldwide. ICMA provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 8,200 city, town, and county experts and other individuals throughout the world.

Copyright © 2008 by the International City/County Management Association. All rights reserved, including rights of reproduction and use in any form or by any means, including the making of copies by any photographic process, or by any electrical or mechanical device, printed, written, or oral or recording for sound or visual reproduction, or for use in any knowledge or retrieval system or device, unless permission in writing is obtained from the copyright proprietor.

## Community and System Profile

### City of Lynwood, California One Call City Hall

#### Form of Government

Council-manager

#### Council Members

Five at-large

#### Population

73,212

#### City's Annual Budget

\$92.3 million (FY 2006-2007, adopted June 20, 2006)

#### One Call City Hall Request for Services System Budget

\$56,300 (FY 2006-07, adopted June 20, 2006)

#### Major Components

- Physical Location: City Hall, City Manager's Office
- Square Footage: 144 square feet office
- Number of phones: Two (one for service requests and one for the hotline)
- Number of computers: One

#### Number of Staff

1.25 Full-time equivalent (FTEs), including a customer service manager to coordinate the system and a blockwatch coordination specialist who provides backup support.

#### Location within City Government

Under the Quality of Life Department, reporting to the City Manager's Office.

#### Type of System

Centralized, online customer service request management system with a dedicated seven-digit phone number and voicemail.

#### Unique System Features and Management Tools

- RequestPartner™ Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) software
- Operated as a hosted solution from GovPartner central data center

#### Citizen Feedback Mechanisms

- Monthly block watch meetings
- Direct customer contact with service request system manager
- City council meetings

### Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) Systems

There are several CRM technology applications in the marketplace that enable organizations (both private companies and local governments) to better communicate with and serve their constituents. CRM is a broad term that encompasses a suite of technologies—phone, computer, Internet, and databases—that are configured into a customized system to fit the needs of a particular application.

A CRM system allows an organization to centralize the point of access for those it serves or those with whom it does business. A CRM system provides a face for customers and constituents by providing information about services, programs, area events and activities. Constituents can use a CRM to request a city service or make a complaint, and it provides a means for the city and constituents to track the progress of a request. A CRM is not a replacement, however, for a full-fledged 311 call center system.

## Brief History of Lynwood's One Call City Hall

Located southeast of Los Angeles, Lynwood was planned as a small, bedroom community, which now has a population of just over 73,000 and an area of 4.9 square miles. While single-family, residential neighborhoods remain, the city's housing stock has grown to include apartment complexes. The city has several commercial and retail corridors, and nearly 500,000 vehicles use city streets daily. But with virtually no industrial base and no room for expansion, the city has a limited tax base for drawing its operating revenue. Lynwood is also very culturally diverse. Over 80 percent of the city's population is of Latino descent, and almost 80 percent speak a language other than English at home. The population is predominantly young with median household and per capita incomes that are below the state and national averages.

In 2000-2001, a routine review of Lynwood's cable franchise agreement prompted the city council to voice support for bringing the city and its residents into the Internet age. The council hoped to offer cable television Internet access to all residents and, by doing so, enable citizens to access city services online and ease pressure on Lynwood's limited resources. At council's urging, the city manager commissioned a telecommunications needs assessment. The assessment, conducted from February-June 2001, involved reaching out to city agencies, the public library, the schools, the hospital,

and businesses to learn more about their needs. City officials wanted to know what steps they should take to enhance local government services through technology. The council hoped to provide an inexpensive technology solution for residents. Findings from the assessment would be used to negotiate with the cable provider.

Due to prohibitive costs, negotiations for Internet service fell through. Findings from the assessment, however, fostered renewed discussions about what technological changes could best enhance services to residents and help make city management more effective. In addition to analyzing cable service expansion, the study explored a geographic information system (GIS), paperless and virtual city hall technologies. The

study found that cable, GIS, and paperless market technologies were not the right fit and beyond the financial scope of the city's resources. The study did identify one area where the city could take steps to realize its goal of providing improved local government services through technology—a centralized,

telephony-based service request system.

Through a centralized system, city officials intended to find a better means for tracking residents' complaints and requests for service. In doing so, the city also hoped to better understand its own performance. The city leaders sought to reduce the amount of time it took for departments to act on service requests and reduce the number of lost complaints.

In May 2001, a senior staffer found the solution

*“The main goal was to break down the technological divide and make city services accessible to all residents.”*

**Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager**

## 4 Lynwood: One Call City Hall

for Lynwood when he attended a conference where private-sector providers demonstrated a CRM system. After hearing the employee's report on the technology solutions available in the marketplace and recognizing the growing need for improved customer service, city council and the city's executive team held a technology retreat to consider a CRM system as a possible technology tool and invited several CRM vendors to demonstrate their systems.

