



City of Hemet  
City Council Meeting  
**STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting:** City Council Meeting - Aug 12 2025  
**Department:** Administration  
**Submitted by:** Mark Prestwich, City Manager  
Mark Prestwich, City Manager;

**Receive and File**       **Consent Calendar**       **Business Item**       **Public Hearing**

**TITLE:**

Receive a Presentation and File Citygate and Associates Final Report and Implementation Action Plan of their City of Hemet Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

It is respectfully recommended that the City Council:

Receive a Presentation and File Citygate and Associates Final Report and Implementation Action Plan Resulting from their City of Hemet Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City Council's Fiscal Year 2024-25 Strategic Plan Action Items includes a "highest priority" task to conduct an independent staffing study and professional review of the City's development review process. The purpose of the study is to identify recommendations on optimal staffing levels and solutions to optimize the development review process by streamlining procedures, orderly development process workflow, and enhancing the customer's overall experience.

Toward that end, the City prepared and released a Request for Proposal (RFP) on September 26, 2024. Four proposals were received and interviews were then held with the three lower cost firms on November 4, 2024 with a panel consisting of the City Manager, Public Works Director/City Engineer, Community Development Director, Chief Building Official, and City Council Business Outreach Ad Hoc Members Mayor Males and Mayor Pro Tem Peterson.

Given the extensive subject matter expertise and experience of the project team with similar California studies, and the cost-effectiveness of the proposal, the interview panel recommended partnering with Citygate Associates for this important study. The City Council awarded the \$99,605 contract on November 12, 2024.

Citygate's work examined the current alignment of development services across the Community Development Department, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, and the Department of Life Safety within the Fire Department. These services were evaluated with best

practices, organizational effectiveness, and the overall customer experience of those who utilize the City's development review services.

Citygate's study approach and methodology consisted of nine major tasks:

1. Initiate study with City representatives.
2. Review documents, policies, and procedures.
3. Conduct external stakeholder interviews.
4. Conduct external stakeholder interviews.
5. Conduct an operational, staffing, and policy analysis.
6. Present a mid-project review.
7. Prepare a Draft Report.
8. Complete a Final Report and Implementation Plan.
9. Implementation support.

## ANALYSIS:

Citygate's Final Report and Implementation Action Plan provides 70 findings and 47 actionable recommendations to improve service delivery, strengthen internal operations, and support continuous improvement across the City's development review process.

Study recommendations will be presented by the Citygate project team.

## PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:

The City Council awarded Citygate Associates a \$99,605 contract on November 12, 2024.

## STRATEGIC PLAN INTEGRATION:



### **GOAL TWO: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

**To ensure that Hemet is a hub, with access to quality jobs, shopping options, and a varied and sustained tax base.**

*Objective 1: Develop business practices that welcome new development by streamlining processes.*

*Objective 2: Provide resources for new businesses to enhance the customer service experience.*



### **GOAL FIVE: ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

**To identify the work needed inside the City organization to effectively provide services to the community and ensure financial stability.**

*Objective 1: Operate in a financially sustainable manner.*

*Objective 2: Evaluate existing practices to ensure continuity with industry best practices.*

*Objective 3: Provide Council with policies that are consistent while lessening liabilities.*

*Objective 4: Increase employee retention by training and creating a positive workplace.*

*Objective 5: Streamline fire prevention coordination efforts.*

## ATTACHMENT(S):

[Hemet – Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis \(08-07-25\)](#)



CITY GATE  
ASSOCIATES

# DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS AND STAFFING ANALYSIS

## CITY OF HEMET, CA

**AUGUST 7, 2025**



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## REPORT EXECUTIVE BRIEF

<b>Request</b>	Citygate Associates conducted an independent analysis of the City of Hemet’s development review process services across the Community Development Department, the Public Works Engineering Division, and the Department of Life Safety. The study evaluated alignment with City Council and community expectations, focusing on service efficiency, staffing, resource use, and customer experience. Key areas included goals, communication, performance metrics, structure, and workflow. While not a financial or compliance audit, the review assessed timeliness, transparency, and alignment with leadership and stakeholder priorities.
<b>Core Deliverables</b>	A comprehensive Final Report, Executive Summary, Implementation Action Plan, and final presentation were provided to the City Council. Recommendations include implementation strategies based on stakeholder interviews, observational analysis, and document review.
<b>Mission</b>	The City of Hemet will be a destination of opportunity and empowerment for its residents, businesses, and visitors by capitalizing on opportunity, striving for growth, and promoting diversity, inclusivity, and respect for each member of our community.
<b>Vision</b>	The City of Hemet shall be a model of excellence in local government; a safe, well-planned, welcoming community with equal opportunity for all.
<b>Core Values</b>	Transparency   Integrity   Service   Excellence   Empowerment
<b>Community Priorities</b>	Follow-through   Communication   Responsiveness   Timeliness   Staffing Levels   Alignment Between Staff and Leadership   Process Improvements   Consistency   Customer Service   Expedited Review Opportunities
<b>Employee Priorities</b>	Staffing Levels   Technology   Timeliness   Coordination and Communication with Divisions/Departments and Consultants   Fiscal Stability   Training Opportunities   Staff and City Council Relations
<b>Implementation Action Plan Template</b>	The Implementation Action Plan is provided as <b>Appendix A</b> to the Report. Additional Revenue-Generating Recommendations are also provided as <b>Appendix B</b> . The Report’s Executive Summary includes a summary of recommendations.
<b>Seven Core Themes</b>	(1) Financial Constraints   (2) Staffing Challenges   (3) Organizational Structure   (4) Communication, Outreach, and Customer Service   (5) Technology Implementation   (6) Leadership and Training   (7) Policy Framework

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

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Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) conducted a Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis for the City of Hemet (City). Citygate’s report is an independent analysis of the City’s development review services across the Community Development Department, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, and the Department of Life Safety within the Fire Department. Citygate’s study evaluates whether current services, staffing, and resources align with community and City Council expectations while identifying opportunities to streamline processes and improve both customer service and workflow efficiency.

Citygate examined current alignment with best practices, organizational effectiveness, and the overall customer experience of those who utilize development review services in the City. Our review focused on key operational areas including departmental missions and goals, communication, performance metrics, organizational structure, customer satisfaction, resource allocation, staffing, supervision, workload trends, and physical workspace layout.

While not a financial or compliance audit, this study provides an assessment of whether City departments deliver services in a timely, efficient, and responsive manner. Citygate evaluated the consistency of departmental philosophies with those of City leadership and development stakeholders, assessed the transparency and execution of services, and identified critical factors for high performance and customer satisfaction.

Citygate’s Final Report and Implementation Action Plan provide **70 key findings and 47 actionable recommendations** to improve service delivery, strengthen internal operations, and support continuous improvement across the City’s development review functions.

### STUDY CONTEXT

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The City is currently facing a complex set of interrelated challenges that are constraining its ability to provide efficient, high-quality development services. These challenges span fiscal limitations, staffing shortages, structural inefficiencies, outdated technology, inconsistent customer service, and aging policy frameworks.

Throughout this assessment, Citygate has taken a candid and constructive approach in identifying both strengths and areas in need of improvement. Our intent is not to assign blame or cause offense, but rather, to serve the City with the transparency and objectivity necessary for meaningful progress. The current state of the development review and permitting process reflects a system shaped over time by numerous structural, procedural, and resource-related factors. The challenges identified in this report are not the result of individual failings, but rather of *accumulated process inefficiencies, evolving community demands, and longstanding organizational constraints*.

**The development challenges facing the City are primarily systemic, not personal.** Across departments, staff members exhibit a clear commitment to public service and a deep sense of responsibility to the Hemet community. During Citygate’s review, the commitment and professionalism of City staff consistently stood out as a strength. The employees involved in the development review process demonstrate a strong work ethic, deep care for the community, and a genuine desire to serve the City well—often under difficult circumstances. They navigate complex regulations, competing priorities, and high expectations with diligence and integrity. It is precisely because of their dedication that the City is well-positioned to implement the changes needed to modernize its systems, improve interdepartmental coordination, and enhance service delivery.

Citygate’s recommendations are intended to build on this strong foundation, recognizing that improving processes is key to the City’s long-term success.

By focusing on process improvements, **the City can unlock the full potential of its existing talent.** These changes will not only empower staff to work more effectively, but will also strengthen interdepartmental collaboration, reduce redundancies, and improve the overall experience of applicants and residents. In this way, the City can move from a reactive, overstretched operating model to one that is proactive, strategic, and better equipped to meet current and future demands.

Ultimately, by investing in systems and organizational structures that allow staff to succeed, the City can create a more responsive, resilient, and service-oriented local government—without losing the dedication and community spirit that already define its workforce.

## Seven Themes of Citygate’s Analysis

This Executive Summary provides an overview of **seven key themes** identified during Citygate’s assessment and outlines strategic improvement opportunities for the City.

### *Theme 1—Financial Constraints*

The City’s fiscal structure is dominated by a heavy allocation of funds to public safety, with 100 percent of Measure U revenue dedicated to Police and Fire services, resulting in an aggregate 79 percent of all City revenue being dedicated to Public Safety services. This leaves only 21 percent to support *all other critical functions*—such as community development, public works, economic development, parks, housing, administrative, and other services. While public safety remains a priority, the current allocation model is unsustainable and inhibits the City’s ability to invest in comprehensive community development. Structural adjustments and revenue diversification are essential to address systemic service inequities in the City.

### ***Theme 2—Staffing Challenges***

Chronic understaffing is undermining the performance and morale of departments central to the development review process. Anticipated growth in development activity will further stress existing capacity, emphasizing the need for proactive staffing and workforce planning.

### ***Theme 3—Organizational Structure Misalignment***

The City’s current departmental structure hampers collaboration and weakens accountability. The integration of Building and Code Compliance within the Fire Department (under Life Safety) creates misalignments between regulatory, procedural, and safety-focused responsibilities. The separation of Building and Code Compliance from Community Development limits interdepartmental coordination. A more integrated organizational model, with clear leadership and streamlined reporting lines, could significantly enhance service efficiency and customer experience.

### ***Theme 4—Communication, Outreach, and Customer Service Deficiencies***

Communication gaps and fragmented processes have created a development review system that frustrates both staff and applicants. Key personnel are often absent from early-stage project meetings, leading to errors, delays, and inconsistent enforcement. Departments operate in relative isolation, with sequential rather than concurrent reviews and outdated customer service practices. A focus on modernized service standards, concurrent review protocols, and expanded over-the-counter services will foster greater public understanding and trust.

### ***Theme 5—Technology Implementation***

The City’s legacy systems, particularly eTrakIt, lack the functionality needed for modern development operations. Reliance on email for permitting and tracking causes frequent miscommunication and inefficiencies. The transition to the Tyler Technologies platform represents a major opportunity to modernize and unify workflows, support digital plan review, and improve transparency across departments.

### ***Theme 6—Leadership and Training***

Leadership development, staff training, and team cohesion are essential for sustaining operational performance. Staff express frustration over a lack of advancement opportunities. Disconnection between departments, limited career development, and insufficient training have contributed to high turnover and low morale. Strengthening leadership pipelines, improving training programs, and fostering a culture of collaboration are critical next steps.

### ***Theme 7—Policy Framework***

The City’s General Plan (last comprehensively updated in 2012) and Zoning Code (largely unchanged since 1997) are outdated and fragmented, undermining alignment with current development trends and community needs. Piecemeal amendments have created inconsistencies,

while key elements—such as the Circulation Element—may be contributing to delays. A thoughtful, comprehensive update of these foundational policy documents would help reduce regulatory ambiguity, streamline approvals, and promote more strategic growth.

**The City has a unique opportunity to address these structural, operational, and strategic challenges and thereby transform its development services and elevate overall municipal performance. By rebalancing financial priorities, resolving staffing shortfalls, improving organizational alignment, and embracing modern technology, the City can enhance service efficiency, responsiveness, and public trust. Updating policy frameworks and investing in leadership and training will further strengthen institutional capacity and resilience.**

Most importantly, these improvements will allow the City to better meet the needs of its growing community—fostering a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future.

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## **METHODOLOGY**

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Citygate evaluated the City’s development review process and the staffing allocated for this function in the Community Development Department, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, and the Department of Life Safety within the Fire Department. The study followed a nine-step methodology, beginning with meetings to align Citygate and the City’s project leaders regarding the project scope and stakeholder engagement; followed by extensive document reviews; internal and external stakeholder interviews; and detailed analyses of operations, staffing, and policies. External interviews included residents and members of the business and development community, providing insight related to customer experiences and expectations.

The operational analysis focused on identifying inefficiencies, skill gaps, outdated procedures, and opportunities for technology improvements. The staffing review assessed the adequacy and structure of departmental roles. Citygate also evaluated the roles of the Development Review Committee and Planning Commission. Midway through the project, preliminary findings were presented to City leadership to refine the study and address outstanding questions before completing the Draft and Final reports.

Key activities of the Project Team included office walkthroughs, data analysis, best practice benchmarking, and validation of findings through multiple sources. In total, 11 internal and 15 external interviews were conducted. Citygate’s findings were presented in a Draft Report for factual review by the City Manager. Citygate followed with this Final Report and Implementation Plan, emphasizing achievable improvements and near-term “quick wins.” Citygate will also

provide follow-up implementation support to assess progress and impact 6–12 months after delivery of this report.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on Citygate’s operational review and analysis—as well as the stakeholder engagement process, including interactions with City employees and external customers through interviews—Citygate has compiled **47 recommendations**, organized into **seven themes** as discussed in this Executive Summary and presented in Section 3. The themes are as follows:

- ◆ **Theme 1—Financial Constraints**
- ◆ **Theme 2—Staffing Challenges**
- ◆ **Theme 3—Organizational Structure Misalignment**
- ◆ **Theme 4—Communication, Outreach, and Customer Service**
- ◆ **Theme 5—Technology Implementation**
- ◆ **Theme 6—Leadership and Training**
- ◆ **Theme 7—Policy Framework**

Citygate provided a suggested prioritization of our recommendations, recognizing budget constraints, operational capacity, and competing priorities. The following is a summary of Citygate’s recommendations. The complete list of Findings and Recommendations is included in Section 3 of this report. The Implementation Action Plan is included as **Appendix A** and includes timing intervals, responsible parties, and the benefits of implementation per item.

**Table 1—Summary of Recommendations**

<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	
<b>THEME 1—FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	Consider utilizing Measure U sales tax revenue to fund the Chief Building Official position, the Building and Safety Division employees, and the Code Compliance Division employees.
<b>1.2</b>	Explore shifting a portion of Measure U sales tax revenue into the General Fund once the revenue reaches a pre-determined threshold, thereby only reallocating future growth.
<b>1.3</b>	An external, comprehensive fee study is needed to assess and update planning, permitting, and inspection fees.
<b>1.4</b>	Prioritize implementation of the Cannabis Ordinance compliance program to increase tax revenue.
<b>1.5</b>	Explore revenue-generating opportunities to support full-time or limited-term positions.

<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	
<b>THEME 2—STAFFING CHALLENGES</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	Hire a Principal Planner to address staffing gaps.
<b>2.2</b>	Add a Code Enforcement Supervisor or Manager position. A Code Enforcement Manager position is preferred; however, based on budget considerations, a Supervisor position could be substituted.
<b>2.3</b>	Add a “Program Manager” (Senior Engineer) role to manage professional services and outsourcing contracts, especially during peak development periods, to better balance staff workloads.
<b>2.4</b>	Add an Engineer dedicated to development plan review.
<b>2.5</b>	Evaluate the role of outside consulting services for development review functions.
<b>2.6</b>	Continue using external planning services for tasks like Housing Element updates, General Plan updates, master plans, and other long-term planning needs.
<b>2.7</b>	Public Works effectively tracks staff allocation for CIP, development, permits, and inspection tasks; this tracking should be more clearly reflected in the City budget.
<b>2.8</b>	Add a third-party inspection option with certified vendors who are approved by the City. Include a quality assurance component by auditing a portion of the vendors’ inspections for each trade.
<b>THEME 3—ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE MISALIGNMENT</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	As a best practice, and based on Citygate’s analysis, move the Chief Building Official, the Building and Safety Division, and the Code Compliance Division—with all associated staff and funding—to the Community Development Department.
<b>3.2</b>	Establish a “one-stop shop” for the City’s development review process by integrating key members of the Community Development Department (with all building permit and inspection functions moved from the Department of Life Safety) and the Engineering Division into a single, streamlined point of contact for developers, contractors, and property owners.
<b>3.3</b>	Consider expanding the Economic Development Department with 1–2 additional staff members, one of which would be an analyst. The positions should be phased, with the analyst position being added first to evaluate progress and goals, and the second position being considered as needed or appropriate.
<b>3.4</b>	Consider shifting all Economic Development positions to the City Manager’s Office.
<b>THEME 4—COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	Standardize and align office operating hours across all development review functions to create greater consistency.
<b>4.2</b>	Ensure staff attendance at predevelopment meetings. In addition, ensure that meetings concerning larger projects are attended by personnel with decision-making authority.
<b>4.3</b>	Consider establishing a set schedule for accepting and processing planning applications. The City should consider accepting applications one day per month, pursuant to a set schedule for the calendar year. Application processing schedules should: a) reflect the type of application and whether it is ministerially approved or subject to discretionary approvals; and b) prioritize applications with statutory processing timelines and those that advance key City policy goals.
<b>4.4</b>	Systematically compile and report data for key development review functions. After 1–2 years, set performance goals, track progress, and report findings to the community and City Council.

<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	
<b>4.5</b>	Continuously review and update standard Conditions of Approval to remove outdated items and support an efficient review process.
<b>4.6</b>	Ensure that Building and Safety staff answer phones during business hours.
<b>4.7</b>	Consider sending a brief checklist upon scheduling an inspection to drive compliance efficiency.
<b>4.8</b>	Develop process flow and job aides for each specific occupancy type to drive consistency and bolster the experience level of staff. Update regularly as new policies are enacted.
<b>4.9</b>	In the absence of internal mentors, develop staff by sending newer inspectors to shadow nearby, high-functioning organizations as part of the onboarding process.
<b>4.10</b>	Offer job shadowing and monthly or quarterly briefings (e.g., 2x2 format) for City Council and Planning Commissioners to improve understanding, trust, and communication related to development projects.
<b>4.11</b>	Survey staff involved in development review to identify job-sharing opportunities for better customer service—possibly through temporary, out-of-class assignments.
<b>4.12</b>	Educate staff and the community about available expedited services to increase utilization and improve service efficiency.
<b>4.13</b>	Enhance legal support for the Planning Commission through the City Attorney’s Office.
<b>4.14</b>	Implement bi-annual community surveys, evaluate goals, and ensure they support desired outcomes and align with the mission and vision of the City.
<b>4.15</b>	Set a goal to increase the issuance of over-the-counter permits. The goal should be reasonable and attainable (no more than an increase of 20 percent). Track progress and reevaluate in 12 months to see whether adding a “Permit Tech” position is warranted.
<b>THEME 5—TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	Create a dedicated phone line for the Community Development Department to reduce transfers and customer frustration or have a customer service representative route Development Review calls appropriately.
<b>5.2</b>	Provide more training opportunities to enhance technology skills and improve the service approaches of staff members.
<b>5.3</b>	As part of the Tyler Technologies software system implementation, develop a “Workflow History Report” for better tracking and transparency.
<b>5.4</b>	Dedicate the staff and other resources required (e.g., third-party trainers) to fully install and implement adoption of the Tyler Technologies system by all City departments. Modify contracts with City consultants to require their effective integration with the new system.
<b>5.5</b>	Include best practices and training for staff for each step of the development review process in the Tyler Technologies software system implementation—covering intake, routing, and time expectations for each step.

