



City Manager's Self-Assessment

Jesus Merejo, City Manager

February 2023 to February 2024

It is my honor to serve as your City Manager. I am excited to share what we have accomplished in this first year and I look forward to building upon this foundation, with your guidance and support, as we continue forward progress in the coming years. In reviewing my performance, and that of my team, I am providing the following overview for your consideration:

- 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

This year, the City Council established a new Vision and Mission Statement:

OUR VISION

To be a **leader** in **finding innovative solutions** that **put residents first** and **support opportunities for all people to thrive**.

OUR MISSION

To provide **exceptional services** that **enhance** our community's **safety, beauty, and quality of life** through **innovation, engagement, and fiscal responsibility**.

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 nearly 240,000 residents, making it the sixth largest city in Florida. We've been working hard to address the impact of a 15% population increase, an influx of almost 25,000 new residents in the last two years alone. We are working to do this while reducing the millage/tax rate for the last eight years while improving services. In addition, we are experiencing an historic period of high inflation that is impacting the costs of City projects with a likewise impact on the household costs of our residents. As we grow together, we've

focused on listening to the needs of our residents through the National Community Survey, the #IamPSL Citizen Summit, and public workshops.

During the past twelve months, significant progress has been made aligning our organizational structure to better prepare us for the future and continue to build a responsive, customer-focused organization. Areas of focus have included:

- Police Department: Implementation of a succession plan to lead the organization well into the future and ensure our continued focus on safety.
- Public Works Department: Key promotions to grow the capacity of our team to meet the infrastructure demands.
- MIDFLORIDA Event Center: Restructuring to optimize the strengths of the team.
- Utility Systems Department: Key promotions to ensure the continued strength of the utility.
- City Manager's Office: Key promotions and structures to support continued growth of the team.

Our team continues to identify personnel development pathways to enable effective succession planning that will serve our organization well into the future. We continue to grow our project-management focus to deliver on the key priorities of the City Council those and desired by City residents.

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is a constant focus of the City of Port St. Lucie management team and the cornerstone in keeping our team focused as we continue to evolve. 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 internal operating systems, such as our grants application and administration process. In the Utility Systems Department, a new workflow improvement for septic to sewer conversions has reduced the sewer conversion process from a peak of 20-24 weeks down to 8-10 weeks.

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. This year, through insights gained from courses offered through "What Works Cities" (WWC) and with support and connections through the WWC coaching program, we evolved our process further by creating PSL STAT. Each quarter, in advance of the update to Council, the City's Executive Team, Department Directors and Strategic Plan project managers gather to review the progress of the Plan with a focus on following the data. PSL STAT is helping grow our collaborative efforts, identify emerging needs to better inform our City Council so we can further strengthen the identification of emerging strategic priorities and improve our service to residents. As we are addressing the impacts of the fast-growing nature of the city, we are working to address the impacts of growth throughout city departments to ensure we continue to meet the service delivery demands of our residents.

Data & Innovation

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).

This year, the City of Port St. Lucie was one of twelve new cities in the United States and Latin America that was 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.

I also am participating this year in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, after our city was selected as one of 40 cities in the world to participate in this yearlong professional management training program.

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. We now have a team working to develop innovations tied to a key resident priority from last year's citizen summit and have expanded access to valuable knowledge and professional development opportunities to grow innovation at City Hall.

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.

Roadways, Sidewalks and Road Maintenance

- Completion of the construction phase of the Lakehurst sidewalk and drainage project from Airoso to Ivanhoe.
- Completed dredging and restoration on the Sagamore Waterway between NE Airoso Boulevard and where the canal intersects with the St. Lucie River.
- Completed the Heatherwood Boulevard Sidewalk project, providing connection from Cashmere to Country Club Road.
- Completed the design of Tulip and College Park Intersection to remove the existing roundabout. This project is moving into construction in FY 24/25.
- Supported Public Works in getting necessary equipment including two new street sweepers and a new air boat. A successful naming contest resulted in a local student being credited as the City of Port St. Lucie's Street Sweeper Naming Contest Winner. "Sweep Caroline" is now being seen, hard at work, throughout the city.
- Incorporated the City's first bicycle sharrow (shared-lane markings) along Essex Drive. Pavement markings were installed which help to provide notice that bicyclists and those driving cars must share the road.

