

CITY COUNCIL RESEARCH REPORT

Performance Audit of The City of Saint Paul's Citizen Service Office



Saint Paul City Council
Council Investigation and Research Center
Saint Paul, Minnesota

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The City of Saint Paul's
Citizen Service Office**

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INTRODUCTION

The City Council, as the governing body of the City of Saint Paul, is responsible for establishing City policies and ensuring that City practices are consistent with these policies. As the body responsible for approving the City Budget and authorizing the tax levy, the Council must also assess the efficiency and effectiveness of City operations. Therefore, the City Council established the Performance Audit Program in the fall of 1996 to help it fulfill these legislative oversight and budgetary responsibilities and directed Council Research to conduct performance audits of City operations. Performance audits analyze the consistency of departmental practices with City policies, as well as provide insight into how policy directives are implemented. The performance audit also examines whether an organization's practices are efficient and reflective of those used by high-performing organizations.

SCOPE OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT

This audit is an examination of the policy compliance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office (CSO). The Office is composed of four divisions: Code Enforcement Programs; Marketing and Promotions; Information and Complaint; and City Clerk/Records.

Policy Compliance

The City Council establishes policies to govern the operations of all City activities including the divisions of the Citizen Service Office. While there are many general City policies which affect all City activities, this report addresses only policies which apply specifically to the functions of the CSO. In order to determine the extent to which CSO activities are consistent with City policies, it is necessary to identify policies the City Council has established regarding their functions. To this end, we have reviewed City Ordinances, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Plan Chapter of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, the *Housing Action Plan 2000*, and the 2000 Budget Activity Performance Plans to isolate any policies adopted by the City Council as part of the annual budget process. The first section of this report identifies City policies related to the Citizen Service Office and assesses the extent to which actual practices are consistent with City policies. Where discrepancies are found, the reason offered for these differences will be provided along with recommendations to bring policies and practices into alignment. These recommendations may suggest changes in Office practices, City policies or both.

City Ordinances and Council Resolutions

We have searched the City Charter, the Legislative and Administrative Codes, and City Council Resolutions for policies pertaining directly to activities of the CSO. The City's Administrative Code is the compilation of City Ordinances which pertains to how City government is structured and should operate. The Legislative Code is the compilation of ordinances which regulates citizens and property owners of the City. The Code is usually explicit and leaves little room for administrative discretion concerning the execution of ordinances. The Council would view

failure to comply with the City Code to be a serious matter. Council resolutions are formal expressions of opinion, intent or will that, if passed by the Council and approved by the Mayor, become City policy. The sections of this report which focus on City Ordinances and Resolutions will identify any differences between policies and practices and offer recommendations to resolve inconsistencies.

Comprehensive Plan and Housing Action Plan 2000

The City of Saint Paul maintains a *Comprehensive Plan* that defines the City's plan for most City services. The chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan* are created through a careful and usually lengthy process involving many parties and interest groups. The most recent version of the *Housing Plan Chapter* of the *Comprehensive Plan* was formally adopted by the City Council in March, 1999. It stands as a written statement of the City Council's policy expectations for housing in Saint Paul. The *Housing Action Plan 2000* is an implementation plan for action to be taken during 2000 to implement the policies in the Housing Plan and the *Saint Paul-Ramsey County Five-Year Low Income Housing and Homeless Services Report and Plan*.

Since the plans are not explicit policy directives, some differences are expected between the Plans and actual activities. However, such differences should be periodically resolved by either changes in practice or revisions of the *Comprehensive Plan* or *Housing Action Plan*. This report will identify the differences between policies, as stated in the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Housing Action Plan*, and current practices in the CSO and offer recommendations to resolve any inconsistencies.

Budget Performance Plan

Each year, as part of the City budget process, the Citizen Service Office presents Activity Performance Plans for each of its divisions and its "Strategic Plans"¹ to the City Council for approval as part of its Office budget. These "Strategic Plans" identify both the ongoing and annual objectives of each budget activity. The City Council then adopts these objectives as part of its adoption of the annual City budget, and, as such, these objectives represent City policies.

While the Council understands that objectives set as part of the budget process may be ambitious and are sometimes thwarted by unforeseen developments, the City budget is an official City policy document and the CSO is responsible for operating in conformance with these adopted policy statements. The sections of this report which focus on budget performance plans will identify differences between policies and practices and provide the division's explanations of these differences. Recommendations will also be offered to minimize such differences in the future.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The City Council is very interested in the value received by citizens for money expended. Taxpayers rightly expect that money provided for the Citizen Service Office will be spent to

¹These "Strategic Plans" do not meet what most experts in public management define as a strategic plan. This discrepancy will be discussed further throughout the audit.

achieve the best result with the least expenditure of public funds. The efficiency and effectiveness of government operations can be assessed in many ways. One common approach is for auditors to examine an organization at a micro-level to try to determine if the organization is following sound procurement practices, properly protecting its resources, and complying with the requirements of laws and regulations. This micro-level approach to auditing is closely related to financial auditing and is often conducted by accountants who spend a great deal of time and effort examining the inner workings of the organization. While we accept there are situations where this type of micro-level auditing is appropriate, such as when fraud is suspected, we believe a higher level audit is most appropriate here. The City Council is less concerned with the minutia of daily operations and more concerned with knowing if this is a top-quality organization. If not, the Council is interested in knowing what can be done to remedy any deficiencies preventing them from achieving the level of excellence expected.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the CSO are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization. The categories and criteria are explained in the introduction of each Quality Assessment chapter of this report.

RESEARCH METHODS

Policies pertaining to the functions of CSO were gathered from the Saint Paul Administrative Code, the Saint Paul Legislative Code, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Chapters of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the CSO's own internal plans, policies and budget objectives. It is not Council Research's intent to make specific findings on every individual policy statement. Rather, we focus on groups of policies that relate to specific functional areas within CSO. It is our belief this approach is more useful to both policy makers and participants in understanding how to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and compliance of the organization.

We believe the best way to assess the level of organizational development is to ask those most knowledgeable about the organization—the people who work in the organization. We believe the employees who work in the Citizen Service Office best know the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and will, when asked, candidly report their opinions. Therefore, we have gone directly to CSO staff to ask them about their work. We were able to administer a written survey to 29 of 40 (72 percent) CSO staff (there were two vacancies at the time of the survey), and we also conducted 20 interviews with CSO staff members. Audit team members also participated in a ride-along with inspectors to gain first-hand knowledge of how inspections are conducted. The findings and recommendations in this report are based on these surveys, interviews and site visits, as well as an examination of written materials related to the CSO's practices.

CITIZEN SERVICE OFFICE OVERVIEW

The Citizen Service Office is composed of four very distinct divisions, listed in the chart below. The diversity of the functions of the CSO made this audit both very interesting and somewhat more complicated because at times it seemed as though we were examining four offices rather than one. The Director of the CSO oversees all the divisions, and has direct responsibility for the Information and Complaint Division, which does not have a separate manager, as the Code Enforcement, Marketing and Promotions, and City Clerk/Records divisions have.

The following table outlines the basic functions of each area and the number of staff positions assigned to each area. The policy compliance sections for each of the divisions will discuss further their respective responsibilities.

Divisions of the Citizen Service Office

City Clerk/Records <i>3 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep all City records, proceedings, official books, papers, seal and documents • provide documents upon request • document preservation • process petitions, claims, summons, complaints • process notices of vacations for right of ways • administer appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer • administer oath of office to elected and appointed officials
Information & Complaint <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints regarding City services • provide public information to callers and walk-ins regarding City services and events • provide call-backs to citizens who call in with concerns
Marketing & Promotions <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote Saint Paul through various events • secure movie production contracts for filming in Saint Paul • assist City neighborhood groups with marketing their events • produce the "Residents' Guide" • develop and maintain the City's website • publish "City Update" for City employees
Code Enforcement Programs <i>31 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enforce minimum housing and health codes on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties • monitor vacant buildings • participate in special programs as requested by district councils and other neighborhood groups • administer the Truth-in-Sale of Housing program • administer Rental Registration

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This chapter presents the policies under which the Citizen Service Office is expected to operate and the degree to which the current practices are consistent with those policies. Council Research gathered policies from a number of sources including ordinances, resolutions, the City's *Comprehensive Plan* and the City's Budget. They are organized according to which division maintains the most responsibility for compliance. We have highlighted in boxes either those policies that deserve special mention or those policies with which the Office is not in compliance. The policies we examined are listed in total in Appendix A.

INFORMATION & COMPLAINT DIVISION

The Information and Complaint Division of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for providing information concerning City matters to the public. It also serves as an advocate and liaison by helping citizens resolve issues relating to City services. The complaint or request process begins with a phone call, walk-in, or e-mail complaint or information request directed to Information and Complaint staff. Walk-in customers speak with an analyst and fill out a complaint form, and the information is then entered into the computer and the appropriate City department is contacted by the analyst. Those phoning in complaints give their information to the Citizen Service analyst who then follows the same process described above. E-mails are reviewed and responded to by a Citizen Service Analyst and logged into the computer in the same manner as other complaints. If the department does not respond to the complaint within a specified amount of time, usually five days, the analyst contacts the agency and asks them when to expect a response.

A wide array of complaints come into the Information and Complaint Division. On a given day a Citizen Service analyst may deal with complaints about snow and ice removal, abandoned vehicles, fallen trees, house parties, animals, excessive garbage, pot holes, or water main breaks. Information is sought on neighborhood and City-wide events, City department responsibility, snow plowing, parking and elections.

This Division works closely with the Parks and Recreation Division, the Police Department, the Public Works Department, the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection, the City Council and the Mayor's Office. Within the CSO, the Information and Complaint Division has a regular working relationship with the Code Enforcement Division. Many of the complaints received by the public have to do with property code violations. Once a complaint has been taken, a letter is sent to the subject of the complaint and the complaint is forwarded to Code Enforcement inspectors, whereupon they schedule a site visit. Analysts sometimes follow-up with a call-back to the complainant to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

Information and Complaint Policies

The following box highlights the City Code and City Budget policies that relate directly to the Information and Complaint Division.

Objectives of the Citizen Service Program

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor. Sec. 2.20. Objectives of Citizen Service Program.

The following objectives are hereby established for the Citizen Service Program:

- (1) To act as an advocate for citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- (2) To work closely with all City departments to constantly improve the City's response to requests and complaints.
- (3) To report regularly to the mayor and the City council on the performance of City departments in response to requests and complaints and the relative satisfaction of the citizens with the City's response.
- (4) To work closely with City-wide information services to operate a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system.
- (5) To provide public information on City services, events, and who to contact for response to requests and complaints.

2000 City Budget: Information and Complaint Division Activity Performance Plan

- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide. (i.e. postcards to complaints with complaints info, survey, follow-up, etc.)
- Serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- Work closely with all City offices/departments to consistently improve the City's response to requests for service.
- Report regularly to the Mayor and City Council on the performance of City departments/offices in responding to requests for service and the relative satisfaction of citizens and businesses with the City's responses.
- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide.
- Provide public information to callers regarding City services and events.
- Build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service.
- Be proactive in gaining awareness regarding upcoming problems related to City departments/offices and make policy recommendations.
- Upon receiving a response to a complaint from a City office/department, provide a callback to citizen(s) within three working days.
- Make the Citizen Service phone number and www address readily available for citizens and visitors.
- Administer employee program to enhance community involvement.

Findings

- 1) The Division compiles a five-day-late report for all unresolved complaints. This report is distributed to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division has not compiled customer satisfaction information or distribute it to the Mayor and Council as stated in the 2000 Budget Objectives and in City Code. They state they are unable to because the current computer system (EXL) is not able to

retrieve reliable data (see the following finding for further discussion). They are also not working closely with other departments to improve the City's response, nor are they actively build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service since they have no gauge of their level of service.

3) The Information and Complaint Division is working with the Office of Technology and Management Services to deploy the AMANDA system throughout the Division. This system will replace the current EXL system which is old and incapable of meeting the Division's needs. AMANDA is currently being used in LIEP and is expected to be used by Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention as well. According to the Director, funding for the new system has been sought for several years. This year funding was finally included in the CSO's 2000 budget.

4) The Division provides very limited call-backs to citizens. It is unclear if they are done within three days. No data are kept to corroborate this objective.

5) The Division does not administer employee programs to enhance community involvement. Rather they encourage certain employees to attend community meetings and put out broad calls for volunteers to staff City events and activities, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Common Complaints

The Information and Complaint Division is responsible for taking complaints and responding to inquiries about all City ordinances. We have two common areas of complaints: snow shoveling and abandoned vehicles. These examples provide a brief illustration of how the CSO processes complaints and inquiries.

Snow and Ice Removal

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 113: Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Sec. 113.02. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks.

The owner or occupant of any building or lot abutting a public sidewalk is responsible for and shall remove any accumulation of snow and /or ice from said public sidewalk within twenty four (24) hours after the snow and /or ice has ceased to fall, gather or accumulate.

Sec. 113.04 Notice.

Before the department shall abate such nuisance, it shall serve or cause to be served upon the owner or occupant of the abutting property a written notice informing the property owner or occupant that a complaint has been received by the City indicating the ice and / or snow has not been removed from the sidewalk within twenty four hours (24)... . If upon inspection by the department the sidewalk is found to be in violation of Section 113.02, the department may immediately schedule abatement... .

Finding

When asked how they implement Section 113.04 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, we found all snow and ice removal complaints are entered into the computer and a letter is generated and sent to the offending party. Staff claim the letter is helpful in getting compliance. Code Enforcement verifies the complaint and issues an order to make corrections. If the snow or ice is not removed within two to three days, a summary abatement is conducted and the City charges the property owner for the cost of the removal.

Abandoned Vehicles

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Sec. 163.04 Custody of abandoned vehicles.

The city health officer or enforcement officials of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city are hereby authorized to remove or have removed any motor vehicle left at any place within the city which reasonably appears to be in violation of this chapter or lost, stolen or unclaimed. The impounding and taking into custody of a motor vehicle pursuant to this chapter shall be done with the assistance of a police officer. A police officer, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city may enter upon private property at all reasonable hours for the purpose of inspecting such vehicle and impounding such vehicle, and it shall be unlawful for any person to prevent a policeman, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city from entering on private property for the purposes of carrying out his duties hereunder or to interfere with him in the lawful performance of his duties.

Finding

We found the CSO informs the Police Department if an abandoned vehicle is on public property, and Code Enforcement if it is on private property. However, staff felt it was better to direct the complainant to call Parking Enforcement directly for faster service. Complaints made through the CSO and then passed on to the Police Department and then to Parking Enforcement can take

longer to be resolved because of the Police Department's internal complaint process. If Parking Enforcement is called directly, Parking Enforcement officers mark the car with chalk and have it towed or tagged if it is not removed within 48 hours. It is apparent from this example that different departments, and perhaps even different staff, handle complaints differently. It was reported that some staff in other departments take complaints without notifying the CSO, others take the complaint and forward the information to the CSO, and finally others simply tell the complainant to contact the CSO directly themselves. The City has no set procedure for handling complaints beyond the CSO's own internal policies. This convoluted system can only contribute to a complainants dissatisfaction and frustration with the City.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a "service" was rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

CITY CLERK/RECORDS DIVISION

The City Clerk/Records Division is responsible for maintaining the City of Saint Paul's official (government) recorded history. Three employees maintain and preserve all records of the City including: minutes, resolutions, ordinances, official books, papers and notices of public hearings as required by the Charter and other applicable law. The Division accepts petitions and determines their sufficiency. It is also keeper of the City Seal which, by law, must be affixed to certain documents. Because of its close physical proximity within the office to the Information and Complaint Division, the Records Division interacts with the public by providing information and assistance to walk-in and phone-in requests as well. The Division accepts summons, claims, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City. The Assistant City Clerk works with Ramsey County by overseeing the County contract for City election services. The City Clerk administers the oath of office to elected and appointed officials. Finally, the Division accepts the paperwork and fees associated with appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer, schedules the hearings and sends the appeal notice to the appellants. The Division is governed by State legislation, City Ordinances and the Budget policies highlighted in the boxes throughout this section.

Records Retention

Minnesota Statutes 138.17 Government records; administration.

Subdivision 1. Destruction, preservation, reproduction of records; prima facie evidence. (a) The attorney general, legislative auditor in the case of state records, state auditor in the case of local records, and director of the Minnesota historical society, hereinafter director, shall constitute the records disposition panel. The members of the panel shall have power by majority vote to direct the destruction or sale for salvage of government records determined to be no longer of any value, or to direct the disposition by gift to the Minnesota historical society or otherwise of government records determined to be valuable for preservation...

Subd. 7. Records management program. A records management program for the application of efficient and economical management methods to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of official records shall be administered by the commissioner of administration with assistance from the director of the historical society.... It shall be the duty of the head of each state agency and the governing body of each county, municipality, and other subdivision of government to cooperate with the commissioner in conducting surveys and to establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of each agency, county, municipality, or other subdivision of government. When requested by the commissioner, public officials shall assist in the preparation of an inclusive inventory of records in their custody, to which shall be attached a schedule, approved by the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records and the commissioner, establishing a time period for the retention or disposal of each series of records. When the schedule is unanimously approved by the records disposition panel, the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records may dispose of the type of records listed in the schedule at a time and in a manner prescribed in the schedule for particular records which were created after the approval. A list of records disposed of pursuant to this subdivision shall be forwarded to the commissioner and the archivist by the head of the governmental unit or agency. The archivist shall maintain a list of all records destroyed.

Records Retention, Cont.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Data Practices Act

13.03 Access to government data.

Subd. 2. **Procedures.** (a) The responsible authority in every state agency, political subdivision, and statewide system shall establish procedures, consistent with this chapter, to insure that requests for government data are received and complied with in an appropriate and prompt manner... .

A responsible authority may designate one or more designees.

Minnesota Rules 1205 Department of Administration - Data Practices

Minn. Rules 1205.1000 Appointment of the Responsible Authority.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 13.02, subdivision 16, the governing body of each political subdivision and the governing body of each state agency whose activities are subject to the direction of a governing body shall, by September 30, 1981, if it has not done so, appoint a responsible authority. This part shall not affect the appointments of responsible authorities made previous to the adoption of these rules. The governing body shall confer on the responsible authority full administrative authority to carry out the duties assigned by the act and by this chapter. Governing bodies may use the forms set forth in part 1205.2000 to appoint the responsible authority.

1205.0200 Definitions.

Subp. 14. **Responsible authority in political subdivisions.** In political subdivisions, the responsible authority shall be as follows, unless otherwise provided by state law:

B. For cities, the city council shall appoint an individual who is an employee of the city.

Saint Paul City Council Resolution 99-881

RESOLVED, pursuant to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Section 13.02, Subd. 16, of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and Minnesota Rules Section 1205.1000, Fred Owusu, City Clerk, is hereby designated as the Responsible Authority for the City of Saint Paul; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Responsible Authority is authorized to establish guidelines and procedures for the purpose of meeting all requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and the related, validly adopted rules.

Findings

Chapter 138.17 of Minnesota Statutes provides a plan for managing governmental records by giving authority to cities to dispose of records with certain limitations. No municipal records may be destroy or removed without authorization of the Records Disposition Panel, which is essentially authorization from the Minnesota Historical Society. Cities may adopt the *General Records Retention Schedule* and any revisions by filing a *Notification of Adoption of City General Retention Schedule* form with the State Archives Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The Historical Society will sign and return the form as a signal the City may dispose of governmental records as indicated on the schedule.

The CSO maintains a copy of the *City General Records Retention Schedule*, but responsibility for documents being disposed of deposited at the Historical Society falls to individual City departments, as Minnesota Statutes allows the responsible authority to designate designees to fulfill these responsibilities, and department heads are the designees. Currently, no formal

process exists for City departments to inform the CSO that they are disposing of or sending documents to the Historical Society. Though it does not occur frequently, according to staff, some departments inform the CSO when they are disposing of documents or sending them to the Historical Society. Also, if the CSO discovers a department is "cleaning house," a note is sent to the director offering the assistance of the Assistant City Clerk to review the soon to be discarded documents to assess their archival value in complying with the Schedule. Under Resolution 99-881, the City Clerk is authorized to establish guidelines to ensure the requirements of the Government Data Practices Act are met.

Recommendation

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Documents Maintained by the CSO

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

b) The city clerk shall keep all minutes, records, proceedings, official books, papers and documents charged to his care in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use. He shall be responsible for the preservation and care of such records and shall take necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve them from deterioration, mutilation, loss or destruction. Records or record books may be repaired, renovated or rebound when necessary for proper preservation. Photographic, photostatic or microfilmed records shall be considered accessible for such purposes. Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, he shall permit all such public records in his custody to be inspected, examined, abstracted or copied during normal business hours subject to his supervision and regulation. He shall, upon demand of any person, furnish certified copies thereof upon payment in advance of reasonable fees therefor.

Saint Paul City Charter Sec. 17.02. Current files.

The city clerk shall keep a properly indexed current file of all city ordinances and resolutions, and this file shall be available for public inspection during the customary working hours observed by city employees. Copies of ordinances, resolutions and Charter amendments shall be distributed b or sold to the public at reasonable prices to be fixed by the council.

Documents Maintained by the CSO, Cont.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

With additional funding the Office of the City Clerk could more closely follow Chapter 4 of the Administrative Code in "taking necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve" these fragile records. Furthermore, the current micro-film reader is becoming obsolete and requires regular repairs.

- Maintain and preserve the minutes and records of the proceedings of the City Council in accordance with the Charter.
- Be the legal custodian of & maintain official copies of all ordinances and resolutions of the City Council.
- Notices of City Council meetings be served in accordance with state statutes, Charter provisions, city ordinances and Council rules.
- Cause the publication of all City Council minutes, ordinances and notices of public hearing as required by the Charter or other applicable law.
- Have custody of the seal of the city and affix it to such documents as may be required ad authorized pursuant to law.
- Give information and direction to private citizens having business with the city... .
- Keep all minutes, records official books, papers and documents in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use.
- Accept claims, summons and complaints, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City.
- Process and record vacations of public right of ways.
- Claim and appeal forms are now available on the City Clerk web page.
- Index City Council proceedings and distribute proceedings book.
- Administer appeals to Legislative Hearing Officer.

Findings

1) We found the Division maintains the documents for which it is responsible. Historical documents are kept at the Minnesota Historical Society and more recent documents are housed in the CSO's file room and on microfiche. The Office is in the process of buying new file cabinets to upgrade the protection of City documents. Ultimately, the Office would like all documents to be preserved on a document imaging system. It has been an ongoing goal of the CSO to obtain funding for a document imaging system, and a system is on order.

2) Official City documents are available for public viewing. Interested parties call or walk-in when in search of City documents. If an individual is doing a lengthy research project, they may be given open unsupervised access to the documents during business hours.

3) According to staff, the binding of the Council proceedings books are two years behind schedule. They are currently published in bound form through 1997. The CSO must index the proceedings before they can be sent out for binding. The Office is indexing the proceedings for 1999 and has completed indexing for 1998 but they have not been sent to the Legal Ledger for binding because the \$11,000 it cost to bind the books was allocated for other uses within the Office. The Office plans to send the 1998 Council Proceedings to the Legal Ledger for binding in 2001. The Legal Ledger is the only organization that bids on the binding contract.

4) According to staff, new or amended ordinances available on the City's Internet site are six to seven weeks behind Council enactment. This time is required to print, codify and have the CAO review the electronic version produced by the Legal Ledger before the Clerk's Office forwards it to Technology and Management Services (TMS) personnel to post the web page. It was reported that TMS personnel take one to two days to get the changes and additions made.

- 5) The Division provides appeal and claims information and forms on their website.

Recommendations

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Documents to the Public Library

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 87. Depository for Documents

Sec. 87.01. Deposit required.

All municipal corporations, departments, agencies and officials of the City of Saint Paul are required to submit a minimum of three (3) copies of each official published document to the Saint Paul Public Library.

Sec. 87.02. Official documents defined.

Such official published documents should include the following:

- (a) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or report issued for public distribution.
- (b) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or official public report which is not issued for public distribution but contains any historical significance or reference value.
- (c) Such official published documents, for example, should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - (1) The annual compilation of the city ordinances and council proceedings.
 - (2) The annual reports of the various departments and bureaus.
 - (3) The City Codes and amendments.
 - (4) The City Charter and amendments.

Finding

CSO staff stated that City documents are not being submitted to the Saint Paul Public Library and no one is responsible for ensuring this is done. We also inquired as to whether this ordinance is reasonable given today's technologies. Staff were not sure it was reasonable since computers could generate electronic versions that do not require as much space.

Recommendation

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Elections

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

Sec. 4.04. Elections.

(a) *Commissioner of registration.* The city clerk shall serve as the commissioner of registration for the city and provide such printed forms, blanks and other supplies and equipment as are necessary and proper to carry out the registration of qualified voters as prescribed by law. The office shall establish and keep, pursuant to statute, a plan of registration, including an original record of voters, properly indexed and safeguarded, and a duplicate registration file open to reasonable public inspection.

(b) *Conduct of elections.* The city clerk shall give public notice of the time and place of the holding of all municipal elections, including the hours during which polls will be open, by posting in every election district appropriate election notices containing a list of offices to be filled at such election. He shall take all other necessary steps to ensure that the conduct and procedure of all elections are governed in accordance with applicable state laws and such supplementary ordinances as are adopted by the council.

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 7. Elections

Sec. 7.04. Name on primary ballot.

Not later than six (6) weeks nor more than eight (8) weeks before the primary election, any person eligible may, by filing an affidavit and payment of fifty dollars (\$50.00) to the city clerk, have his or her name placed on the primary election ballot. Each person desiring to have his or her name placed on the primary ballot for councilmember shall state in the affidavit of candidacy the district for which he or she is a candidate.

Sec. 7.10. Canvass of returns.

Within seven (7) days after the election, the city council shall canvass the returns and declare the results of the election.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

Oversee Ramsey County contract for City election services, including evaluation of the level and quality of service, and maintain duplicate records of elections.

Finding

The Office has a ten-year contract with Ramsey County that expires at the end of 2004 to provide the elections process. According to staff, the CSO approves polling places, election judges and conducts canvassing for primary and general elections. The Office also prepares election-related resolutions for council approval. Ramsey County is responsible for voter registration, absentee ballots, candidate filings and the preparation and maintenance of voting machines.² After an election, Ramsey County submits the unofficial canvass report, which examines votes for authenticity, to the CSO which then submits the report to the City Council.

² The County's duties as agreed to in the contract between Saint Paul and Ramsey County for Election Office Management are outlined in Appendix C.

Initiative, Referendum and Recall

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 8. INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM, AND RECALL

Sec. 8.02.4.

Any person whose name appears on a petition may withdraw his or her name by a statement in writing filed with the city clerk before the clerk advises the council as to the sufficiency of the petition. Any name appearing on any petition which does not comply with the foregoing requirements, except as to ward or legislative district and precinct designation, shall be stricken, and no names shall be counted which have not been verified.

Sec. 8.03. Determination of sufficiency.

Any petition seeking initiative, referendum and recall hereunder shall be deemed received by the council when it is filed with the city clerk, for which filing there shall be no fee. Immediately upon receipt of the petition the city clerk shall examine the petition as to its sufficiency and report to the council within twenty (20) calendar days, except that in the case of a recall petition it shall be thirty (30) calendar days. Upon receiving the report, the council shall determine by resolution the sufficiency of the petition.

Sec. 8.08. Disposition of insufficient petitions.

If the council determines that the petition is insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall deliver a copy of the petition to the person or persons therein named to receive it, together with a written statement of its defects. The persons circulating the petition shall be given thirty (30) days in which to file additional signature papers and to correct the petition in all other particulars. If at the end of that period the council finds that the petition is still insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall file the petition in the clerk's office and notify the persons previously notified of the defects. The final finding of insufficiency or irregularity shall not prejudice the filing of a new petition for the same purpose nor, in the case of an initiated or referred ordinance or resolution, shall it prevent the council from referring the ordinance or resolution to the voters at the next regular or special election at its option.

Finding

The CSO works with the County to comply with the requirements for initiative, referendum and recall. The only petitions found to be insufficient in recent years by the Office were the baseball stadium and billboard petitions. Insufficiency is communicated to the person responsible for the petition by a letter or phone call from the County.

Abandoned Property

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 14. Impoundment and Disposal of Abandoned Personal Property

Sec. 14.03. Abandoned personal property.

It shall be illegal to abandon personal property on property owned by the city. Disposition of this property is in the public interest and the method to be used is to impound the property and dispose of it according to this chapter.

Sec. 14.04. Process.

(a) Whenever the head of any department may deem it in the best interests of the city, he or she may order the impounding of any abandoned personal property located on city property. The department head or his or her designee shall take reasonable steps to attempt to identify the owner of the property and, where the owner has been identified, issue a written notice to the owner that the city intends to impound the property. If no response is received within twenty (20) days of such notice, or no owner can be identified, the department head or designee shall post a notice describing the property in the office of the city clerk...

Finding

Currently notices of abandoned personal property, along with other public announcements, are posted on the bulletin board across from the Citizen Service Office on the southwest corner of the first floor of the City Hall.

Oath of Office and Bonds for City Officials

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 17. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 17.03. Oath of office.

Every elected or appointed official of the city shall, before entering upon the duties of his office, take and subscribe an oath in substantially the following form: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) to support the constitutions of the United States and of the State of Minnesota and to discharge faithfully the duties devolving upon me as (. . . title of office . . .) of the City of Saint Paul to the best of my judgment and ability."

Sec. 17.05. Official bonds.

The mayor and such other officers or employees of the city as may be required by administrative ordinance shall each, before entering upon the duties of his or her respective office or employment, give a bond to the city as security for the faithful performance of his or her official duties and the safekeeping of public funds. The bonds shall be in such form and amount as may be fixed by the council and may be either individual or blanket bonds at the discretion of the council. They shall be approved by the council, approved as to form by the city attorney, and filed with the city clerk. The premiums on such bonds shall be paid by the city.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan
Administer oath of office to all elected and appointed officials.

Findings

- 1) Staff reported the Director tries to stay aware of newly appointed and elected City officials and departments inform the CSO of relevant staff changes. However, there are instances when the City Clerk was not notified and therefore some appointed City officials have not taken the oath in a timely manner.
- 2) According to staff, they have never requested nor received a bond from any City Official, nor were they aware of Charter Section 17.05. However, staff from the Risk Management Division stated that all City staff, not just elected officials, are currently covered under a fidelity bond. This fidelity bond is required by the State for public treasurers, and the City has chosen to cover all staff under it as the additional cost is minimal.

Recommendation

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate if the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Petitions Regarding Public Nuisances

Saint Paul Admin. Code Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances **Sec. 91.03. Petition procedure.**

(a) Upon the filing of a petition in writing signed by sixty (60) percent of the owners and tenants of all private residences, dwellings and apartment houses located in an area one block in any direction from the alleged public nuisance, and upon verification of those signatures by the office of the city clerk, the council shall schedule a public hearing concerning the allegations set forth. All petitions, including those containing an insufficient number of signatures, shall be referred to the council by the city clerk. With respect to petitions containing less than the sixty (60) percent required signatures, the council may, in its discretion, accept the petition and schedule a public hearing or return the petition to the petitioners for additional signatures.

Finding

We asked staff about the process for placing a public nuisance hearing on the Council agenda. The Assistant City Clerk sends a resolution to the Council stating the number of legitimate signatures on the petition for a hearing. The Council then decides whether to schedule a public hearing if it is signed by less than the required 60 percent of homeowners and tenants within a one block radius of the alleged public nuisance. The Office reports it has a good working relationship with Council staff and has no problem scheduling public hearings. It was also reported the organizer of the petition is notified as to when the public hearing will be held.

Trade Secret Information

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information **Sec. 94.01. Definitions.**

Unless specifically defined in this section, the terms contained in this chapter shall be given the definitions as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Section 13.02.

Designees: Individuals designated by the mayor to work on, process, examine or study the economic development or regulatory matter in which trade secret information may be filed.

Responsible authority: The city clerk, who shall be responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter.

Trade secret information: Government data, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that:

- (1) Was supplied by the affected individual, person or organization;
- (2) Is the subject of efforts by the individual or organization that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy; and
- (3) Derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other individuals, persons or organizations who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use.

Sec. 94.02. Classification of data.

All documents, data, studies and other information supplied to the city which the person or firm regards as "trade secret" information within the definition in Section 94.01 should be stamped by the person or firm seeking protection "Trade Secret Information--Not for Public Disclosure." The marking must appear on each page sought to be protected...

Trade Secret Information, Cont.

Sec. 94.03. Notice.

All designees who have access to trade secret information will be given a copy of the ordinance from which this chapter derives by the responsible authority.

Sec. 94.04. Access.

Access to "trade secret" information shall be limited to designees. Access shall be for the purpose of reviewing a economic development project, permit application or other filing, or for other administrative work pertaining to a economic development project or regulatory matter. The trade secret information may be made available to a representative of a consultant hired by the city and designated by the responsible authority as a designee, but only if the consultant's representative has signed a nondisclosure agreement and a copy of the signed agreement is provided to the person or firm who filed the document prior to the consultant's access to trade secret information. If the consultant's representative has signed the nondisclosure agreement, the city will not be held responsible for the actions of such consultant and/or its representative with regard to the nondisclosure agreement.

Sec. 94.05. Storage.

All "trade secret" information filed in accordance with Section 94.02, and copies thereof, shall be stored when not in actual use in locked file cabinets under the exclusive control of the designee of the city. A control sheet identifying the designees who are authorized to access the information will be attached.

Finding

Staff admit the Office has not been adhering to its responsibilities in relation to trade secret data. Senior leaders do consider this an important issue and cited the Peanuts on Parade exhibits as an example given that the memorabilia and the format were closely controlled by the Schultz family and was protected for commercial reasons. Staff stated the CSO will be working with the City Attorney's Office to enhance the role the Office plays with respect to trade secret storage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Public Information Meetings

Saint Paul Administrative Code Appendices Chapter A - 3. All Public Meetings - Notice Requirements
WHEREAS, The council deems it necessary and in the public interest that advance notice be forwarded to elected officials prior to the holding of public informational meetings by any department bureau, agency or committee of the City of Saint Paul, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the council of the City of Saint Paul:

1. That any city personnel arranging or causing to be held any public information meeting by or on behalf of any city department, bureau, agency, board, commission or advisory committee shall provide a minimum of five (5) days' advance written notice of such meeting to all members of the city council, the mayor, the city clerk and the city attorney. Five-day notice may be waived in the event of an emergency. The city clerk shall first be notified if any such public informational meeting is to be held in the council chambers located within the City Hall and Court House.
2. For purposes of such notice, public informational meetings shall mean any meeting for which members of the general public receive notice or invitation to appear for the purpose of presentation, testimony, consultation or otherwise.
3. Such notice shall contain the date, time and place of the meeting to be held and a brief statement of the subject matter to be discussed.
4. The city clerk is hereby directed to forward copies of this resolution to the mayor, all department heads, the chairmen of every board, commission or advisory committee to the city.

Finding

The Planning and Economic Development Department maintains the Early Notification List, a list containing everyone and every organization that is to receive notification of public meetings. Departments are directed to contact PED for the labels when they need to send notice of a public meeting. PED also maintains a Neighborhood Notification List which contains contact names and addresses for all of the district councils. The CSO receives notices from agencies and commissions if the meeting is to be held in City Hall, compiles the meeting list, and places notices on the public bulletin board, the City's web page and in the *Saint Paul Legal Ledger*.

Campaign Contributions

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions

Sec. 28.02. Administration.

(a) *City clerk to administer.* The city clerk shall be in charge of administering and carrying out the various provisions of this chapter.

(b) *City clerk; powers and duties.* The city clerk shall have the following duties and powers:

- (1) Prescribe, adopt and distribute the form for registration forms, statements and reports required to be filed which shall, whenever possible, be identical to or consistent with state forms.
- (2) Receive and accept for filing in the city clerk's office the registration forms, statements and reports required by this chapter.
- (3) Make the statements and reports filed with the city clerk available for public inspection and copying. A reasonable charge for the cost of copying may be charged.
- (4) Preserve all statements and reports for a period of four (4) years from the date of filing, or, in the event that the committee represents a candidate or party which permanently terminates activity within two (2) years, then said records and accounts shall be kept for two (2) years.
- (5) Report findings of noncompliance to the elections board.

Finding

It was reported that campaign contribution forms are turned over to the County, though the CSO retains a copy for five years after an individual leaves office. This is in keeping with State requirements for document storage.

Condominium Conversion Notices

Saint Paul Leg. Code Ch. 48. Condominium and Conversion Condominium Notice Filing Requirements

Sec. 48.04. Notice of condominium creation or conversion.

(a) A declarant of a conversion condominium shall give the city notice of the conversion or intent to convert a building to a condominium no later than one hundred twenty (120) days before the declarant requires any tenant or subtenant in possession in such building to vacate.

(b) A "notice of condominium conversion" in the form required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 515A.4-110(a), together with a "supplemental notice of condominium conversion" in the form provided for in paragraph (c) of this section, filed in the office of the city clerk shall constitute the notice required by paragraph (a).

Sec. 48.05. Certification of compliance.

Upon the filing of the notice, supplemental notice of condominium conversion or statement in lieu thereof as required in section 48.04, the city clerk shall provide the declarant with a signed, written statement certifying compliance with the filing requirements of this chapter. The clerk shall transmit copies of each certificate given and each notice, supplement notice and statement filed to the housing information office, the division of planning and division of housing of the department of planning and economic development, and the division of housing and building code enforcement of the department of community services of the city.

Finding

Staff reported the condominium conversion form is being filed in the CSO on a regular basis. The Office also provides information by copying the relevant sections of the code and giving it to interested parties. According to staff, supplemental notice of condominium conversion is sent to those departments identified in the Code, though technically those departments do not exist as outlined in the ordinance.

Recommendation

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS DIVISION

The Marketing and Promotions Division is involved in promoting City events to residents and visitors. They also work with other organizations such as the Capital City Partnership to market to businesses considering locating in Saint Paul, and with the Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau to market events to visitors. In addition, they have the task of promoting Saint Paul as a place to produce films. While many of the results of their work are visible, efforts such as Peanuts on Parade take an enormous amount of staff time, sometimes more than anticipated because some programs have achieved an overwhelming, unanticipated level of success.

Marketing and Promotions Policies

The Marketing and Promotions Division has very few policies which pertain to its functions. The only policies we discovered were those found in the 2000 Budget, listed in the box below and our findings and recommendations follow. It is problematic that there are no references in City Code to the responsibilities of this Division. They are a part of the administrative branch of the City's government and therefore must have enabling legislation outlining their responsibilities.

2000 Proposed Budget: CSO Strategic Plans related to Marketing and Promotions
Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.

2000 City Budget: Marketing and Promotions Activity Performance Plan

- Continue to work collaboratively with the City Council and neighborhood associations for continued growth of their respective events and marketing/promotional goals.
- Continue to improve web activity with departments and neighborhood organizations.
- Implement payment systems and expand City departments' use of forms and processing software.
- Continue semi-monthly publication "City Update" but decrease printed quantity by whatever percentage of City employees that have Intranet Access. Target distribution to City employees without City Intranet Access.
- The "Resident's Guide" will be published annually (not semi-annually), all cost savings will be directed toward a larger production run and broader distribution.
- Keep film liaison staff and associated budget in Marketing and Promotions Division.
- Work in collaboration with the Minnesota Film Board to secure production contracts in the Saint Paul Market.

Findings

- 1) The Marketing and Promotions Division has been working with neighborhoods to assist them in promoting their events. In the past, the City has simply provided monetary assistance to neighborhoods, but they have recently begun to work more closely with the neighborhoods to provide marketing services and help the neighborhoods market events more successfully.
- 2) The webmasters are part of Marketing and Promotions, and are working with various departments to improve their websites. They are also helping departments expand their services to be able to accept payments on-line and conduct other transactions over the Internet.

- 3) The CSO is now publishing the "City Update" on the City's Intranet site.
- 4) The CSO is no longer producing hard copies of the "Resident's Guide," as all of the information is available on the City's website. This is contrary to their objective to produce a larger number of guides once a year, rather than fewer twice a year. They state they are no longer producing hard copies because the information is available on the Internet. They have also stated that numerous copies were left over from the previous printing when the Guide was distributed to libraries, convenience stores, and other such locations.
- 5) The film liaison staff were transferred from the Planning and Economic Development to the Citizen Service Office in 1999. There is no talk, at this time, of moving them elsewhere. This does not seem appropriate as a budget objective.
- 6) Marketing and Promotions staff are active in seeking film production contracts in the Saint Paul market.
- 7) As mentioned in the introduction to this section, there is no specific language in the City Code establishing the responsibilities of the Marketing and Promotions Division. This is a glaring oversight.

Recommendations

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

The Code Enforcement Programs Division (Code Enforcement) of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for ensuring that residents and property owners of Saint Paul observe the property maintenance laws of the City. Code Enforcement is responsible for investigating interior and exterior code violations at single-family and duplex properties in Saint Paul, and exterior violations on all other properties in the City.³ The chapters of the City Code that Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing are listed in Appendix A.

Code Enforcement has been a division of the Citizen Service Office for about two years. In the past, Code Enforcement was a division of the City's Public Health Division. When the City and County Health departments merged in 1997, Housing Code Enforcement was administratively moved to the Department of Fire and Safety Services, though they were never actually physically relocated to the Fire Department. They remained within the Fire Department's administration for about a year. In 1999, they were moved, both physically and administratively, to the Citizen Service Office. Senior leaders stated one of the reasons for this decision was over half the complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are related to property code violations, and therefore it made sense to have the two divisions under the same department. Lieutenant Warren Bostrom was also brought in from the Police Department to oversee Code Enforcement's technology upgrade activities. About a year later, Lt. Bostrom retired, and Lt. Mike Morehead was brought in to manage Code Enforcement. Inspectors are currently housed both in City Hall and at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices. The current organizational structure of Code Enforcement is illustrated in the chart on page 26.

The process for checking, recording and correcting code violations varies based on the situation, but some common elements exist. When a complaint is received by Information and Complaint staff, it is logged into the EXL system, printed by Code Enforcement support staff and given to the appropriate inspector.⁴ Code Enforcement support staff play a vital role in maintaining records for the Division. The inspectors do not do their own data entry, and support staff are required to work with EXL, an arcane, inefficient computer system, also used by Information and Complaint Division staff. They also retrieve hard copy files for the inspectors and are generally responsible for ensuring that operations run smoothly.

An inspector's day often starts with a visit to the office to review complaints received and prepare for the property visits scheduled for the day. The inspectors prioritize complaints based on the severity of the situation described in the complaint and the date it was received. He or she may make phone calls to verify appointments and may add more property visits based on new complaints received. The inspectors will also do the paperwork from previous visits and turn it in to supervisors and support staff for processing.

Upon visiting a property, the inspector will determine whether to issue a verbal order, a written correction notice, a citation, a summary abatement order, substantial abatement order, or a

³ The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services is primarily responsible for interior code violations of residential properties with three or more units and all commercial properties.

⁴ The City is divided into census tracts, and inspectors are assigned to specific tracts.

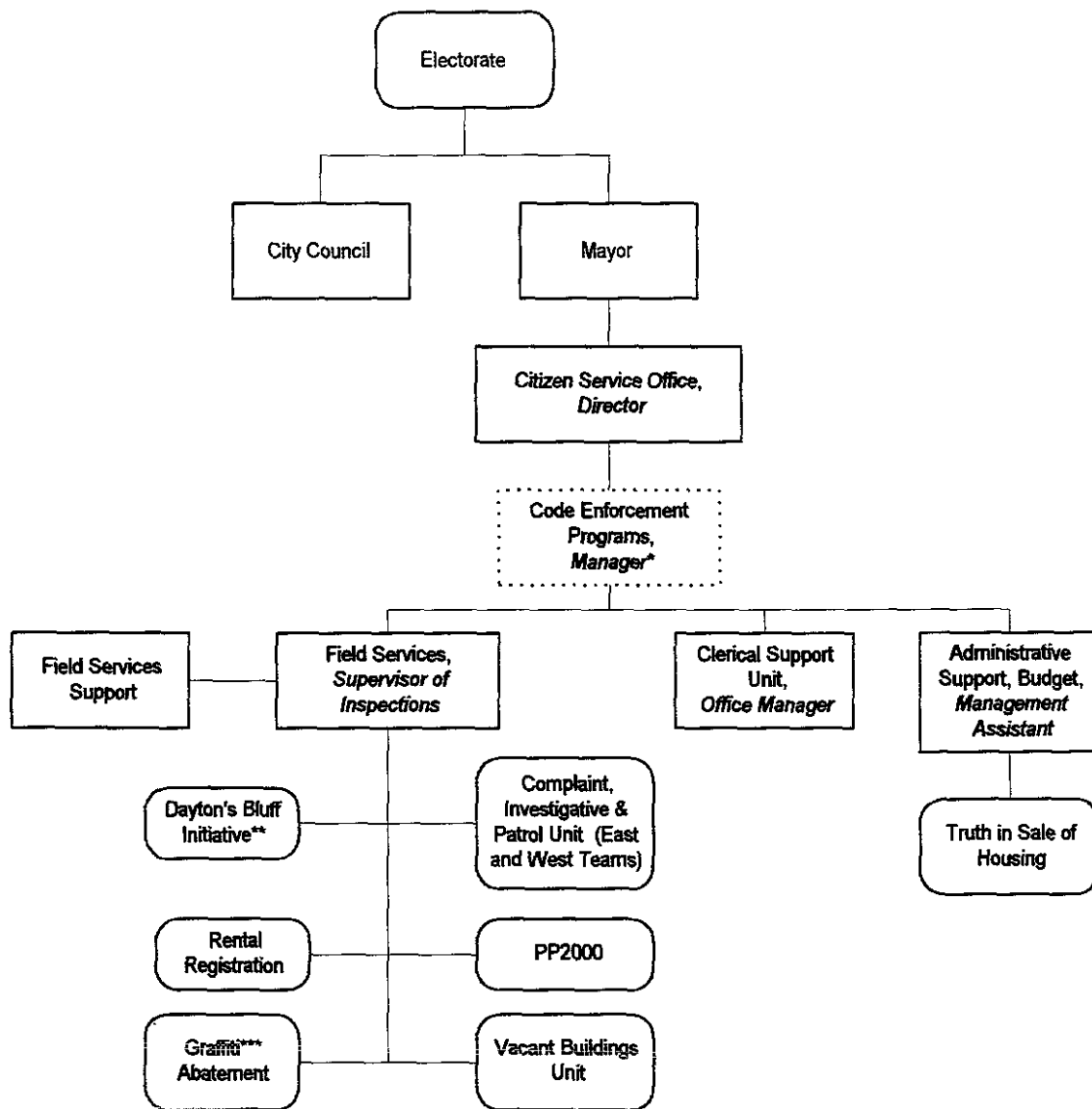
vehicle abatement order.⁵ The method, determined by the inspector, is based on the past history of property code violations at the property, whether the property owner seems responsive and willing to correct the violation, and the severity of the violation (whether it is a life-safety concern). With a summary abatement, if the property owner fails to eliminate the nuisance condition, a work order is issued. The inspectors sometimes take pictures and videotape the situation, both for use as evidence and to show the clean-up crew the problem and what needs to be done. If the clean-up work is done by the City or by one of its contractors, the fee for the work is billed to the property owner. If they fail to pay the fee, it is assessed to the property owner's taxes.

If it is determined the work required to restore a property to meet the minimum property maintenance code requirements equals or exceeds \$3,000, the property may receive a substantial abatement. If the owner fails to correct the problems for which the abatement was issued, the City Council is notified that substantial abatement is necessary and appropriate, and a hearing before the Council is scheduled. After the hearing, the Council will adopt a resolution describing what abatement action, if any, the Council deems appropriate. If the resolution calls for abatement action, the Council may either order the city to take the abatement action or set a time within which the nuisance must be abated by the owner and provide that if corrective action is not taken within the specified time, the City will abate the nuisance. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the council shall, by resolution, provide for the collection of those costs in the same manner as a special assessment. If it is possible the building will have to be demolished, the process also involves some additional notification requirements, and the Vacant Buildings Unit may assume responsibility for monitoring the property.

A property owner or tenant can appeal an inspector's decision by filing an appeal with the City Clerk, who then sends it to the City's Legislative Hearing Officer (LHO). The appellant then appears before the LHO, who makes a decision and forwards it to the City Council. The appellant, if dissatisfied by the decision of the LHO, may appeal to the City Council. If dissatisfied with the Council's decision, he or she may file for review by the District Court. If the property owner or resident refuses to comply with the orders of the enforcement officer, the City may prosecute them criminally. A housing court has been established especially to hear violations of the housing codes. Code Enforcement works closely with the City Attorney's Office to build the case to prosecute the offending property owner or tenant.

⁵A summary abatement is generally issued for garbage and tall grass and weeds. A substantial abatement is issued when the value of the work required exceeds \$3,000. A vehicle abatement is an order for an vehicle owner to remove their inappropriately parked vehicle.

Code Enforcement Organizational Chart



* Code Enforcement staff are assigned to this area to support the Graffiti Abatement program in Public Works.

** The Dayton's Bluff Initiative was scheduled to run through the end of December, 2000.

*** The Manager is a loaned official from the Police Department, and is not a permanent position within the CSO. Therefore, if the position is returned to the Police Department, the other positions would report directly to the CSO Director.

Overlapping Interests of Code Enforcement and Other Departments

The work of Code Enforcement relates closely to the work of other departments throughout the City. For instance, Code Enforcement may receive calls regarding properties about which the Police Department has also received complaints. If the calls are about a suspected drug house, the two departments will coordinate efforts through the Police Department's FORCE unit⁶, which coordinates the City's efforts to reduce street-level drug-related crime. Two Code Enforcement inspectors are on call for the FORCE unit at all times, and check in with them daily to review cases and determine whether they need to accompany officers to execute warrants.

Code Enforcement also works with the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection (LIEP). The two offices coordinate efforts when a property that has been cited for code violations applies for building permits, or when a registered vacant buildings requires permits to restore the property to the City's minimum property maintenance standards. The two offices have a conflict over building permits that remain open for long periods of time. Code Enforcement views them as problematic, feels they create blight, and states there are numerous cases of this in the City, while LIEP suggests that there are relatively few of these long-term open permits and they are not that problematic.

The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services overlaps some responsibilities with Code Enforcement, particularly related to vacant buildings. Fire Prevention staff check vacant buildings every 90 days when a Certificate of Occupancy is revoked, and the Vacant Buildings Unit monitors all vacant buildings every 30 days. Vacant buildings pose a substantial risk for fires, and the Fire Prevention Division is vigilant about monitoring these buildings, as is the Code Enforcement Division.

Code Enforcement and the Parks and Recreation Division work together through the abatement process. Parks and Recreation receives work orders from Code Enforcement for tall grass and weeds and garbage violations, and Parks and Recreation performs the abatement.

Finally, Code Enforcement also interacts with the community through block clubs and district councils. The Weed and Seed program, a federally funded program that provides money directly to neighborhoods for clean-up and other neighborhood improvement activities, allows them to work closely with selected communities. The community will contract with Code Enforcement for increased services such as targeting basic code violations. Code Enforcement is also involved with communities through other special programs, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, (a short-term program in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood that encourages residents to monitor the property maintenance standards of the area) and neighborhood surveys (code enforcement sweeps), which are discussed on pages 44-46.

Code Enforcement Policies

We found Code Enforcement in compliance with most relevant policies, but we will point out a few instances in which they either need to change or solidify their practices, or where it seems a

⁶Focusing Our Resources on Community Empowerment

change in the Code would be the most logical solution. In most cases, we have listed only the sections of the ordinance or policy with which we found compliance problems.⁷

2000 Proposed Budget Program Objectives

The City's annual budget is an official City document that contains not only the spending and revenue projections of all City departments and offices, but also their ongoing and project objectives. Much of the information contained in the 2000 budget activities for Code Enforcement is simply a description of the services they provide, with a few goal-oriented objectives included. A short discussion of the objectives and whether they are currently being met follows this box. Many of the priorities and objectives will be discussed in other sections of this report. Here we will highlight only those not discussed in other subsequent sections.

Code Enforcement Objectives

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Property Code Enforcement

This program enforces minimum housing and health code on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties. The purpose of this program is to protect the public health and safety and maintain and improve the housing in Saint Paul in order to make the City a safe place to live.

The program priorities are to:

1. Investigate citizen complaints and respond to calls for service.
2. Case manage chronic problem properties.
3. Provide support to police officers, R.C.H.S., R.C.H.D. (Ramsey County Human Services, Ramsey County Health Department).
4. Conduct proactive inspection patrols.

These goals are accomplished by:

1. Uniform, consistent enforcement of the Legislative Code, State Statutes and federal regulations.
2. Working in collaboration with police to solve neighborhood problems.
3. Working with district councils, organized block clubs, problem property committees, landlord and tenant advocacy groups and individuals to eliminate urban blight.
4. Working with child and adult protection to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm.
5. Participating in problem property resolution meetings.

2000 City Budget: Property Code Enforcement: Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of excessive use of service (excessive consumption) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has developed a program called PP2000 to handle some chronic problem properties. This program will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

⁷ The list of all the codes relevant to Code Enforcement are listed in Appendix A.

- 2) Code Enforcement works with the Police Department through its support of the FORCE unit, as mentioned earlier in the introduction to this section.
- 3) Code Enforcement works closely with the Ramsey County Human Services Department when they discover situations where children and vulnerable adults may be at risk. In some of the ride-alongs done by Council Research, we witnessed the open dialog inspectors have with child protection workers, and were impressed with the care the inspectors we visited with took in these very difficult situations.
- 4) Code Enforcement is not meeting the objective stating they will reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols. Code Enforcement is currently unable to gather any meaningful data on complaints. Therefore, it is difficult to know if they are meeting the objective to reduce the number of calls. They also have not been able to do routine proactive surveillance patrols due to a lack of funding and limited staff. Inspectors may look for non-reported violations when they are checking the reported violations, but they do not have specific time set aside to patrol their areas. Sweeps have, in recent years, been done at the request of Councilmembers or neighborhoods, but beyond those Code Enforcement finds them difficult to conduct. Code Enforcement recently determined they have some unexpected financial resources because of some open staff positions. As a result, they have asked Councilmembers to determine whether they would like sweeps conducted in their respective wards.

Recommendation

See Recommendations 53-56 in the Information and Analysis Chapter, on pages 68-69, which address data collection and analysis.

Minimum Property Maintenance Standards and Excessive Consumption Fees

Leg. Code Chapter 34: Minimum Property Maintenance Standards for All Structures and Premises

Sec. 34.25. Conflict with other ordinances.

In any case where a provision of this chapter is found to be in conflict with a provision of any zoning, building, fire, safety or health ordinance, chapter or code of this city, the provision which establishes the higher standard for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the people shall prevail.

Sec. 34.08.5 Excessive Consumption of exterior inspection services, fee and liability.

(a) The city shall be entitled to collect its costs of enforcement from a property owner who consumes excessive exterior inspection services. An excessive consumption of exterior inspection services occurs at each element of an exterior inspection cycle beginning after:

- (1) Written notice of a violation is served under section 34.08.3 following an initial inspection; and
- (2) Three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles are performed at the same location within a consecutive twelve-month period after the initial inspection; and
- (3) During each of the three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles under subparagraph (2), the enforcement officer finds violations of section 34.08.3 which are either new violations or violations based upon failure to correct previous violations.

(b) The fee for the fourth inspection cycle shall be two hundred dollars (\$200.00). The fee for each inspection cycle thereafter shall be fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(c) Owners who have received a notice of warning shall be jointly and severally liable for the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee.

(d) The amount of the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee shall be a debt owed to the city by the responsible person or persons.

(e) Action under this section does not preclude any other civil or criminal enforcement procedure.

(f) A new owner who has duly recorded the instrument of conveyance for the subject property with the Ramsey County Department of Records and Revenue within the time provided in Minn. Stat. §§ 507.235 shall not be liable for any excessive consumption fees arising from inspection services provided to the previous owner of the subject property.

Sec. 34.08.3. Initial exterior inspection by enforcement officer.

When an enforcement officer conducts an initial inspection of an exterior property area and determines that violations of section 34.08 exist, the enforcement officer shall, in addition to any other action the enforcement officer may undertake, serve written notice of the violation in conformance with the requirements set forth in section 34.21 of this chapter.

The initial notice must contain a notice of warning informing the owner that subsequent exterior property area inspections at that same location within the next consecutive twelve (12) months may be deemed an excessive consumption of exterior inspection services and that the owner may be liable for an exterior inspection services fee.

Findings

1) When asked how they handle situations where Chapter 34 conflicts with other relevant sections of the code, we received varying answers. Some staff stated they use the most stringent code, others stated they use whatever requirements make the most sense given the situation. Staff stated that perhaps the most problematic of these situations relates to property code violations in historic districts. The inspectors may order repairs to structures governed by the historic preservation code. The Historic Preservation Commission may put strict requirements on the materials that can be used, and the property owner may not be able to afford those required changes. Thus, the repairs may go undone and the inspector may let violations go that in a non-historical area he or she would have ordered. This appears to be a case where Code Enforcement is not consistent in their enforcement of the Code.

2) Code Enforcement is no longer enforcing the excessive consumption portion of the Property Maintenance Code. They have found it impossible to collect the fees in most cases. According to current City Code, these fees cannot be assessed to the property taxes of the violator, therefore there is no mechanism to ensure the fees are collected. Code Enforcement has stated that enforcement of the provision costs more than they would recover from the fee, especially if violators do not pay after repeated attempts by the City to collect the fees. It is unclear to some inspectors as to whether the policy is intended to penalize or just to recover costs. No matter the intent, the fact remains that the fee is not recovering costs because violators are not compelled to pay, and the limited revenues generated are not covering the inspections costs incurred.

3) Code Enforcement inspectors sometimes give oral notices of a violation. This happens in two situations. In the first type of situation, an inspector will simply tell a property owner to cut the grass or weeds or clean up the garbage, and may not follow up with a written order if it seems the property owner is willing to comply. In the other situation, an inspector may come across an emergency situation where clean up needs to happen immediately, such as a dwelling which is filled with garbage and children are living in it. An inspector will tell the occupant to clean-up and then will send a written order as soon as possible. Clearly the second situation is not of concern as a written record is made of the incident. Our concern with the first situation described is the lack of record of the violation, particularly if the problem persists or if other problems occur. The information is also important for data collection and analysis purposes. We are also concerned the property owner may not receive the information on the appeals process if they are not given a written notice, as the appeals information is contained on the notice.

Recommendations

Recommendation #14: Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Chapter 42. Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Sec. 42.01. Definitions.

Unless otherwise expressly stated, the following terms shall, for the purposes of this Chapter 42, have the meanings indicated in this section.

- (1) *Dwelling*. Any one- or two-family rental dwelling which is not occupied by the owner thereof. Dwelling includes both the building or structure and the land upon which it is located.
- (2) *Nuisance dwelling*. Any dwelling which has been found, upon inspection by the fire chief, to be in violation of any provision of any applicable safety code on four (4) separate dates in any twelve-month period.
- (3) *Fire chief*. Fire chief includes the said chief, as well as the official appointed as fire marshal, and also any inspector under his or her supervision and control, and also includes any city officer or employee charged with responsibility for the enforcement of a safety code...

Sec. 42.02. Registration of a nuisance dwelling.

(a) *Registration*. Any dwelling meeting the definition of a nuisance dwelling shall be deemed on the date of the fourth inspection in such twelve-month period to be registered as a nuisance dwelling, and subject to the additional provisions of this chapter, including the payment of a registration fee.

Such registration shall remain in effect for a twelve-month period beginning on the date of registration as a nuisance building.

(b) *Additional requirements*. Any dwelling deemed registered as provided in subsection (a) above shall also be subject to the requirements of section 33.05 of the Legislative Code relating to occupancy so long as it is registered and for a period of twelve (12) months after registration terminates. Such registered nuisance dwelling shall be required to have a certificate of occupancy issued by the fire chief within twelve (12) months after the date on which it is deemed registered. Failure to have such certificate issued within such twelve (12) months shall subject such dwelling and its owner to all enforcement and remedial measures which may be applicable under law or ordinance.

Finding

According to the City Attorney's Office and Code Enforcement staff, Chapter 42 was the first attempt to institute a rental registration program in Saint Paul. Since Chapter 42 was last updated in 1997, a new rental registration program has gone into effect. In 1999, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code was enacted requiring all non owner-occupied one and two unit dwellings to register with the City and obtain a rental dwelling unit registration certificate. If the dwelling is deemed a nuisance according to Minn. Stat. § 617.18, the certificate may be revoked, and the property may no longer be occupied. Since this chapter regulates all one and two-unit dwellings, including those deemed nuisances, it appears Chapter 42 could be repealed. However, since there are some problems with the current registration program, described later in this section, it would be best to wait until the program is fully operable before repealing Chapter 42. Chapter 42, as it is currently written, is the responsibility of the Fire Chief. However, as Code Enforcement is no longer under the administration of the Fire Chief, the language in the ordinance is incorrect.

Recommendation

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Nuisance Abatement

Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement

Sec. 45.08. Authority to abate.

(a) The city is authorized to abate nuisances in accordance with the procedures set forth in sections 45.10, 45.11 and 45.12. All abatement costs incurred shall be charged against the property as a special assessment to be collected in the manner provided for in the City Charter, Chapter 14. Except when a request is filed for a review of an emergency abatement, the assessment hearing shall be replaced by the hearing provided for in section 45.12.

(b) Abatement may include, but shall not be limited to, removal, cleaning, extermination, cutting, mowing, grading, sewer repairs, draining, securing, boarding unoccupied structures, barricading or fencing, removing dangerous portions of structures and demolition of dangerous structures or abandoned buildings.

(c) Abatement costs shall include specifically, but not exclusively, the cost of the abatement; the cost of investigation, including title searches, inspections and testing; the cost of notification including service costs; filing costs; attorney fees, witness fees and appraisers' fees; and administrative costs.

Finding

Currently, the structure of the abatement fees does not, in practice, include costs associated with Code Enforcement; rather it includes only the costs incurred by Parks and Recreation, Public Works or the private contractor. Some discussion has occurred recently about whether the fee should include costs incurred by Code Enforcement as well, such as an inspector's time and mileage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Truth in Sale of Housing

Chapter 189. Truth-in-Sale of Housing

Summary: This ordinance requires that all dwellings for sale in the City of Saint Paul have an evaluation completed to determine the condition of the structural, electrical, and mechanical systems of the dwelling, and that the evaluation be displayed at the dwelling for potential buyers to review. The evaluation must be done by a certified truth-in-sale of housing evaluator who is certified by the City.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Truth-in-Sale of Housing

This activity:

1. Records, processes, and files evaluation reports and fees submitted by the evaluators.
2. Investigates complaints and initiates disciplinary action against the independent evaluators when appropriate.
3. Performs ongoing reviews of materials, insurance, forms and continuing education credits.
4. Serves as secretary/treasurer to the Truth-In-Housing Board and administers certification exams as directed by the Board.
5. Notifies the Division of Fire Prevention when a single-family homes does not have hard-wired smoke detectors.

2000 City Budget: Truth-In-Sale of Housing: 2000 Objectives

1. Conduct compliance investigations to assure compliance by home sellers.
2. Conduct compliance investigations of the independent evaluators which assures conformity to the certification requirements.