<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	
<b>THEME 6—LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	Review and improve the Code Compliance Division’s programs and structure while developing a service philosophy and community compliance approach.
<b>6.2</b>	Review and update the City’s Emergency Operations Plan from 2013—including training, certifications, and annual drills to build skills, education, and confidence for handling unexpected threats.
<b>6.3</b>	Within the Department of Life Safety, sustain a Fire Marshal with added responsibility for emergency planning, quarterly training, and responsibility to participate in the Riverside County hazard mitigation planning process.
<b>6.4</b>	Create a consistent policy for City Council questions regarding staff reports. Ensure questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.
<b>6.5</b>	Establish a clear and consistent communication process policy for City Council and Planning Commission staff to report questions, ensuring questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.
<b>6.6</b>	Implement morale-boosting initiatives such as training in communication, leadership, trust-building through job shadowing, and enhancing collaboration. Job shadowing could include elected and appointed officials with designated City staff.
<b>THEME 7—POLICY FRAMEWORK</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	The City should defer initiating a comprehensive update of the General Plan for 3–5 years in favor of dedicating staff and consultant resources to other efforts that can more quickly increase the efficiency and efficacy of the City’s development review processes and enhance customer service and satisfaction.
<b>7.2</b>	In the interim, however, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a focused, three-month review of the General Plan to identify a limited number of possible amendments that should be undertaken sooner.
<b>7.3</b>	Undertake a comprehensive update of Chapter 90 to facilitate more efficient, predictable, and desirable development while addressing the challenges posed by new land uses, including large warehouse distribution facilities and data centers. Focus on permitting more uses as either “permitted” or “administratively permitted,” subject to satisfying carefully considered development standards.
<b>7.4</b>	Similar to Citygate’s recommendation for the General Plan, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a limited review of the current code to identify the targeted amendments necessary to address issues that are disproportionately absorbing staff time and impacting customers (e.g., fence standards), or that, if deferred, may adversely impact the community and industry (e.g., large warehouse distribution facilities).

## SECTION 1—INTRODUCTION

Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) conducted a Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis for the City of Hemet, CA (City). In this section, we introduce key features of the City that are germane to this study, identify the key service areas involved with Hemet’s development review process, and outline Citygate’s project scope and study approach.

### 1.1 PROJECT INTRODUCTION

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Citygate conducted an independent analysis of the City’s development review services across the Community Development Department, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, and the Department of Life Safety within the Fire Department. Citygate’s study evaluates whether current services, staffing, and resources align with community and City Council expectations while identifying opportunities to streamline processes and improve both customer service and workflow efficiency.

Citygate examined current alignment with best practices, organizational effectiveness, and the overall customer experience of those who utilize development review services in the City. Our review focused on key operational areas including departmental missions and goals, communication, performance metrics, organizational structure, customer satisfaction, resource allocation, staffing, supervision, workload trends, and physical workspace layout.

While not a financial or compliance audit, this study provides an assessment of whether City departments deliver services in a timely, efficient, and responsive manner. Citygate evaluated the consistency of departmental philosophies with those of City leadership and development stakeholders, assessed the transparency and execution of services, and identified critical factors for high performance and customer satisfaction.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND

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The City of Hemet, located in the San Jacinto Valley in Riverside County, California, spans 29.3 square miles, covering approximately half of the valley it shares with the city of San Jacinto. Hemet borders San Jacinto to the north, East Hemet to the east, Polly Butte and Diamond Valley Lake to the south, and Green Acres and Juniper Springs to the west.

Incorporated in 1910, Hemet pre-dates the formation of Riverside County. The City operates under a Council/Manager form of government with a General Fund operating budget of approximately \$80 million. A significant portion of this budget comes from Measure U sales tax revenue, which voters approved in 2016 to fund public safety. Currently, Measure U sales tax generates approximately \$16 million annually. As of the 2020 census, the City’s population was 89,833, but more recent data reflects steady population growth. The City is 90–93 percent built out but faces

challenges related to maintaining and upgrading existing services, facilities, and infrastructure. The City’s development impact fees were also under review at the time of Citygate’s analysis, with the study expected to be completed by June 2025. This review represents an important step in ensuring the City has the necessary funding for future infrastructure and development needs.

The City’s **mission statement** is as follows.

*“The City of Hemet will be a destination of opportunity and empowerment for its residents, businesses, and visitors by capitalizing opportunity, striving for growth, and promoting diversity, inclusivity, and respect for each member of our community.”*

### 1.2.1 Population

As of the 2020 census, the City’s population stood at 89,833. Population projections indicate Hemet will grow steadily through the year 2040, as shown in the following tables.

**Table 2—City of Hemet Population Growth Projection (2010–2040)**

Population					Percent Change	
2010 Actual	2012 Estimated	2021 Actual	2035 Projected	2040 Projected	2010–2020	2020–2040
78,657	80,800	89,823	115,400	126,500	14.2%	40.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/Final Growth Forecast by Jurisdiction Report

**Table 3—City of Hemet Household Growth Forecast (2012–2040)**

Growth Forecast Year					Percent Change
2012	2020	2029	2035	2040	2012–2040
30,300	35,600	38,700*	46,800	52,200	72.3%

Source: City of Hemet 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update 2020–2029

\*Based on projected housing development per RHNA obligation

### 1.2.2 Planning Framework

The City’s land-use and planning framework exists within a complex state of California and regional planning framework with overlapping layers of regulatory bodies; land-use legislation affecting zoning and housing policies; significant growth pressures; the City’s historic, cultural, and environmental significance; and numerous state and City goals and policies to consider and advance. This creates a challenging environment in which to engage in land-use entitlement and related permitting decisions for City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council.

The City’s General Plan was adopted in 2012 and serves as a framework for the articulated vision and goals to guide resource allocations for current and future health, stability, conservation, infrastructure, fiscal allocations, housing, and growth within the City. It was amended at least 16 times between its adoption in 2012 and 2024. Notably, in 2024, the California Department of Housing and Community Development certified the City’s revised Housing Element for the 2021–2029 period. Also in 2024, the City added an Environmental Justice Element to its General Plan in accordance with California Senate Bill 1000.

The following table reflects available land for residential development in the City—as well as the resultant impact to population growth—for the current decade.

**Table 4—City of Hemet Land Available for Residential Development (2021–2029)**

Category	Total Housing Units	Potential Population
<b>Projects in the Pipeline (2021–2022)</b>	5,201	15,083
<b>Vacant Residential-Zoned Land</b>	3,775	10,948
<b>Accessory Dwelling Unit Projections</b>	88	255
<b>Total Potential Development Capacity (2021-2029)</b>	9,064	26,286

Source: City of Hemet 6th Cycle Housing Element Update 2020–2029

Note: Per the housing update and SCAG, the average household size within the City is 2.9 persons

- ◆ The total potential future residential development population (26,286) added to the actual 2021 population (89,832) yields an estimated 2030 population of approximately 116,109. This figure tracks closely with the 2035 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) projected population of 115,400.
- ◆ There is no current Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) Municipal Service Review (MSR) on-line for the City.
- ◆ The City’s 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update 2020–2029 states that there are no local growth measures (i.e., growth constraints) in place.
- ◆ The City’s 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update 2020–2029 notes that, per customer feedback, permit processing times are too slow: *“The development community commonly cites the permit processing time as a contributor to the high cost of housing. Depending on the magnitude and complexity of the development proposal, the time that elapses from application submittal to project approval may vary considerably.”*
- ◆ Depending on the economy, the City will experience significant growth between now and 2040 as summarized in the previous tables.

The following table provides a snapshot of the staffing resources the City has dedicated to the development review process and how staffing has changed over time.

*Note: Full-time equivalent (FTE) positions shown only reflect FTEs by department/division and are not exclusively broken down for development review functions.*

**Table 5—Authorized Staffing Level by Department/Division for Development Review**

Department	Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Personnel by Fiscal Year				
	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
Public Works (Engineering)	7	8	8	9	9
Comm. Dev. (Planning)	6	7	7	9	10
Building	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	7
Fire and Life Safety	6	6	6	6	7
Police	55.5	56.5	63	75	75.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>107.6</b>	<b>120.6</b>	<b>137.3</b>	<b>143.4</b>	<b>146.4</b>

The City budget and financial documents available online do not show how costs are allocated across staff by FTE position for all services, including development review. *It is thus difficult to determine precisely how many FTEs are dedicated to the development review process.*

The following table shows total fund allocations by department/division.

*Note: Budget expenditures shown only reflect total budgets by department/division and are not exclusively broken down for development review functions.*

**Table 6—Development Review Expenditures by Fiscal Year**

Department	Fiscal Year				
	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
<b>Public Works (Engineering)</b>	\$1,406,426	\$1,438,132	\$1,723,764	\$1,614,053	\$2,381,000
<b>Comm. Dev. (Planning)</b>	\$1,081,281	\$1,342,764	\$1,519,277	\$1,541,970	\$2,422,000
<b>Building</b>	\$1,176,034	\$1,513,923	\$2,058,941	\$1,696,838	\$2,146,000
<b>Fire and Life Safety</b>	\$660,261	\$765,158	\$872,879	\$1,139,057	\$1,447,000
<b>Police</b>	\$13,734,251	\$16,778,665	\$18,452,742	\$19,938,228	\$21,109,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,199,230</b>	<b>\$27,931,478</b>	<b>\$31,064,838</b>	<b>\$36,323,757</b>	<b>\$47,511,600</b>

### 1.3 STUDY SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Citygate was commissioned to perform an independent analysis of the City’s development review services and staffing. The City provides development review services largely through the Community Development Department, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, and the Department of Life Safety within the Fire Department (partner departments).

The purpose of this study is to provide recommendations regarding optimal staffing levels and solutions to optimize the development review process by streamlining procedures, improving the development review process workflow, and enhancing the overall experience of City customers. Citygate assessed whether current resources align with community and City Council expectations, whether development review processes align with best practices, and whether the City’s resources are properly organized to carry out their defined responsibilities.

Citygate’s Final Report and Implementation Action Plan template are intended to improve City processes and provide recommendations that, when implemented, substantially enhance customer service and position the City’s development review partner departments for continuous improvement and success.

To meet these objectives, the following key factors were reviewed in detail.

1. Mission, goals and Strategic Plan of the City
2. Mission and policies of the departments
3. Communication among the staffs, and between staff and customers
4. Current and future performance measures
5. Support systems
6. Organization of system components
7. Management structure and effectiveness
8. Customer satisfaction
9. Allocation of employees and other resources
10. Personnel management, supervision, and reporting
11. Staffing, budgeting, and training
12. Workload trends
13. Physical layout of the current program locations

The scope of Citygate’s engagement did not include either a financial audit or a compliance audit. Within the scope and objectives of the study, Citygate set its own goals that, once accomplished, would help determine whether the partner departments under review provide their services in a timely, efficient, effective, and responsive manner. These goals included:

1. Analyzing the City’s goals for its review process and the overall philosophy of the departments and divisions involved; assessing whether this philosophy is consistent with that of City decisionmakers and the interests of development community customers.
2. Assessing whether the partner departments provide a set of clearly defined, comprehensive services that are well planned and executed.
3. Reviewing the elements of development review programs and functions that are most critical to successful organizational performance and outstanding customer service.

Citygate also set a goal of providing realistic and executable recommendations to help the partner departments improve their overall effectiveness and meet the needs of the City Council, other City departments, and the customers and citizens served.

## 1.4 STUDY APPROACH

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Citygate’s study approach and methodology consisted of **nine major tasks**, which were described in our proposal to the City.

1. **Initiate study with City representatives** to enhance our understanding of the context and issues facing the City. We correlated our understanding of the study’s scope and schedule and discussed the specific internal and external stakeholders to interview.
2. **Review documents, policies, and procedures** to develop an overall process profile of the partner department operations and identify areas for improvement.
3. **Conduct internal stakeholder interviews** with key City staff and Council Members identified from development review process-involved partner departments to gain their insight on various aspects of the operational processes.
4. **Conduct external stakeholder interviews** with a targeted list of stakeholders and customers developed in coordination with the City. This includes residents and customers with long-term and regular contact with partner departments, including customers and stakeholders in the development community who have provided negative feedback about the permit process and/or other service delivery by the partner departments. Interviews help us understand stakeholder expectations and perceptions.
5. **Conduct an operational, staffing, and policy analysis.** The **operational** analysis documents the primary inputs, outputs, and sub-processes involved in key operations. Bottlenecks, redundant systems, inadequate controls, inefficient procedures, insufficient skillsets or training, and opportunities for additional technological enhancements were identified. The **staffing** analysis evaluates the organizational structure of partner departments, including the types and number of positions needed to meet workload and performance standards. The **policy** analysis evaluates policy documents, post-planning permit processes, and the Development Review Committee and Planning Commission roles.
6. **Presented a Mid-Project Review** to report preliminary findings and recommendations to the City Manager, Department Directors, and/or other designee(s) before preparing the Draft Report and Implementation Action Plan framework. This review also identified additional information, questions, or concerns to be addressed.

7. **Prepare Draft Report** with findings, recommendations, and a proposed **Implementation Plan** framework. Ample time was provided for the City to review the Draft Report.
8. **Complete Final Report and Implementation Plan**, including an Executive Summary that emphasizes incremental change and any possible “quick wins” for the City.
9. **Implementation Support** – Six months or one year after report delivery Citygate will come back to re-evaluate each of the recommendations in the report.

In executing these tasks and addressing the scope of this study’s objectives, Citygate engaged in the following processes:

- ◆ Met with the City’s assigned project staff to initiate the study.
- ◆ Prepared an employee orientation brochure and conducted an employee orientation session.
- ◆ Conducted 11 interviews with internal stakeholders identified by City staff.
- ◆ Conducted 15 interviews with external stakeholders identified by City staff.
- ◆ Performed walkthroughs of offices and facilities.
- ◆ Reviewed available documents and records related to the management and operations of the departments participating in the development review process.
- ◆ Compiled and performed analysis on various quantitative and qualitative data regarding the permit process.
- ◆ Performed comparisons of engineering services to identify best practices in comparable agencies.
- ◆ Reviewed the activities of the departments in the context of best practices to determine whether opportunities exist to enhance organizational performance.

Throughout this process, it was Citygate’s policy to review our study findings with multiple sources to validate all findings and data used in this report.

The Draft Report was presented to the City Manager, who was asked to review it and ensure its factual basis accuracy.

## **1.5 SUMMARY OF CITY EMPLOYEE AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

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Citygate associates were on-site in the City on January 28, 29, and 30, 2025 to conduct interviews with City staff. We later conducted virtual interviews with City staff that were unavailable during our on-site visit. In total, Citygate consultants completed 11 interviews with City staff, including department heads and select managers, supervisors, and frontline employees.

Additionally, Citygate staff conducted 15 virtual interviews with other persons from a City-provided list. These included the Mayor, members of City Council, Planning Commissioners, both large and small developers, small business owners, and industry professionals. Although participation by external stakeholders was limited by the unavailability and unresponsiveness of some persons who were invited to speak with Citygate, beneficial input was provided by those who participated.

Citygate informed each participant that the interviews would be confidential, with only general themes and recommendations reported, to ensure information would not be connected to specific individuals. Participants were provided with the Citygate project brochure as a preparatory document. The brochure addressed potential preliminary questions and outlined the project's process and timeline. All participants were asked similar questions, with adjustments based on their areas of expertise, departmental functions, and specific concerns or highlights.

Interviewees were also asked if there were others who should be included in the interview process. No additional individuals were identified at that time. Citygate staff also offered participants the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or information within two weeks after the interview if they felt anything had been missed or needed further clarification.

### **1.5.1 City Employee Interviews**

Interviews with staff revealed an overall sense of pride and care for the City. Many reported feelings of encouragement related to current efforts to stabilize leadership positions, adjust salaries to be more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions, and address the staffing challenges resulting from funding constraints.

Many of those interviewed expressed an understanding that staffing remains one of the most persistent challenges facing the City. Under current leadership, the City is shifting away from its previous reliance on outside consultants, with a greater focus on hiring permanent staff. This change is perceived by many of those interviewed to be positive, but it is also understood that the change comes with its own set of challenges—including recruitment struggles and the need for more competitive pay to attract and retain talent.

Nevertheless, the demand for services continues to exceed available resources. Department heads are burdened with a heavy workload, and the lack of key positions has created bottlenecks and led to delays and operational inefficiencies. Additionally, while pre-application processes involving

various City departments are running relatively smoothly, staff report that scheduling conflicts among agencies sometimes cause delays. This is particularly true for the Building and Safety Division of the Department of Life Safety. Issues with staff availability and communication in the Building and Safety Division have led to frustration for both customers and other City staff involved in the development review process.

Customer service remains a critical area of concern for both City employees and customers of the City's development review services. The Building and Safety Division's limited office hours at the time of Citygate's analysis (10:00 am to 3:00 pm) have been a source of confusion and frustration for customers, especially given the extended counter hours of other departments. The lack of communication with customers regarding these office hours remains an unresolved issue, leading to dissatisfaction among customers—which City staff report as creating a conflict between departments.

Many of those interviewed indicated a need for greater inter-departmental collaboration to streamline processes and reduce delays. Staff are hopeful that a simultaneous review system, where all departments undertake review and provide their feedback on a project at the same time, will help expedite the approval process and reduce the back-and-forth between developers and the City. City employees express a great deal of optimism about the implementation of the Tyler Technologies platform and seem focused on making this much-needed technology improvement successful.

### ***Community Development Department***

Community Development employees were positive and encouraged by recent progress while also acknowledging the difficulties they continue to experience due to vacancies in key positions identified at the time of Citygate's analysis (Deputy Director and Principal Planner). While improvements have been made in the recent past, many still feel that there is a lack of coordination and collaboration with internal development review partners. Staff feel overwhelmed with responsibilities and report that between attending to customer inquiries at the counter and trying to complete their assigned projects, they often do not have time to return phone calls or reply to emails. This lack of responsiveness is perceived very negatively by Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, and some external customers.

There is widespread acknowledgement among those interviewed that the Community Development Department needs to adapt to the City's growing population and the changing landscape of residential and commercial development.

### ***Engineering Division of the Public Works Department***

Engineering is a division of the Public Works Department, which has spent the past few years building a capable team. With the appointment of a new City Engineer, and the subsequent hiring of a new Deputy Engineer and other key positions, Engineering Division employees report a sense

of optimism about the direction they are moving in. The decision to move toward more full-time positions and rely less on consultants for development review is viewed as a positive step and has widespread support. Contract staff is still utilized but requires significant oversight, and there is currently no dedicated individual to manage these contracts.

### ***Department of Life Safety [Fire Department]***

The creation of the Department of Life Safety followed turnover in key leadership positions within the City. This decision was seen at the time as an innovative way to provide stability and relieve pressure from the Community Development Department. Since its creation, however, the reasons for its current organizational structure and evidence of its effectiveness in the development review process are elusive to many staff members interviewed by Citygate. Additionally, many report that a lack of sufficient staffing hampers the Department’s ability to be functionally effective. The physical separation of supervisory and plan-check functions, and the different times that permit techs, planners, and engineers are available, adds complexity and frustration to the already strained communication and coordination among development review staff.

A major concern is the lack of staffing in the Department of Life Safety, which is responsible for fire prevention, plan checking, building inspection, and code compliance. Construction activity has placed an extreme demand upon prevention and building plan check and inspection, with related personnel struggling to provide timely plan review and inspections for new projects. This focus has negatively affected future projects as the group has somewhat disengaged from predevelopment meetings in City Hall that are vital for project planning and efficient correction of deficiencies prior to the submittal of plans and construction. Prevention has also deferred inspection of existing occupied buildings and most fire safety education outreach. Within Code Compliance, there were several vacant positions identified during analysis including the manager position, which has since been filled. While the City has adopted many new regulations, Code Compliance has not engaged in substantial outreach to accomplish their intent.

While the formation of the Department of Life Safety reflects a unique, “thinking-outside-the-box” approach, there are many best practices and creative examples of highly efficient and effective building and code enforcement operations housed inside a Community Development Department. Including building and code enforcement functions within a more comprehensive department of related functions enables a city to evolve towards a more cohesive and unified approach to development review. Integrating all the divisions involved in the process—with a “one-stop shop” approach, for example—should also enable a city to provide enhanced services to its customers. Other benefits include (but are not limited to) the streamlining of processes, program enhancements, cross-training and job-sharing opportunities, increased collaboration, reduced redundancies, and enhanced communication.

### 1.5.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with stakeholders revealed a broad spectrum of opinions regarding the City’s development review processes, highlighting key themes of confidence, frustration, and divergent perceptions. Developers, as well as those with hands-on experience in the development sector, largely expressed strong confidence in the City employees they interacted with on a regular basis, and particularly those from the three partner departments involved in the development review process. They lauded the technical expertise and operational knowledge of these staff members and acknowledged their ability to navigate complex regulatory landscapes. Furthermore, developers were understanding of the newer team members, demonstrating patience as they “learn the ropes” and acclimate to the demands of the role.