- Completed the implementation of Traffic Calming to support safety for the following residential streets: Idol, Sunglow, Milner (including Omega and Rugby), Dreyfuss, Dalton, and Abingdon.
- Sidewalk completion and connections: Milner Drive Phases 1 and 2, Village Green Drive from Tiffany Avenue to Midport Place, Trenton, and Tiffany Avenue.
- Completed the addition of a westbound turn lane extension along Tradition Parkway off the I-95 exit to support mobility and safety.
- Completed the replacement of multiple culverts that carry the E-123 Canal under Southbend Boulevard, south of S.E. Eagle Drive. This project replaced aging drainage pipes with high-quality infrastructure funded by the stormwater fee.
- Coordinated with FDOT on the completion of high-priority projects for the city including improvements to Gatlin Boulevard at I-95 with timing and equipment upgrades to the signals. This also included St. Lucie West Boulevard at I-95.
- Moved forward with the planning of the California Boulevard Widening Project. A second Public Information Meeting was held in preparation for moving forward and a federal appropriation was secured for the design phase.
- Removed and replaced sidewalk to comply with ADA requirements along St. Lucie West Boulevard and Port St. Lucie Boulevard. The project along Port St. Lucie Boulevard also included replacing aging ADA ramps.
- Continued the construction of the Floresta Drive Phase 2 One-Half Cent Sales Tax Project. The contractor replaced the existing bridge over the Elkcam waterway and installed a new roundabout at Polynesian as part of this project. Roadway and sidewalk improvements continue with the project estimated to be completed by early 2025.
- Initiated a pressure washing crew to clean areas throughout the city. This included the cleaning of the I-95 overpass.
- Ongoing coordination and construction of the Port St. Lucie Boulevard South Project. Working towards the completion of Port St. Lucie Boulevard Segments 3 and 2.1. We continue coordination and work to get the necessary funding and move the schedules forward for Segments 2.1 and 2.2. This year we negotiated an agreement with FDOT to advance Port St. Lucie Boulevard South from FY28 to FY26 and secured a \$2 million federal appropriation to assist the project.
- Completed the installation of bollards, pedestrian path, and landscaping as part of the Chapman Road Beautification and Pedestrian Access Project.
- Public Works has made great strides in repaving, covering 46.75 miles of roads in FY22/23 and 43.35 miles in FY23/24. This is significant considering we maintain over 917 miles of roads in the city. These efforts are integral to enhancing the overall quality of life in our community.
- To preserve our roadways and help them last longer, we also took steps forward in our asphalt rejuvenation program.

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. Following are the more significant accomplishments.

Southern Grove CRA

It is incredible to see the continued success of Southern Grove – what experts advised could take twenty years was accomplished in just six. To date, all but 250 acres have been sold or are under contract through partnerships with the private sector via the Governmental Finance Corporation. International companies like 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.

As our jobs corridor continues to build out, it is poised to encompass more than 20 million square feet of commercial, industrial, residential, and educational land uses. This growth will expand our city's housing and job capacity, diversify our economy, and increase our property tax base. Additionally, Southern Grove will serve as a community asset, adding more parks, civic, and open spaces, providing for school sites and acting as a venue for future events.

