



City Manager's Self-Assessment

Jesus Merejo, City Manager

February 2024 to February 2025

It is my honor to serve as your City Manager. I am excited about what we have accomplished in this second year working together. I am looking forward to continuing to build on this foundation and to making progress in the coming years, with your support. In reviewing my performance and the performance of my team, I am providing the following overview of my performance:

- I. Management of the Organization and Human Resources Management**
- II. Key Accomplishments as City Manager and Community Redevelopment Agency Executive Director**
- III. Relationship with the City Council**
- IV. Relations with the Community**
- V. Fiscal Management**
- VI. Human Resources Management**
- VII. Personal Qualities**
- VIII. Relations to Other Governments**
- IX. City Powers & Duties**

I. Management of the Organization

As your City Manager, I am committed to leading the team to bring your vision to fruition, grounded in our mission.

The City of Port St. Lucie has grown to over 250,000 residents, making it the sixth largest city in Florida, the second largest in South Florida. We are continuing to work hard on addressing the impact of the continued population increases and providing quality services as we experience historic high inflation and rising project costs. As we grow together, we've remained focused on listening to the needs of our residents through the National Community Survey, the #IamPSL Citizen Summit, public workshops and through our increased focus on resident engagement, as prioritized in the City's Strategic Plan.

In 2024, the City celebrated many milestones. Economic development has remained a cornerstone of our focused efforts to support job growth. We created opportunities for businesses and

entrepreneurs through incentives, support programs and access to resources. Our thriving business community continues to grow, creating jobs and stimulating the local economy. In everything we do, our plans are designed to ensure a bright and sustainable future for the City and its residents. I am proud of the progress we have made and excited about the opportunities ahead. Areas of focus included:

- Furthering our commitment to safety and training with the construction of the Police Training Facility.
- Opening Pioneer Park at the Port District, kicking off the development of Tradition Regional Park, Stars & Stripes Park and beginning the design of Torino Regional Park.
- Initiating the redevelopment of Walton & One.
- Celebrating the Police Academy's historic Training Class, laying the groundwork for the continued development of the Police Department.
- Continuing to improve the operations of the Utility Systems Department by obtaining its first accreditation.
- Effectively leveraging city tax dollars through federal and state grants, generating over \$75 million over the past 2 years through the work of the Citywide Grants & Advocacy Team.
- Implementation of a succession plan at the Police Department to lead the organization well into the future and ensure our continued focus on safety.
- Continuing to collaborate on other vital roadway projects currently in progress, including the extensions of Becker Road and Crosstown Parkway to Range Line Road. These road projects, which are being paid for by developers, are creating two vital east-west connections in Port St. Lucie, addressing the City's growing infrastructure needs ahead of schedule.
- Successfully negotiated the land swap with the School Board for the 15.41 acres of the old PSL Elementary School site in exchange for city-owned properties, securing critical green space and facilities for future parks development and partnerships.
- Creation of the Special Events Division to provide greater alignment and focus on improved events.
- Realigning of community engagement through Communications, expanding outreach and implementing the Love Your Block program as a model for neighborhood engagement, one of only 16 cities nationally selected for the program through the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins.
- Restructuring of different departments to continue to improve efficiency.

Our high-performing team continues to receive accolades. In December, the City was recognized by Attorney General Ashley Moody as the first member of the 100% club, training 100% of our workforce in spotting human-trafficking. Our team also received the highest score in the state from the Florida Recovery Obligation Calculation (FROC) initiative for our performance in critical emergency management efforts.

These and other accolades are referenced in the City Manager's Annual Report, which has been included with this self-assessment. I will highlight a few areas referenced in the report below.

Advancing the use of Strategic Planning, Innovation and Use of Data

Strategic Planning continues to be a focus of City of Port St. Lucie team and is a key ingredient in keeping our team on track as we continue to evolve. The City follows a data-driven process to update its Strategic Plan each year that centers the voice of residents, through the National Community Survey™ and its interactive #IAMPSTL Citizen Summit, collectively engaging thousands of residents each year.