However, despite this overall positive assessment, a **consistent theme of frustration** emerged regarding a perceived lack of responsiveness. Stakeholders almost universally attributed most of this issue as arising from chronic understaffing, which they believed impedes the City’s ability to handle requests and processes in a timely manner.

In stark contrast, interviews with the Mayor, Councilmembers, and Planning Commissioners revealed a significantly different viewpoint, underscoring a profound gap in confidence in City staff between the City’s elected and appointed officials and the development community. These stakeholders expressed doubts about the technical expertise and operational capabilities of development review staff. They also questioned staff’s ability to effectively manage the increasing demands of the development review process. A recurring theme was a perceived inadequacy in communication and follow-through, with concerns raised about the staff’s level of commitment and dedication to their roles. This discord between the development community’s confidence in City staff and the political leadership’s skepticism suggests deeper challenges within the City’s development review process.

### 1.6 THE KEY TO SUCCESS: THERE IS A ROLE FOR EVERYONE

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In developing our findings and recommendations, Citygate aimed to create a report that fosters broad ownership across the City’s workforce and community. Lasting change depends on everyone feeling engaged and empowered to contribute because when improvements do not feel like a shared vision, resistance, disengagement, or even opposition can arise.

Successful implementation of these recommendations is dependent upon how well they reflect the insights and concerns of City employees, elected officials, customers, other stakeholders, and leadership. The City’s unique fiscal constraints, staffing challenges, organizational and structural complexities, outdated technology, and aging policy frameworks are challenging to all.

**Addressing these systemic issues will require collaboration, transparency, and a collective commitment to modernization.**

By embracing a culture of shared responsibility and proactive participation, the City’s diverse teams can overcome resource limitations and organizational misalignments to build a more efficient, responsive, and sustainable development service system. There is an essential, supportive role for every individual and department/division—from elected officials and City leadership to frontline staff and community stakeholders—in owning and driving these strategic improvements forward. Together, **this inclusive approach can transform challenges into opportunities and lay the foundation for the City’s long-term growth and success.**

### 1.6.1 Specific Roles

#### *Elected Officials*

**Your leadership is critical to overcoming the City’s fiscal constraints and structural challenges.** Recognize that the current funding model heavily prioritizes public safety, limiting resources for Community Development and other critical, related functions. Support efforts to diversify revenue streams and restructure budget allocations to provide sustainable funding for development services. Advocate for strategic investments in staffing, technology modernization, and comprehensive policy updates. Leadership’s active endorsement of the Implementation Action Plan and commitment to long-term financial and organizational reforms will send a strong signal throughout City government and the community. Lead with vision and insist on measurable progress toward a more balanced, efficient, and customer-focused development process.

#### *City Manager’s Office*

**You stand at the helm of operational transformation.** Your leadership and vision have already made change possible! Address staffing shortages through proactive workforce planning and seek innovative solutions to build capacity within constrained budgets. Champion organizational restructuring to improve collaboration and accountability—particularly between Community Development, Building and Safety, Code Compliance, and Fire Prevention—to streamline workflows and reduce inefficiencies. Lead the rollout and adoption of the Tyler Technologies software platform to modernize permitting and tracking processes. Prioritize leadership development and staff training programs that build morale and reduce turnover. Your decisive action in aligning resources and driving systemic improvements is crucial to turning recommendations into reality.

#### *Community Development Staff*

**Your frontline role in delivering development services means you are both key contributors and primary beneficiaries of these changes.** Engage actively with the Implementation Action Plan, even as you balance current workload pressures due to staffing shortages. Adapt to new technology tools and concurrent review protocols designed to improve efficiency and reduce

frustration. Advocate for necessary training and skill development to enhance your professional growth and better serve the community. Support efforts to improve interdepartmental communication and coordination, understanding that organizational realignment aims to empower—not hinder—your work. Your commitment and flexibility are vital to building a responsive and resilient department.

***Key Staff in Other City Departments: Public Works, Fire, and Economic Development***

**Your collaboration is indispensable to breaking down silos and improving the development review process.** Work closely with Community Development to implement concurrent, coordinated reviews that minimize delays and inconsistencies. Support the adoption of new technology systems that unify workflows and improve communication. Be flexible in adapting roles and responsibilities as organizational restructuring occurs—especially where overlaps or misalignments currently exist. Recognize that better integration and customer-focused service will enhance the City’s overall effectiveness and public trust. Your engagement and partnership will help turn structural and procedural reforms into practical, day-to-day improvements.

***Customers and Stakeholders***

**Your collaboration and understanding are essential in a system operating under financial and staffing pressures.** Provide complete, accurate, and timely information in your applications to help reduce processing delays. Engage early and constructively with City staff through established channels, avoiding shortcuts that complicate workflows. Appreciate the constraints City employees face and support initiatives aimed at improving communication, transparency, and service delivery. Your patience and partnership can help bridge current gaps, fostering trust as the City transitions to more streamlined, concurrent, and transparent review processes supported by new technology.

## SECTION 2—OPERATIONAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This section describes and examines the resources and processes involved in the provision of development review services, and is based on documents provided by the City, material available on the City’s website, and information gathered during interviews with City staff and external stakeholders. This analysis serves as the foundation for the themes, recommendations, and Implementation Plan Citygate presents in other sections and appendices.

For this analysis, Citygate assessed the departments and divisions involved in the development review process, which primarily include the **Community Development Department** (Planning, Housing, Economic Development), the **Engineering Division** of the Public Works Department, and the **Department of Life Safety** within the Fire Department (Building and Safety, Code Compliance).

### 2.1 SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

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#### 2.1.1 Development Process Phases for a Typical City

- ◆ **Entitlement Phase:** This is the period during which the developer applies for official permission to develop and construct on a property within the City’s jurisdiction. It begins when the developer formally submits the land use entitlement (planning) application and ends when the developer receives approval. Obtaining approval enables the developer to develop the project on that site according to the concept that was approved. The entitlement process varies from city to city. Among the major elements in obtaining a development permit are obtaining approval(s) from a city’s planning commission and/or city council. This is often the most challenging phase of a project because it is subject to the scrutiny of the public and, often, legal challenges.
- ◆ **Permit Phase:** A developer needs a building and sometimes other permits (e.g., grading, encroachment) before it can construct a facility on a property. The permit phase is defined as a period during which architects and engineers collaborate on completing the proposed facility’s design development and construction documents to obtain construction permits from the city. This phase begins when the developer receives a project’s development approval and continues until it receives construction permits allowing the developer to build structures and make other site improvements.
- ◆ **Construction Phase:** This phase represents the building period and starts when builders begin constructing improvements on a site. It concludes when a project

receives its certification (typically a Certificate of Occupancy) from the city that the facility is safe for occupation.

### **2.1.2 City of Hemet Development Review Committee Process**

The following Development Review Committee (DRC) process is found on the City’s website.<sup>1</sup>

**Entitlement Phase:** The DRC review is a three-step process. The first step determines if your application is complete and ready for review; the second is the review of your project’s design; and the third is the review of recommended conditions of approval. This takes a minimum of three DRC meetings to complete.

**Step Number 1:** After the application is accepted, it is distributed to the City’s Planning, Public Works, Building, Fire, and Police Departments. Each department reviews the submittal materials. At the first DRC meeting the reviewing departments identify any items that do not satisfy the requirements listed in the application packet.

If the application is determined to be complete, an item will be scheduled for the next available DRC meeting to review the project’s design issues (Step Number 2).

If the application is determined to be incomplete, it is tabled until such time all the required submittal materials are submitted, reviewed, and accepted by staff as satisfying the requirements of the application packet.

Following the first DRC meeting, staff will mail a letter of either completeness or incompleteness to the applicant based on the determination of the DRC. Consistent with the State’s Permit Streamlining Act, the applicant will receive this letter within 30 days from the date the submittal was accepted.

**Step Number 2:** At the DRC meeting after the application is determined complete, staff will review the project’s design for compliance with the City’s various codes, regulations, and guidelines. During this part of the review revisions to the project may be necessary and, if so, it will take more than one meeting to complete this step of the DRC review process.

It is during this step that, if the project has the potential to affect a significant number of residences, the applicant is encouraged to hold at least one neighborhood meeting to discuss their project with the residents in the area. While this meeting is not required, such a meeting early in the process can provide valuable input which if addressed at this point in the process can avoid potential delays at the time of the Planning Commission’s public meeting.

It is also at this step that any California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC), Parks Commission, or Traffic Commission reviews along with any associated actions must be completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [City Website](#).

The purpose of this step is to assure that every aspect of the project complies with all applicable local, state and federal codes, regulations and guidelines. Detailed specifications as well as overall design issues are discussed, and direction is given to the applicant regarding revisions to the project and its technical drawings. After any necessary revisions are completed, the project is scheduled for the next available DRC meeting (Step Number 3).

**Step Number 3:** Prior to the final DRC meeting, the applicant is provided the DRC's draft recommended conditions of approval for the project. The conditions are discussed at the subsequent DRC meeting and the applicant is asked whether they agree with the conditions. Any conditions that are not agreed upon and cannot be modified enough to reach an agreement are noted and are identified as issue points to be discussed at the time of the applicant's meeting with the Community Development Director or Planning Commission hearing.

While it is the goal of the DRC to reach consensus with the applicant on the ultimate design of the project and its conditions of approval, if agreement cannot be reached, it is the responsibility of the DRC to recommend to the Planning Commission either approval of the project with conditions, including those not agreed to by the applicant, or denial of the project.

### *Permit Phase*

After discretionary approval for a project is issued, the project enters the permit phase. The City follows the typical process of plan-checking submittals and re-checking subsequent submittals that address comments from the first review. The City provides online guidance and checklists for applicants to guide them through the application process. Online guidance covers requirements for permits related to encroachment, grading, transportation, and erosion control. The City also provides online checklists for subdivision maps, improvement plan submittals, and storm drain requirements with its *Submittal Requirements for Review of Final Maps, Improvement Plans and Grading Plans Applications*.<sup>2</sup> Plans may be submitted electronically via email, or through the City's contractor portal. Applications may also be submitted over the counter.

### *Plan Check*

Per the City's website, the Engineering Division's plan checking services include reviews of a variety of improvement plans such as street, storm drain, water, sewer, streetlights, traffic signals, and landscaping plans. The Engineering Division also reviews subdivision maps and studies, including those for hydrology/hydraulics, traffic impacts, and water quality management. The Division manages all agreements and bonding requirements for residential and commercial projects.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [City Website](#).

<sup>3</sup> Source: [City Website](#).

The basic requirements for preparation of tentative maps, final maps, and parcel maps are as follows.

- ◆ After discretionary approval is issued for a project, the applicant proceeds with the preparation of final and parcel maps. Per the City, these shall be prepared by a Registered Civil Engineer or a Professional Land Surveyor, in conformance with the requirements of the City of Hemet and the Subdivision Map Act (latest edition).
- ◆ All improvement plans shall be prepared by a Registered Civil Engineer and in conformance with the City’s *Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction* (including latest updates).
- ◆ Storm drain improvement plans are required to be prepared in conformance with the *Storm Drain Development Standards, Storm Drain Criteria, and Drainage Design Manual*; the City of Hemet Municipal Code; and applicable Ordinances. An approved Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP), with its corresponding proof of filing of a Notice of Intent with the State Water Resources Board, shall be required prior to obtaining a grading permit.
- ◆ The City requires an applicant to submit the following documents for the first review:
  - Final/parcel maps and approved tentative maps – three (3) copies
  - Conditions of Approval – three (3) copies
  - Preliminary Title Report, less than 60 days old – two (2) copies
  - Recorded Maps of Adjacent Properties – one (1) copy
  - Recorded Deeds, Easements, or other related documents – one (1) copy
  - Grading Plan, for reference only – one (1) copy
  - Final/Parcel Map – five (5) sets
  - Traverse Calculations – two (2) sets
  - Plan Check Initial Deposit (per the current fee schedule).
- ◆ The City makes expedited plan reviews available to developers. This service is subject to the City Engineer’s approval and is dependent on staff availability and workload.

### *Acceptance of Maps*

All subdivision maps are required to be accepted by the City Council prior to their recordation.

***Inspection Phase***

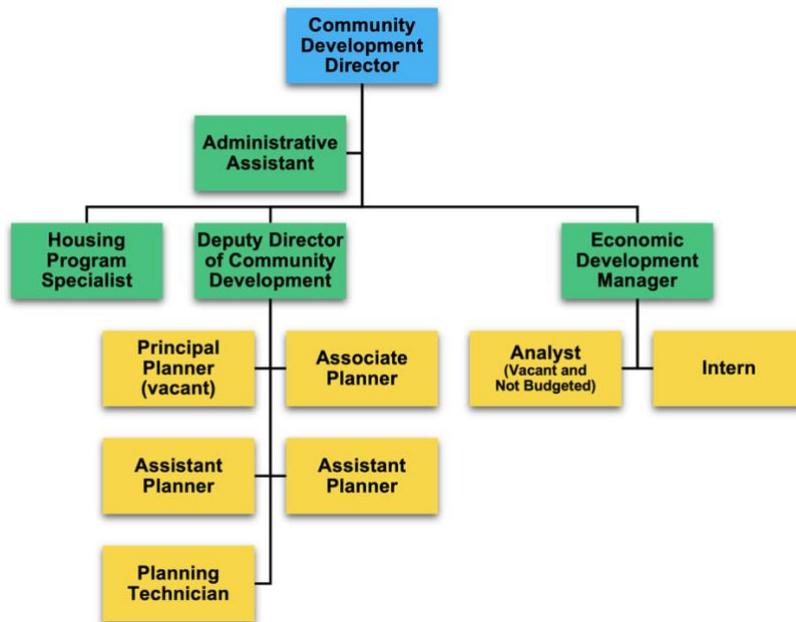
The City follows the usual process for construction inspection. Per the City’s website, “City inspectors provide review services for public and private improvements, grading, parking lots, water and sewer systems, storm drain, bridges, streetlights, pedestrian lights, traffic signals, landscape districts, parks, roadway, curbs, gutters, sidewalk, handicap ramps, and more.”<sup>4</sup>

The City of Hemet currently uses eTRAKiT for inspection scheduling and tracking. This system is scheduled to be replaced with the Tyler Technologies software package. This will improve processing, customer access, and transparency.

**2.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

The Community Development Department (CDD) is organized into three divisions: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development. As reflected in the following figure, CDD was allocated 10 full-time positions in the City’s adopted budget for fiscal year (FY) 2024–25. This is one more position than in the previous two fiscal years and reflects the City Council’s November 2024 approval of a new Deputy Director of Community Development. The Planning division is allocated six positions. The Housing and Economic Development divisions are each allocated one position.

**Figure 1—Community Development Department Organizational Chart (FY 24–25)**



<sup>4</sup> Source: [City Website](#).

The City filled the Deputy Director position in March 2025. While the City had previously recruited for the Principal Planner position, the position has been vacant since September 2023 when the incumbent was appointed Community Development Director.

The Community Development Director leads the CDD. Until the Deputy Director position was filled, the Director was responsible for directly supervising and evaluating all CDD staff. The Director is also responsible, with the support of an Administrative Assistant, for the general administration of the CDD, including processing of agreements, purchase orders, and invoices; maintaining and reconciling deposit accounts; and managing the CDD’s budget and expenditures. In addition to the Planning division, the Director oversees the City’s Economic Development and Housing programs and staff, and is responsible for implementation of some grant-funded state and federal programs. The Director also serves as lead staff (Secretary) for the Planning Commission and the Development Review Committee (DRC).

During the period preceding Citygate’s assessment, and until the Deputy Director position was filled, the CDD Director was spread too thin because the position functioned as both a planner and an executive. This has impaired the Director’s ability to respond in a timely manner when their involvement and decision-making are needed to support staff and respond to external stakeholders, including the Planning Commission and the Mayor / City Council. This situation likely undermined these officials’ confidence in the CDD, and has hindered the Director’s—and, by extension, the City’s—capacity to pursue high-priority goals and objectives, especially those related to improving the development review process.

The City’s recent hiring of a Deputy Director should help the CDD generally and enable the Director to focus more attention on the position’s leadership, strategic, and managerial roles. Filling the vacant Principal Planner position should remain a priority for the City, particularly if it is intended to take a lead role in the development review process. Once the CDD is fully staffed, its collective performance should improve significantly within one to two years. However, CDD will need to continue utilizing consultants for specialized tasks (e.g., major zoning code updates, a full General Plan update, California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] review). CDD will also need to add staff planners to keep up with growing demand for development review, advance planning, and other services.

This same dynamic of workloads exceeding staff resources and capacity extends throughout the CDD. During Citygate’s interviews, **CDD employees consistently communicated significant stress due to heavy workloads**. This includes trying to attend to customer inquiries at the counter, process planning cases and other assignments, and respond to phone calls and emails in a timely fashion.

Citygate’s scope of work for this review did not include an analysis of individual projects and outcomes. Instead, Citygate relied upon information provided by staff and stakeholders regarding

project status and workloads. Those who contributed to Citygate’s understanding reported considerable work backlogs, particularly in development review. However, Citygate had difficulty in determining the extent of the backlog for each function. This was due to **two factors**:

1. City staff provided only a portion of the information requested by Citygate related to current and historical workloads, current work plans, and anticipated workload projections for each function.
2. Management reports measuring key performance metrics for program services such as application aging, assignments, deadlines, milestones, and review times are highly aggregated or nonexistent.

This is unsurprising. The City struggles to adequately staff services that are not supported by Measure U, resulting in chronic under-resourcing of those services. Strategic initiatives, performance measurement, and reporting are, at best, secondary priorities that receive only sporadic focus.

These challenging circumstances are partially mitigated by the CDD’s strengths. Interviews with staff revealed an overall sense of pride and care for the community. Additionally, and as described in this report’s discussion of Citygate’s customer interviews, developers and others with hands-on experience in the development sector largely expressed strong confidence in—and lauded the technical expertise and operational knowledge of—the City employees they interacted with on a regular basis, including CDD staff.

### **2.2.1 Planning**

In larger jurisdictions, there is typically a functional and organizational distinction between staff dedicated to advance planning and staff dedicated to current planning. In the City, as in many smaller jurisdictions, the advance planning and current planning workloads are intermingled, making it difficult to separate respective workloads.

The foundation for **advance planning** is a community’s General Plan. The Planning division is responsible for preparing, updating, and coordinating compliance with the General Plan, as well as applicable state of California laws and City ordinances. Advance planning also includes the development of specific plans for a particular geographic area of a community. The City has adopted a Downtown Specific Plan and design guidelines. It has also adopted plans or custom zoning for other areas of the City, including the airport, the Florida Avenue corridor, and the medical district.

The last full update of the City’s General Plan was adopted in 2012. Per the City’s General Plan 2024 Progress Report (March 2025), the General Plan has been amended at least 16 times between its adoption in 2012 and 2024. Notably, in 2024, the California Department of Housing and Community Development certified the City’s Housing Element for the 2021–2029 period. The

City also added an Environmental Justice Element to its General Plan in 2024 in accordance with California Senate Bill 1000.

The focus of **current planning** in the City is on providing plan check and inspection services and reviewing and processing land-use entitlement applications for compliance with the General Plan, municipal code, and applicable state and federal housing and environmental regulations. Some applications require only administrative (i.e., ministerial) approval. Others are subject to discretionary approvals that require one or more public hearings before the Planning Commission and/or City Council.

The types of current planning applications administered by Planning staff include administrative permits, subdivision maps, zoning changes, site development, conditional use permits, and General Plan amendments. Planning staff are also responsible for responding to public inquiries at the City’s front counter, by telephone, and through email.

The CDD Director reported to Citygate that the Planning division:

- ◆ Processed over 1,800 ministerial and discretionary planning entitlements between January 2020 and November 2024. This represents an average of approximately 400 per year. Of these, 250 to 300 per year were ministerial permits.
- ◆ Conducted 1,849 building permit reviews from 2021 to 2024, an average of 496 per year.
- ◆ Conducted 874 inspections from 2021 to 2024, an average of 291 per year.

Annual statistics were not provided to Citygate at the time of review.

