



City Manager's Self-Assessment

Jesus Merejo, City Manager

February 2025 to February 2026

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 look 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:

- 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**
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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 more than 260,000 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, rising project costs and reduced revenues. 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 2025, the City celebrated many milestones:

- Named an All-America City for the first time in the City's history by the National Civic League, one of only 10 cities to earn the honor in 2025, competing and winning against large U.S. cities such as Austin, Texas, and Denver, Colorado. The Council's leadership in supporting the Naturally PSL Initiative and other environmental and community engagement initiatives reinforced this year's theme of Strengthening Environmental Sustainability through Inclusive Community Engagement. This recognition demonstrated that your City team is leading the nation in being a resilient, connected and forward-thinking City.
- 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. The Southern Grove Jobs Corridor is near completion with only about 22 acres remaining to be sold.
- Delivered a balanced budget, while lowering the millage rate for the 10th consecutive year.
- Furthering our commitment to safety and training with the construction of the Police Training Facility.
- Created Naturally PSL, which advances the vision of the City Council and residents' mission to preserve and activate green spaces in Port St. Lucie, engaging more than 1,000 residents in the design of the program through the support of the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins and Centre for Public Impact. Key components implemented this year included:
 - Officially established the Naturally PSL Community Trust, a City-affiliated nonprofit organization dedicated to acquiring, conserving and activating land for public benefit.
 - Launched the Naturally PSL Environmental Stewardship Awards, honoring individuals and groups caring for Port St. Lucie's natural environment.
 - Acquired and opened the Rosser Lakes property, nearly 105 acres located between Interstate 95 and Rosser Boulevard that were once slated to become homes but now will be preserved for generations to come, responding to a top resident priority.

- Acquired more than 280 acres of land to add to the Naturally PSL Green Spaces and Places Land Bank, also established in 2025.
 - Launched the Naturally PSL Conservation Corps, helping to steward Port St. Lucie’s green spaces.
- Broke ground at Torino Regional Park, our second regional park with a “Play Forest” theme design.
- Reopened Skate City at Whispering Pines Park, a collaboration with residents that made this outdoor roller rink come to life.
- Launched a major economic development initiative by creating a partnership with United Soccer League (USL) League One Team franchise to eastern Port St. Lucie. This professional soccer stadium is set to anchor and ignite the development of Walton & One, envisioned as a key cultural and entertainment hub.
- We continue to invest in public safety, with a second law enforcement training academy class graduating in 2025 that will go directly to work for the Port St. Lucie Police Department — and the third PSLPD-only class already has begun. Kicked off planning of Smart City Policing Initiatives, including the Drones as a First Responder program and the Real-Time Public Safety Operations Center.
- Effectively leveraging City tax dollars through federal and state grants, through the work of the Citywide Grants & Advocacy Team, securing \$18,520,114 in grant funding this fiscal year, with an additional \$61,987,937 in applications currently pending. Those dollars support real projects, from water quality improvements and stormwater upgrades to public safety equipment and neighborhood reinvestment.
- Continuing to collaborate on other vital roadway projects in progress such as the completion of Port St. Lucie Boulevard; commencing construction of Floresta Phase 2; turn lane improvements at East Torino Parkway and Midway Road; along with a modern roundabout at North Torino Parkway and Turtle Dove which was completed.
- Initiated construction on the Discovery and Community traffic signal, and intersection improvements at Tulip Boulevard and College Park Road.
- Advanced the Police Department’s sixth Neighborhood Policing District and launched our first-ever Drone as First Responder program. These drones will provide aerial views in real time to help response time.
- With the implementation of the Special Events Department, in 2025 the City Council approved moving forward with a Special Events Master Plan.
- Restructuring of different departments to continue to improve efficiency.
- Implemented a key component of the Strategic Plan in acquiring developing City facilities, including the Peacock Building to support the Building Department and Public Works building to support improved service throughout the City, a key component of the Strategic Plan. Beginning the design of the City Hall Expansion and Parking Garage and finalizing the design of the new Public Works Building.