After the retreat, the city selected a system based on cost efficiency, technical functionality, and user friendliness. In 2002, the city entered into a contract with GovPartner to use their RequestPartner™ system. The city council opted, by a four-fifths vote, to waive the need for a request for proposals process to select the vendor.

In deciding to implement the new CRM system, the city intended to create a one-stop center for handling all types of requests for services and information. Rather than have each department deal with complaints directly from the public, a central customer

service position was created. The city wanted to avoid having complaints go through multiple departmental layers to find the right division with responsibility for an issue. The city preferred to set up a system where the citizen would not have to know which department was able to take care of his or her request; the city was to be the expert on its services.

As part of its CRM system, the city maintains a dedicated seven-digit phone number for handling citizen requests. Although the city is closed on Fridays, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, citizens reach a city representative who takes their requests. After working hours, citizens can leave a voicemail message that will usually be answered within 24-48 hours or the next business day. Requests and complaints can be submitted via the city's Web site twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week.

Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager, noted that one of the key decision points was where to house the new system. "Although oversight has transitioned over time, it has always been in the city manager's

## Summary of Key Findings

### System Functionality and Major Features

- Finding 1. Off-the-shelf customer service technology products can provide low-cost, effective solutions for small communities (under 100,000 in population) with minimal resources.
- Finding 2. By leveraging existing technology, such as e-mail and the Internet, cities can achieve new efficiencies and greater user acceptance.
- Finding 3. A customer service system driven by multiple input sources (calls, walk-ins, and online) still requires a single point of contact.

### Citizen Engagement and Public Outreach

- Finding 4. Educating citizens about the types of services available through the system is an ongoing process.
- Finding 5. Customer service feedback-not only service/complaint resolution-needs to be systematically sought and applied through surveys, evaluations, and public meetings in order for the community to trust the system.

### Performance Measurements

- Finding 6. A new system can increase and improve workflow by processing requests faster than if a city used labor-intensive methods, such as completing order forms by hand.

- Finding 7. A single definition of "request resolution" must be in place for the standardization of performance measurement.
- Finding 8. Communities using a centralized customer service system as a tool to develop performance targets for fulfillment of citizen requests will need time to establish baselines before comparison data can be generated and assessed.

### Staff Training

- Finding 9. In communities with small staffs (five people or less), where a substantial number of requests are received from walk-ins, the customer service supervisor needs to ensure that training is in place that helps prevent employee burnout.
- Finding 10. A combination of on-the-job training and periodic refresher courses for local government departments and partner organizations on the customer service system's capabilities helps maximize a system's potential.

office...it fosters a tighter relationship between the departments there. The city is trying to structure its services where quality of life services are more comprehensive,” said Hempe. The new system, One Call City Hall, was placed under Lynwood’s Quality of Life Services Department, housed in the city manager’s office. Quality of Life is responsible for responding daily to citizens’ requests for service, including the maintenance of alleys, city parkways, city-owned properties, streets, medians and traffic circles, parks, and city facilities.

The CRM system allows access for employees and residents at Lynwood’s Web site ([www.lynwood.ca.us](http://www.lynwood.ca.us)). The portal allows residents to create a user account to make a request or view an existing request. Residents can view a “Frequently asked questions” section and the first-time user’s guide on the Web site without creating an account.

## System Costs

City staff negotiated a two-year agreement (2001-2002) with GovPartner for the RequestPartner™ system. The initial cost to install system was \$6,500. Lynwood chose to pay a \$750 per month fee for technical maintenance of the system. Initially, the system was paid for through general funds.

Ultimately, the city adopted the new CRM as an enterprise system with each department paying between 5 to 20 percent of the overall costs based on their usage. The funds for this system were identified in various city of Lynwood accounts. Table 2 illustrates how the funds were allocated among city departments.

In addition to purchasing the system, minor changes in configuration were made to the city of Lynwood Web site, where the CRM system is available for use by the community. Staff identified Lynwood Information, Inc., a nonprofit established to promote Lynwood events, as a source for funds to assist in paying for costs associated with updating the Web site and promoting the service.

In preparation for implementation, Lynwood staff created more than eighty unique

request forms to include in the system. Because there were numerous forms, but only one staff person with limited time managing the project, the city decided to contract with GovPartner to complete the configuration of custom forms.