Staff also reported to Citygate that over the past four years—due to a decline in the availability of full-time staff, as well as internal Department leadership changes—the City has hired contract staff to support development review. The consulting firms the City has contracted with have changed in recent years, which has further complicated interdepartmental coordination and the quality of service. Of concern to Citygate is that **the average time to obtain an approval for new construction from all City departments is generally between two to three years.**

### *Operational and Capacity Issues*

Based on the information made available, Citygate views the following operational and capacity issues as having a substantial bearing on development review processing timelines.

- ◆ CDD’s Planning division, as is common in many municipalities, views itself as the “gatekeeper” of the “master development application.” Development applications frequently have multiple and complex components that need review by other

departments for their approval. Planning’s role, and the importance of processing, tracking, and approving applications in a coordinated and timely manner, is not uniformly supported across the various departments that participate in the development review process—impacting the customer service experience and processing timelines. Contributing to this dynamic is that other departments have historically not been required to work out of Planning’s Project Track, the City’s preliminary review portal.

- ◆ Documents are transmitted back and forth through email. Communication occurs through phone calls between various City departments, applicants, and third-party consultants. This is time consuming and subject to miscommunication and performance lapses. City staff report that the process is improving, but challenges remain due to the volume of applications, the follow-up required, and third-party consultant reviews. Adoption of the Tyler Technologies software should substantially mitigate this problem, but only if all departments involved in the development review process fully adopt and utilize the new platform.
- ◆ A related issue is that the intake and dissemination of planning (i.e., land use entitlement) applications is inconsistent. Due to a lack of staff capacity, some applications are reportedly received and held for weeks before they are routed for review. Review by the various City departments participating in the development review process often occurs sequentially rather than concurrently. To address this issue, the City should consider establishing a set schedule for accepting and processing planning applications. Citygate recommends the City accept applications one day per month, pursuant to a set schedule for the calendar year. Once accepted, the processing of applications should: a) reflect the type of application, including whether they are ministerially approved or subject to discretionary approvals; and b) prioritize applications with statutory processing timelines and those that advance key City policy goals.
- ◆ There is a lack of dedicated building and fire plans examiners in the Life Safety Department to participate in the DRC and provide technical review of applications. While the City is currently utilizing a third-party consultant for fire plans, they reportedly lack the expertise necessary to provide comments at the pre-application stage. Also, after formal submittal of a project, there are no City staff representing the Building and Safety Division or Fire Department available to complete a timely review of the preliminary plans submitted.

It is a best practice for building and fire plans professionals to participate in preliminary reviews that could save the applicant time and money or, at minimum, inform applicants of the current building code requirements that would apply to a proposed project. Not having this information

ahead of time can delay completion of the project simply because an applicant is not provided with adequate guidance. Citygate notes that both City staff and external stakeholders expressed concern regarding the frequency of application resubmittals. It would likely pay dividends for development review staff to provide more guidance to applicants and, when resubmittals are necessary, to process those in a timely manner. In addition, skilled plan reviewers, available at the front counter, could respond to critical questions from the public, architects, and contractors.

## **2.2.2 Housing**

The Housing Division of the CDD is charged with coordinating City compliance with and advancing implementation of the Housing Element of the General Plan and operating the City's housing programs and services. It is staffed with a single position, a Housing Program Specialist. The Housing division's programs include:

- ◆ Senior Home and ADA Rehabilitation Program (Annual CDBG Allocation)
- ◆ Rental Property Repair Program (Voluntary Compliance Agreement)
- ◆ HOME Program
- ◆ Cal-Home Program
- ◆ Sahara Village (Monitoring)
- ◆ Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA)
- ◆ General Plan Housing Element Compliance (Goals):
  1. Provide for the attainment of quality housing within a satisfying living environment for households of all socio-economic, age, and ethnic types in Hemet.
  2. Facilitate the provision and improvement of affordable housing to meet the needs of the community.
  3. Provide adequate sites for housing.
  4. Preserve existing neighborhoods and rehabilitate the existing housing stock.
  5. Preserve affordable housing opportunities.

The Housing Division's activities largely lie outside Citygate's scope of work as it pertains to The City's development review processes. However, if it has not already done so, City leadership should consider tasking the Housing Division with facilitating the development review process for housing projects and activities that advance City policy goals and, especially, the Housing Element of the General Plan. To accomplish this, the Housing Program Specialist should, over time, gain a

working knowledge of the development review process and function; provide input on City efforts to streamline the development review process, especially for affordable projects; and, in a similar manner to the Economic Development Manager, assist both City development review staff and housing developers during project review. Doing so could help advance Action Item #25 of the City’s Strategic Plan for FY 2024–25: “Fast track qualifying development projects.”

### **2.2.3 Economic Development**

The Economic Development Division of the CDD is responsible for programs and activities to retain and grow existing businesses, attract new businesses, create employment opportunities, promote entrepreneurship, foster innovation, and enhance the overall economy of the City. The City’s FY 2024–25 budget allocates Economic Development a single, full-time Economic Development Manager position, as well as a part-time, temporary intern.

In August 2024, in accordance with the City’s General Plan and the City Council’s FY 2023–24 Strategic Plan, the City adopted the “Hemet RISES Economic Strategy.” This reflects the City’s leadership’s emphasis on fostering sustainable City growth, stimulating job creation and investment, increasing property values, and enhancing Hemet’s long-term economic prosperity.

The Hemet RISES Economic Strategy outlines a three-pronged approach focusing on “Place, People, and Process” to drive economic prosperity. Especially relevant to Citygate’s analysis of the City’s development review process is the emphasis of “Hemet RISES” on facilitating special events, investment, and development, including:

- ◆ Attracting residents and visitors using a special event-driven strategy. Events require permits.
- ◆ Catalyzing projects like the build-out of the Hemet Auto Mall, redevelopment of the L.P. Denney property and adjacent properties as a mixed-use development, the launch of a restaurant grant program for downtown dining, and the expansion of the Historic Hemet Theatre.
- ◆ Streamlining the development and permitting processes to create a more business-friendly environment. This includes improving and clarifying the City’s regulatory requirements and development process.

The City hired its Economic Development Manager in early 2024. Both internal and external stakeholders spoke positively to Citygate about the Economic Development Manager’s performance and the initiative they have demonstrated to date. City staff also indicate that Planning, Economic Development, Engineering, and Life Safety personnel are building relationships; communication is improving as staff collaborate to make development and code compliance more understandable to businesses; and there is growing recognition of the need to adopt a more educational, rather than strictly regulatory, approach. Some of the staff Citygate

spoke to expressed appreciation for the Thursday development coordination meetings, which provide an opportunity to address development issues collaboratively.

As previously noted, the Economic Development Manager has been supported only by an intern. This diminishes the City’s ability to advance the ambitious goals of the Hemet RISES Economic Strategy. Vigorous pursuit of the strategy—including the utilization of an economic development perspective in efforts to streamline the City’s development review and permitting processes—may represent the City’s best opportunity to improve the community’s medium-to-long-term economic outlook. Successful implementation of Hemet RISES could thus enhance the City’s fiscal position and its capacity to fund City services.

To build on the early momentum of the City’s economic development initiative, Citygate recommends that the City consider expanding the Economic Development Division by adding one to two (1–2) additional staff members to its full-time staff complement. The City should initially add one position, evaluate progress and goals, and consider adding a second position accordingly.

As an option, the City might consider moving the Economic Development functions into the City Manager’s office to improve coordination across departments and increase the City’s ability to act quickly and effectively in response to growth opportunities. Elevating this important function also enhances leadership alignment, external credibility, and internal efficiency.

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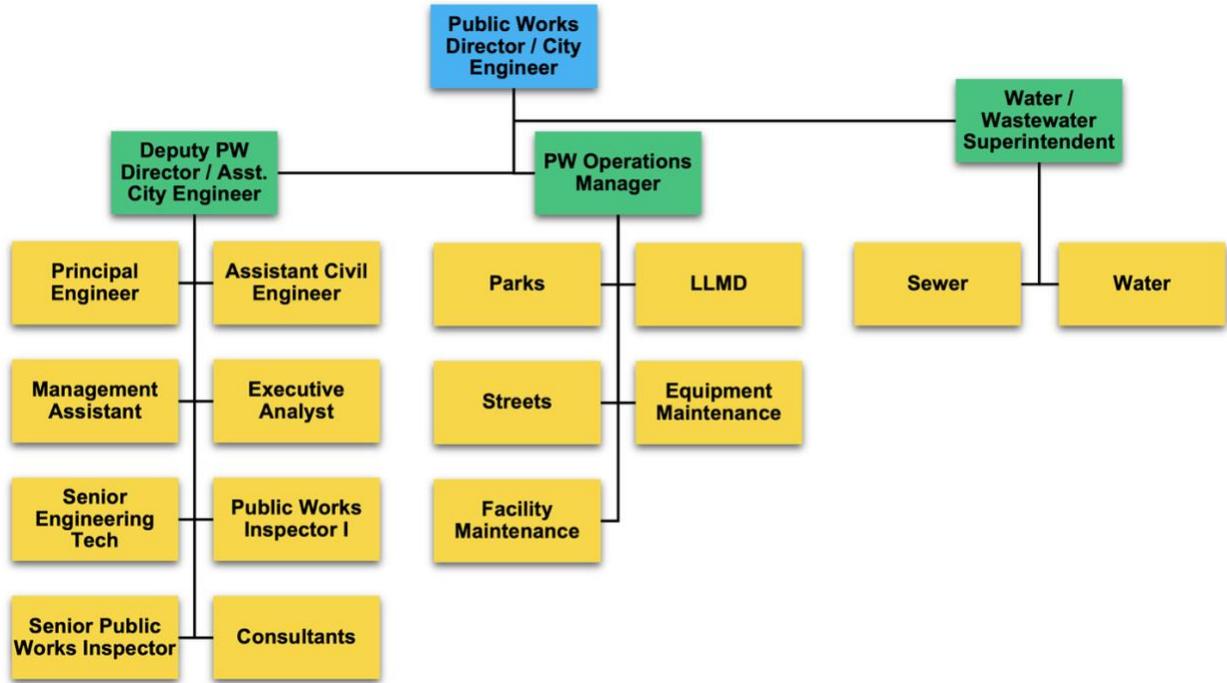
### **2.3 PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION AND ENGINEERING**

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The City’s Public Works Department utilizes the typical organizational structure found in most cities of its size. The Department consists of Public Works Administration, an Engineering Division, and an operations and maintenance division.

The Department’s organizational structure is shown in the following figure.

**Figure 2—Public Works Department Organizational Chart**



According to the City’s website, the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department coordinates, checks plans, inspects services, and issues permits for private development projects. The Engineering Division works with developers, consultants, and the public to ensure development project success and is thus the subject of this element of Citygate’s review.

As is the case with most public works engineering divisions, the City’s Engineering Division is responsible for a variety of engineering services beyond development review, with functions that can be broadly categorized as capital improvement projects, construction management, grant administration, and development review.

In the City’s case, the Engineering Division is responsible for the following functions:

- ◆ Administering assessment districts.
- ◆ Providing long-range planning of Public Works projects and facilities (master planning).
- ◆ Administering various transportation funds and grants.
- ◆ Coordinating engineering reviews of final maps and private development projects.
- ◆ Designing all capital improvement projects.

- ◆ Inspecting all public construction projects, including initial on-site (grading and parking lot) and off-site projects initiated by private developers.
- ◆ Providing administrative and technical support for the various street, sewer, and storm drain projects undertaken by the City.

Currently, these services are provided by nine (9) FTE staff in the Engineering Division as shown in the previous figure.

Engineering Division staff increased from seven (7) FTEs in FY 2020–21 to nine (9) FTEs by FY 2023–24. Consultant services are used to support staff as needed. Additional staff and the filling of the Deputy Director position have enabled the Public Works Department to build a strong team under the Director’s leadership. Given the range of services and relatively lean staffing in the Engineering Division, the Division is a good example of “doing more with less.”

Citygate recommends that the Engineering Division consider creating a new position dedicated to contract administration, with a primary focus on supporting the management of consultant services. As the Division’s workload continues to increase and projects become more complex, project engineers and managers are increasingly tasked with balancing technical responsibilities alongside the administrative demands of contract oversight.

Establishing a dedicated contract administration role would help alleviate this burden, enabling technical staff to concentrate on design, coordination, and the delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects, while also improving oversight of consultant performance. This position could be responsible for tasks such as tracking consultant deliverables, coordinating invoicing and contract amendments, ensuring compliance with procurement policies, and serving as a liaison between consultants and internal departments

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## **2.4 DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SAFETY**

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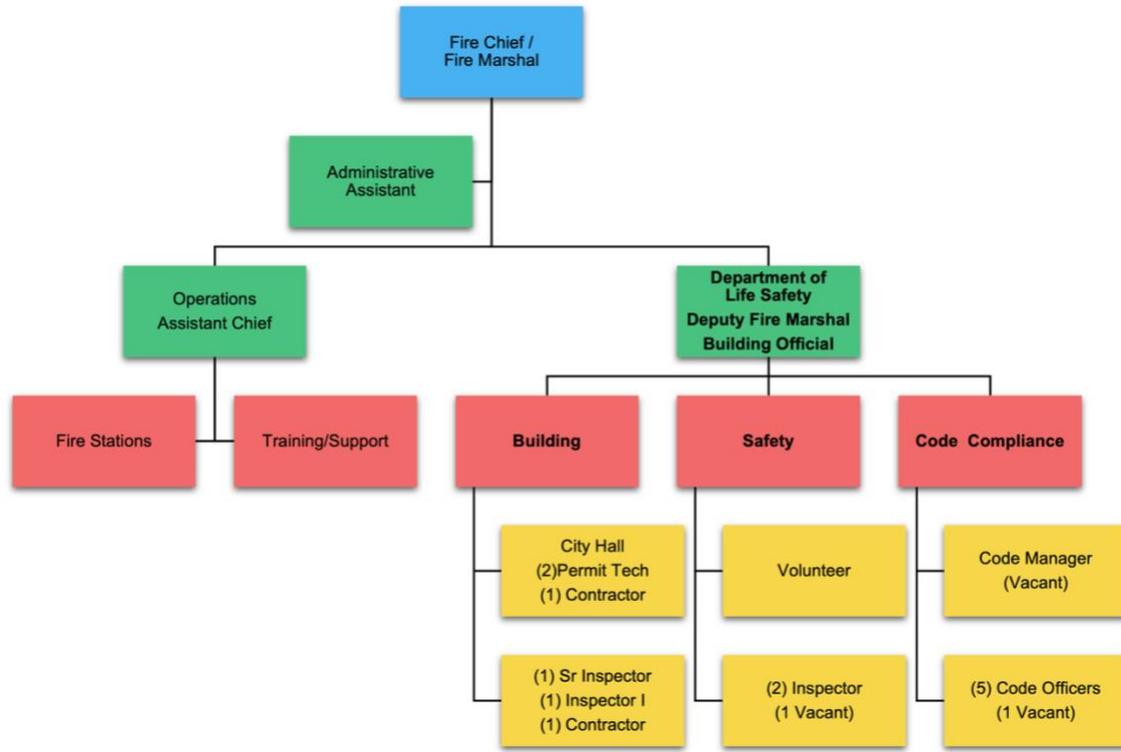
A unique arrangement employed by the City is the grouping of the Building inspections (Building) and Code Compliance (Code) functions with Fire Prevention (Safety) as the Department of Life Safety, which has been organized within the Fire Department since 2022.<sup>5</sup> Previously, many of the positions within Building were staffed with contractors (Willdan), and at the time of transition, the Building Official role was vacant.

The Department of Life Safety is led by the Building Official, who is also designated as Deputy Fire Marshal. The Fire Chief retains the Fire Marshal title. The following figure depicts the organizational structure of the Department of Life Safety within the broader Fire Department.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Hemet Municipal Code Section 14-46: R103.

**Figure 3—City of Hemet Fire Department Administrative Organization**



As the figure shows, staff consists of the Building Official / Deputy Fire Marshal, three Building Permit Technicians, one Volunteer assisting Safety, three Building Inspectors, two Safety Inspectors, one Code Manager, and five Code Officers for enforcement. The Department of Life Safety is housed within Fire Administration and located at 510 E. Florida Avenue, except for the three Permit Technicians, who are collocated with other development services in City Hall, across the street at 445 E. Florida Avenue. The Department of Life Safety is open to the public from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. These hours are shorter than the those kept at City Hall and are intended to allow staff time to process online permit application requests.

The City has adopted the 2022 California Building and Fire codes as minimum requirements for construction and ongoing operation of the built environment. Alignment with the codes provides a reasonable level of health and safety to the public,<sup>6</sup> and the codes are primary for the Building, Safety, and Community Development functions of the City. While the Code Compliance function utilizes the codes to some degree, they also have many local ordinances regulating both residential and commercial occupancies.

<sup>6</sup> Hemet California Code of Ordinances Article II. Uniform Codes 11-8-22.

The Building Official / Deputy Fire Marshal is currently directly responsible for leading the three divisions within the Department of Life Safety (Building, Safety, and Code) and is actively engaged in the following duties and initiatives:

- ◆ Administration and enforcement of the adopted Building Code:
  - Building plan review and oversight
  - System integration of the Tyler Technologies inspection records management system for the City’s development processes.
- ◆ Administration and enforcement of the adopted Fire Code:
  - Fire plan review and oversight
  - System integration of the First Due records management system providing occupancy-specific information for emergency responders.
- ◆ Supervision of the Code Manager (vacant) and Code Compliance-related oversight.
- ◆ Serves as the Animal Control Point of Contact (POC) for receipt, tracking, and referral of incidents and complaints to Riverside County Animal Control.
- ◆ Serves as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for the City.

### **2.4.1 Fire Prevention**

The Fire Chief is the Fire Marshal, with the authority to appoint others as necessary. Prevention is directly managed by the Deputy Fire Marshal / Building Official, who oversees a volunteer position that supports the section administratively, along with two Inspectors who perform both plan review and inspection. Prevention is located within Fire Administration which is adjacent to City Hall.

Prevention has the following key responsibilities:

- ◆ Enforcement of the adopted Fire Code
- ◆ Response to concerns and complaints regarding fire hazards and violations
- ◆ Attendance at predevelopment meetings with potential permit applicants
- ◆ Review of all new development projects and building permits for conformance with applicable fire and life safety codes, ordinances, and regulations
- ◆ Plan review and inspection of fire protection and detection systems for conformance with applicable codes, ordinances, and regulations, and for appropriate design, installation, and operation

- ◆ Certificate of Occupancy inspections for changes to building use
- ◆ Inspection of new building construction for conformance with applicable fire and life safety codes, ordinances, and regulations
- ◆ Inspection of existing building occupancies for conformance with applicable fire and life-safety codes, ordinances, and regulations
- ◆ California Health and Safety Code mandates for annual inspection of hotels, motels, lodging houses, apartment buildings, residential care facilities, and public/private schools
- ◆ Public fire and life-safety education coordination
- ◆ Extinguisher training
- ◆ KNOX lockbox facility access program
- ◆ Fireworks permitting and inspection
- ◆ False alarm billing
- ◆ Pre-incident plans upload via First Due record management system for Operations.

Fire safety education is provided by administrative or response personnel as available and requested. The Department of Life Safety is utilizing mobile inspections software that allows inspectors to access data and input inspection findings from the field. There are ongoing database consolidations that should also increase efficiency when completed. Shifting the pre-incident plan responsibility to the Fire Department’s Operations Division is also an ongoing project.

The Department of Life Safety was unable to provide productivity measures for 2024 for any section. This was primarily due to the lack of a stable records management system and their heavy engagement in new construction projects. Citygate’s review of workload related to Prevention identified that current staffing levels require personnel to assume multiple roles and, due to demand, focus primarily on new construction projects and fire protection system acceptance.

Despite this emphasis, they remain unable to provide a reasonable level of service and maintain a completion pace of 45 to 90 days for plan review and inspection requests. In addition, there is very little capacity remaining to attend pre-development meetings, complete state-mandated inspections of existing occupancies, or engage in traditional community risk reduction efforts. Given the significant inspection burden and the new construction duties of Prevention staff, the unit does not have adequate staff to meet current inspection goals.