Progress to note in 2023 included:

- Successfully sold 132.68 acres in Legacy Park at Tradition to JDN Enterprises, LLC, a subsidiary of Sansone Group, for the construction of 1,900,000 SF to be used as a Costco Warehouse Distribution Depot. Costco will be bringing hundreds of jobs to St. Lucie County as the company develops a multi-phased cold and dry storage depot at the Sansone Group's Legacy Park at Tradition. This global company's Port St. Lucie depot will ultimately include two facilities and employ more than 500 workers. The first phase consists of a 595,000-square-foot cold and dry storage facility which will employ 265 people at an average wage of \$55,350 plus benefits.
- Executed a Letter of Intent for 2.09 acres of land with Amandine, LLC, for the development of a mixed-use site including retail, restaurants, and a boutique hotel.
- Executed a Letter of Intent for 19.49 acres of land with Tradition Entertainment District, LLC, for the development of up to 100,000 SF as a restaurant / entertainment district along SW Village Parkway.
- Preparing the Becker / Village Request For Proposals (RFP) ~ 55+- acres / lifestyle.
- Began construction of the next phase of Anthony F. Sansone Sr. Boulevard, extending 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.
- Tom Mackie Blvd Extension / Construction – Construction is anticipated to commence mid-summer.
- Successfully sold 15.06 acres in Legacy Park at Tradition to Chill Build PSL, LLC, for the construction of 380,000 SF of refrigerated / cold storage / distribution facility.
- Approved a Land Swap Agreement with Saint Matilda, LLC, for 13.97 acres of land for the construction of apartment units. The land swap results in the city obtaining 28.81 acres of land on Torino Parkway to be incorporated into the future Torino Regional Park project.
- Negotiated and executed the Southern Grove Traffic Signal Agreement.
- Executed the Amended and Restated Interlocal Agreement between the Governmental Finance Corporation, the City of Port St. Lucie, and the Southern Grove Community Development District No. 1.

- Approved 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.

In 2023, six of the major projects developed in Southern Grove were responsible for more than \$3 million in tax revenue for Port St. Lucie. They will also provide approximately 1,400 jobs, with a combined annual payroll estimated at nearly \$53 million. These are conservative estimates, representing a handful of the businesses in Southern Grove, some of which are still not fully completed or operational yet.

City Center and Eastside CRA

The completion of the Crosstown Parkway, execution of the Village Green Master Plan and the new Master Plan for City Center are providing clear direction for the East Side CRA, 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 the City Center Master Plan which is now underway.
- Now that the City Center properties have been acquired, with unwavering interest from the development community, demolition of the former Bealls Outlet building is almost complete.
- 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, though funding for construction of the project has not yet been identified. Funding for design of the roadway network received a significant boost this 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 Port District

Considerable progress has been made on The Port District this year, including the following key milestones:

- Grand Opening – A dedicated project team has been assembled to curate The Port District Grand Opening event, which will be known as “PortFest.” It will be held as an all-day event on Saturday, June 15th.
- Park Construction – Ferreira Construction continues to make good progress on the park site after experiencing crippling material and utility delays midway through the project. Finishing touches are being made on the utilities, hardscaping, and landscaping in preparation for a site turnover in mid-Spring. The contractor is also responsible for the boardwalk connection under the Port St. Lucie Blvd. Bridge and has recently started pile driving.
- Fire Damage Repair to Boardwalk – Progress of the repair is underway with anticipated completion in late Spring.

- Historic Homes – The renovation contractor is putting the final touches on the Historic Peacock Lodge. Turnover of this site to the Port St. Lucie Historical Society will occur in 2024.
- River Food Garden – We secured an official lease agreement with a restaurant developer for a riverfront dining experience at The Port. The developer is working toward a phased development approach with the tiki bar, main restaurant, restrooms, back of house, and at least one quad building being constructed with the first phase.

Corridor Extensions

- We continue to collaborate on other vital roadway projects currently in progress: 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.

Public Safety

- Recognition by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement as the safest large city in Florida for 13 consecutive years, while US News and World Report has honored Port St. Lucie as the second safest city in the nation for the last two years.
- Began design-build of a Police Training Facility to provide state-of-the-art training to our Police Department.
- Overhauled the police recruitment process and recruited police officers for District 5, as we near completion of this longtime Council priority of a new policing district in growing Western Port St. Lucie.
- In addition, our Police Department was awarded by the Florida Gang Investigators Association — Gang Unit of the Year Award; and “William Nealy” Gang Prevention Award (2023).