While implementation of Lynwood’s One Call City Hall did come with a price tag, the city officials point out that the system has saved money in terms of personnel requirements. With the CRM system in place, centralized record-keeping and service request management for all city departments is provided by

*“If we didn’t have this system, we’d have to have two or three people for filing and retrieval of the complaints, which would not be as efficient. Because of the system, the city has been able to hold the cost constant and stable from year to year.”*

**Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager**

**Table 1. One Call City Hall Implementation and Operating Budget, FY 2001-02**

One Call City Hall	Fixed Costs
Labor (1.25 FTEs)	\$35,800
RequestPartner™ System—Annual contract for maintenance	\$9,000
RequestPartner™ System <sup>1</sup> —System Installation	\$6,500
Data import from Lotus system, add-on training and assistance, and customization of a Year-To-Date (YTD) report.	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56,300</b>

<sup>1</sup> RequestPartner costs are fixed based on population. Jurisdictions serving populations greater than 50,000 in population pay over \$1,000 per month per module. This cost includes a monthly service fee, software license for unlimited and concurrent users, and technical support and maintenance. There is a one-time implementation fee, which includes orientation/training, and is negotiated with the regional partner firm.

**Table 2. Allocation of RequestPartner Costs among City Departments, FY 2001-02**

Department/Category	Percentage Charged	Amount
Water Utility	20%	\$2,200
Street Maintenance <sup>1</sup>	15%	\$1,650
Street Lighting Maintenance <sup>1</sup>	10%	\$1,100
Landscape Maintenance (Tree Trimming) <sup>1</sup>		
Drug Seizure	10%	\$1,100
Code Enforcement <sup>1</sup>	20%	\$2,200
Graffiti <sup>1</sup>	10%	\$1,100
Parking Enforcement	5%	\$550
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$11,000<sup>2</sup></b>

1 Service provided by the city's Quality of Life department.

2 In the first year of the project, the city budgeted additional funds to cover conversion support costs that were not part of the annual contract rate of \$9,000/year.

1.25 FTEs in the Quality of Life Department. The initial telecommunications needs assessment projected a need for up to twenty FTEs to correct the problems with record-keeping.<sup>1</sup>

**System Functionality and Major Features**

**Finding 1 – Off-the-shelf customer service technology products can provide low-cost, effective solutions for small communities (under 100,000 in population) with minimal resources.**

With an annual budget of just over \$92 million, Lynwood must balance its limited resources against a high demand for services. In order to achieve a balance, the city's leadership has pushed use of e-government and improved efficiencies through technology. At an annual cost of approximately \$0.61 per resident, Lynwood's One Call City Hall system provides its residents with a convenient way to contact the city and gives the local government an efficient way to track and respond to citizens at an affordable price.

CRM is not about technology alone. It is also about dedication to customer service. Lynwood has chosen a tool that works because the leadership and staff have created a culture that embraces customer ser-

vice. "Customer service to me is important and has been for a long time because basically if you're a city employee, the business that we're in as city employees, we're here to serve the community," said Dan Ojeda, Director, Public Works Department.

**Finding 2 – By leveraging existing technology, such as e-mail and the Internet, cities can achieve new efficiencies and greater user acceptance.**

Prior to implementation of the One Call City Hall system, the city used a homegrown Lotus Notes™ database to track complaints. City staff documented incoming calls using paper forms that were filled out by hand and routed through interoffice mail. Information from the forms was entered into the

database. Based on citizen complaints at city council meetings, it was clear that the system was not particularly effective. City officials did gain a general sense of the number of service requests and complaints that were either not responded to or lost in the system.

Although the CRM system was new as a concept and practice to city staff, some of its main elements were already familiar. The CRM system has e-mail capabilities built into it and sends messages through the city's

*"The retreat got the executive team on board and gung ho [about customer service technology]."*

**Autra Adams, assistant to the city manager**

existing e-mail system. It also allows citizens to submit a service request via the city's Web site. Since city staff already used e-mail on a regular basis, the transition to using the new system was relatively painless.

Using the One Call City Hall system, the customer service manager takes citizen calls, enters them into the online database, and uses the e-mail function to send a summary—including location and designated priority level—of the complaint to the appropriate department liaison(s) who then responds based on the priority level.

The new system allows the city to respond much more quickly to incoming requests. Consider, for example, the case of a citizen who has had his or her car blocked in by parents dropping their child off at school. After the customer service manager has entered the information into the system, the request is routed simultaneously to the parking control manager and dispatch officer via e-mail. The dispatch officer confirms the priority ranking and alerts a parking control officer in the field to investigate the situation, ticket, and possibly tow any illegally parked vehicles. The goal is to provide rapid-fire customer service to the resident with the blocked driveway.