- Launched another major amenity in The Port District, with the opening of The Port Preserve trails. We also celebrated the upcoming groundbreaking for The Grove restaurant sites.
- Spearheaded the revitalization of the former Sandpiper Bay Resort to the newly renovated and expanded Sandpiper All-Inclusive Resort with new amenities, new fields and an expanded sports academy. This property is a key economic engine of the City, bringing in visitors and families to the region.

Our high-performing team continues to receive accolades. As mentioned earlier, nationally we won the 2025 All-America City Award and the 2025 Hope Award Trailblazer honor, for our commitment to battling human trafficking. The City took home more than 18 awards over the past year.

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 and nationally award-winning #IamPSL 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 more than 1,000 residents in generating thousands of ideas. We then expanded innovation Citywide with the team bringing these skills to the City Council Strategic Planning session and through departmental strategic planning sessions and staff training sessions.

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).**

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.

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:

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 six years. All but 20 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.

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:

- Announcement of professional soccer team and stadium coming to Walton & One. The new stadium will be home to the Port St. Lucie Sports Club, which will play in the United Soccer League (USL). The team will bring high-energy matches and family-friendly fun right to the heart of our City.
- But the impact goes far beyond the field. The stadium is a first step toward creating a vibrant destination where people can live, work and play
- 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 U.S. Department of Transportation, which also positions the corridor to be competitive to receive future grants for construction.
- The purchase of the Tax Collector’s office will centralize the CRA team in the original CRA area, allowing for direct and efficient access to the City’s fast-paced redevelopment in this area.

The Port District

- The Port District continues to move forward with the creation of a desirable place for our residents to enjoy. The Port District received the American Planning Association Florida Chapter’s award for Great Places in Florida People’s Choice Award, an award selected by the people throughout the state. In October, Port St. Lucie celebrated the groundbreaking of The Grove, a waterfront dining and gathering space located along the St. Lucie River in The Port District. For years, residents have said they would like to see more dining and entertainment venues along the waterfront and The Grove brings that to them.
- The Boardwalk at The Port District is now fully connected from Veterans Park at Rivergate to the preservation tract, allowing visitors to enjoy an uninterrupted scenic walk that is more than three-quarters of a mile along the North Fork of St. Lucie River.

III. Relationship with the City Council

I meet with the members of 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 City Council about the status of program implementation through several vehicles. On a weekly basis, I meet each Council member to provide information on its upcoming agenda items. *PSL On The Pulse*, a monthly update to City Council and residents, newly introduced *Pulse Points* (key updates for Council) and financial status reports, are all tools used to

communicate with Council. Additionally, via memos are provided to Council highlighting key updates and items of importance.

It is critical that City Council and staff are united in achieving the objectives identified in the Strategic Plan. Under my direction, staff has aggressively implemented the objectives approved by Council. Regular progress updates are provided to Council, and the FY 25/26 budget process was constructed around the priorities established in the adopted Strategic Plan, which was developed using a human-centered design process that involved Council and residents like never before. To further emphasize the importance of Council's 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 might occur that requires individual phone calls to Council members. At that time, I call each member and provide the same information.

With year three completed, I will remain focused on making progress in areas of importance to City Council including capital projects, continue to focus on data, communications, engagement and efficiency. I will strive to ensure 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. Delivering needed capital improvement projects has been a cornerstone of my leadership. Since 2021 the share of the budget dedicated to capital projects has grown to nearly 25% of the budget. A major focus on completing projects is necessary given the significant projects we plan to undertake, including Marshall Parkway, the Marshall Parkway Interchange, Range Line Road, Crosstown to Range Line Road, the Police Training Facility, the Public Works Building, St. Lucie West Boulevard Design, Floresta Phase 3 and Oak Hammock Stormwater Design. In addition, we will focus on completing several 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 Riverland Paseo Park. I am committed to ensuring these projects are completed.

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. As committed during the winter workshop, my goal for the next year is to refocus on the most critical priorities and provide innovative service delivery in a time of change. We will focus on getting things done, grounded in our values. We will focus on customer service and getting to yes. We will foster a culture of strong

project management. We will improve efficiency and processes. And we will continue to help our City move forward with innovation, civic engagement, collaboration and deliver strong impact for our residents.