Finding

The Truth in Sale of Housing function of Code Enforcement is generally in compliance both with the Code and the Budget documents. They have an administrative staff person assigned to the program who collects the disclosure and insurance forms and tracks the educational requirements for the evaluators. However, Code Enforcement does not currently have an inspector assigned to Truth in Sale of Housing inspections and are, therefore, not able to conduct the compliance investigations, though they are investigating complaints. During the interview process, staff stated that an inspector will be assigned half-time to the program. Staff stated they did not have the financial resources to assign an inspector. However, an ordinance allowing the Truth-in-Sale of Housing Board to set the fees, rather than having them established in ordinance, was enacted by the City Council and is set to go into effect November 2000. It is believed the fees will be set at a level to cover the administrative costs.

Recommendation

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul *Comprehensive Plan*

The Housing Plan Chapter of the City of Saint Paul's *Comprehensive Plan* contains a number of policies which relate to the work of Code Enforcement. The Plan is an official City document, and its policies are City policies to which departments have an obligation to comply. The following is a brief discussion of each policy and relevant recommendations.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3a. Additional resources should be devoted to the existing code enforcement unit to be used in partnership with neighborhood based improvement efforts such as sweeps, Weed and Seed and residential street paving.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has limited resources, and has stated they are only able to partner with other organizations if overtime funding is available or if the organization provides some funding for Code Enforcement's participation. In the past, Code Enforcement has assisted some City departments in their neighborhood improvement efforts, such as the Police Department's HEAT⁸ program. Code Enforcement expressed frustration with the Police Department in relation to the HEAT program, as no funding was provided for Code Enforcement to assist with the program, though the Police Department expected them to participate. However, we found that the resolution passed by the City Council providing funding for the HEAT program appropriates funds only to the Police Department. Therefore, the Police Department was not authorized to

⁸HEAT stands for Heavy Enforcement Activity for Thirty Days. It targets areas known to be hot spots for criminal activity. Part of the mission is to improve the quality of life by reducing crime.

provide any funds to Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement can choose not to provide support to the Police Department for this program, but the Police Department has stated the process of condemning buildings is easier if Code Enforcement is involved with the property at the onset of the HEAT program's involvement with the property.

Recommendations

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3b The use of administrative fines, rather than the current staff-intensive system that involves a series of warnings and re-inspections, to enforce the provisions of the housing code should be explored.

Finding

Code Enforcement currently imposes no administrative fines, although excessive consumption, described earlier, is an administrative fee. This *Comprehensive Plan* policy is a move away from a staff-intensive enforcement system to a system heavily reliant on fines as the enforcement mechanism. It also reflects a philosophy different than Code Enforcement's current approach which emphasizes direct inspector interaction with property owners to gain compliance, rather than the imposition of fines. This conflict may also reflect a lack of communication between the preparers of the *Comprehensive Plan* and Code Enforcement.

Recommendation

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3c City staff should work with the Housing Court to determine how best to achieve a higher success rate in achieving compliance with the housing code.

Finding

Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and the Housing Court have been working together to achieve compliance, and Code Enforcement states they have achieved a higher success rate, though we are not aware of any concrete data to support this assertion.

Recommendation

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3d Additional resources must be identified and used in partnership with those code enforcement efforts to assist property owners to make the necessary repairs and improvements before there is significant deterioration.

Finding

Some inspectors are proactive about giving out information to property owners regarding programs and sources of funding, such as low interest loans to assist with repairs, while other inspectors are not.

Recommendation

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.4 To the extent possible, funds available for residential rehabilitation should be focused on specific neighborhoods and coordinated with public infrastructure investments in order to achieve the maximum possible impact and leverage the greatest possible private investment. Through neighborhood-based planning processes, district councils, CDCs, business associations, block clubs and other key stakeholders should be involved in both the selection of focus areas and the development of the capital investment program.

Finding

Code Enforcement is not generally directly involved in the selection of focus areas for residential rehabilitation, but rather works with community groups and other departments once an area has been selected for targeted funding through programs like Weed and Seed. They have not been at all involved in the capital investment program. Code Enforcement staff mentioned two recommendations in response to this policy that we felt were excellent and should be pursued.

Recommendations

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the

value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5 Improve management and maintenance of rental property. Among the most vulnerable residential structures in the city's housing stock are its rental properties. Strategies to identify, train and support quality property management services in order to ensure ongoing maintenance and systematic investment should include:

- a. Financial incentives (e.g. rental rehab funds) or reduced inspection fees for well managed properties.
- c. Mechanisms to place vulnerable properties under community management and to build the capacity of community based organization to provide that management.

Finding

Staff suggested the Rental Registration program is one way to incorporate financial incentives for well-managed properties. Another staff person suggested a similar program be created for the vacant buildings program. For instance, the vacant building registration fee could be reduced if the building has few complaints or increased if the building has an excessive number of complaints.

Code Enforcement staff have strong objections to community management of properties.⁹ Through their experience, they believe the same code enforcement problems still existed under community management. This suggests community management may not address the true reasons for the problems.

Recommendation

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5d Training and mentoring for new and prospective landlords.

⁹ Community management occurs when a community group takes over the management of a property.

Finding

The Police Department has a program called Crime Free Multi-Housing which provides landlords and managers of rental properties with training on how to keep criminal activity out of their properties. The full three-day training session is typically held two times a year, but a more informal group meets monthly to discuss issues of concern. This group includes Police and Code Enforcement staff, other relevant City staff and, most importantly, landlords.

Housing Action Plan 2000

Priority Actions for 2000

3.21 Code enforcement

- a. Strengthen inter-department communication working toward a coordinated effort to deal with problem properties. Explore possibilities of forming small information focus groups of City staff to deal with specific problem properties.
- f. Explore resource opportunities to go along with code enforcement in order to encourage improvement of units and reduce evictions and demolition of units.

Findings

1) Pertaining to policy 3.21a, Code Enforcement currently participates in the Problem Properties Task Force (formerly the Information Exchange Group) with other departments such as Police and Fire to address problem properties. Over the years, there have been some philosophical differences within this group as to whether line staff should be communicating informally about these properties, or if the issues had to be dealt with at a higher management level. The feeling of the current chair of the task force is that it is more effective if line staff are encouraged to talk informally as they need to outside of the Task Force meetings. However, the Task Force meetings remain very important for ensuring that activities are formally coordinated.

Some issues have also been raised about sharing information in the group. Some members of the group prefer to keep information to themselves rather than share it with others. This group is vital to keeping communication open between organizations that often interact with the same properties and people at various times.

2) Code Enforcement has struggled with how much information is appropriate to provide property owners and renters in order to encourage improvements. It is a philosophical dilemma for them as they are an enforcement agency and are concerned about the mixed messages they may be giving tenants and property owners if on the one hand they are citing them for property violations and on the other they are promoting City programs to encourage rehabilitation. However, the writers of the *Housing Action Plan 2000* clearly feel it is important to provide property owners with information about resources that may be available to them.

Recommendation

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Special Programs & Units of Code Enforcement

Rental Registration Program

In October 1999, a new ordinance, Legislative Code Chapter 51, went into effect requiring all one and two-unit non-owner occupied residences to register with the City. Once the property is registered, the owner receives a rental dwelling unit registration certificate, which is to be renewed annually. Prior to this time, these properties were not required to register and it was difficult to track these properties and their compliance with housing codes. According to Minnesota State Statutes, the City of Saint Paul could require these properties to obtain a certificate of occupancy, which requires periodic inspections to renew the certificate.¹⁰ However, the City has chosen to require a similar yet less stringent dwelling unit registration certificate that allows for inspections only if the situation meets the specific criteria established in the ordinance. Code Enforcement and the Housing Information Office have been responsible for implementing this program, and numerous problems have been encountered. The following box contains the Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration program.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration Program

This program enforces Rental Dwelling Unit Registration, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code.

- Identifies one- and two- family non-owner occupied subject properties and requires registration and enforces collection of fees.
- Issues Registration Certificates.
- Revokes, suspends, cancels certificates on problem properties as provided for by Ordinance.
- Coordinates registration and certificate issuance with Building Inspection Division
- Collects revenue and registration data and shares this information with other agencies, departments and divisions.
- Provides program information to the public.

Findings

1) Since the program is relatively new, not all of the problems regarding Rental Registration have been worked out. Specifically, Code Enforcement was initially condemning properties if they failed to apply for a registration certificate. The City Attorney's Office has since determined they cannot condemn properties for this reason. Code Enforcement cannot condemn a building if they have not made the determination the building is "unfit for human habitation." There is a danger under the condemnation section of the City Code that the action could be construed as regulatory taking. This type of condemnation is separate from a situation where Code Enforcement has already conducted an inspection and determined that code violations exist. However, the ordinance is still enforceable as it is a misdemeanor if a qualifying property owner fails to register. Other legal issues are being discussed between Code Enforcement and the City Attorney's Office regarding the circumstances under which inspections can be done. Part of these conflicts stem from differences of opinion between staff administering the program.

¹⁰ The City requires a Certificate of Occupancy for rental dwellings with three or more units. This program is administered by the Fire Prevention Unit of the Fire and Safety Services Department.

- 2) We learned from staff that the computer program developed in-house and being used for the Rental Registration program is not effective and is very difficult to use. They are currently converting to the Freelantz software, but have found the systems to be incompatible. Thus, the information initially entered in the Rental Registration system has to be manually transferred to the Freelantz software.
- 3) The Rental Registration program is taking longer than anticipated to implement, partially due to staff resources having been dedicated to the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This Initiative was not anticipated when they were planning for Rental Registration.

Recommendations

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Vacant Buildings Unit

The function of the Vacant Buildings Unit (VBU) is to case manage vacant buildings until they are rehabilitated or demolished. The VBU was created in the mid-1960s as a result of a high profile case in which a woman was attacked by a group of men in an unattended, unlocked vacant building. Since its establishment, the VBU has always been part of Code Enforcement. It has traditionally been perceived by the Division's staff as an elite unit. This perception is due in part to the belief of some staff that management provides VBU employees with more respect and resources than regular Code Enforcement inspectors.

The VBU policies Council Research examined for this audit were found in the Saint Paul Legislative Code and the 2000 City Budget. Most of the Unit's budget objectives are reiterations of its responsibilities found in the City Code. Therefore, we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication. A list of the policies we reviewed are found in the following table.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: Designation of Services Provided/Ongoing Objectives

This Program enforces the Vacant Building Legislation, Chapter 43 of the Legislative Code.¹¹ This activity:

1. Identifies vacant buildings and "case manages" these properties to eliminate the public health and public safety issues associated with vacant buildings
2. Requires registration plans and collects registration fees.
3. Investigates complaints on these buildings.
4. Eliminates nuisance law violations on these properties.
5. Works with the City Council, District Councils, Neighborhood Groups, Block Clubs, Police, Fire, BIDD, and PED on these projects.
6. Collects and distributes the vacant building inventory lists.
7. Identifies "Nuisance Buildings" which are subject to demolition under activity 30251.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: 2001 Objectives

1. Conduct regular inspections of vacant buildings at a minimum of every other month as required by ordinance.
2. Continue regular, routine surveillance of all registered vacant buildings so citizens do not have to make complaints about nuisance conditions at these properties.

Findings

Case-Management of Vacant Buildings

Vacant Building Identification and Registration

1) Vacant Buildings are identified mainly through referrals from citizens, Code Enforcement inspectors, and the Police and Fire Departments. Once a building has been identified, a VBU inspector will evaluate the property in order to make a determination as to whether the property meets the legal definition of a vacant building or is only considered to be unoccupied.¹² Once a building has been declared vacant, the property owner is required by City Code to register the building within 30 days of the declaration. Vacant buildings are also categorized according to their habitability.¹³

2) The vacant building owner is informed of the registration requirement through a notice which states the owner may not occupy the building until it is considered habitable and meets the standards found in the Code. The notice also informs the property owner that he or she must complete a vacant building registration form and submit a fee of \$200. The registration form requires the building owner to provide his or her name, address, and a phone number so s/he may

¹¹The policies found in the 2000 Budget and the Legislative Code are virtually identical. Therefore we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication.

¹²An unoccupied building is a building which is not being used for legal occupancy but it is secured by normal means, that does not have outstanding housing code violations, and is maintained by the property owner.

¹³ The categories of vacant buildings are outlined in Appendix D.

be contacted in the event of an emergency. A placard is placed on the building stating the property has been declared a vacant building. The placard also identifies the name and phone number of the inspector responsible for the property.

Inspections and Complaints

- 1) Vacant buildings are inspected once every three to four weeks. During the inspections, VBU staff ensure that properties are secured, maintained and are not housing squatters. Also, inspectors perform periodic, random spot checks for squatters one night each week.
- 2) Complaints about vacant buildings typically come in through the Information and Complaint phone line. These complaints are entered into the EXL system and a notice is sent to the appropriate inspector. Complaints are also received directly by the inspectors from citizens who find their numbers on the placards posted on the buildings. Inspectors prioritize complaint inspections based on the severity of the situation and will typically conduct the investigation within 2 days of receiving the complaint.

Demolitions

- 1) If a property remains vacant for one year and there are no active building permits for the property, the demolition process may begin. To begin the process, an inspector will inspect the property for deficiencies which need to be corrected. A notice of the deficiencies will be sent to the property owner. The owner has 30 days in which to make the corrections. If, after 30 days the problems are not remedied, a resolution is placed on the City Council agenda announcing a public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer to be scheduled for 30 days later and a public hearing before the City Council. After the public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer, the matter comes before the City Council in the form of a resolution requiring the owner to repair or remove the building within 15 days. If the owner does not comply, the City may demolish the building.

Community Relationships

- 1) The Vacant Buildings Unit responds to City Council concerns on a case-by-case basis. If Councilmembers have questions or issues about a particular property, the VBU will respond as quickly as possible. The VBU also provides Councilmembers with a quarterly report of all vacant buildings in their wards. These quarterly reports are also sent to PED staff and other interested parties who are on a mailing list maintained by the Unit. In addition, the list is posted on the Code Enforcement web page.
- 2) VBU staff attempt to develop relationships with District Councils by checking-in on a regular basis at their offices and meetings. Inspectors will attend block club and neighborhood group meetings if they are asked to do so. The VBU also has weekly conversations with Fire Department inspectors to discuss issues regarding the Certificates of Occupancy for vacant buildings. In addition, they also have weekly discussions with PED staff via phone and email regarding specific properties that may be available for redevelopment. Finally, the VBU supervisor reports that he speaks with representatives from LIEP regarding building permit issues on a daily basis.

Complaint Reduction

3) Complaints about vacant buildings are tracked by the Unit. According to VBU staff, they appear to be going down, but no analysis is done by the VBU to determine why complaints are decreasing. Staff report that anecdotal evidence suggests the decrease is the result of the high demand for housing in the City which has caused property owners to better maintain their properties so they can more quickly be occupied. According to interviewees, the VBU is not provided with the complaint reports produced by the Information and Complaint Division.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Special Initiatives

For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program developed by Code Enforcement to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature. There are several policies pertaining the Office's special initiatives found among its budget objectives in the 2000 Budget.

2000 City Budget: Code Enforcement - Property Code Enforcement Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through the use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of use of service (*excessive consumption of exterior inspection services*) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

PP2000

Code Enforcement's primary initiative for dealing with chronic problem properties is PP2000 (Problem Properties 2000). The program began in January 2000 as the result of a Mayoral directive to develop a program to address chronic problem properties. This program identifies property owners who have had repeated complaints against their properties and assigns these property owners to an inspector who case manages the owner's properties. Property owners were originally selected by senior leaders based on the recommendations of Code Enforcement

inspectors. The Code Enforcement inspectors pro-actively work with the property owner to encourage them to better manage their properties. In the words of one senior manager, the basic philosophy of the program is that "if you cure the problem property owner, you cure the problem." Working with the owner is viewed by management to be more effective than addressing the properties because by addressing the most problematic property owners and all their properties, the Division is able to capture a larger number of properties than if it was focusing on individual properties.

Findings

- 1) The decision to include certain property owners in PP2000 is based primarily on anecdotal information provided by the inspectors. No specific, uniform criteria was articulated for inclusion in the PP2000 program.
- 2) Results of the program have been measured thus far largely by informal and anecdotal reports. Code Enforcement officials believe that many property owners in the PP2000 program are either rehabilitating their properties or selling them. As far as we were able to discern, there are no serious efforts to quantitatively evaluate the program's success.
- 3) The program does not address owner-occupied properties nor does it identify owners who have a small number of rental properties in the City that are chronic problem properties. These properties comprise a substantial proportion of all property code violations.

Recommendations

Recommendation #32. If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33. Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34. Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Dayton's Bluff Initiative

This project is a coordinated effort between the Code Enforcement Division, Police Department, the Fire Department, the Housing Information Office and City residents to address code enforcement violations and the associated problems which they may create, such as crime and lower property values, in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. The project began in February 2000 and is currently scheduled to run through December 2000. Code Enforcement has devoted the equivalent of one full-time inspector position to the effort. They have also worked with neighbors to develop citizen patrols and use "good neighbor notices," which are cards that ask property owners or tenants to clean or fix something and thank them for helping to make the

community better. The program has been viewed as a potential model for other City neighborhoods with a significant number of problem properties. However, the initiative has been perceived by some senior management and front-line staff as being driven by people from outside the department (i.e. the Housing Information Office). This view has created problems getting Code Enforcement inspectors to buy into the initiative. Also, for the first three months, staff were supposed to collect data but did not, according to senior Code Enforcement staff. However, in a report prepared for a City Councilmember, data was retrieved from Code Enforcement files and "good neighbor" code violation notices.

Finding

1) Code Enforcement has done some data collection on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, but limited systematic evaluation of the Initiative has occurred. Staff cite the limitations of their data collection system as part of the reason for the limited evaluation, though an intern for a City Councilmember was able to collect and analyze data for a report on the Initiative produced for a Councilmember.

Recommendation

Recommendation #35. Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Sweeps/Surveys

Finding

The budget states Code Enforcement will conduct periodic surveys (sweeps) in neighborhoods which require closer monitoring for Code Enforcement violations. Typically, sweeps involve a majority of the Code Enforcement inspectors who spend several days in a predetermined geographic area pro-actively seeking code enforcement violations. Sweeps focus on primarily three types of violations: tall grass and weeds, junk cars and garbage. Until a couple of years ago, the Division conducted 50-60 sweeps a year. In 1999, six sweeps were conducted and so far in 2000, only one has taken place. With the change in senior management, the division changed its philosophy regarding the value of these activities. Currently, sweeps are not done unless requested from neighborhood groups or elected officials and they have an outside funding source, such as Weed and Seed (a federally-funded program conducted jointly with the Police Department). Current management views sweeps as a superficial response to more systematic problems. Sweeps require a great deal of time and effort on the part of inspectors. Inspectors must not only conduct the sweeps but must also spend time writing tags and doing paperwork. If a choice has to be made between allocating resources for sweeps or for routine inspections, this time and money, senior managers argue, would be better spent on traditional inspections. However, when coupled with routine enforcement activities, managers suggest sweeps are worthwhile and effective. At the time of writing this report, Code Enforcement determined they have some unanticipated resources as a result of staff changes in the Division, and decided to use

the money to conduct sweeps. City Councilmembers were asked to identify any areas within their wards where they would like sweeps conducted.

Recommendation

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization.

The study of high-performing organizations has typically identified seven characteristics believed to be essential for an organization to achieve excellence. These criteria have been identified from studies over many years and are widely accepted as indicators of organizational excellence. Our criteria, based on that used by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Minnesota Quality Award to assess organizational development and to identify quality organizations, are summarized in the table on the following page. None of the quality categories stand alone. Each impacts the other, and all are essential to achieving a high level of performance. Quite often improvement in one quality category will positively impact another. For example, improvement in the category of Information and Analysis often significantly impacts both Results and Improvement Processes.

Each of these quality categories is a chapter in the report, and each chapter contains the ratings, a discussion of the quality of the organization, and our findings and recommendations. In addition to the Results chapter, which focuses on organizational outcomes, an overview of performance measures and their potential application in the CSO is provided in the Performance Measures chapter. Performance measurement in this performance audit means the regular collection of specific information about the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of services and programs.¹⁴ The suggested measures will enable the CSO to evaluate on its own whether the resources expended (labor or financial resources) on an activity are used efficiently, have the intended effect and result in a quality outcome. Measures can be based on information obtained from written records, observations by specially trained staff or through surveys of customers. This performance audit will examine existing performance measures and suggest other performance measures. However, the audit will not perform the actual measurements.

The table on the following page outlines each quality assessment category, the key concepts that comprise that category, and the pages on which the operations of the Citizen Service Office are described in relation to the quality category.

¹⁴ The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measurement: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, p. 1.

Assessment Categories

Quality Category	Key Concepts	Discussed on Pages:
Planning	Internal Plans Plan Development Plan Dissemination & Implementation	50-53
Leadership	Mission, Vision, Values Stakeholder Relationships Staff Recognition	54-58
Training & Development	Training & Education Resources Employer Commitment Employee Contribution Work Environment Labor-Management Relationship Employee Evaluation	59-64
Information and Analysis	Collection of Data Analysis of Data Effective Use of Automation Systems	65-69
Processes for Improvement	Identification of Potential Improvements Implementation of Improvements Evaluation of Improvement Practices	70-73
Customer Focus	Customer Identification & Knowledge Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs Customer Service Practices Customer Service Standards	74-78
Results	Organizational Outcomes Financial Outcomes Customer Satisfaction Use of Performance Indicators	79-83

Criteria Ratings

We have gathered a wealth of information about the various activities of the CSO while conducting this performance audit. Although capturing all of this information in any rating system is impossible, we believe ratings will help decision-makers grasp the essence of the

information. We have developed a simple summary rating system we believe conveys the essence of our findings. We intend these ratings to reflect what interview subjects have told us about the CSO. While organizations and processes consist of individuals, we intend the ratings to reflect current organizational practices and they should not be interpreted as judgements about individuals.

The summary ratings for the quality categories are intended to portray both the level of development and the level of integration of each quality criterion. Development, in this performance audit, means the extent to which highly-valued organizational characteristics are in evidence. They should be systematic, manifest, pro-active, fact-based, and evaluated. Integration refers to the extent criteria are practiced. It is possible, indeed likely, for criteria to be practiced in some parts of the organization, but not in others.

The summary ratings used for the quality assessment are:

- ★★★★ Criteria fully developed and practiced throughout the organization.
- ★★★ Criteria well developed and practiced throughout most of the organization.
- ★★ Criteria present and practiced in some parts of the organization.
- ★ Criteria very rarely present or practiced in the organization.

PLANNING

Quality Rating: ☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Internal Plans
- ☐ Plan Development Participation
- ☐ Plan Dissemination & Implementation

Planning is an activity that incorporates a strong future orientation and a willingness to make long-term commitments to stakeholders. High-performing organizations actively engage in planning and recognize the impact not only of internal changes, but also of environmental factors, on the organization. Planning considers resource allocation, economic projections, future needs of employees, future customer needs and expectations, technological developments and stakeholder requirements. Plans can be long- or short-term, issue specific, organizational-wide, departmental-wide or unit-wide. In order to be effective, plans need to be carried out and updated frequently.

Office-Wide Planning

The CSO performs a wide variety of functions, and should therefore have plans that incorporate a variety of activities. However, the only office-wide "plan" we discovered is the set of "Strategic Plans" contained in the annual budget.¹⁵ The CSO's "Strategic Plans" are really not plans at all. Rather, they are a set of goals and functions. A meaningful organizational strategic plan would provide a clear set of steps to achieving goals and making the vision a reality. Many of the objectives in the CSO's "Strategic Plans" are vague, such as: "Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services." If this was a true strategic plan statement, it would include a closed-ended statement with specific steps to take to achieve the goal, and a time line for implementation and/or completion.¹⁶ To change the aforementioned statement to an actual plan objective, the CSO could add an action statement at the end to explain what steps the Office will be taking to strengthen the City's approach. A strategic planning process should also include stakeholders and customers, which the CSO has not done. In addition, the "Strategic Plans" developed by the CSO have remained essentially the same for at least the last three years, with a statement pertaining to the Code Enforcement Division added to the 2001 Proposed Budget.

The lack of planning in the CSO is exemplified through their disjointed process of implementing a new computer system. The CSO is replacing the EXL system, but has not made any clear plans to phase in the new system. Rather than implementing AMANDA, as other departments such as the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection and Fire Prevention and Inspection unit are doing, the CSO chose to first go with cheaper software from Freelantz, with the expectation they will implement AMANDA later. The Freelantz software is not operating well; therefore, it would have been advisable to implement AMANDA instead of waiting until LIEP was done in the hope that the problems with the system would be worked out by LIEP. To

¹⁵ See the CSO's "Strategic Plans" in Appendix B

¹⁶ For more information on creating a strategic planning see: Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

undertake such a project without a clear plan to guide actions makes implementation far more difficult and leads to unnecessary expenses being incurred.

Marketing & Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division of the CSO has made a commitment, through an administrative order approved by the City Council on April 26, 2000, to develop and implement a year-long, multi-level marketing plan to celebrate Saint Paul. The Marketing Director presented their plan to the City Council and highlighted how the various activities they were planning fit into an overall theme of "Rediscovering Saint Paul." Because much of the Marketing Division's work is project oriented, their plans are short term and project specific, such as the plans for the "ilovestpaul.com" website and the Peanuts on Parade exhibit. Marketing staff shared with Council Research written, specific objectives, tactics and events designed to fulfill the vision for Saint Paul's sesquicentennial celebration. Marketing staff also met with each Legislative Aide at the beginning of their current terms to discuss marketing goals for their wards, and plan to make these meetings annual. They will also be developing an "after-Snoopy" plan to build on the success of the Peanuts on Parade project.

The City's website developers are also part of the Marketing and Promotions staff. It is not as clear they have a particular plan for web development, though the City is currently involved in developing plans for e-governance efforts City-wide. However, it does not appear the website developers have a specific plan for their work or the assistance they provide to other departments with their respective websites.

Information and Complaint and City Clerk/Records Division

Staff in the Information and Complaint and the City Clerk/Records divisions of the CSO were largely unaware of the Strategic Plans contained in the budget, though many of the objectives are within their realm of responsibility. The divisions also have no plans that pertain specifically to their work. Planning would help balance workloads, share information and prepare for future changes, such as those relating to the new computer systems.

Code Enforcement Programs Division

Within the CSO, there is no overall plan for Code Enforcement. Reasons staff offered for the lack of planning in this area are: 1) their work is complaint-based and therefore reactionary; 2) their work is often influenced by political decisions; and, 3) they have too much work to do to take time to plan. We counter that these are the reasons a department should create plans. Plans can provide a framework for discussions about prioritization of projects and function as a workload management tool.

While there are no plans for Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit has stated they have a plan to address long-term vacant buildings (vacant buildings that have been on the vacant building list for more than one year). However this is not a written plan. The Vacant Buildings Unit stated they are able to manage their daily work better as a result of having even these informal plans and they are able to address problems more proactively by laying out the problem and mapping solutions to it. However, the fact remains that without a specific written plan,

implementation and continuation of the plan will be difficult. Other specific special programs within Code Enforcement, such as Rental Registration, could benefit from having a plan to address and mitigate the problems they are now facing with implementation, as discussed in the Code Enforcement policy compliance section.

Other specific plans have been created by Code Enforcement together with community groups when they have been approached by the community groups to participate in programs like Weed and Seed, a federally funded program to which communities can apply for funding for special projects. Recently, the Railroad Island community contracted with Code Enforcement as part of Weed and Seed funding they received, and Code Enforcement developed a plan with the community to provide staff and time for concentrated code enforcement sweeps.

Plan Dissemination and Implementation

Most front-line staff seem unaware of the "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget, even though the plan has been included in the budget for at least the past three years. CSO staff were not involved in the development of the "Plans" (50 percent of CSO staff report they do not participate in planning and 23 percent neither agree nor disagree that they participate), nor has the plan been discussed with them by managers and supervisors. When asked in interviews who would be responsible for implementation of the "Plans", the overwhelming response was the managers. It is possible that, because the CSO has few plans, many named managers assuming this is a management responsibility.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The majority of general planning that occurs in the CSO involves upper-level management only. Some of the project-specific planning, such as Weed and Seed programs, also involves the affected communities. The Marketing and Promotions Division creates detailed plans for their projects. The Vacant Buildings Unit states they have some informal, unwritten plans.
- 2) The "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget are not plans. Rather, they are a set of objectives and functions that contains no time line or implementation information. The concepts, as stated in the budget, are not specific enough to be truly meaningful or manageable.
- 3) Few staff are aware of any CSO plans, except for specific project plans in the Marketing and Promotions Division.
- 4) Reasons offered for failing to create plans, such as heavy workloads and the effect of outside influences on their daily activities, are actually strong arguments for the creation of plans.
- 5) The CSO, with a few exceptions, has not included its stakeholders or customers in its very limited planning activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation #37. The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its

development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38. The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39. The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40. The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

LEADERSHIP

Quality Rating: ☆½

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Mission, Vision, Values
- ☐ Stakeholder Relationships
- ☐ Staff Recognition

Senior organizational leaders need to set direction, create a customer focus, establish and articulate a clear vision and communicate and make visible the values of the organization. Reinforcing values and expectations requires personal commitment and involvement. Leaders need to take part in the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving excellence. These systems and methods need to guide all activities and decisions of the organization. Leaders must also recognize the role of stakeholders in these processes, and maintain positive relationships with them. Finally, staff need to be recognized for their contributions to the organization and its mission, vision and values.

Many of an organization's policies and practices are derived from strong leadership principles. In this discussion, we look at six leadership areas: mission, vision, values, communication, stakeholders and staff recognition. Good leadership works to ensure that all in the organization understand the organization's purpose – its mission – and where the organization is going – its vision. Good leaders also articulate values clearly and exemplify them on a daily basis. Strong leadership involves good communication between managers and line staff and is aware of the need to recognize staff for outstanding work.

Mission

The mission and vision must be clearly articulated from the top of the organization down. This is a vitally important characteristic of a high-performing organization. The following is CSO's mission statement:

The Citizen Service Office consists of four divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City services by serving as advocates and liaisons.

The mission statement for the CSO was developed with the help of Human Resources and involved the Director, the Deputy City Clerk, Division managers and some staff prior to the incorporation of Code Enforcement into the Office. Shortly thereafter, the statement was enhanced to reflect the current composition of the Office, which now includes Code Enforcement. If the divisions that make up the CSO were to be separate departments, each would have their own mission statements that may not be much alike. This is evidenced by the fact Code Enforcement has been working under the informal directive to "enforce the City code and improve the quality of life in Saint Paul." Some in Code Enforcement view this mission as being contrary to the mission of the CSO. The CSO Director has a leadership style that emphasizes customer service more than enforcement.

Forty-eight percent of survey respondents believe the Director and managers effectively convey the mission to staff, 27 percent say they do not, and 24 percent neither agree nor disagree. This may be the result of many staff from the Office reportedly having not seen the mission statement. It was apparent from interviews that although a majority of staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul.

Vision

Given that the vision should be clearly articulated from the top of the organization, we identify the Mayor as having the ultimate responsibility for communicating a vision to staff, whether this is communicated directly from him or through department and office directors. According to survey responses, only 24 percent of employees believe the Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO. However, those interviewed responded that they have a sense of the Mayor's vision for the Office and feel he supports the work they do.

Only 31 percent of survey respondents believe the CSO director conveys a clear vision for the future of the Office. When we asked staff about the vision they receive from the CSO director, several stated he conveys a similar vision to that of the Mayor. However, some employees, especially those in Code Enforcement, felt he lacked an understanding of their duties and therefore it was difficult for him to articulate a clear, meaningful vision. The Office admits to being in a reactive rather than proactive mode which enhances the effect outside pressures can have on the Office. Some staff believe the Director is too sensitive to these outside interests. This point will be discussed further under the Training and Development section.

Values

When asked about organizational values, CSO employees demonstrated a clear understanding of the values. Although the divisions within the Citizen Service Office are different, managers and senior leaders are very clear about the level of politeness, fairness, common sense and decency they expect from the employees. These values are not written down, but staff have a thoughtful grasp of the professionalism required and demonstrate these values. According to the survey, about half the staff are aware of the values they are expected to demonstrate; 51 percent reported the Director and managers convey the core values of the organization while only 20 percent of respondents stated they do not. Also, interviewees cited several examples where core organizational values were, in fact, demonstrated by the Director and managers. These values are displayed through such things as their willingness to pitch-in and help line staff, their flexibility, their professionalism and their willingness to listen to staff concerns.

Communication

Within the CSO, communication at all levels could be improved. Survey results demonstrated a split between those who agree that communication within the CSO is effective and those who do not. Some interviewees expressed frustration about not being kept up-to-date or included in management decisions. All-staff meetings are not held frequently, though staff report information is disseminated through e-mail and word of mouth. Interviewees also stated there is a strong "us versus them" mentality throughout the organization. Despite these significant

issues, 75 percent of respondents surveyed felt that managers are visible and in interviews staff stated managers are accessible and have an open-door policy.

Communication between the divisions is poor. It was reported that communication between the Marketing and Promotions Division and the Information and Complaint Division suffers because Marketing does not receive weekly updates from the Information and Complaint Division. They would like information and complaint data identifying the questions and complaints received that are related to Marketing events. Likewise, it was reported that Marketing occasionally fails to update Information and Complaint Division staff about marketing projects that require Information and Complaint staff to give out times, locations and other information about events to the public.

It was also revealed that the Information and Complaint Division has communication problems with Code Enforcement inspectors. These problems concern such issues as if and when an inspection occurred. Inspectors also believe that Information and Complaint personnel do not understand what Code Enforcement does, and they are concerned about whether Information and Complaint staff are providing accurate information to the public.

Communication within Code Enforcement is still rather poor in some respects, despite the changing work environment. Some staff in Code Enforcement are not included in discussions because of the past history of their role in the organization and their relationship with others in the Division. In some cases, management and staff have conflicted over various aspects of a program, such as Rental Registration and the conflict over whether to condemn a property if the owner fails to apply for a registration certificate. Communication between Code Enforcement clerical staff and Code Enforcement managers could be improved. Certain staff feel they are not heard by management. Some Code Enforcement clerical staff also feel it is difficult to connect with inspectors. They feel they are not told things until the last minute which makes them feel excluded and undervalued. Part of this problem may stem from the fact that the Vacant Buildings Unit and all clerical staff, with the exception of one person, are housed in the City Hall/ Courthouse building, while other Code Enforcement staff are at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District building. Code Enforcement views the hiring of an office manager as a positive step in aiding communication between clerical staff and inspectors. The fact remains that communication in Code Enforcement is vital particularly given the changes and upheaval the Division has experienced in the past few years. We also recognize that some of these communication problems stem from personal conflicts between employees – conflicts which have created an atmosphere that has hindered clerical staff's ability to communicate with one another and other employees in the CSO.

Stakeholders

Positive stakeholder relationships are essential to maintaining strong leadership. Leadership must be able to identify its stakeholders and understand their needs, and incorporate those needs into the department's planning processes. Stakeholders are "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output."¹⁷ The quality of stakeholder relationships should be based on communication, fulfilled

¹⁷ Bryson, John. *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, 1995, Page 27.

expectations, and information sharing. CSO's stakeholders include the Police Department, the Fire Department, LIEP, Ramsey County, community organizations and elected officials. Many of these stakeholders are discussed in the Policy Compliance section. Overall, the CSO maintains functional stakeholder relationships, though certainly communication could be improved between some of them, such as the City Council and the CSO regarding complaints and satisfaction rates. They also have not incorporated their stakeholders' needs into their planning processes.

Staff Recognition

Forty-six percent of staff surveyed agree the Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions, while the remaining 54 percent either feel their managers do not recognize staff contributions or they neither agree nor disagree that contributions are recognized. Interviews revealed staff recognition is informal and takes the form of "thank you, good job" and "atta-girls." Management has also held pizza parties and other informal gatherings to thank staff for their work. However, interviewees were not aware of any plans by senior leaders to create a formal recognition system to recognize outstanding contributions to the organization. Without a formal, organized recognition system, recognition can seem arbitrary, and many staff may not be aware of any recognition shown to employees, as the survey results indicate. This problem extends far beyond any one department; the City no longer has an employee recognition program, which has left employees wondering to what extent City leaders value their work.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Although a majority of CSO staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. There is some disagreement in Code Enforcement as to whether the mission is enforcement or customer service.
- 2) CSO staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the values that are expected of them despite the fact that the Office has no formal values statement. Staff stated the managers exemplify the values.
- 3) Communication between the divisions, between the clerical staff and the Director, and between clerical staff, inspectors and managers is generally poor. There is a strong "us vs. them" mentality within and between some divisions.
- 4) The Office does not have a formal employee recognition program, though they do recognize staff through other informal means. The City also discontinued the City-wide recognition program.

Recommendations

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Quality Rating: ☆☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Work Environment
- ☐ Employee Involvement
- ☐ Employee Evaluation
- ☐ Labor/Management Relationship
- ☐ Education & Training Resources

Employees in successful organizations are provided the tools they need to deliver quality services. These same employees are given encouragement and the resources to develop a set of skills that allows them to contribute effectively to the organization. For example, if an organization values continuing education for its employees, it will provide workers the opportunity and resources needed for them to attend classes, seminars and in-house trainings. A successful organization also creates an environment which increases the growth and well-being of its employees. Finally, organizations should link the training of their employees to the organization's goals and priorities. This connection should occur through the development and implementation of a long-term strategic plan tied to basic organizational values.

CSO Work Environment

Code Enforcement Merger

The merger of Code Enforcement with the Citizen Service Office has resulted in a number of perceived and reported improvements in the Division's work environment. Almost all the employees interviewed reported the morale and leadership of the Division have improved. Staff credit much of this improvement to a change in Code Enforcement management and that the CSO has provided a much more supportive environment than the one that existed under the Fire Department. Also cited as a major improvement was the creation of the Supervisor of Inspections position, which is a level of management between the Manager of Code Enforcement Programs, who oversees the entire Code Enforcement Program, and the program supervisors, who are assigned to individual areas in Code Enforcement. Staff expressed they appreciate having someone with the technical knowledge about Code Enforcement inspections in upper management and can act as an intermediary between front-line staff and CSO senior leaders who do not have Code Enforcement backgrounds. They also reported the Supervisor of Inspections is very accessible and that it is beneficial to have the Supervisor present at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices and available in the field. The facility at the Eastern Patrol District is reported to be a significant improvement over the previous offices where the Division was housed. In the new facility, there is more space and an open floor plan which allows inspectors to easily talk to one another.

Despite these achievements, there have been a number of problems created by the merger. Staff reported the three mergers it has experienced in the last five years have created a tremendous amount of instability and distraction for staff. Few Code Enforcement staff members identify themselves as employees of the CSO and are hesitant to get too comfortable with this label.

More importantly, many Code Enforcement employees feel their mission is incompatible with rest of the CSO, as discussed previously in the Leadership section. Code Enforcement employees claim the customer service mission of CSO contradicts their mission of enforcement. While we do not believe these concepts are necessarily mutually exclusive, we did find enough evidence to conclude that this difference in philosophy creates significant tension and a very real disconnect between Code Enforcement and the rest of the organization.

Another difficulty created since the merger is that Vacant Buildings Unit and clerical staff are located downtown in City Hall and are separated from the inspectors who are at the Eastern District Patrol Offices. This situation has created communication and morale problems for the Division. Traditionally, there has been a high degree of collegiality among inspectors and the rest of the staff. However, it was reported that since the staff has been split apart, camaraderie has suffered and the Code Enforcement clerical staff feel especially alienated from the rest of the Division. Regular communication between different units of the Division has been made more difficult. Perhaps the best indication of this fact is the Division has not conducted an all-staff meeting in six months. Inspectors did report, however, that they are pleased with their new location, despite the communication problems.

Political Influence

It was frequently mentioned by senior leaders and front-line staff that the CSO is vulnerable to political pressures. Several respondents reported that Councilmembers, the Mayor's Office and the media have a tremendous influence over the practices and plans of CSO. Although it is entirely appropriate for these parties to take a keen interest the operations of government agencies, many front-line employees claimed this involvement was overly meddlesome and was often motivated by something other than the public good. The work of CSO, by its very nature, is reactive in that most of the activities they undertake are either customer service driven or in response to complaints. Therefore, it is not surprising that crises, stories in the newspaper and Council initiatives are perceived by staff as the primary drivers of work in the Office. However, the CSO lacks the ability to sufficiently navigate this political environment because it does not undertake planning, results measurement or stakeholder analysis that would allow it to be more pro-active. If the Office were to have a clear vision of what the organization was to be, they would be able to better manage the various demands on their services and operations.

Diversity

Well over half the employees in the CSO (61 percent) feel senior leaders create an environment which is respectful of employees regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability. However, 21 percent of employees surveyed did not believe this was the case, and 18 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the environment is respectful of all employees. In our interviews, some staff reported that racial or class intolerance affected their work environment. They believed they were not respected by others in the organization because they held low ranking positions.

Employee Involvement

Most employees in the CSO feel they have an opportunity to contribute to decisions made about their work, although no formal mechanism exists for this to be done. Almost all staff who were interviewed reported that CSO senior leaders were very accessible. Most of the Office's managers have an open door policy and informally check in with staff daily. Less is done, however, to actively solicit the suggestions and opinions of employees. The Code Enforcement Division did seek out volunteers to assist in writing a procedures manual. Unfortunately, only one person volunteered for this project and the manual was never completed. Finally, it should be noted that CSO clerical staff and Information and Complaint employees feel, much more so than CSO staff in general, disconnected from decisions which impact their work.

While the CSO appears to have an informal system for employee input, it should be noted that there are certain benefits to having a more formal system. An informal system may seem arbitrary, and may miss input from some staff who are not as comfortable approaching a supervisor or manager in an informal setting. A more structured setting can also create an environment in which employees feel more valued as they know management has made it a priority to gather feedback from staff, and have actually solicited it, rather than just waited until staff approached them with concerns or ideas.

Performance Expectations and Annual Evaluations

Formal, written performance expectations do not exist in the CSO. However, staff feel they understand the expectations of their supervisors and they have learned these expectations through experience on the job. For instance, the reports issued by Code Enforcement inspectors are reviewed on a daily basis by their immediate supervisors. Serious concern was expressed by staff, especially those in Code Enforcement, that formal, written performance expectations would lead to performance quotas. A procedures manual was created by a previous Director of Code Enforcement and was being updated by an employee; however, this project was later dropped. At the moment, it appears the manual is no longer being actively used by staff.

Annual performance evaluations of employees have not taken place in the CSO for three years. Before the practice was discontinued, the Office used the standard evaluation process and forms provided by the City's Human Resources Department. The Code Enforcement Programs Manager stated he would like to commence performance evaluations for the Division's clerical employees, but has been waiting until an office manager was hired. This lack of evaluation is problematic because employees are not getting feedback on their performance nor do they know what is expected of them.

Labor-Management Relationship

For the most part, the labor management situation in the CSO appears to be similar to the rest of the City. In the past year, only two significant labor relations issues stand out. When the Code Enforcement Division introduced the Freelantz data base system, inspectors were required to perform all data entry for their reports. This issue caused great distress among inspectors who are not trained in keyboarding. As a result, the inspectors filed a labor contract grievance to stop

this practice, arguing that data entry is not part of the duties for the Code Enforcement inspector classification.

The other significant labor relations issue that has faced the Office in the last year was a grievance filed by Code Enforcement inspectors that a political appointee was working out of title as an inspector. This appointee was charged with overseeing the Dayton's Bluff Initiative but was involved in some day-to-day inspection duties related to the project. This issue was complicated because the individual was reportedly very unpopular with front-line staff. The grievance became irrelevant when the political appointee was fired from his position due to reasons unrelated to this issue.

Training

Senior leadership has made training a high priority and provides many training opportunities for staff. The Office's training opportunities are perhaps best developed in the Code Enforcement Division. The Division's employees are encouraged and provided resources to take job-related training in the community college system. Many also attend an annual conference at the University of Minnesota and a regional conference in Madison, Wisconsin. It was reported the Division had provided in-house training in the past but this practice has been discontinued in recent years. Most Code Enforcement inspectors take advantage of training; however, interviewees reported junior employees do not utilize the opportunities as much as they should.

Other CSO staff have similar chances to participate in training, but they appear not to take advantage of them to same extent as their Code Enforcement counterparts. This may be partly explained by the fact that clerical employees and other CSO employees have less-developed professional networks when compared to Code Enforcement inspectors.

New staff in the CSO are trained through mentoring done by senior employees. In the Code Enforcement Division new inspectors "ride-along" with experienced staff for their first six to eight weeks. New inspectors are also required to study the Legislative Code. Other CSO staff are also trained through partnering with senior staff.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The mission of Code Enforcement appears to conflict at times with the overall mission of the CSO. ~~This conflict may be contributing to some tension between the divisions within the CSO.~~
- 2) The Citizen Service Office, particularly its Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to staff to attend various training sessions and conferences. Some staff, such as clerical support staff, are less inclined to attend training, although they are encouraged to do so.
- 3) Several staff commented the work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has improved since it was administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office. Since the merger, some problems have been created as a result of the Division's staff being separated from each other.

4) Code Enforcement seems particularly susceptible to outside influences from sources such as the City Council, Mayor and the media. They have not yet found a way to balance the demands of the various interests.

5) Code Enforcement used to have an employee manual that contained valuable information on standard procedures and requirements. It appears this manual has it been updated recently nor is it being used.

6) Opportunities for staff to contribute to decisions made about the operations and procedures of the CSO are inadequate and informal at best.

7) The CSO has not done employee performance evaluations in over three years. Employees are not getting regular feedback on their performance.

Recommendations

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

INFORMATION & ANALYSIS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Data Collection
- ☐ Analysis of Data
- ☐ Effective Use of Automation Systems

Quality Rating: ★¹/₂

Information gathering and analysis are vital functions for any organization. Quality organizations should collect data on customers, services, employees and costs. Organizations should also concentrate on collecting and using data that relate to their goals and plans.

Collecting data serves little purpose if it is not analyzed and used to make improvements. It is very important to extract the larger meaning from data to support evaluation and decision-making at various levels throughout the organization. Analysis should employ the examination of trends, projections, comparisons and cause-effect correlations. Using data and analysis systematically is important in properly setting goals, developing plans and allocating resources. The information collected and analyzed should be used throughout the organization and used to evaluate the organization and its progress. Information is essential in monitoring goals and it should play a key role in the decision-making process. Finally, organizations must have information systems which are useful to staff and provide them with the tools they need to collect, retrieve and analyze data.

Data Collection

The work areas in the CSO, in particular the Code Enforcement and the Information and Complaint Divisions, have the potential to collect a substantial amount of data about their operations. The Office currently collects some data but these efforts have been limited by poor information systems and inconsistent information gathering. We examine below the data collection efforts of the divisions within CSO.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division collects data on complaints which the Office receives. The Division tracks the number of complaints, the type of complaint, the date the complaint was received, and the City department responsible for resolving this complaint. Based on these complaints, the Division also generates reports for complaints that have taken more than five days to resolve. These five day late reports are distributed to department and office directors responsible for seeing that their departments address the complaints. Very limited customer satisfaction data is collected, and it is not compiled or analyzed.

Code Enforcement Division

There are numerous activities and actions the Code Enforcement Division undertakes which have the potential to a robust sources of data. Code Enforcement has a history of collecting data about

its activities, often collecting and tabulating it by hand. Recently, data collection efforts have decreased for two primary reasons: 1) the Division has inadequate computer systems which are unable to reliably collect, store and retrieve data; and 2) there has been a change in leadership within the Division which has resulted in a de-emphasis on data collection. Despite the decreased data collection in the last few years, the Division does collect the number of inspections conducted, the type of inspection, the address of the property and the mileage driven by inspectors. This information is taken from the inspectors' work sheets and entered into the EXL system by the clerical staff.

Senior leaders report that the EXL complaint data base system is so poor at managing and extracting data that the Division currently pays little attention to the data collected. In their opinion, doing so would be a wasted effort as long as the CSO uses the data bases currently in place. However, this change in practice was not communicated to their stakeholders, thus many stakeholders, such as the City Council, were under the impression they were continuing to report data and provide meaningful information.

Two sub-units of Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit and the Rental Registration Program, collect their own data. Arguably, the Vacant Buildings Unit collects the best data within the CSO. The Unit tracks the number of vacant buildings registered, their location, the number of inspections performed at the unit, and the number and types of citations written. In addition, the VBU tracks the status of vacant buildings based on the type and condition of the property. The Rental Registration Program, which is now a year old, reportedly collects data on the number of properties registered and the amount of fees collected, though at the time this audit was being prepared, their computer systems were not functioning as hoped and the Rental Registration Program was not running at its optimum level.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division collects customer data and basic information on the economic impact of its projects. The Division's film staff collect data on the amount of money spent as the result of films produced in the City. This data is disaggregated based on the type of film, whether it is an independent, motion picture or a commercial project. The Division also collects customer information through business surveys, web hits on City web site, and visitor and events survey data.

Data Use and Analysis

Similar to the Office's data collection efforts, the analysis and use of the data in the CSO is generally not well-developed and it varies across divisions. It is our belief that if better data was collected and analysis were done, it would inform planning activities and decision-making. With better data collection and analysis, CSO leaders could be more proactive and less dependent on crises management. In addition, with improved data analysis, elected officials would have better information for introducing initiatives and making decisions.

The Information and Complaint Division provides, based on calls received, feedback to other Departments about particular problem areas which need to be addressed. For instance, the

Division will inform the Public Works Department that they are getting a large number of complaints about potholes on University Avenue.

The Code Enforcement Division has performed almost no analysis of the data it collects on its regular functions. The Division did have a research analyst position which was removed from the City's Budget in 2000 and replaced with an office manager position. Currently, there is no one in the Office with primary responsibility for all of the Office's data collection and analysis activities.

Little data analysis takes place for planning, implementing and evaluating special projects and initiatives, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and PP2000. For example, when the CSO worked with the City's Housing Information Office to establish the boundaries of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, data stored in the Office's EXL system was not used to determine the scope of the project. Rather, the CSO relied on suggestions from inspectors to determine the boundaries. Similarly, the properties selected for PP2000 were chosen based on anecdotal evidence. Little effort has been made to systematically track the results of special initiatives. The reason given by senior leaders for this lack of analysis has been that the data bases currently used by CSO, EXL and Freelantz, are inadequate. Interestingly, however, there has been no effort to track results of special initiatives using other data base software that would be capable of analyzing data of this nature, such as SPSS or Lotus.

Information Systems

The CSO's information systems, by which we mean the computer and communication hardware and software, were consistently rated as poor by both senior leaders and staff. The Office appears to have adequate computer hardware and has made efforts to improve communication for Code Enforcement inspectors in the field with acquisition of NEXTEL phones. However, as we have already noted in this section above, the EXL complaint system, which serves as the Office's data base, and the Freelantz system, which was developed to temporarily replace the EXL system, are believed to be inadequate by everyone we interviewed.

The EXL system was created in 1979. The view that the system is unreliable and no longer useful for data collection and analysis has fostered an attitude that data analysis cannot take place given the state of EXL. Furthermore, Technology and Management Services has stated it will not support the EXL system after 2001. As a result, all data analysis in Code Enforcement has appeared to have completely ceased. As mentioned earlier, some data collection and reporting does take place in the Code Enforcement Division, but most data are not analyzed for use in decision-making or the development of the divisional plans or strategies.

To address the deficiencies of the EXL system, Code Enforcement has been working on developing software created by a company called Freelantz, to be a temporary replacement for EXL until the new data base was established (possibly the AMANDA system). However, the development and conversion of EXL to the Freelantz software was poorly planned and has not been completely implemented. The software's development under the direction of a former Director of Code Enforcement did not involve staff. Several front-line employees reported that if Code Enforcement inspectors were involved in the creation of Freelantz's, many of the programs flaws would have been avoided. Many interview subjects with knowledge of the program reported that Freelantz performs fewer functions and takes more time to operate than the

archaic EXL system. Currently, the new system is being used on a trial basis by the Vacant Buildings Unit. The Rental Registration Program is utilizing another system that requires outside support, and therefore due to a desire to keep expenses low, this system is not fully functional either. The resulting problems with implementation mirror those resulting from the Freelantz software. The Director of Code Enforcement states that the failure of the Freelantz software to function adequately will result in the conversion to the AMANDA system sooner than expected.

Both the Freelantz software and the AMANDA system require Code Enforcement inspectors to perform data entry. In the past, data entry on the EXL system has been done by Code Enforcement clerical staff. This has resulted in a discontent among some inspectors who do not have keyboarding skills. As mentioned in the Training and Development section, the inspectors have filed a grievance claiming that data entry is outside their regular duties and therefore violates their labor contract.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in general collects very little meaningful data about its operation, and performs even less data analysis. The Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions are the two areas that perform some data collection and analysis, and the Information and Complaint Division creates a five-day late report based on complaint resolution time. The CSO has been waiting to convert to the AMANDA system until the other offices implementing the system have worked out any problems in the program.
- 2) The new computer systems the Office has been trying to develop are proving to be woefully inadequate and inoperable. The current computer system is outdated and can no longer provide accurate information.
- 3) Code Enforcement no longer has a staff person dedicated to data analysis. They decided to dedicate the FTE (full-time equivalent) to the newly created position of office manager instead.

Recommendations

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do

data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.

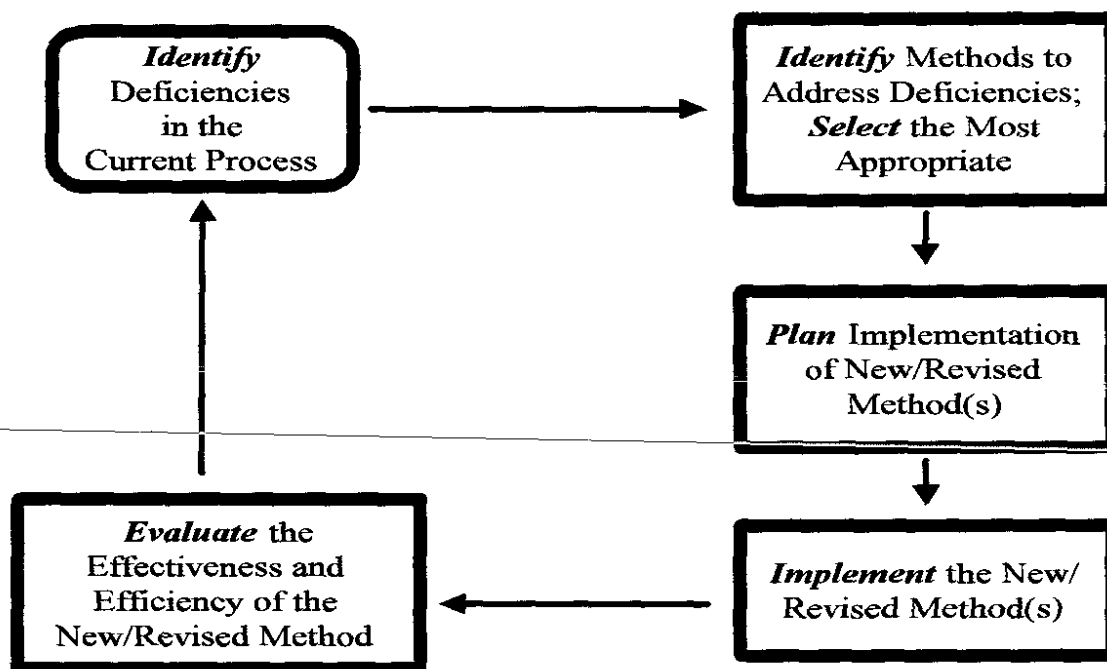
IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ❑ Identification of Potential Improvements
- ❑ Implementation of Improvements
- ❑ Evaluation of Improvement Efforts

Quality Rating: ☆

The improvement process occurs when an organization considers the design, management and improvement of internal organizational processes. Similarly, the improvement process should be part of the daily work within the organization, and should seek to eliminate problems at the source and be driven by opportunities to improve. Improvement *practices* are the methods identified in the improvement process to enhance operations - the implementation stage. Many organizations engage only in the implementation (improvement practice) stage, and fail to go through the planning and evaluation (improvement process) stages. The improvement process must contain planning, implementation and evaluation, all of which require information and methods for assessing progress. All practices of an organization should be continually evaluated to identify problems and successes. The improvement process is charted in the following diagram.



01-67

Improvements in the Citizen Service Office

While the CSO is attempting to incorporate a number of improvement practices, these improvements did not come out of an overall improvement plan. Rather, they are a reaction to a given situation, and little consideration is given to the long-term effects of the changes. A key component of the improvement process is evaluation of the improvement effort. Did it accomplish what was intended? Why or why not? What should be modified? The CSO does not do this type of evaluation of their improvement efforts. Most review is largely anecdotal and based on whether complaints are down and the reaction of elected officials. They also receive some feedback from the Internet site. Marketing may do more evaluation by looking at attendance at events, methods by which people found out about the event, money generated by an event, and so on. Overall, however, the CSO could do a better job of tracking their improvement efforts.

The CSO evaluates their vendors only through the bidding process. The Office tracks complaints and discussed them with their vendors, as well as does spot-checks on the contractors who board vacant buildings for them and those who cut tall grass and weeds when an abatement is ordered.

The following paragraphs discuss the improvement practices the CSO has attempted. Again, these improvements were not part of a planning process, nor have they been evaluated as to their effectiveness.

Code Enforcement Division

Code Enforcement has made a change to the structure of the Division. An Office Manager has been hired to coordinate activities, staff have begun some job-sharing, and the Division has placed a clerical staff member at the Eastern Patrol District Offices where most of the inspectors are located. Unfortunately, the Office Manager position comes at the expense of a data analyst, a position that could be very valuable to Code Enforcement in determining the effectiveness of various programs, as mentioned previously in the Information and Analysis section. Code Enforcement has also been involved in creating the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and assisting with Weed and Seed programs, such as the one in the Railroad Island community. Again, these programs were not necessarily of Code Enforcement's own initiative, but Code Enforcement worked with those interested in creating the programs to carry them out. They continue to look at ways to reduce the number of chronic problem properties, whether through case management or working with owners of these properties more closely to remedy the problems.

Code Enforcement and the Police Department have also devised an initiative called the Red Card program to assist with identifying abandoned vehicles. The Police Department places a red card on vehicles that appear to be abandoned requesting the owner to move the vehicle, and notifying them that it may be towed. The Police Department and Code Enforcement have found this to be an effective way to gain owner's cooperation and avoid having to tow numerous vehicles.

The Vacant Buildings Unit is also actively looking for ways to eliminate long-term vacant buildings through such activities as incentives to tear down or rehabilitate these properties. Other improvements include placing the vacant building list on the Internet.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division is continually trying to find new, inexpensive ways to promote events and increase participation. They have created an e-mail infrastructure to market City events directly to employees of downtown businesses. They are also working with existing attractions and encouraging them to not only market their attractions, but to market Saint Paul as well. They have partnered with radio stations to encourage their presence at events, which results in on-air, in-kind advertising. Marketing and Promotions is also placing a greater emphasis on marketing events through the Internet, such as the ilovestpaul.com website, which is a partnership with other Saint Paul organizations and businesses. They are also trying to work more directly and lend their expertise to the neighborhoods to market their events, rather than simply providing them the funding and leaving the organizations to figure out what to do to promote their events. For example, a neighborhood organization can call Marketing and Promotions staff, and the staff will provide them with contacts at businesses and organizations that might be interested in working with the neighborhood group to market their neighborhood events. They will also try to help the neighborhood groups find other sources of revenue beyond the City, as well as encourage media sponsorship of local events.

Marketing staff have also provided training session for production houses that come to film in Saint Paul that helps them better prepare for filming here. Staff took the initiative to make an unscheduled presentation at a seminar for production companies and went over common questions and situations production companies face when they come to Saint Paul. Staff also produced an easy-to-use reference guide that covers common situations and problems such as the process for getting parking meters hooded, arranging for traffic detours, the fees charged for special services, and other pertinent concerns and situations. After presenting and preparing the reference guide, staff noticed a decreased level of stress and time spent arranging for filming and a smoother filming process.

Information and Complaint, City Clerk/Records

The Information and Complaint Division now has a form for walk-ins to fill out when they come in to report a complaint, rather than having a staff person take the complaint directly from the individual. It appears this new practice benefits the employees, but it is not as clear as to whether this benefits the customers. However, it does create a written record of the complaint, which may give some assurance to the customer that it will be recorded and taken seriously. The City Clerk/Records Division does not have any apparent improvement processes in place. Other improvements in these divisions will be discussed in the following Customer Focus section.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Overall, most evaluation of improvements in the CSO is based on anecdotal evidence and is very informal. The evaluations are not used to make plans for the Office.
- 2) Code Enforcement has engaged in some improvement efforts such as programmatic and staffing changes. However, many of these improvements are reactive rather preventive measures. The CSO has not prepared any concrete plans to fully implement the changes and anticipate any potential problems resulting from the changes.

3) The Marketing and Promotions Division is perhaps the only division in the CSO that engages in any planning and evaluation of their improvement efforts.

Recommendations

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Customer Identification & Knowledge
- ☐ Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs
- ☐ Customer Service Practices
- ☐ Customer Service Standards

Quality Rating: ★★½

Attention to customer needs is critical for achieving organizational excellence. Through the creation and management of relationships with their customers, organizations which excel in customer satisfaction obtain information on customer service requirements, expectations and satisfaction. Knowing the requirements of its customers enables an organization to develop standards which are designed to enhance customer satisfaction.¹⁸ For these standards to be effective, they must be understood and followed by everyone in the organization.

In recent years, the CSO has placed a great deal of emphasis on providing good customer service. The vision for this effort comes from the Mayor and the Director. However, since incorporating the Code Enforcement Division into the Office, the philosophy of providing good customer service has been strained by the fact that Code Enforcement is an enforcement agency. Inspectors and managers have for years wrestled with the notion of customer service being the paramount objective. Other divisions within the Office do not struggle with this notion to the same degree. However, there are still some areas in which the Citizen Service Office could improve. Organizational improvement requires that staff understand the importance of customer service training and that good customer service skills can be learned and enhanced.

CSO's Customers

Most CSO staff agreed that anyone requesting services or information, whether internal or external, is a potential customer. However, with the aforementioned exception, Citizen Service Office employees indicated through the survey a general lack of agreement as to who are their customers. A list of customers that were identified include: the general public, citizens of Saint Paul, property owners, businesses, neighborhood groups, City workers and elected officials. While this list is very broad it does shed some light on the difficulty employees face when trying to define their role in the organization, and who their primary customers should be when each division within the Office is charged with different responsibilities. Interviewees stated that citizens are perceived as customers by all the divisions because they provide the Office with informal feedback as to how well the Office is doing its job. This is an important criteria for them when deciding who their customer is because these individuals provide the organization with information pertaining to customer satisfaction and needs.

¹⁸ In many cases, an organization's customers may be the same as their stakeholders. However, customers and stakeholders each provide the organization with a unique set of information, and the relationship between the organization and its customers versus the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders is different. For more discussion of stakeholders, see the Leadership section.

Code Enforcement Division

Survey respondents within Code Enforcement overwhelmingly chose the citizens of Saint Paul as their customer. Many also view the general public, City of Saint Paul employees, businesses and community groups as customers. There is some confusion about whether or not property owners with code violations should be considered customers.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division also identified the public and citizens of Saint Paul as its primary customers. Because they also interact with the City Council regarding neighborhood problems, they identified the Council as a customer as well. This Division has the unique responsibility of serving walk-in visitors and phone-in customers. In fact, systems have been developed to deal with these individuals in a friendly and efficient manner. Walk-ins are served by counter personnel and are given a complaint sheet to fill out and phone-ins have their complaints entered into the computer and passed on to the appropriate City agency.