This direct method of channeling complaints from dispatch to the field via e-mail significantly increases the city's efficiency in responding to citizen calls. Since the parking control manager also receives a copy of the request, he can monitor officer behavior in the field in more or less real time. Equipped with an e-mail capable phone, the parking control manager can track complaints from anywhere, anytime by reviewing e-mails sent through the system.

---

### **Finding 3 – A customer service system driven by multiple input sources (calls, walk-ins, and online) still requires a single point of contact.**

In Lynwood, some long-time residents already know where to call to get their issues resolved. Other residents prefer face-to-face contact at city hall. Still others prefer the anonymity of a phone call, but want to talk to a person. The CRM system relies on one point

of contact for service requests and complaints, but embraces and caters to all of these preferences, which allows maximum resident participation and satisfaction.

The One Call City Hall desk in the city manager's office is open during business hours for walk-ins and responses to phone calls and e-mail requests. As requests come in, they are reviewed and sent to appropriate departments. Although the city also maintains limited service counter hours for certain departments and divisions, where residents can take their concerns directly to the appropriate department, only those

walk-ins to the One Call City Hall desk are entered into and tracked through the CRM system. Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager, explained, "The city wanted the resident to have the perspective that the city handles the issue regardless of which agency has jurisdiction or authority over it. The goal was to make it easier on the resident by cutting through the red tape and allowing them to rely on one thing to resolve their issue: calling city hall."

Lynwood went live with the system in 2002 and began actively promoting its availability to the public in July 2003. As Table 3 shows, phone calls, by a wide margin, are the most popular means for contacting the city. The percentage of contact from walk-ins has consistently decreased, from a high of almost 22 percent in 2002 to a low of under 4 percent in 2007. Although the percentage of Lynwood residents using the online service request

*"The e-mail notice is what I like about it. . . . The old way of handling requests, pre-RequestPartner, wasn't setup with the e-mail feature, and staff had to remember to check for requests every day. Now it comes on e-mail."*

**Nancy Miranda, office assistant**



## 24 Hour Hotline

The City of Lynwood hotline to report:

Graffiti - Illegal dumping - Abandoned shopping carts

**Hotline: (310) 886-0465**

[www.lynwood.ca.us](http://www.lynwood.ca.us)

[lnnewsletter@lynwood.ca.us](mailto:lnnewsletter@lynwood.ca.us)

feature has remained low in comparison to the telephone calls, 2007 showed the highest percentage of online users (slightly over eight percent). As Internet connectivity increases among residents and the city rolls out more marketing programs, city officials anticipate additional increases in use of the online feature.

**Citizen Engagement and Public Outreach**

**Finding 4 – Educating citizens about the types of services available through the system is an ongoing process.**

There are two schools of thought about the role of citizen-city communications. Some feel that it is incumbent upon the citizen to proactively report issues and concerns to city officials. Others hold that the local government needs be in front of community issues by anticipating needs. These principles are not mutually exclusive. The city needs to promote awareness and educate the public about how citizens can best be involved with their local government, and citizens need to provide feedback and input to address ineffective or unresponsive city services.

When Lynwood first implemented the One Call City Hall system, it conducted a media blitz that included press releases, local newspaper advertisements, and announcements in the city newsletter. Due to budgetary constraints, the city has not been able to maintain a sustained, high-profile marketing and outreach campaign over time. It does continue to promote the system through lower-cost marketing opportunities, such

as in the *Lynwood ‘n Perspective*, a city-wide newsletter that comes out on a monthly basis. In it, the city publishes the number of citizen requests received and advertises the One Call City Hall phone number.

City staff members also attend neighborhood block watch meetings, which deal with quality-of-life issues. These meetings are an opportunity for staff to receive service requests and concerns from residents. A neighborhood block watch specialist works with over fifty block watch groups in the network and serves as a back-up to the customer service agent in the city manager’s office. This hands-on, word-of-mouth approach to promoting the system is low cost and may be contributing to increased use of the system over time (see Table 3).

**Finding 5 – Customer service feedback-not only service and complaint resolution-needs to be systematically sought and applied through surveys, evaluations, and public meetings in order for the community to trust the system.**

Over the years, Lynwood has tried to measure customer satisfaction through the use of community-wide citizen surveys. Unfortunately, it has experienced low response rates to past surveys. Citizens do not take the time to complete the surveys for a variety of reasons, possibly due to language difficulties or lack of general understanding as to how the information would be used by the city.