One of the City's strategic initiatives is to "Improve Performance Through Innovation." With the assistance of the PSL Forward Innovation Academy and Strategic Initiatives & Innovation Team, employees are working to improve the efficiency of our systems, and we are expanding innovation through the utilization of human-centered design. We gained these new skills through our participation in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative Innovation Track, as our City was selected as one of 40 cities in the world to participate in the yearlong professional management training program. An interdepartmental team learned techniques to improve our resident engagement and problem-solving skills and effectively engaged over 1,000 residents in developing 1,000 ideas. We then expanded innovation Citywide with the team bringing these skills to the City Council Strategic Planning session (which was reportedly our best ever) and through departmental strategic planning sessions and staff training sessions.

Employees are reacting positively by rating us higher than the national benchmark at providing a clear vision for our organization, openness to new ideas, collaboration between departments and more facets that better empower our employees to make a difference for our community.

In addition to innovation, I have placed an increased focus on the use of data throughout the organization, and **the team continues to rise to the challenge, as outlined in the City Manager's Annual Report (attached to this assessment).**

Last year, the City of Port St. Lucie was one of 12 new cities in the United States and Latin America that has been awarded Results for America's What Works Cities Certification, the international standard of data excellence in city governance, for establishing exceptional data capabilities to inform policy decisions, allocate funding, improve services, evaluate program effectiveness, and engage residents. What Works Cities Certification continues to set a standard of excellence for data-informed local government. The standard reflects the practices, policies, and resources municipal governments must have in place to effectively harness data for better decision-making. Port St. Lucie is one of only 74 cities in North and South America and only the second city in Florida to achieve certification.

Port St. Lucie is continually working to be more data-driven, and among various efforts continued PSL STAT, a focus on delivering improved outcomes for residents through reviewing data tied to the Strategic Plan.

We are also expanding our work on innovatively communicating with residents. In August, the City launched a rebranded and revised website to provide residents, businesses and visitors with improved access to information, services and resources.

I am actively seeking opportunities to gain new tools and expertise to expand my problem-solving capacity, strengthen our city team, and improve outcomes for residents. Continuing with our commitment to using data and innovation, we implemented OpenGov to streamline and strengthen our budget and procurement process.

II. Key Accomplishments as CRA Director and City Manager

The list of projects and objectives initiated and/or accomplished by the organization throughout the year is extensive. **The key accomplishments as City Manager have been outlined in the City Manager's Annual Report, included with this self-assessment and include areas such as Roadways, Sidewalks and Road Maintenance; Public Safety; Fiscal Responsibility, Mobility Fees and Grants; Water Quality; Parks & Recreation; Communications and Community Engagement and growing as a High-Performing Government.**

Community Redevelopment Agency Executive Director

As Executive Director of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), I am proud of the progress made on revitalizing the redevelopment areas. A few of the more significant accomplishments this past year include the following.

Southern Grove CRA

It continues to amaze me to see the continued success of Southern Grove – what experts advised could take 20 plus years for buildout, has taken Port St. Lucie a mere 6 years. All but 100+/- acres have been sold or are under contract through the partnership with the private sector via the Governmental Finance Corporation. International companies like Accel, Amazon, and FedEx have built facilities that have created jobs and will continue to bring economic growth to the city for many years to come.

Progress to note in 2024 included:

- Successfully sold an additional 7 acres in Legacy Park at Tradition to JDN Enterprises, LLC, a subsidiary of Sansone Group, to be combined with the already sold 133+/- acres for the construction of 1,900,000 SF to be used as a Costco Warehouse Distribution Depot. Site work has been underway for the last several months with Costco indicating their desire to advance a second phase of the project in line with the first phase. Executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement for 2.09 acres of land with Amandine, LLC, for the development of a mixed-use site including retail, restaurants and a boutique hotel.
- Successfully sold 9.49 acres of land to Tradition Entertainment District, LLC, with entitlements to develop up to 150,000 SF of retail, 45,000 SF of office, and 120 hotel rooms to be developed as a restaurant / entertainment district along SW Village Parkway.

- Executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement for 44.56 acres of land with Tradition Entertainment District, LLC, for the development of up to 300,000 SF of retail, 50,000 SF of office, and 140 hotel rooms as part of a centrally located restaurant / entertainment district along SW Village Parkway.
- Finalized release of RFP for Becker / Village RFP ~ 55+- acres / lifestyle. Interested developers will be submitting proposals by mid-March 2025 for the development of up to 550,000 SF of retail, 350 apartment units, and 120 hotel rooms for the creation of a lifestyle center / destination at the southern end of Southern Grove.
- Continued construction on the extension of Anthony F. Sansone Sr. Blvd., from Hegener Drive up to the future Marshall Parkway roadway alignment. A realignment of the roadway was necessary to facilitate the development of the Costco Warehouse Distribution Depot.
- Commenced construction on the next phase of Tom Mackie Blvd and Marshall Parkway. Continued to work through the terms of a Land Swap Agreement with Saint Matilda, LLC, for 13.97 acres of land for the construction of apartment units. This land swap results in the City obtaining 28.81 acres of land on Torino Parkway to be incorporated into the forthcoming Torino Regional Park project.
- Continued to work through terms of a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Four Port St. Lucie, LLC, on 30.95 acres of land for the construction up to 500,000 SF of manufacturing / warehouse distribution facility.
- Successfully executed numerous infrastructure agreements to ensure necessary infrastructure is in place for the continued development within Southern Grove.

Original CRA

The completion of Crosstown Parkway, master plan and design for Village Green Drive, and Master Plan for Walton & One are providing clear direction for the Original CRA in eastern Port St. Lucie, including the following areas of progress:

- Port St. Lucie's east side redevelopment area is now embarking on an exciting chapter of renewal with the implementation of a master plan for Walton & One, formerly known as City Center.
- Staff have continued to work on an economic development project for Walton & One, intended to provide a unique anchor for the site, spurring surrounding development.
- Demolition of the former Bealls Outlet building, Walton Road Warehouse, and Community Garden are complete.
- Staff have been working with the Legal Department on necessary amendments to regulatory documents to allow for the development in the coming months.
- Design of the Village Green Drive corridor continues. With an adopted master plan in hand, the alignment for the Hog Pen Slough Boardwalk has been finalized and design plans are in progress. Funding for design of the roadway network received a significant boost last year with the award of a \$2 million RAISE Grant from the US Department of Transportation, which also positions the corridor to be competitive to receive future grants for construction.

The Port District

We brought The Port to Port St. Lucie! Considerable progress has been made on The Port District this year, including the following key milestones:

- PortFest was held on June 15th, marking the opening of The Port District. This all-day event was incredibly successful and was capped up by a performance by The Wailers.
- With the installation of qualifying improvements near the park, Staff was able prepare a speed zone ordinance to submit to the State for the establishment of a slow speed / no wake zone.
- The much-anticipated boardwalk connection under the Port St. Lucie Blvd bridge neared completion, and the repair to the Tom Hooper Park Boardwalk segment is also underway. FDOT provided the City notice of their intent to complete embankment work during this construction period in hopes of all work being done and the Boardwalk open to the public in late Summer.
- The renovation of the Historic Peacock Lodge was complete in Summer 2024 and the site was turned over to the Port St. Lucie Historical Society for use as a Historical Education Center.
- A pad ready site was delivered to the restaurant developer in June 2024, who is now working through pre-permitting with the City's Building Department.

III. Relationship with the City Council

I meet with the members of the City Council on a regular basis to vet any concerns that arise throughout the week. It is my goal to treat all Council members equally. I share information with the City Council about the status of program implementation through several vehicles. On a weekly basis, I meet each Council member to provide information on the Council's upcoming agenda items. *The Pulse*, a monthly update to the City Council and residents, newly introduced *Pulse Points* (key updates for City Council) and financial status reports, are all tools used to communicate with the Council. Additionally, via memos are provided to Council highlighting key updates and items of importance.

It is critical the City Council and staff are united in achieving the objectives identified in the Strategic Plan. Under my direction, staff have aggressively implemented the objectives approved by the Council. Regular progress updates are provided to the City Council, and the FY 24/25 budget process was constructed around the priorities established in the adopted Strategic Plan, which was developed utilizing a human-centered design process that involved the Council and residents like never before. To further emphasize the importance of the Council adopted Strategic Plan, departments demonstrate progress by using a system of performance measures, indicators and reporting on each of the strategic goals, initiatives and projects. Our work aligning our budget with the City's strategic goals has received recognition as a model practice.