City Clerk / Records Division

This Division believes that people requesting copies of City documents are their primary customers. City departments and the City Council are identified as customers who are served less frequently, but who are still customers. The City Clerk also provides information about official City documents, local elections, petitions, and historical data to researchers.

Marketing and Promotions Division

Marketing and Promotions staff feel their customers are the residents, visitors and film production companies that come to Saint Paul to attend events or film movies. The Mayor's Office, the City Council and City departments were reported to be customers as well. This Division allocates a certain dollar amount for marketing and promotions efforts in each City ward, which involves working with Councilmembers and their aides to determine how the money should be spent. The Division must also work with other City departments and organizations which promote the City to coordinate City services for events occurring in Saint Paul.

Marketing and Promotions also provides the City's website development services. The City's website provides useful information, but is somewhat difficult to navigate for people less familiar with the City's governmental structure. Each City department's website has its own look, rather than a standard structure that makes it easier for a viewer to recognize it as being a City of Saint Paul web page. The CSO's own website is useful and contains various complaint forms, meeting information, and links to other useful sites. However, it does not have as many links as might be useful for citizens and visitors looking for information. The Citizen Service Office is often the first place people go to seek information. Therefore, their website has the potential to be one of the most valuable of the City's pages. Just as people call the CSO when they are unsure of what department to call, many people may consult their web page first in the hope of finding a link to the information they are seeking. People are also becoming more technologically sophisticated and are finding it easier to submit information requests and complaints via e-mail.

Determining Customer Needs and Satisfaction

Good customer focus involves determining what specifically the customer needs and how satisfied the customer is with a product or service. The CSO identifies what its customers need through responding to complaints and talking with property owners, businesses, visitors to the Office and community organizations. However, only 35 percent of respondents surveyed felt that CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer needs, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, forty five percent of respondents believe the Office is responsive to changes in customer needs, while 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the Office is responsive. These numbers can be explained by the fact that although staff say they determine customers needs by verbal communication and letters from citizens, the Office has no formal mechanism for gathering customer needs information or sharing customer responses with staff. Information is difficult to gather from the current computer systems and the Office does not hold staff meetings where it would be easy to share and discuss customer information.

Customer satisfaction is admittedly a more difficult aspect for the Office to ascertain than customer needs. Beyond limited call-backs, the Office does not have a formal survey instrument or process to ascertain levels of customer satisfaction. In fact, only 24 percent of staff surveyed felt the Office monitors for changes in customer satisfaction, while 27 percent felt they do not monitor for changes, and 59 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 28 percent of respondents felt that the Office was responsive to changes in customer satisfaction, with 14 percent reporting they are not, and 57 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The Information and Complaint Division does not pass along its very limited customer satisfaction results from call-backs to other CSO staff or to the Code Enforcement inspectors. Inspectors remarked that they only receive customer satisfaction results when they are negative and the feedback is usually in the form of an angry phone call or letter. Marketing and Promotions conducts informal surveys of its customers after large events such as the Titanic exhibit at the Union Depot building and the Peanuts on Parade exhibits.

High performing organizations use customer satisfaction data for planning and implementing strategies that enable the organization to be less reactionary. In truth, if the organization captured customer satisfaction and needs information through a regular process of formal surveys and analysis of the results it could adjust its practices to deal with changes in customer satisfaction without disrupting daily routines. Not only is this important for the CSO, the City could benefit enormously from engaging in a City-wide survey and having customer need and satisfaction data available for all of its operations.

Customer Service Standards

Formal customer service standards help staff understand what is expected of them by the organization and by their customers. The CSO does not have a set of formal customer service standards that are written down and circulated to all employees. Code Enforcement has some standards in a manual that was created under a former manager. However, many Code Enforcement staff are not aware of its existence. Information and Complaint, Marketing and Promotions and the City Clerk all purport to have informal customer service standards. Staff acknowledge these are not written down, as such, but are relatively widely understood and

practiced. Forty-four percent of respondents surveyed agreed that there were customer service standards in their work area, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Many of the informal customer service standards referred to by staff are close to being values or are values of the organization. This is evidenced by the fact that these standards are learned and reinforced by employees observing their co-workers in the field and on the phones. While it is good that 42 percent of staff surveyed understand the Offices' informal customer service standards and attempt to follow them, over 1/5 of the staff reported they do not understand or feel that staff follow them. This is an insufficient management practice. Unless standards are formalized, written down, and widely circulated they can not be updated, amended or added to in any way that would promote efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. This situation is compounded by the lack of all-staff meetings where organizational information is usually exchanged.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in total does not agree on who its customers are. While deference is paid to those seeking information or services, there is no Office-wide agreement as to whom the organization should consider as its customers.
- 2) The CSO does not have a formal process for assessing customer needs and satisfaction. Divisions within the Office rely on complaints from citizens and informal surveys to determine this information. The Information and Complaint Division occasionally utilizes a call back method to garner some customer satisfaction information. However this information is not compiled or shared with any other staff in the Office or City.
- 3) The Office does not have a formal set of customer service standards. Rather, the employees adhere to an informal set of value-driven, common sense standards that are enforced by action and word-of-mouth and emulated by staff.
- 4) The City's website has the potential to be an invaluable resource and method for communicating with residents, visitors, businesses and anyone seeking information on Saint Paul. However, the City's website is currently difficult to use and lacks uniformity that would make it easier to navigate. The CSO's website provides useful information and complaint forms, but should be developed further as many visitors to the City's site may go to their page first when they are unsure of which department they need.

Recommendations

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of

standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

RESULTS

Quality Rating: ☆½

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Organizational Outcomes
- ☐ Financial Outcomes
- ☐ Customer Satisfaction
- ☐ Use of Performance Indicators

The Results component of the Malcolm Baldrige system addresses an organization's ability to determine if and how well it is accomplishing its mission. Successful organizations know how well they perform. Through result measurement an organization is able to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. Organizations should track results over time and compare these results to other similar organizations. Results management should be the last phase in an ongoing cycle involving goal setting, planning, the execution of plans and improvement practices. Using results information in this way can help staff provide the best service in the most efficient way possible. Decision makers can also use results information to monitor the provision of services on the public's behalf, ensuring government accountability.

The work functions within CSO have a great deal of potential data available which could be used to measure results. However, as mentioned in the Information and Analysis section of this audit, CSO's data collection efforts are poor and their data storage and retrieval systems are inadequate. These factors have severely limited the Office's capacity to perform meaningful results measurement.

Outcomes Measured

The measurement of results is not a well-developed concept in the CSO. Below we detail the Office's efforts to develop, measure and use results.

Information and Complaint Division/City Clerks Office

The Information and Complaint Division collects response time data regarding how long it takes City departments to resolve a complaint. After five days, the Division will send out a late report if the complaint is unresolved. These reports are sent to department and office directors but not directly to staff responsible for resolving the complaint. The Information and Complaint Division also collects very limited information on how satisfied citizens are with City Departments' ability to resolve their complaints. The Division's staff occasionally calls citizens who have made complaints and asks them state whether they were *satisfied with the timeliness and quality of the City's response*. However, they do not compile this data or prepare any reports with this information; therefore, other City staff are unaware of the limited satisfaction results. Despite this shortcoming, we believe soliciting citizen satisfaction information is an excellent practice and represents an important mechanism which the City can use to understand its customers' requirements.

There was no indication the City Clerk's Office measured the results of its operations.

Code Enforcement Division

The activities of the Code Enforcement Division have the potential to provide a rich source of data which could be measured to determine organizational results. Given this potential data source, the Division could be a very results-oriented organization. However, senior leaders state the organization's ability to focus on results has been limited because of poor data collection efforts and inadequate computer systems. With the change in leadership in the division, there has also been a de-emphasis on data collection.

The Division's data storage system, EXL, is currently is able to collect data but cannot easily retrieve data. The Freelantz system, which was initially created to replace EXL, has not been fully implemented. The new program has run into difficulty and senior leaders report it is unlikely the Division will ever fully deploy the program. It now appears the Division will convert to the AMANDA system to serve as its complaint data base.

The Code Enforcement Division tracks the number of complaints they receive. Several interview respondents stated the number of complaints has decreased over the last year, but none of these employees could provide an explanation of why complaints have gone down. One senior manager suggested tracking the number of complaints is a poor measure of the Division's success because the Office does not track data which would explain the decreasing number of complaints. For instance, he suggested it is possible that one could interpret a drop in initial complaints to mean that people are calling less because they are increasingly discouraged by the City's ability to deal with Code Enforcement problems.

The Division also tracks the number of complaints resolved. Cases are considered closed once a member of the clerical staff enters the inspector's final report on the EXL system. It was reported this measure may be inaccurate because the information is sometimes entered weeks after the inspector has completed the report, thereby exaggerating the number of open cases.

The most results-oriented unit of the Code Enforcement Division is the Vacant Building's unit. The Unit tracks the number of demolitions, the number of demolitions disaggregated by property owners, the number of active vacant buildings, and the number of vacant buildings that are rehabilitated. A report of these results is published quarterly and distributed to the Mayor's Office and the City Council.

Code Enforcement staff have a good understanding of the results they would like to measure. They hope the conversion to a data base, such as AMANDA, and a new commitment by senior leaders will lead to a greater use of results measurement. In the table below we detail the measures that Code Enforcement would like to track.

- Number of summary abatement orders and number of abatements performed by the City
- First notice compliance rates
- The disposition of citations
- The number of condemnations
- Complaints broken down by U.S. Census track
- Data regarding the safety of inspectors

A senior leader suggested that many of these statistics would provide the City with a better indication of how Code Enforcement is doing and help the Division develop future strategies and plans. In our view, establishing the measures mentioned by staff would be an excellent beginning for measuring the Division's performance. However, we believe these measures alone do not serve as a complete list of potential performance indicators which could be used by the divisions. Nor do we believe they sufficiently account for social and economic factors which are beyond the control of the Division. For instance, as one of the Division's supervisors mentioned, the declining number of vacant buildings is not meaningful unless one also looks at the condition of the housing market in Saint Paul. To provide better information for the analysis of results and the development organizational plans, new measures should attempt to incorporate external social and economic factors.

Result Measurement for Special Initiatives

Several senior leaders within the CSO stated the Office does a particularly poor job of measuring the results of special initiatives. For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program that has been developed to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature.¹⁹

The inadequacy of the Office's data collection efforts is a major impediment to its efforts to measure the results of its special initiatives. The Director of Code Enforcement stated that in 1999, this Division conducted six Weed and Seed programs and there are no records of how the program's money was spent or about the results of the programs in terms of citations, arrests and property improvements. Similarly, the Division is currently undertaking a pilot program, the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, for which there was supposed to be a serious data collection effort underway during its first three months. However, it was reported that the collection efforts were so poor that the data was essentially useless for a serious evaluation of the program. Currently, the Office's most significant special initiative is PP2000. PP2000 is the Division's program to address the problems created at some of Saint Paul's most troubled properties. To track the success of the program, staff collect data on whether complaints on PP2000 properties are decreasing. However, they say they would also like to collect the number of properties sold by a PP2000 property owner, the number of complaints based on ownership, and whether corrections were made as a result of writing a citation.

There are several reasons why tracking results of special initiatives, such as PP2000, should be of great importance for the CSO. First, PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff Initiative have been mentioned as potential models for dealing with the City's problem properties. Without good data collection and continuous tracking of results, it will be very difficult to determine whether these programs are successful, whether they should be continued and implemented on a larger scale. Second, there appears to be a great deal of resistance to some of these programs among staff and some senior leaders. Many complain that initiatives such as these use scarce resources which would be better used for the day-to-day activities of the Code Enforcement Division. By systematically tracking results of these special initiatives, senior leaders and decision-makers will be able to judge whether resources are being used in the most effective manner possible.

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of these programs, see the "Special Initiatives" section of Policy Alignment portion of this audit.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division measures the results of some of its activities. The Film Office determines the financial results of its efforts by examining the budgets of the projects it helps bring to Saint Paul. This data is disaggregated by production type. The Division also collects data on visitors and revenues generated by events that it promotes in the City. Staff also track press clippings to determine the success of their promotional efforts.²⁰ Finally, the Division seeks feedback from stakeholders about specific projects it has undertaken. Several staff members stated they would like to receive regular reports from the CSO's Information and Complaint Division about requests and complaints related to their activities. They have made a request to the CSO Director to be provided with this information; however, the Division has yet to receive these reports.

Comparisons of Results

Divisions within the CSO do not compare their results to the outcomes of other similar organizations. Occasionally, employees informally speak or swap stories with staff from other cities who perform similar functions. Many Code Enforcement staff members stated it would be difficult to compare Saint Paul's results with other similar agencies because of the difference in housing code and enforcement traditions.

Staff Knowledge of Goals and Goal Achievement

Ultimately, the measurement of results should be undertaken to determine whether an organization is achieving its goals. Staff, however, appear to be unclear about the goals of the CSO. The staff's knowledge about organizational goals is essentially the responsibility of senior leaders. Leaders must make it clear, through the vision and planning process, what the goals of the organization are and how they will be achieved. Although the point is intertwined with much of what is stated in the audit's Leadership section, it is mentioned here because if an organization does not have clear and defined goals, it is difficult for an organization to determine what results should be measured. Since there does not appear to be consensus in the CSO about the organization's goals, it is not surprising the Office has paid scant attention to measuring results.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO does not have a results measurement system.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and citizen satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions Division measures the success of their programs and the Vacant Building Unit tracks case management data.

²⁰ As an example, articles about Peanuts on Parade have appeared in papers as far away as Japan, Germany, Canada, Belgium, and Puerto Rico, and staff were interviewed by Australian radio.

3) For the most part, the Office's performance indicators are poorly developed and do not provide the organization and elected officials with useful information which could assist them with decision-making.

Recommendations

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures, also referred to as performance indicators, provide an organization with a means to gauge how well it is achieving its goals. Although not everything an organization does and seeks to accomplish can be quantified, there are some measures that are good indicators of this. Fundamentally, performance indicators should measure how well an organization is meeting its mission. For this reason, CSO's mission bears restating here. "The Citizen Service Office consists of Four Divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City Services by serving as advocates and liaisons." In this chapter we will explore how the CSO may seek to inform itself, its customers and stakeholders about how well it is doing at achieving its mission. This chapter is intended to provide a basis for discussion and assist CSO in developing performance measures. The CSO will embark over the next year on the implementation of AMANDA, the information system which will track much of the needed data for performance measurement. Therefore, it is a critical juncture for CSO to consider these issues.

Council Research has approached this examination of performance indicators with several assumptions in mind. First, we believe the City Council has a vested interest in examining performance indicators as a part of the budget review process. The use of performance indicators gives the City Council a clear picture of what has been accomplished in past years, and the reasonableness of expectations for future years. They meaningfully connect dollars spent to hoped-for outcomes in the services expected of City government. Indeed, as the Council deliberated upon "managed competition proposals," the need to translate City activities into meaningful performance indicators became very apparent. The development of such indicators is necessary to make clear with anyone—employees or private vendors—just what are performance requirements which will be specified in the contract. Second, we believe performance indicators can be useful management tools for communicating with staff about expectations. However, we also put forward the notion that staff must be a part of the creation of performance indicators and see their usefulness in their daily work lives. The people who will, in practice, provide information for performance indicators are also profoundly affected by what the indicators may reveal. Finally, although we recognize there are limitations in what performance indicators can communicate about the success of an organization, there is little else available to provide "a gauge" on progress. Comprehensive evaluations of programs or activities are timely and expensive, and do not necessarily allow for the incremental improvement of efforts.

The CSO does have a number of so-called "performance indicators" in its budget. In our view, however, most of the indicators included in the budget do not constitute meaningful, useful or effective measures. Developing performance measures begins with identifying what pieces of information indicate the organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and quality. Some guidelines for the development of meaningful performance indicators are provided below.

Performance Indicators Should Be:

- ☐ Quantifiable, readily available, easy to calculate, "trackable" and show the direction of progress
- ☐ Strongly connected to the mission of the organization
- ☐ Intrinsically meaningful and understood throughout the organization
- ☐ Focused on outcomes and products, rather than processes when possible

Examples of Performance Measures:

- ☐ Customer and employee satisfaction
- ☐ Volume of outputs as work units or products
- ☐ Productivity and efficiency: time and cost per unit of product
- ☐ Errors, mistakes, complaints, waste, return rates or pollution
- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Timeliness
- ☐ Impact: changes resulting from activity

It is important to note that performance indicators are often most meaningful and effective when the measures can serve as a basis for comparison. Comparisons are best when they are made using similar data from similar organizations, or if they compare the same activities within the organization over time. Comparing the City of Saint Paul's performance in these areas over time is likely to yield more meaningful results because of the idiosyncratic nature of these processes. Therefore, it is recommended that the following measures be tracked at periodic intervals for comparisons.

We have organized our discussion of potential performance measures by division: City Clerk/Information and Complaint, Code Enforcement, and Marketing and Promotions. What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential measures, but rather provides what we believe would be good measures for some aspects of the Office's work. Some of the data needed for these measures are already collected.

City Clerk

- 1) The timeliness of record retrieval could be measured by tracking what percent of record requests are fulfilled within a certain time period, for example 24 hours. This information could also be tracked and reported by type of request.
- 2) Similarly, the City Clerk's Office could measure how promptly official City documents are processed and filled by tracking the percentage of documents processed within a certain time period.
- 3) To measure the accessibility of official documents to the general public, the Clerk's Office should track how up-to-date document indexes and compilation of City records, such as Council minutes, are.

Information and Complaint Division

- 1) To measure the response time to citizen complaints, the Division should measure the average time it takes to refer the complaint to the appropriate department.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division should formalize the collection of citizen satisfaction data regarding the City's response to complaints. This information is currently being collected on an irregular basis. The Division should develop a consistent policy and methodology for collecting this data and reports should be produced and distributed city-wide.
- 3) Part of the development of citizen satisfaction data collection policy should include the measurement of the Division's ability to conduct these call-backs in a timely manner. This should include tracking the amount of time it takes Information and Complaint staff to call citizens back after their complaint has been resolved.

Performance Measures for Code Enforcement

- 1) To measure workload, the Code Enforcement Division could measure inspections per inspector, or inspections per year.
- 2) To measure timeliness, the Division could measure (a) average response time in calendar days for initial inspection of code violations for the most recent fiscal year; and (b) the average time in calendar days for progressing from inspector's report to either voluntary compliance or the initiation of administrative or judicial action.
- 3) To measure the effectiveness of code enforcement activities, the Division could measure, (a) the percentage of code violations brought into voluntary compliance prior to the initiation of administrative or judicial action; or (b) the number of code violations resolved per full time equivalents (FTEs) units.
- 4) To measure cost, the Division could measure the cost per code enforcement case.

Marketing and Promotions Division

- 1) ~~The Division should attempt to measure the effectiveness of their efforts to promote and market events by surveying attendees about how they found out about particular events.~~
- 2) The Division should survey stakeholders, such as community groups and businesses, which benefit from its activities. The Division should focus on measures which relate to stakeholder needs and satisfaction.
- 3) The Film Office should measure the average amount of revenue generated by film projects in the City. This data should be disaggregated by the film type, such as commercial, feature film, or video.

CONCLUSION

The employees of the Citizen Service Office are diligent and very concerned with providing services and information to the extent possible and as dictated in law. We found some policies where further development of CSO practices are necessary, and others where a change in policy would be more logical. We also found a great deal of room for improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office's operations. Through our interview process, we discovered that staff and the managers and director have a willingness to improve operations. Our intent is to provide them with recommendations that would do just that. Many of the recommendations are not difficult to implement and could dramatically improve the overall quality of the Office's operations. The following is a summary of our findings.

Planning

The Citizen Service Office does very little planning for its operations. The only "plans" we discovered were the "Strategic Plans" found in the City's Budget document, and some plans created by the Marketing and Promotions Division directly related to various events and activities. Staff suggested the overall lack of planning is a result of the reactionary nature of their work and the influence of political decision-makers on their operations. Council Research offers that creating plans to guide their work would assist the Citizen Service Office in balancing the demands on their resources and assisting with prioritizing requests.

Leadership

Most staff within the Citizen Service Office have not seen the Office's mission statement. However, most staff agree the mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. Staff are less sure of the vision for the Office, though they do feel the Mayor provides a vision of the future of the Office and supports the work they do. This was particularly evident in the Code Enforcement Division. The vision from the Director of the CSO seemed less clear to staff.

While the mission and vision may not be entirely clear to staff, the values of the organization are. The Director and managers deserve special recognition for exemplifying the values, in the eyes of the staff, and for being open and accessible to their staff. Still, it would be helpful to new staff to be able to view a vision, mission, and values statement to get a better understanding of the organization.

Communication is a problem for the Citizen Service Office. We found many instances where there was an apparent lack of communication between divisions and between management and staff. Staff meetings and more information sharing between divisions could result in a great improvement in the level of communication in the Office.

Training and Development

The Citizen Service Office, particularly the Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to attend various training sessions and conferences. Other staff, such as

support staff, do not seem as inclined to attend training, though they are also encouraged to seek training.

The work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has reportedly improved since they were administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office, and most staff were physically placed in the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District offices. They have also come under new management which, staff state, has an open-door, approachable philosophy. Some problems still exist with clerical and vacant buildings staff being located in City Hall and the rest of the inspectors being located at the East team offices. The files are also located downtown, which decreases efficiency of operations and access to information. The work environment of other divisions appear to be fairly healthy, though there were some problems discussed that appear to be human resources issues that need to be handled on an individual basis.

Direct employee involvement in decision-making is an area that needs improvement in the Office. Many employees feel decisions are made at higher levels and they are the last to find out about changes.

Information and Analysis

The Citizen Service Office is collecting very little useful data at the present time. They have stated that their current computer system does not allow them to retrieve meaningful data; therefore, any analysis of this data would be inaccurate. Two areas within the Office are better able to collect data: the Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions. Information and Complaint is able to generate some reports as well, but not to the extent we feel they ought to be.

The Office has also begun to move away from the old EXL data base system. Some units within the Office are experimenting with Freelantz software, which they have found to be inadequate. They are also pursuing the possibility of using the AMANDA system, which LIEP and Fire Prevention have already begun to use. Council Research feels they should be moving more quickly toward implementing AMANDA with greater input from current users.

Improvement Processes

As we have found in many other audits, the City overall does not engage in a systematic, meaningful improvement process, and the Citizen Service Office is no exception. They are very good at finding different ways to improve their services, whether it is accepting information requests and complaints on-line or creating special initiatives to address specific Code Enforcement problems. However, they are lacking in the planning process for these initiatives, and therefore run into unanticipated, avoidable problems in implementation, and they are less sure of the success of the initiatives because they have created no mechanisms to evaluate the initiatives or changes.

Customer Focus

We are constantly impressed with the level of concern City employees show toward citizens, their customers. The Citizen Service Office is very interested in ensuring they are providing

citizens with the information and assistance they need. Currently, Information and Complaint staff sometimes follow-up with complainants to assess their satisfaction with the City's response to their inquiry or complaint, though this information is not compiled or distributed. A more thorough assessment of residents' needs and level of satisfaction would be beneficial to the City, and ought to be done on a broader scale than just those residents who call the CSO. While the responsibility for knowing this information rests with every City department, the CSO is best poised for conducting a city-wide survey.

The employees of the Citizen Service Office understand a basic, informal set of customer service standards. However, it would be helpful to have more formal standards to assist staff in understanding what the expectations are for their performance in relation to customers.

Results

Closely related to planning and information and analysis is results measurement. It is vitally important that organizations gauge how well they are achieving their mission. The CSO does not have a highly developed results measurement system. The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions tracks the success of their programs, and the Vacant Buildings unit tracks information such as how many vacant buildings are rehabilitated. However, overall the Office does not use even the little information it has to analyze to assess its operations. The Office needs to re-examine its performance indicators used in the City's Budget. Performance measures are not just volume indicators, they are used to assess progress, efficiency, and satisfaction. For example, Information and Complaint staff currently track the number of call backs they do. A more meaningful measure for them would be the number of call backs within three days, which is their objective as stated in the budget. They could set a goal for the level of satisfaction of complainants - for example 80 percent.

Performance Measures

The Citizen Service Office currently has few meaningful performance measures. However, they have the potential to create measures using data they anticipate collecting with the development of their information systems. Using performance measures in an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and improvement could significantly assist the CSO in years to come, and will enhance internal management and accountability to customers and stakeholders.

Appendix A: Resources

General Citizen Service Office Policies Applicable to All Divisions

2000 Budget Objectives and Activity Performance Plans

2000 Budget Strategic Plans

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor

Code Enforcement Policies

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 34. Property Code Maintenance
- Chapter 35. Rental Disclosure Posting
- Chapter 39. Smoke Detectors
- Chapter 43. Vacant Buildings
- Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement
- Chapter 51. Dwelling Unit Registration
- Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks
- Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles
- Chapter 189. Truth in Sale of Housing
- Chapter 357. Solid Waste Provisions

The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan: Housing Plan, Adopted by the City Council March 24, 1999.
Housing Action Plan 2000

City Clerk/Records Policies

City Charter:

- Chapter. 8. Initiative, Referendum, and Recall
- Chapter 14. Special Assessments
- Chapter 17. General Provisions

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 9. Publishing Costs of Special Ordinances and Resolutions
- Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions
- Chapter 130. Procedure for Vacating Streets and Other Public Grounds

Administrative Code:

- Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk
- Chapter 76. City Elections – Nominating Petitions and Petitions in Lieu of Filing Fees
- Chapter 77. Elections – Canvassing of Returns and Certifications of Results
- Chapter 87. Depository for Documents
- Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances
- Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information
- Appendix Chap. 3. All Public Meetings – Notice Requirements

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Government Data Practices Act

Minnesota Rules 1205. Department of Administration - Data Practices

City Council Resolution 99-881

Information and Complaint Policies

Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Books / Miscellaneous Documents

Ammon, David N. (1996). *Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organization*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program. *2000 Criteria for Performance Excellence*.

The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measures: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C., The Urban Institute.

Appendix B: CSO "2000 Strategic Plans"²¹

Communicate useful information regarding city services to elected officials and the citizens of Saint Paul.

Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services.

Ensuring stronger collaborative partnerships with internal and external customers (i.e. community organizations).

Measuring and reporting citizen satisfaction rate related to requests for service and responses to complaints.

Phasing in a new computerized complaint system that will be used in City Offices and Departments.

To provide citizens and City operations with accurate credible, pro-active research and policy development by:

- Identifying "real" problem issues in the City.

- Clarifying whether we need to re-allocate resources.

- Providing accurate, base information to affect policy development or modifications.

- Pinpointing the need for system changes, etc.

Ensuring an educational component to our work to encourage professional and personal development.

Ensuring public information employees within the City stay current.

Increase the frequency and quality of information going to City employees.

Solving long term communication issues.

Help with implementation of communication strategies.

~~Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.~~

²¹taken from Page 64 of the 2000 Proposed City of Saint Paul Budget

Appendix C: Excerpt from the "Agreement Between Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul for Election Office Management"

1. County Duties

The County will assume all election duties required by Minnesota Statutes to be performed by City Election staff with exceptions as noted in this Agreement. These duties will include:

-
- Continue efforts to improve customer service in part through the use of random surveys to gauge voter satisfaction
- Locate and arrange for polling places that are handicap accessible, wherever possible, and obtain City Council approval for any changes
- Recruit and train election judges
- Prepare and maintain the election calendar year
- Handle candidate filings and maintain candidate files
- Supply copies of candidate filing to the city Clerk within twenty - four (24) hours of receipt
- Order ballots, envelopes and other voting supplies
- Monitor delivery of ballots from printer, sort new ballots, prepare test decks
- Administer City absentee balloting
- Arrange for public accuracy tests
- Program for elections and test those programs
- Package and deliver election supplies
- Maintain and store voting equipment
- Provide main office phone coverage to answer questions whenever polls are open or election judges are still at the polling locations
- Provide unofficial election results at the election office to the media and candidates at least every half hour after polls close on election night
- Accumulate election returns and provide City Council with results for their approval
- Store voted ballots and election returns
- Verify signatures on petitions, initiatives, referendums and recalls
- Provide an analysis to the City of the election costs for proposed legislation as requested
- If a new voting system is used, the County will inform voters and provide demonstrations as required by Minnesota Statutes section 206.58

Appendix D: Vacant Building Categories

Category	1	2	3
Requirements That Must be Met to take Building off Vacant Building List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Occupy • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program • Permits if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • \$2,000 cash deposit or Performance Bond Posted • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program

Appendix E: Compilation of Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a service is rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate it the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

Recommendation #14. Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and

Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Recommendation #32: If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33: Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34: Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Recommendation #35: Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

Recommendation #37: The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38: The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39: The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40: The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the

work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. ~~This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.~~

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the

information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
-
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

Appendix F: CSO Performance Audit Survey

Answer the questions by circling the number of the response category which best answers the question or describes your opinion. All responses are anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Plans in my work area are made...</p> <p>4 At least twice a year
3 Annually
2 Every 3 years or more
1 Never
0 Don't know
* If never, go to question 6.</p> | <p>6. The Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>2. The durations of the plans in CSO are... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 More than three years (long-term plans)
2 Three years or less (short term plans)
1 Don't know</p> | <p>7. The CSO Director conveys a clear vision for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>3. CSO makes the following types of plans... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 Issue-specific plans
2 General organizational plans
1 Other _____</p> | <p>8. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey the core values of the organization</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>4. I regularly participate in CSO's planning efforts</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | <p>9. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey an organizational mission</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>5. CSO plans are implemented frequently</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | |

10. Senior management is visible and accessible to employees

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

11. The communication within CSO is effective

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

12. The Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

13. The Director and managers encourage participation in professional organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

14. I have a good understanding of performance expectations in my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

15. The current employee evaluation process is useful to employees for improving their performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

16. CSO senior leaders, supervisors and employees treat each other with respect regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

17. In CSO, labor and management work well together

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

18. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

19. My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

20. Opportunities exist for me to contribute to the decisions made about operations and procedures in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

21. I receive the training necessary to perform my job effectively

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

22. My individual performance is evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know

23. The current employee evaluation is useful in helping me improve my performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

24. CSO collects data to effectively support its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

25. The collected data is useful and relevant to the work performed in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

26. CSO uses data to evaluate its activities and to improve its performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

27. The CSO's information systems currently meet my needs

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

28. Activities in CSO are formally evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know
- * if never, go to question 30

29. CSO practices are regularly changed based on the results of the evaluations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

30. CSO frequently changes the way work is done to improve performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

31. Administrative practices (such as forms and reporting procedures) within CSO are reviewed frequently for improvement

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

32. The performance of CSO's vendors (providers of goods and contracted services) is regularly evaluated

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

33. I know who the customers of CSO are

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

34. List who you consider to be the customers of CSO

- 5 _____
- 4 _____
- 3 _____
- 2 _____
- 1 _____

35. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

36. The CSO is responsive to changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

37. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

38. CSO is responsive to changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

39. CSO has customer service standards for my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

40. CSO's customer service standards are written

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

41. I understand CSO's customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

42. Staff follow established customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

43. CSO regularly measures the results of its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

44. CSO compares its results to those of similar organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

45. CSO often achieves its desired goals

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

47. How do you know goals have been achieved? (Please explain)**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS****How long have you been employed by CSO?**

- 5 less than one year
- 4 1 to 5 years
- 3 5 to 10 years
- 2 10 to 20 years
- 1 20 or more years

What type of an employee are you?

- 3 full time
- 2 part time
- 1 intern

What area do you work in? (Circle all that apply)

- 4 City Clerk/Records
- 3 Information & Complaints
- 2 Code Enforcement
- 1 Marketing & Promotions

ORIGINAL

Council File # 01-67

Green Sheet # 100740

RESOLUTION
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

27

Presented by

Lath, Rant

Referred To

Committee Date

RESOLUTION Accepting the Council Research Performance Audit of the Saint Paul Citizen Service Office

- 1 WHEREAS, the Saint Paul City Council has directed the City Council Investigation and Research Center to conduct
2 performance audits of City departments to examine their policy compliance and determine the level of efficiency and
3 effectiveness of City operations; now, therefore, be it
- 4 RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council accepts the report titled "Performance Audit of the City of Saint Paul's
5 Citizen Service Office," and requests the director of the Citizen Service Office to provide to the City Council a response
6 to the performance audit findings at the February 7, 2001 Council meeting.

	Yeas	Nays	Absent
Benanav	✓		
Blakey	✓		
Bostrom	✓		
Coleman	✓		
Harris			✓
Lantry	✓		
Reiter	✓		
	6	0	1

Requested by Department of:

By:

Form Approved by City Attorney

By:

Adopted by Council: Date Jan 24, 2001

Adoption Certified by Council Secretary

By:

[Signature]


Approved by Mayor for Submission to Council

By:

Approved by Mayor: Date Jan 31 2001

By:

[Signature]

DEPARTMENT/OFFICE/COUNCIL Ward 7 - Kathy Lantry	DATE INITIATED Jan. 15	GREEN SHEET No 100740	
CONTACT PERSON & PHONE Kathy Lantry x68670		<input type="checkbox"/> DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR _____	<input type="checkbox"/> CITY COUNCIL _____
MUST BE ON COUNCIL AGENDA BY (DATE) Jan 24, 2001 Discussion		<input type="checkbox"/> CITY ATTORNEY _____	<input type="checkbox"/> CITY CLERK _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> FINANCIAL SERVICES DIR. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FINANCIAL SERVICES CTG. _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> MAYOR (OR ASSISTANT) _____	
TOTAL # OF SIGNATURE PAGES _____		(CLIP ALL LOCATIONS FOR SIGNATURE)	
ACTION REQUESTED Resolution accepting the Council Research Performance Audit of the Saint Paul Citizen Service Office			
RECOMMENDATION Approve (A) or Reject (R) _____ PLANNING COMMISSION _____ CIB COMMITTEE _____ CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION _____ _____ _____		PERSONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS MUST ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: 1. Has this person/firm ever worked under a contract for this department? YES NO 2. Has this person/firm ever been a city employee? YES NO 3. Does this person/firm possess a skill not normally possessed by any current city employee? YES NO 4. Is this person/firm a targeted vendor? YES NO Explain all yes answers on separate sheet and attach to green sheet	
INITIATING PROBLEM ISSUE, OPPORTUNITY (Who, What, When, Where, Why) <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; transform: rotate(-10deg);"> Council Research Center JAN 16 2001 </div>			
ADVANTAGES IF APPROVED			
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DISADVANTAGES IF NOT APPROVED			
TOTAL AMOUNT OF TRANSACTION \$ _____		COST/REVENUE BUDGETED (CIRCLE ONE) YES NO	
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FINANCIAL INFORMATION (EXPLAIN)			



PERFORMANCE AUDIT PURPOSE

The Saint Paul City Council established the Performance Audit Program to help fulfill two major legislative oversight responsibilities:

- Ensure City practices are consistent with City policies; and
- Assess the degree of efficiency and effectiveness with which City policies are being carried out.

This performance audit examines the activities of the Citizen Service Office (CSO), which includes four divisions: Information and Complaint, Marketing and Promotions, City Clerk/Records, and Code Enforcement Programs.

CITY POLICIES

In its effort to identify policy statements relating to CSO activities, Council Research reviewed City Ordinances, City Council resolutions and 2000 Budget Performance Plans. The City's *Housing Plan Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan* and the *2000 Housing Action Plan* were also reviewed.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The City Council wants to know if the Citizen Service Office is operating at an optimal level of quality and, if not, what can be done to remedy any deficiencies preventing it from achieving the level of excellence expected. Information needed to review the CSO was obtained through document review, site visits, interviews and an Office-wide survey. The seven criteria used to assess organizational development and to identify quality organizations are: planning, leadership, training and development, information and analysis, processes for improvement, customer focus and results.

MAJOR FINDINGS - POLICY COMPLIANCE

- The CSO is generally in compliance with relevant City policies, with the exception of some Budget objectives.
- The CSO is in compliance with records retention requirements, but the CSO should develop more formalized administrative practices to increase efficiency and ensure compliance by other City departments.
- We found no enabling legislation in City Code for the Marketing and Promotions Division.
- The CSO should develop formal administrative practices to ensure compliance with trade secret storage requirements.

MAJOR FINDINGS - QUALITY ASSESSMENT

- The CSO prepares very few plans with the exception of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

- Staff feel the values of the organization, though informal, are exemplified by the Office's management staff.
- Communication at all levels and between all divisions within the Office is relatively poor.
- Staff are encouraged to attend training and training resources are readily available.
- The work environment of Code Enforcement has reportedly improved since they were moved to the CSO. However, some problems still exist with staff being placed in different locations and the fact that the files are located downtown, while most Code Enforcement inspectors are located at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District building.
- The Citizen Service Office collects little data and performs virtually no analysis or results measurement.
- Staff are very focused on providing good customer service. However, they do very little assessment of customer needs and satisfaction.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS

Council Research developed a summary rating system we believe conveys the essence of our findings concerning the City's Citizen Service Office and the seven efficiency and effectiveness criteria used in the assessment. Each area assessment was assigned a "star" rating based on how fully developed and practiced a criterion was throughout the organization.

Key to Efficiency and Effectiveness Ratings

★★★★	→ Criteria fully developed and practiced throughout the organization.
★★★	→ Criteria well developed and practiced throughout most of the organization
★★	→ Criteria present and practiced in some parts of the organization.
★	→ Criteria very rarely present or practiced in the organization.

Citizen Service Office Summary Efficiency and Effectiveness Ratings

★	Planning	★	Improvement Processes
★½	Leadership	★★½	Customer Focus
★★	Training and Development	★ ½	Results
★½	Information and Analysis		

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thirty-six recommendations are made concerning policy compliance and twenty-nine recommendations are offered concerning the efficiency and effectiveness criteria. The most significant recommendations pertain to:

- creating a useful strategic plan for the CSO;
- improving communication and employee input;
- measuring results;
- measuring customer satisfaction and needs; and
- developing meaningful budget objectives.

FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR A COPY OF THE REPORT PLEASE CONTACT

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CITY COUNCIL RESEARCH REPORT

Performance Audit of The City of Saint Paul's Citizen Service Office



Saint Paul City Council
Council Investigation and Research Center
Saint Paul, Minnesota

01-67

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**Performance Audit of
The City of Saint Paul's
Citizen Service Office**

January 2001

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INTRODUCTION

The City Council, as the governing body of the City of Saint Paul, is responsible for establishing City policies and ensuring that City practices are consistent with these policies. As the body responsible for approving the City Budget and authorizing the tax levy, the Council must also assess the efficiency and effectiveness of City operations. Therefore, the City Council established the Performance Audit Program in the fall of 1996 to help it fulfill these legislative oversight and budgetary responsibilities and directed Council Research to conduct performance audits of City operations. Performance audits analyze the consistency of departmental practices with City policies, as well as provide insight into how policy directives are implemented. The performance audit also examines whether an organization's practices are efficient and reflective of those used by high-performing organizations.

SCOPE OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT

This audit is an examination of the policy compliance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office (CSO). The Office is composed of four divisions: Code Enforcement Programs; Marketing and Promotions; Information and Complaint; and City Clerk/Records.

Policy Compliance

The City Council establishes policies to govern the operations of all City activities including the divisions of the Citizen Service Office. While there are many general City policies which affect all City activities, this report addresses only policies which apply specifically to the functions of the CSO. In order to determine the extent to which CSO activities are consistent with City policies, it is necessary to identify policies the City Council has established regarding their functions. To this end, we have reviewed City Ordinances, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Plan Chapter of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, the *Housing Action Plan 2000*, and the 2000 Budget Activity Performance Plans to isolate any policies adopted by the City Council as part of the annual budget process. The first section of this report identifies City policies related to the Citizen Service Office and assesses the extent to which actual practices are consistent with City policies. Where discrepancies are found, the reason offered for these differences will be provided along with recommendations to bring policies and practices into alignment. These recommendations may suggest changes in Office practices, City policies or both.

City Ordinances and Council Resolutions

We have searched the City Charter, the Legislative and Administrative Codes, and City Council Resolutions for policies pertaining directly to activities of the CSO. The City's Administrative Code is the compilation of City Ordinances which pertains to how City government is structured and should operate. The Legislative Code is the compilation of ordinances which regulates citizens and property owners of the City. The Code is usually explicit and leaves little room for administrative discretion concerning the execution of ordinances. The Council would view

failure to comply with the City Code to be a serious matter. Council resolutions are formal expressions of opinion, intent or will that, if passed by the Council and approved by the Mayor, become City policy. The sections of this report which focus on City Ordinances and Resolutions will identify any differences between policies and practices and offer recommendations to resolve inconsistencies.

Comprehensive Plan and Housing Action Plan 2000

The City of Saint Paul maintains a *Comprehensive Plan* that defines the City's plan for most City services. The chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan* are created through a careful and usually lengthy process involving many parties and interest groups. The most recent version of the *Housing Plan Chapter* of the *Comprehensive Plan* was formally adopted by the City Council in March, 1999. It stands as a written statement of the City Council's policy expectations for housing in Saint Paul. The *Housing Action Plan 2000* is an implementation plan for action to be taken during 2000 to implement the policies in the Housing Plan and the *Saint Paul-Ramsey County Five-Year Low Income Housing and Homeless Services Report and Plan*.

Since the plans are not explicit policy directives, some differences are expected between the Plans and actual activities. However, such differences should be periodically resolved by either changes in practice or revisions of the *Comprehensive Plan* or *Housing Action Plan*. This report will identify the differences between policies, as stated in the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Housing Action Plan*, and current practices in the CSO and offer recommendations to resolve any inconsistencies.

Budget Performance Plan

Each year, as part of the City budget process, the Citizen Service Office presents Activity Performance Plans for each of its divisions and its "Strategic Plans"¹ to the City Council for approval as part of its Office budget. These "Strategic Plans" identify both the ongoing and annual objectives of each budget activity. The City Council then adopts these objectives as part of its adoption of the annual City budget, and, as such, these objectives represent City policies.

While the Council understands that objectives set as part of the budget process may be ambitious and are sometimes thwarted by unforeseen developments, the City budget is an official City policy document and the CSO is responsible for operating in conformance with these adopted policy statements. The sections of this report which focus on budget performance plans will identify differences between policies and practices and provide the division's explanations of these differences. Recommendations will also be offered to minimize such differences in the future.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The City Council is very interested in the value received by citizens for money expended. Taxpayers rightly expect that money provided for the Citizen Service Office will be spent to

¹These "Strategic Plans" do not meet what most experts in public management define as a strategic plan. This discrepancy will be discussed further throughout the audit.

achieve the best result with the least expenditure of public funds. The efficiency and effectiveness of government operations can be assessed in many ways. One common approach is for auditors to examine an organization at a micro-level to try to determine if the organization is following sound procurement practices, properly protecting its resources, and complying with the requirements of laws and regulations. This micro-level approach to auditing is closely related to financial auditing and is often conducted by accountants who spend a great deal of time and effort examining the inner workings of the organization. While we accept there are situations where this type of micro-level auditing is appropriate, such as when fraud is suspected, we believe a higher level audit is most appropriate here. The City Council is less concerned with the minutia of daily operations and more concerned with knowing if this is a top-quality organization. If not, the Council is interested in knowing what can be done to remedy any deficiencies preventing them from achieving the level of excellence expected.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the CSO are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization. The categories and criteria are explained in the introduction of each Quality Assessment chapter of this report.

RESEARCH METHODS

Policies pertaining to the functions of CSO were gathered from the Saint Paul Administrative Code, the Saint Paul Legislative Code, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Chapters of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the CSO's own internal plans, policies and budget objectives. It is not Council Research's intent to make specific findings on every individual policy statement. Rather, we focus on groups of policies that relate to specific functional areas within CSO. It is our belief this approach is more useful to both policy makers and participants in understanding how to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and compliance of the organization.

We believe the best way to assess the level of organizational development is to ask those most knowledgeable about the organization—the people who work in the organization. We believe the employees who work in the Citizen Service Office best know the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and will, when asked, candidly report their opinions. Therefore, we have gone directly to CSO staff to ask them about their work. We were able to administer a written survey to 29 of 40 (72 percent) CSO staff (there were two vacancies at the time of the survey), and we also conducted 20 interviews with CSO staff members. Audit team members also participated in a ride-along with inspectors to gain first-hand knowledge of how inspections are conducted. The findings and recommendations in this report are based on these surveys, interviews and site visits, as well as an examination of written materials related to the CSO's practices.

CITIZEN SERVICE OFFICE OVERVIEW

The Citizen Service Office is composed of four very distinct divisions, listed in the chart below. The diversity of the functions of the CSO made this audit both very interesting and somewhat more complicated because at times it seemed as though we were examining four offices rather than one. The Director of the CSO oversees all the divisions, and has direct responsibility for the Information and Complaint Division, which does not have a separate manager, as the Code Enforcement, Marketing and Promotions, and City Clerk/Records divisions have.

The following table outlines the basic functions of each area and the number of staff positions assigned to each area. The policy compliance sections for each of the divisions will discuss further their respective responsibilities.

Divisions of the Citizen Service Office

City Clerk/Records <i>3 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep all City records, proceedings, official books, papers, seal and documents • provide documents upon request • document preservation • process petitions, claims, summons, complaints • process notices of vacations for right of ways • administer appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer • administer oath of office to elected and appointed officials
Information & Complaint <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints regarding City services • provide public information to callers and walk-ins regarding City services and events • provide call-backs to citizens who call in with concerns
Marketing & Promotions <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote Saint Paul through various events • secure movie production contracts for filming in Saint Paul • assist City neighborhood groups with marketing their events • produce the "Residents' Guide" • develop and maintain the City's website • publish "City Update" for City employees
Code Enforcement Programs <i>31 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enforce minimum housing and health codes on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties • monitor vacant buildings • participate in special programs as requested by district councils and other neighborhood groups • administer the Truth-in-Sale of Housing program • administer Rental Registration

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This chapter presents the policies under which the Citizen Service Office is expected to operate and the degree to which the current practices are consistent with those policies. Council Research gathered policies from a number of sources including ordinances, resolutions, the City's *Comprehensive Plan* and the City's Budget. They are organized according to which division maintains the most responsibility for compliance. We have highlighted in boxes either those policies that deserve special mention or those policies with which the Office is not in compliance. The policies we examined are listed in total in Appendix A.

INFORMATION & COMPLAINT DIVISION

The Information and Complaint Division of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for providing information concerning City matters to the public. It also serves as an advocate and liaison by helping citizens resolve issues relating to City services. The complaint or request process begins with a phone call, walk-in, or e-mail complaint or information request directed to Information and Complaint staff. Walk-in customers speak with an analyst and fill out a complaint form, and the information is then entered into the computer and the appropriate City department is contacted by the analyst. Those phoning in complaints give their information to the Citizen Service analyst who then follows the same process described above. E-mails are reviewed and responded to by a Citizen Service Analyst and logged into the computer in the same manner as other complaints. If the department does not respond to the complaint within a specified amount of time, usually five days, the analyst contacts the agency and asks them when to expect a response.

A wide array of complaints come into the Information and Complaint Division. On a given day a Citizen Service analyst may deal with complaints about snow and ice removal, abandoned vehicles, fallen trees, house parties, animals, excessive garbage, pot holes, or water main breaks. Information is sought on neighborhood and City-wide events, City department responsibility, snow plowing, parking and elections.

This Division works closely with the Parks and Recreation Division, the Police Department, the Public Works Department, the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection, the City Council and the Mayor's Office. Within the CSO, the Information and Complaint Division has a regular working relationship with the Code Enforcement Division. Many of the complaints received by the public have to do with property code violations. Once a complaint has been taken, a letter is sent to the subject of the complaint and the complaint is forwarded to Code Enforcement inspectors, whereupon they schedule a site visit. Analysts sometimes follow-up with a call-back to the complainant to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

Information and Complaint Policies

The following box highlights the City Code and City Budget policies that relate directly to the Information and Complaint Division.

Objectives of the Citizen Service Program

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor. Sec. 2.20. Objectives of Citizen Service Program.

The following objectives are hereby established for the Citizen Service Program:

- (1) To act as an advocate for citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- (2) To work closely with all City departments to constantly improve the City's response to requests and complaints.
- (3) To report regularly to the mayor and the City council on the performance of City departments in response to requests and complaints and the relative satisfaction of the citizens with the City's response.
- (4) To work closely with City-wide information services to operate a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system.
- (5) To provide public information on City services, events, and who to contact for response to requests and complaints.

2000 City Budget: Information and Complaint Division Activity Performance Plan

- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide. (i.e. postcards to complaints with complaints info, survey, follow-up, etc.)
- Serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- Work closely with all City offices/departments to consistently improve the City's response to requests for service.
- Report regularly to the Mayor and City Council on the performance of City departments/offices in responding to requests for service and the relative satisfaction of citizens and businesses with the City's responses.
- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide.
- Provide public information to callers regarding City services and events.
- Build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service.
- Be proactive in gaining awareness regarding upcoming problems related to City departments/offices and make policy recommendations.
- Upon receiving a response to a complaint from a City office/department, provide a callback to citizen(s) within three working days.
- Make the Citizen Service phone number and www address readily available for citizens and visitors.
- Administer employee program to enhance community involvement.

Findings

- 1) The Division compiles a five-day-late report for all unresolved complaints. This report is distributed to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division has not compiled customer satisfaction information or distribute it to the Mayor and Council as stated in the 2000 Budget Objectives and in City Code. They state they are unable to because the current computer system (EXL) is not able to

retrieve reliable data (see the following finding for further discussion). They are also not working closely with other departments to improve the City's response, nor are they actively build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service since they have no gauge of their level of service.

3) The Information and Complaint Division is working with the Office of Technology and Management Services to deploy the AMANDA system throughout the Division. This system will replace the current EXL system which is old and incapable of meeting the Division's needs. AMANDA is currently being used in LIEP and is expected to be used by Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention as well. According to the Director, funding for the new system has been sought for several years. This year funding was finally included in the CSO's 2000 budget.

4) The Division provides very limited call-backs to citizens. It is unclear if they are done within three days. No data are kept to corroborate this objective.

5) The Division does not administer employee programs to enhance community involvement. Rather they encourage certain employees to attend community meetings and put out broad calls for volunteers to staff City events and activities, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Common Complaints

The Information and Complaint Division is responsible for taking complaints and responding to inquiries about all City ordinances. We have two common areas of complaints: snow shoveling and abandoned vehicles. These examples provide a brief illustration of how the CSO processes complaints and inquiries.

Snow and Ice Removal

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 113: Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Sec. 113.02. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks.

The owner or occupant of any building or lot abutting a public sidewalk is responsible for and shall remove any accumulation of snow and /or ice from said public sidewalk within twenty four (24) hours after the snow and /or ice has ceased to fall, gather or accumulate.

Sec. 113.04 Notice.

Before the department shall abate such nuisance, it shall serve or cause to be served upon the owner or occupant of the abutting property a written notice informing the property owner or occupant that a complaint has been received by the City indicating the ice and / or snow has not been removed from the sidewalk within twenty four hours (24)... . If upon inspection by the department the sidewalk is found to be in violation of Section 113.02, the department may immediately schedule abatement... .

Finding

When asked how they implement Section 113.04 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, we found all snow and ice removal complaints are entered into the computer and a letter is generated and sent to the offending party. Staff claim the letter is helpful in getting compliance. Code Enforcement verifies the complaint and issues an order to make corrections. If the snow or ice is not removed within two to three days, a summary abatement is conducted and the City charges the property owner for the cost of the removal.

Abandoned Vehicles

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Sec. 163.04 Custody of abandoned vehicles.

The city health officer or enforcement officials of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city are hereby authorized to remove or have removed any motor vehicle left at any place within the city which reasonably appears to be in violation of this chapter or lost, stolen or unclaimed. The impounding and taking into custody of a motor vehicle pursuant to this chapter shall be done with the assistance of a police officer. A police officer, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city may enter upon private property at all reasonable hours for the purpose of inspecting such vehicle and impounding such vehicle, and it shall be unlawful for any person to prevent a policeman, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city from entering on private property for the purposes of carrying out his duties hereunder or to interfere with him in the lawful performance of his duties.

Finding

We found the CSO informs the Police Department if an abandoned vehicle is on public property, and Code Enforcement if it is on private property. However, staff felt it was better to direct the complainant to call Parking Enforcement directly for faster service. Complaints made through the CSO and then passed on to the Police Department and then to Parking Enforcement can take

longer to be resolved because of the Police Department's internal complaint process. If Parking Enforcement is called directly, Parking Enforcement officers mark the car with chalk and have it towed or tagged if it is not removed within 48 hours. It is apparent from this example that different departments, and perhaps even different staff, handle complaints differently. It was reported that some staff in other departments take complaints without notifying the CSO, others take the complaint and forward the information to the CSO, and finally others simply tell the complainant to contact the CSO directly themselves. The City has no set procedure for handling complaints beyond the CSO's own internal policies. This convoluted system can only contribute to a complainants dissatisfaction and frustration with the City.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a "service" was rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

CITY CLERK/RECORDS DIVISION

The City Clerk/Records Division is responsible for maintaining the City of Saint Paul's official (government) recorded history. Three employees maintain and preserve all records of the City including: minutes, resolutions, ordinances, official books, papers and notices of public hearings as required by the Charter and other applicable law. The Division accepts petitions and determines their sufficiency. It is also keeper of the City Seal which, by law, must be affixed to certain documents. Because of its close physical proximity within the office to the Information and Complaint Division, the Records Division interacts with the public by providing information and assistance to walk-in and phone-in requests as well. The Division accepts summons, claims, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City. The Assistant City Clerk works with Ramsey County by overseeing the County contract for City election services. The City Clerk administers the oath of office to elected and appointed officials. Finally, the Division accepts the paperwork and fees associated with appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer, schedules the hearings and sends the appeal notice to the appellants. The Division is governed by State legislation, City Ordinances and the Budget policies highlighted in the boxes throughout this section.

Records Retention

Minnesota Statutes 138.17 Government records; administration.

Subdivision 1. Destruction, preservation, reproduction of records; prima facie evidence. (a) The attorney general, legislative auditor in the case of state records, state auditor in the case of local records, and director of the Minnesota historical society, hereinafter director, shall constitute the records disposition panel. The members of the panel shall have power by majority vote to direct the destruction or sale for salvage of government records determined to be no longer of any value, or to direct the disposition by gift to the Minnesota historical society or otherwise of government records determined to be valuable for preservation...

Subd. 7. Records management program. A records management program for the application of efficient and economical management methods to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of official records shall be administered by the commissioner of administration with assistance from the director of the historical society.... It shall be the duty of the head of each state agency and the governing body of each county, municipality, and other subdivision of government to cooperate with the commissioner in conducting surveys and to establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of each agency, county, municipality, or other subdivision of government. When requested by the commissioner, public officials shall assist in the preparation of an inclusive inventory of records in their custody, to which shall be attached a schedule, approved by the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records and the commissioner, establishing a time period for the retention or disposal of each series of records. When the schedule is unanimously approved by the records disposition panel, the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records may dispose of the type of records listed in the schedule at a time and in a manner prescribed in the schedule for particular records which were created after the approval. A list of records disposed of pursuant to this subdivision shall be forwarded to the commissioner and the archivist by the head of the governmental unit or agency. The archivist shall maintain a list of all records destroyed.

Records Retention, Cont.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Data Practices Act

13.03 Access to government data.

Subd. 2. **Procedures.** (a) The responsible authority in every state agency, political subdivision, and statewide system shall establish procedures, consistent with this chapter, to insure that requests for government data are received and complied with in an appropriate and prompt manner... .

A responsible authority may designate one or more designees.

Minnesota Rules 1205 Department of Administration - Data Practices

Minn. Rules 1205.1000 Appointment of the Responsible Authority.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 13.02, subdivision 16, the governing body of each political subdivision and the governing body of each state agency whose activities are subject to the direction of a governing body shall, by September 30, 1981, if it has not done so, appoint a responsible authority. This part shall not affect the appointments of responsible authorities made previous to the adoption of these rules. The governing body shall confer on the responsible authority full administrative authority to carry out the duties assigned by the act and by this chapter. Governing bodies may use the forms set forth in part 1205.2000 to appoint the responsible authority.

1205.0200 Definitions.

Subp. 14. **Responsible authority in political subdivisions.** In political subdivisions, the responsible authority shall be as follows, unless otherwise provided by state law:

B. For cities, the city council shall appoint an individual who is an employee of the city.

Saint Paul City Council Resolution 99-881

RESOLVED, pursuant to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Section 13.02, Subd. 16, of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and Minnesota Rules Section 1205.1000, Fred Owusu, City Clerk, is hereby designated as the Responsible Authority for the City of Saint Paul; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Responsible Authority is authorized to establish guidelines and procedures for the purpose of meeting all requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and the related, validly adopted rules.

Findings

Chapter 138.17 of Minnesota Statutes provides a plan for managing governmental records by giving authority to cities to dispose of records with certain limitations. No municipal records may be destroyed or removed without authorization of the Records Disposition Panel, which is essentially authorization from the Minnesota Historical Society. Cities may adopt the *General Records Retention Schedule* and any revisions by filing a *Notification of Adoption of City General Retention Schedule* form with the State Archives Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The Historical Society will sign and return the form as a signal the City may dispose of governmental records as indicated on the schedule.

The CSO maintains a copy of the *City General Records Retention Schedule*, but responsibility for documents being disposed of deposited at the Historical Society falls to individual City departments, as Minnesota Statutes allows the responsible authority to designate designees to fulfill these responsibilities, and department heads are the designees. Currently, no formal

process exists for City departments to inform the CSO that they are disposing of or sending documents to the Historical Society. Though it does not occur frequently, according to staff, some departments inform the CSO when they are disposing of documents or sending them to the Historical Society. Also, if the CSO discovers a department is "cleaning house," a note is sent to the director offering the assistance of the Assistant City Clerk to review the soon to be discarded documents to assess their archival value in complying with the Schedule. Under Resolution 99-881, the City Clerk is authorized to establish guidelines to ensure the requirements of the Government Data Practices Act are met.

Recommendation

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Documents Maintained by the CSO

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

b) The city clerk shall keep all minutes, records, proceedings, official books, papers and documents charged to his care in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use. He shall be responsible for the preservation and care of such records and shall take necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve them from deterioration, mutilation, loss or destruction. Records or record books may be repaired, renovated or rebound when necessary for proper preservation. Photographic, photostatic or microfilmed records shall be considered accessible for such purposes. Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, he shall permit all such public records in his custody to be inspected, examined, abstracted or copied during normal business hours subject to his supervision and regulation. He shall, upon demand of any person, furnish certified copies thereof upon payment in advance of reasonable fees therefor.

Saint Paul City Charter Sec. 17.02. Current files.

The city clerk shall keep a properly indexed current file of all city ordinances and resolutions, and this file shall be available for public inspection during the customary working hours observed by city employees. Copies of ordinances, resolutions and Charter amendments shall be distributed b or sold to the public at reasonable prices to be fixed by the council.

Documents Maintained by the CSO, Cont.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

With additional funding the Office of the City Clerk could more closely follow Chapter 4 of the Administrative Code in "taking necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve" these fragile records. Furthermore, the current micro-film reader is becoming obsolete and requires regular repairs.

- Maintain and preserve the minutes and records of the proceedings of the City Council in accordance with the Charter.
- Be the legal custodian of & maintain official copies of all ordinances and resolutions of the City Council.
- Notices of City Council meetings be served in accordance with state statutes, Charter provisions, city ordinances and Council rules.
- Cause the publication of all City Council minutes, ordinances and notices of public hearing as required by the Charter or other applicable law.
- Have custody of the seal of the city and affix it to such documents as may be required ad authorized pursuant to law.
- Give information and direction to private citizens having business with the city... .
- Keep all minutes, records official books, papers and documents in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use.
- Accept claims, summons and complaints, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City.
- Process and record vacations of public right of ways.
- Claim and appeal forms are now available on the City Clerk web page.
- Index City Council proceedings and distribute proceedings book.
- Administer appeals to Legislative Hearing Officer.

Findings

1) We found the Division maintains the documents for which it is responsible. Historical documents are kept at the Minnesota Historical Society and more recent documents are housed in the CSO's file room and on microfiche. The Office is in the process of buying new file cabinets to upgrade the protection of City documents. Ultimately, the Office would like all documents to be preserved on a document imaging system. It has been an ongoing goal of the CSO to obtain funding for a document imaging system, and a system is on order.

2) Official City documents are available for public viewing. Interested parties call or walk-in when in search of City documents. If an individual is doing a lengthy research project, they may be given open unsupervised access to the documents during business hours.

3) According to staff, the binding of the Council proceedings books are two years behind schedule. They are currently published in bound form through 1997. The CSO must index the proceedings before they can be sent out for binding. The Office is indexing the proceedings for 1999 and has completed indexing for 1998 but they have not been sent to the Legal Ledger for binding because the \$11,000 it cost to bind the books was allocated for other uses within the Office. The Office plans to send the 1998 Council Proceedings to the Legal Ledger for binding in 2001. The Legal Ledger is the only organization that bids on the binding contract.

4) According to staff, new or amended ordinances available on the City's Internet site are six to seven weeks behind Council enactment. This time is required to print, codify and have the CAO review the electronic version produced by the Legal Ledger before the Clerk's Office forwards it to Technology and Management Services (TMS) personnel to post the web page. It was reported that TMS personnel take one to two days to get the changes and additions made.

- 5) The Division provides appeal and claims information and forms on their website.

Recommendations

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Documents to the Public Library

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 87. Depository for Documents

Sec. 87.01. Deposit required.

All municipal corporations, departments, agencies and officials of the City of Saint Paul are required to submit a minimum of three (3) copies of each official published document to the Saint Paul Public Library.

Sec. 87.02. Official documents defined.

Such official published documents should include the following:

- (a) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or report issued for public distribution.
- (b) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or official public report which is not issued for public distribution but contains any historical significance or reference value.
- (c) Such official published documents, for example, should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - (1) The annual compilation of the city ordinances and council proceedings.
 - (2) The annual reports of the various departments and bureaus.
 - (3) The City Codes and amendments.
 - (4) The City Charter and amendments.

Finding

CSO staff stated that City documents are not being submitted to the Saint Paul Public Library and no one is responsible for ensuring this is done. We also inquired as to whether this ordinance is reasonable given today's technologies. Staff were not sure it was reasonable since computers could generate electronic versions that do not require as much space.

Recommendation

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Elections

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

Sec. 4.04. Elections.

(a) *Commissioner of registration.* The city clerk shall serve as the commissioner of registration for the city and provide such printed forms, blanks and other supplies and equipment as are necessary and proper to carry out the registration of qualified voters as prescribed by law. The office shall establish and keep, pursuant to statute, a plan of registration, including an original record of voters, properly indexed and safeguarded, and a duplicate registration file open to reasonable public inspection.

(b) *Conduct of elections.* The city clerk shall give public notice of the time and place of the holding of all municipal elections, including the hours during which polls will be open, by posting in every election district appropriate election notices containing a list of offices to be filled at such election. He shall take all other necessary steps to ensure that the conduct and procedure of all elections are governed in accordance with applicable state laws and such supplementary ordinances as are adopted by the council.

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 7. Elections

Sec. 7.04. Name on primary ballot.

Not later than six (6) weeks nor more than eight (8) weeks before the primary election, any person eligible may, by filing an affidavit and payment of fifty dollars (\$50.00) to the city clerk, have his or her name placed on the primary election ballot. Each person desiring to have his or her name placed on the primary ballot for councilmember shall state in the affidavit of candidacy the district for which he or she is a candidate.