The city is considering ways to increase its response rate to surveys. Most Lynwood citizens using the One

**Table 3. Citizen contacts by year through Lynwood’s One Call City Hall**

Source	TOTAL		System Live date 12/31/2002		1/1/2003- 12/31/2003		1/1/2004- 12/31/2004		1/1/2005- 12/31/2005		1/1/2006- 12/31/2006		1/1/2007- 12/31/2007	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Citizen Online	2,099	6.47	7	0.22	325	6.55	290	5.16	487	7.73	374	6.73	521	8.36
Conversation	107	0.33	8	0.25	16	0.32	16	0.28	12	0.19	23	0.41	24	0.39
Email	106	0.33	8	0.25	26	0.52	9	0.16	16	0.25	24	0.43	22	0.35
Fax	5	0.02	0	0.00	1	0.02	0	0.00	4	0.06	0	0.00	0	0.00
In-Person	3,423	10.55	713	21.93	786	15.84	728	12.95	526	8.35	433	7.79	212	3.40
Telephone	26,592	81.97	2,510	77.21	3,793	76.46	4,574	81.34	5,236	83.10	4,675	84.16	5,413	86.90
US Mail	34	0.10	3	0.09	9	0.18	4	0.07	13	0.21	2	0.04	3	0.05
VoiceMail Message	75	0.23	2	0.06	5	0.10	2	0.04	7	0.11	24	0.43	34	0.55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32,441</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>3,251</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>4,961</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>5,623</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>6,301</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>5,555</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>6,229</b>	<b>100.00</b>



Call City Hall system prefer to remain anonymous when reporting their complaints. Based on this preference, the customer service manager, who is responsible for administering and collecting surveys, would like to offer a bi-lingual, anonymous survey online. The problem with anonymous surveys is that it is difficult to relate the feedback on a survey to a particular complaint or request.

In addition to community-wide surveys, the city has an informal practice of periodically calling citizens to go over the resolution of their complaints. After the customer service manager has briefed the citizen on how his or her request was handled, he asks two questions:

1. How do you rate staff performance?

Courteous

Discourteous and unprofessional

Other

2. Do you have any general comments or concerns on the way the city handles the citizen's request for services or information?

While this informal survey does not collect data related to the city's performance measurements, it does help strengthen the relationship between the city and its residents. By soliciting citizen input, the city shows that it cares about what the citizen thinks of the services that it provides. As the city continues to demonstrate its commitment to customer service, more citizens will be encouraged to use the system over time. The city intends to make this practice a more formalized, regular, and proactive part of collecting citizen feedback.

As Darryl Morris, a resident of Lynwood, reported, "The city has called me once or twice since I've been

**Lynwood Request Service Page**

<http://com2.govtsystems.com/RPLW/public/default.as> Google

**City of Lynwood**

**Welcome to the Online Communication System for the City of Lynwood**

[Click Here to Create an Account](#)

**Account Member Login**

Email Address:

Password:

**Login**

[Forgot Password? Password Hint or Email Password](#)

At Lynwood we want to serve the public by being online all the time and have made this system available to allow you to submit requests for service, questions and other forms of communication as well as [check the status of a request](#) or review [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about City Services.

[Make A Request](#) [Review Existing Request](#) [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

If you are a first time visitor to the Lynwood Online Communication Management System you may want to review our [First Time Users Guide](#) and [Create an Account](#) to obtain maximum benefit from this service.

[View First Time User's Guide](#)

[Help](#)

Done

using the service. It should be a little more frequent than that, but overall, the service is pretty good. I have had to call back, but not that often, to tell them it's not been taken care of."

## Performance Measurement

### Finding 6 – The new system increases workflow by processing requests faster than when a city used labor-intensive methods, such as completing order forms by hand in triplicate.

Prior to the implementation of the One Call City Hall system, the city tracked customer service requests and complaints using a labor-intensive process. Staff recorded incoming service requests and citizen complaints on standard paper forms in triplicate that were routed to the Management Information Services (MIS) division. MIS entered the data into the central database and then manually sent the form out—one to the resident, one to a central file, and one through city hall to the appropriate staff member.

The new system streamlines internal processing by routing requests using e-mail and Internet technologies. Under the new process, a citizen calls the city and gets the customer service manager at the One Call City Hall desk. Once the customer service manager has enough information about the issue and enters it into the tracking database, an e-mail alert is instantly forwarded to the liaison in the department or division responsible for the issue who pushes the issue to the field. The field staff investigates the issue, takes necessary action, and notifies the liaison of investigation findings and the resolution or next steps.