On rare occasions, an incident may occur that requires individual phone calls to Council members. At that time, I call each member and provide the same information.

With year two completed, I will remain focused on making progress on areas of importance to the City Council including capital projects, continue to focus on data, communications, engagement and efficiency. I will strive to ensure that all information is provided to all Council members in a timely fashion. And I am working to ensure departments meet deadlines and deliver on projects outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan.

A major focus on completing projects is necessary given the significant projects we plan to undertake, including Marshall Parkway, Range Line Road, Crosstown to Range Line Road, the Police Training Facility, the Public Works Building, design of the City Hall Parking Garage and revitalization of City Center. In addition, we will focus on completing numerous roadway and park improvements including St. Lucie West, California, Torino, Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Pioneer Park, Tradition Regional Park, Torino Regional Park, OL Peacock Park, Stars and Stripes and Paseo Park.

I will continue to improve the work of City departments and structure of the organization to help take our City into its next phase of growth.

IV. Relationship with the Community

As your City Manager, I strive to be accessible to the community. During the past year, I have attended and participated in community meetings, spoke before service organizations and neighborhood associations, and have personally met with key businesses representatives within our community. I have attended St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce meetings and discussed various projects and shared our community progress via a “Fireside Chat”. I regularly participate in the St. Lucie County Economic Development Council. Through these and other visits and presentations, I am an advocate of the Council’s adopted policy.

To gain a better understanding of our citizens’ priorities and perception of City services a comprehensive citizen survey was conducted in 2024 with some of the highest response rates in the nation, signifying our engaged community. I am proud that we also engage our residents through the annual Citizen Summit, which reached record attendance this year, connecting with approximately 1000 residents who provided valuable feedback on the City’s strategic plan. Our work in this area has been recognized twice by the National Research Center and the International City County Management Association with the Voice of the People Awards for Transformation in Foundations and Community Engagement. The Voice of the People Awards are the only awards given to local governments based on the opinion of residents.

The 1PSL tool was launched in 2019 to help with resident requests, and it continues to be a valuable resource for residents and for staff to review data and identify emerging needs. The Solid Waste call center, established in January 2023, has been instrumental in handling waste management inquiries. Between January 2024 and January 2025, the call center managed a total of 38,261 calls. Notably, half of these calls resulted in 1PSL entries, while the remaining half were efficiently resolved with immediate solutions, such as providing service days or answering service-related questions. To be successful at public outreach and engagement, the City must employ multiple tools. *The City Managers “Pulse”*, letters to the editor, the *Annual Year in Review*, Citizen Summit, and City University are all vehicles that are used by the Council and staff to engage citizens in their City government. I am particularly pleased with the continued success of the most recent City University which provided more citizens than ever with a virtual behind the scenes look at City government, as detailed in the annual report. This year we also significantly expanded the City’s first ever Youth Council who have taken on assignments, advocated for Port St. Lucie priorities in Tallahassee and staffed booths at engagement events including PSL in Lights, the Citizen Summit and Love Your Block launch.

V. Fiscal Management

Most recently, Fitch Ratings reviewed the City's Utility System Revenue Bonds and raised the ratings from AA- to AA with a Stable Outlook. The upgrade from AA- to AA signifies an affirmation of the Utility System's strong financial position and its ability to fulfill its financial obligations, with a stable outlook indicating sustained confidence in its creditworthiness.

The City Council's strategic goal to reduce bonded debt has been highly successful. Over the past 15 years, the City has cut its debt by 41%, a reduction of over \$400 million. The FY 24/25 budget projects a further reduction bringing total debt down to \$583 million. This progress has been achieved alongside a steadily decreasing millage over the past 9 years.

In 2010 the City's debt per capita was \$6,332. By FY25 the debt per capita is expected to decline to \$2,330, a total reduction of \$4,002 per capita – a 63% decrease.

Reducing per capita debt and elevating a municipality's credit rating from AA- to AA with a stable outlook carry significant benefits. It lowers borrowing costs and provides greater financial flexibility for essential projects and services without burdening taxpayers. The debt reduction has enhanced the city's reputation, helping to foster economic growth, and better positioning the city to weather economic downturns.