Sec. 7.10. Canvass of returns.

Within seven (7) days after the election, the city council shall canvass the returns and declare the results of the election.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

Oversee Ramsey County contract for City election services, including evaluation of the level and quality of service, and maintain duplicate records of elections.

Finding

The Office has a ten-year contract with Ramsey County that expires at the end of 2004 to provide the elections process. According to staff, the CSO approves polling places, election judges and conducts canvassing for primary and general elections. The Office also prepares election-related resolutions for council approval. Ramsey County is responsible for voter registration, absentee ballots, candidate filings and the preparation and maintenance of voting machines.² After an election, Ramsey County submits the unofficial canvass report, which examines votes for authenticity, to the CSO which then submits the report to the City Council.

² The County's duties as agreed to in the contract between Saint Paul and Ramsey County for Election Office Management are outlined in Appendix C.

Initiative, Referendum and Recall

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 8. INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM, AND RECALL

Sec. 8.02.4.

Any person whose name appears on a petition may withdraw his or her name by a statement in writing filed with the city clerk before the clerk advises the council as to the sufficiency of the petition. Any name appearing on any petition which does not comply with the foregoing requirements, except as to ward or legislative district and precinct designation, shall be stricken, and no names shall be counted which have not been verified.

Sec. 8.03. Determination of sufficiency.

Any petition seeking initiative, referendum and recall hereunder shall be deemed received by the council when it is filed with the city clerk, for which filing there shall be no fee. Immediately upon receipt of the petition the city clerk shall examine the petition as to its sufficiency and report to the council within twenty (20) calendar days, except that in the case of a recall petition it shall be thirty (30) calendar days. Upon receiving the report, the council shall determine by resolution the sufficiency of the petition.

Sec. 8.08. Disposition of insufficient petitions.

If the council determines that the petition is insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall deliver a copy of the petition to the person or persons therein named to receive it, together with a written statement of its defects. The persons circulating the petition shall be given thirty (30) days in which to file additional signature papers and to correct the petition in all other particulars. If at the end of that period the council finds that the petition is still insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall file the petition in the clerk's office and notify the persons previously notified of the defects. The final finding of insufficiency or irregularity shall not prejudice the filing of a new petition for the same purpose nor, in the case of an initiated or referred ordinance or resolution, shall it prevent the council from referring the ordinance or resolution to the voters at the next regular or special election at its option.

Finding

The CSO works with the County to comply with the requirements for initiative, referendum and recall. The only petitions found to be insufficient in recent years by the Office were the baseball stadium and billboard petitions. Insufficiency is communicated to the person responsible for the petition by a letter or phone call from the County.

Abandoned Property

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 14. Impoundment and Disposal of Abandoned Personal Property

Sec. 14.03. Abandoned personal property.

It shall be illegal to abandon personal property on property owned by the city. Disposition of this property is in the public interest and the method to be used is to impound the property and dispose of it according to this chapter.

Sec. 14.04. Process.

(a) Whenever the head of any department may deem it in the best interests of the city, he or she may order the impounding of any abandoned personal property located on city property. The department head or his or her designee shall take reasonable steps to attempt to identify the owner of the property and, where the owner has been identified, issue a written notice to the owner that the city intends to impound the property. If no response is received within twenty (20) days of such notice, or no owner can be identified, the department head or designee shall post a notice describing the property in the office of the city clerk...

Finding

Currently notices of abandoned personal property, along with other public announcements, are posted on the bulletin board across from the Citizen Service Office on the southwest corner of the first floor of the City Hall.

Oath of Office and Bonds for City Officials

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 17. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 17.03. Oath of office.

Every elected or appointed official of the city shall, before entering upon the duties of his office, take and subscribe an oath in substantially the following form: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) to support the constitutions of the United States and of the State of Minnesota and to discharge faithfully the duties devolving upon me as (. . . title of office . . .) of the City of Saint Paul to the best of my judgment and ability."

Sec. 17.05. Official bonds.

The mayor and such other officers or employees of the city as may be required by administrative ordinance shall each, before entering upon the duties of his or her respective office or employment, give a bond to the city as security for the faithful performance of his or her official duties and the safekeeping of public funds. The bonds shall be in such form and amount as may be fixed by the council and may be either individual or blanket bonds at the discretion of the council. They shall be approved by the council, approved as to form by the city attorney, and filed with the city clerk. The premiums on such bonds shall be paid by the city.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan
Administer oath of office to all elected and appointed officials.

Findings

- 1) Staff reported the Director tries to stay aware of newly appointed and elected City officials and departments inform the CSO of relevant staff changes. However, there are instances when the City Clerk was not notified and therefore some appointed City officials have not taken the oath in a timely manner.
- 2) According to staff, they have never requested nor received a bond from any City Official, nor were they aware of Charter Section 17.05. However, staff from the Risk Management Division stated that all City staff, not just elected officials, are currently covered under a fidelity bond. This fidelity bond is required by the State for public treasurers, and the City has chosen to cover all staff under it as the additional cost is minimal.

Recommendation

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate if the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Petitions Regarding Public Nuisances

**Saint Paul Admin. Code Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances
Sec. 91.03. Petition procedure.**

(a) Upon the filing of a petition in writing signed by sixty (60) percent of the owners and tenants of all private residences, dwellings and apartment houses located in an area one block in any direction from the alleged public nuisance, and upon verification of those signatures by the office of the city clerk, the council shall schedule a public hearing concerning the allegations set forth. All petitions, including those containing an insufficient number of signatures, shall be referred to the council by the city clerk. With respect to petitions containing less than the sixty (60) percent required signatures, the council may, in its discretion, accept the petition and schedule a public hearing or return the petition to the petitioners for additional signatures.

Finding

We asked staff about the process for placing a public nuisance hearing on the Council agenda. The Assistant City Clerk sends a resolution to the Council stating the number of legitimate signatures on the petition for a hearing. The Council then decides whether to schedule a public hearing if it is signed by less than the required 60 percent of homeowners and tenants within a one block radius of the alleged public nuisance. The Office reports it has a good working relationship with Council staff and has no problem scheduling public hearings. It was also reported the organizer of the petition is notified as to when the public hearing will be held.

Trade Secret Information

**Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information
Sec. 94.01. Definitions.**

Unless specifically defined in this section, the terms contained in this chapter shall be given the definitions as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Section 13.02.

Designees: Individuals designated by the mayor to work on, process, examine or study the economic development or regulatory matter in which trade secret information may be filed.

Responsible authority: The city clerk, who shall be responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter.

Trade secret information: Government data, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that:

- (1) Was supplied by the affected individual, person or organization;
- (2) Is the subject of efforts by the individual or organization that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy; and
- (3) Derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other individuals, persons or organizations who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use.

Sec. 94.02. Classification of data.

All documents, data, studies and other information supplied to the city which the person or firm regards as "trade secret" information within the definition in Section 94.01 should be stamped by the person or firm seeking protection "Trade Secret Information--Not for Public Disclosure." The marking must appear on each page sought to be protected...

Trade Secret Information, Cont.

Sec. 94.03. Notice.

All designees who have access to trade secret information will be given a copy of the ordinance from which this chapter derives by the responsible authority.

Sec. 94.04. Access.

Access to "trade secret" information shall be limited to designees. Access shall be for the purpose of reviewing a economic development project, permit application or other filing, or for other administrative work pertaining to a economic development project or regulatory matter. The trade secret information may be made available to a representative of a consultant hired by the city and designated by the responsible authority as a designee, but only if the consultant's representative has signed a nondisclosure agreement and a copy of the signed agreement is provided to the person or firm who filed the document prior to the consultant's access to trade secret information. If the consultant's representative has signed the nondisclosure agreement, the city will not be held responsible for the actions of such consultant and/or its representative with regard to the nondisclosure agreement.

Sec. 94.05. Storage.

All "trade secret" information filed in accordance with Section 94.02, and copies thereof, shall be stored when not in actual use in locked file cabinets under the exclusive control of the designee of the city. A control sheet identifying the designees who are authorized to access the information will be attached.

Finding

Staff admit the Office has not been adhering to its responsibilities in relation to trade secret data. Senior leaders do consider this an important issue and cited the Peanuts on Parade exhibits as an example given that the memorabilia and the format were closely controlled by the Schultz family and was protected for commercial reasons. Staff stated the CSO will be working with the City Attorney's Office to enhance the role the Office plays with respect to trade secret storage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Public Information Meetings

Saint Paul Administrative Code Appendices Chapter A - 3. All Public Meetings - Notice Requirements
 WHEREAS, The council deems it necessary and in the public interest that advance notice be forwarded to elected officials prior to the holding of public informational meetings by any department bureau, agency or committee of the City of Saint Paul, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the council of the City of Saint Paul:

1. That any city personnel arranging or causing to be held any public information meeting by or on behalf of any city department, bureau, agency, board, commission or advisory committee shall provide a minimum of five (5) days' advance written notice of such meeting to all members of the city council, the mayor, the city clerk and the city attorney. Five-day notice may be waived in the event of an emergency. The city clerk shall first be notified if any such public informational meeting is to be held in the council chambers located within the City Hall and Court House.
2. For purposes of such notice, public informational meetings shall mean any meeting for which members of the general public receive notice or invitation to appear for the purpose of presentation, testimony, consultation or otherwise.
3. Such notice shall contain the date, time and place of the meeting to be held and a brief statement of the subject matter to be discussed.
4. The city clerk is hereby directed to forward copies of this resolution to the mayor, all department heads, the chairmen of every board, commission or advisory committee to the city.

Finding

The Planning and Economic Development Department maintains the Early Notification List, a list containing everyone and every organization that is to receive notification of public meetings. Departments are directed to contact PED for the labels when they need to send notice of a public meeting. PED also maintains a Neighborhood Notification List which contains contact names and addresses for all of the district councils. The CSO receives notices from agencies and commissions if the meeting is to be held in City Hall, compiles the meeting list, and places notices on the public bulletin board, the City's web page and in the *Saint Paul Legal Ledger*.

Campaign Contributions

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions

Sec. 28.02. Administration.

(a) *City clerk to administer.* The city clerk shall be in charge of administering and carrying out the various provisions of this chapter.

(b) *City clerk; powers and duties.* The city clerk shall have the following duties and powers:

- (1) Prescribe, adopt and distribute the form for registration forms, statements and reports required to be filed which shall, whenever possible, be identical to or consistent with state forms.
- (2) Receive and accept for filing in the city clerk's office the registration forms, statements and reports required by this chapter.
- (3) Make the statements and reports filed with the city clerk available for public inspection and copying. A reasonable charge for the cost of copying may be charged.
- (4) Preserve all statements and reports for a period of four (4) years from the date of filing, or, in the event that the committee represents a candidate or party which permanently terminates activity within two (2) years, then said records and accounts shall be kept for two (2) years.
- (5) Report findings of noncompliance to the elections board.

Finding

It was reported that campaign contribution forms are turned over to the County, though the CSO retains a copy for five years after an individual leaves office. This is in keeping with State requirements for document storage.

Condominium Conversion Notices

Saint Paul Leg. Code Ch. 48. Condominium and Conversion Condominium Notice Filing Requirements**Sec. 48.04. Notice of condominium creation or conversion.**

(a) A declarant of a conversion condominium shall give the city notice of the conversion or intent to convert a building to a condominium no later than one hundred twenty (120) days before the declarant requires any tenant or subtenant in possession in such building to vacate.

(b) A "notice of condominium conversion" in the form required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 515A.4-110(a), together with a "supplemental notice of condominium conversion" in the form provided for in paragraph (c) of this section, filed in the office of the city clerk shall constitute the notice required by paragraph (a).

Sec. 48.05. Certification of compliance.

Upon the filing of the notice, supplemental notice of condominium conversion or statement in lieu thereof as required in section 48.04, the city clerk shall provide the declarant with a signed, written statement certifying compliance with the filing requirements of this chapter. The clerk shall transmit copies of each certificate given and each notice, supplement notice and statement filed to the housing information office, the division of planning and division of housing of the department of planning and economic development, and the division of housing and building code enforcement of the department of community services of the city.

Finding

Staff reported the condominium conversion form is being filed in the CSO on a regular basis. The Office also provides information by copying the relevant sections of the code and giving it to interested parties. According to staff, supplemental notice of condominium conversion is sent to those departments identified in the Code, though technically those departments do not exist as outlined in the ordinance.

Recommendation

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS DIVISION

The Marketing and Promotions Division is involved in promoting City events to residents and visitors. They also work with other organizations such as the Capital City Partnership to market to businesses considering locating in Saint Paul, and with the Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau to market events to visitors. In addition, they have the task of promoting Saint Paul as a place to produce films. While many of the results of their work are visible, efforts such as Peanuts on Parade take an enormous amount of staff time, sometimes more than anticipated because some programs have achieved an overwhelming, unanticipated level of success.

Marketing and Promotions Policies

The Marketing and Promotions Division has very few policies which pertain to its functions. The only policies we discovered were those found in the 2000 Budget, listed in the box below and our findings and recommendations follow. It is problematic that there are no references in City Code to the responsibilities of this Division. They are a part of the administrative branch of the City's government and therefore must have enabling legislation outlining their responsibilities.

2000 Proposed Budget: CSO Strategic Plans related to Marketing and Promotions
Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.

2000 City Budget: Marketing and Promotions Activity Performance Plan

- Continue to work collaboratively with the City Council and neighborhood associations for continued growth of their respective events and marketing/promotional goals.
- Continue to improve web activity with departments and neighborhood organizations.
- Implement payment systems and expand City departments' use of forms and processing software.
- Continue semi-monthly publication "City Update" but decrease printed quantity by whatever percentage of City employees that have Intranet Access. Target distribution to City employees without City Intranet Access.
- The "Resident's Guide" will be published annually (not semi-annually), all cost savings will be directed toward a larger production run and broader distribution.
- Keep film liaison staff and associated budget in Marketing and Promotions Division.
- Work in collaboration with the Minnesota Film Board to secure production contracts in the Saint Paul Market.

Findings

- 1) The Marketing and Promotions Division has been working with neighborhoods to assist them in promoting their events. In the past, the City has simply provided monetary assistance to neighborhoods, but they have recently begun to work more closely with the neighborhoods to provide marketing services and help the neighborhoods market events more successfully.
- 2) The webmasters are part of Marketing and Promotions, and are working with various departments to improve their websites. They are also helping departments expand their services to be able to accept payments on-line and conduct other transactions over the Internet.

- 3) The CSO is now publishing the "City Update" on the City's Intranet site.
- 4) The CSO is no longer producing hard copies of the "Resident's Guide," as all of the information is available on the City's website. This is contrary to their objective to produce a larger number of guides once a year, rather than fewer twice a year. They state they are no longer producing hard copies because the information is available on the Internet. They have also stated that numerous copies were left over from the previous printing when the Guide was distributed to libraries, convenience stores, and other such locations.
- 5) The film liaison staff were transferred from the Planning and Economic Development to the Citizen Service Office in 1999. There is no talk, at this time, of moving them elsewhere. This does not seem appropriate as a budget objective.
- 6) Marketing and Promotions staff are active in seeking film production contracts in the Saint Paul market.
- 7) As mentioned in the introduction to this section, there is no specific language in the City Code establishing the responsibilities of the Marketing and Promotions Division. This is a glaring oversight.

Recommendations

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

The Code Enforcement Programs Division (Code Enforcement) of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for ensuring that residents and property owners of Saint Paul observe the property maintenance laws of the City. Code Enforcement is responsible for investigating interior and exterior code violations at single-family and duplex properties in Saint Paul, and exterior violations on all other properties in the City.³ The chapters of the City Code that Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing are listed in Appendix A.

Code Enforcement has been a division of the Citizen Service Office for about two years. In the past, Code Enforcement was a division of the City's Public Health Division. When the City and County Health departments merged in 1997, Housing Code Enforcement was administratively moved to the Department of Fire and Safety Services, though they were never actually physically relocated to the Fire Department. They remained within the Fire Department's administration for about a year. In 1999, they were moved, both physically and administratively, to the Citizen Service Office. Senior leaders stated one of the reasons for this decision was over half the complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are related to property code violations, and therefore it made sense to have the two divisions under the same department. Lieutenant Warren Bostrom was also brought in from the Police Department to oversee Code Enforcement's technology upgrade activities. About a year later, Lt. Bostrom retired, and Lt. Mike Morehead was brought in to manage Code Enforcement. Inspectors are currently housed both in City Hall and at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices. The current organizational structure of Code Enforcement is illustrated in the chart on page 26.

The process for checking, recording and correcting code violations varies based on the situation, but some common elements exist. When a complaint is received by Information and Complaint staff, it is logged into the EXL system, printed by Code Enforcement support staff and given to the appropriate inspector.⁴ Code Enforcement support staff play a vital role in maintaining records for the Division. The inspectors do not do their own data entry, and support staff are required to work with EXL, an arcane, inefficient computer system, also used by Information and Complaint Division staff. They also retrieve hard copy files for the inspectors and are generally responsible for ensuring that operations run smoothly.

An inspector's day often starts with a visit to the office to review complaints received and prepare for the property visits scheduled for the day. The inspectors prioritize complaints based on the severity of the situation described in the complaint and the date it was received. He or she may make phone calls to verify appointments and may add more property visits based on new complaints received. The inspectors will also do the paperwork from previous visits and turn it in to supervisors and support staff for processing.

Upon visiting a property, the inspector will determine whether to issue a verbal order, a written correction notice, a citation, a summary abatement order, substantial abatement order, or a

³ The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services is primarily responsible for interior code violations of residential properties with three or more units and all commercial properties.

⁴ The City is divided into census tracts, and inspectors are assigned to specific tracts.

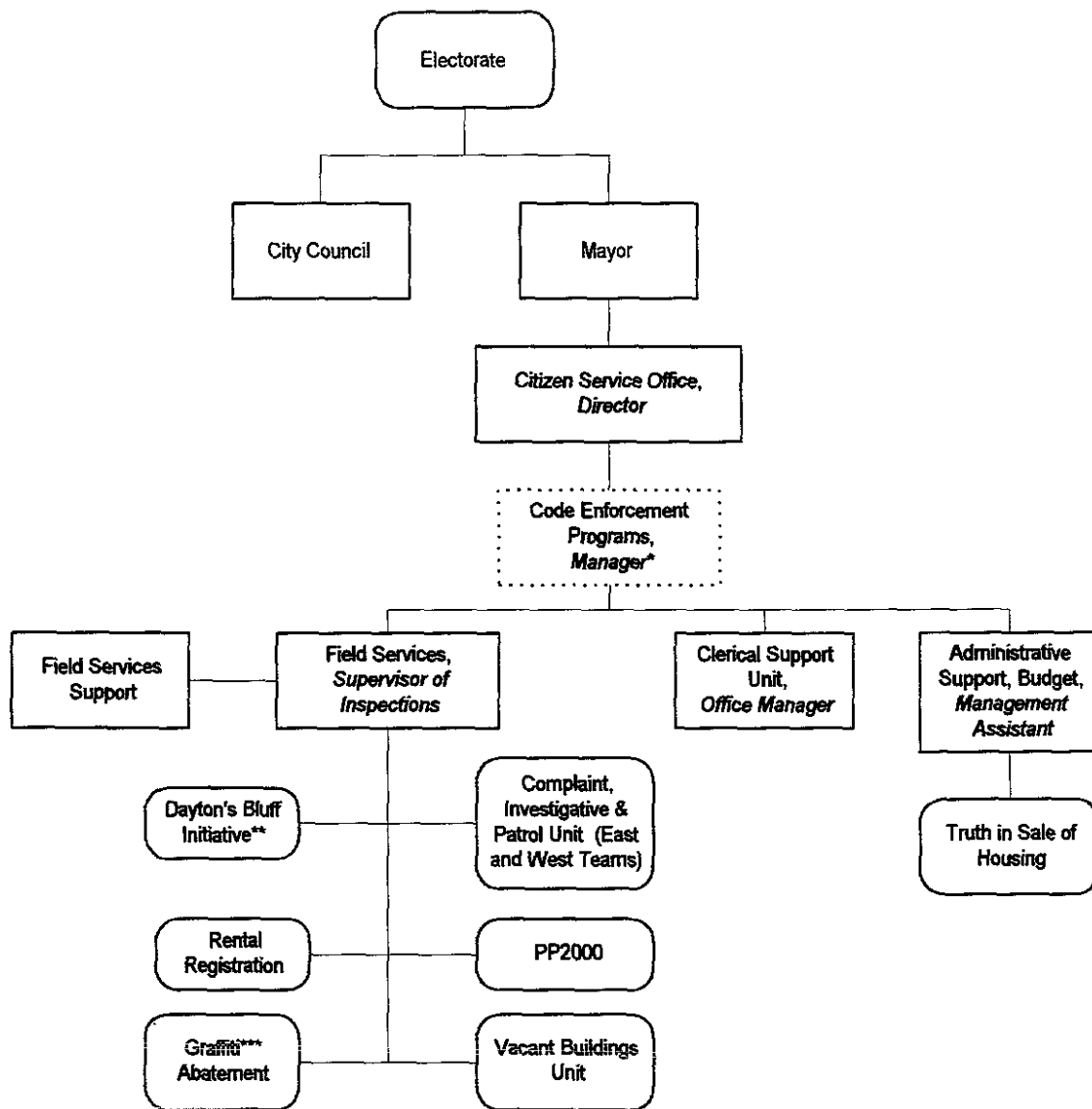
vehicle abatement order.⁵ The method, determined by the inspector, is based on the past history of property code violations at the property, whether the property owner seems responsive and willing to correct the violation, and the severity of the violation (whether it is a life-safety concern). With a summary abatement, if the property owner fails to eliminate the nuisance condition, a work order is issued. The inspectors sometimes take pictures and videotape the situation, both for use as evidence and to show the clean-up crew the problem and what needs to be done. If the clean-up work is done by the City or by one of its contractors, the fee for the work is billed to the property owner. If they fail to pay the fee, it is assessed to the property owner's taxes.

If it is determined the work required to restore a property to meet the minimum property maintenance code requirements equals or exceeds \$3,000, the property may receive a substantial abatement. If the owner fails to correct the problems for which the abatement was issued, the City Council is notified that substantial abatement is necessary and appropriate, and a hearing before the Council is scheduled. After the hearing, the Council will adopt a resolution describing what abatement action, if any, the Council deems appropriate. If the resolution calls for abatement action, the Council may either order the city to take the abatement action or set a time within which the nuisance must be abated by the owner and provide that if corrective action is not taken within the specified time, the City will abate the nuisance. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the council shall, by resolution, provide for the collection of those costs in the same manner as a special assessment. If it is possible the building will have to be demolished, the process also involves some additional notification requirements, and the Vacant Buildings Unit may assume responsibility for monitoring the property.

A property owner or tenant can appeal an inspector's decision by filing an appeal with the City Clerk, who then sends it to the City's Legislative Hearing Officer (LHO). The appellant then appears before the LHO, who makes a decision and forwards it to the City Council. The appellant, if dissatisfied by the decision of the LHO, may appeal to the City Council. If dissatisfied with the Council's decision, he or she may file for review by the District Court. If the property owner or resident refuses to comply with the orders of the enforcement officer, the City may prosecute them criminally. A housing court has been established especially to hear violations of the housing codes. Code Enforcement works closely with the City Attorney's Office to build the case to prosecute the offending property owner or tenant.

⁵A summary abatement is generally issued for garbage and tall grass and weeds. A substantial abatement is issued when the value of the work required exceeds \$3,000. A vehicle abatement is an order for an vehicle owner to remove their inappropriately parked vehicle.

Code Enforcement Organizational Chart



* Code Enforcement staff are assigned to this area to support the Graffiti Abatement program in Public Works.

** The Dayton's Bluff Initiative was scheduled to run through the end of December, 2000.

*** The Manager is a loaned official from the Police Department, and is not a permanent position within the CSO. Therefore, if the position is returned to the Police Department, the other positions would report directly to the CSO Director.

Overlapping Interests of Code Enforcement and Other Departments

The work of Code Enforcement relates closely to the work of other departments throughout the City. For instance, Code Enforcement may receive calls regarding properties about which the Police Department has also received complaints. If the calls are about a suspected drug house, the two departments will coordinate efforts through the Police Department's FORCE unit⁶, which coordinates the City's efforts to reduce street-level drug-related crime. Two Code Enforcement inspectors are on call for the FORCE unit at all times, and check in with them daily to review cases and determine whether they need to accompany officers to execute warrants.

Code Enforcement also works with the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection (LIEP). The two offices coordinate efforts when a property that has been cited for code violations applies for building permits, or when a registered vacant buildings requires permits to restore the property to the City's minimum property maintenance standards. The two offices have a conflict over building permits that remain open for long periods of time. Code Enforcement views them as problematic, feels they create blight, and states there are numerous cases of this in the City, while LIEP suggests that there are relatively few of these long-term open permits and they are not that problematic.

The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services overlaps some responsibilities with Code Enforcement, particularly related to vacant buildings. Fire Prevention staff check vacant buildings every 90 days when a Certificate of Occupancy is revoked, and the Vacant Buildings Unit monitors all vacant buildings every 30 days. Vacant buildings pose a substantial risk for fires, and the Fire Prevention Division is vigilant about monitoring these buildings, as is the Code Enforcement Division.

Code Enforcement and the Parks and Recreation Division work together through the abatement process. Parks and Recreation receives work orders from Code Enforcement for tall grass and weeds and garbage violations, and Parks and Recreation performs the abatement.

Finally, Code Enforcement also interacts with the community through block clubs and district councils. The Weed and Seed program, a federally funded program that provides money directly to neighborhoods for clean-up and other neighborhood improvement activities, allows them to work closely with selected communities. The community will contract with Code Enforcement for increased services such as targeting basic code violations. Code Enforcement is also involved with communities through other special programs, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, (a short-term program in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood that encourages residents to monitor the property maintenance standards of the area) and neighborhood surveys (code enforcement sweeps), which are discussed on pages 44-46.

Code Enforcement Policies

We found Code Enforcement in compliance with most relevant policies, but we will point out a few instances in which they either need to change or solidify their practices, or where it seems a

⁶Focusing Our Resources on Community Empowerment

change in the Code would be the most logical solution. In most cases, we have listed only the sections of the ordinance or policy with which we found compliance problems.⁷

2000 Proposed Budget Program Objectives

The City's annual budget is an official City document that contains not only the spending and revenue projections of all City departments and offices, but also their ongoing and project objectives. Much of the information contained in the 2000 budget activities for Code Enforcement is simply a description of the services they provide, with a few goal-oriented objectives included. A short discussion of the objectives and whether they are currently being met follows this box. Many of the priorities and objectives will be discussed in other sections of this report. Here we will highlight only those not discussed in other subsequent sections.

Code Enforcement Objectives

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Property Code Enforcement

This program enforces minimum housing and health code on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties. The purpose of this program is to protect the public health and safety and maintain and improve the housing in Saint Paul in order to make the City a safe place to live.

The program priorities are to:

1. Investigate citizen complaints and respond to calls for service.
2. Case manage chronic problem properties.
3. Provide support to police officers, R.C.H.S., R.C.H.D. (Ramsey County Human Services, Ramsey County Health Department).
4. Conduct proactive inspection patrols.

These goals are accomplished by:

1. Uniform, consistent enforcement of the Legislative Code, State Statutes and federal regulations.
2. Working in collaboration with police to solve neighborhood problems.
3. Working with district councils, organized block clubs, problem property committees, landlord and tenant advocacy groups and individuals to eliminate urban blight.
4. Working with child and adult protection to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm.
5. Participating in problem property resolution meetings.

2000 City Budget: Property Code Enforcement: Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of excessive use of service (excessive consumption) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has developed a program called PP2000 to handle some chronic problem properties. This program will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

⁷ The list of all the codes relevant to Code Enforcement are listed in Appendix A.

- 2) Code Enforcement works with the Police Department through its support of the FORCE unit, as mentioned earlier in the introduction to this section.
- 3) Code Enforcement works closely with the Ramsey County Human Services Department when they discover situations where children and vulnerable adults may be at risk. In some of the ride-alongs done by Council Research, we witnessed the open dialog inspectors have with child protection workers, and were impressed with the care the inspectors we visited with took in these very difficult situations.
- 4) Code Enforcement is not meeting the objective stating they will reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols. Code Enforcement is currently unable to gather any meaningful data on complaints. Therefore, it is difficult to know if they are meeting the objective to reduce the number of calls. They also have not been able to do routine proactive surveillance patrols due to a lack of funding and limited staff. Inspectors may look for non-reported violations when they are checking the reported violations, but they do not have specific time set aside to patrol their areas. Sweeps have, in recent years, been done at the request of Councilmembers or neighborhoods, but beyond those Code Enforcement finds them difficult to conduct. Code Enforcement recently determined they have some unexpected financial resources because of some open staff positions. As a result, they have asked Councilmembers to determine whether they would like sweeps conducted in their respective wards.

Recommendation

See Recommendations 53-56 in the Information and Analysis Chapter, on pages 68-69, which address data collection and analysis.

Minimum Property Maintenance Standards and Excessive Consumption Fees

Leg. Code Chapter 34: Minimum Property Maintenance Standards for All Structures and Premises

Sec. 34.25. Conflict with other ordinances.

In any case where a provision of this chapter is found to be in conflict with a provision of any zoning, building, fire, safety or health ordinance, chapter or code of this city, the provision which establishes the higher standard for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the people shall prevail.

Sec. 34.08.5 Excessive Consumption of exterior inspection services, fee and liability.

(a) The city shall be entitled to collect its costs of enforcement from a property owner who consumes excessive exterior inspection services. An excessive consumption of exterior inspection services occurs at each element of an exterior inspection cycle beginning after:

- (1) Written notice of a violation is served under section 34.08.3 following an initial inspection; and
- (2) Three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles are performed at the same location within a consecutive twelve-month period after the initial inspection; and
- (3) During each of the three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles under subparagraph (2), the enforcement officer finds violations of section 34.08.3 which are either new violations or violations based upon failure to correct previous violations.

(b) The fee for the fourth inspection cycle shall be two hundred dollars (\$200.00). The fee for each inspection cycle thereafter shall be fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(c) Owners who have received a notice of warning shall be jointly and severally liable for the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee.

(d) The amount of the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee shall be a debt owed to the city by the responsible person or persons.

(e) Action under this section does not preclude any other civil or criminal enforcement procedure.

(f) A new owner who has duly recorded the instrument of conveyance for the subject property with the Ramsey County Department of Records and Revenue within the time provided in Minn. Stat. §§ 507.235 shall not be liable for any excessive consumption fees arising from inspection services provided to the previous owner of the subject property.

Sec. 34.08.3. Initial exterior inspection by enforcement officer.

When an enforcement officer conducts an initial inspection of an exterior property area and determines that violations of section 34.08 exist, the enforcement officer shall, in addition to any other action the enforcement officer may undertake, serve written notice of the violation in conformance with the requirements set forth in section 34.21 of this chapter.

The initial notice must contain a notice of warning informing the owner that subsequent exterior property area inspections at that same location within the next consecutive twelve (12) months may be deemed an excessive consumption of exterior inspection services and that the owner may be liable for an exterior inspection services fee.

Findings

1) When asked how they handle situations where Chapter 34 conflicts with other relevant sections of the code, we received varying answers. Some staff stated they use the most stringent code, others stated they use whatever requirements make the most sense given the situation. Staff stated that perhaps the most problematic of these situations relates to property code violations in historic districts. The inspectors may order repairs to structures governed by the historic preservation code. The Historic Preservation Commission may put strict requirements on the materials that can be used, and the property owner may not be able to afford those required changes. Thus, the repairs may go undone and the inspector may let violations go that in a non-historical area he or she would have ordered. This appears to be a case where Code Enforcement is not consistent in their enforcement of the Code.

2) Code Enforcement is no longer enforcing the excessive consumption portion of the Property Maintenance Code. They have found it impossible to collect the fees in most cases. According to current City Code, these fees cannot be assessed to the property taxes of the violator, therefore there is no mechanism to ensure the fees are collected. Code Enforcement has stated that enforcement of the provision costs more than they would recover from the fee, especially if violators do not pay after repeated attempts by the City to collect the fees. It is unclear to some inspectors as to whether the policy is intended to penalize or just to recover costs. No matter the intent, the fact remains that the fee is not recovering costs because violators are not compelled to pay, and the limited revenues generated are not covering the inspections costs incurred.

3) Code Enforcement inspectors sometimes give oral notices of a violation. This happens in two situations. In the first type of situation, an inspector will simply tell a property owner to cut the grass or weeds or clean up the garbage, and may not follow up with a written order if it seems the property owner is willing to comply. In the other situation, an inspector may come across an emergency situation where clean up needs to happen immediately, such as a dwelling which is filled with garbage and children are living in it. An inspector will tell the occupant to clean-up and then will send a written order as soon as possible. Clearly the second situation is not of concern as a written record is made of the incident. Our concern with the first situation described is the lack of record of the violation, particularly if the problem persists or if other problems occur. The information is also important for data collection and analysis purposes. We are also concerned the property owner may not receive the information on the appeals process if they are not given a written notice, as the appeals information is contained on the notice.

Recommendations

Recommendation #14: Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Chapter 42. Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Sec. 42.01. Definitions.

Unless otherwise expressly stated, the following terms shall, for the purposes of this Chapter 42, have the meanings indicated in this section.

- (1) *Dwelling*. Any one- or two-family rental dwelling which is not occupied by the owner thereof. Dwelling includes both the building or structure and the land upon which it is located.
- (2) *Nuisance dwelling*. Any dwelling which has been found, upon inspection by the fire chief, to be in violation of any provision of any applicable safety code on four (4) separate dates in any twelve-month period.
- (3) *Fire chief*. Fire chief includes the said chief, as well as the official appointed as fire marshal, and also any inspector under his or her supervision and control, and also includes any city officer or employee charged with responsibility for the enforcement of a safety code...

Sec. 42.02. Registration of a nuisance dwelling.

(a) *Registration*. Any dwelling meeting the definition of a nuisance dwelling shall be deemed on the date of the fourth inspection in such twelve-month period to be registered as a nuisance dwelling, and subject to the additional provisions of this chapter, including the payment of a registration fee.

Such registration shall remain in effect for a twelve-month period beginning on the date of registration as a nuisance building.

(b) *Additional requirements*. Any dwelling deemed registered as provided in subsection (a) above shall also be subject to the requirements of section 33.05 of the Legislative Code relating to occupancy so long as it is registered and for a period of twelve (12) months after registration terminates. Such registered nuisance dwelling shall be required to have a certificate of occupancy issued by the fire chief within twelve (12) months after the date on which it is deemed registered. Failure to have such certificate issued within such twelve (12) months shall subject such dwelling and its owner to all enforcement and remedial measures which may be applicable under law or ordinance.

Finding

According to the City Attorney's Office and Code Enforcement staff, Chapter 42 was the first attempt to institute a rental registration program in Saint Paul. Since Chapter 42 was last updated in 1997, a new rental registration program has gone into effect. In 1999, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code was enacted requiring all non owner-occupied one and two unit dwellings to register with the City and obtain a rental dwelling unit registration certificate. If the dwelling is deemed a nuisance according to Minn. Stat. § 617.18, the certificate may be revoked, and the property may no longer be occupied. Since this chapter regulates all one and two-unit dwellings, including those deemed nuisances, it appears Chapter 42 could be repealed. However, since there are some problems with the current registration program, described later in this section, it would be best to wait until the program is fully operable before repealing Chapter 42. Chapter 42, as it is currently written, is the responsibility of the Fire Chief. However, as Code Enforcement is no longer under the administration of the Fire Chief, the language in the ordinance is incorrect.

Recommendation

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Nuisance Abatement

Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement

Sec. 45.08. Authority to abate.

(a) The city is authorized to abate nuisances in accordance with the procedures set forth in sections 45.10, 45.11 and 45.12. All abatement costs incurred shall be charged against the property as a special assessment to be collected in the manner provided for in the City Charter, Chapter 14. Except when a request is filed for a review of an emergency abatement, the assessment hearing shall be replaced by the hearing provided for in section 45.12.

(b) Abatement may include, but shall not be limited to, removal, cleaning, extermination, cutting, mowing, grading, sewer repairs, draining, securing, boarding unoccupied structures, barricading or fencing, removing dangerous portions of structures and demolition of dangerous structures or abandoned buildings.

(c) Abatement costs shall include specifically, but not exclusively, the cost of the abatement; the cost of investigation, including title searches, inspections and testing; the cost of notification including service costs; filing costs; attorney fees, witness fees and appraisers' fees; and administrative costs.

Finding

Currently, the structure of the abatement fees does not, in practice, include costs associated with Code Enforcement; rather it includes only the costs incurred by Parks and Recreation, Public Works or the private contractor. Some discussion has occurred recently about whether the fee should include costs incurred by Code Enforcement as well, such as an inspector's time and mileage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Truth in Sale of Housing

Chapter 189. Truth-in-Sale of Housing

Summary: This ordinance requires that all dwellings for sale in the City of Saint Paul have an evaluation completed to determine the condition of the structural, electrical, and mechanical systems of the dwelling, and that the evaluation be displayed at the dwelling for potential buyers to review. The evaluation must be done by a certified truth-in-sale of housing evaluator who is certified by the City.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Truth-in-Sale of Housing

This activity:

1. Records, processes, and files evaluation reports and fees submitted by the evaluators.
2. Investigates complaints and initiates disciplinary action against the independent evaluators when appropriate.
3. Performs ongoing reviews of materials, insurance, forms and continuing education credits.
4. Serves as secretary/treasurer to the Truth-In-Housing Board and administers certification exams as directed by the Board.
5. Notifies the Division of Fire Prevention when a single-family homes does not have hard-wired smoke detectors.

2000 City Budget: Truth-In-Sale of Housing: 2000 Objectives

1. Conduct compliance investigations to assure compliance by home sellers.
2. Conduct compliance investigations of the independent evaluators which assures conformity to the certification requirements.

Finding

The Truth in Sale of Housing function of Code Enforcement is generally in compliance both with the Code and the Budget documents. They have an administrative staff person assigned to the program who collects the disclosure and insurance forms and tracks the educational requirements for the evaluators. However, Code Enforcement does not currently have an inspector assigned to Truth in Sale of Housing inspections and are, therefore, not able to conduct the compliance investigations, though they are investigating complaints. During the interview process, staff stated that an inspector will be assigned half-time to the program. Staff stated they did not have the financial resources to assign an inspector. However, an ordinance allowing the Truth-in-Sale of Housing Board to set the fees, rather than having them established in ordinance, was enacted by the City Council and is set to go into effect November 2000. It is believed the fees will be set at a level to cover the administrative costs.

Recommendation

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul *Comprehensive Plan*

The Housing Plan Chapter of the City of Saint Paul's *Comprehensive Plan* contains a number of policies which relate to the work of Code Enforcement. The Plan is an official City document, and its policies are City policies to which departments have an obligation to comply. The following is a brief discussion of each policy and relevant recommendations.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3a. Additional resources should be devoted to the existing code enforcement unit to be used in partnership with neighborhood based improvement efforts such as sweeps, Weed and Seed and residential street paving.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has limited resources, and has stated they are only able to partner with other organizations if overtime funding is available or if the organization provides some funding for Code Enforcement's participation. In the past, Code Enforcement has assisted some City departments in their neighborhood improvement efforts, such as the Police Department's HEAT⁸ program. Code Enforcement expressed frustration with the Police Department in relation to the HEAT program, as no funding was provided for Code Enforcement to assist with the program, though the Police Department expected them to participate. However, we found that the resolution passed by the City Council providing funding for the HEAT program appropriates funds only to the Police Department. Therefore, the Police Department was not authorized to

⁸HEAT stands for Heavy Enforcement Activity for Thirty Days. It targets areas known to be hot spots for criminal activity. Part of the mission is to improve the quality of life by reducing crime.

provide any funds to Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement can choose not to provide support to the Police Department for this program, but the Police Department has stated the process of condemning buildings is easier if Code Enforcement is involved with the property at the onset of the HEAT program's involvement with the property.

Recommendations

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3b The use of administrative fines, rather than the current staff-intensive system that involves a series of warnings and re-inspections, to enforce the provisions of the housing code should be explored.

Finding

Code Enforcement currently imposes no administrative fines, although excessive consumption, described earlier, is an administrative fee. This *Comprehensive Plan* policy is a move away from a staff-intensive enforcement system to a system heavily reliant on fines as the enforcement mechanism. It also reflects a philosophy different than Code Enforcement's current approach which emphasizes direct inspector interaction with property owners to gain compliance, rather than the imposition of fines. This conflict may also reflect a lack of communication between the preparers of the *Comprehensive Plan* and Code Enforcement.

Recommendation

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3c City staff should work with the Housing Court to determine how best to achieve a higher success rate in achieving compliance with the housing code.

Finding

Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and the Housing Court have been working together to achieve compliance, and Code Enforcement states they have achieved a higher success rate, though we are not aware of any concrete data to support this assertion.

Recommendation

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3d Additional resources must be identified and used in partnership with those code enforcement efforts to assist property owners to make the necessary repairs and improvements before there is significant deterioration.

Finding

Some inspectors are proactive about giving out information to property owners regarding programs and sources of funding, such as low interest loans to assist with repairs, while other inspectors are not.

Recommendation

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.4 To the extent possible, funds available for residential rehabilitation should be focused on specific neighborhoods and coordinated with public infrastructure investments in order to achieve the maximum possible impact and leverage the greatest possible private investment. Through neighborhood-based planning processes, district councils, CDCs, business associations, block clubs and other key stakeholders should be involved in both the selection of focus areas and the development of the capital investment program.

Finding

Code Enforcement is not generally directly involved in the selection of focus areas for residential rehabilitation, but rather works with community groups and other departments once an area has been selected for targeted funding through programs like Weed and Seed. They have not been at all involved in the capital investment program. Code Enforcement staff mentioned two recommendations in response to this policy that we felt were excellent and should be pursued.

Recommendations

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the

value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5 Improve management and maintenance of rental property. Among the most vulnerable residential structures in the city's housing stock are its rental properties. Strategies to identify, train and support quality property management services in order to ensure ongoing maintenance and systematic investment should include:

- a. Financial incentives (e.g. rental rehab funds) or reduced inspection fees for well managed properties.
- c. Mechanisms to place vulnerable properties under community management and to build the capacity of community based organization to provide that management.

Finding

Staff suggested the Rental Registration program is one way to incorporate financial incentives for well-managed properties. Another staff person suggested a similar program be created for the vacant buildings program. For instance, the vacant building registration fee could be reduced if the building has few complaints or increased if the building has an excessive number of complaints.

Code Enforcement staff have strong objections to community management of properties.⁹ Through their experience, they believe the same code enforcement problems still existed under community management. This suggests community management may not address the true reasons for the problems.

Recommendation

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5d Training and mentoring for new and prospective landlords.

⁹ Community management occurs when a community group takes over the management of a property.

Finding

The Police Department has a program called Crime Free Multi-Housing which provides landlords and managers of rental properties with training on how to keep criminal activity out of their properties. The full three-day training session is typically held two times a year, but a more informal group meets monthly to discuss issues of concern. This group includes Police and Code Enforcement staff, other relevant City staff and, most importantly, landlords.

Housing Action Plan 2000

Priority Actions for 2000

3.21 Code enforcement

- a. Strengthen inter-department communication working toward a coordinated effort to deal with problem properties. Explore possibilities of forming small information focus groups of City staff to deal with specific problem properties.
- f. Explore resource opportunities to go along with code enforcement in order to encourage improvement of units and reduce evictions and demolition of units.

Findings

1) Pertaining to policy 3.21a, Code Enforcement currently participates in the Problem Properties Task Force (formerly the Information Exchange Group) with other departments such as Police and Fire to address problem properties. Over the years, there have been some philosophical differences within this group as to whether line staff should be communicating informally about these properties, or if the issues had to be dealt with at a higher management level. The feeling of the current chair of the task force is that it is more effective if line staff are encouraged to talk informally as they need to outside of the Task Force meetings. However, the Task Force meetings remain very important for ensuring that activities are formally coordinated.

Some issues have also been raised about sharing information in the group. Some members of the group prefer to keep information to themselves rather than share it with others. This group is vital to keeping communication open between organizations that often interact with the same properties and people at various times.

2) Code Enforcement has struggled with how much information is appropriate to provide property owners and renters in order to encourage improvements. It is a philosophical dilemma for them as they are an enforcement agency and are concerned about the mixed messages they may be giving tenants and property owners if on the one hand they are citing them for property violations and on the other they are promoting City programs to encourage rehabilitation. However, the writers of the *Housing Action Plan 2000* clearly feel it is important to provide property owners with information about resources that may be available to them.

Recommendation

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Special Programs & Units of Code Enforcement

Rental Registration Program

In October 1999, a new ordinance, Legislative Code Chapter 51, went into effect requiring all one and two-unit non-owner occupied residences to register with the City. Once the property is registered, the owner receives a rental dwelling unit registration certificate, which is to be renewed annually. Prior to this time, these properties were not required to register and it was difficult to track these properties and their compliance with housing codes. According to Minnesota State Statutes, the City of Saint Paul could require these properties to obtain a certificate of occupancy, which requires periodic inspections to renew the certificate.¹⁰ However, the City has chosen to require a similar yet less stringent dwelling unit registration certificate that allows for inspections only if the situation meets the specific criteria established in the ordinance. Code Enforcement and the Housing Information Office have been responsible for implementing this program, and numerous problems have been encountered. The following box contains the Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration program.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration Program

This program enforces Rental Dwelling Unit Registration, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code.

- Identifies one- and two- family non-owner occupied subject properties and requires registration and enforces collection of fees.
- Issues Registration Certificates.
- Revokes, suspends, cancels certificates on problem properties as provided for by Ordinance.
- Coordinates registration and certificate issuance with Building Inspection Division
- Collects revenue and registration data and shares this information with other agencies, departments and divisions.
- Provides program information to the public.

Findings

1) Since the program is relatively new, not all of the problems regarding Rental Registration have been worked out. Specifically, Code Enforcement was initially condemning properties if they failed to apply for a registration certificate. The City Attorney's Office has since determined they cannot condemn properties for this reason. Code Enforcement cannot condemn a building if they have not made the determination the building is "unfit for human habitation." There is a danger under the condemnation section of the City Code that the action could be construed as regulatory taking. This type of condemnation is separate from a situation where Code Enforcement has already conducted an inspection and determined that code violations exist. However, the ordinance is still enforceable as it is a misdemeanor if a qualifying property owner fails to register. Other legal issues are being discussed between Code Enforcement and the City Attorney's Office regarding the circumstances under which inspections can be done. Part of these conflicts stem from differences of opinion between staff administering the program.

¹⁰ The City requires a Certificate of Occupancy for rental dwellings with three or more units. This program is administered by the Fire Prevention Unit of the Fire and Safety Services Department.

- 2) We learned from staff that the computer program developed in-house and being used for the Rental Registration program is not effective and is very difficult to use. They are currently converting to the Freelantz software, but have found the systems to be incompatible. Thus, the information initially entered in the Rental Registration system has to be manually transferred to the Freelantz software.
- 3) The Rental Registration program is taking longer than anticipated to implement, partially due to staff resources having been dedicated to the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This Initiative was not anticipated when they were planning for Rental Registration.

Recommendations

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Vacant Buildings Unit

The function of the Vacant Buildings Unit (VBU) is to case manage vacant buildings until they are rehabilitated or demolished. The VBU was created in the mid-1960s as a result of a high profile case in which a woman was attacked by a group of men in an unattended, unlocked vacant building. Since its establishment, the VBU has always been part of Code Enforcement. It has traditionally been perceived by the Division's staff as an elite unit. This perception is due in part to the belief of some staff that management provides VBU employees with more respect and resources than regular Code Enforcement inspectors.

The VBU policies Council Research examined for this audit were found in the Saint Paul Legislative Code and the 2000 City Budget. Most of the Unit's budget objectives are reiterations of its responsibilities found in the City Code. Therefore, we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication. A list of the policies we reviewed are found in the following table.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: Designation of Services Provided/Ongoing Objectives

This Program enforces the Vacant Building Legislation, Chapter 43 of the Legislative Code.¹¹ This activity:

1. Identifies vacant buildings and "case manages" these properties to eliminate the public health and public safety issues associated with vacant buildings
2. Requires registration plans and collects registration fees.
3. Investigates complaints on these buildings.
4. Eliminates nuisance law violations on these properties.
5. Works with the City Council, District Councils, Neighborhood Groups, Block Clubs, Police, Fire, BIDD, and PED on these projects.
6. Collects and distributes the vacant building inventory lists.
7. Identifies "Nuisance Buildings" which are subject to demolition under activity 30251.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: 2001 Objectives

1. Conduct regular inspections of vacant buildings at a minimum of every other month as required by ordinance.
2. Continue regular, routine surveillance of all registered vacant buildings so citizens do not have to make complaints about nuisance conditions at these properties.

Findings

Case-Management of Vacant Buildings

Vacant Building Identification and Registration

1) Vacant Buildings are identified mainly through referrals from citizens, Code Enforcement inspectors, and the Police and Fire Departments. Once a building has been identified, a VBU inspector will evaluate the property in order to make a determination as to whether the property meets the legal definition of a vacant building or is only considered to be unoccupied.¹² Once a building has been declared vacant, the property owner is required by City Code to register the building within 30 days of the declaration. Vacant buildings are also categorized according to their habitability.¹³

2) The vacant building owner is informed of the registration requirement through a notice which states the owner may not occupy the building until it is considered habitable and meets the standards found in the Code. The notice also informs the property owner that he or she must complete a vacant building registration form and submit a fee of \$200. The registration form requires the building owner to provide his or her name, address, and a phone number so s/he may

¹¹The policies found in the 2000 Budget and the Legislative Code are virtually identical. Therefore we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication.

¹²An unoccupied building is a building which is not being used for legal occupancy but it is secured by normal means, that does not have outstanding housing code violations, and is maintained by the property owner.

¹³ The categories of vacant buildings are outlined in Appendix D.

be contacted in the event of an emergency. A placard is placed on the building stating the property has been declared a vacant building. The placard also identifies the name and phone number of the inspector responsible for the property.

Inspections and Complaints

- 1) Vacant buildings are inspected once every three to four weeks. During the inspections, VBU staff ensure that properties are secured, maintained and are not housing squatters. Also, inspectors perform periodic, random spot checks for squatters one night each week.
- 2) Complaints about vacant buildings typically come in through the Information and Complaint phone line. These complaints are entered into the EXL system and a notice is sent to the appropriate inspector. Complaints are also received directly by the inspectors from citizens who find their numbers on the placards posted on the buildings. Inspectors prioritize complaint inspections based on the severity of the situation and will typically conduct the investigation within 2 days of receiving the complaint.

Demolitions

- 1) If a property remains vacant for one year and there are no active building permits for the property, the demolition process may begin. To begin the process, an inspector will inspect the property for deficiencies which need to be corrected. A notice of the deficiencies will be sent to the property owner. The owner has 30 days in which to make the corrections. If, after 30 days the problems are not remedied, a resolution is placed on the City Council agenda announcing a public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer to be scheduled for 30 days later and a public hearing before the City Council. After the public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer, the matter comes before the City Council in the form of a resolution requiring the owner to repair or remove the building within 15 days. If the owner does not comply, the City may demolish the building.

Community Relationships

- 1) The Vacant Buildings Unit responds to City Council concerns on a case-by-case basis. If Councilmembers have questions or issues about a particular property, the VBU will respond as quickly as possible. The VBU also provides Councilmembers with a quarterly report of all vacant buildings in their wards. These quarterly reports are also sent to PED staff and other interested parties who are on a mailing list maintained by the Unit. In addition, the list is posted on the Code Enforcement web page.
- 2) VBU staff attempt to develop relationships with District Councils by checking-in on a regular basis at their offices and meetings. Inspectors will attend block club and neighborhood group meetings if they are asked to do so. The VBU also has weekly conversations with Fire Department inspectors to discuss issues regarding the Certificates of Occupancy for vacant buildings. In addition, they also have weekly discussions with PED staff via phone and email regarding specific properties that may be available for redevelopment. Finally, the VBU supervisor reports that he speaks with representatives from LIEP regarding building permit issues on a daily basis.

Complaint Reduction

3) Complaints about vacant buildings are tracked by the Unit. According to VBU staff, they appear to be going down, but no analysis is done by the VBU to determine why complaints are decreasing. Staff report that anecdotal evidence suggests the decrease is the result of the high demand for housing in the City which has caused property owners to better maintain their properties so they can more quickly be occupied. According to interviewees, the VBU is not provided with the complaint reports produced by the Information and Complaint Division.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Special Initiatives

For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program developed by Code Enforcement to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature. There are several policies pertaining the Office's special initiatives found among its budget objectives in the 2000 Budget.

2000 City Budget: Code Enforcement - Property Code Enforcement Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through the use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of use of service (*excessive consumption of exterior inspection services*) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

PP2000

Code Enforcement's primary initiative for dealing with chronic problem properties is PP2000 (Problem Properties 2000). The program began in January 2000 as the result of a Mayoral directive to develop a program to address chronic problem properties. This program identifies property owners who have had repeated complaints against their properties and assigns these property owners to an inspector who case manages the owner's properties. Property owners were originally selected by senior leaders based on the recommendations of Code Enforcement

inspectors. The Code Enforcement inspectors pro-actively work with the property owner to encourage them to better manage their properties. In the words of one senior manager, the basic philosophy of the program is that "if you cure the problem property owner, you cure the problem." Working with the owner is viewed by management to be more effective than addressing the properties because by addressing the most problematic property owners and all their properties, the Division is able to capture a larger number of properties than if it was focusing on individual properties.

Findings

- 1) The decision to include certain property owners in PP2000 is based primarily on anecdotal information provided by the inspectors. No specific, uniform criteria was articulated for inclusion in the PP2000 program.
- 2) Results of the program have been measured thus far largely by informal and anecdotal reports. Code Enforcement officials believe that many property owners in the PP2000 program are either rehabilitating their properties or selling them. As far as we were able to discern, there are no serious efforts to quantitatively evaluate the program's success.
- 3) The program does not address owner-occupied properties nor does it identify owners who have a small number of rental properties in the City that are chronic problem properties. These properties comprise a substantial proportion of all property code violations.

Recommendations

Recommendation #32. If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33. Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34. Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Dayton's Bluff Initiative

This project is a coordinated effort between the Code Enforcement Division, Police Department, the Fire Department, the Housing Information Office and City residents to address code enforcement violations and the associated problems which they may create, such as crime and lower property values, in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. The project began in February 2000 and is currently scheduled to run through December 2000. Code Enforcement has devoted the equivalent of one full-time inspector position to the effort. They have also worked with neighbors to develop citizen patrols and use "good neighbor notices," which are cards that ask property owners or tenants to clean or fix something and thank them for helping to make the

community better. The program has been viewed as a potential model for other City neighborhoods with a significant number of problem properties. However, the initiative has been perceived by some senior management and front-line staff as being driven by people from outside the department (i.e. the Housing Information Office). This view has created problems getting Code Enforcement inspectors to buy into the initiative. Also, for the first three months, staff were supposed to collect data but did not, according to senior Code Enforcement staff. However, in a report prepared for a City Councilmember, data was retrieved from Code Enforcement files and "good neighbor" code violation notices.

Finding

1) Code Enforcement has done some data collection on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, but limited systematic evaluation of the Initiative has occurred. Staff cite the limitations of their data collection system as part of the reason for the limited evaluation, though an intern for a City Councilmember was able to collect and analyze data for a report on the Initiative produced for a Councilmember.

Recommendation

Recommendation #35. Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Sweeps/Surveys

Finding

The budget states Code Enforcement will conduct periodic surveys (sweeps) in neighborhoods which require closer monitoring for Code Enforcement violations. Typically, sweeps involve a majority of the Code Enforcement inspectors who spend several days in a predetermined geographic area pro-actively seeking code enforcement violations. Sweeps focus on primarily three types of violations: tall grass and weeds, junk cars and garbage. Until a couple of years ago, the Division conducted 50-60 sweeps a year. In 1999, six sweeps were conducted and so far in 2000, only one has taken place. With the change in senior management, the division changed its philosophy regarding the value of these activities. Currently, sweeps are not done unless requested from neighborhood groups or elected officials and they have an outside funding source, such as Weed and Seed (a federally-funded program conducted jointly with the Police Department). Current management views sweeps as a superficial response to more systematic problems. Sweeps require a great deal of time and effort on the part of inspectors. Inspectors must not only conduct the sweeps but must also spend time writing tags and doing paperwork. If a choice has to be made between allocating resources for sweeps or for routine inspections, this time and money, senior managers argue, would be better spent on traditional inspections. However, when coupled with routine enforcement activities, managers suggest sweeps are worthwhile and effective. At the time of writing this report, Code Enforcement determined they have some unanticipated resources as a result of staff changes in the Division, and decided to use

the money to conduct sweeps. City Councilmembers were asked to identify any areas within their wards where they would like sweeps conducted.

Recommendation

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization.

The study of high-performing organizations has typically identified seven characteristics believed to be essential for an organization to achieve excellence. These criteria have been identified from studies over many years and are widely accepted as indicators of organizational excellence. Our criteria, based on that used by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Minnesota Quality Award to assess organizational development and to identify quality organizations, are summarized in the table on the following page. None of the quality categories stand alone. Each impacts the other, and all are essential to achieving a high level of performance. Quite often improvement in one quality category will positively impact another. For example, improvement in the category of Information and Analysis often significantly impacts both Results and Improvement Processes.

Each of these quality categories is a chapter in the report, and each chapter contains the ratings, a discussion of the quality of the organization, and our findings and recommendations. In addition to the Results chapter, which focuses on organizational outcomes, an overview of performance measures and their potential application in the CSO is provided in the Performance Measures chapter. Performance measurement in this performance audit means the regular collection of specific information about the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of services and programs.¹⁴ The suggested measures will enable the CSO to evaluate on its own whether the resources expended (labor or financial resources) on an activity are used efficiently, have the intended effect and result in a quality outcome. Measures can be based on information obtained from written records, observations by specially trained staff or through surveys of customers. This performance audit will examine existing performance measures and suggest other performance measures. However, the audit will not perform the actual measurements.

The table on the following page outlines each quality assessment category, the key concepts that comprise that category, and the pages on which the operations of the Citizen Service Office are described in relation to the quality category.

¹⁴ The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measurement: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, p. 1.

Assessment Categories

Quality Category	Key Concepts	Discussed on Pages:
Planning	Internal Plans Plan Development Plan Dissemination & Implementation	50-53
Leadership	Mission, Vision, Values Stakeholder Relationships Staff Recognition	54-58
Training & Development	Training & Education Resources Employer Commitment Employee Contribution Work Environment Labor-Management Relationship Employee Evaluation	59-64
Information and Analysis	Collection of Data Analysis of Data Effective Use of Automation Systems	65-69
Processes for Improvement	Identification of Potential Improvements Implementation of Improvements Evaluation of Improvement Practices	70-73
Customer Focus	Customer Identification & Knowledge Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs Customer Service Practices Customer Service Standards	74-78
Results	Organizational Outcomes Financial Outcomes Customer Satisfaction Use of Performance Indicators	79-83

Criteria Ratings

We have gathered a wealth of information about the various activities of the CSO while conducting this performance audit. Although capturing all of this information in any rating system is impossible, we believe ratings will help decision-makers grasp the essence of the

information. We have developed a simple summary rating system we believe conveys the essence of our findings. We intend these ratings to reflect what interview subjects have told us about the CSO. While organizations and processes consist of individuals, we intend the ratings to reflect current organizational practices and they should not be interpreted as judgements about individuals.

The summary ratings for the quality categories are intended to portray both the level of development and the level of integration of each quality criterion. Development, in this performance audit, means the extent to which highly-valued organizational characteristics are in evidence. They should be systematic, manifest, pro-active, fact-based, and evaluated. Integration refers to the extent criteria are practiced. It is possible, indeed likely, for criteria to be practiced in some parts of the organization, but not in others.

The summary ratings used for the quality assessment are:

- ★★★★ Criteria fully developed and practiced throughout the organization.
- ★★★ Criteria well developed and practiced throughout most of the organization.
- ★★ Criteria present and practiced in some parts of the organization.
- ★ Criteria very rarely present or practiced in the organization.

PLANNING

Quality Rating: ☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Internal Plans
- ☐ Plan Development Participation
- ☐ Plan Dissemination & Implementation

Planning is an activity that incorporates a strong future orientation and a willingness to make long-term commitments to stakeholders. High-performing organizations actively engage in planning and recognize the impact not only of internal changes, but also of environmental factors, on the organization. Planning considers resource allocation, economic projections, future needs of employees, future customer needs and expectations, technological developments and stakeholder requirements. Plans can be long- or short-term, issue specific, organizational-wide, departmental-wide or unit-wide. In order to be effective, plans need to be carried out and updated frequently.

Office-Wide Planning

The CSO performs a wide variety of functions, and should therefore have plans that incorporate a variety of activities. However, the only office-wide "plan" we discovered is the set of "Strategic Plans" contained in the annual budget.¹⁵ The CSO's "Strategic Plans" are really not plans at all. Rather, they are a set of goals and functions. A meaningful organizational strategic plan would provide a clear set of steps to achieving goals and making the vision a reality. Many of the objectives in the CSO's "Strategic Plans" are vague, such as: "Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services." If this was a true strategic plan statement, it would include a closed-ended statement with specific steps to take to achieve the goal, and a time line for implementation and/or completion.¹⁶ To change the aforementioned statement to an actual plan objective, the CSO could add an action statement at the end to explain what steps the Office will be taking to strengthen the City's approach. A strategic planning process should also include stakeholders and customers, which the CSO has not done. In addition, the "Strategic Plans" developed by the CSO have remained essentially the same for at least the last three years, with a statement pertaining to the Code Enforcement Division added to the 2001 Proposed Budget.

The lack of planning in the CSO is exemplified through their disjointed process of implementing a new computer system. The CSO is replacing the EXL system, but has not made any clear plans to phase in the new system. Rather than implementing AMANDA, as other departments such as the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection and Fire Prevention and Inspection unit are doing, the CSO chose to first go with cheaper software from Freelantz, with the expectation they will implement AMANDA later. The Freelantz software is not operating well; therefore, it would have been advisable to implement AMANDA instead of waiting until LIEP was done in the hope that the problems with the system would be worked out by LIEP. To

¹⁵ See the CSO's "Strategic Plans" in Appendix B

¹⁶ For more information on creating a strategic planning see: Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

undertake such a project without a clear plan to guide actions makes implementation far more difficult and leads to unnecessary expenses being incurred.

Marketing & Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division of the CSO has made a commitment, through an administrative order approved by the City Council on April 26, 2000, to develop and implement a year-long, multi-level marketing plan to celebrate Saint Paul. The Marketing Director presented their plan to the City Council and highlighted how the various activities they were planning fit into an overall theme of "Rediscovering Saint Paul." Because much of the Marketing Division's work is project oriented, their plans are short term and project specific, such as the plans for the "ilovestpaul.com" website and the Peanuts on Parade exhibit. Marketing staff shared with Council Research written, specific objectives, tactics and events designed to fulfill the vision for Saint Paul's sesquicentennial celebration. Marketing staff also met with each Legislative Aide at the beginning of their current terms to discuss marketing goals for their wards, and plan to make these meetings annual. They will also be developing an "after-Snoopy" plan to build on the success of the Peanuts on Parade project.