## 2.4.2 Building and Safety Division

The Building and Safety Division is directly managed by the Building Official / Deputy Fire Marshal, who oversees the three permit technicians located with other development functions within City Hall, as well as three plan reviewers/inspectors located within Fire Administration, which is across the street from City Hall.

The Building and Safety Division has the following key responsibilities:

- ◆ Attendance at pre-development meetings with potential permit applicants.
- ◆ Review of all new development projects and building permits for conformance with applicable codes, ordinances, and regulations.
- ◆ Plan review and site inspection of construction for conformance with applicable codes, ordinances, and regulations, and for appropriate design, installation, and operation.
- ◆ Certificate of Occupancy inspections for changes to building use.

As a primary partner with both Planning and Engineering development review, the Building and Safety Division’s location across the street from City Hall, and their reduced public hours (10:00 am to 3:00 pm), create many challenges for permit applicants and shunts engagement duties to other departments.

Building has a limited staff, which has led to consistent delays in development processes. This has engendered a political dynamic as elected officials routinely poll and encourage staff in response to developer complaints. The result is many “one-off” agreements and out-of-order processes that cloud communication and project tracking among staff. The corresponding pressures on staff have resulted in a great deal of attrition.

Understandably, the lesser-tenured employees possess limited institutional knowledge of City processes and projects. Despite these challenges, the City has not instituted third-party development review support to provide relief when project activity rises.

The Building and Safety Division recently developed tiered performance goals for plan review based on the complexity of the project in review.<sup>7</sup> There is also a process for a fee-based, expedited service that entails a response in half the time.

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Life Safety internal plan dated 10/9/24 (Nolasco)

The following table shows plan review time goals for over-the-counter and tiered turnarounds.

**Table 7—City of Hemet Building Plan Review 2024 Turnaround Times Goals**

Classification	Over-the-Counter	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>Initial Submittal</b>	Same Day	10 days	20 days	25 days
<b>Resubmittals</b>	Same Day	10 days	10 days	15 days
<b>Expedited (Fee)</b>	--	5 days	10 days	12 days
<b>Scope</b>	Exterior improvement and repair or replacement of existing systems	Room additions and remodels up to 1000 sq. ft.	Change of use, new ADU, single-family, multi-family and commercial	High-rise, mixed-use, 5-story, or larger than 100,000 sq. ft.

This new priority service option is an appropriate addition that allows construction managers an established method to keep their projects on schedule. However, staff is currently working at an intensive pace and will have to add capacity to deliver these tiered and expedited services in a consistent manner.

### **2.4.3 Code Compliance**

Of the three sections within the Department of Life Safety, Code Compliance is the only one with a formal manager position. However, the position was vacant at the time of Citygate’s study.

Code Compliance primarily regulates locally adopted standards and differs from the duties of building code compliance. Numerous additional standards—both recently adopted or in process—address landscaping, car washes, refuse enclosures, billboards, and color palette. The City contains 44 recreational vehicle (RV) and mobile home parks.<sup>8</sup> Roughly one third of residential dwellings are rental properties.<sup>9</sup> The Code section provides a web-based guide to common code violations that are linked to the City Ordinance page.

<sup>8</sup> City of Hemet Mobile Home Park and Recreational Vehicle Park Data, Community Development Department November 2017.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/hemetcitycalifornia>

## SECTION 3—FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Citygate’s assessment process provided a framework for Citygate to develop recommendations and an Implementation Plan for the City, specifying opportunities to improve the overall efficiency, transparency, and predictability of land-use planning, development review, permitting, and economic development functions.

### 3.1 SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED THEMES

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Based on Citygate’s operational analysis and review, as well as the stakeholder engagement process—including interviews with City employees and external customers—Citygate identified the following **seven themes**.

#### Theme 1—Financial Constraints

The City is currently navigating a challenging fiscal landscape marked by a heavy concentration of its limited resources toward public safety services. Measure U, a voter-approved local sales tax, currently generates approximately \$16 million annually, with 100 percent of Measure U revenue currently dedicated to Police and Fire services, resulting in an aggregate 79 percent of all City revenue being dedicated to Public Safety services. While public safety is a critical priority, this funding structure leaves just 21 percent of total revenues to support *all* other essential City functions. These include the library, public works, community development, housing, and administrative services. As a result, non-Police and Fire departments are significantly under-resourced, limiting the City’s ability to adequately deliver broad-based services, maintain infrastructure, and invest in community well-being.

Adding to the fiscal pressure is the impending expiration of a \$7.1-million federal staffing grant (SAFER) received by the Fire Department in 2022, which funded 15 firefighter positions. This grant will expire in 2026, raising concerns about how those positions will be sustained without additional funding.

At the same time, there may be untapped opportunities to diversify or increase the City’s revenue streams, which could help balance resource allocation more equitably. Without structural changes to the revenue distribution or expansion of the City’s fiscal capacity, the current model risks perpetuating service disparities and undermining the long-term sustainability of the City’s broader operational needs.

#### Theme 2—Staffing Challenges

Each City department tasked with development review responsibilities suffers from chronic understaffing and unclear role definitions are severely impacting service delivery, operational efficiency, and employee well-being. In the **Community Development Department**, the absence

of key leadership roles—specifically a Deputy Director and Principal Planner—has led to a cascade of issues, including staff stress, procedural delays, and reduced effectiveness in processing development review applications. The Department's workload has grown unsustainably, outpacing available human resources and leaving staff overwhelmed. This has compromised the Department's ability to function efficiently and maintain service levels that meet community and developer expectations.

In the **Department of Life Safety**, the situation is similarly strained. Each component of the Department is operating with insufficient staffing, contributing to high turnover and the erosion of the institutional knowledge vital for project continuity and regulatory consistency. The Deputy Fire Marshal / Building Official, despite holding a leadership role, is burdened with non-managerial duties, limiting their capacity to provide strategic direction or manage operations effectively. Meanwhile, the Building and Safety Division is supported by just three permit technicians and one consultant, and Code Compliance is operating with only three officers (down from five) and no specialized Code Manager. These staffing shortages undermine regulatory enforcement, customer service, and the City's broader capacity to manage growth and ensure public safety.

The **Public Works Engineering Division** presents a contrasting scenario. Now fully staffed, with clear responsibilities split between Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and new development, the Division is functioning at full capacity and offers a valuable model for how proper staffing can improve outcomes. However, with anticipated growth in development activity, the City will need to proactively assess the role of outsourced engineering services to ensure the Division can meet future workload demands without overextending internal resources.

### **Theme 3—Organizational Structure Misalignment**

The City's current organizational structure presents significant challenges to interdepartmental coordination; leadership capacity; and service efficiency in functions related to development review, building safety, and code compliance. One major concern is the alignment of the Fire Department with building and code compliance functions under the Department of Life Safety. While life safety and fire prevention are essential components of development oversight, they differ in mission and focus from the more procedural, regulatory, and customer service-oriented responsibilities of building inspections and code enforcement. This misalignment has led to a disconnect in the development review process, contributing to inefficiencies and communication breakdowns.

At the leadership level, the Deputy Fire Marshal / Building Official is tasked with an unsustainable span of control—responsible for leading both the Fire Prevention and Building and Safety divisions in a growing city of 93,000 residents. This dual role, without adequate mid-level support, limits the City's ability to provide timely and effective development services. Compounding the issue, the organizational (and even physical) separation of Building and Safety and Code

Compliance from the Community Development Department hinders collaboration, slows down project review and approval timelines, and creates a fragmented customer experience for developers and residents alike.

Within Code Compliance, the need for a stronger leadership structure is evident. The Division would benefit from a clearer focus on customer service, program innovation (especially those with potential revenue-generating components), and proactive engagement. While the Engineering Division's participation in Development Review Committee (DRC) meetings has improved communication and review efficiency, overall coordination among Engineering, Community Development, and the Department of Life Safety personnel remains limited. A restructured, integrated organizational approach could enhance interdepartmental understanding, clarify roles, and improve service delivery throughout the City organization.

#### **Theme 4—Communication, Outreach, and Customer Service**

Effective communication, proactive outreach, and responsive customer service are foundational to a well-functioning development review process—but the City is currently facing serious challenges in all three areas. While communication between the leadership of the Community Development Department and the Engineering Division is improving, significant disconnects persist between the Department of Life Safety and other departments in the development review context. For example, Building and Safety Division staff are not consistently present at pre-development meetings, contributing to avoidable errors in plan submittals and project delays. The absence of key personnel in early stages, inconsistent participation in the pre-application process, and lack of coordination across departments has led to a fragmented experience for applicants and stakeholders. This siloed structure is exacerbated by sequential, rather than concurrent, plan reviews, inconsistencies in the routing process, and excessive resubmittals—further frustrating both developers and City staff.

Customer service concerns are prevalent and persistent. Across development review partner departments, complaints are common regarding poor communication, long delays in response times, and a lack of follow-through on inquiries. Some planners reportedly fail to return phone calls in a timely manner, and limited Building and Safety Division office hours create inefficiencies that shift customer service burdens to Planning staff. The outdated nature of the City's customer service principles and lack of consistent lobby support reflect a system in need of modernization. Although the recently funded Community Solutions Coordinator has been positively received and serves as a helpful ombudsman-like resource, broader structural changes are needed. A more comprehensive, customer-centric approach—including clearer internal coordination, expanded over-the-counter approvals, and better-informed staff—is necessary to improve both internal operations and external perceptions of City services.

Additionally, the City must strengthen its outreach and education efforts, particularly in areas like Code Compliance, where expanding regulations require better public understanding and strategic

enforcement. Online resources are a step in the right direction, but more in-person education, proactive guidance, and coordination with Planning are needed to prevent conflicting enforcement actions. There is also growing interest in refining standard conditions of approval, enhancing legal support during Planning Commission meetings, and utilizing the City’s expedited review processes—tools that remain underutilized due to a lack of internal and external awareness. To meet growing development demands and community expectations, the City must commit to improving communication, streamlining internal processes, and delivering high-quality, responsive customer service across all departments.

### **Theme 5—Technology Implementation**

Technology is a critical component of effective development services, but the City’s current systems are outdated and fragmented, resulting in inefficiencies, communication breakdowns, and a lack of transparency. The existing platform, eTrakIt, has significant limitations in its ability to record and retrieve meaningful data. As a result, departments have become overly reliant on email for key functions such as permit processing, leading to lost information, inconsistent records, and further inefficiencies. Miscommunication between divisions such as Planning and Engineering has been exacerbated by the system’s shortcomings, contributing to mistakes and duplicated efforts. The lack of a centralized, functional permit tracking and workflow system makes it nearly impossible to accurately monitor a project's progress through the development pipeline, leaving staff, applicants, and decision-makers without clear visibility.

To address these issues, the City is in the process of transitioning to the Tyler Technologies software system, which promises to significantly improve operational efficiency, transparency, and interdepartmental collaboration. The implementation process has already proven valuable in prompting a reassessment of workflows and responsibilities, revealing opportunities for better alignment and communication among departments. Introductory training is scheduled for September, and once the system goes live, it will offer integrated project tracking, digital review capabilities, and more robust data reporting—tools essential for modern municipal operations. Engineering has already made strides in digital integration, operating entirely paperless and working toward aligning Bluebeam and Tyler Technologies for efficient plan reviews. Additionally, the Community Development Department continues to face operational inefficiencies due to its phone system setup, which causes Planning staff to field inquiries unrelated to their work.

A modernized, clearly defined, and well-integrated technology platform is not only overdue but essential to elevating the quality, speed, and reliability of development services Citywide.

### **Theme 6—Leadership and Training**

The City is experiencing a period of organizational transition in which leadership quality, staff training, and interdepartmental collaboration are playing increasingly important roles in shaping

overall performance and morale. While many staff members expressed confidence in certain leaders for their clear communication and supportive management style, broader challenges persist across the organization. Team camaraderie, once perceived to be stronger before the COVID-19 pandemic, has weakened due to the shift toward more online interactions, leading to a sense of disconnect among departments. This reduced collaboration has contributed to confusion about departmental roles and responsibilities, with staff often unclear about who is accountable for specific review tasks, creating inefficiencies and duplication of effort.

Opportunities for professional growth and training remain limited, especially within the Community Development Department, where a lack of advancement pathways contributes to higher turnover. Although staff are increasingly being given the opportunity to present at City Council and Planning Commission meetings—an encouraging step for development and visibility—building technicians, for example, continue to operate with little training or oversight and are not utilized for plan reviews. This underutilization highlights missed opportunities for capacity building and career progression.

While the City Manager has fostered a degree of openness in communication between City Council members and staff—provided boundaries are respected—some Councilmembers do submit questions in advance of meetings, allowing staff to be well prepared; however, staff do not always have the time or resources to do so effectively. Additionally, Planning Commissioners have expressed concerns over limited time to review meeting materials, which can impact decision-making quality. Collectively, these issues highlight a pressing need for improved staff training, clearer role definitions, and targeted leadership development to strengthen the organization’s resilience, effectiveness, and internal cohesion. The City would benefit from the establishment of a clear and consistent communication policy for City Council and Planning Commission staff.

### **Theme 7—Policy Framework**

The City’s foundational policy documents—most notably the General Plan and Zoning Code—are showing signs of age and inconsistency, presenting both challenges and opportunities for modernization and alignment with the City’s current and future needs. The General Plan, last comprehensively updated in 2012, has undergone at least 16 amendments through 2024, reflecting a piecemeal approach to addressing evolving priorities and development pressures. As noted in the 2024 General Plan Progress Report, there is a divergence of opinion among staff and stakeholders regarding whether a full update is necessary. Some believe the General Plan no longer adequately reflects Hemet’s present-day realities, development trends, and anticipated growth patterns, while others expressed mixed views, particularly citing concerns that certain elements—such as the Circulation Element—may be contributing to development delays. These concerns suggest a need to not only reassess the Plan’s overall relevance but also to ensure that its components are not inadvertently hindering desired outcomes.

Similarly, the City’s Zoning Code, much of which dates back to 1997, has been amended dozens of times (roughly 36 amendments between 2012 and 2020) to maintain consistency with the 2012 General Plan. A major rezoning effort in 2019 also sought to bring land use designations into alignment. However, a high-level review and stakeholder feedback suggest that these incremental updates may no longer be sufficient. A comprehensive review and modernization of the Zoning Code could help streamline development approvals, reduce ambiguity for applicants and staff, and support the types of housing, commercial, and mixed-use development that align with the City’s vision. In contrast to these dated documents, the City has stayed current with state mandates, having adopted the 2022 Edition of the California Building Code with City-specific amendments. This demonstrates a capacity and willingness to update policy when needed and provides a strong foundation for undertaking broader planning and zoning reforms that can improve efficiency and better support community goals.

### **3.2 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THEME**

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Using Citygate’s framework that includes engagement and analysis related to stakeholders and customers, internal procedures, and processes, Citygate presents the following findings and recommendations, organized by the seven identified themes.

#### **Theme 1—Financial Constraints**

##### *Findings*

- Finding #1:** The Measure U sales tax currently generates approximately \$16 million of revenue annually.
  
- Finding #2:** 100 percent of Measure U revenue, is currently dedicated to Police and Fire services, resulting in an aggregate 79 percent of all City revenue being dedicated to Public Safety services.
  
- Finding #3:** All other City functions are supported by only 21 percent of the total revenue. This allocation has led to significant under-resourcing of the City’s non-Police and Fire staffing and services.
  
- Finding #4:** There are potential opportunities for the City to increase revenue.
  
- Finding #5:** In 2022, The Fire Department was a recipient of a \$7.1 million federal staffing grant for 15 firefighters that will expire in 2026.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.1:** Consider utilizing Measure U sales tax revenue to fund the Chief Building Official position, the Building and Safety Division employees, and the Code Compliance Division employees.

**Recommendation 1.2:** Explore shifting a portion of Measure U sales tax revenue into the General Fund once the revenue reaches a pre-determined threshold, thereby only reallocating future growth.

*The following table demonstrates a simple scenario in which Measure U revenue is distributed incrementally over 11 years beginning the year that revenue reaches \$20 million annually. This approach maintains the 72 percent for Police and Fire services mandated by Resolution 4703 while reallocating future revenue to support development review process expenses and other City functions.*

**Table 8—Measure U Revenue Distribution Scenario**

Year	All Funds in Millions of Dollars				
	Total Revenue	Measure U Revenue	Public Safety Distribution	Public Safety Budget	General Fund Portion
2025	\$80	\$16	79.0%	\$63	\$47
0	\$100	\$20	79.0%	\$79	\$59
1	\$103	\$21	78.3%	\$80	\$60
2	\$105	\$21	77.6%	\$82	\$61
3	\$108	\$22	76.9%	\$83	\$61
4	\$110	\$22	76.2%	\$84	\$62
5	\$113	\$23	75.5%	\$85	\$63
6	\$116	\$23	74.8%	\$87	\$64
7	\$119	\$24	74.1%	\$88	\$64
8	\$122	\$24	73.4%	\$89	\$65
9	\$125	\$25	72.7%	\$91	\$66
10	\$128	\$26	72.0%	\$92	\$67

**Recommendation 1.3:** An external, comprehensive fee study is needed to assess and update planning, permitting, and inspection fees.

**Recommendation 1.4:** Prioritize implementation of the Cannabis Ordinance compliance program to increase tax revenue.

**Recommendation 1.5:** Explore revenue-generating opportunities to support full-time or limited-term positions.

## Theme 2—Staffing Challenges

### *Findings*

#### Community Development Department

**Finding #6:** The absence of a Deputy Director and Principal Planner in the Community Development Department has caused staff stress, procedural delays, and reduced efficiency in development review services.

**Finding #7:** The current staff workload is unsustainable.

**Finding #8:** Due to the lack of staff resources, the Community Development Department is overwhelmed and unable to operate efficiently.

#### Engineering Division

**Finding #9:** The City has two engineers (one for Capital Improvement Projects, and one for new development inspections) but reporting and task assignments could be more clearly defined and tracked.

**Finding #10:** The Engineering Division has been fully staffed and is now operating at full capacity, serving as a model for improving efficiency in other divisions/departments.

**Finding #11:** There is need for the City to evaluate the role of outsourced engineering services to address projected workload demands due to growth.

#### Department of Life Safety

**Finding #12:** The Department of Life Safety represents a consolidation of the three distinct missions of three separate divisions, each of which is understaffed. The current pace and climate contribute to high turnover of staff and result in a low level of institutional knowledge related to projects and processes.

**Finding #13:** The Deputy Fire Marshal / Building Official has multiple roles and is heavily engaged in non-managerial tasks. As a result, they defer providing strategic direction and their managing, directing, controlling duties.

**Finding #14:** The Building Division includes two permit technicians and one consultant.

**Finding #15:** Code Compliance is understaffed with four of six authorized positions filled. The specialized Code Manager position and one Code Officer position are vacant.

*Recommendations*

- Recommendation 2.1:** Hire a Principal Planner to address staffing gaps.
- Recommendation 2.2:** Add a Code Enforcement Supervisor or Manager position. A Code Enforcement Manager position is preferred; however, based on budget considerations, a Supervisor position could be substituted.
- Recommendation 2.3:** Add a “Program Manager” (Senior Engineer) role to manage professional services and outsourcing contracts, especially during peak development periods, to better balance staff workloads.
- Recommendation 2.4:** Add an Engineer dedicated to development plan review.
- Recommendation 2.5:** Assess the potential benefits and drawbacks of utilizing third-party consultants to support or supplement in-house staff for development review processes. Assessment should include:
- Reviewing applications for planning, zoning, building permits, and environmental compliance.
  - Conducting technical studies or peer reviews.
  - Providing surge capacity during periods of high application volume.
  - Ensuring objectivity or specialized expertise not available in-house.
  - Analyzing cost-effectiveness compared to hiring or expanding internal staff.
  - Exploring models for consultant oversight to maintain quality, consistency, and accountability.
- Recommendation 2.6:** Continue using external planning services for tasks like Housing Element updates, General Plan updates, master plans, and other long-term planning needs.
- Recommendation 2.7:** Public Works effectively tracks staff allocation for CIP, development, permits, and inspection tasks; this tracking should be more clearly reflected in the City budget.
- Recommendation 2.8:** Add a third-party inspection option with certified vendors who are approved by the City. Include a quality assurance component by auditing a portion of the vendors’ inspections for each trade.

