



## **Performance Audit:**

### **Why We Did This Audit**

We undertook this audit because the City Council's City Utilities Committee requested an audit of solid waste fees and services.

### **What We Recommended**

To maintain service delivery standards, the Commissioner of Public Works should:

- develop a comprehensive solid waste staffing strategy including recruitment and retention of city staff, extra help staffing, and the use of contractors
- consider using more automated collection vehicles
- invest in its facilities
- develop incentives to improve staff morale
- follow through on its vehicle replacement plan
- develop a plan ensuring that equipment is replaced at the end of its life cycle

To improve data management, the Commissioner of Public Works should:

- identify critical data and develop a centralized database
- consistently track the reasons for overtime use
- develop a non-compliance enforcement plan for residents and staff

To evenly distribute workload, the Commissioner of Public Works should:

- conduct route optimization planning

For more information regarding this report, please use the "contact" link on our website at [www.atlaudit.org](http://www.atlaudit.org)

### **Solid Waste Services**

#### **What We Found**

Solid Waste Services would benefit from investing additional resources into its operations. Despite its recruiting efforts and an increase in the number of allocated positions, the Office of Solid Waste has been unable to reach its target of being 90% staffed. Management procured almost \$12 million in emergency contracts for extra help staff, yard trimmings collection, bulk waste pickup, and cleanup at illegal dumpsites. The additional resources helped the department cover its collection routes, but high absences likely contributed to Solid Waste Services overspending its overtime budget by more than \$400,000 between fiscal years 2021 and 2022. Employees reported low morale and felt underpaid for the difficulty and physical demands of the work. During our observations of the department's facilities, we saw evidence of water damage in the ceilings, and peeling floors.

We also found that 60% of vehicles and 95% of equipment are beyond their life cycle, causing work delays because of mechanical failures. Most vehicles are assigned one collection route a day, but some vehicles must cover two routes, leading to additional wear and tear. For example, we observed crews that had been delayed because of mechanical failures with trucks and equipment.

Solid Waste Services does not have a centralized data system. The department tracks daily resources and performance using manual data entry, and file storage is limited to paper copies at different facilities. Also, support for overtime use is not consistently tracked. Leadership reported frustration about the paper filing and manual entry system, because it not only costs them unnecessary time to complete, but has also resulted in missing or incorrect information. The department also does not have an effective mechanism for tracking and reporting resident non-compliance city code provisions for curbside collections, such as the per-bag fee for excess bags or the annual service fee additional bins.

## Management Responses to Audit Recommendations

Summary of Management Responses		
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner develop a comprehensive solid waste staffing strategy including recruitment and retention of city staff, extra help staffing, and the use of contractors.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> Ongoing
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner consider using more automated collection vehicles to reduce the number of collectors needed to deliver services.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Partly Implemented	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> March 2025
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner invest in its facilities to improve work conditions.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> October 2023
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner develop incentives to improve staff morale.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Implemented	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> March 2023
<b>Recommendation #5:</b> We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner follow through on its vehicle replacement plan to ensure enough vehicles are available during scheduled shift time.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> September 2023

<b>Recommendation #6:</b>		
We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner develop a plan to ensure that equipment is replaced when it reaches the end of its life cycle.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> June 2023
<b>Recommendation #7:</b>		
We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner identify critical data and develop a centralized database to store that data and generate reports to inform decision-making.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Partly Implemented	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> June 2023
<b>Recommendation #8:</b>		
We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner consistently track the reasons for overtime use to ensure necessary overtime is properly budgeted.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> June 2023
<b>Recommendation #9:</b>		
We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner develop a non-compliance enforcement plan for residents and staff.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> October 2023
<b>Recommendation #10:</b>		
We recommend that the Public Works Commissioner conduct route optimization planning to ensure that routes are balanced among crews' daily workloads.		
<b>Response:</b> Agree	<b>Status:</b> Started	<b>Estimated Completion Date (M/Y):</b> October 2023