The City's website developers are also part of the Marketing and Promotions staff. It is not as clear they have a particular plan for web development, though the City is currently involved in developing plans for e-governance efforts City-wide. However, it does not appear the website developers have a specific plan for their work or the assistance they provide to other departments with their respective websites.

Information and Complaint and City Clerk/Records Division

Staff in the Information and Complaint and the City Clerk/Records divisions of the CSO were largely unaware of the Strategic Plans contained in the budget, though many of the objectives are within their realm of responsibility. The divisions also have no plans that pertain specifically to their work. Planning would help balance workloads, share information and prepare for future changes, such as those relating to the new computer systems.

Code Enforcement Programs Division

Within the CSO, there is no overall plan for Code Enforcement. Reasons staff offered for the lack of planning in this area are: 1) their work is complaint-based and therefore reactionary; 2) their work is often influenced by political decisions; and, 3) they have too much work to do to take time to plan. We counter that these are the reasons a department should create plans. Plans can provide a framework for discussions about prioritization of projects and function as a workload management tool.

While there are no plans for Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit has stated they have a plan to address long-term vacant buildings (vacant buildings that have been on the vacant building list for more than one year). However this is not a written plan. The Vacant Buildings Unit stated they are able to manage their daily work better as a result of having even these informal plans and they are able to address problems more proactively by laying out the problem and mapping solutions to it. However, the fact remains that without a specific written plan,

implementation and continuation of the plan will be difficult. Other specific special programs within Code Enforcement, such as Rental Registration, could benefit from having a plan to address and mitigate the problems they are now facing with implementation, as discussed in the Code Enforcement policy compliance section.

Other specific plans have been created by Code Enforcement together with community groups when they have been approached by the community groups to participate in programs like Weed and Seed, a federally funded program to which communities can apply for funding for special projects. Recently, the Railroad Island community contracted with Code Enforcement as part of Weed and Seed funding they received, and Code Enforcement developed a plan with the community to provide staff and time for concentrated code enforcement sweeps.

Plan Dissemination and Implementation

Most front-line staff seem unaware of the "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget, even though the plan has been included in the budget for at least the past three years. CSO staff were not involved in the development of the "Plans" (50 percent of CSO staff report they do not participate in planning and 23 percent neither agree nor disagree that they participate), nor has the plan been discussed with them by managers and supervisors. When asked in interviews who would be responsible for implementation of the "Plans", the overwhelming response was the managers. It is possible that, because the CSO has few plans, many named managers assuming this is a management responsibility.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The majority of general planning that occurs in the CSO involves upper-level management only. Some of the project-specific planning, such as Weed and Seed programs, also involves the affected communities. The Marketing and Promotions Division creates detailed plans for their projects. The Vacant Buildings Unit states they have some informal, unwritten plans.
- 2) The "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget are not plans. Rather, they are a set of objectives and functions that contains no time line or implementation information. The concepts, as stated in the budget, are not specific enough to be truly meaningful or manageable.
- 3) Few staff are aware of any CSO plans, except for specific project plans in the Marketing and Promotions Division.
- 4) Reasons offered for failing to create plans, such as heavy workloads and the effect of outside influences on their daily activities, are actually strong arguments for the creation of plans.
- 5) The CSO, with a few exceptions, has not included its stakeholders or customers in its very limited planning activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation #37. The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its

development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38. The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39. The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40. The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

LEADERSHIP

Quality Rating: ☆½

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Mission, Vision, Values
- ☐ Stakeholder Relationships
- ☐ Staff Recognition

Senior organizational leaders need to set direction, create a customer focus, establish and articulate a clear vision and communicate and make visible the values of the organization. Reinforcing values and expectations requires personal commitment and involvement. Leaders need to take part in the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving excellence. These systems and methods need to guide all activities and decisions of the organization. Leaders must also recognize the role of stakeholders in these processes, and maintain positive relationships with them. Finally, staff need to be recognized for their contributions to the organization and its mission, vision and values.

Many of an organization's policies and practices are derived from strong leadership principles. In this discussion, we look at six leadership areas: mission, vision, values, communication, stakeholders and staff recognition. Good leadership works to ensure that all in the organization understand the organization's purpose – its mission – and where the organization is going – its vision. Good leaders also articulate values clearly and exemplify them on a daily basis. Strong leadership involves good communication between managers and line staff and is aware of the need to recognize staff for outstanding work.

Mission

The mission and vision must be clearly articulated from the top of the organization down. This is a vitally important characteristic of a high-performing organization. The following is CSO's mission statement:

The Citizen Service Office consists of four divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City services by serving as advocates and liaisons.

The mission statement for the CSO was developed with the help of Human Resources and involved the Director, the Deputy City Clerk, Division managers and some staff prior to the incorporation of Code Enforcement into the Office. Shortly thereafter, the statement was enhanced to reflect the current composition of the Office, which now includes Code Enforcement. If the divisions that make up the CSO were to be separate departments, each would have their own mission statements that may not be much alike. This is evidenced by the fact Code Enforcement has been working under the informal directive to "enforce the City code and improve the quality of life in Saint Paul." Some in Code Enforcement view this mission as being contrary to the mission of the CSO. The CSO Director has a leadership style that emphasizes customer service more than enforcement.

Forty-eight percent of survey respondents believe the Director and managers effectively convey the mission to staff, 27 percent say they do not, and 24 percent neither agree nor disagree. This may be the result of many staff from the Office reportedly having not seen the mission statement. It was apparent from interviews that although a majority of staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul.

Vision

Given that the vision should be clearly articulated from the top of the organization, we identify the Mayor as having the ultimate responsibility for communicating a vision to staff, whether this is communicated directly from him or through department and office directors. According to survey responses, only 24 percent of employees believe the Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO. However, those interviewed responded that they have a sense of the Mayor's vision for the Office and feel he supports the work they do.

Only 31 percent of survey respondents believe the CSO director conveys a clear vision for the future of the Office. When we asked staff about the vision they receive from the CSO director, several stated he conveys a similar vision to that of the Mayor. However, some employees, especially those in Code Enforcement, felt he lacked an understanding of their duties and therefore it was difficult for him to articulate a clear, meaningful vision. The Office admits to being in a reactive rather than proactive mode which enhances the effect outside pressures can have on the Office. Some staff believe the Director is too sensitive to these outside interests. This point will be discussed further under the Training and Development section.

Values

When asked about organizational values, CSO employees demonstrated a clear understanding of the values. Although the divisions within the Citizen Service Office are different, managers and senior leaders are very clear about the level of politeness, fairness, common sense and decency they expect from the employees. These values are not written down, but staff have a thoughtful grasp of the professionalism required and demonstrate these values. According to the survey, about half the staff are aware of the values they are expected to demonstrate; 51 percent reported the Director and managers convey the core values of the organization while only 20 percent of respondents stated they do not. Also, interviewees cited several examples where core organizational values were, in fact, demonstrated by the Director and managers. These values are displayed through such things as their willingness to pitch-in and help line staff, their flexibility, their professionalism and their willingness to listen to staff concerns.

Communication

Within the CSO, communication at all levels could be improved. Survey results demonstrated a split between those who agree that communication within the CSO is effective and those who do not. Some interviewees expressed frustration about not being kept up-to-date or included in management decisions. All-staff meetings are not held frequently, though staff report information is disseminated through e-mail and word of mouth. Interviewees also stated there is a strong "us versus them" mentality throughout the organization. Despite these significant

issues, 75 percent of respondents surveyed felt that managers are visible and in interviews staff stated managers are accessible and have an open-door policy.

Communication between the divisions is poor. It was reported that communication between the Marketing and Promotions Division and the Information and Complaint Division suffers because Marketing does not receive weekly updates from the Information and Complaint Division. They would like information and complaint data identifying the questions and complaints received that are related to Marketing events. Likewise, it was reported that Marketing occasionally fails to update Information and Complaint Division staff about marketing projects that require Information and Complaint staff to give out times, locations and other information about events to the public.

It was also revealed that the Information and Complaint Division has communication problems with Code Enforcement inspectors. These problems concern such issues as if and when an inspection occurred. Inspectors also believe that Information and Complaint personnel do not understand what Code Enforcement does, and they are concerned about whether Information and Complaint staff are providing accurate information to the public.

Communication within Code Enforcement is still rather poor in some respects, despite the changing work environment. Some staff in Code Enforcement are not included in discussions because of the past history of their role in the organization and their relationship with others in the Division. In some cases, management and staff have conflicted over various aspects of a program, such as Rental Registration and the conflict over whether to condemn a property if the owner fails to apply for a registration certificate. Communication between Code Enforcement clerical staff and Code Enforcement managers could be improved. Certain staff feel they are not heard by management. Some Code Enforcement clerical staff also feel it is difficult to connect with inspectors. They feel they are not told things until the last minute which makes them feel excluded and undervalued. Part of this problem may stem from the fact that the Vacant Buildings Unit and all clerical staff, with the exception of one person, are housed in the City Hall/ Courthouse building, while other Code Enforcement staff are at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District building. Code Enforcement views the hiring of an office manager as a positive step in aiding communication between clerical staff and inspectors. The fact remains that communication in Code Enforcement is vital particularly given the changes and upheaval the Division has experienced in the past few years. We also recognize that some of these communication problems stem from personal conflicts between employees – conflicts which have created an atmosphere that has hindered clerical staff's ability to communicate with one another and other employees in the CSO.

Stakeholders

Positive stakeholder relationships are essential to maintaining strong leadership. Leadership must be able to identify its stakeholders and understand their needs, and incorporate those needs into the department's planning processes. Stakeholders are "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output."¹⁷ The quality of stakeholder relationships should be based on communication, fulfilled

¹⁷ Bryson, John. *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, 1995, Page 27.

expectations, and information sharing. CSO's stakeholders include the Police Department, the Fire Department, LIEP, Ramsey County, community organizations and elected officials. Many of these stakeholders are discussed in the Policy Compliance section. Overall, the CSO maintains functional stakeholder relationships, though certainly communication could be improved between some of them, such as the City Council and the CSO regarding complaints and satisfaction rates. They also have not incorporated their stakeholders' needs into their planning processes.

Staff Recognition

Forty-six percent of staff surveyed agree the Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions, while the remaining 54 percent either feel their managers do not recognize staff contributions or they neither agree nor disagree that contributions are recognized. Interviews revealed staff recognition is informal and takes the form of "thank you, good job" and "atta-girls." Management has also held pizza parties and other informal gatherings to thank staff for their work. However, interviewees were not aware of any plans by senior leaders to create a formal recognition system to recognize outstanding contributions to the organization. Without a formal, organized recognition system, recognition can seem arbitrary, and many staff may not be aware of any recognition shown to employees, as the survey results indicate. This problem extends far beyond any one department; the City no longer has an employee recognition program, which has left employees wondering to what extent City leaders value their work.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Although a majority of CSO staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. There is some disagreement in Code Enforcement as to whether the mission is enforcement or customer service.
- 2) CSO staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the values that are expected of them despite the fact that the Office has no formal values statement. Staff stated the managers exemplify the values.
- 3) Communication between the divisions, between the clerical staff and the Director, and between clerical staff, inspectors and managers is generally poor. There is a strong "us vs. them" mentality within and between some divisions.
- 4) The Office does not have a formal employee recognition program, though they do recognize staff through other informal means. The City also discontinued the City-wide recognition program.

Recommendations

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Quality Rating: ☆☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Work Environment
- ☐ Employee Involvement
- ☐ Employee Evaluation
- ☐ Labor/Management Relationship
- ☐ Education & Training Resources

Employees in successful organizations are provided the tools they need to deliver quality services. These same employees are given encouragement and the resources to develop a set of skills that allows them to contribute effectively to the organization. For example, if an organization values continuing education for its employees, it will provide workers the opportunity and resources needed for them to attend classes, seminars and in-house trainings. A successful organization also creates an environment which increases the growth and well-being of its employees. Finally, organizations should link the training of their employees to the organization's goals and priorities. This connection should occur through the development and implementation of a long-term strategic plan tied to basic organizational values.

CSO Work Environment

Code Enforcement Merger

The merger of Code Enforcement with the Citizen Service Office has resulted in a number of perceived and reported improvements in the Division's work environment. Almost all the employees interviewed reported the morale and leadership of the Division have improved. Staff credit much of this improvement to a change in Code Enforcement management and that the CSO has provided a much more supportive environment than the one that existed under the Fire Department. Also cited as a major improvement was the creation of the Supervisor of Inspections position, which is a level of management between the Manager of Code Enforcement Programs, who oversees the entire Code Enforcement Program, and the program supervisors, who are assigned to individual areas in Code Enforcement. Staff expressed they appreciate having someone with the technical knowledge about Code Enforcement inspections in upper management and can act as an intermediary between front-line staff and CSO senior leaders who do not have Code Enforcement backgrounds. They also reported the Supervisor of Inspections is very accessible and that it is beneficial to have the Supervisor present at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices and available in the field. The facility at the Eastern Patrol District is reported to be a significant improvement over the previous offices where the Division was housed. In the new facility, there is more space and an open floor plan which allows inspectors to easily talk to one another.

Despite these achievements, there have been a number of problems created by the merger. Staff reported the three mergers it has experienced in the last five years have created a tremendous amount of instability and distraction for staff. Few Code Enforcement staff members identify themselves as employees of the CSO and are hesitant to get too comfortable with this label.

More importantly, many Code Enforcement employees feel their mission is incompatible with rest of the CSO, as discussed previously in the Leadership section. Code Enforcement employees claim the customer service mission of CSO contradicts their mission of enforcement. While we do not believe these concepts are necessarily mutually exclusive, we did find enough evidence to conclude that this difference in philosophy creates significant tension and a very real disconnect between Code Enforcement and the rest of the organization.

Another difficulty created since the merger is that Vacant Buildings Unit and clerical staff are located downtown in City Hall and are separated from the inspectors who are at the Eastern District Patrol Offices. This situation has created communication and morale problems for the Division. Traditionally, there has been a high degree of collegiality among inspectors and the rest of the staff. However, it was reported that since the staff has been split apart, camaraderie has suffered and the Code Enforcement clerical staff feel especially alienated from the rest of the Division. Regular communication between different units of the Division has been made more difficult. Perhaps the best indication of this fact is the Division has not conducted an all-staff meeting in six months. Inspectors did report, however, that they are pleased with their new location, despite the communication problems.

Political Influence

It was frequently mentioned by senior leaders and front-line staff that the CSO is vulnerable to political pressures. Several respondents reported that Councilmembers, the Mayor's Office and the media have a tremendous influence over the practices and plans of CSO. Although it is entirely appropriate for these parties to take a keen interest the operations of government agencies, many front-line employees claimed this involvement was overly meddlesome and was often motivated by something other than the public good. The work of CSO, by its very nature, is reactive in that most of the activities they undertake are either customer service driven or in response to complaints. Therefore, it is not surprising that crises, stories in the newspaper and Council initiatives are perceived by staff as the primary drivers of work in the Office. However, the CSO lacks the ability to sufficiently navigate this political environment because it does not undertake planning, results measurement or stakeholder analysis that would allow it to be more pro-active. If the Office were to have a clear vision of what the organization was to be, they would be able to better manage the various demands on their services and operations.

Diversity

Well over half the employees in the CSO (61 percent) feel senior leaders create an environment which is respectful of employees regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability. However, 21 percent of employees surveyed did not believe this was the case, and 18 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the environment is respectful of all employees. In our interviews, some staff reported that racial or class intolerance affected their work environment. They believed they were not respected by others in the organization because they held low ranking positions.

Employee Involvement

Most employees in the CSO feel they have an opportunity to contribute to decisions made about their work, although no formal mechanism exists for this to be done. Almost all staff who were interviewed reported that CSO senior leaders were very accessible. Most of the Office's managers have an open door policy and informally check in with staff daily. Less is done, however, to actively solicit the suggestions and opinions of employees. The Code Enforcement Division did seek out volunteers to assist in writing a procedures manual. Unfortunately, only one person volunteered for this project and the manual was never completed. Finally, it should be noted that CSO clerical staff and Information and Complaint employees feel, much more so than CSO staff in general, disconnected from decisions which impact their work.

While the CSO appears to have an informal system for employee input, it should be noted that there are certain benefits to having a more formal system. An informal system may seem arbitrary, and may miss input from some staff who are not as comfortable approaching a supervisor or manager in an informal setting. A more structured setting can also create an environment in which employees feel more valued as they know management has made it a priority to gather feedback from staff, and have actually solicited it, rather than just waited until staff approached them with concerns or ideas.

Performance Expectations and Annual Evaluations

Formal, written performance expectations do not exist in the CSO. However, staff feel they understand the expectations of their supervisors and they have learned these expectations through experience on the job. For instance, the reports issued by Code Enforcement inspectors are reviewed on a daily basis by their immediate supervisors. Serious concern was expressed by staff, especially those in Code Enforcement, that formal, written performance expectations would lead to performance quotas. A procedures manual was created by a previous Director of Code Enforcement and was being updated by an employee; however, this project was later dropped. At the moment, it appears the manual is no longer being actively used by staff.

Annual performance evaluations of employees have not taken place in the CSO for three years. Before the practice was discontinued, the Office used the standard evaluation process and forms provided by the City's Human Resources Department. The Code Enforcement Programs Manager stated he would like to commence performance evaluations for the Division's clerical employees, but has been waiting until an office manager was hired. This lack of evaluation is problematic because employees are not getting feedback on their performance nor do they know what is expected of them.

Labor-Management Relationship

For the most part, the labor management situation in the CSO appears to be similar to the rest of the City. In the past year, only two significant labor relations issues stand out. When the Code Enforcement Division introduced the Freelantz data base system, inspectors were required to perform all data entry for their reports. This issue caused great distress among inspectors who are not trained in keyboarding. As a result, the inspectors filed a labor contract grievance to stop

this practice, arguing that data entry is not part of the duties for the Code Enforcement inspector classification.

The other significant labor relations issue that has faced the Office in the last year was a grievance filed by Code Enforcement inspectors that a political appointee was working out of title as an inspector. This appointee was charged with overseeing the Dayton's Bluff Initiative but was involved in some day-to-day inspection duties related to the project. This issue was complicated because the individual was reportedly very unpopular with front-line staff. The grievance became irrelevant when the political appointee was fired from his position due to reasons unrelated to this issue.

Training

Senior leadership has made training a high priority and provides many training opportunities for staff. The Office's training opportunities are perhaps best developed in the Code Enforcement Division. The Division's employees are encouraged and provided resources to take job-related training in the community college system. Many also attend an annual conference at the University of Minnesota and a regional conference in Madison, Wisconsin. It was reported the Division had provided in-house training in the past but this practice has been discontinued in recent years. Most Code Enforcement inspectors take advantage of training; however, interviewees reported junior employees do not utilize the opportunities as much as they should.

Other CSO staff have similar chances to participate in training, but they appear not to take advantage of them to same extent as their Code Enforcement counterparts. This may be partly explained by the fact that clerical employees and other CSO employees have less-developed professional networks when compared to Code Enforcement inspectors.

New staff in the CSO are trained through mentoring done by senior employees. In the Code Enforcement Division new inspectors "ride-along" with experienced staff for their first six to eight weeks. New inspectors are also required to study the Legislative Code. Other CSO staff are also trained through partnering with senior staff.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The mission of Code Enforcement appears to conflict at times with the overall mission of the CSO. ~~This conflict may be contributing to some tension between the divisions within the CSO.~~
- 2) The Citizen Service Office, particularly its Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to staff to attend various training sessions and conferences. Some staff, such as clerical support staff, are less inclined to attend training, although they are encouraged to do so.
- 3) Several staff commented the work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has improved since it was administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office. Since the merger, some problems have been created as a result of the Division's staff being separated from each other.

4) Code Enforcement seems particularly susceptible to outside influences from sources such as the City Council, Mayor and the media. They have not yet found a way to balance the demands of the various interests.

5) Code Enforcement used to have an employee manual that contained valuable information on standard procedures and requirements. It appears this manual has it been updated recently nor is it being used.

6) Opportunities for staff to contribute to decisions made about the operations and procedures of the CSO are inadequate and informal at best.

7) The CSO has not done employee performance evaluations in over three years. Employees are not getting regular feedback on their performance.

Recommendations

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

INFORMATION & ANALYSIS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Data Collection
- ☐ Analysis of Data
- ☐ Effective Use of Automation Systems

Quality Rating: ★¹/₂

Information gathering and analysis are vital functions for any organization. Quality organizations should collect data on customers, services, employees and costs. Organizations should also concentrate on collecting and using data that relate to their goals and plans.

Collecting data serves little purpose if it is not analyzed and used to make improvements. It is very important to extract the larger meaning from data to support evaluation and decision-making at various levels throughout the organization. Analysis should employ the examination of trends, projections, comparisons and cause-effect correlations. Using data and analysis systematically is important in properly setting goals, developing plans and allocating resources. The information collected and analyzed should be used throughout the organization and used to evaluate the organization and its progress. Information is essential in monitoring goals and it should play a key role in the decision-making process. Finally, organizations must have information systems which are useful to staff and provide them with the tools they need to collect, retrieve and analyze data.

Data Collection

The work areas in the CSO, in particular the Code Enforcement and the Information and Complaint Divisions, have the potential to collect a substantial amount of data about their operations. The Office currently collects some data but these efforts have been limited by poor information systems and inconsistent information gathering. We examine below the data collection efforts of the divisions within CSO.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division collects data on complaints which the Office receives. The Division tracks the number of complaints, the type of complaint, the date the complaint was received, and the City department responsible for resolving this complaint. Based on these complaints, the Division also generates reports for complaints that have taken more than five days to resolve. These five day late reports are distributed to department and office directors responsible for seeing that their departments address the complaints. Very limited customer satisfaction data is collected, and it is not compiled or analyzed.

Code Enforcement Division

There are numerous activities and actions the Code Enforcement Division undertakes which have the potential to a robust sources of data. Code Enforcement has a history of collecting data about

its activities, often collecting and tabulating it by hand. Recently, data collection efforts have decreased for two primary reasons: 1) the Division has inadequate computer systems which are unable to reliably collect, store and retrieve data; and 2) there has been a change in leadership within the Division which has resulted in a de-emphasis on data collection. Despite the decreased data collection in the last few years, the Division does collect the number of inspections conducted, the type of inspection, the address of the property and the mileage driven by inspectors. This information is taken from the inspectors' work sheets and entered into the EXL system by the clerical staff.

Senior leaders report that the EXL complaint data base system is so poor at managing and extracting data that the Division currently pays little attention to the data collected. In their opinion, doing so would be a wasted effort as long as the CSO uses the data bases currently in place. However, this change in practice was not communicated to their stakeholders, thus many stakeholders, such as the City Council, were under the impression they were continuing to report data and provide meaningful information.

Two sub-units of Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit and the Rental Registration Program, collect their own data. Arguably, the Vacant Buildings Unit collects the best data within the CSO. The Unit tracks the number of vacant buildings registered, their location, the number of inspections performed at the unit, and the number and types of citations written. In addition, the VBU tracks the status of vacant buildings based on the type and condition of the property. The Rental Registration Program, which is now a year old, reportedly collects data on the number of properties registered and the amount of fees collected, though at the time this audit was being prepared, their computer systems were not functioning as hoped and the Rental Registration Program was not running at its optimum level.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division collects customer data and basic information on the economic impact of its projects. The Division's film staff collect data on the amount of money spent as the result of films produced in the City. This data is disaggregated based on the type of film, whether it is an independent, motion picture or a commercial project. The Division also collects customer information through business surveys, web hits on City web site, and visitor and events survey data.

Data Use and Analysis

Similar to the Office's data collection efforts, the analysis and use of the data in the CSO is generally not well-developed and it varies across divisions. It is our belief that if better data was collected and analysis were done, it would inform planning activities and decision-making. With better data collection and analysis, CSO leaders could be more proactive and less dependent on crises management. In addition, with improved data analysis, elected officials would have better information for introducing initiatives and making decisions.

The Information and Complaint Division provides, based on calls received, feedback to other Departments about particular problem areas which need to be addressed. For instance, the

Division will inform the Public Works Department that they are getting a large number of complaints about potholes on University Avenue.

The Code Enforcement Division has performed almost no analysis of the data it collects on its regular functions. The Division did have a research analyst position which was removed from the City's Budget in 2000 and replaced with an office manager position. Currently, there is no one in the Office with primary responsibility for all of the Office's data collection and analysis activities.

Little data analysis takes place for planning, implementing and evaluating special projects and initiatives, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and PP2000. For example, when the CSO worked with the City's Housing Information Office to establish the boundaries of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, data stored in the Office's EXL system was not used to determine the scope of the project. Rather, the CSO relied on suggestions from inspectors to determine the boundaries. Similarly, the properties selected for PP2000 were chosen based on anecdotal evidence. Little effort has been made to systematically track the results of special initiatives. The reason given by senior leaders for this lack of analysis has been that the data bases currently used by CSO, EXL and Freelantz, are inadequate. Interestingly, however, there has been no effort to track results of special initiatives using other data base software that would be capable of analyzing data of this nature, such as SPSS or Lotus.

Information Systems

The CSO's information systems, by which we mean the computer and communication hardware and software, were consistently rated as poor by both senior leaders and staff. The Office appears to have adequate computer hardware and has made efforts to improve communication for Code Enforcement inspectors in the field with acquisition of NEXTEL phones. However, as we have already noted in this section above, the EXL complaint system, which serves as the Office's data base, and the Freelantz system, which was developed to temporarily replace the EXL system, are believed to be inadequate by everyone we interviewed.

The EXL system was created in 1979. The view that the system is unreliable and no longer useful for data collection and analysis has fostered an attitude that data analysis cannot take place given the state of EXL. Furthermore, Technology and Management Services has stated it will not support the EXL system after 2001. As a result, all data analysis in Code Enforcement has appeared to have completely ceased. As mentioned earlier, some data collection and reporting does take place in the Code Enforcement Division, but most data are not analyzed for use in decision-making or the development of the divisional plans or strategies.

To address the deficiencies of the EXL system, Code Enforcement has been working on developing software created by a company called Freelantz, to be a temporary replacement for EXL until the new data base was established (possibly the AMANDA system). However, the development and conversion of EXL to the Freelantz software was poorly planned and has not been completely implemented. The software's development under the direction of a former Director of Code Enforcement did not involve staff. Several front-line employees reported that if Code Enforcement inspectors were involved in the creation of Freelantz's, many of the programs flaws would have been avoided. Many interview subjects with knowledge of the program reported that Freelantz performs fewer functions and takes more time to operate than the

archaic EXL system. Currently, the new system is being used on a trial basis by the Vacant Buildings Unit. The Rental Registration Program is utilizing another system that requires outside support, and therefore due to a desire to keep expenses low, this system is not fully functional either. The resulting problems with implementation mirror those resulting from the Freelantz software. The Director of Code Enforcement states that the failure of the Freelantz software to function adequately will result in the conversion to the AMANDA system sooner than expected.

Both the Freelantz software and the AMANDA system require Code Enforcement inspectors to perform data entry. In the past, data entry on the EXL system has been done by Code Enforcement clerical staff. This has resulted in a discontent among some inspectors who do not have keyboarding skills. As mentioned in the Training and Development section, the inspectors have filed a grievance claiming that data entry is outside their regular duties and therefore violates their labor contract.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in general collects very little meaningful data about its operation, and performs even less data analysis. The Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions are the two areas that perform some data collection and analysis, and the Information and Complaint Division creates a five-day late report based on complaint resolution time. The CSO has been waiting to convert to the AMANDA system until the other offices implementing the system have worked out any problems in the program.
- 2) The new computer systems the Office has been trying to develop are proving to be woefully inadequate and inoperable. The current computer system is outdated and can no longer provide accurate information.
- 3) Code Enforcement no longer has a staff person dedicated to data analysis. They decided to dedicate the FTE (full-time equivalent) to the newly created position of office manager instead.

Recommendations

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do

data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.

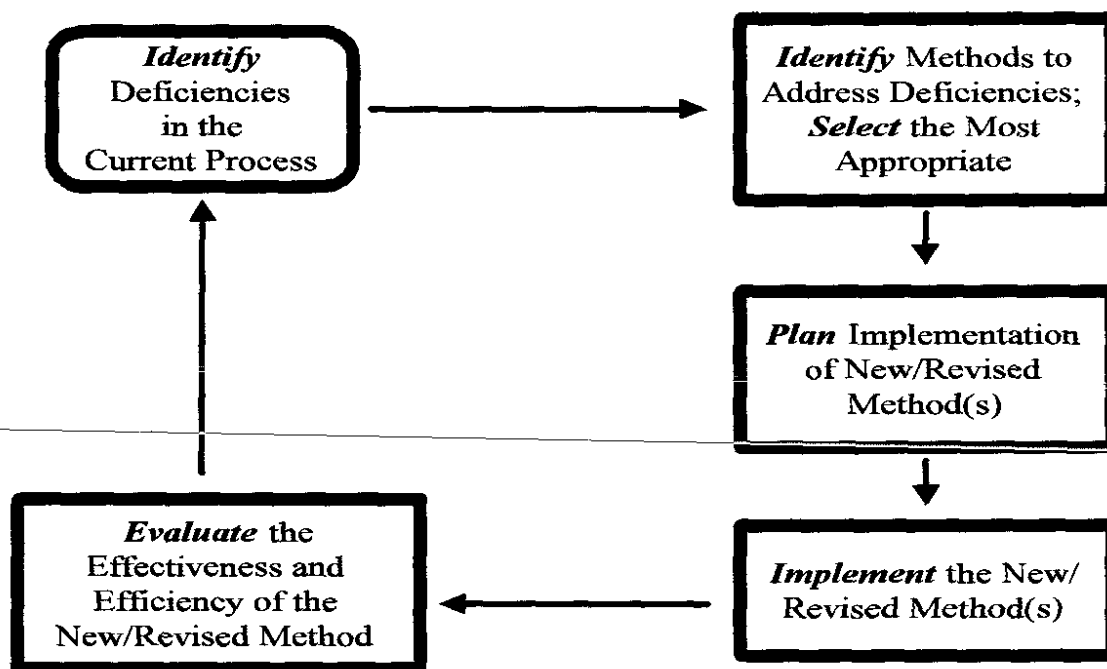
IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ❑ Identification of Potential Improvements
- ❑ Implementation of Improvements
- ❑ Evaluation of Improvement Efforts

Quality Rating: ☆

The improvement process occurs when an organization considers the design, management and improvement of internal organizational processes. Similarly, the improvement process should be part of the daily work within the organization, and should seek to eliminate problems at the source and be driven by opportunities to improve. Improvement *practices* are the methods identified in the improvement process to enhance operations - the implementation stage. Many organizations engage only in the implementation (improvement practice) stage, and fail to go through the planning and evaluation (improvement process) stages. The improvement process must contain planning, implementation and evaluation, all of which require information and methods for assessing progress. All practices of an organization should be continually evaluated to identify problems and successes. The improvement process is charted in the following diagram.



01-67

Improvements in the Citizen Service Office

While the CSO is attempting to incorporate a number of improvement practices, these improvements did not come out of an overall improvement plan. Rather, they are a reaction to a given situation, and little consideration is given to the long-term effects of the changes. A key component of the improvement process is evaluation of the improvement effort. Did it accomplish what was intended? Why or why not? What should be modified? The CSO does not do this type of evaluation of their improvement efforts. Most review is largely anecdotal and based on whether complaints are down and the reaction of elected officials. They also receive some feedback from the Internet site. Marketing may do more evaluation by looking at attendance at events, methods by which people found out about the event, money generated by an event, and so on. Overall, however, the CSO could do a better job of tracking their improvement efforts.

The CSO evaluates their vendors only through the bidding process. The Office tracks complaints and discussed them with their vendors, as well as does spot-checks on the contractors who board vacant buildings for them and those who cut tall grass and weeds when an abatement is ordered.

The following paragraphs discuss the improvement practices the CSO has attempted. Again, these improvements were not part of a planning process, nor have they been evaluated as to their effectiveness.

Code Enforcement Division

Code Enforcement has made a change to the structure of the Division. An Office Manager has been hired to coordinate activities, staff have begun some job-sharing, and the Division has placed a clerical staff member at the Eastern Patrol District Offices where most of the inspectors are located. Unfortunately, the Office Manager position comes at the expense of a data analyst, a position that could be very valuable to Code Enforcement in determining the effectiveness of various programs, as mentioned previously in the Information and Analysis section. Code Enforcement has also been involved in creating the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and assisting with Weed and Seed programs, such as the one in the Railroad Island community. Again, these programs were not necessarily of Code Enforcement's own initiative, but Code Enforcement worked with those interested in creating the programs to carry them out. They continue to look at ways to reduce the number of chronic problem properties, whether through case management or working with owners of these properties more closely to remedy the problems.

Code Enforcement and the Police Department have also devised an initiative called the Red Card program to assist with identifying abandoned vehicles. The Police Department places a red card on vehicles that appear to be abandoned requesting the owner to move the vehicle, and notifying them that it may be towed. The Police Department and Code Enforcement have found this to be an effective way to gain owner's cooperation and avoid having to tow numerous vehicles.

The Vacant Buildings Unit is also actively looking for ways to eliminate long-term vacant buildings through such activities as incentives to tear down or rehabilitate these properties. Other improvements include placing the vacant building list on the Internet.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division is continually trying to find new, inexpensive ways to promote events and increase participation. They have created an e-mail infrastructure to market City events directly to employees of downtown businesses. They are also working with existing attractions and encouraging them to not only market their attractions, but to market Saint Paul as well. They have partnered with radio stations to encourage their presence at events, which results in on-air, in-kind advertising. Marketing and Promotions is also placing a greater emphasis on marketing events through the Internet, such as the ilovestpaul.com website, which is a partnership with other Saint Paul organizations and businesses. They are also trying to work more directly and lend their expertise to the neighborhoods to market their events, rather than simply providing them the funding and leaving the organizations to figure out what to do to promote their events. For example, a neighborhood organization can call Marketing and Promotions staff, and the staff will provide them with contacts at businesses and organizations that might be interested in working with the neighborhood group to market their neighborhood events. They will also try to help the neighborhood groups find other sources of revenue beyond the City, as well as encourage media sponsorship of local events.

Marketing staff have also provided training session for production houses that come to film in Saint Paul that helps them better prepare for filming here. Staff took the initiative to make an unscheduled presentation at a seminar for production companies and went over common questions and situations production companies face when they come to Saint Paul. Staff also produced an easy-to-use reference guide that covers common situations and problems such as the process for getting parking meters hooded, arranging for traffic detours, the fees charged for special services, and other pertinent concerns and situations. After presenting and preparing the reference guide, staff noticed a decreased level of stress and time spent arranging for filming and a smoother filming process.

Information and Complaint, City Clerk/Records

The Information and Complaint Division now has a form for walk-ins to fill out when they come in to report a complaint, rather than having a staff person take the complaint directly from the individual. It appears this new practice benefits the employees, but it is not as clear as to whether this benefits the customers. However, it does create a written record of the complaint, which may give some assurance to the customer that it will be recorded and taken seriously. The City Clerk/Records Division does not have any apparent improvement processes in place. Other improvements in these divisions will be discussed in the following Customer Focus section.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Overall, most evaluation of improvements in the CSO is based on anecdotal evidence and is very informal. The evaluations are not used to make plans for the Office.
- 2) Code Enforcement has engaged in some improvement efforts such as programmatic and staffing changes. However, many of these improvements are reactive rather preventive measures. The CSO has not prepared any concrete plans to fully implement the changes and anticipate any potential problems resulting from the changes.

3) The Marketing and Promotions Division is perhaps the only division in the CSO that engages in any planning and evaluation of their improvement efforts.

Recommendations

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Customer Identification & Knowledge
- ☐ Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs
- ☐ Customer Service Practices
- ☐ Customer Service Standards

Quality Rating: ★★½

Attention to customer needs is critical for achieving organizational excellence. Through the creation and management of relationships with their customers, organizations which excel in customer satisfaction obtain information on customer service requirements, expectations and satisfaction. Knowing the requirements of its customers enables an organization to develop standards which are designed to enhance customer satisfaction.¹⁸ For these standards to be effective, they must be understood and followed by everyone in the organization.

In recent years, the CSO has placed a great deal of emphasis on providing good customer service. The vision for this effort comes from the Mayor and the Director. However, since incorporating the Code Enforcement Division into the Office, the philosophy of providing good customer service has been strained by the fact that Code Enforcement is an enforcement agency. Inspectors and managers have for years wrestled with the notion of customer service being the paramount objective. Other divisions within the Office do not struggle with this notion to the same degree. However, there are still some areas in which the Citizen Service Office could improve. Organizational improvement requires that staff understand the importance of customer service training and that good customer service skills can be learned and enhanced.

CSO's Customers

Most CSO staff agreed that anyone requesting services or information, whether internal or external, is a potential customer. However, with the aforementioned exception, Citizen Service Office employees indicated through the survey a general lack of agreement as to who are their customers. A list of customers that were identified include: the general public, citizens of Saint Paul, property owners, businesses, neighborhood groups, City workers and elected officials. While this list is very broad it does shed some light on the difficulty employees face when trying to define their role in the organization, and who their primary customers should be when each division within the Office is charged with different responsibilities. Interviewees stated that citizens are perceived as customers by all the divisions because they provide the Office with informal feedback as to how well the Office is doing its job. This is an important criteria for them when deciding who their customer is because these individuals provide the organization with information pertaining to customer satisfaction and needs.

¹⁸ In many cases, an organization's customers may be the same as their stakeholders. However, customers and stakeholders each provide the organization with a unique set of information, and the relationship between the organization and its customers versus the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders is different. For more discussion of stakeholders, see the Leadership section.

Code Enforcement Division

Survey respondents within Code Enforcement overwhelmingly chose the citizens of Saint Paul as their customer. Many also view the general public, City of Saint Paul employees, businesses and community groups as customers. There is some confusion about whether or not property owners with code violations should be considered customers.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division also identified the public and citizens of Saint Paul as its primary customers. Because they also interact with the City Council regarding neighborhood problems, they identified the Council as a customer as well. This Division has the unique responsibility of serving walk-in visitors and phone-in customers. In fact, systems have been developed to deal with these individuals in a friendly and efficient manner. Walk-ins are served by counter personnel and are given a complaint sheet to fill out and phone-ins have their complaints entered into the computer and passed on to the appropriate City agency.

City Clerk / Records Division

This Division believes that people requesting copies of City documents are their primary customers. City departments and the City Council are identified as customers who are served less frequently, but who are still customers. The City Clerk also provides information about official City documents, local elections, petitions, and historical data to researchers.

Marketing and Promotions Division

Marketing and Promotions staff feel their customers are the residents, visitors and film production companies that come to Saint Paul to attend events or film movies. The Mayor's Office, the City Council and City departments were reported to be customers as well. This Division allocates a certain dollar amount for marketing and promotions efforts in each City ward, which involves working with Councilmembers and their aides to determine how the money should be spent. The Division must also work with other City departments and organizations which promote the City to coordinate City services for events occurring in Saint Paul.

Marketing and Promotions also provides the City's website development services. The City's website provides useful information, but is somewhat difficult to navigate for people less familiar with the City's governmental structure. Each City department's website has its own look, rather than a standard structure that makes it easier for a viewer to recognize it as being a City of Saint Paul web page. The CSO's own website is useful and contains various complaint forms, meeting information, and links to other useful sites. However, it does not have as many links as might be useful for citizens and visitors looking for information. The Citizen Service Office is often the first place people go to seek information. Therefore, their website has the potential to be one of the most valuable of the City's pages. Just as people call the CSO when they are unsure of what department to call, many people may consult their web page first in the hope of finding a link to the information they are seeking. People are also becoming more technologically sophisticated and are finding it easier to submit information requests and complaints via e-mail.

Determining Customer Needs and Satisfaction

Good customer focus involves determining what specifically the customer needs and how satisfied the customer is with a product or service. The CSO identifies what its customers need through responding to complaints and talking with property owners, businesses, visitors to the Office and community organizations. However, only 35 percent of respondents surveyed felt that CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer needs, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, forty five percent of respondents believe the Office is responsive to changes in customer needs, while 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the Office is responsive. These numbers can be explained by the fact that although staff say they determine customers needs by verbal communication and letters from citizens, the Office has no formal mechanism for gathering customer needs information or sharing customer responses with staff. Information is difficult to gather from the current computer systems and the Office does not hold staff meetings where it would be easy to share and discuss customer information.

Customer satisfaction is admittedly a more difficult aspect for the Office to ascertain than customer needs. Beyond limited call-backs, the Office does not have a formal survey instrument or process to ascertain levels of customer satisfaction. In fact, only 24 percent of staff surveyed felt the Office monitors for changes in customer satisfaction, while 27 percent felt they do not monitor for changes, and 59 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 28 percent of respondents felt that the Office was responsive to changes in customer satisfaction, with 14 percent reporting they are not, and 57 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The Information and Complaint Division does not pass along its very limited customer satisfaction results from call-backs to other CSO staff or to the Code Enforcement inspectors. Inspectors remarked that they only receive customer satisfaction results when they are negative and the feedback is usually in the form of an angry phone call or letter. Marketing and Promotions conducts informal surveys of its customers after large events such as the Titanic exhibit at the Union Depot building and the Peanuts on Parade exhibits.

High performing organizations use customer satisfaction data for planning and implementing strategies that enable the organization to be less reactionary. In truth, if the organization captured customer satisfaction and needs information through a regular process of formal surveys and analysis of the results it could adjust its practices to deal with changes in customer satisfaction without disrupting daily routines. Not only is this important for the CSO, the City could benefit enormously from engaging in a City-wide survey and having customer need and satisfaction data available for all of its operations.

Customer Service Standards

Formal customer service standards help staff understand what is expected of them by the organization and by their customers. The CSO does not have a set of formal customer service standards that are written down and circulated to all employees. Code Enforcement has some standards in a manual that was created under a former manager. However, many Code Enforcement staff are not aware of its existence. Information and Complaint, Marketing and Promotions and the City Clerk all purport to have informal customer service standards. Staff acknowledge these are not written down, as such, but are relatively widely understood and

practiced. Forty-four percent of respondents surveyed agreed that there were customer service standards in their work area, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Many of the informal customer service standards referred to by staff are close to being values or are values of the organization. This is evidenced by the fact that these standards are learned and reinforced by employees observing their co-workers in the field and on the phones. While it is good that 42 percent of staff surveyed understand the Offices' informal customer service standards and attempt to follow them, over 1/5 of the staff reported they do not understand or feel that staff follow them. This is an insufficient management practice. Unless standards are formalized, written down, and widely circulated they can not be updated, amended or added to in any way that would promote efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. This situation is compounded by the lack of all-staff meetings where organizational information is usually exchanged.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in total does not agree on who its customers are. While deference is paid to those seeking information or services, there is no Office-wide agreement as to whom the organization should consider as its customers.
- 2) The CSO does not have a formal process for assessing customer needs and satisfaction. Divisions within the Office rely on complaints from citizens and informal surveys to determine this information. The Information and Complaint Division occasionally utilizes a call back method to garner some customer satisfaction information. However this information is not compiled or shared with any other staff in the Office or City.
- 3) The Office does not have a formal set of customer service standards. Rather, the employees adhere to an informal set of value-driven, common sense standards that are enforced by action and word-of-mouth and emulated by staff.
- 4) The City's website has the potential to be an invaluable resource and method for communicating with residents, visitors, businesses and anyone seeking information on Saint Paul. However, the City's website is currently difficult to use and lacks uniformity that would make it easier to navigate. The CSO's website provides useful information and complaint forms, but should be developed further as many visitors to the City's site may go to their page first when they are unsure of which department they need.

Recommendations

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of

standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

RESULTS

Quality Rating: ☆ $\frac{1}{2}$

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Organizational Outcomes
- ☐ Financial Outcomes
- ☐ Customer Satisfaction
- ☐ Use of Performance Indicators

The Results component of the Malcolm Baldrige system addresses an organization's ability to determine if and how well it is accomplishing its mission. Successful organizations know how well they perform. Through result measurement an organization is able to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. Organizations should track results over time and compare these results to other similar organizations. Results management should be the last phase in an ongoing cycle involving goal setting, planning, the execution of plans and improvement practices. Using results information in this way can help staff provide the best service in the most efficient way possible. Decision makers can also use results information to monitor the provision of services on the public's behalf, ensuring government accountability.

The work functions within CSO have a great deal of potential data available which could be used to measure results. However, as mentioned in the Information and Analysis section of this audit, CSO's data collection efforts are poor and their data storage and retrieval systems are inadequate. These factors have severely limited the Office's capacity to perform meaningful results measurement.

Outcomes Measured

The measurement of results is not a well-developed concept in the CSO. Below we detail the Office's efforts to develop, measure and use results.

Information and Complaint Division/City Clerks Office

The Information and Complaint Division collects response time data regarding how long it takes City departments to resolve a complaint. After five days, the Division will send out a late report if the complaint is unresolved. These reports are sent to department and office directors but not directly to staff responsible for resolving the complaint. The Information and Complaint Division also collects very limited information on how satisfied citizens are with City Departments' ability to resolve their complaints. The Division's staff occasionally calls citizens who have made complaints and asks them state whether they were *satisfied with the timeliness and quality of the City's response*. However, they do not compile this data or prepare any reports with this information; therefore, other City staff are unaware of the limited satisfaction results. Despite this shortcoming, we believe soliciting citizen satisfaction information is an excellent practice and represents an important mechanism which the City can use to understand its customers' requirements.

There was no indication the City Clerk's Office measured the results of its operations.

Code Enforcement Division

The activities of the Code Enforcement Division have the potential to provide a rich source of data which could be measured to determine organizational results. Given this potential data source, the Division could be a very results-oriented organization. However, senior leaders state the organization's ability to focus on results has been limited because of poor data collection efforts and inadequate computer systems. With the change in leadership in the division, there has also been a de-emphasis on data collection.

The Division's data storage system, EXL, is currently is able to collect data but cannot easily retrieve data. The Freelantz system, which was initially created to replace EXL, has not been fully implemented. The new program has run into difficulty and senior leaders report it is unlikely the Division will ever fully deploy the program. It now appears the Division will convert to the AMANDA system to serve as its complaint data base.

The Code Enforcement Division tracks the number of complaints they receive. Several interview respondents stated the number of complaints has decreased over the last year, but none of these employees could provide an explanation of why complaints have gone down. One senior manager suggested tracking the number of complaints is a poor measure of the Division's success because the Office does not track data which would explain the decreasing number of complaints. For instance, he suggested it is possible that one could interpret a drop in initial complaints to mean that people are calling less because they are increasingly discouraged by the City's ability to deal with Code Enforcement problems.

The Division also tracks the number of complaints resolved. Cases are considered closed once a member of the clerical staff enters the inspector's final report on the EXL system. It was reported this measure may be inaccurate because the information is sometimes entered weeks after the inspector has completed the report, thereby exaggerating the number of open cases.

The most results-oriented unit of the Code Enforcement Division is the Vacant Building's unit. The Unit tracks the number of demolitions, the number of demolitions disaggregated by property owners, the number of active vacant buildings, and the number of vacant buildings that are rehabilitated. A report of these results is published quarterly and distributed to the Mayor's Office and the City Council.

Code Enforcement staff have a good understanding of the results they would like to measure. They hope the conversion to a data base, such as AMANDA, and a new commitment by senior leaders will lead to a greater use of results measurement. In the table below we detail the measures that Code Enforcement would like to track.

- Number of summary abatement orders and number of abatements performed by the City
- First notice compliance rates
- The disposition of citations
- The number of condemnations
- Complaints broken down by U.S. Census track
- Data regarding the safety of inspectors

A senior leader suggested that many of these statistics would provide the City with a better indication of how Code Enforcement is doing and help the Division develop future strategies and plans. In our view, establishing the measures mentioned by staff would be an excellent beginning for measuring the Division's performance. However, we believe these measures alone do not serve as a complete list of potential performance indicators which could be used by the divisions. Nor do we believe they sufficiently account for social and economic factors which are beyond the control of the Division. For instance, as one of the Division's supervisors mentioned, the declining number of vacant buildings is not meaningful unless one also looks at the condition of the housing market in Saint Paul. To provide better information for the analysis of results and the development organizational plans, new measures should attempt to incorporate external social and economic factors.

Result Measurement for Special Initiatives

Several senior leaders within the CSO stated the Office does a particularly poor job of measuring the results of special initiatives. For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program that has been developed to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature.¹⁹

The inadequacy of the Office's data collection efforts is a major impediment to its efforts to measure the results of its special initiatives. The Director of Code Enforcement stated that in 1999, this Division conducted six Weed and Seed programs and there are no records of how the program's money was spent or about the results of the programs in terms of citations, arrests and property improvements. Similarly, the Division is currently undertaking a pilot program, the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, for which there was supposed to be a serious data collection effort underway during its first three months. However, it was reported that the collection efforts were so poor that the data was essentially useless for a serious evaluation of the program. Currently, the Office's most significant special initiative is PP2000. PP2000 is the Division's program to address the problems created at some of Saint Paul's most troubled properties. To track the success of the program, staff collect data on whether complaints on PP2000 properties are decreasing. However, they say they would also like to collect the number of properties sold by a PP2000 property owner, the number of complaints based on ownership, and whether corrections were made as a result of writing a citation.

There are several reasons why tracking results of special initiatives, such as PP2000, should be of great importance for the CSO. First, PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff Initiative have been mentioned as potential models for dealing with the City's problem properties. Without good data collection and continuous tracking of results, it will be very difficult to determine whether these programs are successful, whether they should be continued and implemented on a larger scale. Second, there appears to be a great deal of resistance to some of these programs among staff and some senior leaders. Many complain that initiatives such as these use scarce resources which would be better used for the day-to-day activities of the Code Enforcement Division. By systematically tracking results of these special initiatives, senior leaders and decision-makers will be able to judge whether resources are being used in the most effective manner possible.

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of these programs, see the "Special Initiatives" section of Policy Alignment portion of this audit.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division measures the results of some of its activities. The Film Office determines the financial results of its efforts by examining the budgets of the projects it helps bring to Saint Paul. This data is disaggregated by production type. The Division also collects data on visitors and revenues generated by events that it promotes in the City. Staff also track press clippings to determine the success of their promotional efforts.²⁰ Finally, the Division seeks feedback from stakeholders about specific projects it has undertaken. Several staff members stated they would like to receive regular reports from the CSO's Information and Complaint Division about requests and complaints related to their activities. They have made a request to the CSO Director to be provided with this information; however, the Division has yet to receive these reports.

Comparisons of Results

Divisions within the CSO do not compare their results to the outcomes of other similar organizations. Occasionally, employees informally speak or swap stories with staff from other cities who perform similar functions. Many Code Enforcement staff members stated it would be difficult to compare Saint Paul's results with other similar agencies because of the difference in housing code and enforcement traditions.

Staff Knowledge of Goals and Goal Achievement

Ultimately, the measurement of results should be undertaken to determine whether an organization is achieving its goals. Staff, however, appear to be unclear about the goals of the CSO. The staff's knowledge about organizational goals is essentially the responsibility of senior leaders. Leaders must make it clear, through the vision and planning process, what the goals of the organization are and how they will be achieved. Although the point is intertwined with much of what is stated in the audit's Leadership section, it is mentioned here because if an organization does not have clear and defined goals, it is difficult for an organization to determine what results should be measured. Since there does not appear to be consensus in the CSO about the organization's goals, it is not surprising the Office has paid scant attention to measuring results.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO does not have a results measurement system.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and citizen satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions Division measures the success of their programs and the Vacant Building Unit tracks case management data.

²⁰ As an example, articles about Peanuts on Parade have appeared in papers as far away as Japan, Germany, Canada, Belgium, and Puerto Rico, and staff were interviewed by Australian radio.

3) For the most part, the Office's performance indicators are poorly developed and do not provide the organization and elected officials with useful information which could assist them with decision-making.

Recommendations

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures, also referred to as performance indicators, provide an organization with a means to gauge how well it is achieving its goals. Although not everything an organization does and seeks to accomplish can be quantified, there are some measures that are good indicators of this. Fundamentally, performance indicators should measure how well an organization is meeting its mission. For this reason, CSO's mission bears restating here. "The Citizen Service Office consists of Four Divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City Services by serving as advocates and liaisons." In this chapter we will explore how the CSO may seek to inform itself, its customers and stakeholders about how well it is doing at achieving its mission. This chapter is intended to provide a basis for discussion and assist CSO in developing performance measures. The CSO will embark over the next year on the implementation of AMANDA, the information system which will track much of the needed data for performance measurement. Therefore, it is a critical juncture for CSO to consider these issues.

Council Research has approached this examination of performance indicators with several assumptions in mind. First, we believe the City Council has a vested interest in examining performance indicators as a part of the budget review process. The use of performance indicators gives the City Council a clear picture of what has been accomplished in past years, and the reasonableness of expectations for future years. They meaningfully connect dollars spent to hoped-for outcomes in the services expected of City government. Indeed, as the Council deliberated upon "managed competition proposals," the need to translate City activities into meaningful performance indicators became very apparent. The development of such indicators is necessary to make clear with anyone—employees or private vendors—just what are performance requirements which will be specified in the contract. Second, we believe performance indicators can be useful management tools for communicating with staff about expectations. However, we also put forward the notion that staff must be a part of the creation of performance indicators and see their usefulness in their daily work lives. The people who will, in practice, provide information for performance indicators are also profoundly affected by what the indicators may reveal. Finally, although we recognize there are limitations in what performance indicators can communicate about the success of an organization, there is little else available to provide "a gauge" on progress. Comprehensive evaluations of programs or activities are timely and expensive, and do not necessarily allow for the incremental improvement of efforts.

The CSO does have a number of so-called "performance indicators" in its budget. In our view, however, most of the indicators included in the budget do not constitute meaningful, useful or effective measures. Developing performance measures begins with identifying what pieces of information indicate the organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and quality. Some guidelines for the development of meaningful performance indicators are provided below.

Performance Indicators Should Be:

- ☐ Quantifiable, readily available, easy to calculate, "trackable" and show the direction of progress
- ☐ Strongly connected to the mission of the organization
- ☐ Intrinsically meaningful and understood throughout the organization
- ☐ Focused on outcomes and products, rather than processes when possible

Examples of Performance Measures:

- ☐ Customer and employee satisfaction
- ☐ Volume of outputs as work units or products
- ☐ Productivity and efficiency: time and cost per unit of product
- ☐ Errors, mistakes, complaints, waste, return rates or pollution
- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Timeliness
- ☐ Impact: changes resulting from activity

It is important to note that performance indicators are often most meaningful and effective when the measures can serve as a basis for comparison. Comparisons are best when they are made using similar data from similar organizations, or if they compare the same activities within the organization over time. Comparing the City of Saint Paul's performance in these areas over time is likely to yield more meaningful results because of the idiosyncratic nature of these processes. Therefore, it is recommended that the following measures be tracked at periodic intervals for comparisons.

We have organized our discussion of potential performance measures by division: City Clerk/Information and Complaint, Code Enforcement, and Marketing and Promotions. What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential measures, but rather provides what we believe would be good measures for some aspects of the Office's work. Some of the data needed for these measures are already collected.

City Clerk

- 1) The timeliness of record retrieval could be measured by tracking what percent of record requests are fulfilled within a certain time period, for example 24 hours. This information could also be tracked and reported by type of request.
- 2) Similarly, the City Clerk's Office could measure how promptly official City documents are processed and filled by tracking the percentage of documents processed within a certain time period.
- 3) To measure the accessibility of official documents to the general public, the Clerk's Office should track how up-to-date document indexes and compilation of City records, such as Council minutes, are.

Information and Complaint Division

- 1) To measure the response time to citizen complaints, the Division should measure the average time it takes to refer the complaint to the appropriate department.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division should formalize the collection of citizen satisfaction data regarding the City's response to complaints. This information is currently being collected on an irregular basis. The Division should develop a consistent policy and methodology for collecting this data and reports should be produced and distributed city-wide.
- 3) Part of the development of citizen satisfaction data collection policy should include the measurement of the Division's ability to conduct these call-backs in a timely manner. This should include tracking the amount of time it takes Information and Complaint staff to call citizens back after their complaint has been resolved.

Performance Measures for Code Enforcement

- 1) To measure workload, the Code Enforcement Division could measure inspections per inspector, or inspections per year.
- 2) To measure timeliness, the Division could measure (a) average response time in calendar days for initial inspection of code violations for the most recent fiscal year; and (b) the average time in calendar days for progressing from inspector's report to either voluntary compliance or the initiation of administrative or judicial action.
- 3) To measure the effectiveness of code enforcement activities, the Division could measure, (a) the percentage of code violations brought into voluntary compliance prior to the initiation of administrative or judicial action; or (b) the number of code violations resolved per full time equivalents (FTEs) units.
- 4) To measure cost, the Division could measure the cost per code enforcement case.

Marketing and Promotions Division

- 1) ~~The Division should attempt to measure the effectiveness of their efforts to promote and market events by surveying attendees about how they found out about particular events.~~
- 2) The Division should survey stakeholders, such as community groups and businesses, which benefit from its activities. The Division should focus on measures which relate to stakeholder needs and satisfaction.
- 3) The Film Office should measure the average amount of revenue generated by film projects in the City. This data should be disaggregated by the film type, such as commercial, feature film, or video.

CONCLUSION

The employees of the Citizen Service Office are diligent and very concerned with providing services and information to the extent possible and as dictated in law. We found some policies where further development of CSO practices are necessary, and others where a change in policy would be more logical. We also found a great deal of room for improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office's operations. Through our interview process, we discovered that staff and the managers and director have a willingness to improve operations. Our intent is to provide them with recommendations that would do just that. Many of the recommendations are not difficult to implement and could dramatically improve the overall quality of the Office's operations. The following is a summary of our findings.

Planning

The Citizen Service Office does very little planning for its operations. The only "plans" we discovered were the "Strategic Plans" found in the City's Budget document, and some plans created by the Marketing and Promotions Division directly related to various events and activities. Staff suggested the overall lack of planning is a result of the reactionary nature of their work and the influence of political decision-makers on their operations. Council Research offers that creating plans to guide their work would assist the Citizen Service Office in balancing the demands on their resources and assisting with prioritizing requests.

Leadership

Most staff within the Citizen Service Office have not seen the Office's mission statement. However, most staff agree the mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. Staff are less sure of the vision for the Office, though they do feel the Mayor provides a vision of the future of the Office and supports the work they do. This was particularly evident in the Code Enforcement Division. The vision from the Director of the CSO seemed less clear to staff.

While the mission and vision may not be entirely clear to staff, the values of the organization are. The Director and managers deserve special recognition for exemplifying the values, in the eyes of the staff, and for being open and accessible to their staff. Still, it would be helpful to new staff to be able to view a vision, mission, and values statement to get a better understanding of the organization.

Communication is a problem for the Citizen Service Office. We found many instances where there was an apparent lack of communication between divisions and between management and staff. Staff meetings and more information sharing between divisions could result in a great improvement in the level of communication in the Office.

Training and Development

The Citizen Service Office, particularly the Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to attend various training sessions and conferences. Other staff, such as

support staff, do not seem as inclined to attend training, though they are also encouraged to seek training.

The work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has reportedly improved since they were administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office, and most staff were physically placed in the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District offices. They have also come under new management which, staff state, has an open-door, approachable philosophy. Some problems still exist with clerical and vacant buildings staff being located in City Hall and the rest of the inspectors being located at the East team offices. The files are also located downtown, which decreases efficiency of operations and access to information. The work environment of other divisions appear to be fairly healthy, though there were some problems discussed that appear to be human resources issues that need to be handled on an individual basis.

Direct employee involvement in decision-making is an area that needs improvement in the Office. Many employees feel decisions are made at higher levels and they are the last to find out about changes.

Information and Analysis

The Citizen Service Office is collecting very little useful data at the present time. They have stated that their current computer system does not allow them to retrieve meaningful data; therefore, any analysis of this data would be inaccurate. Two areas within the Office are better able to collect data: the Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions. Information and Complaint is able to generate some reports as well, but not to the extent we feel they ought to be.

The Office has also begun to move away from the old EXL data base system. Some units within the Office are experimenting with Freelantz software, which they have found to be inadequate. They are also pursuing the possibility of using the AMANDA system, which LIEP and Fire Prevention have already begun to use. Council Research feels they should be moving more quickly toward implementing AMANDA with greater input from current users.

Improvement Processes

As we have found in many other audits, the City overall does not engage in a systematic, meaningful improvement process, and the Citizen Service Office is no exception. They are very good at finding different ways to improve their services, whether it is accepting information requests and complaints on-line or creating special initiatives to address specific Code Enforcement problems. However, they are lacking in the planning process for these initiatives, and therefore run into unanticipated, avoidable problems in implementation, and they are less sure of the success of the initiatives because they have created no mechanisms to evaluate the initiatives or changes.

Customer Focus

We are constantly impressed with the level of concern City employees show toward citizens, their customers. The Citizen Service Office is very interested in ensuring they are providing

citizens with the information and assistance they need. Currently, Information and Complaint staff sometimes follow-up with complainants to assess their satisfaction with the City's response to their inquiry or complaint, though this information is not compiled or distributed. A more thorough assessment of residents' needs and level of satisfaction would be beneficial to the City, and ought to be done on a broader scale than just those residents who call the CSO. While the responsibility for knowing this information rests with every City department, the CSO is best poised for conducting a city-wide survey.

The employees of the Citizen Service Office understand a basic, informal set of customer service standards. However, it would be helpful to have more formal standards to assist staff in understanding what the expectations are for their performance in relation to customers.

Results

Closely related to planning and information and analysis is results measurement. It is vitally important that organizations gauge how well they are achieving their mission. The CSO does not have a highly developed results measurement system. The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions tracks the success of their programs, and the Vacant Buildings unit tracks information such as how many vacant buildings are rehabilitated. However, overall the Office does not use even the little information it has to analyze to assess its operations. The Office needs to re-examine its performance indicators used in the City's Budget. Performance measures are not just volume indicators, they are used to assess progress, efficiency, and satisfaction. For example, Information and Complaint staff currently track the number of call backs they do. A more meaningful measure for them would be the number of call backs within three days, which is their objective as stated in the budget. They could set a goal for the level of satisfaction of complainants - for example 80 percent.

Performance Measures

The Citizen Service Office currently has few meaningful performance measures. However, they have the potential to create measures using data they anticipate collecting with the development of their information systems. Using performance measures in an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and improvement could significantly assist the CSO in years to come, and will enhance internal management and accountability to customers and stakeholders.

Appendix A: Resources

General Citizen Service Office Policies Applicable to All Divisions

2000 Budget Objectives and Activity Performance Plans

2000 Budget Strategic Plans

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor

Code Enforcement Policies

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 34. Property Code Maintenance
- Chapter 35. Rental Disclosure Posting
- Chapter 39. Smoke Detectors
- Chapter 43. Vacant Buildings
- Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement
- Chapter 51. Dwelling Unit Registration
- Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks
- Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles
- Chapter 189. Truth in Sale of Housing
- Chapter 357. Solid Waste Provisions

The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan: Housing Plan, Adopted by the City Council March 24, 1999.
Housing Action Plan 2000

City Clerk/Records Policies

City Charter:

- Chapter. 8. Initiative, Referendum, and Recall
- Chapter 14. Special Assessments
- Chapter 17. General Provisions

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 9. Publishing Costs of Special Ordinances and Resolutions
- Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions
- Chapter 130. Procedure for Vacating Streets and Other Public Grounds

Administrative Code:

- Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk
- Chapter 76. City Elections – Nominating Petitions and Petitions in Lieu of Filing Fees
- Chapter 77. Elections – Canvassing of Returns and Certifications of Results
- Chapter 87. Depository for Documents
- Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances
- Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information
- Appendix Chap. 3. All Public Meetings – Notice Requirements

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Government Data Practices Act

Minnesota Rules 1205. Department of Administration - Data Practices

City Council Resolution 99-881

Information and Complaint Policies

Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Books / Miscellaneous Documents

Ammon, David N. (1996). *Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organization*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program. *2000 Criteria for Performance Excellence*.