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 business representatives within our community. I have attended St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce meetings and discussed various projects. 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 2025 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 800 residents who provided valuable feedback on the City's Strategic Plan. Other cities across the nation are beginning to implement this strategy, with Columbia, Missouri implementing their version of the Citizen Summit for the past two years and we hosted the City of Birmingham who is also seeking to replicate the Summit, again demonstrating Port St. Lucie's efforts as a thought leader.

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. To be successful at public outreach and engagement, the City must employ multiple tools. PSL On The Pulse, letters to the editor, the *Annual Year in Review*, Citizen Summit and City University are all vehicles used by 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. We launched our City Ambassador Program designed to provide residents with information to share with their neighbors and community at large. This year we also significantly expanded the City's first-ever Youth Council, now in its third year, and welcomed 39 high school students who participated in various events including planning a youth-focused Big Summer Blowout event. Additionally, through the Love Your Block program, powered by Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University, the City issued 16 mini grants for residents to work on projects in the Whispering Pines neighborhood. This resulted in minor home repairs, tree planting, community clean up, installation of Little Free Libraries and pet waste stations. The Love

Your Block work continues this year, and staff are preparing to move into new neighborhoods in the future.

Finally, we launched PSL in Progress which is an interactive tool developed by our Communications Department that helps residents understand the City's most significant projects including roads, stormwater, utility upgrades, parks and community redevelopment.

V. Fiscal Management

Fiscal responsibility has long been a hallmark of Port St. Lucie's governance, and 2025 was no exception. This year, the City celebrated a decade of consecutive millage rate reductions, a rare achievement among Florida's largest cities. Since 2015, the property tax rate has dropped by 25%, saving local taxpayers more than \$40 million. The City's current millage rate stands as the third lowest among its peers, a testament to prudent budgeting and a commitment to easing the financial burden on residents.

Debt reduction has gone hand-in-hand with these tax cuts. Over the past 16 years, Port St. Lucie has reduced its long-term debt by nearly 35%, bringing it down to a projected \$681 million for FY 25/26. This careful stewardship has not gone unnoticed: Moody's Investors Service upgraded several of the City's bond ratings in 2025, reflecting improved financial strength and conservative fiscal management. These strong ratings translate directly into lower borrowing costs, allowing the City to invest more efficiently in critical infrastructure and services.

FY 25 maintained existing services; fast tracked Police Department District Six Neighborhood Policing District ahead of schedule. This new district enhances coverage and ensures officers can respond quickly and effectively to the needs of residents; funded capital projects; and provided conservative staffing levels to maintain level of service for our residents.

The City's financial indicators confirm 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 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. I remain committed to supporting employee development so we can continue to provide the best services possible to the community and remain focused on organizational development with an emphasis on training and employee reclassifications. In the past year, the City has processed more than 12,000 applications and on-boarded 346 employees. The Human Resources department plays an integral role in ensuring our level of service across all departments is maintained to the highest levels possible by ensuring we have the staffing to make it possible.

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. Achieving 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.

Continued professional growth was another priority of the City team, and we were afforded world-class educational opportunities because of competitive applications. Two City teams attended Harvard programs this year including a Managing City Talent program and a Procurement Reform program at Harvard University, generously funded through the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

I will continue to focus on succession planning and imparting key values through speaking with the City team. My approach is that of a coach on a team: my focus is supporting the executive team and ensuring it plays an active role in their assigned departments, ensuring we meet the goals of 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 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 with 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 we can all benefit from each other’s success.

In January 2026, the City and county met for a joint meeting, facilitated by the City Manager’s Office. This meeting allowed both organizations to discuss joint programs and projects we can tackle together and created an opportunity for elected bodies to connect with each other with the goal of continued intergovernmental coordination.

I think it is critical to work effectively with other government agencies at the local, state and federal levels. To that end, we underwent a reorganization of our advocacy strategy this year, aligning our state and federal programs under the leadership of the 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 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.