Fiscal Responsibility, Grants and Mobility Fees

While we continue to expand and improve services, we maintain fiscal responsibility under the leadership of the City Council. For the eighth year in a row, the city was able to reduce the millage rate for property taxes. At the same time, we were able to lower our total city debt by \$36.5 million.

PSL has the third lowest municipal property tax rate, compared to the top 20 largest cities in Florida. The City's approved budget continues its debt reduction strategy, resulting in a reduction of 40% (or over \$400 million) in 14 years.

Grants

One way we make improvements and advance fiscal responsibility is through grants. These opportunities allow us to meet the needs of residents without relying solely on city taxpayer dollars. In 2023, the city received \$50 million in grants for projects that advance our Strategic Plan, through working collaboratively through the City's Grants & Advocacy Team.

Key grants received included:

- \$2 million RAISE Grant to support design of the Village Green Drive corridor in eastern Port St. Lucie from the U.S. Department of Transportation that will improve mobility and safety.
- More than \$28 million for water quality projects and road improvements.
- \$4.2 million will be used for parks and homeowner and rental assistance.
- \$3.4 million is available to boost small businesses and support vital infrastructure projects.
- \$1 million grant will allow the city to plant trees across Port St. Lucie.
- We also advocated for a \$2 million federal appropriation secured by Congressman Mast which was applied to the City's local cost share for Port St. Lucie Boulevard South.

Mobility Plan and Fees

We continued to implement the City's Mobility Plan and Mobility Fees, a vital tool to mitigate the impact of new growth on existing infrastructure and advance mobility, the top issue consistently identified by residents in the National Community Survey. Staff finalized all Mobility Fee True Up Agreements during the past year; this enhances our services by ensuring that our fees are protected from "double dipping" and ensures developers received their permits in a timely manner.

Water Quality

Continued to implement the City Council's strategic priority of improving water quality through the following projects:

- Ongoing septic to sewer conversion. To date, more than 10,300 conversions from septic to City sewer have been completed. Between the septic to sewer conversions and new installations, more than 28 billion gallons of wastewater has been kept from going into the ground and diverted to a wastewater treatment plant. The reduction and elimination of septic systems is one way we can proactively improve the health of our local waterways, including the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.
- Completion of Area 4 of the St. Lucie River/C-23 Water Quality Project located at McCarty Ranch Preserve. As a result of the project, 10 billion gallons of water from the C-23 Canal has been captured at the site, which can be used for future water supply. It also prevents that water from directly entering the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, which is often filled with phosphorus and nitrogen that can cause algae blooms in our waterways. Over \$8 million in grants have been secured for this project since its inception, a powerful example of how the city has partnered with the state of Florida to advance water quality and supply.
- Reduced the number of Culvert replacements for the known culverts in disrepair from ±550 to 470.
- Received allocation and grant awards totaling \$4 million for critical stormwater facilities including water quality improvements.
- Received \$1.1 million in beautification grant funding for tree installation in the city.

- Finalized design of the D-11 Canal improvements and the project is being included in the Floresta Phase 3 construction.
- Completed the design of the SWW-1 Control Structure rehabilitation project which is currently under construction.