The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measures: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C., The Urban Institute.

Appendix B: CSO "2000 Strategic Plans"²¹

Communicate useful information regarding city services to elected officials and the citizens of Saint Paul.

Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services.

Ensuring stronger collaborative partnerships with internal and external customers (i.e. community organizations).

Measuring and reporting citizen satisfaction rate related to requests for service and responses to complaints.

Phasing in a new computerized complaint system that will be used in City Offices and Departments.

To provide citizens and City operations with accurate credible, pro-active research and policy development by:

Identifying "real" problem issues in the City.

Clarifying whether we need to re-allocate resources.

Providing accurate, base information to affect policy development or modifications.

Pinpointing the need for system changes, etc.

Ensuring an educational component to our work to encourage professional and personal development.

Ensuring public information employees within the City stay current.

Increase the frequency and quality of information going to City employees.

Solving long term communication issues.

Help with implementation of communication strategies.

Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.

²¹taken from Page 64 of the 2000 Proposed City of Saint Paul Budget

Appendix C: Excerpt from the "Agreement Between Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul for Election Office Management"

1. County Duties

The County will assume all election duties required by Minnesota Statutes to be performed by City Election staff with exceptions as noted in this Agreement. These duties will include:

-
- Continue efforts to improve customer service in part through the use of random surveys to gauge voter satisfaction
- Locate and arrange for polling places that are handicap accessible, wherever possible, and obtain City Council approval for any changes
- Recruit and train election judges
- Prepare and maintain the election calendar year
- Handle candidate filings and maintain candidate files
- Supply copies of candidate filing to the city Clerk within twenty - four (24) hours of receipt
- Order ballots, envelopes and other voting supplies
- Monitor delivery of ballots from printer, sort new ballots, prepare test decks
- Administer City absentee balloting
- Arrange for public accuracy tests
- Program for elections and test those programs
- Package and deliver election supplies
- Maintain and store voting equipment
- Provide main office phone coverage to answer questions whenever polls are open or election judges are still at the polling locations
- Provide unofficial election results at the election office to the media and candidates at least every half hour after polls close on election night
- Accumulate election returns and provide City Council with results for their approval
- Store voted ballots and election returns
- Verify signatures on petitions, initiatives, referendums and recalls
- Provide an analysis to the City of the election costs for proposed legislation as requested
- If a new voting system is used, the County will inform voters and provide demonstrations as required by Minnesota Statutes section 206.58

Appendix D: Vacant Building Categories

Category	1	2	3
Requirements That Must be Met to take Building off Vacant Building List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Occupy • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program • Permits if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • \$2,000 cash deposit or Performance Bond Posted • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program

Appendix E: Compilation of Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a service is rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate it the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

Recommendation #14. Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and

Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Recommendation #32: If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33: Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34: Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Recommendation #35: Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

Recommendation #37: The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38: The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39: The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40: The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the

work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. ~~This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.~~

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the

information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
-
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

Appendix F: CSO Performance Audit Survey

Answer the questions by circling the number of the response category which best answers the question or describes your opinion. All responses are anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Plans in my work area are made...</p> <p>4 At least twice a year
3 Annually
2 Every 3 years or more
1 Never
0 Don't know
* If never, go to question 6.</p> | <p>6. The Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>2. The durations of the plans in CSO are... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 More than three years (long-term plans)
2 Three years or less (short term plans)
1 Don't know</p> | <p>7. The CSO Director conveys a clear vision for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>3. CSO makes the following types of plans... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 Issue-specific plans
2 General organizational plans
1 Other _____</p> | <p>8. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey the core values of the organization</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>4. I regularly participate in CSO's planning efforts</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | <p>9. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey an organizational mission</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>5. CSO plans are implemented frequently</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | |

10. Senior management is visible and accessible to employees

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

11. The communication within CSO is effective

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

12. The Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

13. The Director and managers encourage participation in professional organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

14. I have a good understanding of performance expectations in my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

15. The current employee evaluation process is useful to employees for improving their performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

16. CSO senior leaders, supervisors and employees treat each other with respect regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

17. In CSO, labor and management work well together

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

18. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

19. My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

20. Opportunities exist for me to contribute to the decisions made about operations and procedures in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

21. I receive the training necessary to perform my job effectively

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

22. My individual performance is evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know

23. The current employee evaluation is useful in helping me improve my performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

24. CSO collects data to effectively support its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

25. The collected data is useful and relevant to the work performed in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

26. CSO uses data to evaluate its activities and to improve its performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

27. The CSO's information systems currently meet my needs

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

28. Activities in CSO are formally evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know
- * if never, go to question 30

29. CSO practices are regularly changed based on the results of the evaluations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

30. CSO frequently changes the way work is done to improve performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

31. Administrative practices (such as forms and reporting procedures) within CSO are reviewed frequently for improvement

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

32. The performance of CSO's vendors (providers of goods and contracted services) is regularly evaluated

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

33. I know who the customers of CSO are

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

34. List who you consider to be the customers of CSO

- 5 _____
- 4 _____
- 3 _____
- 2 _____
- 1 _____

35. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

36. The CSO is responsive to changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

37. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

38. CSO is responsive to changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

39. CSO has customer service standards for my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

40. CSO's customer service standards are written

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

41. I understand CSO's customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

42. Staff follow established customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

43. CSO regularly measures the results of its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

44. CSO compares its results to those of similar organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

45. CSO often achieves its desired goals

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

47. How do you know goals have been achieved? (Please explain)**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS****How long have you been employed by CSO?**

- 5 less than one year
- 4 1 to 5 years
- 3 5 to 10 years
- 2 10 to 20 years
- 1 20 or more years

What type of an employee are you?

- 3 full time
- 2 part time
- 1 intern

What area do you work in? (Circle all that apply)

- 4 City Clerk/Records
- 3 Information & Complaints
- 2 Code Enforcement
- 1 Marketing & Promotions

ORIGINAL

Council File # 01-67

Green Sheet # 100740

RESOLUTION
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

27

Presented by Lath, Rant

Referred To _____ Committee Date _____

RESOLUTION Accepting the Council Research Performance Audit of the Saint Paul Citizen Service Office

- 1 WHEREAS, the Saint Paul City Council has directed the City Council Investigation and Research Center to conduct
2 performance audits of City departments to examine their policy compliance and determine the level of efficiency and
3 effectiveness of City operations; now, therefore, be it
- 4 RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council accepts the report titled "Performance Audit of the City of Saint Paul's
5 Citizen Service Office," and requests the director of the Citizen Service Office to provide to the City Council a response
6 to the performance audit findings at the February 7, 2001 Council meeting.

	Yeas	Nays	Absent
Benanav	✓		
Blakey	✓		
Bostrom	✓		
Coleman	✓		
Harris			✓
Lantry	✓		
Reiter	✓		
	6	0	1

Requested by Department of:

By: _____

Form Approved by City Attorney

By: _____

Adopted by Council: Date Jan 24, 2001

Adoption Certified by Council Secretary


By: [Signature]

Approved by Mayor for Submission to Council

By: _____

Approved by Mayor: Date Jan 31 2001

By: [Signature]

DEPARTMENT/OFFICE/COUNCIL Ward 7 - Kathy Lantry	DATE INITIATED Jan. 15	GREEN SHEET No 100740	
CONTACT PERSON & PHONE Kathy Lantry x68670		<input type="checkbox"/> DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR _____	<input type="checkbox"/> CITY COUNCIL _____
MUST BE ON COUNCIL AGENDA BY (DATE) Jan 24, 2001 Discussion		<input type="checkbox"/> CITY ATTORNEY _____	<input type="checkbox"/> CITY CLERK _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> FINANCIAL SERVICES DIR. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FINANCIAL SERVICES CTG. _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> MAYOR (OR ASSISTANT) _____	
TOTAL # OF SIGNATURE PAGES _____		(CLIP ALL LOCATIONS FOR SIGNATURE)	
ACTION REQUESTED Resolution accepting the Council Research Performance Audit of the Saint Paul Citizen Service Office			
RECOMMENDATION Approve (A) or Reject (R) _____ PLANNING COMMISSION _____ CIB COMMITTEE _____ CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION _____ _____ _____		PERSONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS MUST ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: 1. Has this person/firm ever worked under a contract for this department? YES NO 2. Has this person/firm ever been a city employee? YES NO 3. Does this person/firm possess a skill not normally possessed by any current city employee? YES NO 4. Is this person/firm a targeted vendor? YES NO Explain all yes answers on separate sheet and attach to green sheet	
INITIATING PROBLEM ISSUE, OPPORTUNITY (Who, What, When, Where, Why) <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 50px;"> Council Research Center JAN 16 2001 </div>			
ADVANTAGES IF APPROVED			
DISADVANTAGES IF APPROVED			
DISADVANTAGES IF NOT APPROVED			
TOTAL AMOUNT OF TRANSACTION \$ _____		COST/REVENUE BUDGETED (CIRCLE ONE) YES NO	
FUNDING SOURCE _____		ACTIVITY NUMBER _____	
FINANCIAL INFORMATION (EXPLAIN)			



PERFORMANCE AUDIT PURPOSE

The Saint Paul City Council established the Performance Audit Program to help fulfill two major legislative oversight responsibilities:

- Ensure City practices are consistent with City policies; and
- Assess the degree of efficiency and effectiveness with which City policies are being carried out.

This performance audit examines the activities of the Citizen Service Office (CSO), which includes four divisions: Information and Complaint, Marketing and Promotions, City Clerk/Records, and Code Enforcement Programs.

CITY POLICIES

In its effort to identify policy statements relating to CSO activities, Council Research reviewed City Ordinances, City Council resolutions and 2000 Budget Performance Plans. The City's *Housing Plan Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan* and the *2000 Housing Action Plan* were also reviewed.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The City Council wants to know if the Citizen Service Office is operating at an optimal level of quality and, if not, what can be done to remedy any deficiencies preventing it from achieving the level of excellence expected. Information needed to review the CSO was obtained through document review, site visits, interviews and an Office-wide survey. The seven criteria used to assess organizational development and to identify quality organizations are: planning, leadership, training and development, information and analysis, processes for improvement, customer focus and results.

MAJOR FINDINGS - POLICY COMPLIANCE

- The CSO is generally in compliance with relevant City policies, with the exception of some Budget objectives.
- The CSO is in compliance with records retention requirements, but the CSO should develop more formalized administrative practices to increase efficiency and ensure compliance by other City departments.
- We found no enabling legislation in City Code for the Marketing and Promotions Division.
- The CSO should develop formal administrative practices to ensure compliance with trade secret storage requirements.

MAJOR FINDINGS - QUALITY ASSESSMENT

- The CSO prepares very few plans with the exception of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

- Staff feel the values of the organization, though informal, are exemplified by the Office's management staff.
- Communication at all levels and between all divisions within the Office is relatively poor.
- Staff are encouraged to attend training and training resources are readily available.
- The work environment of Code Enforcement has reportedly improved since they were moved to the CSO. However, some problems still exist with staff being placed in different locations and the fact that the files are located downtown, while most Code Enforcement inspectors are located at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District building.
- The Citizen Service Office collects little data and performs virtually no analysis or results measurement.
- Staff are very focused on providing good customer service. However, they do very little assessment of customer needs and satisfaction.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS

Council Research developed a summary rating system we believe conveys the essence of our findings concerning the City's Citizen Service Office and the seven efficiency and effectiveness criteria used in the assessment. Each area assessment was assigned a "star" rating based on how fully developed and practiced a criterion was throughout the organization.

Key to Efficiency and Effectiveness Ratings

★★★★	→ Criteria fully developed and practiced throughout the organization.
★★★	→ Criteria well developed and practiced throughout most of the organization
★★	→ Criteria present and practiced in some parts of the organization.
★	→ Criteria very rarely present or practiced in the organization.

Citizen Service Office Summary Efficiency and Effectiveness Ratings

★	Planning	★	Improvement Processes
★½	Leadership	★★½	Customer Focus
★★	Training and Development	★ ½	Results
★½	Information and Analysis		

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thirty-six recommendations are made concerning policy compliance and twenty-nine recommendations are offered concerning the efficiency and effectiveness criteria. The most significant recommendations pertain to:

- creating a useful strategic plan for the CSO;
- improving communication and employee input;
- measuring results;
- measuring customer satisfaction and needs; and
- developing meaningful budget objectives.

FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR A COPY OF THE REPORT PLEASE CONTACT

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CITY COUNCIL RESEARCH REPORT

Performance Audit of The City of Saint Paul's Citizen Service Office



Saint Paul City Council
Council Investigation and Research Center
Saint Paul, Minnesota

01-67

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Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102**

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**Performance Audit of
The City of Saint Paul's
Citizen Service Office**

January 2001

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Jennifer Dunn

David Godfrey

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Questions?

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INTRODUCTION

The City Council, as the governing body of the City of Saint Paul, is responsible for establishing City policies and ensuring that City practices are consistent with these policies. As the body responsible for approving the City Budget and authorizing the tax levy, the Council must also assess the efficiency and effectiveness of City operations. Therefore, the City Council established the Performance Audit Program in the fall of 1996 to help it fulfill these legislative oversight and budgetary responsibilities and directed Council Research to conduct performance audits of City operations. Performance audits analyze the consistency of departmental practices with City policies, as well as provide insight into how policy directives are implemented. The performance audit also examines whether an organization's practices are efficient and reflective of those used by high-performing organizations.

SCOPE OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT

This audit is an examination of the policy compliance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office (CSO). The Office is composed of four divisions: Code Enforcement Programs; Marketing and Promotions; Information and Complaint; and City Clerk/Records.

Policy Compliance

The City Council establishes policies to govern the operations of all City activities including the divisions of the Citizen Service Office. While there are many general City policies which affect all City activities, this report addresses only policies which apply specifically to the functions of the CSO. In order to determine the extent to which CSO activities are consistent with City policies, it is necessary to identify policies the City Council has established regarding their functions. To this end, we have reviewed City Ordinances, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Plan Chapter of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, the *Housing Action Plan 2000*, and the 2000 Budget Activity Performance Plans to isolate any policies adopted by the City Council as part of the annual budget process. The first section of this report identifies City policies related to the Citizen Service Office and assesses the extent to which actual practices are consistent with City policies. Where discrepancies are found, the reason offered for these differences will be provided along with recommendations to bring policies and practices into alignment. These recommendations may suggest changes in Office practices, City policies or both.

City Ordinances and Council Resolutions

We have searched the City Charter, the Legislative and Administrative Codes, and City Council Resolutions for policies pertaining directly to activities of the CSO. The City's Administrative Code is the compilation of City Ordinances which pertains to how City government is structured and should operate. The Legislative Code is the compilation of ordinances which regulates citizens and property owners of the City. The Code is usually explicit and leaves little room for administrative discretion concerning the execution of ordinances. The Council would view

failure to comply with the City Code to be a serious matter. Council resolutions are formal expressions of opinion, intent or will that, if passed by the Council and approved by the Mayor, become City policy. The sections of this report which focus on City Ordinances and Resolutions will identify any differences between policies and practices and offer recommendations to resolve inconsistencies.

Comprehensive Plan and Housing Action Plan 2000

The City of Saint Paul maintains a *Comprehensive Plan* that defines the City's plan for most City services. The chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan* are created through a careful and usually lengthy process involving many parties and interest groups. The most recent version of the *Housing Plan Chapter* of the *Comprehensive Plan* was formally adopted by the City Council in March, 1999. It stands as a written statement of the City Council's policy expectations for housing in Saint Paul. The *Housing Action Plan 2000* is an implementation plan for action to be taken during 2000 to implement the policies in the Housing Plan and the *Saint Paul-Ramsey County Five-Year Low Income Housing and Homeless Services Report and Plan*.

Since the plans are not explicit policy directives, some differences are expected between the Plans and actual activities. However, such differences should be periodically resolved by either changes in practice or revisions of the *Comprehensive Plan* or *Housing Action Plan*. This report will identify the differences between policies, as stated in the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Housing Action Plan*, and current practices in the CSO and offer recommendations to resolve any inconsistencies.

Budget Performance Plan

Each year, as part of the City budget process, the Citizen Service Office presents Activity Performance Plans for each of its divisions and its "Strategic Plans"¹ to the City Council for approval as part of its Office budget. These "Strategic Plans" identify both the ongoing and annual objectives of each budget activity. The City Council then adopts these objectives as part of its adoption of the annual City budget, and, as such, these objectives represent City policies.

While the Council understands that objectives set as part of the budget process may be ambitious and are sometimes thwarted by unforeseen developments, the City budget is an official City policy document and the CSO is responsible for operating in conformance with these adopted policy statements. The sections of this report which focus on budget performance plans will identify differences between policies and practices and provide the division's explanations of these differences. Recommendations will also be offered to minimize such differences in the future.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The City Council is very interested in the value received by citizens for money expended. Taxpayers rightly expect that money provided for the Citizen Service Office will be spent to

¹These "Strategic Plans" do not meet what most experts in public management define as a strategic plan. This discrepancy will be discussed further throughout the audit.

achieve the best result with the least expenditure of public funds. The efficiency and effectiveness of government operations can be assessed in many ways. One common approach is for auditors to examine an organization at a micro-level to try to determine if the organization is following sound procurement practices, properly protecting its resources, and complying with the requirements of laws and regulations. This micro-level approach to auditing is closely related to financial auditing and is often conducted by accountants who spend a great deal of time and effort examining the inner workings of the organization. While we accept there are situations where this type of micro-level auditing is appropriate, such as when fraud is suspected, we believe a higher level audit is most appropriate here. The City Council is less concerned with the minutia of daily operations and more concerned with knowing if this is a top-quality organization. If not, the Council is interested in knowing what can be done to remedy any deficiencies preventing them from achieving the level of excellence expected.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the CSO are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization. The categories and criteria are explained in the introduction of each Quality Assessment chapter of this report.

RESEARCH METHODS

Policies pertaining to the functions of CSO were gathered from the Saint Paul Administrative Code, the Saint Paul Legislative Code, City Council Resolutions, the Housing Chapters of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the CSO's own internal plans, policies and budget objectives. It is not Council Research's intent to make specific findings on every individual policy statement. Rather, we focus on groups of policies that relate to specific functional areas within CSO. It is our belief this approach is more useful to both policy makers and participants in understanding how to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and compliance of the organization.

We believe the best way to assess the level of organizational development is to ask those most knowledgeable about the organization—the people who work in the organization. We believe the employees who work in the Citizen Service Office best know the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and will, when asked, candidly report their opinions. Therefore, we have gone directly to CSO staff to ask them about their work. We were able to administer a written survey to 29 of 40 (72 percent) CSO staff (there were two vacancies at the time of the survey), and we also conducted 20 interviews with CSO staff members. Audit team members also participated in a ride-along with inspectors to gain first-hand knowledge of how inspections are conducted. The findings and recommendations in this report are based on these surveys, interviews and site visits, as well as an examination of written materials related to the CSO's practices.

CITIZEN SERVICE OFFICE OVERVIEW

The Citizen Service Office is composed of four very distinct divisions, listed in the chart below. The diversity of the functions of the CSO made this audit both very interesting and somewhat more complicated because at times it seemed as though we were examining four offices rather than one. The Director of the CSO oversees all the divisions, and has direct responsibility for the Information and Complaint Division, which does not have a separate manager, as the Code Enforcement, Marketing and Promotions, and City Clerk/Records divisions have.

The following table outlines the basic functions of each area and the number of staff positions assigned to each area. The policy compliance sections for each of the divisions will discuss further their respective responsibilities.

Divisions of the Citizen Service Office

City Clerk/Records <i>3 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep all City records, proceedings, official books, papers, seal and documents • provide documents upon request • document preservation • process petitions, claims, summons, complaints • process notices of vacations for right of ways • administer appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer • administer oath of office to elected and appointed officials
Information & Complaint <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints regarding City services • provide public information to callers and walk-ins regarding City services and events • provide call-backs to citizens who call in with concerns
Marketing & Promotions <i>5 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote Saint Paul through various events • secure movie production contracts for filming in Saint Paul • assist City neighborhood groups with marketing their events • produce the "Residents' Guide" • develop and maintain the City's website • publish "City Update" for City employees
Code Enforcement Programs <i>31 employees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enforce minimum housing and health codes on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties • monitor vacant buildings • participate in special programs as requested by district councils and other neighborhood groups • administer the Truth-in-Sale of Housing program • administer Rental Registration

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This chapter presents the policies under which the Citizen Service Office is expected to operate and the degree to which the current practices are consistent with those policies. Council Research gathered policies from a number of sources including ordinances, resolutions, the City's *Comprehensive Plan* and the City's Budget. They are organized according to which division maintains the most responsibility for compliance. We have highlighted in boxes either those policies that deserve special mention or those policies with which the Office is not in compliance. The policies we examined are listed in total in Appendix A.

INFORMATION & COMPLAINT DIVISION

The Information and Complaint Division of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for providing information concerning City matters to the public. It also serves as an advocate and liaison by helping citizens resolve issues relating to City services. The complaint or request process begins with a phone call, walk-in, or e-mail complaint or information request directed to Information and Complaint staff. Walk-in customers speak with an analyst and fill out a complaint form, and the information is then entered into the computer and the appropriate City department is contacted by the analyst. Those phoning in complaints give their information to the Citizen Service analyst who then follows the same process described above. E-mails are reviewed and responded to by a Citizen Service Analyst and logged into the computer in the same manner as other complaints. If the department does not respond to the complaint within a specified amount of time, usually five days, the analyst contacts the agency and asks them when to expect a response.

A wide array of complaints come into the Information and Complaint Division. On a given day a Citizen Service analyst may deal with complaints about snow and ice removal, abandoned vehicles, fallen trees, house parties, animals, excessive garbage, pot holes, or water main breaks. Information is sought on neighborhood and City-wide events, City department responsibility, snow plowing, parking and elections.

This Division works closely with the Parks and Recreation Division, the Police Department, the Public Works Department, the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection, the City Council and the Mayor's Office. Within the CSO, the Information and Complaint Division has a regular working relationship with the Code Enforcement Division. Many of the complaints received by the public have to do with property code violations. Once a complaint has been taken, a letter is sent to the subject of the complaint and the complaint is forwarded to Code Enforcement inspectors, whereupon they schedule a site visit. Analysts sometimes follow-up with a call-back to the complainant to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

Information and Complaint Policies

The following box highlights the City Code and City Budget policies that relate directly to the Information and Complaint Division.

Objectives of the Citizen Service Program

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor. Sec. 2.20. Objectives of Citizen Service Program.

The following objectives are hereby established for the Citizen Service Program:

- (1) To act as an advocate for citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- (2) To work closely with all City departments to constantly improve the City's response to requests and complaints.
- (3) To report regularly to the mayor and the City council on the performance of City departments in response to requests and complaints and the relative satisfaction of the citizens with the City's response.
- (4) To work closely with City-wide information services to operate a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system.
- (5) To provide public information on City services, events, and who to contact for response to requests and complaints.

2000 City Budget: Information and Complaint Division Activity Performance Plan

- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide. (i.e. postcards to complaints with complaints info, survey, follow-up, etc.)
- Serve as an advocate for residential and corporate citizens in responding to requests and complaints that pertain to City services.
- Work closely with all City offices/departments to consistently improve the City's response to requests for service.
- Report regularly to the Mayor and City Council on the performance of City departments/offices in responding to requests for service and the relative satisfaction of citizens and businesses with the City's responses.
- Work closely with Information Services to develop a fully computerized complaint referral and follow-up system to be used Citywide.
- Provide public information to callers regarding City services and events.
- Build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service.
- Be proactive in gaining awareness regarding upcoming problems related to City departments/offices and make policy recommendations.
- Upon receiving a response to a complaint from a City office/department, provide a callback to citizen(s) within three working days.
- Make the Citizen Service phone number and www address readily available for citizens and visitors.
- Administer employee program to enhance community involvement.

Findings

- 1) The Division compiles a five-day-late report for all unresolved complaints. This report is distributed to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division has not compiled customer satisfaction information or distribute it to the Mayor and Council as stated in the 2000 Budget Objectives and in City Code. They state they are unable to because the current computer system (EXL) is not able to

retrieve reliable data (see the following finding for further discussion). They are also not working closely with other departments to improve the City's response, nor are they actively build citizen-business loyalty by providing high quality customer service since they have no gauge of their level of service.

3) The Information and Complaint Division is working with the Office of Technology and Management Services to deploy the AMANDA system throughout the Division. This system will replace the current EXL system which is old and incapable of meeting the Division's needs. AMANDA is currently being used in LIEP and is expected to be used by Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention as well. According to the Director, funding for the new system has been sought for several years. This year funding was finally included in the CSO's 2000 budget.

4) The Division provides very limited call-backs to citizens. It is unclear if they are done within three days. No data are kept to corroborate this objective.

5) The Division does not administer employee programs to enhance community involvement. Rather they encourage certain employees to attend community meetings and put out broad calls for volunteers to staff City events and activities, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Common Complaints

The Information and Complaint Division is responsible for taking complaints and responding to inquiries about all City ordinances. We have two common areas of complaints: snow shoveling and abandoned vehicles. These examples provide a brief illustration of how the CSO processes complaints and inquiries.

Snow and Ice Removal

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 113: Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Sec. 113.02. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks.

The owner or occupant of any building or lot abutting a public sidewalk is responsible for and shall remove any accumulation of snow and /or ice from said public sidewalk within twenty four (24) hours after the snow and /or ice has ceased to fall, gather or accumulate.

Sec. 113.04 Notice.

Before the department shall abate such nuisance, it shall serve or cause to be served upon the owner or occupant of the abutting property a written notice informing the property owner or occupant that a complaint has been received by the City indicating the ice and / or snow has not been removed from the sidewalk within twenty four hours (24)... . If upon inspection by the department the sidewalk is found to be in violation of Section 113.02, the department may immediately schedule abatement... .

Finding

When asked how they implement Section 113.04 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, we found all snow and ice removal complaints are entered into the computer and a letter is generated and sent to the offending party. Staff claim the letter is helpful in getting compliance. Code Enforcement verifies the complaint and issues an order to make corrections. If the snow or ice is not removed within two to three days, a summary abatement is conducted and the City charges the property owner for the cost of the removal.

Abandoned Vehicles

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Sec. 163.04 Custody of abandoned vehicles.

The city health officer or enforcement officials of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city are hereby authorized to remove or have removed any motor vehicle left at any place within the city which reasonably appears to be in violation of this chapter or lost, stolen or unclaimed. The impounding and taking into custody of a motor vehicle pursuant to this chapter shall be done with the assistance of a police officer. A police officer, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city may enter upon private property at all reasonable hours for the purpose of inspecting such vehicle and impounding such vehicle, and it shall be unlawful for any person to prevent a policeman, health officer or enforcement official of the division of housing and building code enforcement for the city from entering on private property for the purposes of carrying out his duties hereunder or to interfere with him in the lawful performance of his duties.

Finding

We found the CSO informs the Police Department if an abandoned vehicle is on public property, and Code Enforcement if it is on private property. However, staff felt it was better to direct the complainant to call Parking Enforcement directly for faster service. Complaints made through the CSO and then passed on to the Police Department and then to Parking Enforcement can take

longer to be resolved because of the Police Department's internal complaint process. If Parking Enforcement is called directly, Parking Enforcement officers mark the car with chalk and have it towed or tagged if it is not removed within 48 hours. It is apparent from this example that different departments, and perhaps even different staff, handle complaints differently. It was reported that some staff in other departments take complaints without notifying the CSO, others take the complaint and forward the information to the CSO, and finally others simply tell the complainant to contact the CSO directly themselves. The City has no set procedure for handling complaints beyond the CSO's own internal policies. This convoluted system can only contribute to a complainants dissatisfaction and frustration with the City.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a "service" was rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

CITY CLERK/RECORDS DIVISION

The City Clerk/Records Division is responsible for maintaining the City of Saint Paul's official (government) recorded history. Three employees maintain and preserve all records of the City including: minutes, resolutions, ordinances, official books, papers and notices of public hearings as required by the Charter and other applicable law. The Division accepts petitions and determines their sufficiency. It is also keeper of the City Seal which, by law, must be affixed to certain documents. Because of its close physical proximity within the office to the Information and Complaint Division, the Records Division interacts with the public by providing information and assistance to walk-in and phone-in requests as well. The Division accepts summons, claims, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City. The Assistant City Clerk works with Ramsey County by overseeing the County contract for City election services. The City Clerk administers the oath of office to elected and appointed officials. Finally, the Division accepts the paperwork and fees associated with appeals to the Legislative Hearing Officer, schedules the hearings and sends the appeal notice to the appellants. The Division is governed by State legislation, City Ordinances and the Budget policies highlighted in the boxes throughout this section.

Records Retention

Minnesota Statutes 138.17 Government records; administration.

Subdivision 1. Destruction, preservation, reproduction of records; prima facie evidence. (a) The attorney general, legislative auditor in the case of state records, state auditor in the case of local records, and director of the Minnesota historical society, hereinafter director, shall constitute the records disposition panel. The members of the panel shall have power by majority vote to direct the destruction or sale for salvage of government records determined to be no longer of any value, or to direct the disposition by gift to the Minnesota historical society or otherwise of government records determined to be valuable for preservation...

Subd. 7. Records management program. A records management program for the application of efficient and economical management methods to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of official records shall be administered by the commissioner of administration with assistance from the director of the historical society.... It shall be the duty of the head of each state agency and the governing body of each county, municipality, and other subdivision of government to cooperate with the commissioner in conducting surveys and to establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of each agency, county, municipality, or other subdivision of government. When requested by the commissioner, public officials shall assist in the preparation of an inclusive inventory of records in their custody, to which shall be attached a schedule, approved by the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records and the commissioner, establishing a time period for the retention or disposal of each series of records. When the schedule is unanimously approved by the records disposition panel, the head of the governmental unit or agency having custody of the records may dispose of the type of records listed in the schedule at a time and in a manner prescribed in the schedule for particular records which were created after the approval. A list of records disposed of pursuant to this subdivision shall be forwarded to the commissioner and the archivist by the head of the governmental unit or agency. The archivist shall maintain a list of all records destroyed.

Records Retention, Cont.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Data Practices Act

13.03 Access to government data.

Subd. 2. **Procedures.** (a) The responsible authority in every state agency, political subdivision, and statewide system shall establish procedures, consistent with this chapter, to insure that requests for government data are received and complied with in an appropriate and prompt manner... .

A responsible authority may designate one or more designees.

Minnesota Rules 1205 Department of Administration - Data Practices

Minn. Rules 1205.1000 Appointment of the Responsible Authority.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 13.02, subdivision 16, the governing body of each political subdivision and the governing body of each state agency whose activities are subject to the direction of a governing body shall, by September 30, 1981, if it has not done so, appoint a responsible authority. This part shall not affect the appointments of responsible authorities made previous to the adoption of these rules. The governing body shall confer on the responsible authority full administrative authority to carry out the duties assigned by the act and by this chapter. Governing bodies may use the forms set forth in part 1205.2000 to appoint the responsible authority.

1205.0200 Definitions.

Subp. 14. Responsible authority in political subdivisions. In political subdivisions, the responsible authority shall be as follows, unless otherwise provided by state law:

B. For cities, the city council shall appoint an individual who is an employee of the city.

Saint Paul City Council Resolution 99-881

RESOLVED, pursuant to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Section 13.02, Subd. 16, of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and Minnesota Rules Section 1205.1000, Fred Owusu, City Clerk, is hereby designated as the Responsible Authority for the City of Saint Paul; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Responsible Authority is authorized to establish guidelines and procedures for the purpose of meeting all requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and the related, validly adopted rules.

Findings

Chapter 138.17 of Minnesota Statutes provides a plan for managing governmental records by giving authority to cities to dispose of records with certain limitations. No municipal records may be destroyed or removed without authorization of the Records Disposition Panel, which is essentially authorization from the Minnesota Historical Society. Cities may adopt the *General Records Retention Schedule* and any revisions by filing a *Notification of Adoption of City General Retention Schedule* form with the State Archives Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The Historical Society will sign and return the form as a signal the City may dispose of governmental records as indicated on the schedule.

The CSO maintains a copy of the *City General Records Retention Schedule*, but responsibility for documents being disposed of deposited at the Historical Society falls to individual City departments, as Minnesota Statutes allows the responsible authority to designate designees to fulfill these responsibilities, and department heads are the designees. Currently, no formal

process exists for City departments to inform the CSO that they are disposing of or sending documents to the Historical Society. Though it does not occur frequently, according to staff, some departments inform the CSO when they are disposing of documents or sending them to the Historical Society. Also, if the CSO discovers a department is "cleaning house," a note is sent to the director offering the assistance of the Assistant City Clerk to review the soon to be discarded documents to assess their archival value in complying with the Schedule. Under Resolution 99-881, the City Clerk is authorized to establish guidelines to ensure the requirements of the Government Data Practices Act are met.

Recommendation

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Documents Maintained by the CSO

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

b) The city clerk shall keep all minutes, records, proceedings, official books, papers and documents charged to his care in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use. He shall be responsible for the preservation and care of such records and shall take necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve them from deterioration, mutilation, loss or destruction. Records or record books may be repaired, renovated or rebound when necessary for proper preservation. Photographic, photostatic or microfilmed records shall be considered accessible for such purposes. Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, he shall permit all such public records in his custody to be inspected, examined, abstracted or copied during normal business hours subject to his supervision and regulation. He shall, upon demand of any person, furnish certified copies thereof upon payment in advance of reasonable fees therefor.

Saint Paul City Charter Sec. 17.02. Current files.

The city clerk shall keep a properly indexed current file of all city ordinances and resolutions, and this file shall be available for public inspection during the customary working hours observed by city employees. Copies of ordinances, resolutions and Charter amendments shall be distributed b or sold to the public at reasonable prices to be fixed by the council.

Documents Maintained by the CSO, Cont.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

With additional funding the Office of the City Clerk could more closely follow Chapter 4 of the Administrative Code in "taking necessary steps to carefully protect and preserve" these fragile records. Furthermore, the current micro-film reader is becoming obsolete and requires regular repairs.

- Maintain and preserve the minutes and records of the proceedings of the City Council in accordance with the Charter.
- Be the legal custodian of & maintain official copies of all ordinances and resolutions of the City Council.
- Notices of City Council meetings be served in accordance with state statutes, Charter provisions, city ordinances and Council rules.
- Cause the publication of all City Council minutes, ordinances and notices of public hearing as required by the Charter or other applicable law.
- Have custody of the seal of the city and affix it to such documents as may be required ad authorized pursuant to law.
- Give information and direction to private citizens having business with the city... .
- Keep all minutes, records official books, papers and documents in such arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use.
- Accept claims, summons and complaints, petitions and other legal documents on behalf of the City.
- Process and record vacations of public right of ways.
- Claim and appeal forms are now available on the City Clerk web page.
- Index City Council proceedings and distribute proceedings book.
- Administer appeals to Legislative Hearing Officer.

Findings

1) We found the Division maintains the documents for which it is responsible. Historical documents are kept at the Minnesota Historical Society and more recent documents are housed in the CSO's file room and on microfiche. The Office is in the process of buying new file cabinets to upgrade the protection of City documents. Ultimately, the Office would like all documents to be preserved on a document imaging system. It has been an ongoing goal of the CSO to obtain funding for a document imaging system, and a system is on order.

2) Official City documents are available for public viewing. Interested parties call or walk-in when in search of City documents. If an individual is doing a lengthy research project, they may be given open unsupervised access to the documents during business hours.

3) According to staff, the binding of the Council proceedings books are two years behind schedule. They are currently published in bound form through 1997. The CSO must index the proceedings before they can be sent out for binding. The Office is indexing the proceedings for 1999 and has completed indexing for 1998 but they have not been sent to the Legal Ledger for binding because the \$11,000 it cost to bind the books was allocated for other uses within the Office. The Office plans to send the 1998 Council Proceedings to the Legal Ledger for binding in 2001. The Legal Ledger is the only organization that bids on the binding contract.

4) According to staff, new or amended ordinances available on the City's Internet site are six to seven weeks behind Council enactment. This time is required to print, codify and have the CAO review the electronic version produced by the Legal Ledger before the Clerk's Office forwards it to Technology and Management Services (TMS) personnel to post the web page. It was reported that TMS personnel take one to two days to get the changes and additions made.

- 5) The Division provides appeal and claims information and forms on their website.

Recommendations

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Documents to the Public Library

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 87. Depository for Documents

Sec. 87.01. Deposit required.

All municipal corporations, departments, agencies and officials of the City of Saint Paul are required to submit a minimum of three (3) copies of each official published document to the Saint Paul Public Library.

Sec. 87.02. Official documents defined.

Such official published documents should include the following:

- (a) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or report issued for public distribution.
- (b) Any book, document, journal, map, pamphlet or official public report which is not issued for public distribution but contains any historical significance or reference value.
- (c) Such official published documents, for example, should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - (1) The annual compilation of the city ordinances and council proceedings.
 - (2) The annual reports of the various departments and bureaus.
 - (3) The City Codes and amendments.
 - (4) The City Charter and amendments.

Finding

CSO staff stated that City documents are not being submitted to the Saint Paul Public Library and no one is responsible for ensuring this is done. We also inquired as to whether this ordinance is reasonable given today's technologies. Staff were not sure it was reasonable since computers could generate electronic versions that do not require as much space.

Recommendation

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Elections

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk

Sec. 4.04. Elections.

(a) *Commissioner of registration.* The city clerk shall serve as the commissioner of registration for the city and provide such printed forms, blanks and other supplies and equipment as are necessary and proper to carry out the registration of qualified voters as prescribed by law. The office shall establish and keep, pursuant to statute, a plan of registration, including an original record of voters, properly indexed and safeguarded, and a duplicate registration file open to reasonable public inspection.

(b) *Conduct of elections.* The city clerk shall give public notice of the time and place of the holding of all municipal elections, including the hours during which polls will be open, by posting in every election district appropriate election notices containing a list of offices to be filled at such election. He shall take all other necessary steps to ensure that the conduct and procedure of all elections are governed in accordance with applicable state laws and such supplementary ordinances as are adopted by the council.

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 7. Elections

Sec. 7.04. Name on primary ballot.

Not later than six (6) weeks nor more than eight (8) weeks before the primary election, any person eligible may, by filing an affidavit and payment of fifty dollars (\$50.00) to the city clerk, have his or her name placed on the primary election ballot. Each person desiring to have his or her name placed on the primary ballot for councilmember shall state in the affidavit of candidacy the district for which he or she is a candidate.

Sec. 7.10. Canvass of returns.

Within seven (7) days after the election, the city council shall canvass the returns and declare the results of the election.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan

Oversee Ramsey County contract for City election services, including evaluation of the level and quality of service, and maintain duplicate records of elections.

Finding

The Office has a ten-year contract with Ramsey County that expires at the end of 2004 to provide the elections process. According to staff, the CSO approves polling places, election judges and conducts canvassing for primary and general elections. The Office also prepares election-related resolutions for council approval. Ramsey County is responsible for voter registration, absentee ballots, candidate filings and the preparation and maintenance of voting machines.² After an election, Ramsey County submits the unofficial canvass report, which examines votes for authenticity, to the CSO which then submits the report to the City Council.

² The County's duties as agreed to in the contract between Saint Paul and Ramsey County for Election Office Management are outlined in Appendix C.

Initiative, Referendum and Recall

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 8. INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM, AND RECALL

Sec. 8.02.4.

Any person whose name appears on a petition may withdraw his or her name by a statement in writing filed with the city clerk before the clerk advises the council as to the sufficiency of the petition. Any name appearing on any petition which does not comply with the foregoing requirements, except as to ward or legislative district and precinct designation, shall be stricken, and no names shall be counted which have not been verified.

Sec. 8.03. Determination of sufficiency.

Any petition seeking initiative, referendum and recall hereunder shall be deemed received by the council when it is filed with the city clerk, for which filing there shall be no fee. Immediately upon receipt of the petition the city clerk shall examine the petition as to its sufficiency and report to the council within twenty (20) calendar days, except that in the case of a recall petition it shall be thirty (30) calendar days. Upon receiving the report, the council shall determine by resolution the sufficiency of the petition.

Sec. 8.08. Disposition of insufficient petitions.

If the council determines that the petition is insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall deliver a copy of the petition to the person or persons therein named to receive it, together with a written statement of its defects. The persons circulating the petition shall be given thirty (30) days in which to file additional signature papers and to correct the petition in all other particulars. If at the end of that period the council finds that the petition is still insufficient or irregular, the city clerk shall file the petition in the clerk's office and notify the persons previously notified of the defects. The final finding of insufficiency or irregularity shall not prejudice the filing of a new petition for the same purpose nor, in the case of an initiated or referred ordinance or resolution, shall it prevent the council from referring the ordinance or resolution to the voters at the next regular or special election at its option.

Finding

The CSO works with the County to comply with the requirements for initiative, referendum and recall. The only petitions found to be insufficient in recent years by the Office were the baseball stadium and billboard petitions. Insufficiency is communicated to the person responsible for the petition by a letter or phone call from the County.

Abandoned Property

Saint Paul Leg. Code Chapter 14. Impoundment and Disposal of Abandoned Personal Property

Sec. 14.03. Abandoned personal property.

It shall be illegal to abandon personal property on property owned by the city. Disposition of this property is in the public interest and the method to be used is to impound the property and dispose of it according to this chapter.

Sec. 14.04. Process.

(a) Whenever the head of any department may deem it in the best interests of the city, he or she may order the impounding of any abandoned personal property located on city property. The department head or his or her designee shall take reasonable steps to attempt to identify the owner of the property and, where the owner has been identified, issue a written notice to the owner that the city intends to impound the property. If no response is received within twenty (20) days of such notice, or no owner can be identified, the department head or designee shall post a notice describing the property in the office of the city clerk...

Finding

Currently notices of abandoned personal property, along with other public announcements, are posted on the bulletin board across from the Citizen Service Office on the southwest corner of the first floor of the City Hall.

Oath of Office and Bonds for City Officials

Saint Paul City Charter Chapter 17. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 17.03. Oath of office.

Every elected or appointed official of the city shall, before entering upon the duties of his office, take and subscribe an oath in substantially the following form: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) to support the constitutions of the United States and of the State of Minnesota and to discharge faithfully the duties devolving upon me as (. . . title of office . . .) of the City of Saint Paul to the best of my judgment and ability."

Sec. 17.05. Official bonds.

The mayor and such other officers or employees of the city as may be required by administrative ordinance shall each, before entering upon the duties of his or her respective office or employment, give a bond to the city as security for the faithful performance of his or her official duties and the safekeeping of public funds. The bonds shall be in such form and amount as may be fixed by the council and may be either individual or blanket bonds at the discretion of the council. They shall be approved by the council, approved as to form by the city attorney, and filed with the city clerk. The premiums on such bonds shall be paid by the city.

2000 City Budget: City Clerk Records Activity Performance Plan
Administer oath of office to all elected and appointed officials.

Findings

- 1) Staff reported the Director tries to stay aware of newly appointed and elected City officials and departments inform the CSO of relevant staff changes. However, there are instances when the City Clerk was not notified and therefore some appointed City officials have not taken the oath in a timely manner.
- 2) According to staff, they have never requested nor received a bond from any City Official, nor were they aware of Charter Section 17.05. However, staff from the Risk Management Division stated that all City staff, not just elected officials, are currently covered under a fidelity bond. This fidelity bond is required by the State for public treasurers, and the City has chosen to cover all staff under it as the additional cost is minimal.

Recommendation

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate if the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Petitions Regarding Public Nuisances

Saint Paul Admin. Code Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances **Sec. 91.03. Petition procedure.**

(a) Upon the filing of a petition in writing signed by sixty (60) percent of the owners and tenants of all private residences, dwellings and apartment houses located in an area one block in any direction from the alleged public nuisance, and upon verification of those signatures by the office of the city clerk, the council shall schedule a public hearing concerning the allegations set forth. All petitions, including those containing an insufficient number of signatures, shall be referred to the council by the city clerk. With respect to petitions containing less than the sixty (60) percent required signatures, the council may, in its discretion, accept the petition and schedule a public hearing or return the petition to the petitioners for additional signatures.

Finding

We asked staff about the process for placing a public nuisance hearing on the Council agenda. The Assistant City Clerk sends a resolution to the Council stating the number of legitimate signatures on the petition for a hearing. The Council then decides whether to schedule a public hearing if it is signed by less than the required 60 percent of homeowners and tenants within a one block radius of the alleged public nuisance. The Office reports it has a good working relationship with Council staff and has no problem scheduling public hearings. It was also reported the organizer of the petition is notified as to when the public hearing will be held.

Trade Secret Information

Saint Paul Administrative Code Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information **Sec. 94.01. Definitions.**

Unless specifically defined in this section, the terms contained in this chapter shall be given the definitions as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Section 13.02.

Designees: Individuals designated by the mayor to work on, process, examine or study the economic development or regulatory matter in which trade secret information may be filed.

Responsible authority: The city clerk, who shall be responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter.

Trade secret information: Government data, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that:

- (1) Was supplied by the affected individual, person or organization;
- (2) Is the subject of efforts by the individual or organization that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy; and
- (3) Derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other individuals, persons or organizations who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use.

Sec. 94.02. Classification of data.

All documents, data, studies and other information supplied to the city which the person or firm regards as "trade secret" information within the definition in Section 94.01 should be stamped by the person or firm seeking protection "Trade Secret Information--Not for Public Disclosure." The marking must appear on each page sought to be protected...

Trade Secret Information, Cont.

Sec. 94.03. Notice.

All designees who have access to trade secret information will be given a copy of the ordinance from which this chapter derives by the responsible authority.

Sec. 94.04. Access.

Access to "trade secret" information shall be limited to designees. Access shall be for the purpose of reviewing a economic development project, permit application or other filing, or for other administrative work pertaining to a economic development project or regulatory matter. The trade secret information may be made available to a representative of a consultant hired by the city and designated by the responsible authority as a designee, but only if the consultant's representative has signed a nondisclosure agreement and a copy of the signed agreement is provided to the person or firm who filed the document prior to the consultant's access to trade secret information. If the consultant's representative has signed the nondisclosure agreement, the city will not be held responsible for the actions of such consultant and/or its representative with regard to the nondisclosure agreement.

Sec. 94.05. Storage.

All "trade secret" information filed in accordance with Section 94.02, and copies thereof, shall be stored when not in actual use in locked file cabinets under the exclusive control of the designee of the city. A control sheet identifying the designees who are authorized to access the information will be attached.

Finding

Staff admit the Office has not been adhering to its responsibilities in relation to trade secret data. Senior leaders do consider this an important issue and cited the Peanuts on Parade exhibits as an example given that the memorabilia and the format were closely controlled by the Schultz family and was protected for commercial reasons. Staff stated the CSO will be working with the City Attorney's Office to enhance the role the Office plays with respect to trade secret storage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Public Information Meetings

Saint Paul Administrative Code Appendices Chapter A - 3. All Public Meetings - Notice Requirements
WHEREAS, The council deems it necessary and in the public interest that advance notice be forwarded to elected officials prior to the holding of public informational meetings by any department bureau, agency or committee of the City of Saint Paul, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the council of the City of Saint Paul:

1. That any city personnel arranging or causing to be held any public information meeting by or on behalf of any city department, bureau, agency, board, commission or advisory committee shall provide a minimum of five (5) days' advance written notice of such meeting to all members of the city council, the mayor, the city clerk and the city attorney. Five-day notice may be waived in the event of an emergency. The city clerk shall first be notified if any such public informational meeting is to be held in the council chambers located within the City Hall and Court House.
2. For purposes of such notice, public informational meetings shall mean any meeting for which members of the general public receive notice or invitation to appear for the purpose of presentation, testimony, consultation or otherwise.
3. Such notice shall contain the date, time and place of the meeting to be held and a brief statement of the subject matter to be discussed.
4. The city clerk is hereby directed to forward copies of this resolution to the mayor, all department heads, the chairmen of every board, commission or advisory committee to the city.

Finding

The Planning and Economic Development Department maintains the Early Notification List, a list containing everyone and every organization that is to receive notification of public meetings. Departments are directed to contact PED for the labels when they need to send notice of a public meeting. PED also maintains a Neighborhood Notification List which contains contact names and addresses for all of the district councils. The CSO receives notices from agencies and commissions if the meeting is to be held in City Hall, compiles the meeting list, and places notices on the public bulletin board, the City's web page and in the *Saint Paul Legal Ledger*.

Campaign Contributions

Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions

Sec. 28.02. Administration.

(a) *City clerk to administer.* The city clerk shall be in charge of administering and carrying out the various provisions of this chapter.

(b) *City clerk; powers and duties.* The city clerk shall have the following duties and powers:

- (1) Prescribe, adopt and distribute the form for registration forms, statements and reports required to be filed which shall, whenever possible, be identical to or consistent with state forms.
- (2) Receive and accept for filing in the city clerk's office the registration forms, statements and reports required by this chapter.
- (3) Make the statements and reports filed with the city clerk available for public inspection and copying. A reasonable charge for the cost of copying may be charged.
- (4) Preserve all statements and reports for a period of four (4) years from the date of filing, or, in the event that the committee represents a candidate or party which permanently terminates activity within two (2) years, then said records and accounts shall be kept for two (2) years.
- (5) Report findings of noncompliance to the elections board.

Finding

It was reported that campaign contribution forms are turned over to the County, though the CSO retains a copy for five years after an individual leaves office. This is in keeping with State requirements for document storage.

Condominium Conversion Notices

Saint Paul Leg. Code Ch. 48. Condominium and Conversion Condominium Notice Filing Requirements

Sec. 48.04. Notice of condominium creation or conversion.

(a) A declarant of a conversion condominium shall give the city notice of the conversion or intent to convert a building to a condominium no later than one hundred twenty (120) days before the declarant requires any tenant or subtenant in possession in such building to vacate.

(b) A "notice of condominium conversion" in the form required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 515A.4-110(a), together with a "supplemental notice of condominium conversion" in the form provided for in paragraph (c) of this section, filed in the office of the city clerk shall constitute the notice required by paragraph (a).

Sec. 48.05. Certification of compliance.

Upon the filing of the notice, supplemental notice of condominium conversion or statement in lieu thereof as required in section 48.04, the city clerk shall provide the declarant with a signed, written statement certifying compliance with the filing requirements of this chapter. The clerk shall transmit copies of each certificate given and each notice, supplement notice and statement filed to the housing information office, the division of planning and division of housing of the department of planning and economic development, and the division of housing and building code enforcement of the department of community services of the city.

Finding

Staff reported the condominium conversion form is being filed in the CSO on a regular basis. The Office also provides information by copying the relevant sections of the code and giving it to interested parties. According to staff, supplemental notice of condominium conversion is sent to those departments identified in the Code, though technically those departments do not exist as outlined in the ordinance.

Recommendation

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS DIVISION

The Marketing and Promotions Division is involved in promoting City events to residents and visitors. They also work with other organizations such as the Capital City Partnership to market to businesses considering locating in Saint Paul, and with the Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau to market events to visitors. In addition, they have the task of promoting Saint Paul as a place to produce films. While many of the results of their work are visible, efforts such as Peanuts on Parade take an enormous amount of staff time, sometimes more than anticipated because some programs have achieved an overwhelming, unanticipated level of success.

Marketing and Promotions Policies

The Marketing and Promotions Division has very few policies which pertain to its functions. The only policies we discovered were those found in the 2000 Budget, listed in the box below and our findings and recommendations follow. It is problematic that there are no references in City Code to the responsibilities of this Division. They are a part of the administrative branch of the City's government and therefore must have enabling legislation outlining their responsibilities.

2000 Proposed Budget: CSO Strategic Plans related to Marketing and Promotions
Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.

2000 City Budget: Marketing and Promotions Activity Performance Plan

- Continue to work collaboratively with the City Council and neighborhood associations for continued growth of their respective events and marketing/promotional goals.
- Continue to improve web activity with departments and neighborhood organizations.
- Implement payment systems and expand City departments' use of forms and processing software.
- Continue semi-monthly publication "City Update" but decrease printed quantity by whatever percentage of City employees that have Intranet Access. Target distribution to City employees without City Intranet Access.
- The "Resident's Guide" will be published annually (not semi-annually), all cost savings will be directed toward a larger production run and broader distribution.
- Keep film liaison staff and associated budget in Marketing and Promotions Division.
- Work in collaboration with the Minnesota Film Board to secure production contracts in the Saint Paul Market.

Findings

- 1) The Marketing and Promotions Division has been working with neighborhoods to assist them in promoting their events. In the past, the City has simply provided monetary assistance to neighborhoods, but they have recently begun to work more closely with the neighborhoods to provide marketing services and help the neighborhoods market events more successfully.
- 2) The webmasters are part of Marketing and Promotions, and are working with various departments to improve their websites. They are also helping departments expand their services to be able to accept payments on-line and conduct other transactions over the Internet.

- 3) The CSO is now publishing the "City Update" on the City's Intranet site.
- 4) The CSO is no longer producing hard copies of the "Resident's Guide," as all of the information is available on the City's website. This is contrary to their objective to produce a larger number of guides once a year, rather than fewer twice a year. They state they are no longer producing hard copies because the information is available on the Internet. They have also stated that numerous copies were left over from the previous printing when the Guide was distributed to libraries, convenience stores, and other such locations.
- 5) The film liaison staff were transferred from the Planning and Economic Development to the Citizen Service Office in 1999. There is no talk, at this time, of moving them elsewhere. This does not seem appropriate as a budget objective.
- 6) Marketing and Promotions staff are active in seeking film production contracts in the Saint Paul market.
- 7) As mentioned in the introduction to this section, there is no specific language in the City Code establishing the responsibilities of the Marketing and Promotions Division. This is a glaring oversight.

Recommendations

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

The Code Enforcement Programs Division (Code Enforcement) of the Citizen Service Office is responsible for ensuring that residents and property owners of Saint Paul observe the property maintenance laws of the City. Code Enforcement is responsible for investigating interior and exterior code violations at single-family and duplex properties in Saint Paul, and exterior violations on all other properties in the City.³ The chapters of the City Code that Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing are listed in Appendix A.

Code Enforcement has been a division of the Citizen Service Office for about two years. In the past, Code Enforcement was a division of the City's Public Health Division. When the City and County Health departments merged in 1997, Housing Code Enforcement was administratively moved to the Department of Fire and Safety Services, though they were never actually physically relocated to the Fire Department. They remained within the Fire Department's administration for about a year. In 1999, they were moved, both physically and administratively, to the Citizen Service Office. Senior leaders stated one of the reasons for this decision was over half the complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are related to property code violations, and therefore it made sense to have the two divisions under the same department. Lieutenant Warren Bostrom was also brought in from the Police Department to oversee Code Enforcement's technology upgrade activities. About a year later, Lt. Bostrom retired, and Lt. Mike Morehead was brought in to manage Code Enforcement. Inspectors are currently housed both in City Hall and at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices. The current organizational structure of Code Enforcement is illustrated in the chart on page 26.

The process for checking, recording and correcting code violations varies based on the situation, but some common elements exist. When a complaint is received by Information and Complaint staff, it is logged into the EXL system, printed by Code Enforcement support staff and given to the appropriate inspector.⁴ Code Enforcement support staff play a vital role in maintaining records for the Division. The inspectors do not do their own data entry, and support staff are required to work with EXL, an arcane, inefficient computer system, also used by Information and Complaint Division staff. They also retrieve hard copy files for the inspectors and are generally responsible for ensuring that operations run smoothly.

An inspector's day often starts with a visit to the office to review complaints received and prepare for the property visits scheduled for the day. The inspectors prioritize complaints based on the severity of the situation described in the complaint and the date it was received. He or she may make phone calls to verify appointments and may add more property visits based on new complaints received. The inspectors will also do the paperwork from previous visits and turn it in to supervisors and support staff for processing.

Upon visiting a property, the inspector will determine whether to issue a verbal order, a written correction notice, a citation, a summary abatement order, substantial abatement order, or a

³ The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services is primarily responsible for interior code violations of residential properties with three or more units and all commercial properties.

⁴ The City is divided into census tracts, and inspectors are assigned to specific tracts.

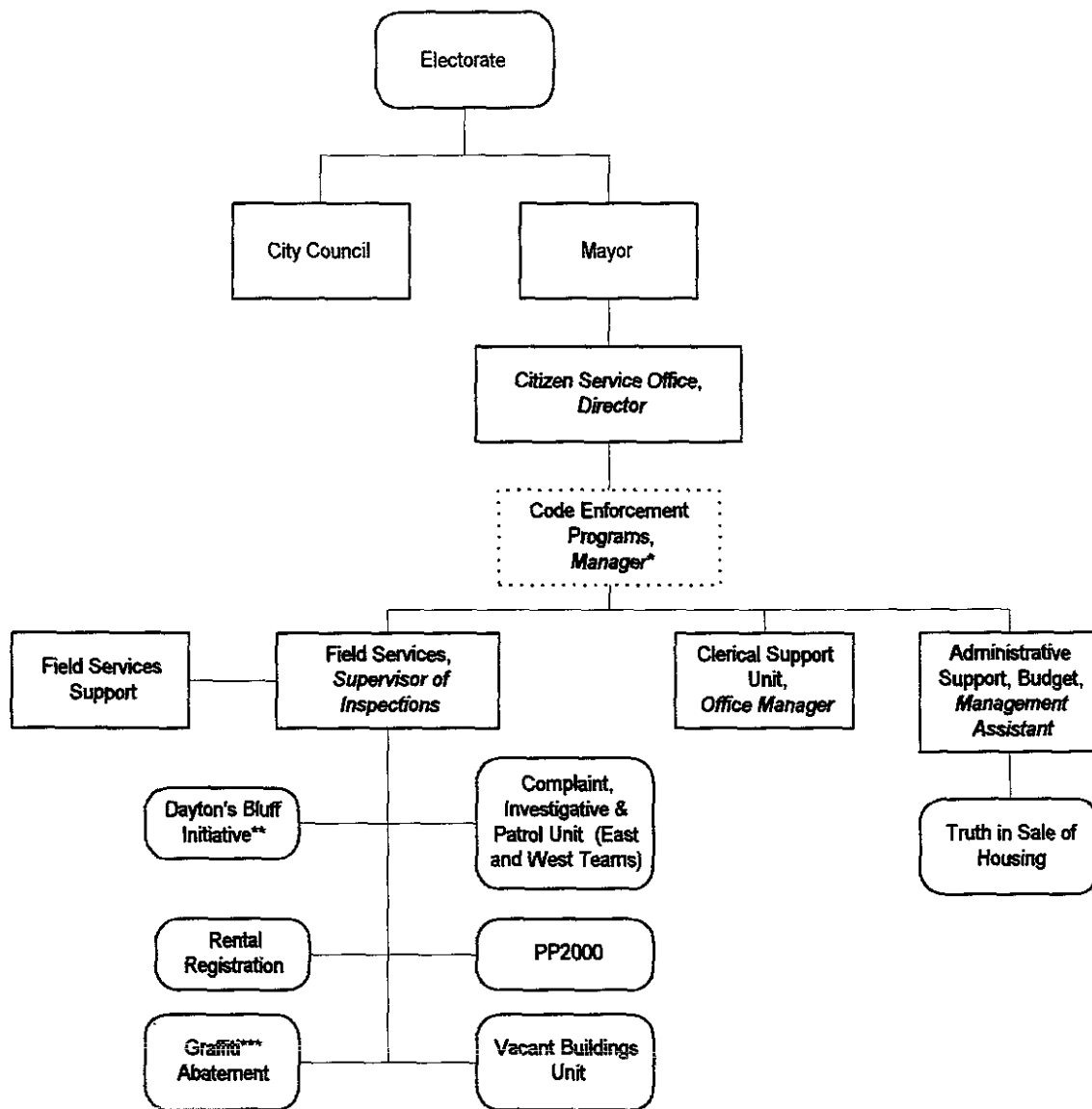
vehicle abatement order.⁵ The method, determined by the inspector, is based on the past history of property code violations at the property, whether the property owner seems responsive and willing to correct the violation, and the severity of the violation (whether it is a life-safety concern). With a summary abatement, if the property owner fails to eliminate the nuisance condition, a work order is issued. The inspectors sometimes take pictures and videotape the situation, both for use as evidence and to show the clean-up crew the problem and what needs to be done. If the clean-up work is done by the City or by one of its contractors, the fee for the work is billed to the property owner. If they fail to pay the fee, it is assessed to the property owner's taxes.

If it is determined the work required to restore a property to meet the minimum property maintenance code requirements equals or exceeds \$3,000, the property may receive a substantial abatement. If the owner fails to correct the problems for which the abatement was issued, the City Council is notified that substantial abatement is necessary and appropriate, and a hearing before the Council is scheduled. After the hearing, the Council will adopt a resolution describing what abatement action, if any, the Council deems appropriate. If the resolution calls for abatement action, the Council may either order the city to take the abatement action or set a time within which the nuisance must be abated by the owner and provide that if corrective action is not taken within the specified time, the City will abate the nuisance. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the council shall, by resolution, provide for the collection of those costs in the same manner as a special assessment. If it is possible the building will have to be demolished, the process also involves some additional notification requirements, and the Vacant Buildings Unit may assume responsibility for monitoring the property.

A property owner or tenant can appeal an inspector's decision by filing an appeal with the City Clerk, who then sends it to the City's Legislative Hearing Officer (LHO). The appellant then appears before the LHO, who makes a decision and forwards it to the City Council. The appellant, if dissatisfied by the decision of the LHO, may appeal to the City Council. If dissatisfied with the Council's decision, he or she may file for review by the District Court. If the property owner or resident refuses to comply with the orders of the enforcement officer, the City may prosecute them criminally. A housing court has been established especially to hear violations of the housing codes. Code Enforcement works closely with the City Attorney's Office to build the case to prosecute the offending property owner or tenant.

⁵A summary abatement is generally issued for garbage and tall grass and weeds. A substantial abatement is issued when the value of the work required exceeds \$3,000. A vehicle abatement is an order for an vehicle owner to remove their inappropriately parked vehicle.

Code Enforcement Organizational Chart



* Code Enforcement staff are assigned to this area to support the Graffiti Abatement program in Public Works.

** The Dayton's Bluff Initiative was scheduled to run through the end of December, 2000.

*** The Manager is a loaned official from the Police Department, and is not a permanent position within the CSO. Therefore, if the position is returned to the Police Department, the other positions would report directly to the CSO Director.

Overlapping Interests of Code Enforcement and Other Departments

The work of Code Enforcement relates closely to the work of other departments throughout the City. For instance, Code Enforcement may receive calls regarding properties about which the Police Department has also received complaints. If the calls are about a suspected drug house, the two departments will coordinate efforts through the Police Department's FORCE unit⁶, which coordinates the City's efforts to reduce street-level drug-related crime. Two Code Enforcement inspectors are on call for the FORCE unit at all times, and check in with them daily to review cases and determine whether they need to accompany officers to execute warrants.

Code Enforcement also works with the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection (LIEP). The two offices coordinate efforts when a property that has been cited for code violations applies for building permits, or when a registered vacant buildings requires permits to restore the property to the City's minimum property maintenance standards. The two offices have a conflict over building permits that remain open for long periods of time. Code Enforcement views them as problematic, feels they create blight, and states there are numerous cases of this in the City, while LIEP suggests that there are relatively few of these long-term open permits and they are not that problematic.