The city's previous system required almost three days of interoffice mail and data entry to respond to inquiries and complaints. One staff member spent approximately four hours a day processing complaints and entering data under the old paper-intensive system. Under the new system, it takes this same person approximately two hours a day to process and close requests. Theoretically, the total number of service requests being processed could double and not take more time than the old system. Nancy Miranda, office

assistant, reports, "It's made my job a lot nicer and easier. When I first started, I was told that we had to manually complete triplicate forms with the date, complaint, and what the problem was... It involved taking more calls, filling out forms, tearing them apart, giving a copy to the supervisor, waiting for them to return it, then re-attaching their copy, filing it away, and giving a copy of the completed form back to the boss."

City staff worked with GovPartner to review and import just over 7,500 cases from the old system into the new CRM, providing the city with a history of requests made on an issue or by a specific individual that could continue to be tracked in the new system. The city did not want to lose the history it had compiled. By matching up fields in the old system with the new, more flexible CRM technology, the records were maintained.

### Finding 7 – A single definition of "request resolution" must be in place for the standardization of performance measurement.

While Lynwood's One Call City Hall system provides a central point for handling service requests and complaints, the responsibility for accomplishing field work remains with individual departments and divisions. The speed of the field work is governed by a number of factors, including workload, location, issue complexity, equipment availability, weather, and traffic.

Most of the city's performance measurements are based on the percentage of task orders resolved in the field within a certain length of time. But the definition of what it takes to "resolve" an issue is a continuing struggle for the city. Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager, explained, "We all have different definitions of request resolution. . . . From my perspective, the service request

or complaint isn't resolved until the call is made back to the resident. But sometimes the request cannot be resolved, either because the request was anonymous or the issue cannot be resolved to the citizen's satisfaction [due to the complexity of the issue]."

Lynwood's code enforcement division, for example,

*"The citizen's responsibility is to communicate anything that needs to be done to improve the quality of life. If they don't, how is the government going to know that any problems exist?"*

**Irene Garcia, resident**

has achieved a 90 percent rate for inspections within twenty-four hours of all suspected temporary vendor-on-public-property violations. For code enforcement’s purposes, the issue is resolved once field action has been taken. From the customer service perspective, however, resolution occurs only once the ticket order has been closed out in the tracking system. For the citizen, the issue may not be resolved until he/she receives a call from the city reporting on the action taken. This final step truly helps build trust and satisfaction with city services.

Unless all departments and divisions are measuring

*“The old system was very inefficient. It was painful every time someone wanted to research performance.”*