Parks & Recreation

As part of our goal to advance Culture, Nature & Fun Activities our team made progress on the following critical Parks & Recreation projects and programs this year, in addition to The Port District:

- Torino Regional Park: Design of the 200-acre park is currently underway.
- Tradition Regional Park: Ongoing collaboration with Mattamy Homes on the 110-acre Tradition Regional Park. Secured partnership to introduce the distinctive USA BMX Adaptive All-Wheel Park. The facility will offer BMX biking, skateboarding, and inline skating. Site work is currently under way, and we eagerly anticipate the groundbreaking ceremony for Tradition Regional Park in the coming months.
- Riverland Paseo Park: Construction is underway on this project built in partnership with GL Homes, which will be open next summer.
- Stars and Stripes in the Park: Planning underway in partnership with Mattamy Homes in Tradition.
- At The Saints Golf Course, we ended FY 2022/23 with more than 55,000 rounds of golf played, and broke ground on a momentous drainage improvement project. Through the assistance of a State Water-Quality Assistance Grant (SWAG), a \$1.3 million award provided the ability to greatly improve drainage across the course, which will improve player access during months with inclement weather.
- More than 17 events were hosted Citywide, when thousands of guests joined our Special Events team as we celebrated the various seasons and moments that make our community home.
- Improvement projects at the Botanical Gardens and O.L. Peacock, Sr. and Wilderness Trail Parks are also on the horizon.
- For 2023, Parks and Recreation were awarded the 2023 Florida Recreation & Park Association for Excellence in Health Award and The Golden Shovel Parks Professional Award, Kelly Boatwright, CPRP, Park Administrator-projects.

Communication and Community Engagement

We are proud that Port St. Lucie was one of only 20 cities in the nation to be named as finalist in the All-America City competition. We were honored for our work in finding innovative ways to engage young people in the work of their city governments. Other accomplishments to highlight in our efforts to engage residents and improve communication, a top priority of the City Council include:

- We rolled out a new brand in 2024 that reflects Port St. Lucie's place as "The Heart of the Treasure Coast." As we evolve as a city, our identity grows.
- We established the first ever Port St. Lucie Youth Council.
- Reworked City publications including launching Pulse Points, key highlights.
- Expanded PSL in Lights and Citizen Summit outreach events at NICE 2.0 socials.

- A new focus on District communications is launching this upcoming year to better support the custom needs of Council districts.
- Our Utilities Services Department was awarded the 2023 Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA) — Award of Distinction — Jenny Tomes, APR, for outreach in local classrooms as “Water Woman.”

High-Performing Government

- Reviewed plans and issued 3,844 building permits for new single-family homes, and continued high customer service ratings, with customers rating the Building Department on average 9.5 out of 10 points.
- Continued to work with new ownership of Club Med to advance improvements to their facility.
- Completed a Corridor Study for Port St. Lucie Boulevard.
- Began planning for expansion for City Hall and a parking garage to meet the needs of our growing facility.
- Continued to plan and prepare our Utility Systems infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing city, including a new Reverse Osmosis Plant, raw water mains, and the design of the Glades facility. Annual free chlorination program to improve water quality implemented. Finished Reclaimed main extension in Tradition: this was the main that provided re-use water to extinguish the mulch fire.
- Implemented a new workflow for septic to sewer conversions. This improvement has reduced the sewer conversion process from a peak of 20-24 weeks down to 8-10 weeks.
- Continued to utilize the strength of the city’s cross-departmental teams to function as a high performing organization - there are now many cross-departmental City teams tackling a variety of issues that affect our residents, including stormwater maintenance, high performance public spaces, litter prevention, safety, development review, and implementing the One Half-Cent Sales Tax approved by voters in 2018 for better roads and sidewalks.
- These projects have come to fruition under the leadership of the City Council and your work to adopt your Strategic Plan and multi-year plans such as the 10-Year Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Stormwater Management Plan, Sidewalk Master Plan, Resurfacing Master Plan, Southern Grove Master Plan, Port District Master Plan and Public Art Master Plan. I appreciate the City Council’s long-term vision, which helps me, and my team increase our effectiveness.

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 each 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 methods. On a weekly basis, I meet with each Council member to provide information on the Council’s upcoming agenda items. *The City Managers Bi-weekly Report* (recently rebranded as “The Pulse”) and financial status reports are all tools used to communicate with the Council.

It is critical that 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. A quarterly report describing progress in achieving the objectives has been

provided to the Council, and the FY 23/24 budget process was constructed around the priorities established in the adopted Strategic Plan.