FY 24 maintained existing services, funded year five of a Police Department five-year plan to implement District V, provided additional fee-based staffing additions to keep up with growth and reduced the financial impact of Southern Grove Jobs Corridor expenditures while reducing the millage rate.

The City's financial indicators confirm that the City of Port St. Lucie is financially sound. Once again, the City was awarded the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award and the Comprehensive Annual Financial Reporting award of Excellence for financial reporting, and a special recognition of our strategic goals and Capital Improvement Plan.

VI. Human Resource Management

My vision for the workforce is of an organization that is professional, results-oriented, and relentlessly focused on providing a high return on investment to our taxpayers. As one of the 2024 Best Places to Work in St. Lucie County our organization's structure, training and communication with employees are critical to success. I remain committed to supporting employee development so that we can continue to provide the best services possible to the community, remain focused on organizational development with an emphasis on training and employee reclassifications. Our recent successful police negotiations placed the City's police department salaries in the top percentile allowing the City to be competitive in the market with attracting and retaining police officers.

Employee Feedback

The work of our team has been positively received by employees, according to surveys and outreach in the departments. I am proud of our City's onboarding program, Keys to the City, which has been well received. Additionally, there is continued follow-up with the employees who attend Keys throughout their probationary period of nine months to ensure that have everything they need to be successful in their first year with the organization. The City's comprehensive training program PSL Forward is in its fourth year and has resulted in improved employee satisfaction with available training opportunities. Achieving the City Council's goals and objectives requires highly motivated employees. I emphasize the importance of getting the right person in the right position, two-way communication, ethics, accountability, and teamwork. The Port St. Lucie organization continues to place a high priority on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce and selecting the most qualified individuals to be part of our organization.

I will continue to focus on succession planning and imparting key values through speaking with the City Team, such as through our new InnovatePSL Fireside Chat series where I shared some of my journey of 35 years within the organization and encouraged staff in their growth. My approach is that of a coach on a team: my focus is supporting the executive team and ensuring they take an active role in their assigned departments, and ensuring we meet the goals of the Council and live our City values.

VII. Personal Qualities

I believe a successful organization must have a vision, set goals, live our values, involve stakeholders, act with integrity, work as a team, and follow through.

Among the skills I bring to the table is a focus on infrastructure and negotiations with developers. With the support of my team, my deep knowledge of the City and its history, as well as my ability to innovate towards its future needs, helps position us to serve the Mayor and City Council at a high level. My team continually focuses on these issues, including: improving traffic flow; signalization; strategically funding new roadways; securing property for public recreation through a partnership with St. Lucie Public Schools; enhancing technology and completing a fiber network to enable the City to become a "Smart City," conserving land; and more.

VIII. Relations to other Governments

To foster improved relationships with St. Lucie County, Fort Pierce and the other Cities and Counties in the region, I meet monthly with the managers of the jurisdictions with whom I have a positive relationship.

In addition, the Mayor, myself, County Administrator and Chair of St. Lucie County Commission are scheduled to meet quarterly to continue to support joint efforts that impact County and City residents. I am committed to ensuring that intergovernmental relations between the County and City thrive so that we can all benefit from each other's success.

I think it is critical to work effectively with other government agencies at the local, state and federal levels. To that end, we underwent an reorganization of our advocacy strategy this year, aligning our state and federal programs under the leadership of Grants & Advocacy Team and added a federal lobbyist to further advance our efforts on Capitol Hill.

IX. City Powers and Duties

The City of Port St. Lucie follows, and exceeds, the requirements of City ordinances. Systems are maintained for finance, procurement, human resources, information technology, budgeting, property inventory control, and risk management.

The City's budget process integrates capital, information technology, and operating expenditures and revenues in an award-winning document. A copy of the most recent Strategic Plan annual update is included in the Council packet for this assessment.

As your City Manager, I attest that the City of Port St. Lucie's government is well run and in compliance with state statutes. My commitment to the City Council is to continuously improve my performance and the performance of the organization. As we move forward, we will continue to build on our successes, guided by our shared commitment to making Port St. Lucie the best possible place to live, work and thrive.