### Theme 3—Organizational Structure Misalignment

#### *Findings*

- Finding #16:** The Fire Department’s focus on life safety and fire prevention does not align well with the Building and Code Compliance functions, leading to a disconnect with development review processes.
- Finding #17:** The Deputy Fire Marshal / Building Official is responsible for most leadership responsibilities in both the Fire Prevention and Building and Safety divisions. This span of responsibilities is inappropriate for a city of 93,000 residents.
- Finding #18:** The Department of Life Safety lacks essential mid-level positions, like plans examiners, which are vital for effective building functions.
- Finding #19:** Organizational and physical separation of Building and Code Compliance from Community Development has led to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.
- Finding #20:** There is need within the Code Compliance Division to adopt a customer service approach; to develop and adopt specialized programs including those that could provide revenue opportunities; and for strong, focused leadership.
- Finding #21:** Engineering Division staff’s involvement in Development Review Committee (DRC) meetings has improved development review efficiency, but there remains a lack of teamwork and understanding of roles between Engineering, Community Development, and the Department of Life Safety.

#### *Recommendations*

- Recommendation 3.1:** As a best practice, and based on Citygate’s analysis, move the Chief Building Official, the Building and Safety Division, and the Code Compliance Division—with all associated staff and funding—to the Community Development Department.
- Recommendation 3.2:** Establish a “one-stop shop” for the City’s development review process by integrating key members of the Community Development Department (with all building permit and inspection functions moved from the Department of Life Safety) and the Engineering Division into a single, streamlined point of contact for developers, contractors, and property owners. This centralized approach should significantly reduce the complexity and time delays typically associated with navigating multiple departments. Benefits would include:

- Developers and property owners could submit plans, receive feedback, and obtain necessary permits through a single, coordinated process.
- It would reduce the number of instances of City staff failing to identify critical requirements and potential conditions of approval to applicants; prevent delays caused by disjointed coordination between departments; and reduce the potential for miscommunication between City entities.
- All aspects of a development project—land use planning, engineering infrastructure, and life safety—would be considered together. This would help identify potential conflicts early on and enable all relevant codes and regulations to be met simultaneously.
- Cross-departmental coordination could foster innovation and problem-solving, benefiting both customers and City staff in achieving their goals.

**Recommendation 3.3:** Consider expanding the Economic Development Department with 1–2 additional staff members, one of which would be an analyst. The positions should be phased, with the analyst position being added first to evaluate progress and goals, and the second position being considered as needed or appropriate.

**Recommendation 3.4:** Consider shifting all Economic Development positions to the City Manager’s Office.

## **Theme 4—Communication, Outreach, and Customer Service**

### *Findings*

**Finding #22:** Communication between the leadership of the Community Development Department and the Engineering Division is good and improving.

**Finding #23:** Communication between the Department of Life Safety and other departments involved in the development review process needs improvement.

**Finding #24:** A Building and Safety Division representative is not consistently present at pre-development meetings with prospective applicants; regular attendance could prevent more errors in plan submittals.

**Finding #25:** Turnaround times for new system inspections are 45 to 90 days. In response, the Prevention Division has focused on the new construction mission and has

deemphasized fire safety education, emergency planning, complaint investigation, and ongoing inspection of existing commercial occupancies.

- Finding #26:** The Operations Division of the Fire Department does not assist with inspection of commercial properties or vegetation.
- Finding #27:** The Code Compliance Division has a rapidly expanding suite of regulations that require education, outreach, and strategic enforcement throughout the City. Their online presence includes guidance for common code violations and references relevant ordinances per guideline.
- Finding #28:** Frequent delays occur in processing permits and corrections.
- Finding #29:** Some City staff, members of the Planning Commission, and experienced developers are unaware of the City’s expedited process but are interested in utilizing it.
- Finding #30:** Customer service is lacking across all development review partner departments, with complaints about poor communication and delayed responses common.
- Finding #31:** There is a failure to return phone calls promptly, especially by planners.
- Finding #32:** More attention is needed to assist customers in the lobby properly.
- Finding #33:** The Building section has limited office hours (10:00 am to 3:00 pm), while Planning has longer hours (7:30 am to 5:30 pm). This engenders inefficiency, complaints, and customers seeking help from Planning staff when Building staff are unavailable.
- Finding #34:** The City’s customer service principles have not been updated in many years.
- Finding #35:** Code Compliance and Planning can have poor collaboration. For example, sometimes Code Compliance issues citations that contradict Planning, such as citing a use as needing approval when it is not permitted by zoning code.
- Finding #36:** Building Technicians are not involved in plan checks/review, impacting the overall process.
- Finding #37:** The City Council funded a Community Solutions Coordinator to address community concerns, similar to an ombudsman, which is viewed as very beneficial.

- Finding #38:** Communication and connection between Community Development, the Planning Commission, City Council, and other City departments needs improvement.
- Finding #39:** Preapplication meetings are positive and seem to be going well. The associated fee currently seems appropriate.
- Finding #40:** There is a strong desire for a more thorough review of standard conditions of approval to determine what is necessary, updateable, and fitting for each project.
- Finding #41:** There is a strong desire for enhanced legal input, support, and guidance during Planning Commission meetings.
- Finding #42:** Feedback suggests that the plan routing process is inconsistent.
- Finding #43:** There is a desire for an increased number of over-the-counter reviews and approvals, the number of which are currently minimal.
- Finding #44:** Many applications and plans that could be reviewed concurrently by all stakeholders in the development review process are being reviewed sequentially, leading to processing delays.
- Finding #45:** Resubmittals are common and are perceived by the development community to be excessive.
- Finding #46:** The pre-application process starts with Planning and involves multiple departments and divisions (Engineering, Building, Fire, Police). However, consistent attendance by all reviewing departments and divisions is lacking.

### *Recommendations*

- Recommendation 4.1:** Standardize and align office operating hours across all development review functions to create greater consistency.
- Recommendation 4.2:** Ensure staff attendance at predevelopment meetings. In addition, ensure that meetings concerning larger projects are attended by personnel with decision-making authority.
- Recommendation 4.3:** Consider establishing a set schedule for accepting and processing planning applications. The City should consider accepting applications one day per month, pursuant to a set schedule for the calendar year. Application processing schedules should: a) reflect the type of application and whether it is ministerially approved or subject to

discretionary approvals; and b) prioritize applications with statutory processing timelines and those that advance key City policy goals.

- Recommendation 4.4:** Systematically compile and report data for key development review functions. After 1–2 years, set performance goals, track progress, and report findings to the community and City Council.
- Recommendation 4.5:** Continuously review and update standard Conditions of Approval to remove outdated items and support an efficient review process.
- Recommendation 4.6:** Ensure that Building and Safety staff answer phones during business hours.
- Recommendation 4.7:** Consider sending a brief checklist upon scheduling an inspection to drive compliance efficiency.
- Recommendation 4.8:** Develop process flow and job aides for each specific occupancy type to drive consistency and bolster the experience level of staff. Update regularly as new policies are enacted.
- Recommendation 4.9:** In the absence of internal mentors, develop staff by sending newer inspectors to shadow nearby, high-functioning organizations as part of the onboarding process.
- Recommendation 4.10:** Offer job shadowing and monthly or quarterly briefings (e.g., 2x2 format) for City Council and Planning Commissioners to improve understanding, trust, and communication related to development projects.
- Recommendation 4.11:** Survey staff involved in development review to identify job-sharing opportunities for better customer service—possibly through temporary, out-of-class assignments.
- Recommendation 4.12:** Educate staff and the community about available expedited services to increase utilization and improve service efficiency.
- Recommendation 4.13:** Enhance legal support for the Planning Commission through the City Attorney’s Office.
- Recommendation 4.14:** Implement bi-annual community surveys, evaluate goals, and ensure they support desired outcomes and align with the mission and vision of the City.

**Recommendation 4.15:** Set a goal to increase the issuance of over-the-counter permits. The goal should be reasonable and attainable (no more than an increase of 20 percent). Track progress and reevaluate in 12 months to see whether adding a “Permit Tech” position is warranted.

## **Theme 5—Technology Implementation**

### *Findings*

- Finding #47:** Limitations of the technology currently used for planning, engineering, and permit tracking (eTrakIt) has made it difficult to record and access meaningful data, leading to overall inefficiencies.
- Finding #48:** Lack of efficient technology has made email communication the default substitute for permit processing software.
- Finding #49:** Once the Tyler Technologies system is fully implemented, it will enable the City to operate with more efficiency and transparency. Introductory training for this system is scheduled for January 2026, with a go-live date planned.
- Finding #50:** Staff needs a clearer understanding of what their roles and responsibilities are. Miscommunication between departments/divisions, such as Planning and Engineering, has led to mistakes and inefficiencies. The current use of the eTrakIt system represents one area where better collaboration is needed.
- Finding #51:** The transition to the Tyler Technologies system has required a deep dive into processes, which has been valuable in improving understanding about each step in the development review process. The City is making progress on workflow improvements, with the right people working on the issue.
- Finding #52:** The Community Development main line rings on all phones in the department, which leads to Planning staff addressing calls that are not related to their division, such as Building or Code Compliance inquiries.
- Finding #53:** Engineering is 100 percent digital, and there is an ongoing effort to integrate Bluebeam and the Tyler Technologies system for digital review processes.
- Finding #54:** There are concerns related to the difficulty of incorporating outside consultants into the Tyler Technologies workflows, which may complicate the process.
- Finding #55:** The City currently lacks an efficient way to track a project throughout the various steps in the development review process.

### *Recommendations*

- Recommendation 5.1:** Create a dedicated phone line for the Community Development Department to reduce transfers and customer frustration or have a customer service representative route Development Review calls appropriately.
- Recommendation 5.2:** Provide more training opportunities to enhance technology skills and improve the service approaches of staff members.
- Recommendation 5.3:** As part of the Tyler Technologies software system implementation, develop a “Workflow History Report” for better tracking and transparency.
- Recommendation 5.4:** Dedicate the staff and other resources required (e.g., third-party trainers) to fully install and implement adoption of the Tyler Technologies system by all City departments. Modify contracts with City consultants to require their effective integration with the new system.
- Recommendation 5.5:** Include best practices and training for staff for each step of the development review process in the Tyler Technologies software system implementation—covering intake, routing, and time expectations for each step.

## **Theme 6—Leadership and Training**

### *Findings*

- Finding #56:** Team camaraderie between departments/divisions was reportedly stronger before COVID; now, online interactions have created a sense of disconnection.
- Finding #57:** Interviewees expressed positive feedback about the City’s leadership, particularly recognizing the Public Works Director’s leadership and communication.
- Finding #58:** The City Manager is perceived as open to City Council members communicating with employees, provided it does not involve giving direction. This is consistent with a council-manager form of government wherein the City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of city employees.
- Finding #59:** More staff are presenting to the City Council and Planning Commission, providing valuable staff development opportunities.

- Finding #60:** Limited career advancement opportunities in the Community Development Department contribute to higher turnover.
- Finding #61:** There is a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for reviewing what, with staff not fully understanding the roles of other departments/divisions.
- Finding #62:** All communication from departments/divisions to the City Council is routed through the City Manager.
- Finding #63:** Staff expressed concerns about insufficient training or drills for emergencies and/or disasters.
- Finding #64:** Staff morale is perceived to be low, with a strong desire among staff to see morale improved.
- Finding #65:** Some City Council members provide staff with questions in advance of meetings, allowing staff to be more prepared to address them at meetings.
- Finding #66:** Some Planning Commission members feel they lack sufficient time to adequately review materials.
- Finding #67:** Building technicians receive little to no oversight or training and do not conduct plan reviews.

### *Recommendations*

- Recommendation 6.1:** Review and improve the Code Compliance Division’s programs and structure while developing a service philosophy and community compliance approach.
- Recommendation 6.2:** Review and update the City’s Emergency Operations Plan from 2013—including training, certifications, and annual drills to build skills, education, and confidence for handling unexpected threats.
- Recommendation 6.3:** Within the Department of Life Safety, sustain a Fire Marshal with added responsibility for emergency planning, quarterly training, and responsibility to participate in the Riverside County hazard mitigation planning process.
- Recommendation 6.4:** Create a consistent policy for City Council questions regarding staff reports. Ensure questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.

**Recommendation 6.5:** Establish a clear and consistent communication process policy for City Council and Planning Commission staff to report questions, ensuring questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.

**Recommendation 6.6:** Implement morale-boosting initiatives such as training in communication, leadership, trust-building through job shadowing, and enhancing collaboration. Job shadowing could include elected and appointed officials with designated City staff.

## Theme 7—Policy Framework

### *Findings*

**Finding #68:** The last full update of the City’s General Plan was adopted in 2012. Per the General Plan 2024 Progress Report (March 2025), the General Plan was amended at least 16 times between its adoption in 2012 and 2024. Citygate received varying—and somewhat conflicting—input regarding the need to update the General Plan. Some of the staff and other stakeholders interviewed by Citygate believe a comprehensive update of the City’s General Plan is needed for this important policy document to better reflect the City’s current circumstances, development trends, and anticipated challenges and opportunities. Other input was more mixed, including (for example) that the Circulation Element has created delays for some development projects.

**Finding #69:** Much of the Zoning Code (i.e., Chapter 90 of the Hemet Municipal Code) appears to date back to at least 1997, though the City adopted approximately 36 different Zoning Code amendments between 2012 and 2020 to ensure consistency with the 2012 General Plan. The City also rezoned properties Citywide in 2019 for consistency with the 2012 General Plan. While a detailed analysis of the Zoning Code is beyond the scope of Citygate’s contract, a high-level review and the input provided by staff and other stakeholders indicates additional changes, and ideally a comprehensive review and update, could streamline development review processes, facilitate more of the types of development the City desires, and address emerging issues.

**Finding #70:** The City is up to date as it adopted the 2022 Edition of the California Building Code with City-specific amendments.

### *Recommendations*

**Recommendation 7.1:** The City should defer initiating a comprehensive update of the General Plan for 3–5 years in favor of dedicating staff and consultant resources

to other efforts that can more quickly increase the efficiency and efficacy of the City’s development review processes and enhance customer service and satisfaction.

**Recommendation 7.2:** In the interim, however, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a focused 3~ month review of the General Plan to identify a limited number of possible amendments that should be undertaken sooner.

The Public Works Director (or designee) should support the process, and staff from all departments who regularly use the General Plan or provide input on it should participate in the review as appropriate. Once strategic potential amendments are identified, staff should present them to the Planning Commission and seek City Council direction, through the annual update of the General Plan implementation program, to pursue the amendments.

**Recommendation 7.3:** Undertake a comprehensive update of Chapter 90 to facilitate more efficient, predictable, and desirable development while addressing the challenges posed by new land uses, including large warehouse distribution facilities and data centers. Focus on permitting more uses as either “permitted” or “administratively permitted,” subject to satisfying carefully considered development standards.

Initiate the update process within 18 months. Prior to that, prioritize addressing staffing issues, improving current processes and procedures, and full adoption of the Tyler Technologies application- and permit-processing platform.

**Recommendation 7.4:** Similar to Citygate’s recommendation for the General Plan, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a limited review of the current code to identify the targeted amendments necessary to address issues that are disproportionately absorbing staff time and impacting customers (e.g., fence standards), or that, if deferred, may adversely impact the community and industry (e.g., large warehouse distribution facilities).

## APPENDIX A—IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

This Implementation Action Plan is an appendix to Citygate’s Final Report and covers priorities and recommendations gleaned from both community and employee stakeholder interviews, historical data, and best practices related to the development review process.

The Implementation Action Plan includes **priorities and recommendations to be considered for implementation over the next three to five years**. Citygate recommends implementation actions begin as soon as this report has been presented to the Council and Planning Commission and as budgets allow.

This document and discussion also provide ongoing opportunity for any necessary pivots, accommodations for any resource or staffing changes, input from current and/or new Councilmembers, and continued/enhanced communications through ongoing community engagement—thus providing for a more effective and thoughtful process that is in greater alignment with current trends, challenges, expectations, and opportunities.

**There are a total of 47 Citygate Recommendations within the 7 Core Themes** addressed in the Implementation Action Plan. The City will have the option to workshop the prioritization of these goals with the City Council or submit to council for approval based on the Departments and Citygate’s recommendations.

In addition, since the beginning of this project, there have been several goals that were addressed, completed, or are still in process including (but not limited to) two critical Department positions being filled. The City Manager, the City Engineer, the Department of Life Safety Director, and the Community Development Director are to be commended for their expeditious efforts and accomplishments thus far.

### A.1 PRIORITIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA

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There are several criteria that should be considered when evaluating the urgency or appropriate timing related to the implementation of recommendations—including organizational priorities and ability/capacity to implement recommendations. As such, there are a variety of successful tools and techniques that can aid in successful outcomes.

While both elements are required in any agency, it is even more critical and challenging within local government. As best practices can differ from one city to another, recommendations can be formulated based on a top ten methodology, utilizing a combination of optimal and proven, 360-degree approaches as shown in the following table.

**Table 9—Top Ten Methodologies for Implementation and Prioritization**

Methodology	Description
<b>1. Balanced Approach</b>	One size does not fit all. Disperse the opportunities, resources, and funding throughout different goals.
<b>2. Sequential Sense</b>	Do not put the cart before the horse. Thoughtfully consider a plan and find efficient approaches to solving various challenges.
<b>3. Input Considerations</b>	Collect extensive and unbiased input from the community, volunteers, staff, and elected officials in a collaborative approach.
<b>4. Data</b>	Collect and analyze relevant data.
<b>5. Fiscal Considerations</b>	What can be funded and how can it support long-term fiscal stability?
<b>6. Voting priorities</b>	Who was involved and how were the priorities determined? Utilize voting in an appropriately weighted approach.
<b>7. RICE Approach</b>	<b>R</b> each (How many people are impacted by this decision/choice?), <b>I</b> mpact (How are these people impacted? Massively, high, medium, or low), <b>C</b> onfidence (Gut instincts and awareness of emotionally charged or politically sensitive situations), <b>E</b> ffort (What will it take to really accomplish this goal?).
<b>8. Capacity</b>	Understand limitations. Work towards appropriately growing capacity to meet needs.
<b>9. MoSCoW Approach<sup>10</sup></b>	Determine “ <b>M</b> ust haves” for survival and safety; “ <b>S</b> hould haves” for efficient and effective approaches and goals that support priorities and the overall wellness of the community and organization; “ <b>C</b> ould haves” that will have to wait but are eventually desired; and “ <b>W</b> on’t haves” that have no current resource allocation and are a low priority.
<b>10. Alignment</b>	Does the work align with the culture, needs, and vision now and in the future?

## A.2 PRIORITIZATION—TIMING INTERVALS

Citygate suggests defining priorities based on achievable timing intervals. Priorities can be defined further by fiscal year to follow the City’s strategic workplans that guide staff action plans.

**For the “Time Frame” column of this table:**

**Near-Term** = 0–2 years for recommended action to be completed

**Mid-Term** = 3–4 years for recommended action to be completed

**Long-Term** = 5+ years for recommended action to be completed

**Ongoing** = Current/standard practice or no end date for recommended action

<sup>10</sup> Clegg, Dai; Barker, Richards (1994); Case Method Fast-Track: A RAD Approach, Addison-Wesley.

**A.3 IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN TABLE**

**Table 10—Implementation Action Plan Table**

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>THEME 1—FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS</b>				
1.1	Consider utilizing Measure U sales tax revenue to fund the Chief Building Official position, the Building and Safety Division employees, and the Code Compliance Division employees.	Near-Term	City Manager	Building and Safety and Code Compliance are public safety functions that benefit the entire City. When efforts within those functions are effective, calls for service are reduced.
1.2	Explore shifting a portion of Measure U sales tax revenue into the General Fund once the revenue reaches a pre-determined threshold, thereby only reallocating future growth.	Long-Term	City Manager	Redirecting revenue growth from Measure U to the General Fund gives policymakers more options to address emerging priorities, general City services, and structural budget needs without levying new taxes. This “shared-growth” strategy allows public safety functions to continue to be funded while the City gains more tools to meet other needs.
1.3	An external, comprehensive fee study is needed to assess and update planning, permitting, and inspection fees.	Near-Term	City Manager	This recommendation helps the City align its fee structures with actual service costs, making the system more fair, transparent, and financially sound.
1.4	Prioritize implementation of the Cannabis Ordinance compliance program to increase tax revenue.	Near-Term	City Manager and Community Development Director	Prioritizing implementation allows the City to quickly capture revenue from cannabis business taxes, licensing fees, and sales taxes, supporting essential services. A dedicated compliance program helps ensure operators follow rules, pay required taxes, and meet safety and zoning standards.
1.5	Explore revenue-generating opportunities to support full-time or limited-term positions.	Near-Term	City Manager and Department Directors	This recommendation gives the City greater flexibility to increase staff capacity while remaining fiscally responsible. Implementation would enable the City to tap into alternative revenue sources, respond to service demand, and invest in innovation—all without overcommitting long-term resources.