The Fire Prevention Division of Fire and Safety Services overlaps some responsibilities with Code Enforcement, particularly related to vacant buildings. Fire Prevention staff check vacant buildings every 90 days when a Certificate of Occupancy is revoked, and the Vacant Buildings Unit monitors all vacant buildings every 30 days. Vacant buildings pose a substantial risk for fires, and the Fire Prevention Division is vigilant about monitoring these buildings, as is the Code Enforcement Division.

Code Enforcement and the Parks and Recreation Division work together through the abatement process. Parks and Recreation receives work orders from Code Enforcement for tall grass and weeds and garbage violations, and Parks and Recreation performs the abatement.

Finally, Code Enforcement also interacts with the community through block clubs and district councils. The Weed and Seed program, a federally funded program that provides money directly to neighborhoods for clean-up and other neighborhood improvement activities, allows them to work closely with selected communities. The community will contract with Code Enforcement for increased services such as targeting basic code violations. Code Enforcement is also involved with communities through other special programs, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, (a short-term program in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood that encourages residents to monitor the property maintenance standards of the area) and neighborhood surveys (code enforcement sweeps), which are discussed on pages 44-46.

Code Enforcement Policies

We found Code Enforcement in compliance with most relevant policies, but we will point out a few instances in which they either need to change or solidify their practices, or where it seems a

⁶Focusing Our Resources on Community Empowerment

change in the Code would be the most logical solution. In most cases, we have listed only the sections of the ordinance or policy with which we found compliance problems.⁷

2000 Proposed Budget Program Objectives

The City's annual budget is an official City document that contains not only the spending and revenue projections of all City departments and offices, but also their ongoing and project objectives. Much of the information contained in the 2000 budget activities for Code Enforcement is simply a description of the services they provide, with a few goal-oriented objectives included. A short discussion of the objectives and whether they are currently being met follows this box. Many of the priorities and objectives will be discussed in other sections of this report. Here we will highlight only those not discussed in other subsequent sections.

Code Enforcement Objectives

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Property Code Enforcement

This program enforces minimum housing and health code on all interior one- and two-family homes and on all exterior properties. The purpose of this program is to protect the public health and safety and maintain and improve the housing in Saint Paul in order to make the City a safe place to live.

The program priorities are to:

1. Investigate citizen complaints and respond to calls for service.
2. Case manage chronic problem properties.
3. Provide support to police officers, R.C.H.S., R.C.H.D. (Ramsey County Human Services, Ramsey County Health Department).
4. Conduct proactive inspection patrols.

These goals are accomplished by:

1. Uniform, consistent enforcement of the Legislative Code, State Statutes and federal regulations.
2. Working in collaboration with police to solve neighborhood problems.
3. Working with district councils, organized block clubs, problem property committees, landlord and tenant advocacy groups and individuals to eliminate urban blight.
4. Working with child and adult protection to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm.
5. Participating in problem property resolution meetings.

2000 City Budget: Property Code Enforcement: Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of excessive use of service (excessive consumption) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has developed a program called PP2000 to handle some chronic problem properties. This program will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

⁷ The list of all the codes relevant to Code Enforcement are listed in Appendix A.

- 2) Code Enforcement works with the Police Department through its support of the FORCE unit, as mentioned earlier in the introduction to this section.
- 3) Code Enforcement works closely with the Ramsey County Human Services Department when they discover situations where children and vulnerable adults may be at risk. In some of the ride-alongs done by Council Research, we witnessed the open dialog inspectors have with child protection workers, and were impressed with the care the inspectors we visited with took in these very difficult situations.
- 4) Code Enforcement is not meeting the objective stating they will reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols. Code Enforcement is currently unable to gather any meaningful data on complaints. Therefore, it is difficult to know if they are meeting the objective to reduce the number of calls. They also have not been able to do routine proactive surveillance patrols due to a lack of funding and limited staff. Inspectors may look for non-reported violations when they are checking the reported violations, but they do not have specific time set aside to patrol their areas. Sweeps have, in recent years, been done at the request of Councilmembers or neighborhoods, but beyond those Code Enforcement finds them difficult to conduct. Code Enforcement recently determined they have some unexpected financial resources because of some open staff positions. As a result, they have asked Councilmembers to determine whether they would like sweeps conducted in their respective wards.

Recommendation

See Recommendations 53-56 in the Information and Analysis Chapter, on pages 68-69, which address data collection and analysis.

Minimum Property Maintenance Standards and Excessive Consumption Fees

Leg. Code Chapter 34: Minimum Property Maintenance Standards for All Structures and Premises

Sec. 34.25. Conflict with other ordinances.

In any case where a provision of this chapter is found to be in conflict with a provision of any zoning, building, fire, safety or health ordinance, chapter or code of this city, the provision which establishes the higher standard for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the people shall prevail.

Sec. 34.08.5 Excessive Consumption of exterior inspection services, fee and liability.

(a) The city shall be entitled to collect its costs of enforcement from a property owner who consumes excessive exterior inspection services. An excessive consumption of exterior inspection services occurs at each element of an exterior inspection cycle beginning after:

- (1) Written notice of a violation is served under section 34.08.3 following an initial inspection; and
- (2) Three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles are performed at the same location within a consecutive twelve-month period after the initial inspection; and
- (3) During each of the three (3) additional exterior inspection cycles under subparagraph (2), the enforcement officer finds violations of section 34.08.3 which are either new violations or violations based upon failure to correct previous violations.

(b) The fee for the fourth inspection cycle shall be two hundred dollars (\$200.00). The fee for each inspection cycle thereafter shall be fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(c) Owners who have received a notice of warning shall be jointly and severally liable for the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee.

(d) The amount of the excessive consumption of exterior inspection services fee shall be a debt owed to the city by the responsible person or persons.

(e) Action under this section does not preclude any other civil or criminal enforcement procedure.

(f) A new owner who has duly recorded the instrument of conveyance for the subject property with the Ramsey County Department of Records and Revenue within the time provided in Minn. Stat. §§ 507.235 shall not be liable for any excessive consumption fees arising from inspection services provided to the previous owner of the subject property.

Sec. 34.08.3. Initial exterior inspection by enforcement officer.

When an enforcement officer conducts an initial inspection of an exterior property area and determines that violations of section 34.08 exist, the enforcement officer shall, in addition to any other action the enforcement officer may undertake, serve written notice of the violation in conformance with the requirements set forth in section 34.21 of this chapter.

The initial notice must contain a notice of warning informing the owner that subsequent exterior property area inspections at that same location within the next consecutive twelve (12) months may be deemed an excessive consumption of exterior inspection services and that the owner may be liable for an exterior inspection services fee.

Findings

1) When asked how they handle situations where Chapter 34 conflicts with other relevant sections of the code, we received varying answers. Some staff stated they use the most stringent code, others stated they use whatever requirements make the most sense given the situation. Staff stated that perhaps the most problematic of these situations relates to property code violations in historic districts. The inspectors may order repairs to structures governed by the historic preservation code. The Historic Preservation Commission may put strict requirements on the materials that can be used, and the property owner may not be able to afford those required changes. Thus, the repairs may go undone and the inspector may let violations go that in a non-historical area he or she would have ordered. This appears to be a case where Code Enforcement is not consistent in their enforcement of the Code.

2) Code Enforcement is no longer enforcing the excessive consumption portion of the Property Maintenance Code. They have found it impossible to collect the fees in most cases. According to current City Code, these fees cannot be assessed to the property taxes of the violator, therefore there is no mechanism to ensure the fees are collected. Code Enforcement has stated that enforcement of the provision costs more than they would recover from the fee, especially if violators do not pay after repeated attempts by the City to collect the fees. It is unclear to some inspectors as to whether the policy is intended to penalize or just to recover costs. No matter the intent, the fact remains that the fee is not recovering costs because violators are not compelled to pay, and the limited revenues generated are not covering the inspections costs incurred.

3) Code Enforcement inspectors sometimes give oral notices of a violation. This happens in two situations. In the first type of situation, an inspector will simply tell a property owner to cut the grass or weeds or clean up the garbage, and may not follow up with a written order if it seems the property owner is willing to comply. In the other situation, an inspector may come across an emergency situation where clean up needs to happen immediately, such as a dwelling which is filled with garbage and children are living in it. An inspector will tell the occupant to clean-up and then will send a written order as soon as possible. Clearly the second situation is not of concern as a written record is made of the incident. Our concern with the first situation described is the lack of record of the violation, particularly if the problem persists or if other problems occur. The information is also important for data collection and analysis purposes. We are also concerned the property owner may not receive the information on the appeals process if they are not given a written notice, as the appeals information is contained on the notice.

Recommendations

Recommendation #14: Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Chapter 42. Certain Nuisance Dwellings

Sec. 42.01. Definitions.

Unless otherwise expressly stated, the following terms shall, for the purposes of this Chapter 42, have the meanings indicated in this section.

- (1) *Dwelling*. Any one- or two-family rental dwelling which is not occupied by the owner thereof. Dwelling includes both the building or structure and the land upon which it is located.
- (2) *Nuisance dwelling*. Any dwelling which has been found, upon inspection by the fire chief, to be in violation of any provision of any applicable safety code on four (4) separate dates in any twelve-month period.
- (3) *Fire chief*. Fire chief includes the said chief, as well as the official appointed as fire marshal, and also any inspector under his or her supervision and control, and also includes any city officer or employee charged with responsibility for the enforcement of a safety code...

Sec. 42.02. Registration of a nuisance dwelling.

(a) *Registration*. Any dwelling meeting the definition of a nuisance dwelling shall be deemed on the date of the fourth inspection in such twelve-month period to be registered as a nuisance dwelling, and subject to the additional provisions of this chapter, including the payment of a registration fee.

Such registration shall remain in effect for a twelve-month period beginning on the date of registration as a nuisance building.

(b) *Additional requirements*. Any dwelling deemed registered as provided in subsection (a) above shall also be subject to the requirements of section 33.05 of the Legislative Code relating to occupancy so long as it is registered and for a period of twelve (12) months after registration terminates. Such registered nuisance dwelling shall be required to have a certificate of occupancy issued by the fire chief within twelve (12) months after the date on which it is deemed registered. Failure to have such certificate issued within such twelve (12) months shall subject such dwelling and its owner to all enforcement and remedial measures which may be applicable under law or ordinance.

Finding

According to the City Attorney's Office and Code Enforcement staff, Chapter 42 was the first attempt to institute a rental registration program in Saint Paul. Since Chapter 42 was last updated in 1997, a new rental registration program has gone into effect. In 1999, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code was enacted requiring all non owner-occupied one and two unit dwellings to register with the City and obtain a rental dwelling unit registration certificate. If the dwelling is deemed a nuisance according to Minn. Stat. § 617.18, the certificate may be revoked, and the property may no longer be occupied. Since this chapter regulates all one and two-unit dwellings, including those deemed nuisances, it appears Chapter 42 could be repealed. However, since there are some problems with the current registration program, described later in this section, it would be best to wait until the program is fully operable before repealing Chapter 42. Chapter 42, as it is currently written, is the responsibility of the Fire Chief. However, as Code Enforcement is no longer under the administration of the Fire Chief, the language in the ordinance is incorrect.

Recommendation

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Nuisance Abatement

Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement

Sec. 45.08. Authority to abate.

(a) The city is authorized to abate nuisances in accordance with the procedures set forth in sections 45.10, 45.11 and 45.12. All abatement costs incurred shall be charged against the property as a special assessment to be collected in the manner provided for in the City Charter, Chapter 14. Except when a request is filed for a review of an emergency abatement, the assessment hearing shall be replaced by the hearing provided for in section 45.12.

(b) Abatement may include, but shall not be limited to, removal, cleaning, extermination, cutting, mowing, grading, sewer repairs, draining, securing, boarding unoccupied structures, barricading or fencing, removing dangerous portions of structures and demolition of dangerous structures or abandoned buildings.

(c) Abatement costs shall include specifically, but not exclusively, the cost of the abatement; the cost of investigation, including title searches, inspections and testing; the cost of notification including service costs; filing costs; attorney fees, witness fees and appraisers' fees; and administrative costs.

Finding

Currently, the structure of the abatement fees does not, in practice, include costs associated with Code Enforcement; rather it includes only the costs incurred by Parks and Recreation, Public Works or the private contractor. Some discussion has occurred recently about whether the fee should include costs incurred by Code Enforcement as well, such as an inspector's time and mileage.

Recommendation

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Truth in Sale of Housing

Chapter 189. Truth-in-Sale of Housing

Summary: This ordinance requires that all dwellings for sale in the City of Saint Paul have an evaluation completed to determine the condition of the structural, electrical, and mechanical systems of the dwelling, and that the evaluation be displayed at the dwelling for potential buyers to review. The evaluation must be done by a certified truth-in-sale of housing evaluator who is certified by the City.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for Truth-in-Sale of Housing

This activity:

1. Records, processes, and files evaluation reports and fees submitted by the evaluators.
2. Investigates complaints and initiates disciplinary action against the independent evaluators when appropriate.
3. Performs ongoing reviews of materials, insurance, forms and continuing education credits.
4. Serves as secretary/treasurer to the Truth-In-Housing Board and administers certification exams as directed by the Board.
5. Notifies the Division of Fire Prevention when a single-family homes does not have hard-wired smoke detectors.

2000 City Budget: Truth-In-Sale of Housing: 2000 Objectives

1. Conduct compliance investigations to assure compliance by home sellers.
2. Conduct compliance investigations of the independent evaluators which assures conformity to the certification requirements.

Finding

The Truth in Sale of Housing function of Code Enforcement is generally in compliance both with the Code and the Budget documents. They have an administrative staff person assigned to the program who collects the disclosure and insurance forms and tracks the educational requirements for the evaluators. However, Code Enforcement does not currently have an inspector assigned to Truth in Sale of Housing inspections and are, therefore, not able to conduct the compliance investigations, though they are investigating complaints. During the interview process, staff stated that an inspector will be assigned half-time to the program. Staff stated they did not have the financial resources to assign an inspector. However, an ordinance allowing the Truth-in-Sale of Housing Board to set the fees, rather than having them established in ordinance, was enacted by the City Council and is set to go into effect November 2000. It is believed the fees will be set at a level to cover the administrative costs.

Recommendation

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul *Comprehensive Plan*

The Housing Plan Chapter of the City of Saint Paul's *Comprehensive Plan* contains a number of policies which relate to the work of Code Enforcement. The Plan is an official City document, and its policies are City policies to which departments have an obligation to comply. The following is a brief discussion of each policy and relevant recommendations.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3a. Additional resources should be devoted to the existing code enforcement unit to be used in partnership with neighborhood based improvement efforts such as sweeps, Weed and Seed and residential street paving.

Findings

1) Code Enforcement has limited resources, and has stated they are only able to partner with other organizations if overtime funding is available or if the organization provides some funding for Code Enforcement's participation. In the past, Code Enforcement has assisted some City departments in their neighborhood improvement efforts, such as the Police Department's HEAT⁸ program. Code Enforcement expressed frustration with the Police Department in relation to the HEAT program, as no funding was provided for Code Enforcement to assist with the program, though the Police Department expected them to participate. However, we found that the resolution passed by the City Council providing funding for the HEAT program appropriates funds only to the Police Department. Therefore, the Police Department was not authorized to

⁸HEAT stands for Heavy Enforcement Activity for Thirty Days. It targets areas known to be hot spots for criminal activity. Part of the mission is to improve the quality of life by reducing crime.

provide any funds to Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement can choose not to provide support to the Police Department for this program, but the Police Department has stated the process of condemning buildings is easier if Code Enforcement is involved with the property at the onset of the HEAT program's involvement with the property.

Recommendations

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3b The use of administrative fines, rather than the current staff-intensive system that involves a series of warnings and re-inspections, to enforce the provisions of the housing code should be explored.

Finding

Code Enforcement currently imposes no administrative fines, although excessive consumption, described earlier, is an administrative fee. This *Comprehensive Plan* policy is a move away from a staff-intensive enforcement system to a system heavily reliant on fines as the enforcement mechanism. It also reflects a philosophy different than Code Enforcement's current approach which emphasizes direct inspector interaction with property owners to gain compliance, rather than the imposition of fines. This conflict may also reflect a lack of communication between the preparers of the *Comprehensive Plan* and Code Enforcement.

Recommendation

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3c City staff should work with the Housing Court to determine how best to achieve a higher success rate in achieving compliance with the housing code.

Finding

Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and the Housing Court have been working together to achieve compliance, and Code Enforcement states they have achieved a higher success rate, though we are not aware of any concrete data to support this assertion.

Recommendation

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.3d Additional resources must be identified and used in partnership with those code enforcement efforts to assist property owners to make the necessary repairs and improvements before there is significant deterioration.

Finding

Some inspectors are proactive about giving out information to property owners regarding programs and sources of funding, such as low interest loans to assist with repairs, while other inspectors are not.

Recommendation

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.4 To the extent possible, funds available for residential rehabilitation should be focused on specific neighborhoods and coordinated with public infrastructure investments in order to achieve the maximum possible impact and leverage the greatest possible private investment. Through neighborhood-based planning processes, district councils, CDCs, business associations, block clubs and other key stakeholders should be involved in both the selection of focus areas and the development of the capital investment program.

Finding

Code Enforcement is not generally directly involved in the selection of focus areas for residential rehabilitation, but rather works with community groups and other departments once an area has been selected for targeted funding through programs like Weed and Seed. They have not been at all involved in the capital investment program. Code Enforcement staff mentioned two recommendations in response to this policy that we felt were excellent and should be pursued.

Recommendations

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the

value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5 Improve management and maintenance of rental property. Among the most vulnerable residential structures in the city's housing stock are its rental properties. Strategies to identify, train and support quality property management services in order to ensure ongoing maintenance and systematic investment should include:

- a. Financial incentives (e.g. rental rehab funds) or reduced inspection fees for well managed properties.
- c. Mechanisms to place vulnerable properties under community management and to build the capacity of community based organization to provide that management.

Finding

Staff suggested the Rental Registration program is one way to incorporate financial incentives for well-managed properties. Another staff person suggested a similar program be created for the vacant buildings program. For instance, the vacant building registration fee could be reduced if the building has few complaints or increased if the building has an excessive number of complaints.

Code Enforcement staff have strong objections to community management of properties.⁹ Through their experience, they believe the same code enforcement problems still existed under community management. This suggests community management may not address the true reasons for the problems.

Recommendation

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Housing Plan Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, March 24, 1999

Policy 4.5d Training and mentoring for new and prospective landlords.

⁹ Community management occurs when a community group takes over the management of a property.

Finding

The Police Department has a program called Crime Free Multi-Housing which provides landlords and managers of rental properties with training on how to keep criminal activity out of their properties. The full three-day training session is typically held two times a year, but a more informal group meets monthly to discuss issues of concern. This group includes Police and Code Enforcement staff, other relevant City staff and, most importantly, landlords.

Housing Action Plan 2000

Priority Actions for 2000

3.21 Code enforcement

- a. Strengthen inter-department communication working toward a coordinated effort to deal with problem properties. Explore possibilities of forming small information focus groups of City staff to deal with specific problem properties.
- f. Explore resource opportunities to go along with code enforcement in order to encourage improvement of units and reduce evictions and demolition of units.

Findings

1) Pertaining to policy 3.21a, Code Enforcement currently participates in the Problem Properties Task Force (formerly the Information Exchange Group) with other departments such as Police and Fire to address problem properties. Over the years, there have been some philosophical differences within this group as to whether line staff should be communicating informally about these properties, or if the issues had to be dealt with at a higher management level. The feeling of the current chair of the task force is that it is more effective if line staff are encouraged to talk informally as they need to outside of the Task Force meetings. However, the Task Force meetings remain very important for ensuring that activities are formally coordinated.

Some issues have also been raised about sharing information in the group. Some members of the group prefer to keep information to themselves rather than share it with others. This group is vital to keeping communication open between organizations that often interact with the same properties and people at various times.

2) Code Enforcement has struggled with how much information is appropriate to provide property owners and renters in order to encourage improvements. It is a philosophical dilemma for them as they are an enforcement agency and are concerned about the mixed messages they may be giving tenants and property owners if on the one hand they are citing them for property violations and on the other they are promoting City programs to encourage rehabilitation. However, the writers of the *Housing Action Plan 2000* clearly feel it is important to provide property owners with information about resources that may be available to them.

Recommendation

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Special Programs & Units of Code Enforcement

Rental Registration Program

In October 1999, a new ordinance, Legislative Code Chapter 51, went into effect requiring all one and two-unit non-owner occupied residences to register with the City. Once the property is registered, the owner receives a rental dwelling unit registration certificate, which is to be renewed annually. Prior to this time, these properties were not required to register and it was difficult to track these properties and their compliance with housing codes. According to Minnesota State Statutes, the City of Saint Paul could require these properties to obtain a certificate of occupancy, which requires periodic inspections to renew the certificate.¹⁰ However, the City has chosen to require a similar yet less stringent dwelling unit registration certificate that allows for inspections only if the situation meets the specific criteria established in the ordinance. Code Enforcement and the Housing Information Office have been responsible for implementing this program, and numerous problems have been encountered. The following box contains the Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration program.

2000 City Budget: Activity Performance Plan for the Rental Registration Program

This program enforces Rental Dwelling Unit Registration, Chapter 51 of the Legislative Code.

- Identifies one- and two- family non-owner occupied subject properties and requires registration and enforces collection of fees.
- Issues Registration Certificates.
- Revokes, suspends, cancels certificates on problem properties as provided for by Ordinance.
- Coordinates registration and certificate issuance with Building Inspection Division
- Collects revenue and registration data and shares this information with other agencies, departments and divisions.
- Provides program information to the public.

Findings

1) Since the program is relatively new, not all of the problems regarding Rental Registration have been worked out. Specifically, Code Enforcement was initially condemning properties if they failed to apply for a registration certificate. The City Attorney's Office has since determined they cannot condemn properties for this reason. Code Enforcement cannot condemn a building if they have not made the determination the building is "unfit for human habitation." There is a danger under the condemnation section of the City Code that the action could be construed as regulatory taking. This type of condemnation is separate from a situation where Code Enforcement has already conducted an inspection and determined that code violations exist. However, the ordinance is still enforceable as it is a misdemeanor if a qualifying property owner fails to register. Other legal issues are being discussed between Code Enforcement and the City Attorney's Office regarding the circumstances under which inspections can be done. Part of these conflicts stem from differences of opinion between staff administering the program.

¹⁰ The City requires a Certificate of Occupancy for rental dwellings with three or more units. This program is administered by the Fire Prevention Unit of the Fire and Safety Services Department.

- 2) We learned from staff that the computer program developed in-house and being used for the Rental Registration program is not effective and is very difficult to use. They are currently converting to the Freelantz software, but have found the systems to be incompatible. Thus, the information initially entered in the Rental Registration system has to be manually transferred to the Freelantz software.
- 3) The Rental Registration program is taking longer than anticipated to implement, partially due to staff resources having been dedicated to the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This Initiative was not anticipated when they were planning for Rental Registration.

Recommendations

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Vacant Buildings Unit

The function of the Vacant Buildings Unit (VBU) is to case manage vacant buildings until they are rehabilitated or demolished. The VBU was created in the mid-1960s as a result of a high profile case in which a woman was attacked by a group of men in an unattended, unlocked vacant building. Since its establishment, the VBU has always been part of Code Enforcement. It has traditionally been perceived by the Division's staff as an elite unit. This perception is due in part to the belief of some staff that management provides VBU employees with more respect and resources than regular Code Enforcement inspectors.

The VBU policies Council Research examined for this audit were found in the Saint Paul Legislative Code and the 2000 City Budget. Most of the Unit's budget objectives are reiterations of its responsibilities found in the City Code. Therefore, we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication. A list of the policies we reviewed are found in the following table.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: Designation of Services Provided/Ongoing Objectives

This Program enforces the Vacant Building Legislation, Chapter 43 of the Legislative Code.¹¹ This activity:

1. Identifies vacant buildings and "case manages" these properties to eliminate the public health and public safety issues associated with vacant buildings
2. Requires registration plans and collects registration fees.
3. Investigates complaints on these buildings.
4. Eliminates nuisance law violations on these properties.
5. Works with the City Council, District Councils, Neighborhood Groups, Block Clubs, Police, Fire, BIDD, and PED on these projects.
6. Collects and distributes the vacant building inventory lists.
7. Identifies "Nuisance Buildings" which are subject to demolition under activity 30251.

2000 City Budget: Vacant Building Monitoring: 2001 Objectives

1. Conduct regular inspections of vacant buildings at a minimum of every other month as required by ordinance.
2. Continue regular, routine surveillance of all registered vacant buildings so citizens do not have to make complaints about nuisance conditions at these properties.

Findings

Case-Management of Vacant Buildings

Vacant Building Identification and Registration

1) Vacant Buildings are identified mainly through referrals from citizens, Code Enforcement inspectors, and the Police and Fire Departments. Once a building has been identified, a VBU inspector will evaluate the property in order to make a determination as to whether the property meets the legal definition of a vacant building or is only considered to be unoccupied.¹² Once a building has been declared vacant, the property owner is required by City Code to register the building within 30 days of the declaration. Vacant buildings are also categorized according to their habitability.¹³

2) The vacant building owner is informed of the registration requirement through a notice which states the owner may not occupy the building until it is considered habitable and meets the standards found in the Code. The notice also informs the property owner that he or she must complete a vacant building registration form and submit a fee of \$200. The registration form requires the building owner to provide his or her name, address, and a phone number so s/he may

¹¹The policies found in the 2000 Budget and the Legislative Code are virtually identical. Therefore we have listed only 2000 Budget Objectives to avoid duplication.

¹²An unoccupied building is a building which is not being used for legal occupancy but it is secured by normal means, that does not have outstanding housing code violations, and is maintained by the property owner.

¹³ The categories of vacant buildings are outlined in Appendix D.

be contacted in the event of an emergency. A placard is placed on the building stating the property has been declared a vacant building. The placard also identifies the name and phone number of the inspector responsible for the property.

Inspections and Complaints

- 1) Vacant buildings are inspected once every three to four weeks. During the inspections, VBU staff ensure that properties are secured, maintained and are not housing squatters. Also, inspectors perform periodic, random spot checks for squatters one night each week.
- 2) Complaints about vacant buildings typically come in through the Information and Complaint phone line. These complaints are entered into the EXL system and a notice is sent to the appropriate inspector. Complaints are also received directly by the inspectors from citizens who find their numbers on the placards posted on the buildings. Inspectors prioritize complaint inspections based on the severity of the situation and will typically conduct the investigation within 2 days of receiving the complaint.

Demolitions

- 1) If a property remains vacant for one year and there are no active building permits for the property, the demolition process may begin. To begin the process, an inspector will inspect the property for deficiencies which need to be corrected. A notice of the deficiencies will be sent to the property owner. The owner has 30 days in which to make the corrections. If, after 30 days the problems are not remedied, a resolution is placed on the City Council agenda announcing a public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer to be scheduled for 30 days later and a public hearing before the City Council. After the public hearing before the Legislative Hearing Officer, the matter comes before the City Council in the form of a resolution requiring the owner to repair or remove the building within 15 days. If the owner does not comply, the City may demolish the building.

Community Relationships

- 1) The Vacant Buildings Unit responds to City Council concerns on a case-by-case basis. If Councilmembers have questions or issues about a particular property, the VBU will respond as quickly as possible. The VBU also provides Councilmembers with a quarterly report of all vacant buildings in their wards. These quarterly reports are also sent to PED staff and other interested parties who are on a mailing list maintained by the Unit. In addition, the list is posted on the Code Enforcement web page.
- 2) VBU staff attempt to develop relationships with District Councils by checking-in on a regular basis at their offices and meetings. Inspectors will attend block club and neighborhood group meetings if they are asked to do so. The VBU also has weekly conversations with Fire Department inspectors to discuss issues regarding the Certificates of Occupancy for vacant buildings. In addition, they also have weekly discussions with PED staff via phone and email regarding specific properties that may be available for redevelopment. Finally, the VBU supervisor reports that he speaks with representatives from LIEP regarding building permit issues on a daily basis.

Complaint Reduction

3) Complaints about vacant buildings are tracked by the Unit. According to VBU staff, they appear to be going down, but no analysis is done by the VBU to determine why complaints are decreasing. Staff report that anecdotal evidence suggests the decrease is the result of the high demand for housing in the City which has caused property owners to better maintain their properties so they can more quickly be occupied. According to interviewees, the VBU is not provided with the complaint reports produced by the Information and Complaint Division.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Special Initiatives

For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program developed by Code Enforcement to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature. There are several policies pertaining the Office's special initiatives found among its budget objectives in the 2000 Budget.

2000 City Budget: Code Enforcement - Property Code Enforcement Objectives

1. Identify and target those properties which generate repeat complaints, and which comprise continual nuisances and blight in the residential neighborhoods. Educate those property owners and occupants through the use of all existing enforcement options, including enforcement of use of service (*excessive consumption of exterior inspection services*) ordinance.
2. Reduce the number of complaint calls to the City by proactive surveillance patrols.
3. Conduct scheduled surveys of neighborhoods in the City where conditions warrant closer monitoring by enforcement officers.

PP2000

Code Enforcement's primary initiative for dealing with chronic problem properties is PP2000 (Problem Properties 2000). The program began in January 2000 as the result of a Mayoral directive to develop a program to address chronic problem properties. This program identifies property owners who have had repeated complaints against their properties and assigns these property owners to an inspector who case manages the owner's properties. Property owners were originally selected by senior leaders based on the recommendations of Code Enforcement

inspectors. The Code Enforcement inspectors pro-actively work with the property owner to encourage them to better manage their properties. In the words of one senior manager, the basic philosophy of the program is that "if you cure the problem property owner, you cure the problem." Working with the owner is viewed by management to be more effective than addressing the properties because by addressing the most problematic property owners and all their properties, the Division is able to capture a larger number of properties than if it was focusing on individual properties.

Findings

- 1) The decision to include certain property owners in PP2000 is based primarily on anecdotal information provided by the inspectors. No specific, uniform criteria was articulated for inclusion in the PP2000 program.
- 2) Results of the program have been measured thus far largely by informal and anecdotal reports. Code Enforcement officials believe that many property owners in the PP2000 program are either rehabilitating their properties or selling them. As far as we were able to discern, there are no serious efforts to quantitatively evaluate the program's success.
- 3) The program does not address owner-occupied properties nor does it identify owners who have a small number of rental properties in the City that are chronic problem properties. These properties comprise a substantial proportion of all property code violations.

Recommendations

Recommendation #32. If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33. Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34. Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Dayton's Bluff Initiative

This project is a coordinated effort between the Code Enforcement Division, Police Department, the Fire Department, the Housing Information Office and City residents to address code enforcement violations and the associated problems which they may create, such as crime and lower property values, in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. The project began in February 2000 and is currently scheduled to run through December 2000. Code Enforcement has devoted the equivalent of one full-time inspector position to the effort. They have also worked with neighbors to develop citizen patrols and use "good neighbor notices," which are cards that ask property owners or tenants to clean or fix something and thank them for helping to make the

community better. The program has been viewed as a potential model for other City neighborhoods with a significant number of problem properties. However, the initiative has been perceived by some senior management and front-line staff as being driven by people from outside the department (i.e. the Housing Information Office). This view has created problems getting Code Enforcement inspectors to buy into the initiative. Also, for the first three months, staff were supposed to collect data but did not, according to senior Code Enforcement staff. However, in a report prepared for a City Councilmember, data was retrieved from Code Enforcement files and "good neighbor" code violation notices.

Finding

1) Code Enforcement has done some data collection on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, but limited systematic evaluation of the Initiative has occurred. Staff cite the limitations of their data collection system as part of the reason for the limited evaluation, though an intern for a City Councilmember was able to collect and analyze data for a report on the Initiative produced for a Councilmember.

Recommendation

Recommendation #35. Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Sweeps/Surveys

Finding

The budget states Code Enforcement will conduct periodic surveys (sweeps) in neighborhoods which require closer monitoring for Code Enforcement violations. Typically, sweeps involve a majority of the Code Enforcement inspectors who spend several days in a predetermined geographic area pro-actively seeking code enforcement violations. Sweeps focus on primarily three types of violations: tall grass and weeds, junk cars and garbage. Until a couple of years ago, the Division conducted 50-60 sweeps a year. In 1999, six sweeps were conducted and so far in 2000, only one has taken place. With the change in senior management, the division changed its philosophy regarding the value of these activities. Currently, sweeps are not done unless requested from neighborhood groups or elected officials and they have an outside funding source, such as Weed and Seed (a federally-funded program conducted jointly with the Police Department). Current management views sweeps as a superficial response to more systematic problems. Sweeps require a great deal of time and effort on the part of inspectors. Inspectors must not only conduct the sweeps but must also spend time writing tags and doing paperwork. If a choice has to be made between allocating resources for sweeps or for routine inspections, this time and money, senior managers argue, would be better spent on traditional inspections. However, when coupled with routine enforcement activities, managers suggest sweeps are worthwhile and effective. At the time of writing this report, Code Enforcement determined they have some unanticipated resources as a result of staff changes in the Division, and decided to use

the money to conduct sweeps. City Councilmembers were asked to identify any areas within their wards where they would like sweeps conducted.

Recommendation

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The efficiency and effectiveness of the Citizen Service Office are evaluated using an Organizational Quality Assessment. While there are several methods to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, our approach is based on work done by the organizers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award who identified the characteristics of a high-performing organization.

The study of high-performing organizations has typically identified seven characteristics believed to be essential for an organization to achieve excellence. These criteria have been identified from studies over many years and are widely accepted as indicators of organizational excellence. Our criteria, based on that used by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Minnesota Quality Award to assess organizational development and to identify quality organizations, are summarized in the table on the following page. None of the quality categories stand alone. Each impacts the other, and all are essential to achieving a high level of performance. Quite often improvement in one quality category will positively impact another. For example, improvement in the category of Information and Analysis often significantly impacts both Results and Improvement Processes.

Each of these quality categories is a chapter in the report, and each chapter contains the ratings, a discussion of the quality of the organization, and our findings and recommendations. In addition to the Results chapter, which focuses on organizational outcomes, an overview of performance measures and their potential application in the CSO is provided in the Performance Measures chapter. Performance measurement in this performance audit means the regular collection of specific information about the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of services and programs.¹⁴ The suggested measures will enable the CSO to evaluate on its own whether the resources expended (labor or financial resources) on an activity are used efficiently, have the intended effect and result in a quality outcome. Measures can be based on information obtained from written records, observations by specially trained staff or through surveys of customers. This performance audit will examine existing performance measures and suggest other performance measures. However, the audit will not perform the actual measurements.

The table on the following page outlines each quality assessment category, the key concepts that comprise that category, and the pages on which the operations of the Citizen Service Office are described in relation to the quality category.

¹⁴ The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measurement: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, p. 1.

Assessment Categories

Quality Category	Key Concepts	Discussed on Pages:
Planning	Internal Plans Plan Development Plan Dissemination & Implementation	50-53
Leadership	Mission, Vision, Values Stakeholder Relationships Staff Recognition	54-58
Training & Development	Training & Education Resources Employer Commitment Employee Contribution Work Environment Labor-Management Relationship Employee Evaluation	59-64
Information and Analysis	Collection of Data Analysis of Data Effective Use of Automation Systems	65-69
Processes for Improvement	Identification of Potential Improvements Implementation of Improvements Evaluation of Improvement Practices	70-73
Customer Focus	Customer Identification & Knowledge Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs Customer Service Practices Customer Service Standards	74-78
Results	Organizational Outcomes Financial Outcomes Customer Satisfaction Use of Performance Indicators	79-83

Criteria Ratings

We have gathered a wealth of information about the various activities of the CSO while conducting this performance audit. Although capturing all of this information in any rating system is impossible, we believe ratings will help decision-makers grasp the essence of the

information. We have developed a simple summary rating system we believe conveys the essence of our findings. We intend these ratings to reflect what interview subjects have told us about the CSO. While organizations and processes consist of individuals, we intend the ratings to reflect current organizational practices and they should not be interpreted as judgements about individuals.

The summary ratings for the quality categories are intended to portray both the level of development and the level of integration of each quality criterion. Development, in this performance audit, means the extent to which highly-valued organizational characteristics are in evidence. They should be systematic, manifest, pro-active, fact-based, and evaluated. Integration refers to the extent criteria are practiced. It is possible, indeed likely, for criteria to be practiced in some parts of the organization, but not in others.

The summary ratings used for the quality assessment are:

- ★★★★ Criteria fully developed and practiced throughout the organization.
- ★★★ Criteria well developed and practiced throughout most of the organization.
- ★★ Criteria present and practiced in some parts of the organization.
- ★ Criteria very rarely present or practiced in the organization.

PLANNING

Quality Rating: ☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Internal Plans
- ☐ Plan Development Participation
- ☐ Plan Dissemination & Implementation

Planning is an activity that incorporates a strong future orientation and a willingness to make long-term commitments to stakeholders. High-performing organizations actively engage in planning and recognize the impact not only of internal changes, but also of environmental factors, on the organization. Planning considers resource allocation, economic projections, future needs of employees, future customer needs and expectations, technological developments and stakeholder requirements. Plans can be long- or short-term, issue specific, organizational-wide, departmental-wide or unit-wide. In order to be effective, plans need to be carried out and updated frequently.

Office-Wide Planning

The CSO performs a wide variety of functions, and should therefore have plans that incorporate a variety of activities. However, the only office-wide "plan" we discovered is the set of "Strategic Plans" contained in the annual budget.¹⁵ The CSO's "Strategic Plans" are really not plans at all. Rather, they are a set of goals and functions. A meaningful organizational strategic plan would provide a clear set of steps to achieving goals and making the vision a reality. Many of the objectives in the CSO's "Strategic Plans" are vague, such as: "Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services." If this was a true strategic plan statement, it would include a closed-ended statement with specific steps to take to achieve the goal, and a time line for implementation and/or completion.¹⁶ To change the aforementioned statement to an actual plan objective, the CSO could add an action statement at the end to explain what steps the Office will be taking to strengthen the City's approach. A strategic planning process should also include stakeholders and customers, which the CSO has not done. In addition, the "Strategic Plans" developed by the CSO have remained essentially the same for at least the last three years, with a statement pertaining to the Code Enforcement Division added to the 2001 Proposed Budget.

The lack of planning in the CSO is exemplified through their disjointed process of implementing a new computer system. The CSO is replacing the EXL system, but has not made any clear plans to phase in the new system. Rather than implementing AMANDA, as other departments such as the Office of License, Inspections and Environmental Protection and Fire Prevention and Inspection unit are doing, the CSO chose to first go with cheaper software from Freelantz, with the expectation they will implement AMANDA later. The Freelantz software is not operating well; therefore, it would have been advisable to implement AMANDA instead of waiting until LIEP was done in the hope that the problems with the system would be worked out by LIEP. To

¹⁵ See the CSO's "Strategic Plans" in Appendix B

¹⁶ For more information on creating a strategic planning see: Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

undertake such a project without a clear plan to guide actions makes implementation far more difficult and leads to unnecessary expenses being incurred.

Marketing & Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division of the CSO has made a commitment, through an administrative order approved by the City Council on April 26, 2000, to develop and implement a year-long, multi-level marketing plan to celebrate Saint Paul. The Marketing Director presented their plan to the City Council and highlighted how the various activities they were planning fit into an overall theme of "Rediscovering Saint Paul." Because much of the Marketing Division's work is project oriented, their plans are short term and project specific, such as the plans for the "ilovestpaul.com" website and the Peanuts on Parade exhibit. Marketing staff shared with Council Research written, specific objectives, tactics and events designed to fulfill the vision for Saint Paul's sesquicentennial celebration. Marketing staff also met with each Legislative Aide at the beginning of their current terms to discuss marketing goals for their wards, and plan to make these meetings annual. They will also be developing an "after-Snoopy" plan to build on the success of the Peanuts on Parade project.

The City's website developers are also part of the Marketing and Promotions staff. It is not as clear they have a particular plan for web development, though the City is currently involved in developing plans for e-governance efforts City-wide. However, it does not appear the website developers have a specific plan for their work or the assistance they provide to other departments with their respective websites.

Information and Complaint and City Clerk/Records Division

Staff in the Information and Complaint and the City Clerk/Records divisions of the CSO were largely unaware of the Strategic Plans contained in the budget, though many of the objectives are within their realm of responsibility. The divisions also have no plans that pertain specifically to their work. Planning would help balance workloads, share information and prepare for future changes, such as those relating to the new computer systems.

Code Enforcement Programs Division

Within the CSO, there is no overall plan for Code Enforcement. Reasons staff offered for the lack of planning in this area are: 1) their work is complaint-based and therefore reactionary; 2) their work is often influenced by political decisions; and, 3) they have too much work to do to take time to plan. We counter that these are the reasons a department should create plans. Plans can provide a framework for discussions about prioritization of projects and function as a workload management tool.

While there are no plans for Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit has stated they have a plan to address long-term vacant buildings (vacant buildings that have been on the vacant building list for more than one year). However this is not a written plan. The Vacant Buildings Unit stated they are able to manage their daily work better as a result of having even these informal plans and they are able to address problems more proactively by laying out the problem and mapping solutions to it. However, the fact remains that without a specific written plan,

implementation and continuation of the plan will be difficult. Other specific special programs within Code Enforcement, such as Rental Registration, could benefit from having a plan to address and mitigate the problems they are now facing with implementation, as discussed in the Code Enforcement policy compliance section.

Other specific plans have been created by Code Enforcement together with community groups when they have been approached by the community groups to participate in programs like Weed and Seed, a federally funded program to which communities can apply for funding for special projects. Recently, the Railroad Island community contracted with Code Enforcement as part of Weed and Seed funding they received, and Code Enforcement developed a plan with the community to provide staff and time for concentrated code enforcement sweeps.

Plan Dissemination and Implementation

Most front-line staff seem unaware of the "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget, even though the plan has been included in the budget for at least the past three years. CSO staff were not involved in the development of the "Plans" (50 percent of CSO staff report they do not participate in planning and 23 percent neither agree nor disagree that they participate), nor has the plan been discussed with them by managers and supervisors. When asked in interviews who would be responsible for implementation of the "Plans", the overwhelming response was the managers. It is possible that, because the CSO has few plans, many named managers assuming this is a management responsibility.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The majority of general planning that occurs in the CSO involves upper-level management only. Some of the project-specific planning, such as Weed and Seed programs, also involves the affected communities. The Marketing and Promotions Division creates detailed plans for their projects. The Vacant Buildings Unit states they have some informal, unwritten plans.
- 2) The "Strategic Plans" contained in the budget are not plans. Rather, they are a set of objectives and functions that contains no time line or implementation information. The concepts, as stated in the budget, are not specific enough to be truly meaningful or manageable.
- 3) Few staff are aware of any CSO plans, except for specific project plans in the Marketing and Promotions Division.
- 4) Reasons offered for failing to create plans, such as heavy workloads and the effect of outside influences on their daily activities, are actually strong arguments for the creation of plans.
- 5) The CSO, with a few exceptions, has not included its stakeholders or customers in its very limited planning activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation #37. The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its

development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38. The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39. The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40. The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

LEADERSHIP

Quality Rating: ☆½

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Mission, Vision, Values
- ☐ Stakeholder Relationships
- ☐ Staff Recognition

Senior organizational leaders need to set direction, create a customer focus, establish and articulate a clear vision and communicate and make visible the values of the organization. Reinforcing values and expectations requires personal commitment and involvement. Leaders need to take part in the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving excellence. These systems and methods need to guide all activities and decisions of the organization. Leaders must also recognize the role of stakeholders in these processes, and maintain positive relationships with them. Finally, staff need to be recognized for their contributions to the organization and its mission, vision and values.

Many of an organization's policies and practices are derived from strong leadership principles. In this discussion, we look at six leadership areas: mission, vision, values, communication, stakeholders and staff recognition. Good leadership works to ensure that all in the organization understand the organization's purpose – its mission – and where the organization is going – its vision. Good leaders also articulate values clearly and exemplify them on a daily basis. Strong leadership involves good communication between managers and line staff and is aware of the need to recognize staff for outstanding work.

Mission

The mission and vision must be clearly articulated from the top of the organization down. This is a vitally important characteristic of a high-performing organization. The following is CSO's mission statement:

The Citizen Service Office consists of four divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City services by serving as advocates and liaisons.

The mission statement for the CSO was developed with the help of Human Resources and involved the Director, the Deputy City Clerk, Division managers and some staff prior to the incorporation of Code Enforcement into the Office. Shortly thereafter, the statement was enhanced to reflect the current composition of the Office, which now includes Code Enforcement. If the divisions that make up the CSO were to be separate departments, each would have their own mission statements that may not be much alike. This is evidenced by the fact Code Enforcement has been working under the informal directive to "enforce the City code and improve the quality of life in Saint Paul." Some in Code Enforcement view this mission as being contrary to the mission of the CSO. The CSO Director has a leadership style that emphasizes customer service more than enforcement.

Forty-eight percent of survey respondents believe the Director and managers effectively convey the mission to staff, 27 percent say they do not, and 24 percent neither agree nor disagree. This may be the result of many staff from the Office reportedly having not seen the mission statement. It was apparent from interviews that although a majority of staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul.

Vision

Given that the vision should be clearly articulated from the top of the organization, we identify the Mayor as having the ultimate responsibility for communicating a vision to staff, whether this is communicated directly from him or through department and office directors. According to survey responses, only 24 percent of employees believe the Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO. However, those interviewed responded that they have a sense of the Mayor's vision for the Office and feel he supports the work they do.

Only 31 percent of survey respondents believe the CSO director conveys a clear vision for the future of the Office. When we asked staff about the vision they receive from the CSO director, several stated he conveys a similar vision to that of the Mayor. However, some employees, especially those in Code Enforcement, felt he lacked an understanding of their duties and therefore it was difficult for him to articulate a clear, meaningful vision. The Office admits to being in a reactive rather than proactive mode which enhances the effect outside pressures can have on the Office. Some staff believe the Director is too sensitive to these outside interests. This point will be discussed further under the Training and Development section.

Values

When asked about organizational values, CSO employees demonstrated a clear understanding of the values. Although the divisions within the Citizen Service Office are different, managers and senior leaders are very clear about the level of politeness, fairness, common sense and decency they expect from the employees. These values are not written down, but staff have a thoughtful grasp of the professionalism required and demonstrate these values. According to the survey, about half the staff are aware of the values they are expected to demonstrate; 51 percent reported the Director and managers convey the core values of the organization while only 20 percent of respondents stated they do not. Also, interviewees cited several examples where core organizational values were, in fact, demonstrated by the Director and managers. These values are displayed through such things as their willingness to pitch-in and help line staff, their flexibility, their professionalism and their willingness to listen to staff concerns.

Communication

Within the CSO, communication at all levels could be improved. Survey results demonstrated a split between those who agree that communication within the CSO is effective and those who do not. Some interviewees expressed frustration about not being kept up-to-date or included in management decisions. All-staff meetings are not held frequently, though staff report information is disseminated through e-mail and word of mouth. Interviewees also stated there is a strong "us versus them" mentality throughout the organization. Despite these significant

issues, 75 percent of respondents surveyed felt that managers are visible and in interviews staff stated managers are accessible and have an open-door policy.

Communication between the divisions is poor. It was reported that communication between the Marketing and Promotions Division and the Information and Complaint Division suffers because Marketing does not receive weekly updates from the Information and Complaint Division. They would like information and complaint data identifying the questions and complaints received that are related to Marketing events. Likewise, it was reported that Marketing occasionally fails to update Information and Complaint Division staff about marketing projects that require Information and Complaint staff to give out times, locations and other information about events to the public.

It was also revealed that the Information and Complaint Division has communication problems with Code Enforcement inspectors. These problems concern such issues as if and when an inspection occurred. Inspectors also believe that Information and Complaint personnel do not understand what Code Enforcement does, and they are concerned about whether Information and Complaint staff are providing accurate information to the public.

Communication within Code Enforcement is still rather poor in some respects, despite the changing work environment. Some staff in Code Enforcement are not included in discussions because of the past history of their role in the organization and their relationship with others in the Division. In some cases, management and staff have conflicted over various aspects of a program, such as Rental Registration and the conflict over whether to condemn a property if the owner fails to apply for a registration certificate. Communication between Code Enforcement clerical staff and Code Enforcement managers could be improved. Certain staff feel they are not heard by management. Some Code Enforcement clerical staff also feel it is difficult to connect with inspectors. They feel they are not told things until the last minute which makes them feel excluded and undervalued. Part of this problem may stem from the fact that the Vacant Buildings Unit and all clerical staff, with the exception of one person, are housed in the City Hall/ Courthouse building, while other Code Enforcement staff are at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District building. Code Enforcement views the hiring of an office manager as a positive step in aiding communication between clerical staff and inspectors. The fact remains that communication in Code Enforcement is vital particularly given the changes and upheaval the Division has experienced in the past few years. We also recognize that some of these communication problems stem from personal conflicts between employees – conflicts which have created an atmosphere that has hindered clerical staff's ability to communicate with one another and other employees in the CSO.

Stakeholders

Positive stakeholder relationships are essential to maintaining strong leadership. Leadership must be able to identify its stakeholders and understand their needs, and incorporate those needs into the department's planning processes. Stakeholders are "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output."¹⁷ The quality of stakeholder relationships should be based on communication, fulfilled

¹⁷ Bryson, John. *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, 1995, Page 27.

expectations, and information sharing. CSO's stakeholders include the Police Department, the Fire Department, LIEP, Ramsey County, community organizations and elected officials. Many of these stakeholders are discussed in the Policy Compliance section. Overall, the CSO maintains functional stakeholder relationships, though certainly communication could be improved between some of them, such as the City Council and the CSO regarding complaints and satisfaction rates. They also have not incorporated their stakeholders' needs into their planning processes.

Staff Recognition

Forty-six percent of staff surveyed agree the Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions, while the remaining 54 percent either feel their managers do not recognize staff contributions or they neither agree nor disagree that contributions are recognized. Interviews revealed staff recognition is informal and takes the form of "thank you, good job" and "atta-girls." Management has also held pizza parties and other informal gatherings to thank staff for their work. However, interviewees were not aware of any plans by senior leaders to create a formal recognition system to recognize outstanding contributions to the organization. Without a formal, organized recognition system, recognition can seem arbitrary, and many staff may not be aware of any recognition shown to employees, as the survey results indicate. This problem extends far beyond any one department; the City no longer has an employee recognition program, which has left employees wondering to what extent City leaders value their work.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Although a majority of CSO staff have not seen the mission statement, they do adhere to its ideals and believe their mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. There is some disagreement in Code Enforcement as to whether the mission is enforcement or customer service.
- 2) CSO staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the values that are expected of them despite the fact that the Office has no formal values statement. Staff stated the managers exemplify the values.
- 3) Communication between the divisions, between the clerical staff and the Director, and between clerical staff, inspectors and managers is generally poor. There is a strong "us vs. them" mentality within and between some divisions.
- 4) The Office does not have a formal employee recognition program, though they do recognize staff through other informal means. The City also discontinued the City-wide recognition program.

Recommendations

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Quality Rating: ☆☆

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Work Environment
- ☐ Employee Involvement
- ☐ Employee Evaluation
- ☐ Labor/Management Relationship
- ☐ Education & Training Resources

Employees in successful organizations are provided the tools they need to deliver quality services. These same employees are given encouragement and the resources to develop a set of skills that allows them to contribute effectively to the organization. For example, if an organization values continuing education for its employees, it will provide workers the opportunity and resources needed for them to attend classes, seminars and in-house trainings. A successful organization also creates an environment which increases the growth and well-being of its employees. Finally, organizations should link the training of their employees to the organization's goals and priorities. This connection should occur through the development and implementation of a long-term strategic plan tied to basic organizational values.

CSO Work Environment

Code Enforcement Merger

The merger of Code Enforcement with the Citizen Service Office has resulted in a number of perceived and reported improvements in the Division's work environment. Almost all the employees interviewed reported the morale and leadership of the Division have improved. Staff credit much of this improvement to a change in Code Enforcement management and that the CSO has provided a much more supportive environment than the one that existed under the Fire Department. Also cited as a major improvement was the creation of the Supervisor of Inspections position, which is a level of management between the Manager of Code Enforcement Programs, who oversees the entire Code Enforcement Program, and the program supervisors, who are assigned to individual areas in Code Enforcement. Staff expressed they appreciate having someone with the technical knowledge about Code Enforcement inspections in upper management and can act as an intermediary between front-line staff and CSO senior leaders who do not have Code Enforcement backgrounds. They also reported the Supervisor of Inspections is very accessible and that it is beneficial to have the Supervisor present at the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District Offices and available in the field. The facility at the Eastern Patrol District is reported to be a significant improvement over the previous offices where the Division was housed. In the new facility, there is more space and an open floor plan which allows inspectors to easily talk to one another.

Despite these achievements, there have been a number of problems created by the merger. Staff reported the three mergers it has experienced in the last five years have created a tremendous amount of instability and distraction for staff. Few Code Enforcement staff members identify themselves as employees of the CSO and are hesitant to get too comfortable with this label.

More importantly, many Code Enforcement employees feel their mission is incompatible with rest of the CSO, as discussed previously in the Leadership section. Code Enforcement employees claim the customer service mission of CSO contradicts their mission of enforcement. While we do not believe these concepts are necessarily mutually exclusive, we did find enough evidence to conclude that this difference in philosophy creates significant tension and a very real disconnect between Code Enforcement and the rest of the organization.

Another difficulty created since the merger is that Vacant Buildings Unit and clerical staff are located downtown in City Hall and are separated from the inspectors who are at the Eastern District Patrol Offices. This situation has created communication and morale problems for the Division. Traditionally, there has been a high degree of collegiality among inspectors and the rest of the staff. However, it was reported that since the staff has been split apart, camaraderie has suffered and the Code Enforcement clerical staff feel especially alienated from the rest of the Division. Regular communication between different units of the Division has been made more difficult. Perhaps the best indication of this fact is the Division has not conducted an all-staff meeting in six months. Inspectors did report, however, that they are pleased with their new location, despite the communication problems.

Political Influence

It was frequently mentioned by senior leaders and front-line staff that the CSO is vulnerable to political pressures. Several respondents reported that Councilmembers, the Mayor's Office and the media have a tremendous influence over the practices and plans of CSO. Although it is entirely appropriate for these parties to take a keen interest the operations of government agencies, many front-line employees claimed this involvement was overly meddlesome and was often motivated by something other than the public good. The work of CSO, by its very nature, is reactive in that most of the activities they undertake are either customer service driven or in response to complaints. Therefore, it is not surprising that crises, stories in the newspaper and Council initiatives are perceived by staff as the primary drivers of work in the Office. However, the CSO lacks the ability to sufficiently navigate this political environment because it does not undertake planning, results measurement or stakeholder analysis that would allow it to be more pro-active. If the Office were to have a clear vision of what the organization was to be, they would be able to better manage the various demands on their services and operations.

Diversity

Well over half the employees in the CSO (61 percent) feel senior leaders create an environment which is respectful of employees regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability. However, 21 percent of employees surveyed did not believe this was the case, and 18 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the environment is respectful of all employees. In our interviews, some staff reported that racial or class intolerance affected their work environment. They believed they were not respected by others in the organization because they held low ranking positions.

Employee Involvement

Most employees in the CSO feel they have an opportunity to contribute to decisions made about their work, although no formal mechanism exists for this to be done. Almost all staff who were interviewed reported that CSO senior leaders were very accessible. Most of the Office's managers have an open door policy and informally check in with staff daily. Less is done, however, to actively solicit the suggestions and opinions of employees. The Code Enforcement Division did seek out volunteers to assist in writing a procedures manual. Unfortunately, only one person volunteered for this project and the manual was never completed. Finally, it should be noted that CSO clerical staff and Information and Complaint employees feel, much more so than CSO staff in general, disconnected from decisions which impact their work.

While the CSO appears to have an informal system for employee input, it should be noted that there are certain benefits to having a more formal system. An informal system may seem arbitrary, and may miss input from some staff who are not as comfortable approaching a supervisor or manager in an informal setting. A more structured setting can also create an environment in which employees feel more valued as they know management has made it a priority to gather feedback from staff, and have actually solicited it, rather than just waited until staff approached them with concerns or ideas.

Performance Expectations and Annual Evaluations

Formal, written performance expectations do not exist in the CSO. However, staff feel they understand the expectations of their supervisors and they have learned these expectations through experience on the job. For instance, the reports issued by Code Enforcement inspectors are reviewed on a daily basis by their immediate supervisors. Serious concern was expressed by staff, especially those in Code Enforcement, that formal, written performance expectations would lead to performance quotas. A procedures manual was created by a previous Director of Code Enforcement and was being updated by an employee; however, this project was later dropped. At the moment, it appears the manual is no longer being actively used by staff.

Annual performance evaluations of employees have not taken place in the CSO for three years. Before the practice was discontinued, the Office used the standard evaluation process and forms provided by the City's Human Resources Department. The Code Enforcement Programs Manager stated he would like to commence performance evaluations for the Division's clerical employees, but has been waiting until an office manager was hired. This lack of evaluation is problematic because employees are not getting feedback on their performance nor do they know what is expected of them.

Labor-Management Relationship

For the most part, the labor management situation in the CSO appears to be similar to the rest of the City. In the past year, only two significant labor relations issues stand out. When the Code Enforcement Division introduced the Freelantz data base system, inspectors were required to perform all data entry for their reports. This issue caused great distress among inspectors who are not trained in keyboarding. As a result, the inspectors filed a labor contract grievance to stop

this practice, arguing that data entry is not part of the duties for the Code Enforcement inspector classification.

The other significant labor relations issue that has faced the Office in the last year was a grievance filed by Code Enforcement inspectors that a political appointee was working out of title as an inspector. This appointee was charged with overseeing the Dayton's Bluff Initiative but was involved in some day-to-day inspection duties related to the project. This issue was complicated because the individual was reportedly very unpopular with front-line staff. The grievance became irrelevant when the political appointee was fired from his position due to reasons unrelated to this issue.

Training

Senior leadership has made training a high priority and provides many training opportunities for staff. The Office's training opportunities are perhaps best developed in the Code Enforcement Division. The Division's employees are encouraged and provided resources to take job-related training in the community college system. Many also attend an annual conference at the University of Minnesota and a regional conference in Madison, Wisconsin. It was reported the Division had provided in-house training in the past but this practice has been discontinued in recent years. Most Code Enforcement inspectors take advantage of training; however, interviewees reported junior employees do not utilize the opportunities as much as they should.

Other CSO staff have similar chances to participate in training, but they appear not to take advantage of them to same extent as their Code Enforcement counterparts. This may be partly explained by the fact that clerical employees and other CSO employees have less-developed professional networks when compared to Code Enforcement inspectors.

New staff in the CSO are trained through mentoring done by senior employees. In the Code Enforcement Division new inspectors "ride-along" with experienced staff for their first six to eight weeks. New inspectors are also required to study the Legislative Code. Other CSO staff are also trained through partnering with senior staff.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The mission of Code Enforcement appears to conflict at times with the overall mission of the CSO. ~~This conflict may be contributing to some tension between the divisions within the CSO.~~
- 2) The Citizen Service Office, particularly its Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to staff to attend various training sessions and conferences. Some staff, such as clerical support staff, are less inclined to attend training, although they are encouraged to do so.
- 3) Several staff commented the work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has improved since it was administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office. Since the merger, some problems have been created as a result of the Division's staff being separated from each other.

4) Code Enforcement seems particularly susceptible to outside influences from sources such as the City Council, Mayor and the media. They have not yet found a way to balance the demands of the various interests.

5) Code Enforcement used to have an employee manual that contained valuable information on standard procedures and requirements. It appears this manual has it been updated recently nor is it being used.

6) Opportunities for staff to contribute to decisions made about the operations and procedures of the CSO are inadequate and informal at best.

7) The CSO has not done employee performance evaluations in over three years. Employees are not getting regular feedback on their performance.

Recommendations

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

INFORMATION & ANALYSIS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Data Collection
- ☐ Analysis of Data
- ☐ Effective Use of Automation Systems

Quality Rating: ★¹/₂

Information gathering and analysis are vital functions for any organization. Quality organizations should collect data on customers, services, employees and costs. Organizations should also concentrate on collecting and using data that relate to their goals and plans.

Collecting data serves little purpose if it is not analyzed and used to make improvements. It is very important to extract the larger meaning from data to support evaluation and decision-making at various levels throughout the organization. Analysis should employ the examination of trends, projections, comparisons and cause-effect correlations. Using data and analysis systematically is important in properly setting goals, developing plans and allocating resources. The information collected and analyzed should be used throughout the organization and used to evaluate the organization and its progress. Information is essential in monitoring goals and it should play a key role in the decision-making process. Finally, organizations must have information systems which are useful to staff and provide them with the tools they need to collect, retrieve and analyze data.

Data Collection

The work areas in the CSO, in particular the Code Enforcement and the Information and Complaint Divisions, have the potential to collect a substantial amount of data about their operations. The Office currently collects some data but these efforts have been limited by poor information systems and inconsistent information gathering. We examine below the data collection efforts of the divisions within CSO.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division collects data on complaints which the Office receives. The Division tracks the number of complaints, the type of complaint, the date the complaint was received, and the City department responsible for resolving this complaint. Based on these complaints, the Division also generates reports for complaints that have taken more than five days to resolve. These five day late reports are distributed to department and office directors responsible for seeing that their departments address the complaints. Very limited customer satisfaction data is collected, and it is not compiled or analyzed.

Code Enforcement Division

There are numerous activities and actions the Code Enforcement Division undertakes which have the potential to a robust sources of data. Code Enforcement has a history of collecting data about

its activities, often collecting and tabulating it by hand. Recently, data collection efforts have decreased for two primary reasons: 1) the Division has inadequate computer systems which are unable to reliably collect, store and retrieve data; and 2) there has been a change in leadership within the Division which has resulted in a de-emphasis on data collection. Despite the decreased data collection in the last few years, the Division does collect the number of inspections conducted, the type of inspection, the address of the property and the mileage driven by inspectors. This information is taken from the inspectors' work sheets and entered into the EXL system by the clerical staff.

Senior leaders report that the EXL complaint data base system is so poor at managing and extracting data that the Division currently pays little attention to the data collected. In their opinion, doing so would be a wasted effort as long as the CSO uses the data bases currently in place. However, this change in practice was not communicated to their stakeholders, thus many stakeholders, such as the City Council, were under the impression they were continuing to report data and provide meaningful information.

Two sub-units of Code Enforcement, the Vacant Buildings Unit and the Rental Registration Program, collect their own data. Arguably, the Vacant Buildings Unit collects the best data within the CSO. The Unit tracks the number of vacant buildings registered, their location, the number of inspections performed at the unit, and the number and types of citations written. In addition, the VBU tracks the status of vacant buildings based on the type and condition of the property. The Rental Registration Program, which is now a year old, reportedly collects data on the number of properties registered and the amount of fees collected, though at the time this audit was being prepared, their computer systems were not functioning as hoped and the Rental Registration Program was not running at its optimum level.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division collects customer data and basic information on the economic impact of its projects. The Division's film staff collect data on the amount of money spent as the result of films produced in the City. This data is disaggregated based on the type of film, whether it is an independent, motion picture or a commercial project. The Division also collects customer information through business surveys, web hits on City web site, and visitor and events survey data.