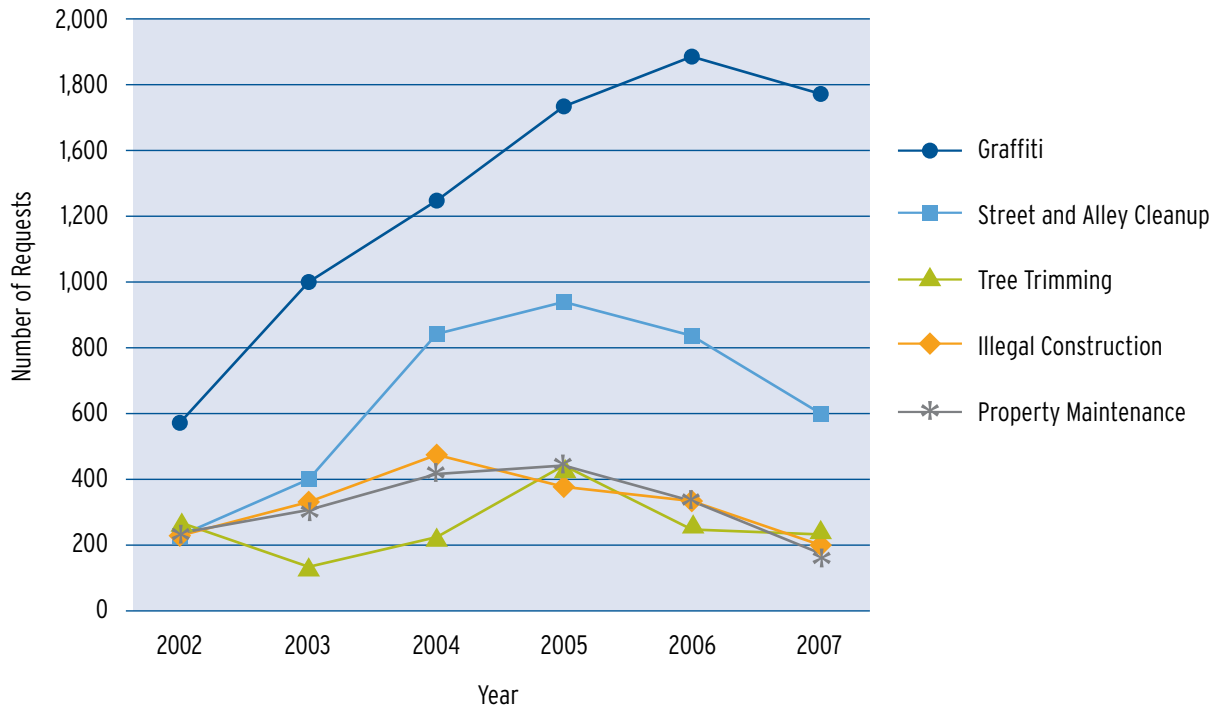
**Lorry Hempe, assistant city manager**

performance based on the same definition of request resolution, it is difficult to compare their performance. If a citizen calls in with a request to fix a city street, and street repair is not planned for another year, is the issue resolved when a call is made back to the citizen to explain the capital improvements plan (within twenty-four hours)? Or when the street is actually repaired (perhaps twelve months from the time of the call)? And how does that performance measure relate in comparison to code enforcement resolution of the vendor-on-public property violation? Such confusion can make it difficult to determine if

**Figure 1. Using its One Hall City Hall system, the city of Lynwood can easily generate reports to track the types of service requests it is receiving as part of its performance measurement program.**

Type of Request/Complaint	Request Range	Calendar / Fiscal YTD	12 Month Running Count	Running Average
<b>Quality of Life</b>				
Canopies	18	0	6	0.00
City of Lynwood Survey	0	0	0	0.00
Converted Requests - Code Enforcement	0	0	0	0.00
Graffiti	101	480	2476	40.00
Illegal Construction	27	28	248	2.00
Illegal Trash Burning	0	0	0	0.00
Lawn Parking	1	1	2	0.00
Lot Clean Up	5	1	26	0.00

Figure 2. Top Five Services Requested Per Year from 2002-2007



departments and divisions have the resources they need in order to meet their performance measurement standards.

**Finding 8 – Communities using a centralized customer service system as a tool to develop performance targets for fulfillment of citizen requests will need time to establish baselines before comparison data can be generated and assessed.**

Lynwood has a relatively new performance measurement system. The assistant city manager first introduced the idea of performance measurements to city council in 2005 and was authorized to proceed with implementation. The assistant city manager worked with each department head to establish targets for performance. Each department head, in turn, appointed a staff liaison to work with their department

*“The system has made the complaint process more efficient. . . . We were back like the Flintstones before this.”*

**J.D. Whitaker, parking control manager**

teams to begin the process of creating and adopting performance measures.

The teams first identified the purpose of their departments and their core services. They determined which of the core services to measure. The city manager reviewed the services selected and made the final decision, keeping three to five core services that would be measured for each division. The assistant city manager worked with the liaison to establish what data would be used to measure the performance of the service. Initially, service performance was reported on a

quarterly basis, but shifted to every six months. The reports supported the department’s annual budget request.

The One Call City Hall system has enabled the city to collect data on the total number of requests for services (see Figure 2), which has helped staff develop performance targets.

Graffiti removal in the Quality of Life Department, for example, has a performance measurement tied to the

CRM system. The turnaround time for graffiti removal is adjusted using data gathered by the system. This information is used as a basis for data reporting and to determine whether or not the service is meeting its performance measurement target.

Not all departments or divisions use the One Call City Hall system; this makes it difficult to compare data across departments. Another challenge is that the city has services that it wants to track, but they are not necessarily sought through a service request. One performance measure, for example, is how often traffic lights are down for more than four hours. The city does not wait for a service request from a citizen before getting into the field to fix a traffic light, so they are not dependent on the service request system to identify the problem.

## Staff Training

### **Finding 9 – In communities with small staffs (five people or less), where a substantial number of requests are received from walk-ins, the customer service supervisor needs to ensure that training is in place that helps prevent employee burnout.**

It is critical to the success of small CRM systems to consider the individuals staffing them. Lynwood's One Call City Hall system, which handles the majority of the city's incoming complaints and requests, is staffed by a single customer service manager. The agent will see, on average, ten walk-in customers per day, who are usually unhappy and perhaps emotional about an issue. These discussions can last fifteen to twenty minutes and are often intense. The customer service manager also responds, on average, to forty to fifty phone calls with requests and complaints each day. Between walk-in traffic and phone calls, staff burnout is a real possibility. It is important to be proactive in preventing staff burn-out. One solution is to offer professional development and training designed for customer service personnel. These courses train staff about coping mechanisms and stress-reduction techniques. They also offer opportunities for peer networking and a break from the everyday routine.