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Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>THEME 2—STAFFING CHALLENGES</b>				
<b>2.1</b>	Hire a Principal Planner to address staffing gaps.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Community Development Director</b>	Hiring a Principal Planner addresses critical staffing gaps. This role enhances the Community Development Department's capacity to manage high-level projects, ensures more effective decision-making, and improves service delivery to the community. It also helps distribute workload more evenly, reducing burnout and increasing overall team efficiency and responsiveness.
<b>2.2</b>	Add a Code Enforcement Supervisor or Manager position. A Code Enforcement Manager position is preferred; however, based on budget considerations, a Supervisor position could be substituted.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	Career advancement opportunities, better effective communication with community and leadership, support of development compliance efforts, expertise in program development and implementation, cross-departmental connections and communication, support with complex ordinance development and compliance efforts, and oversight of the Division support overall Department efforts for effective and efficient practices and the balancing of duties and responsibilities within each division's area of expertise. This also provides additional support to the community for meetings, events, complex projects, or when complaints arise.
<b>2.3</b>	Add a "Program Manager" (Senior Engineer) role to manage professional services and outsourcing contracts, especially during peak development periods, to better balance staff workloads.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Engineer</b>	Adding a Program Manager role helps the City manage outsourced work more effectively, reduce internal strain, and enhance the quality and speed of service delivery—especially during high-demand periods.
<b>2.4</b>	Add an Engineer dedicated to development plan review.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Engineer</b>	Adding an Engineer focused solely on development plan review enhances the City's ability to deliver timely, accurate, and customer-friendly services while relieving pressure on existing staff. It supports economic development, housing production, and capital project timelines

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>2.5</b>	<p>Assess the potential benefits and drawbacks of utilizing third-party consultants to support or supplement in-house staff for development review processes. Assessment should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing applications for planning, zoning, building permits, and environmental compliance.</li> <li>• Conducting technical studies or peer reviews.</li> <li>• Providing surge capacity during periods of high application volume.</li> <li>• Ensuring objectivity or specialized expertise not available in-house.</li> <li>• Analyzing cost-effectiveness compared to hiring or expanding internal staff.</li> <li>• Exploring models for consultant oversight to maintain quality, consistency, and accountability.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Community Development Director and City Engineer</b>	Evaluating the role of outside consultants in development review helps the City make informed, data-driven decisions about how to best manage workload, ensure service quality, and optimize the use of resources.
<b>2.6</b>	Continue using external planning services for tasks like Housing Element updates, General Plan updates, master plans, and other long-term planning needs.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Community Development Director</b>	Consulting services support the unpredictable, the inconsistency of workflow, and often provide access to a wider pool of specialized expertise and talent through diversity of staffing with fresh perspectives and objective guidance on an as-needed basis. This does not increase unfunded liability, offers cost-effective approaches and often more timely results, and can free non-internal resources so staff can support core functions and duties. Consulting services can also offer and support the development of new skills and knowledge for in-house staff.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>2.7</b>	Public Works effectively tracks staff allocation for CIP, development, permits, and inspection tasks; this tracking should be more clearly reflected in the City budget.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	This recommendation helps the City clearly connect staffing to specific functions and funding sources, improving transparency, accountability, and operational planning. It also positions the City to make more informed budget and policy decisions that reflect real workload and service demands.
<b>2.8</b>	Add a third-party inspection option with certified vendors who are approved by the City. Include a quality assurance component by auditing a portion of the vendors' inspections for each trade.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	This recommendation boosts the City's inspection capacity, efficiency, and flexibility while maintaining high quality and accountability through certification and audits. It supports economic growth, improves customer experience, and ensures that public safety and code compliance are not compromised.
<b>THEME 3—ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE</b>				
<b>3.1</b>	As a best practice, and based on Citygate's analysis, move the Chief Building Official, the Building and Safety Division, and the Code Compliance Division—with all associated staff and funding—to the Community Development Department.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	While this supports a best-practice approach, it also improves efficiencies, reduces duplications, improves communications, and often streamlines operations. With ever-changing community demands, needs, and expectations, this reorganization is a way to respond to the concerns of staff and the community. This approach will also facilitate better integration and coordination and innovation across programs and functions. Change, though it brings uncertainty, can also inspire new ideas and fresh perspectives, bring new opportunities, motivate a positive shift in morale, boost energy, and enhance collaboration—which can ultimately lead to more unified and higher-functioning team.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>3.2</b>	Establish a “one-stop shop” for the City’s development review process by integrating key members of the Community Development Department (with all building permit and inspection functions moved from the Department of Life Safety) and the Engineering Division into a single, streamlined point of contact for developers, contractors, and property owners. This centralized approach should significantly reduce the complexity and time delays typically associated with navigating multiple departments.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developers and property owners could submit plans, receive feedback, and obtain necessary permits through a single, coordinated process.</li> <li>▪ It would reduce the number of instances of City staff failing to identify critical requirements and potential conditions of approval to applicants; prevent delays caused by disjointed coordination between departments; and reduce the potential for miscommunication between City entities.</li> <li>▪ All aspects of a development project—land use planning, engineering infrastructure, and life safety—would be considered together. This would help identify potential conflicts early on and enable all relevant codes and regulations to be met simultaneously.</li> <li>▪ Cross-departmental coordination could foster innovation and problem-solving, benefiting both customers and City staff in achieving their goals.</li> </ul>
<b>3.3</b>	Consider expanding the Economic Development Department with 1–2 additional staff members, one of which would be an analyst. The positions should be phased, with the analyst position being added first to evaluate progress and goals, and the second position being considered as needed or appropriate.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	This would improve efficiencies, expand essential services, align with the City’s goals and vision, improve services (especially within the business community), offer opportunity for more in-depth research and analysis, support various important economic development incentive programs and initiatives, and bring specialized expertise that is currently lacking.
<b>3.4</b>	Consider shifting all Economic Development positions to the City Manager’s Office.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	This would elevate the strategic role of economic development, improve coordination across departments, and increase the City’s ability to act quickly and effectively in relation to growth opportunities. It would also enhance leadership alignment, external credibility, and internal efficiency.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>THEME 4—COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>				
<b>4.1</b>	Standardize and align office operating hours across all development review functions to create greater consistency.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	Offering uniform hours would enhance customer service and provide clarity and predictability, lead to more predictable and measurable outputs, allow for capacity planning, allow for more ease in coordination and collaborative discussions, and enable simple and efficient approaches to scheduling. It would also support a thoughtful response to customer needs and requests.
<b>4.2</b>	Ensure staff attendance at predevelopment meetings. In addition, ensure that meetings concerning larger projects are attended by personnel with decision-making authority.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	This recommendation strengthens the City’s development review process by ensuring the right people are at the table at the right time. It improves efficiency, decision-making, and customer experience, while reinforcing a culture of responsiveness and professionalism.
<b>4.3</b>	Consider establishing a set schedule for accepting and processing planning applications. The City should consider accepting applications one day per month, pursuant to a set schedule for the calendar year. Application processing schedules should: a) reflect the type of application and whether it is ministerially approved or subject to discretionary approvals; and b) prioritize applications with statutory processing timelines and those that advance key City policy goals.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director</b>	A scheduled intake process enables staff to better manage workloads by batching applications and planning ahead, which helps prevent overlapping project demands and reduces rush requests. This structure allows staff to focus more on the quality and responsiveness of their reviews. By publishing a clear calendar and intake schedule, the City would create predictable expectations that improve customer satisfaction and minimize confusion. Additionally, this system allows for the triage of applications based on urgency, complexity, and alignment with policy priorities, ensuring statutory obligations are met while advancing key City goals. Tailoring the schedule according to application type further optimizes review timelines, preventing unnecessary delays for simpler projects. Overall, a set schedule supports performance tracking, the ability to plan staffing around known workload peaks, and data-driven adjustments to meet housing production and economic development objectives.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>4.4</b>	Systematically compile and report data for key development review functions. After 1–2 years, set performance goals, track progress, and report findings to the community and City Council.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Regularly compiling and reporting data on development review processes enhances transparency and accountability by openly sharing performance with the community and City Council, thereby building trust. This data-driven approach improves performance management by identifying bottlenecks and inefficiencies, allowing the City to make informed decisions and implement targeted improvements. With reliable information, the City can set realistic performance goals, track progress over time, and continuously refine operations. Demonstrating a commitment to monitoring and enhancing development services increases confidence among developers, residents, and partners by demonstrating a focus on effective and timely project delivery. Additionally, data insights support better resource planning by aligning staffing and budgets with actual workload demands. Finally, ongoing progress tracking ensures that development review activities remain strategically aligned with broader City goals such as housing production, economic growth, and regulatory compliance.
<b>4.5</b>	Continuously review and update standard Conditions of Approval to remove outdated items and support an efficient review process.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Planning Staff</b>	This would provide predictability, fairness, and efficiencies for the development community, bringing smoother and often more reliable deliverables.
<b>4.6</b>	Ensure that Building and Safety staff answer phones during business hours.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	This would improve timely customer service and satisfaction, support a professionalism approach, and allow for quick resolutions and a sense of accomplishment.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
4.7	Consider sending a brief checklist upon scheduling an inspection to drive compliance efficiency.	Near-Term	Community Development Director and Chief Building Official	Providing applicants and contractors with a clear checklist up front improves compliance efficiency by helping them better prepare for inspections and reducing the likelihood of failures or missed requirements. Communicating expectations and key criteria early lowers re-inspection rates, saving time and resources for both staff and applicants. The checklist also enhances communication and clarity by clearly outlining what inspectors will be looking for, minimizing misunderstandings and questions. As a result, fewer inspection failures and delays occur, which speeds up project timelines and benefits both developers and the community. Additionally, clear guidelines reduce back-and-forth communication, allowing inspection staff to focus on their core tasks and improving overall productivity.
4.8	Develop process flow and job aides for each specific occupancy type to drive consistency and bolster the experience level of staff. Update regularly as new policies are enacted.	Near-Term	Community Development Director and Chief Building Official	Implementing process flows and job aides tailored to each specific occupancy type promotes consistency in development review and inspection processes while supporting and enhancing staff expertise. These clear, standardized tools help ensure that staff follow best practices and apply policies uniformly, reducing errors and variability in decision-making. Regular updates to these resources, aligned with new policies and regulations, keep the team informed and adaptable to changing requirements. Overall, this approach strengthens staff confidence, improves service quality, and creates a more efficient and predictable experience for applicants and stakeholders.
4.9	In the absence of internal mentors, develop staff by sending newer inspectors to shadow nearby, high-functioning organizations as part of the onboarding process.	Mid-Term	City Manager, Community Development Director, and Chief Building Official	This would gain new insights for the City, gain appreciation for others' duties and responsibilities, offer career exploration and skill development, offer networking opportunities, provide a proven and effective onboarding tool as it brings ease and clarity with new positions, improve morale, and even break down silos.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>4.10</b>	Offer job shadowing and monthly or quarterly briefings (e.g., 2x2 format) for City Council and Planning Commissioners to improve understanding, trust, and communication related to development projects.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Offering job-shadowing opportunities, along with regular monthly or quarterly briefings for City Council members and Planning Commissioners, helps deepen their understanding of development projects and processes. These initiatives foster greater transparency and build trust by providing firsthand insight into the complexities and challenges of development review. Improved communication through briefings ensures that decision-makers are well informed, enabling more effective oversight and collaboration. Ultimately, this strengthens relationships among staff, elected officials, and commissioners, leading to more confident and aligned decision-making that benefits the community.
<b>4.11</b>	Survey staff involved in development review to identify job-sharing opportunities for better customer service—possibly through temporary, out-of-class assignments.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Surveying staff involved in development review to identify job-sharing opportunities can enhance customer service by increasing flexibility and coverage during peak periods or staff absences. Exploring temporary, out-of-class assignments allows team members to take on additional responsibilities, fostering skill development and cross-training. This approach not only helps balance workloads more effectively but also ensures that customer inquiries and project reviews continue smoothly without delays. Overall, it promotes a more adaptable, responsive team that can better meet the needs of applicants and support consistent, high-quality service delivery.
<b>4.12</b>	Educate staff and the community about available expedited services to increase utilization and improve service efficiency.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	Educating both staff and the community regarding available expedited services helps increase awareness and utilization of these options, leading to more efficient processing of development projects. When staff are well-informed, they can better guide applicants toward faster service pathways, while applicants gain clarity on how to take advantage of expedited reviews. This shared understanding reduces confusion, shortens approval timelines, and improves overall satisfaction.

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Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>4.13</b>	Enhance legal support for the Planning Commission through the City Attorney's Office.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>City Manager and City Attorney</b>	Enhancing legal support for the Planning Commission with the City Attorney ensures that commissioners have access to accurate, timely legal guidance during decision-making processes. This collaboration helps clarify complex regulations, reduces legal risks, and supports compliance with state and local laws.
<b>4.14</b>	Implement bi-annual community surveys, evaluate goals, and ensure they support desired outcomes and align with the mission and vision of the City.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Implementing bi-annual community surveys allows the City to regularly gather feedback, evaluate progress toward goals, and ensure that initiatives effectively support desired outcomes. This ongoing engagement helps the City stay aligned with the community's needs and priorities while also ensuring that programs and policies reflect the mission and vision of the City. By consistently measuring public sentiment and adjusting strategies accordingly, the City can foster greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness—ultimately enhancing community trust and satisfaction.
<b>4.15</b>	Set a goal to increase the issuance of over-the-counter permits. The goal should be reasonable and attainable (no more than an increase of 20 percent). Track progress and reevaluate in 12 months to see whether adding a "Permit Tech" position is warranted.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	Enhancing over-the-counter reviews streamlines the development review process by providing quicker, more accessible service for straightforward permits and applications. This improvement reduces wait times for applicants, accelerates project timelines, and alleviates workload pressures on staff by efficiently handling simple cases. By making the review process more user-friendly and responsive, the City can improve customer satisfaction, encourage compliance, and support timely development—all while maintaining quality and consistency in permit approvals.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>THEME 5—TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
5.1	Create a dedicated phone line for the Community Development Department to reduce transfers and customer frustration or have a customer service representative route Development Review calls appropriately.	Near-Term	<b>Community Development Director and Technology Consultant</b>	Creating a dedicated phone line for the Community Development Department—or assigning a customer service representative to route development review calls—helps reduce call transfers and minimizes customer frustration. This streamlined communication approach ensures that callers are quickly connected to the right staff, improving responsiveness and enhancing the overall customer experience. By simplifying access to information and support, the City can foster greater satisfaction, reduce wait times, and promote more efficient handling of development-related inquiries.
5.2	Provide more training opportunities to enhance technology skills and improve the service approaches of staff members.	Ongoing	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Offering technology and service training provides staff with the tools and knowledge needed to use new systems effectively and deliver higher-quality customer service. Enhanced technology skills help staff work more efficiently, reduce errors, and adapt to evolving digital tools; while improved service training fosters better communication, problem-solving, and responsiveness. Together, these training opportunities empower employees to provide a smoother, more professional experience for applicants and stakeholders, ultimately improving overall departmental performance and satisfaction.
5.3	As part of the Tyler Technologies software system implementation, develop a “Workflow History Report” for better tracking and transparency.	Near-Term	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	A Workflow History Report turns process data into actionable insight, helping the City utilize the Tyler system more effectively while promoting transparency, user trust in the system, and accountability. It also provides an audit trail that can be used for internal or external reviews and ensures adherence to policies and procedures by documenting process flows.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>5.4</b>	Dedicate the staff and other resources required (e.g., third-party trainers) to fully install and implement adoption of the Tyler Technologies system by all City departments. Modify contracts with City consultants to require their effective integration with the new system.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Dedicating staff and resources, including third-party trainers, to fully implement the Tyler Technologies system ensures consistent adoption across all City departments, maximizing the system's value and functionality. This approach promotes user proficiency, reduces implementation delays, and supports a smoother transition from legacy processes. Modifying consultant contracts to require integration with the new system further aligns external support with internal goals, fostering a cohesive, efficient, and future-ready operational environment.
<b>5.5</b>	Include best practices and training for staff for each step of the development review process in the Tyler Technologies software system implementation—covering intake, routing, and time expectations for each step.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>	<p>Embedding best practices and staff training into the Tyler Technologies implementation ensures the system is used effectively, processes are streamlined, and service outcomes are improved. It aligns people, process, and technology for maximum impact. Key benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved Consistency and Accuracy – Staff follow standardized procedures, reducing errors and miscommunication.</li> <li>▪ Faster Processing Times – Clear time expectations help staff meet deadlines and avoid delays.</li> <li>▪ Better Use of the Tyler System – Training ensures proper use of features, maximizing the software investment.</li> <li>▪ Greater Accountability – Defined steps and responsibilities make it easier to track performance and address issues.</li> <li>▪ Easier Onboarding of New Staff – Documented best practices simplify and speed up training for new employees.</li> <li>▪ Improved Reporting and Analytics – Consistent data entry enables better tracking, forecasting, and decision-making.</li> <li>▪ Better Customer Experience – Streamlined, transparent processes enhance satisfaction for applicants and stakeholders.</li> </ul>

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>THEME 6—LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING</b>				
<b>6.1</b>	Review and improve the Code Compliance Division’s programs and structure while developing a service philosophy and community compliance approach.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Community Development Director and Chief Building Official</b>	Developing a clear service philosophy and a community compliance approach helps shift the focus from simply penalizing violations to fostering cooperation and voluntary compliance. This leads to stronger community relationships, improved public safety and quality of life, and more consistent enforcement outcomes.
<b>6.2</b>	Review and update the City’s Emergency Operations Plan from 2013—including training, certifications, and annual drills to build skills, education, and confidence for handling unexpected threats.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Fire Chief</b>	Incorporating training, certifications, and annual drills builds staff skills, knowledge, and confidence, enabling the City to respond quickly and efficiently to unexpected threats. This proactive preparation enhances public safety, minimizes damage, and fosters community resilience.
<b>6.3</b>	Within the Department of Life Safety, sustain a Fire Marshal with added responsibility for emergency planning, quarterly training, and responsibility to participate in the Riverside County hazard mitigation planning process.	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>City Manager and Fire Chief</b>	Sustaining a Fire Marshal within the Department of Life Safety who carries added responsibilities for emergency planning, quarterly training, and participation in the Riverside County hazard mitigation planning process strengthens the City’s overall preparedness and response capabilities. This dedicated role ensures continuous focus on fire safety, emergency readiness, and regional collaboration, promoting consistent training and up-to-date planning.
<b>6.4</b>	Create a consistent policy for City Council questions regarding staff reports. Ensure questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Establishing a communication policy that outlines the appropriate chain of command for City Council interactions with City staff helps ensure clear, respectful, and efficient exchanges of information. This policy promotes accountability by defining roles and protocols, reducing confusion and miscommunication. It supports a professional working environment, fosters effective collaboration, and helps maintain transparency and trust between elected officials and City employees.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>6.5</b>	Establish a clear and consistent communication process policy for City Council and Planning Commission staff to report questions, ensuring questions are submitted in advance and answers are publicly shared at the meeting.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Establishing a clear communication process ensures that questions are submitted in advance and responses are publicly shared during meetings. This consistent policy promotes transparency, allows staff adequate time to prepare accurate information, and helps maintain an organized and efficient meeting flow.
<b>6.6</b>	Implement morale-boosting initiatives such as training in communication, leadership, trust-building through job shadowing, and enhancing collaboration. Job shadowing could include elected and appointed officials with designated City staff.	<b>Near-Term and Ongoing</b>	<b>City Manager and Department Directors</b>	Job shadowing and trainings can support the gaining of new insights, increases appreciation for others duties and responsibilities, offers career exploration and skill development, offers networking opportunities, is a proven effective onboarding tool as it brings ease and clarity with new positions, can improve morale and even break down silos, advances collaboration, improves efficiencies, can reduce absenteeism, and can improve employee retention and culture. High morale leads to motivated individuals, enhanced creativity, and a sense of value and/or purpose.
<b>THEME 7—POLICY FRAMEWORK</b>				
<b>7.1</b>	The City should defer initiating a comprehensive update of the General Plan for 3–5 years in favor of dedicating staff and consultant resources to other efforts that can more quickly increase the efficiency and efficacy of the City’s development review processes and enhance customer service and satisfaction.	<b>Mid-Term to Long-Term</b>	<b>Planning / Consultant(s)</b>	Comprehensively updating the General Plan can facilitate desired development and provide the policy framework for addressing emerging land-use, infrastructure, environmental, and other challenges. While important, the City should defer 3–5 years to reflect the City’s circumstances, development trends, goals, and anticipated challenges and opportunities.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>7.2</b>	<p>In the interim, however, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a focused, three-month review of the General Plan to identify a limited number of possible amendments that should be undertaken sooner.</p> <p>The Public Works Director (or designee) should support the process, and staff from all departments who regularly use the General Plan or provide input on it should participate in the review as appropriate. Once strategic potential amendments are identified, staff should present them to the Planning Commission and seek City Council direction, through the annual update of the General Plan implementation program, to pursue the amendments.</p>	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Planning / Engineering / Consultant(s)</b>	Near-term amendments of the General Plan can address ambiguous and conflicting policies, facilitate desired development, and provide for stronger regulation of land use of concern to the community.
<b>7.3</b>	<p>Undertake a comprehensive update of Chapter 90 to facilitate more efficient, predictable, and desirable development while addressing the challenges posed by new land uses, including large warehouse distribution facilities and data centers. Focus on permitting more uses as either “permitted” or “administratively permitted,” subject to satisfying carefully considered development standards.</p> <p>Initiate the update process within 18 months. Prior to that, prioritize addressing staffing issues, improving current processes and procedures, and full adoption of the Tyler Technologies application- and permit-processing platform.</p>	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>Planning / Consultant(s)</b>	This would streamline and increase transparency and predictability of development review, facilitate development the City desires, and effectively regulate land uses of concern to the community.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
7.4	Similar to Citygate’s recommendation for the General Plan, the Community Development Director (or designee) should lead a limited review of the current code to identify the targeted amendments necessary to address issues that are disproportionately absorbing staff time and impacting customers (e.g., fence standards), or that, if deferred, may adversely impact the community and industry (e.g., large warehouse distribution facilities).	Near-Term	Planning	Near-term amendments of the zoning code can address ambiguous and conflicting standards and conditions, facilitate desired development, and provide for stronger regulation of land use of concern to the community.

