



Pathfinder

"Real, sustainable community change requires the initiative and engagement of community members."

Helene D. Gayle

Teamwork Matters

*A message from
the City Manager*



JASON STILWELL

The City is further engaging with the Santa Maria community about how we can address maintaining municipal programs and quality of life service needs in the face of shrinking funding.

Over the next several weeks, designated City staff and I will be speaking to numerous local groups (including a number of meetings with City employees in late April and early May, details TBA), to educate them about the City's current vision and needs, and asking for their feedback. We want to determine specific areas of interest among different groups.

Our focus is on the outcomes that local funding can continue to provide. The City Council asked us to look into a survey of our community to gauge support for the current levels of municipal service. Also, to see if residents are interested in additional levels of City service, and what those might be.

Most Santa Maria residents are highly satisfied with their vital City government services and believe the City is headed in the right direction, according to an independent survey that we commissioned.

Residents expressed strong support for key public safety services and quality of life services. Residents strongly supported maintaining and enhancing police, fire, and anti-gang and at-risk youth services, building on the City's successful efforts in recent years.

I'm thrilled that our residents are satisfied with the City's performance and are optimistic about the City's future. The positive opinions residents have of the City is a direct result of the excellent work you all provide day in

and day out. For that I want to say thank you. We work hard to keep our city safe, clean, and well-maintained. Scarcity of resources is always an issue.

We are so fortunate that voters in June 2012 passed Measure U, raising the local sales tax by a quarter-cent. Revenue raised by the tax is allocated for essential City services like neighborhood police patrols, fire protection, 9-1-1 emergency response, gang suppression and other services. About 44 percent goes to fire services and 47 percent to police services. That supplemental Measure U revenue helped the Police Department to stop the terrible wave of violence in 2014 to 2016 when 21 homicides were committed in 14 months.

In the survey, residents also expressed support for quality of life services that protect at-risk youth from gangs, violence, and drugs. Maintaining library, park, and recreation programs provides necessary alternatives to keep kids out of gangs and reduce crime problems.

We are working hard in the face of financial challenges to maintain the City services on which more than 106,000 residents depend. Over the past 25 years, the State has taken \$55.2 million in local funds away from Santa Maria to fix its own budgets. That hurts our local ability to provide critical public safety and quality of life services.

We look forward to continuing to discuss our vital community service needs and evaluating how best to maintain these services, particularly public safety and the ongoing challenge of protecting children from youth violence and gangs. We will continue to engage the community and keep the public informed - including through a new webpage soon - on how we will be maintaining the high quality services our residents expect and deserve.

Jason