*“The current system works great for the size of the community. This is the city’s point person for all the requests and complaints the city receives.”*

**Ramon Galindo, office assistant**

### **Finding 10 – A combination of on-the-job training and periodic refresher courses for local government departments and partner organizations on the customer service system’s capabilities helps maximize a system’s potential.**

When the One Call City Hall system was introduced in 2001, nearly everyone who used it was trained on its features. The technology provider, GovPartner, worked in partnership with the local implementation partner, Bureau Veritas, to conduct a city-wide orientation as well as individual trainings for departments. At present, the city provides on-the-job training for users of the system, and is considering the benefits of adding a yearly refresher course.

While detailed, ongoing training may not be necessary for the most senior executives, staff members who use the system want to be informed of its full range of functions and capabilities of the system. Deputy Jason Paar, Los Angeles county sheriff's office (which provides public safety services to Lynwood through a contract) notes, “I haven't had any formal training, but would love some. All of my training has been hands on. I came over and talked to the customer service manager and said, ‘How are we doing this thing and show me how it works.’ A couple phone calls later [I'm asking], ‘How do I do this?’”

Yearly training at a basic or intermediate practitioner level for all staff using the system would enable individuals to process work orders more efficiently and indirectly provide more responsive customer service. In addition, supplementing on-the-job training with more formal training would introduce users to the full range of capabilities of the

CRM system, including report-generating features that would enhance the city's performance measurement efforts.

## Methodology and List of Study Participants

In April 2007, the author conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen individuals familiar with the city of Lynwood's One Call City Hall service request system and its operation. These individuals represented a diverse group of interests and perspectives, including policy makers, local government management,

## 14 Lynwood: One Call City Hall

call center staff, and citizens. Five separate interview protocols, each designed with a specific audience in mind, guided the questioning during the interviews. The author used a conversational interviewing technique in order to more fully explore the participants' experiences and perceptions.

All interviews, except for one phone interview, were tape recorded and reviewed in compiling notes for this report. Written permission was sought prior to attributing any quotes to an individual or organization. The author wishes to thank all the study participants for taking the time to discuss the city of Lynwood One Call City Hall system. Their contributions to the study were invaluable.

Autra Adams, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Lynwood

Ramon Galindo, Office Assistant II, Department of Quality of Life, City Manager's Office, City of Lynwood

Irene Garcia, Citizen, Block Watch Captain, City of Lynwood

Manuel Gonzales, Citizen, City of Lynwood

Paul Hardy, Sergeant, Century Sheriffs Station, Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department

Lorry Hempe, Assistant City Manager, City of Lynwood

Deborah Jackson, Director, Department of Quality of

Life, City Manager's Office, City of Lynwood

Nancy Miranda, Office Assistant II, Department of Public Works, City of Lynwood

Darryl Morris, Citizen, City of Lynwood

Dan Ojeda, Director, Department of Public Works, City of Lynwood

Jason Paar, Deputy, Century Sheriffs Station, Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department

Silverio Rivas, Lieutenant, Century Sheriffs Station, Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department

Helen Sanchez, Department of Public Works

Grant Taylor, former Director, Development Services, City of Lynwood

Delania Whitaker, Administrative Analyst II, City Manager's Office, City of Lynwood

J.D. Whitaker, Parking Control Manager, Parking Enforcement Division, Department of Development Services, City of Lynwood

### Endnote

1. Final Report on Telecommunications Needs Assessment Study for the City of Lynwood, California (c), Telecom Planners, Inc., June 14, 2001.





777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002-4201

The mission of ICMA is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide.

### **ICMA National Study of 311 and Customer Service Technology**

With funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, ICMA is conducting the first ever national study on 311 and related customer service technology used by local governments in the United States. The study will explore the benefits of and barriers to local governments adopting integrated systems for customer service. A national survey of local governments, together with information collected from a series of in-depth case studies, will help create a portrait of how local governments are using such systems to respond to citizen needs and build the local government-constituent relationship. When viewed together, the survey results and findings from the case study research will present current practices and successful implementation of coordinated systems for customer service.

#### **For more information about the study, contact...**

Cory Fleming, project director  
Phone: 207-854-1083  
E-mail: [cfleming@icma.org](mailto:cfleming@icma.org)