## APPENDIX B—REVENUE-GENERATING RECOMMENDATIONS

### B.1 “QUICK WINS” BEGIN NOW

As part of this Development Review Process and Staffing Analysis, Citygate recommends that the City pursue revenue-generating strategies, services, and programs that support more accurate cost recovery while aligning with the City’s broader quality-of-life goals and needs.

These recommendations are outlined in detail within Theme 1—Financial Constraints within the full report and were also presented during the Mid-Project Review to the City Manager and various members of City leadership. Following the Mid-Project briefing, the City Manager responded proactively, reaching out to Citygate with a clear desire to take immediate action. This led to the coordination of a focused and targeted virtual session held on June 4, 2025. The 75-minute meeting brought together the City Manager and the Department of Life Safety leadership to explore cost-recovery and revenue-generating ideas. The goal of the session was to spark a deeper, collaborative conversation, generate innovative solutions, and identify practical solutions and fiscal improvements for both the short term and long term.

As a result of this session, **30 key supplemental and revenue-generating recommendations** were developed across **five strategic categories**: Fire Safety, Community Engagement, Training, Ordinances, and Building and Code Compliance.

Implementation is often the most difficult phase of any strategic plan, as agencies are hindered by a range of operational and organizational challenges. However, Citygate commends the City for its commitment to putting these ideas into action. The City’s swift and thoughtful pursuit of cost-recovery initiatives—especially those supporting quality-of-life programs and services—reflects strong leadership and a dedication to good governance. Citygate applauds the City’s forward-thinking, proactive approach and its continued efforts to serve both the organization and the broader community effectively.

A comprehensive evaluation of Citygate’s revenue-generating recommendations is provided in the following table.

### B.2 REVENUE-GENERATING RECOMMENDATIONS TABLE

**For the “Time Frame” column of this table:**  
**Near-Term** = 0–2 years for recommended action to be completed  
**Mid-Term** = 3–4 years for recommended action to be completed  
**Long-Term** = 5+ years for recommended action to be completed  
**Ongoing** = Current/standard practice or no end date for recommended action

**Table 11—Revenue-Generating Recommendations Table**

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>CATEGORY 8.1—FIRE SAFETY</b>				
8.1.1	Pursue the full and systematic activation of the Fire Inspection Program, supported by key performance indicators (KPIs), with the goal of reducing the approximately 400 reported fires in 2024–2025 by 10–20 percent.	<b>Near-Term/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Fire</b>	Supports life safety and quality of life, ensures compliance with state mandates, potentially reduces insurance premiums, and protects property—contributing to overall economic stability.
8.1.2	Actively recruit to fill the one vacant Fire Inspector position, utilizing consulting services until the recruitment is successful. This is already a cost-recovery role.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Fire</b>	Filling the vacant fire inspector position supports life safety and quality of life, ensures staff compliance with state mandates, and can potentially lead to reduced insurance premiums. It also improves staff morale and helps prevent burnout by reducing workload pressure.
8.1.3	Communicate with the community and City Council about the proactive, state-mandated fire safety inspection program ramping back up by using one-on-one meetings with council members, social media, flyers at popular local businesses or gathering places, doorhangers, mailers, and outreach at the farmers market—incorporating the message of "lean innovation" and "boots-on-the-ground" conversations and efforts into all.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Fire and City Manager</b>	This approach strengthens transparency and enhances service by fostering clearer communication and deeper connections with the community—ultimately promoting life safety and improving overall quality of life.
8.1.4	Reevaluate fees and implement a tiered penalty structure to achieve more accurate cost recovery while using penalties that effectively encourage compliance.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>Fire and Finance</b>	This promotes greater stability and resiliency, leads to improved compliance outcomes, and has the potential to reduce violations through stronger enforcement supported by a well-structured fee system.
8.1.5	Transfer invoicing, billing, and collections responsibilities to the Finance Department.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>Fire and finance</b>	This creates a more efficient and effective approach by streamlining processes, aligning job descriptions and responsibilities, and allowing staff to focus on their core duties and mandated tasks.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
8.1.6	Consider using the County tax assessment as a collection tool—factoring in an administrative fee—as an alternative to a third-party collection agency. If a third-party agency is used, their fee should be capped at 10 percent, and they must guarantee a minimum 90 percent cost-recovery rate or higher.	Near-Term	Finance	The benefit of this approach is improved cost-efficiency and reliability in collections. Using the county tax assessment ensures a stable, built-in mechanism for recovering funds with minimal overhead, while setting strict performance standards for third-party agencies protects public resources, maximizes cost recovery, and ensures accountability.
8.1.7	Recruit volunteers to prepare for the current volunteer’s retirement in September 2025. Prioritize the recruitment of a part-time employee in an administrative or management analyst role to also support grant applications, monitoring, and reporting.	Mid-Term	HR and Fire	This approach ensures a smooth transition by preparing for volunteer replacement while strengthening the team with a part-time professional who can provide consistent administrative support, enhance grant management, and improve monitoring and reporting—ultimately increasing program effectiveness and continuity.
<b>CATEGORY 8.2—COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>				
8.2.1	<p>Implement a door-to-door / lean innovation approach with target questions related to potential programs that support quality-of-life and public safety:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Smoking ordinance and a compliance (fee/penalty-based) program (business sales, rentals, etc.)</li> <li>2. Vacant property ordinance, registration and compliance (fee/penalty-based) program.</li> <li>3. Cannabis compliance program and ordinance (optional) including, semi-annual (fee-based) inspections, penalty structure, community benefit options as part of conditions of approval</li> <li>4. Annual rental inspection program (fee-based) with penalty structure</li> <li>5. Citizens Academy or Summer Youth Academy</li> <li>6. Noise</li> <li>7. Parking permits.</li> </ol>	Mid-Term	City Manager and CDD	Combining <b>direct community engagement</b> with <b>lean experimentation</b> means these potentially sensitive or complex programs can be better understood, more effectively designed, more readily supported, and efficiently implemented

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
8.2.2	<b>Vacant Property Ordinance with Registration and Compliance Program</b> – A fee-based initiative designed to ensure cost recovery, incorporating a penalty structure that encourages timely compliance and responsible property maintenance.	Near-Term	CDD	A Vacant Property Registration and Compliance Program improves neighborhood conditions, enhances public safety, and ensures the city recovers the cost of managing vacant properties
8.2.3	<b>Smoking Ordinance and Compliance Program</b> – A fee-based regulatory program covering areas such as business establishments, rental properties, and public spaces. It includes a structured penalty system designed to promote compliance, protect public health, and ensure full cost recovery for enforcement and administration.	Mid-Term	CDD and PD	Promotes a healthier community by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke in businesses, rentals, and shared public spaces. By using a fee-based model with a clear penalty structure, the program encourages compliance, holds property owners and businesses accountable, and ensures the City can recover the full cost of enforcement. This helps create cleaner, safer environments while minimizing the financial burden on taxpayers.
8.2.4	<b>Cannabis Compliance Program and Potential Ordinance</b> – A structured, fee-based framework that includes semi-annual inspections and a clear penalty system to ensure regulatory compliance, promote public safety, and achieve full cost recovery. As part of the approval process, the program can incorporate <b>community benefit requirements</b> , ensuring cannabis businesses contribute positively to the neighborhoods they serve.	Near-Term	CDD and PD	This program protects public health, ensures compliance, recovers enforcement costs, and creates a path for cannabis businesses to be active, positive contributors to the community— <b>balancing economic opportunity with responsible regulation.</b>
8.2.5	<b>Annual Rental Inspection and Compliance Program (Proposed Ordinance)</b> – A fee-based program designed to ensure rental properties meet health and safety standards through regular annual inspections. Backed by a structured penalty system, it motivates property-owner compliance, protects tenants, and supports full cost recovery for City enforcement and administrative efforts.	Mid-Term	CDD	The <b>Annual Rental Inspection and Compliance Program</b> helps ensure safe, healthy living conditions for tenants by holding property owners accountable for maintenance and code compliance. Through regular inspections and a fee-based model with penalties for violations, the program promotes proactive upkeep of rental units, reduces complaints and emergency repairs, and recovers the full cost of enforcement—improving overall housing quality without burdening taxpayers.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
8.2.6	Consider a Citizens Academy or Summer Youth Academy in partnership with Police, Fire and/or other departments.	Long-Term	CDD, PD, Fire and CM	A <b>Citizens or Summer Youth Academy</b> strengthens community relations by providing residents, especially youth, with hands-on education about public safety and local government. This engagement builds trust, encourages civic responsibility, and fosters positive connections between citizens and first responders—ultimately enhancing public safety and community cohesion.
8.2.7	<b>Noise Ordinance</b> – Review and update the existing ordinance as needed and establish a fee-based compliance program with a penalty system designed to encourage adherence and fully cover enforcement costs.	Mid-Term	CDD and PD	Updating the Noise Ordinance and implementing a fee-based Compliance Program ensures that noise levels are effectively managed to protect community peace and quality of life. The penalty structure motivates timely compliance, reducing disturbances and conflicts. Additionally, by recovering the full cost of enforcement through fees, the program remains financially sustainable without relying on taxpayer funds, allowing for consistent and fair regulation that benefits both residents and businesses.
8.2.8	<b>Parking Permit Program with Compliance Enforcement</b> – A fee-based system that issues parking permits and includes a penalty structure to encourage adherence, ensuring effective management of parking resources while fully covering the costs of administration and enforcement.	Long-Term	CDD and PD	A <b>Parking Permit Program with Compliance Enforcement</b> supports improved quality of life and public safety by managing parking fairly and reducing congestion in residential and commercial areas. The fee-based structure ensures full cost recovery, while penalties encourage compliance and fairness among users. By utilizing Code Compliance staff for oversight, the program frees up police resources to focus on core public safety duties, enhancing overall community well-being.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>CATEGORY 8.3—TRAINING</b>				
<b>8.3.1</b>	Ensure all Fire, Code Compliance, and Building staff maintain up-to-date required certifications. The costs associated with these certifications should be included in the fee update to achieve full cost recovery.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD and Fire</b>	Keeping staff certified and up to date with local and state mandates ensures a higher level of expertise and service, supporting community safety and quality of life. Certified staff reduce risks during warrants, abatements, and court proceedings by providing qualified, professional oversight. This commitment to ongoing education also strengthens recruitment efforts and boosts staff morale, fostering a skilled, motivated workforce dedicated to protecting and improving the community.
<b>8.3.2</b>	Offer opportunities for cross-training and obtaining multiple certifications to enhance inspection efficiency, support staff development, and deliver higher levels of service.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD and Fire</b>	Providing cross-training and cross-certification opportunities leads to more effective and efficient inspection processes, ensuring compliance with local and state mandates while raising the overall level of staff expertise. This continuous education supports higher service standards, enhances community safety, and improves quality of life. Certified, qualified staff reduce risks during warrants, abatements, and court proceedings by ensuring professional and accurate enforcement. Additionally, these development opportunities strengthen recruitment efforts and boost staff morale, creating a skilled, motivated workforce dedicated to protecting and serving the community.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>CATEGORY 8.4—ORDINANCES</b>				
8.4.1	Review and update existing ordinances related to graffiti, blight, weeds, vacant properties, public art, and those supporting main corridor vibrancy and economic development to ensure they are clear, consistent, enforceable, and include provisions for full cost recovery.	Mid-Term	CDD	Reviewing and updating these ordinances enhances their clarity and consistency, making enforcement more straightforward and effective. Clear, enforceable language helps address issues like graffiti, blight, and vacant properties promptly, supporting neighborhood revitalization and economic growth. Including cost recovery provisions ensures that enforcement efforts are financially sustainable, reducing the burden on taxpayers. Overall, these updates contribute to vibrant, attractive corridors and healthier communities, improving quality of life and fostering a stronger local economy.
8.4.2	Develop an Art ordinance and program integrated into development standards to reduce blight, enhance beautification, promote volunteerism, and provide anti-graffiti protections. Offer options for adoption or sponsorship of art and pursue grant opportunities.	Near-Term	CDD and CM	Developing an Art Ordinance and Program supports community beautification and has been proven to reduce graffiti by creating visually appealing spaces that discourage vandalism. It fosters partnerships between residents, businesses, and local organizations, opening opportunities for grant funding to expand art projects and programs. As a proactive business incentive, it promotes a vibrant cultural environment that can create jobs and enhance the visual appeal of outdoor areas. Increased community engagement and foot traffic not only boost economic activity but also contribute to improved public safety by creating lively, well-used spaces.
<b>CATEGORY 8.5—BUILDING AND CODE COMPLIANCE</b>				
8.5.1	Adopt a penalty fee for red-tagging violations, with a tiered fee structure for removal costs based on the severity or timing of compliance.	Near-Term	CDD	This approach encourages property owners to address violations promptly, leading to faster compliance and more efficient enforcement processes. By incentivizing timely action, the program reduces administrative burdens and helps maintain community standards effectively and sustainably.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>8.5.2</b>	Offer opportunities for cross-training and multiple certifications in building code and enforcement to improve inspection efficiency, support staff development, and provide higher levels of service.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD</b>	Providing cross-training and multiple certifications in building code and enforcement ensures staff remain compliant with local and state mandates while advancing their education and expertise. This leads to higher service levels that support community safety and quality of life. Certified and qualified staff reduce risks during warrants, abatements, and court proceedings by ensuring professional and accurate enforcement. Additionally, these opportunities enhance recruitment efforts and boost staff morale, creating a skilled, motivated workforce dedicated to protecting and improving the community.
<b>8.5.3</b>	Actively recruit to fill vacancies, using consultants as needed until positions are successfully filled.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD and Fire</b>	Actively filling vacant positions—using consultants if needed—helps ensure these roles, which are largely cost-recovered, have minimal impact on the City’s operating budget. Successfully staffed positions can exceed cost recovery by improving overall productivity, enhancing customer service, and meeting community expectations. Filling vacancies also reduces burnout among current staff, boosts morale, supports operational functions, and contributes to better employee retention throughout the organization.
<b>8.5.4</b>	Use the County tax assessment system as the primary method for fee collection, including an administrative fee, instead of relying on a third-party collection agency. If a third party is used, their fee should be capped at 10 percent, and they must guarantee at least a 90 percent cost-recovery rate. The Finance Department should manage all billing, invoicing, and collections.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>Finance</b>	Using the county tax assessment system as the primary collection tool brings a high level of cost recovery with minimal or no additional expense, making it an effective and efficient method for revenue collection. This approach streamlines the process, reduces reliance on costly third-party agencies, and ensures more consistent and timely payments. By centralizing billing and collections within the Finance Department, the City can maintain better control and oversight, ultimately supporting fiscal stability and maximizing revenue recovery.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
8.5.5	Once community and Council engagement and support have been secured, develop additional quality-of-life programs like those described in Section 2.	Mid/Near-Term	CDD and CM	See benefits described in Section 2.
8.5.6	Implement proactive code enforcement by incorporating conditions of approval into project permits.	Mid-Term	CDD	Incorporating proactive code enforcement through conditions of approval generates revenue based on cost recovery while ensuring projects are completed more promptly and to higher standards. This approach helps reduce complaints by shifting from reactive to proactive enforcement, improving overall community satisfaction and project outcomes.
8.5.7	<b>Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) Deposits</b> – Increase the standard \$10,000 deposit to a tiered structure that reflects the potential cost of remediation in case of noncompliance. For larger projects, bonds may be a more effective deposit option.	Near-Term	CDD	Expanding the TCO deposit to a tiered structure aligned with potential remediation costs ensures stronger financial protection for the City, encouraging timely compliance and reducing the risk of unpaid enforcement expenses. Using bonds for larger projects provides a reliable guarantee for addressing issues, helping to safeguard public interests while promoting responsible project completion.
8.5.8	Implement a fee for extending a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) beyond its originally approved timeframe.	Near-Term	CDD	Charging a fee for extending a TCO generates additional revenue while encouraging timely project completion and adherence to higher standards. This approach promotes accountability, supports cost recovery, and helps reduce complaints by shifting enforcement from reactive to proactive, ultimately improving overall project outcomes and community satisfaction.

Priority	Recommendation	Time Frame	Responsible Party/Parties	Benefit
<b>8.5.9</b>	All programs with penalties should offer an option to appeal to a hearing body for a fee. Some jurisdictions reduce costs by sharing personnel to create a local or regional hearing body. Hiring a third party for hearings is optional but may be expensive.	<b>Mid-Term</b>	<b>CDD and Fire</b>	Including an appeal option with a hearing body supports compliance with mandates requiring due process and ensures the public has a fair opportunity to be heard. This judicial process allows for reflection on current policies, provides unbiased resolutions, and promotes transparency and accountability, ultimately strengthening trust in enforcement programs and improving community relations.
<b>8.5.10</b>	Update and increase the fees for inspection and abatement warrants to reflect the technical complexities and specialized expertise required.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD and CAO</b>	Updating and increasing fees for inspection and abatement warrants supports true cost recovery by ensuring fees accurately reflect the specialized expertise and complexities involved. This approach promotes fiscal stability and responsible financial management.
<b>8.5.11</b>	Increase the “clouding the title” fee to fully recover the actual costs incurred.	<b>Near-Term</b>	<b>CDD and Finance</b>	Increasing the “clouding the title” fee generates additional revenue while setting a stronger deterrent for serious violations. This encourages property owners to comply promptly, helping to maintain community standards and reduce prolonged enforcement actions.