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. Occasionally, an incident may occur that requires individual phone calls to Council members, at which time I call each Councilmember and provide the same information.

This year the team worked to support the City Council to strengthen their collaboration in meeting the challenges of a growing city, organizing workshops with former National League of Cities President Jim Hunt of Amazing Cities.

With “Year One” as City Manager completed, I remain focused on making progress on areas of importance to the City Council including communications, engagement, and efficiency. I will work on preparing our award-winning Parks & Recreation Department for succession with the retirement of longtime Parks & Recreation Director Sherman Conrad. I will strive to ensure that all information is provided to all Council members in a timely fashion; that departmental leadership achieve success in meeting deadlines and delivering on projects in the Capital Improvement Plan and seek continued improvement to the City’s procurement process. A major focus on completing projects is necessary given the significance of the projects we plan to undertake. Marshall Parkway, Range Line Road, Crosstown Parkway to Range Line Road, the Police Training Facility, the Public Works Building, design of the City Hall Parking Garage, and revitalization of City Center are pending projects of high importance to our ability to keep pace with the unprecedented growth Port St. Lucie is experiencing. 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 Park, and Paseo Park.

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, spoken before service organizations and neighborhood associations, and have personally met with key business leaders throughout 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 citizen priorities and glean their perception of City services, a comprehensive citizen survey was conducted in 2023 with some of the highest response rates in the nation; this signifying that ours is an engaged community. I am proud that we also engage our residents through the annual Citizen Summit, this year reaching record attendance, connecting with nearly 900 residents who provided valuable feedback on the City Council’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.

1PSL was launched as a tool 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. Since the launch of 1PSL in October 2019, the City's 1PSL operators have fielded 359,491 calls and 96,256 total requests.

The Solid Waste Call Center, established in January 2023, has been instrumental in handling waste management inquiries. Between February 2023 and February 2024, the Call Center managed a total of 41,081 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. Only 7,225 calls were missed garbage collection entries, indicating a high level of effectiveness in operations. In February 2024, there was a significant decrease of 56% in call volume compared to the previous year, highlighting the efficacy of the Call Center's operations and success in solid waste guidelines resident education.

To be successful at public outreach and engagement, the city must employ multiple tools. *The City Managers Bi-weekly Report*, letters to the editor, the annual *Year in Review*, Citizen Summit, and the Citizens' University are all programs that are used by the Council and staff to engage citizens in their local government. I am particularly pleased with the continued success of the most recent Citizens' Academy which provided 80 citizens with a virtual behind the scenes look at our government. We further educated hundreds of youths this year during the City's Government Week along with Mayor Martin, City Council members, and a panel of City staff. This year we also launched the City's first ever Youth Council who have taken on assignments, advocated for Port St. Lucie priorities in Tallahassee, and staffed a booth at PSL in Lights and at the Citizen Summit.

V. Fiscal Management

In 2023, The City's bond rating was increased from an A- to an AA, the third highest Standard & Poor's credit rating, and indicators such as millage, debt per capita, and employees per capita are stable or improving.

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 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.

In 2010 the city had over a \$1 Billion in bonded debt. The City Council adopted a strategic objective of substantially reducing bonded debt and has been successful. The FY 23/24 Budget projects that total debt will decline by more than \$400,000,000 to total debt of \$619,000,000, a reduction of approximately 44% from FY10. This was also accomplished with a decreasing millage over the past eight years.

In 2010 our city had the second highest debt per capita at \$6,332. In FY24 the debt per capita is expected to be \$2,583. This is a total debt reduction of \$3,214 per capita.

Reducing per capita debt and elevating a municipality's credit rating from AA- to AA with a stable outlook carries 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 positions the city to weather economic downturns.

FY24 maintained existing services, funded the final year of a Police Department's Five-Year Plan to implement District V, provided additional fee-based staffing additions to keep up with growth and reduced the financial impact of the 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.