Data Use and Analysis

Similar to the Office's data collection efforts, the analysis and use of the data in the CSO is generally not well-developed and it varies across divisions. It is our belief that if better data was collected and analysis were done, it would inform planning activities and decision-making. With better data collection and analysis, CSO leaders could be more proactive and less dependent on crises management. In addition, with improved data analysis, elected officials would have better information for introducing initiatives and making decisions.

The Information and Complaint Division provides, based on calls received, feedback to other Departments about particular problem areas which need to be addressed. For instance, the

Division will inform the Public Works Department that they are getting a large number of complaints about potholes on University Avenue.

The Code Enforcement Division has performed almost no analysis of the data it collects on its regular functions. The Division did have a research analyst position which was removed from the City's Budget in 2000 and replaced with an office manager position. Currently, there is no one in the Office with primary responsibility for all of the Office's data collection and analysis activities.

Little data analysis takes place for planning, implementing and evaluating special projects and initiatives, such as the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and PP2000. For example, when the CSO worked with the City's Housing Information Office to establish the boundaries of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, data stored in the Office's EXL system was not used to determine the scope of the project. Rather, the CSO relied on suggestions from inspectors to determine the boundaries. Similarly, the properties selected for PP2000 were chosen based on anecdotal evidence. Little effort has been made to systematically track the results of special initiatives. The reason given by senior leaders for this lack of analysis has been that the data bases currently used by CSO, EXL and Freelantz, are inadequate. Interestingly, however, there has been no effort to track results of special initiatives using other data base software that would be capable of analyzing data of this nature, such as SPSS or Lotus.

Information Systems

The CSO's information systems, by which we mean the computer and communication hardware and software, were consistently rated as poor by both senior leaders and staff. The Office appears to have adequate computer hardware and has made efforts to improve communication for Code Enforcement inspectors in the field with acquisition of NEXTEL phones. However, as we have already noted in this section above, the EXL complaint system, which serves as the Office's data base, and the Freelantz system, which was developed to temporarily replace the EXL system, are believed to be inadequate by everyone we interviewed.

The EXL system was created in 1979. The view that the system is unreliable and no longer useful for data collection and analysis has fostered an attitude that data analysis cannot take place given the state of EXL. Furthermore, Technology and Management Services has stated it will not support the EXL system after 2001. As a result, all data analysis in Code Enforcement has appeared to have completely ceased. As mentioned earlier, some data collection and reporting does take place in the Code Enforcement Division, but most data are not analyzed for use in decision-making or the development of the divisional plans or strategies.

To address the deficiencies of the EXL system, Code Enforcement has been working on developing software created by a company called Freelantz, to be a temporary replacement for EXL until the new data base was established (possibly the AMANDA system). However, the development and conversion of EXL to the Freelantz software was poorly planned and has not been completely implemented. The software's development under the direction of a former Director of Code Enforcement did not involve staff. Several front-line employees reported that if Code Enforcement inspectors were involved in the creation of Freelantz's, many of the programs flaws would have been avoided. Many interview subjects with knowledge of the program reported that Freelantz performs fewer functions and takes more time to operate than the

archaic EXL system. Currently, the new system is being used on a trial basis by the Vacant Buildings Unit. The Rental Registration Program is utilizing another system that requires outside support, and therefore due to a desire to keep expenses low, this system is not fully functional either. The resulting problems with implementation mirror those resulting from the Freelantz software. The Director of Code Enforcement states that the failure of the Freelantz software to function adequately will result in the conversion to the AMANDA system sooner than expected.

Both the Freelantz software and the AMANDA system require Code Enforcement inspectors to perform data entry. In the past, data entry on the EXL system has been done by Code Enforcement clerical staff. This has resulted in a discontent among some inspectors who do not have keyboarding skills. As mentioned in the Training and Development section, the inspectors have filed a grievance claiming that data entry is outside their regular duties and therefore violates their labor contract.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in general collects very little meaningful data about its operation, and performs even less data analysis. The Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions are the two areas that perform some data collection and analysis, and the Information and Complaint Division creates a five-day late report based on complaint resolution time. The CSO has been waiting to convert to the AMANDA system until the other offices implementing the system have worked out any problems in the program.
- 2) The new computer systems the Office has been trying to develop are proving to be woefully inadequate and inoperable. The current computer system is outdated and can no longer provide accurate information.
- 3) Code Enforcement no longer has a staff person dedicated to data analysis. They decided to dedicate the FTE (full-time equivalent) to the newly created position of office manager instead.

Recommendations

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do

data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.

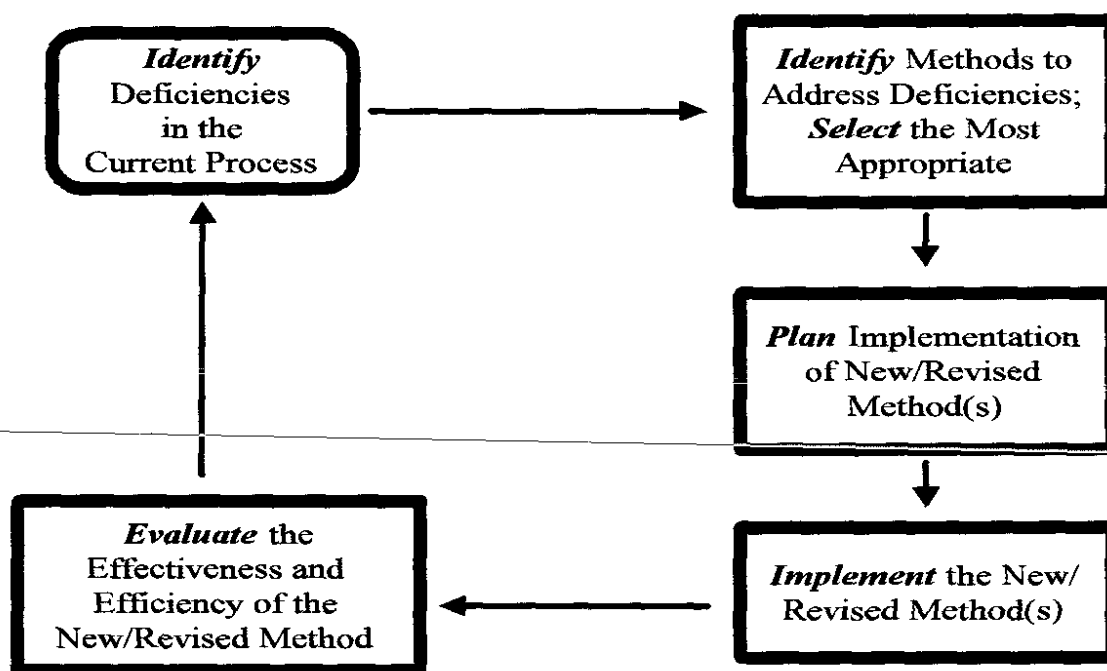
IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ❑ Identification of Potential Improvements
- ❑ Implementation of Improvements
- ❑ Evaluation of Improvement Efforts

Quality Rating: ☆

The improvement process occurs when an organization considers the design, management and improvement of internal organizational processes. Similarly, the improvement process should be part of the daily work within the organization, and should seek to eliminate problems at the source and be driven by opportunities to improve. Improvement *practices* are the methods identified in the improvement process to enhance operations - the implementation stage. Many organizations engage only in the implementation (improvement practice) stage, and fail to go through the planning and evaluation (improvement process) stages. The improvement process must contain planning, implementation and evaluation, all of which require information and methods for assessing progress. All practices of an organization should be continually evaluated to identify problems and successes. The improvement process is charted in the following diagram.



Improvements in the Citizen Service Office

While the CSO is attempting to incorporate a number of improvement practices, these improvements did not come out of an overall improvement plan. Rather, they are a reaction to a given situation, and little consideration is given to the long-term effects of the changes. A key component of the improvement process is evaluation of the improvement effort. Did it accomplish what was intended? Why or why not? What should be modified? The CSO does not do this type of evaluation of their improvement efforts. Most review is largely anecdotal and based on whether complaints are down and the reaction of elected officials. They also receive some feedback from the Internet site. Marketing may do more evaluation by looking at attendance at events, methods by which people found out about the event, money generated by an event, and so on. Overall, however, the CSO could do a better job of tracking their improvement efforts.

The CSO evaluates their vendors only through the bidding process. The Office tracks complaints and discussed them with their vendors, as well as does spot-checks on the contractors who board vacant buildings for them and those who cut tall grass and weeds when an abatement is ordered.

The following paragraphs discuss the improvement practices the CSO has attempted. Again, these improvements were not part of a planning process, nor have they been evaluated as to their effectiveness.

Code Enforcement Division

Code Enforcement has made a change to the structure of the Division. An Office Manager has been hired to coordinate activities, staff have begun some job-sharing, and the Division has placed a clerical staff member at the Eastern Patrol District Offices where most of the inspectors are located. Unfortunately, the Office Manager position comes at the expense of a data analyst, a position that could be very valuable to Code Enforcement in determining the effectiveness of various programs, as mentioned previously in the Information and Analysis section. Code Enforcement has also been involved in creating the Dayton's Bluff Initiative and assisting with Weed and Seed programs, such as the one in the Railroad Island community. Again, these programs were not necessarily of Code Enforcement's own initiative, but Code Enforcement worked with those interested in creating the programs to carry them out. They continue to look at ways to reduce the number of chronic problem properties, whether through case management or working with owners of these properties more closely to remedy the problems.

Code Enforcement and the Police Department have also devised an initiative called the Red Card program to assist with identifying abandoned vehicles. The Police Department places a red card on vehicles that appear to be abandoned requesting the owner to move the vehicle, and notifying them that it may be towed. The Police Department and Code Enforcement have found this to be an effective way to gain owner's cooperation and avoid having to tow numerous vehicles.

The Vacant Buildings Unit is also actively looking for ways to eliminate long-term vacant buildings through such activities as incentives to tear down or rehabilitate these properties. Other improvements include placing the vacant building list on the Internet.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division is continually trying to find new, inexpensive ways to promote events and increase participation. They have created an e-mail infrastructure to market City events directly to employees of downtown businesses. They are also working with existing attractions and encouraging them to not only market their attractions, but to market Saint Paul as well. They have partnered with radio stations to encourage their presence at events, which results in on-air, in-kind advertising. Marketing and Promotions is also placing a greater emphasis on marketing events through the Internet, such as the ilovestpaul.com website, which is a partnership with other Saint Paul organizations and businesses. They are also trying to work more directly and lend their expertise to the neighborhoods to market their events, rather than simply providing them the funding and leaving the organizations to figure out what to do to promote their events. For example, a neighborhood organization can call Marketing and Promotions staff, and the staff will provide them with contacts at businesses and organizations that might be interested in working with the neighborhood group to market their neighborhood events. They will also try to help the neighborhood groups find other sources of revenue beyond the City, as well as encourage media sponsorship of local events.

Marketing staff have also provided training session for production houses that come to film in Saint Paul that helps them better prepare for filming here. Staff took the initiative to make an unscheduled presentation at a seminar for production companies and went over common questions and situations production companies face when they come to Saint Paul. Staff also produced an easy-to-use reference guide that covers common situations and problems such as the process for getting parking meters hooded, arranging for traffic detours, the fees charged for special services, and other pertinent concerns and situations. After presenting and preparing the reference guide, staff noticed a decreased level of stress and time spent arranging for filming and a smoother filming process.

Information and Complaint, City Clerk/Records

The Information and Complaint Division now has a form for walk-ins to fill out when they come in to report a complaint, rather than having a staff person take the complaint directly from the individual. It appears this new practice benefits the employees, but it is not as clear as to whether this benefits the customers. However, it does create a written record of the complaint, which may give some assurance to the customer that it will be recorded and taken seriously. The City Clerk/Records Division does not have any apparent improvement processes in place. Other improvements in these divisions will be discussed in the following Customer Focus section.

Summary of Findings

- 1) Overall, most evaluation of improvements in the CSO is based on anecdotal evidence and is very informal. The evaluations are not used to make plans for the Office.
- 2) Code Enforcement has engaged in some improvement efforts such as programmatic and staffing changes. However, many of these improvements are reactive rather preventive measures. The CSO has not prepared any concrete plans to fully implement the changes and anticipate any potential problems resulting from the changes.

3) The Marketing and Promotions Division is perhaps the only division in the CSO that engages in any planning and evaluation of their improvement efforts.

Recommendations

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Customer Identification & Knowledge
- ☐ Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Needs
- ☐ Customer Service Practices
- ☐ Customer Service Standards

Quality Rating: ★★½

Attention to customer needs is critical for achieving organizational excellence. Through the creation and management of relationships with their customers, organizations which excel in customer satisfaction obtain information on customer service requirements, expectations and satisfaction. Knowing the requirements of its customers enables an organization to develop standards which are designed to enhance customer satisfaction.¹⁸ For these standards to be effective, they must be understood and followed by everyone in the organization.

In recent years, the CSO has placed a great deal of emphasis on providing good customer service. The vision for this effort comes from the Mayor and the Director. However, since incorporating the Code Enforcement Division into the Office, the philosophy of providing good customer service has been strained by the fact that Code Enforcement is an enforcement agency. Inspectors and managers have for years wrestled with the notion of customer service being the paramount objective. Other divisions within the Office do not struggle with this notion to the same degree. However, there are still some areas in which the Citizen Service Office could improve. Organizational improvement requires that staff understand the importance of customer service training and that good customer service skills can be learned and enhanced.

CSO's Customers

Most CSO staff agreed that anyone requesting services or information, whether internal or external, is a potential customer. However, with the aforementioned exception, Citizen Service Office employees indicated through the survey a general lack of agreement as to who are their customers. A list of customers that were identified include: the general public, citizens of Saint Paul, property owners, businesses, neighborhood groups, City workers and elected officials. While this list is very broad it does shed some light on the difficulty employees face when trying to define their role in the organization, and who their primary customers should be when each division within the Office is charged with different responsibilities. Interviewees stated that citizens are perceived as customers by all the divisions because they provide the Office with informal feedback as to how well the Office is doing its job. This is an important criteria for them when deciding who their customer is because these individuals provide the organization with information pertaining to customer satisfaction and needs.

¹⁸ In many cases, an organization's customers may be the same as their stakeholders. However, customers and stakeholders each provide the organization with a unique set of information, and the relationship between the organization and its customers versus the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders is different. For more discussion of stakeholders, see the Leadership section.

Code Enforcement Division

Survey respondents within Code Enforcement overwhelmingly chose the citizens of Saint Paul as their customer. Many also view the general public, City of Saint Paul employees, businesses and community groups as customers. There is some confusion about whether or not property owners with code violations should be considered customers.

Information and Complaint Division

The Information and Complaint Division also identified the public and citizens of Saint Paul as its primary customers. Because they also interact with the City Council regarding neighborhood problems, they identified the Council as a customer as well. This Division has the unique responsibility of serving walk-in visitors and phone-in customers. In fact, systems have been developed to deal with these individuals in a friendly and efficient manner. Walk-ins are served by counter personnel and are given a complaint sheet to fill out and phone-ins have their complaints entered into the computer and passed on to the appropriate City agency.

City Clerk / Records Division

This Division believes that people requesting copies of City documents are their primary customers. City departments and the City Council are identified as customers who are served less frequently, but who are still customers. The City Clerk also provides information about official City documents, local elections, petitions, and historical data to researchers.

Marketing and Promotions Division

Marketing and Promotions staff feel their customers are the residents, visitors and film production companies that come to Saint Paul to attend events or film movies. The Mayor's Office, the City Council and City departments were reported to be customers as well. This Division allocates a certain dollar amount for marketing and promotions efforts in each City ward, which involves working with Councilmembers and their aides to determine how the money should be spent. The Division must also work with other City departments and organizations which promote the City to coordinate City services for events occurring in Saint Paul.

Marketing and Promotions also provides the City's website development services. The City's website provides useful information, but is somewhat difficult to navigate for people less familiar with the City's governmental structure. Each City department's website has its own look, rather than a standard structure that makes it easier for a viewer to recognize it as being a City of Saint Paul web page. The CSO's own website is useful and contains various complaint forms, meeting information, and links to other useful sites. However, it does not have as many links as might be useful for citizens and visitors looking for information. The Citizen Service Office is often the first place people go to seek information. Therefore, their website has the potential to be one of the most valuable of the City's pages. Just as people call the CSO when they are unsure of what department to call, many people may consult their web page first in the hope of finding a link to the information they are seeking. People are also becoming more technologically sophisticated and are finding it easier to submit information requests and complaints via e-mail.

Determining Customer Needs and Satisfaction

Good customer focus involves determining what specifically the customer needs and how satisfied the customer is with a product or service. The CSO identifies what its customers need through responding to complaints and talking with property owners, businesses, visitors to the Office and community organizations. However, only 35 percent of respondents surveyed felt that CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer needs, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, forty five percent of respondents believe the Office is responsive to changes in customer needs, while 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the Office is responsive. These numbers can be explained by the fact that although staff say they determine customers needs by verbal communication and letters from citizens, the Office has no formal mechanism for gathering customer needs information or sharing customer responses with staff. Information is difficult to gather from the current computer systems and the Office does not hold staff meetings where it would be easy to share and discuss customer information.

Customer satisfaction is admittedly a more difficult aspect for the Office to ascertain than customer needs. Beyond limited call-backs, the Office does not have a formal survey instrument or process to ascertain levels of customer satisfaction. In fact, only 24 percent of staff surveyed felt the Office monitors for changes in customer satisfaction, while 27 percent felt they do not monitor for changes, and 59 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 28 percent of respondents felt that the Office was responsive to changes in customer satisfaction, with 14 percent reporting they are not, and 57 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The Information and Complaint Division does not pass along its very limited customer satisfaction results from call-backs to other CSO staff or to the Code Enforcement inspectors. Inspectors remarked that they only receive customer satisfaction results when they are negative and the feedback is usually in the form of an angry phone call or letter. Marketing and Promotions conducts informal surveys of its customers after large events such as the Titanic exhibit at the Union Depot building and the Peanuts on Parade exhibits.

High performing organizations use customer satisfaction data for planning and implementing strategies that enable the organization to be less reactionary. In truth, if the organization captured customer satisfaction and needs information through a regular process of formal surveys and analysis of the results it could adjust its practices to deal with changes in customer satisfaction without disrupting daily routines. Not only is this important for the CSO, the City could benefit enormously from engaging in a City-wide survey and having customer need and satisfaction data available for all of its operations.

Customer Service Standards

Formal customer service standards help staff understand what is expected of them by the organization and by their customers. The CSO does not have a set of formal customer service standards that are written down and circulated to all employees. Code Enforcement has some standards in a manual that was created under a former manager. However, many Code Enforcement staff are not aware of its existence. Information and Complaint, Marketing and Promotions and the City Clerk all purport to have informal customer service standards. Staff acknowledge these are not written down, as such, but are relatively widely understood and

practiced. Forty-four percent of respondents surveyed agreed that there were customer service standards in their work area, and 41 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Many of the informal customer service standards referred to by staff are close to being values or are values of the organization. This is evidenced by the fact that these standards are learned and reinforced by employees observing their co-workers in the field and on the phones. While it is good that 42 percent of staff surveyed understand the Offices' informal customer service standards and attempt to follow them, over 1/5 of the staff reported they do not understand or feel that staff follow them. This is an insufficient management practice. Unless standards are formalized, written down, and widely circulated they can not be updated, amended or added to in any way that would promote efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. This situation is compounded by the lack of all-staff meetings where organizational information is usually exchanged.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO in total does not agree on who its customers are. While deference is paid to those seeking information or services, there is no Office-wide agreement as to whom the organization should consider as its customers.
- 2) The CSO does not have a formal process for assessing customer needs and satisfaction. Divisions within the Office rely on complaints from citizens and informal surveys to determine this information. The Information and Complaint Division occasionally utilizes a call back method to garner some customer satisfaction information. However this information is not compiled or shared with any other staff in the Office or City.
- 3) The Office does not have a formal set of customer service standards. Rather, the employees adhere to an informal set of value-driven, common sense standards that are enforced by action and word-of-mouth and emulated by staff.
- 4) The City's website has the potential to be an invaluable resource and method for communicating with residents, visitors, businesses and anyone seeking information on Saint Paul. However, the City's website is currently difficult to use and lacks uniformity that would make it easier to navigate. The CSO's website provides useful information and complaint forms, but should be developed further as many visitors to the City's site may go to their page first when they are unsure of which department they need.

Recommendations

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of

standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

RESULTS

Quality Rating: ☆¹/₂

KEY CONCEPTS:

- ☐ Organizational Outcomes
- ☐ Financial Outcomes
- ☐ Customer Satisfaction
- ☐ Use of Performance Indicators

The Results component of the Malcolm Baldrige system addresses an organization's ability to determine if and how well it is accomplishing its mission. Successful organizations know how well they perform. Through result measurement an organization is able to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. Organizations should track results over time and compare these results to other similar organizations. Results management should be the last phase in an ongoing cycle involving goal setting, planning, the execution of plans and improvement practices. Using results information in this way can help staff provide the best service in the most efficient way possible. Decision makers can also use results information to monitor the provision of services on the public's behalf, ensuring government accountability.

The work functions within CSO have a great deal of potential data available which could be used to measure results. However, as mentioned in the Information and Analysis section of this audit, CSO's data collection efforts are poor and their data storage and retrieval systems are inadequate. These factors have severely limited the Office's capacity to perform meaningful results measurement.

Outcomes Measured

The measurement of results is not a well-developed concept in the CSO. Below we detail the Office's efforts to develop, measure and use results.

Information and Complaint Division/City Clerks Office

The Information and Complaint Division collects response time data regarding how long it takes City departments to resolve a complaint. After five days, the Division will send out a late report if the complaint is unresolved. These reports are sent to department and office directors but not directly to staff responsible for resolving the complaint. The Information and Complaint Division also collects very limited information on how satisfied citizens are with City Departments' ability to resolve their complaints. The Division's staff occasionally calls citizens who have made complaints and asks them state whether they were *satisfied with the timeliness and quality of the City's response*. However, they do not compile this data or prepare any reports with this information; therefore, other City staff are unaware of the limited satisfaction results. Despite this shortcoming, we believe soliciting citizen satisfaction information is an excellent practice and represents an important mechanism which the City can use to understand its customers' requirements.

There was no indication the City Clerk's Office measured the results of its operations.

Code Enforcement Division

The activities of the Code Enforcement Division have the potential to provide a rich source of data which could be measured to determine organizational results. Given this potential data source, the Division could be a very results-oriented organization. However, senior leaders state the organization's ability to focus on results has been limited because of poor data collection efforts and inadequate computer systems. With the change in leadership in the division, there has also been a de-emphasis on data collection.

The Division's data storage system, EXL, is currently is able to collect data but cannot easily retrieve data. The Freelantz system, which was initially created to replace EXL, has not been fully implemented. The new program has run into difficulty and senior leaders report it is unlikely the Division will ever fully deploy the program. It now appears the Division will convert to the AMANDA system to serve as its complaint data base.

The Code Enforcement Division tracks the number of complaints they receive. Several interview respondents stated the number of complaints has decreased over the last year, but none of these employees could provide an explanation of why complaints have gone down. One senior manager suggested tracking the number of complaints is a poor measure of the Division's success because the Office does not track data which would explain the decreasing number of complaints. For instance, he suggested it is possible that one could interpret a drop in initial complaints to mean that people are calling less because they are increasingly discouraged by the City's ability to deal with Code Enforcement problems.

The Division also tracks the number of complaints resolved. Cases are considered closed once a member of the clerical staff enters the inspector's final report on the EXL system. It was reported this measure may be inaccurate because the information is sometimes entered weeks after the inspector has completed the report, thereby exaggerating the number of open cases.

The most results-oriented unit of the Code Enforcement Division is the Vacant Building's unit. The Unit tracks the number of demolitions, the number of demolitions disaggregated by property owners, the number of active vacant buildings, and the number of vacant buildings that are rehabilitated. A report of these results is published quarterly and distributed to the Mayor's Office and the City Council.

Code Enforcement staff have a good understanding of the results they would like to measure. They hope the conversion to a data base, such as AMANDA, and a new commitment by senior leaders will lead to a greater use of results measurement. In the table below we detail the measures that Code Enforcement would like to track.

- Number of summary abatement orders and number of abatements performed by the City
- First notice compliance rates
- The disposition of citations
- The number of condemnations
- Complaints broken down by U.S. Census track
- Data regarding the safety of inspectors

A senior leader suggested that many of these statistics would provide the City with a better indication of how Code Enforcement is doing and help the Division develop future strategies and plans. In our view, establishing the measures mentioned by staff would be an excellent beginning for measuring the Division's performance. However, we believe these measures alone do not serve as a complete list of potential performance indicators which could be used by the divisions. Nor do we believe they sufficiently account for social and economic factors which are beyond the control of the Division. For instance, as one of the Division's supervisors mentioned, the declining number of vacant buildings is not meaningful unless one also looks at the condition of the housing market in Saint Paul. To provide better information for the analysis of results and the development organizational plans, new measures should attempt to incorporate external social and economic factors.

Result Measurement for Special Initiatives

Several senior leaders within the CSO stated the Office does a particularly poor job of measuring the results of special initiatives. For the purpose of this audit, we define special initiatives to mean any new project or program that has been developed to address a specific problem. These initiatives are usually pilot projects or temporary in nature.¹⁹

The inadequacy of the Office's data collection efforts is a major impediment to its efforts to measure the results of its special initiatives. The Director of Code Enforcement stated that in 1999, this Division conducted six Weed and Seed programs and there are no records of how the program's money was spent or about the results of the programs in terms of citations, arrests and property improvements. Similarly, the Division is currently undertaking a pilot program, the Dayton's Bluff Initiative, for which there was supposed to be a serious data collection effort underway during its first three months. However, it was reported that the collection efforts were so poor that the data was essentially useless for a serious evaluation of the program. Currently, the Office's most significant special initiative is PP2000. PP2000 is the Division's program to address the problems created at some of Saint Paul's most troubled properties. To track the success of the program, staff collect data on whether complaints on PP2000 properties are decreasing. However, they say they would also like to collect the number of properties sold by a PP2000 property owner, the number of complaints based on ownership, and whether corrections were made as a result of writing a citation.

There are several reasons why tracking results of special initiatives, such as PP2000, should be of great importance for the CSO. First, PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff Initiative have been mentioned as potential models for dealing with the City's problem properties. Without good data collection and continuous tracking of results, it will be very difficult to determine whether these programs are successful, whether they should be continued and implemented on a larger scale. Second, there appears to be a great deal of resistance to some of these programs among staff and some senior leaders. Many complain that initiatives such as these use scarce resources which would be better used for the day-to-day activities of the Code Enforcement Division. By systematically tracking results of these special initiatives, senior leaders and decision-makers will be able to judge whether resources are being used in the most effective manner possible.

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of these programs, see the "Special Initiatives" section of Policy Alignment portion of this audit.

Marketing and Promotions Division

The Marketing and Promotions Division measures the results of some of its activities. The Film Office determines the financial results of its efforts by examining the budgets of the projects it helps bring to Saint Paul. This data is disaggregated by production type. The Division also collects data on visitors and revenues generated by events that it promotes in the City. Staff also track press clippings to determine the success of their promotional efforts.²⁰ Finally, the Division seeks feedback from stakeholders about specific projects it has undertaken. Several staff members stated they would like to receive regular reports from the CSO's Information and Complaint Division about requests and complaints related to their activities. They have made a request to the CSO Director to be provided with this information; however, the Division has yet to receive these reports.

Comparisons of Results

Divisions within the CSO do not compare their results to the outcomes of other similar organizations. Occasionally, employees informally speak or swap stories with staff from other cities who perform similar functions. Many Code Enforcement staff members stated it would be difficult to compare Saint Paul's results with other similar agencies because of the difference in housing code and enforcement traditions.

Staff Knowledge of Goals and Goal Achievement

Ultimately, the measurement of results should be undertaken to determine whether an organization is achieving its goals. Staff, however, appear to be unclear about the goals of the CSO. The staff's knowledge about organizational goals is essentially the responsibility of senior leaders. Leaders must make it clear, through the vision and planning process, what the goals of the organization are and how they will be achieved. Although the point is intertwined with much of what is stated in the audit's Leadership section, it is mentioned here because if an organization does not have clear and defined goals, it is difficult for an organization to determine what results should be measured. Since there does not appear to be consensus in the CSO about the organization's goals, it is not surprising the Office has paid scant attention to measuring results.

Summary of Findings

- 1) The CSO does not have a results measurement system.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and citizen satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions Division measures the success of their programs and the Vacant Building Unit tracks case management data.

²⁰ As an example, articles about Peanuts on Parade have appeared in papers as far away as Japan, Germany, Canada, Belgium, and Puerto Rico, and staff were interviewed by Australian radio.

3) For the most part, the Office's performance indicators are poorly developed and do not provide the organization and elected officials with useful information which could assist them with decision-making.

Recommendations

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures, also referred to as performance indicators, provide an organization with a means to gauge how well it is achieving its goals. Although not everything an organization does and seeks to accomplish can be quantified, there are some measures that are good indicators of this. Fundamentally, performance indicators should measure how well an organization is meeting its mission. For this reason, CSO's mission bears restating here. "The Citizen Service Office consists of Four Divisions – City Clerk Records, Marketing & Promotions, Code Enforcement Programs and Information and Complaint. Together, the employees of the Citizen Service Office maintain Saint Paul's official recorded history, promote its vitality and diversity, identify proactive solutions to correct code violations, and help resolve citizen issues related to City Services by serving as advocates and liaisons." In this chapter we will explore how the CSO may seek to inform itself, its customers and stakeholders about how well it is doing at achieving its mission. This chapter is intended to provide a basis for discussion and assist CSO in developing performance measures. The CSO will embark over the next year on the implementation of AMANDA, the information system which will track much of the needed data for performance measurement. Therefore, it is a critical juncture for CSO to consider these issues.

Council Research has approached this examination of performance indicators with several assumptions in mind. First, we believe the City Council has a vested interest in examining performance indicators as a part of the budget review process. The use of performance indicators gives the City Council a clear picture of what has been accomplished in past years, and the reasonableness of expectations for future years. They meaningfully connect dollars spent to hoped-for outcomes in the services expected of City government. Indeed, as the Council deliberated upon "managed competition proposals," the need to translate City activities into meaningful performance indicators became very apparent. The development of such indicators is necessary to make clear with anyone—employees or private vendors—just what are performance requirements which will be specified in the contract. Second, we believe performance indicators can be useful management tools for communicating with staff about expectations. However, we also put forward the notion that staff must be a part of the creation of performance indicators and see their usefulness in their daily work lives. The people who will, in practice, provide information for performance indicators are also profoundly affected by what the indicators may reveal. Finally, although we recognize there are limitations in what performance indicators can communicate about the success of an organization, there is little else available to provide "a gauge" on progress. Comprehensive evaluations of programs or activities are timely and expensive, and do not necessarily allow for the incremental improvement of efforts.

The CSO does have a number of so-called "performance indicators" in its budget. In our view, however, most of the indicators included in the budget do not constitute meaningful, useful or effective measures. Developing performance measures begins with identifying what pieces of information indicate the organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and quality. Some guidelines for the development of meaningful performance indicators are provided below.

Performance Indicators Should Be:

- ☐ Quantifiable, readily available, easy to calculate, "trackable" and show the direction of progress
- ☐ Strongly connected to the mission of the organization
- ☐ Intrinsically meaningful and understood throughout the organization
- ☐ Focused on outcomes and products, rather than processes when possible

Examples of Performance Measures:

- ☐ Customer and employee satisfaction
- ☐ Volume of outputs as work units or products
- ☐ Productivity and efficiency: time and cost per unit of product
- ☐ Errors, mistakes, complaints, waste, return rates or pollution
- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Timeliness
- ☐ Impact: changes resulting from activity

It is important to note that performance indicators are often most meaningful and effective when the measures can serve as a basis for comparison. Comparisons are best when they are made using similar data from similar organizations, or if they compare the same activities within the organization over time. Comparing the City of Saint Paul's performance in these areas over time is likely to yield more meaningful results because of the idiosyncratic nature of these processes. Therefore, it is recommended that the following measures be tracked at periodic intervals for comparisons.

We have organized our discussion of potential performance measures by division: City Clerk/Information and Complaint, Code Enforcement, and Marketing and Promotions. What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential measures, but rather provides what we believe would be good measures for some aspects of the Office's work. Some of the data needed for these measures are already collected.

City Clerk

- 1) The timeliness of record retrieval could be measured by tracking what percent of record requests are fulfilled within a certain time period, for example 24 hours. This information could also be tracked and reported by type of request.
- 2) Similarly, the City Clerk's Office could measure how promptly official City documents are processed and filled by tracking the percentage of documents processed within a certain time period.
- 3) To measure the accessibility of official documents to the general public, the Clerk's Office should track how up-to-date document indexes and compilation of City records, such as Council minutes, are.

Information and Complaint Division

- 1) To measure the response time to citizen complaints, the Division should measure the average time it takes to refer the complaint to the appropriate department.
- 2) The Information and Complaint Division should formalize the collection of citizen satisfaction data regarding the City's response to complaints. This information is currently being collected on an irregular basis. The Division should develop a consistent policy and methodology for collecting this data and reports should be produced and distributed city-wide.
- 3) Part of the development of citizen satisfaction data collection policy should include the measurement of the Division's ability to conduct these call-backs in a timely manner. This should include tracking the amount of time it takes Information and Complaint staff to call citizens back after their complaint has been resolved.

Performance Measures for Code Enforcement

- 1) To measure workload, the Code Enforcement Division could measure inspections per inspector, or inspections per year.
- 2) To measure timeliness, the Division could measure (a) average response time in calendar days for initial inspection of code violations for the most recent fiscal year; and (b) the average time in calendar days for progressing from inspector's report to either voluntary compliance or the initiation of administrative or judicial action.
- 3) To measure the effectiveness of code enforcement activities, the Division could measure, (a) the percentage of code violations brought into voluntary compliance prior to the initiation of administrative or judicial action; or (b) the number of code violations resolved per full time equivalents (FTEs) units.
- 4) To measure cost, the Division could measure the cost per code enforcement case.

Marketing and Promotions Division

- 1) ~~The Division should attempt to measure the effectiveness of their efforts to promote and market events by surveying attendees about how they found out about particular events.~~
- 2) The Division should survey stakeholders, such as community groups and businesses, which benefit from its activities. The Division should focus on measures which relate to stakeholder needs and satisfaction.
- 3) The Film Office should measure the average amount of revenue generated by film projects in the City. This data should be disaggregated by the film type, such as commercial, feature film, or video.

CONCLUSION

The employees of the Citizen Service Office are diligent and very concerned with providing services and information to the extent possible and as dictated in law. We found some policies where further development of CSO practices are necessary, and others where a change in policy would be more logical. We also found a great deal of room for improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office's operations. Through our interview process, we discovered that staff and the managers and director have a willingness to improve operations. Our intent is to provide them with recommendations that would do just that. Many of the recommendations are not difficult to implement and could dramatically improve the overall quality of the Office's operations. The following is a summary of our findings.

Planning

The Citizen Service Office does very little planning for its operations. The only "plans" we discovered were the "Strategic Plans" found in the City's Budget document, and some plans created by the Marketing and Promotions Division directly related to various events and activities. Staff suggested the overall lack of planning is a result of the reactionary nature of their work and the influence of political decision-makers on their operations. Council Research offers that creating plans to guide their work would assist the Citizen Service Office in balancing the demands on their resources and assisting with prioritizing requests.

Leadership

Most staff within the Citizen Service Office have not seen the Office's mission statement. However, most staff agree the mission is to serve the citizens of Saint Paul. Staff are less sure of the vision for the Office, though they do feel the Mayor provides a vision of the future of the Office and supports the work they do. This was particularly evident in the Code Enforcement Division. The vision from the Director of the CSO seemed less clear to staff.

While the mission and vision may not be entirely clear to staff, the values of the organization are. The Director and managers deserve special recognition for exemplifying the values, in the eyes of the staff, and for being open and accessible to their staff. Still, it would be helpful to new staff to be able to view a vision, mission, and values statement to get a better understanding of the organization.

Communication is a problem for the Citizen Service Office. We found many instances where there was an apparent lack of communication between divisions and between management and staff. Staff meetings and more information sharing between divisions could result in a great improvement in the level of communication in the Office.

Training and Development

The Citizen Service Office, particularly the Code Enforcement Division, encourages training and provides resources to attend various training sessions and conferences. Other staff, such as

support staff, do not seem as inclined to attend training, though they are also encouraged to seek training.

The work environment of the Code Enforcement Division has reportedly improved since they were administratively moved to the Citizen Service Office, and most staff were physically placed in the Police Department's Eastern Patrol District offices. They have also come under new management which, staff state, has an open-door, approachable philosophy. Some problems still exist with clerical and vacant buildings staff being located in City Hall and the rest of the inspectors being located at the East team offices. The files are also located downtown, which decreases efficiency of operations and access to information. The work environment of other divisions appear to be fairly healthy, though there were some problems discussed that appear to be human resources issues that need to be handled on an individual basis.

Direct employee involvement in decision-making is an area that needs improvement in the Office. Many employees feel decisions are made at higher levels and they are the last to find out about changes.

Information and Analysis

The Citizen Service Office is collecting very little useful data at the present time. They have stated that their current computer system does not allow them to retrieve meaningful data; therefore, any analysis of this data would be inaccurate. Two areas within the Office are better able to collect data: the Vacant Buildings Unit and Marketing and Promotions. Information and Complaint is able to generate some reports as well, but not to the extent we feel they ought to be.

The Office has also begun to move away from the old EXL data base system. Some units within the Office are experimenting with Freelantz software, which they have found to be inadequate. They are also pursuing the possibility of using the AMANDA system, which LIEP and Fire Prevention have already begun to use. Council Research feels they should be moving more quickly toward implementing AMANDA with greater input from current users.

Improvement Processes

As we have found in many other audits, the City overall does not engage in a systematic, meaningful improvement process, and the Citizen Service Office is no exception. They are very good at finding different ways to improve their services, whether it is accepting information requests and complaints on-line or creating special initiatives to address specific Code Enforcement problems. However, they are lacking in the planning process for these initiatives, and therefore run into unanticipated, avoidable problems in implementation, and they are less sure of the success of the initiatives because they have created no mechanisms to evaluate the initiatives or changes.

Customer Focus

We are constantly impressed with the level of concern City employees show toward citizens, their customers. The Citizen Service Office is very interested in ensuring they are providing

citizens with the information and assistance they need. Currently, Information and Complaint staff sometimes follow-up with complainants to assess their satisfaction with the City's response to their inquiry or complaint, though this information is not compiled or distributed. A more thorough assessment of residents' needs and level of satisfaction would be beneficial to the City, and ought to be done on a broader scale than just those residents who call the CSO. While the responsibility for knowing this information rests with every City department, the CSO is best poised for conducting a city-wide survey.

The employees of the Citizen Service Office understand a basic, informal set of customer service standards. However, it would be helpful to have more formal standards to assist staff in understanding what the expectations are for their performance in relation to customers.

Results

Closely related to planning and information and analysis is results measurement. It is vitally important that organizations gauge how well they are achieving their mission. The CSO does not have a highly developed results measurement system. The Information and Complaint Division does track some response times and satisfaction levels, Marketing and Promotions tracks the success of their programs, and the Vacant Buildings unit tracks information such as how many vacant buildings are rehabilitated. However, overall the Office does not use even the little information it has to analyze to assess its operations. The Office needs to re-examine its performance indicators used in the City's Budget. Performance measures are not just volume indicators, they are used to assess progress, efficiency, and satisfaction. For example, Information and Complaint staff currently track the number of call backs they do. A more meaningful measure for them would be the number of call backs within three days, which is their objective as stated in the budget. They could set a goal for the level of satisfaction of complainants - for example 80 percent.

Performance Measures

The Citizen Service Office currently has few meaningful performance measures. However, they have the potential to create measures using data they anticipate collecting with the development of their information systems. Using performance measures in an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and improvement could significantly assist the CSO in years to come, and will enhance internal management and accountability to customers and stakeholders.

Appendix A: Resources

General Citizen Service Office Policies Applicable to All Divisions

2000 Budget Objectives and Activity Performance Plans

2000 Budget Strategic Plans

Administrative Code Chapter 2. Office of the Mayor

Code Enforcement Policies

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 34. Property Code Maintenance
- Chapter 35. Rental Disclosure Posting
- Chapter 39. Smoke Detectors
- Chapter 43. Vacant Buildings
- Chapter 45. Nuisance Abatement
- Chapter 51. Dwelling Unit Registration
- Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks
- Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles
- Chapter 189. Truth in Sale of Housing
- Chapter 357. Solid Waste Provisions

The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan: Housing Plan, Adopted by the City Council March 24, 1999.
Housing Action Plan 2000

City Clerk/Records Policies

City Charter:

- Chapter. 8. Initiative, Referendum, and Recall
- Chapter 14. Special Assessments
- Chapter 17. General Provisions

Legislative Code:

- Chapter 9. Publishing Costs of Special Ordinances and Resolutions
- Chapter 28. Campaign Contributions
- Chapter 130. Procedure for Vacating Streets and Other Public Grounds

Administrative Code:

- Chapter 4. Office of the City Clerk
- Chapter 76. City Elections – Nominating Petitions and Petitions in Lieu of Filing Fees
- Chapter 77. Elections – Canvassing of Returns and Certifications of Results
- Chapter 87. Depository for Documents
- Chapter 91. Procedure for Public Hearings Regarding Public Nuisances
- Chapter 94. Protection of Trade Secret Information
- Appendix Chap. 3. All Public Meetings – Notice Requirements

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. Government Data Practices Act

Minnesota Rules 1205. Department of Administration - Data Practices

City Council Resolution 99-881

Information and Complaint Policies

Chapter 113. Snow and Ice on Sidewalks

Chapter 163. Abandoned Vehicles

Books / Miscellaneous Documents

Ammon, David N. (1996). *Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Bryson, John. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organization*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program. *2000 Criteria for Performance Excellence*.

The Urban Institute (1980). *Performance Measures: A Guide for Local Elected Officials*. Washington D.C., The Urban Institute.

Appendix B: CSO "2000 Strategic Plans"²¹

Communicate useful information regarding city services to elected officials and the citizens of Saint Paul.

Strengthen the City's approach in delivering City services.

Ensuring stronger collaborative partnerships with internal and external customers (i.e. community organizations).

Measuring and reporting citizen satisfaction rate related to requests for service and responses to complaints.

Phasing in a new computerized complaint system that will be used in City Offices and Departments.

To provide citizens and City operations with accurate credible, pro-active research and policy development by:

- Identifying "real" problem issues in the City.

- Clarifying whether we need to re-allocate resources.

- Providing accurate, base information to affect policy development or modifications.

- Pinpointing the need for system changes, etc.

Ensuring an educational component to our work to encourage professional and personal development.

Ensuring public information employees within the City stay current.

Increase the frequency and quality of information going to City employees.

Solving long term communication issues.

Help with implementation of communication strategies.

~~Marketing and Promotion of City events both downtown and in the neighborhoods.~~

²¹taken from Page 64 of the 2000 Proposed City of Saint Paul Budget

Appendix C: Excerpt from the "Agreement Between Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul for Election Office Management"

1. County Duties

The County will assume all election duties required by Minnesota Statutes to be performed by City Election staff with exceptions as noted in this Agreement. These duties will include:

-
- Continue efforts to improve customer service in part through the use of random surveys to gauge voter satisfaction
- Locate and arrange for polling places that are handicap accessible, wherever possible, and obtain City Council approval for any changes
- Recruit and train election judges
- Prepare and maintain the election calendar year
- Handle candidate filings and maintain candidate files
- Supply copies of candidate filing to the city Clerk within twenty - four (24) hours of receipt
- Order ballots, envelopes and other voting supplies
- Monitor delivery of ballots from printer, sort new ballots, prepare test decks
- Administer City absentee balloting
- Arrange for public accuracy tests
- Program for elections and test those programs
- Package and deliver election supplies
- Maintain and store voting equipment
- Provide main office phone coverage to answer questions whenever polls are open or election judges are still at the polling locations
- Provide unofficial election results at the election office to the media and candidates at least every half hour after polls close on election night
- Accumulate election returns and provide City Council with results for their approval
- Store voted ballots and election returns
- Verify signatures on petitions, initiatives, referendums and recalls
- Provide an analysis to the City of the election costs for proposed legislation as requested
- If a new voting system is used, the County will inform voters and provide demonstrations as required by Minnesota Statutes section 206.58

Appendix D: Vacant Building Categories

Category	1	2	3
Requirements That Must be Met to take Building off Vacant Building List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Occupy • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program • Permits if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay outstanding fees • Code Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Report • \$2,000 cash deposit or Performance Bond Posted • All necessary work permits • Code Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Occupancy issued • Pull stop order card and return to Nuisance Buildings Code Enforcement Program

Appendix E: Compilation of Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The Information and Complaint Division should resume providing customer satisfaction data to the Mayor, City Council and department and office directors, as well as to other staff in the Citizen Service Office. Other computer systems could be used to prepare the reports until the AMANDA system is fully operational. They must also set a high standard for doing call-backs, such as a setting a goal of calling back 90 percent of all complainants within three days.

Recommendation #2. The Citizen Service Office should prepare an annual report for the Mayor and City Council clearly showing each department's response times to complaints and inquiries, as well as customer satisfaction data. The data should be delineated by department. They should create an objective to provide this information at least annually, if not more often.

Recommendation #3. The City Council should direct Council Research, the Citizen Service Office, and the Planning and Economic Development Department to conduct a City-wide survey to ascertain the level of citizen satisfaction with City services and citizen service needs.

Recommendation #4. The CSO should work with other departments, such as the Police Department, LIEP, Fire Prevention, and Public Works to create a plan or system to follow so that complaints are addressed quickly and uniformly. Specific data should be compiled on when a complaint is received and forwarded to the department, to whom it is forwarded, when a service is rendered, and when a response is received. Information on complaint resolution should be made part of the five-day late report.

Recommendation #5. The CSO should establish specific guidelines requiring departments to submit to the CSO, on a biannual basis, a Records Retention Schedule. They should also devise guidelines to ensure departments notify the City Clerk when documents are permanently removed from City files or disposed of, and these notifications should be maintained by the City Clerk.

Recommendation #6. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a plan to transition paper documents to the new document imaging system.

Recommendation #7. The City Clerk/Records Division should prepare a specific plan to ensure that Council Proceedings are prepared annually and indexed in a timely fashion. Funds should not be re-allocated for other uses if they are specified for binding.

Recommendation #8. The Citizen Service Office should take responsibility for educating departments on what documents need to be provided to the Public Library. Council Research, the City Council, the Public Library and the Citizen Service Office should work together to review the requirements of the ordinance to determine whether three paper copies need to be submitted, or if the number of paper copies required could be reduced if an electronic copy is provided. Following this review, an ordinance change should be made if necessary.

Recommendation #9. The City Clerk should devise a more formal system for departments and other relevant City officials to notify the Clerk of newly elected and appointed officials who need to receive the oath of office. The Clerk's budget objective should be modified to indicate it the oath of office will be administered within a specified amount of time, such as thirty days.

Recommendation #10. The Citizen Service Office should immediately develop a strategy to inform all City departments of the requirements and process for trade secret storage.

Recommendation #11. The City Council should update the language in Legislative Code Chapter 48.05 to reflect the current City departments.

Recommendation #12. The Marketing and Promotions Division should resume production of hard copies of the Resident's Guide and ensure that all residents have access to the information.

Recommendation #13. The Administration should prepare, for City Council consideration, an amendment to the Administrative Code outlining the duties and powers of the Marketing and Promotions Division.

Recommendation #14. Code Enforcement managers should clarify for inspectors which ordinances provide the highest standard for enforcement.

Recommendation #15: Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office and Council Research should revise the excessive consumption portion of Chapter 34 to allow the City to collect fees to cover costs from repeated inspections at the same property. The City should assess the fees to the property taxes.

Recommendation #16: Inspectors should issue written orders along with any oral orders to provide written evidence if the problem persists, and to ensure the property owner or tenant receives the appeals process information.

Recommendation #17. The City Council should update the language in Chapter 42 and make it the responsibility of the Director of the Citizen Service Office, or his or her designee. If Chapter 51 is successfully implemented, the Citizen Service Office should request that Chapter 42 be repealed from City Code.

Recommendation #18: The City Council should revise Chapter 45 to include the cost of Code Enforcement inspections in the abatement fee. This would then be compatible with the concept behind excess consumption and recovering costs associated with enforcement.

Recommendation #19. Code Enforcement should immediately assign an inspector to the Truth-In-Sale of Housing program or the City should contract out the compliance inspections. The City should maintain its responsibility for investigating complaints.

Recommendation #20. The City Council should allocate funds directly to Code Enforcement to ensure their participation in the HEAT program if it wishes to continue the program in its current form. If the City Council does not want Code Enforcement involved in the HEAT program, it should specify that Code Enforcement not participate in the program.

Recommendation #21. Code Enforcement should advise the Planning Commission to change Comprehensive Plan policy 4.3b if fines are an ineffective a less desirable way to gain compliance than is interacting with property owners through the standard violations notice process.

Recommendation #22. Code Enforcement, the City Attorney's Office, Fire Prevention, LIEP and

Housing Court should do an evaluation of the services provided and the level of success of the housing court program and determine areas for improvement or change.

Recommendation #23. Code Enforcement should standardize the information given out to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information. This information could also be given out to entire neighborhoods that are the focus of Code Enforcement sweeps. This information should also be made available on Code Enforcement's web site.

Recommendation #24. Code Enforcement should be more involved with Public Works in the selection of projects such as alley paving and plowing, curb and gutter installation, street lighting upgrade, boulevard and sidewalk maintenance and street surfacing. If Code Enforcement were to assist with the selection, they may be able to target resources to neighborhoods where City investment would greatly impact the neighborhood and increase the value of the properties. While in many instances these projects deal with quality of life concerns, rather than safety concerns, they serve to improve and beautify neighborhoods and increase people's sense of security.

Recommendation #25. Code Enforcement should provide statistics that indicate which areas of the City inspectors spend most of their time and what the common problems in the area are. This could provide data which would help decision-makers determine where resources should be directed. This information could be used City-wide by various departments.

Recommendation #26. The Planning Commission should remove, from the Comprehensive Plan, policy 4.5c which promotes the placement of vulnerable properties under the management of a community based organization.

Recommendation #27. Code Enforcement and the Planning and Economic Development Department should reach agreement on what information about available resources for rehabilitation is appropriate to provide to property owners and tenants.

Recommendation #28. Code Enforcement should develop a plan for the administration of the Rental Registration program. It must address potential influences on the program, such as special initiatives, and how to make the program successful even if staff resources are limited. Code Enforcement also needs to plan for implementation of each provision of the ordinance to ensure they are enforceable. All staff responsible for Rental Registration should be involved in the creation of the plan as well as the City Attorney's Office and other relevant stakeholders. As with any new program, other staff within the CSO should be educated as to the specifics of the program in order to prevent confusion over enforcement and administration and to ensure the information provided regarding the program is consistent.

Recommendation #29. Code Enforcement must implement the AMANDA system as quickly as possible for Rental Registration. This would also allow other departments utilizing AMANDA easy access to the registration data.

Recommendation #30: The CSO's Information and Complaint Division should provide complaint reports and complaint resolution feedback reports to the Vacant Buildings unit. This information should be used to assist the Vacant Buildings Unit in determining how well the case management system is working.

Recommendation #31: The Vacant Buildings Unit should develop more meaningful budget objectives which are more than just reiterations of City Legislative Code. The unit should review both their ongoing and annual budget objectives. New objectives should set goals for the unit which go beyond what is required by Code and are pertinent to special initiatives to be taken in the coming year. The lack of meaningful budget objectives is an issue for most of the CSO's budget areas.

Recommendation #32: If PP2000 is to continue, Code Enforcement should articulate criteria for inclusion in the PP2000 program. The criteria should be based in part on quantitative data such as complaints about the address, the number of citations issued to the property, and police calls to the property.

Recommendation #33: Code Enforcement should immediately compile and analyze data relating to the PP2000 program to determine its effectiveness and worthiness.

Recommendation #34: Code Enforcement should develop a program to address problem properties which are not included in the PP2000 program, such as owner-occupied and other rental properties not owned by the subjects of the PP2000 program.

Recommendation #35: Code Enforcement should perform a systematic evaluation of the Dayton's Bluff Initiative. This would involve collecting more comprehensive data on the Dayton's Bluff Initiative to determine its effectiveness, particularly if it is to be extended or used as a model in other neighborhoods.

Recommendation #36: Code Enforcement should collect data to determine the effectiveness of sweeps. If they are found effective, the City Council should provide special funding to conduct them in addition to routine Code Enforcement activities.

Recommendation #37: The CSO should create a true strategic plan with outcomes, time lines and action steps. It should involve all staff and representative stakeholders and customers in its development, and make sure that all staff are made aware of the plans and how they contribute to achieving outcomes. All divisions within the CSO should have plans relating specifically to their work which help them manage workloads and expectations, and to anticipate potential changes. The need for planning in Code Enforcement is particularly apparent. Plans would allow them to better manage staff work assignments. The CSO should discuss the plans with the Council and Mayor to garner their input.

Recommendation #38: The CSO should engage in planning prior to implementation of the AMANDA system to ensure the system is functional for staff, and to assist them in managing the training and workloads during this period.

Recommendation #39: The Marketing and Promotions Division should solicit Council input annually during Marketing's planning process for the upcoming year.

Recommendation #40: The CSO should create a plan for the City's website development. This would assist the Office in guiding other departments through the development of their own web pages and clearly state the time frame and expectations for development.

Recommendation #41. The CSO should revise its mission statement and involve all CSO staff in its development. This could be done in conjunction with the development of an Office-wide strategic plan. See also recommendation #37 in the Planning section.

Recommendation #42. The CSO Director should schedule monthly all-staff meetings for dissemination of information between divisions and staff recognition. Unit-wide meetings should also be held on a regular basis.

Recommendation #43. The CSO should establish an employee recognition program and make recognition an important part of daily work. Employees should be included in the formation of the program to determine what types of recognition are most meaningful to staff.

Recommendation #44. Senior leaders should formalize the values of the Office and integrate them into formal customer service standards. Staff should be directly involved in this process.

Recommendation #45. CSO leadership should work with employees to develop a strategy to mitigate the "us vs. them" mentality that occurs between staff. The Office should work to create a sense of employee ownership of the CSO.

Recommendation #46: Consistent with recommendation #41, the Citizen Service Office should undertake an effort to redefine their mission, particularly because the missions of Code Enforcement and the rest of the CSO appear inconsistent and possibly incompatible. The Office needs to do a better job of integrating these two functions. If the missions cannot be aligned, serious consideration should be given to whether Code Enforcement should be located elsewhere in the City's governmental structure.

Recommendation #47: As described in recommendation #37, the CSO must pursue strategic and long-term planning in order to be less vulnerable to political influence and less apt to have its work driven by crises.

Recommendation #48: Senior leaders of the CSO should create a process by which employees can be more directly involved in decisions made about their work.

Recommendation #49: The CSO should develop a plan to house the entire Code Enforcement staff in one location. Communication and the morale of clerical staff would improve. The files downtown should be moved to where inspectors are located because of the inefficiencies caused by the current arrangement.

Recommendation #50: Code Enforcement should review and revise its employee manual. A work group representing senior leaders, inspectors, and clerical staff should be responsible for this effort. A revised manual would help the division ensure consistent enforcement and codify existing performance expectations for Code Enforcement employees.

Recommendation #51: The CSO should reintroduce performance evaluations. To this end, the CSO should undertake an effort which involves all staff to develop an appropriate evaluation process and forms for each of the functions in the Office. While the CSO may wish to continue to use the Human Resources format, it may be in their interest to customize the form to reflect the

work done by the different functions within the Office. After the new process is developed, CSO leaders should begin conducting performance evaluations immediately.

Recommendation #52: CSO senior leaders should determine why some staff are less inclined to attend training. Particular attention should be paid to members of the clerical staff and less senior code enforcement inspectors who reportedly are less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Senior leaders should consider providing an incentive for staff to take advantage of training by making this an important factor in evaluating an employee's performance. Staff should also be encouraged to pursue training that would advance them professionally and be rewarded for their successful pursuit of career-track training.

Recommendation #53: The CSO should convert to AMANDA as quickly as possible. The Office has planned to adopt AMANDA after LIEP has had more experience with the system in the hope the Office could learn from LIEP's experience. However, we believe this would be a mistake. As our findings demonstrate, this Office collects very little meaningful information about its work and performs almost no data analysis. As an explanation for this fact, almost everyone has blamed the EXL system for this problem. Moreover, there is every indication that LIEP has been successful in implementing AMANDA. Therefore, the CSO should convert its databases to the AMANDA system as soon as possible.

Recommendation #54: The CSO should hire an employee whose primary duty it is to perform research and analysis. There are a number of ways to implement this recommendation. An employee could be hired to serve all four divisions of the CSO. Alternatively, the Code Enforcement or Information and Complaint Division could hire someone who splits their duties between research, analysis and other work activities in the Office. Another consideration might be that, consistent with the Office's 2000 strategic plans, this staff person could potentially do data analysis for other City Departments and Offices in an effort to improve services and programs City-wide.

Recommendation #55: The CSO should immediately begin data collection and analysis for special initiatives which it is currently undertaking, such as PP2000 and the Dayton's Bluff initiative. Even if EXL or Freelantz systems are inadequate to collect data and perform analysis, the Office could do meaningful analysis on simple spreadsheets and statistical programs, such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Recommendation #56: The CSO should specify data collection, analysis and evaluation strategies in the plan for any new initiatives. ~~This aspect of the plan should specify the goals of the program, how they will measure whether these goals have been achieved and who will do the measurement.~~

Recommendation #57. The CSO should engage in a more formal improvement process that includes planning, implementation and evaluation of the improvement efforts. By engaging in an internal process to identify improvements, planning the implementation of the improvements, and evaluating their impact, they will move away from the reactive mode to a more proactive environment. The new hire to perform data analysis, suggested in the Information and Analysis recommendations, should be heavily involved in this effort.

Recommendation #58. The CSO should identify, as part of its strategic planning efforts, who its customers are and put processes in place to identify their needs and satisfaction with the

information and services provided by the Office. This could be accomplished by initiating a formal annual survey of its customers once they have been identified by staff and management.

Recommendation #59. The CSO should produce a written set of customer standards and circulate them to all staff. Based on the fact that employees currently follow an informal set of standards based on organizational values this should not be difficult. This will clarify customer expectations for all staff and aid in the training of new staff.

Recommendation #60. Code Enforcement should provide customer service training to its inspectors and clerical staff in order to provide a more consistent customer-focused attitude in the course of carrying out their jobs. This would be in line with the vision from the Mayor's Office and the Director.

Recommendation #61. The CSO should be a leader in developing a more useful, functional City website. Some suggestions to reach this goal are:

- make permit and complaint forms easily accessible from the CSO's web page;*
-
- standardize the City website so all City department pages have a uniform, recognizable look;*
- develop a standard complaint form; and*
- create an auto-reply function for inquiries.*

Recommendation #62: The Information and Complaint Division should generate customer satisfaction reports and distribute them to all staff in the CSO, as well as other departments. Over 50 percent of complaints received by the Information and Complaint Division are Code Enforcement related. This type of feedback would be invaluable for Code Enforcement to track how it well it is doing. Moreover, the CSO should also provide these reports to relevant frontline staff of other City departments and offices, such as Public Works, LIEP and Parks and Recreation, who also receive a large share of these complaints. The CSO should also consider posting these reports on the City's web site so residents and City workers can track how well the City is doing to resolve problems identified by citizens.

Recommendation #63: The CSO should include, in its planning for the implementation of the AMANDA computer system, a discussion of what results it wishes to track. It should determine whether these results can be adequately tracked by the new systems. The consideration of the results suggested by staff in the performance audit interviews are an excellent starting point for this discussion.

Recommendation #64: The CSO should compare its results to other similar organizations.

Recommendation #65: Senior leadership in the CSO should clearly detail goals for each work activity in CSO through organizational vision and strategic planning efforts. Staff should be informed about these goals and have an understanding of how their work is connected to the achievement of the goals.

Appendix F: CSO Performance Audit Survey

Answer the questions by circling the number of the response category which best answers the question or describes your opinion. All responses are anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Plans in my work area are made...</p> <p>4 At least twice a year
3 Annually
2 Every 3 years or more
1 Never
0 Don't know
* If never, go to question 6.</p> | <p>6. The Mayor effectively conveys a clear direction for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>2. The durations of the plans in CSO are... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 More than three years (long-term plans)
2 Three years or less (short term plans)
1 Don't know</p> | <p>7. The CSO Director conveys a clear vision for the future of CSO</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>3. CSO makes the following types of plans... (Circle all that apply)</p> <p>3 Issue-specific plans
2 General organizational plans
1 Other _____</p> | <p>8. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey the core values of the organization</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>4. I regularly participate in CSO's planning efforts</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | <p>9. The CSO Director and managers effectively convey an organizational mission</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> |
| <p>5. CSO plans are implemented frequently</p> <p>5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree</p> | |

10. Senior management is visible and accessible to employees

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

11. The communication within CSO is effective

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

12. The Director and managers effectively recognize staff contributions

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

13. The Director and managers encourage participation in professional organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

14. I have a good understanding of performance expectations in my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

15. The current employee evaluation process is useful to employees for improving their performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

16. CSO senior leaders, supervisors and employees treat each other with respect regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation or physical ability

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

17. In CSO, labor and management work well together

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

18. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

19. My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

20. Opportunities exist for me to contribute to the decisions made about operations and procedures in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

21. I receive the training necessary to perform my job effectively

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

22. My individual performance is evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know

23. The current employee evaluation is useful in helping me improve my performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

24. CSO collects data to effectively support its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

25. The collected data is useful and relevant to the work performed in CSO

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

26. CSO uses data to evaluate its activities and to improve its performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

27. The CSO's information systems currently meet my needs

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

28. Activities in CSO are formally evaluated...

- 4 Twice a year
- 3 Annually
- 2 Every 3 years or more
- 1 Never
- 0 Don't know
- * if never, go to question 30

29. CSO practices are regularly changed based on the results of the evaluations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

30. CSO frequently changes the way work is done to improve performance

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

31. Administrative practices (such as forms and reporting procedures) within CSO are reviewed frequently for improvement

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

32. The performance of CSO's vendors (providers of goods and contracted services) is regularly evaluated

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

33. I know who the customers of CSO are

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

34. List who you consider to be the customers of CSO

- 5 _____
- 4 _____
- 3 _____
- 2 _____
- 1 _____

35. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

36. The CSO is responsive to changes in customer NEEDS

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

37. CSO staff frequently monitor for changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

38. CSO is responsive to changes in customer SATISFACTION

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

39. CSO has customer service standards for my area of work

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

40. CSO's customer service standards are written

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

41. I understand CSO's customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

42. Staff follow established customer service standards

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

43. CSO regularly measures the results of its activities

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

44. CSO compares its results to those of similar organizations

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

45. CSO often achieves its desired goals

- 5 Strongly Agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

47. How do you know goals have been achieved? (Please explain)**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS****How long have you been employed by CSO?**

- 5 less than one year
- 4 1 to 5 years
- 3 5 to 10 years
- 2 10 to 20 years
- 1 20 or more years

What type of an employee are you?

- 3 full time
- 2 part time
- 1 intern

What area do you work in? (Circle all that apply)

- 4 City Clerk/Records
- 3 Information & Complaints
- 2 Code Enforcement
- 1 Marketing & Promotions