VI. Human Resource Management

As your City Manager, my vision for the workforce is that of an organization which is professional, results-oriented, and relentlessly focused on providing a high return on investment to our taxpayers. As one of the 2023 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 we can provide the best services possible to the community and meet the goals of the City Council as a High Performing Government Organization.

Employee Feedback

The work of our team has been positively received by employees, according to the 2023 National Employee Survey™ administered by Polco, this being the fifth annual survey performed for the city. Most employees, about 9 in 10, reported feeling satisfied with their job overall and felt positive about working for the City of Port St. Lucie. In terms of retention, 93% of employees planned to work for the City a year from now, surpassing the national benchmark. This organization continues to make positive headway in the areas of inclusivity and equity. About 8 in 10 employees offered positive reviews for the City's performance attracting employees from diverse backgrounds and promoting workplace diversity, both of which were higher than average. Evaluations for the organization demonstrating respect for employees of different cultures and belief systems rated at 83% as excellent or good.

Similarly, to internal support services, about 8 in 10 employees offered high marks to the City's Risk Management, Finance, Purchasing, Information Technology, and Facilities Management Departments. Most employees, about 92%, applauded the City's Employee and Family Health Clinic.

When asked how employees would rate compensation (salary, benefits, & incentives) compared with similar opportunities, the City of Port St. Lucie was rated higher than the national average. When we began surveying employees in 2019, only 49% rated this category good or excellent. In 2023 the results showed improvement as 57% of employees rated their compensation as good or excellent.

The city also rated higher than the benchmark in the following categories:

- Making all employees feel welcome (76%),
- Helping new employees feel connected and integrated (77%),
- Fostering a respectful atmosphere (76%).

Our employees also believe in the city’s mission and vision with 83% of employees sharing that the mission and vision of the city makes them feel their job is important, higher than the benchmark.

Additionally, there is continued follow-up with the employees who attend, on their first day of employment, our introductory “Keys to the City” Program. This is their launching pad into our government family of support systems available to them throughout their probationary period of nine months; the goal of which is to ensure that each new employee has everything necessary to be successful in their first year with our organization.

The city's comprehensive training program “PSL Forward” is in its fourth year. Ratings on supporting continual learning and development as well as availability of opportunities for employees to develop knowledge and skills increased from 60-65% in 2019 to a 73% rating (higher than the national average).

It is important to point out that most of the results involving the performance of our supervisors were rated higher than the benchmark and, in some instances, increased upwards of 28 and 31%.

	2019	2023
Recognizing high performers	42%	70%
Applying discipline fairly and consistently	49%	72%
Managing low-performing employees	32%	63%
Coaching and mentoring	46%	72%

A comprehensive training program, specifically, the Supervisory Upskill category is believed to be a major contributing factor to those responses. The training opportunities for supervisors will expand this year with the addition of a Supervisor Track that will be mandatory for any newly hired or promoted supervisor.

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 am pleased with three significant additions to the City Manager’s team: Colt Schwerdt, Public Works Director, David Stonehouse, MIDFLORIDA Event Center Director and Ella Gilbert, Risk Management Director. Colt, David, and Ella were selected from within the organization and demonstrate a commitment to our values, professionalism, and the hard work necessary to take our organization to the next level.

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. My approach is that of a coach on a team: my focus is supporting the Assistant and Deputy City Managers and ensure they take an active role in their assigned departments, and ensuring we meet the goals of the Council and live our city values.

In addition, our Human Resources Department received the 2023 Public Sector HR Association (PSHRA) Small Agency Award of Excellence.

VII. Personal Qualities

My goal is to provide excellent service and continue to build the strength of the team in support of the City Council and citizens of Port St. Lucie. I believe to be successful, the organization must have a vision, set goals, live our values, involve stakeholders, act with integrity, work as a team, and follow through.

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.

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 government is well run and in compliance with state statues. My commitment to the City Council is to continuously improve my performance and the performance of the organization.