

Information Technology Services Annual Report 2010



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Director's Message

Building value through transparency, stewardship, and innovation

When I arrived at the City almost 6 years ago, one of the first activities that I participated in was the formation of a set of core principles for the department.

I feel strongly about the need to establish guiding principles for an organization. They guide good employees to do the right thing even when no supervisors are around. But core values can't be boilerplate – they must reflect the organization's culture, and the makeup and attitudes of the organization.

Given the current fiscal realities, citizens will be glad to know that the group picked “stewardship,” in particular, “fiscally responsible management” as one of the department's key core values. Six years later, I can assure you that this principle is still going strong. IT Services has a long history of using innovation to create lower cost and higher levels of service.

This year was no different. Through innovation and some out of the box thinking, IT staff avoided \$450,000 of annual expenses in broadband services. And by re-engineering, prioritization, continuous improvement, and plain old hard work, IT staff was able to cut the IT Services budget by 12%.

As you'll see by our metrics, this did have an impact on service levels. This type of transparency is often painful for an organization. High performing individuals always strive for top grade results, and it can be painful to see results that aren't quite what you'd like. But I also believe that facing up to bad news can be a powerful stimulus to innovate. When I arrived, facing up to poor customer service scores galvanized the department to figure out how to fix this, and through innovation and change, fix it they did.

I anticipate that this same group of folks will adopt new practices, technologies, and ideas to bolster service levels, even in the face of economic difficulty. Citizens and customers can rest assured that I, and the rest of the team, will do so, not only out of a sense of responsibility, but also because it is satisfying and rewarding work. It is a pleasure to continue to serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Feldman'.

Jonathan Feldman, MSM
Director, Information Technology Services
City of Asheville, North Carolina

Mission

Information Technology Services strives to provide excellent customer services by providing quality technical deliverables with a high level of professionalism and responsiveness. We adhere to principles of technical and fiscal stewardship with an end goal of a high quality of life for employees and citizens.

Core Values

Customer Service

We will provide customer service in a responsive and timely manner.

Professionalism

We will interact courteously, ethically, and with commitment to continuous improvement.

Stewardship

We will earn trust by practicing fiscally responsible management that ensures system integrity and availability.

Expertise

We will be advocates for our customers by developing and maintaining competence and knowledge.

Quality of Life

We will recognize the importance of balancing the relationship between quality of work and quality of life.

A VISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

IT Services will be considered a credible and effective business technology service organization by our customers. Our impact on the business we serve will earn the respect of our peers. We will be busy but not frantic, allowing for planned and quality work.



Strategic Goals



Business & Citizen Focus

Ensure that technology services are focused on business requirements of City staff and citizens; display innovative leadership in automating City processes to save labor, improve efficiency, and reduce expenses.



Organizational Development

Pursue organizational development strategy, including staff industry certifications and industry accreditation.



Security & Reliability

Significantly improve security and reliability by modernizing data center & data handling practices.



Quality & Timeliness

Utilize test environment and automated deployment system to ensure that quality, timely IT products are received by users & citizens.



Measurement & Action

Monitor and act on metrics regarding work load, capacity, and network health to enable proactive management of resources.

Selected achievements towards these goals may be found throughout this annual report with the symbols associated with the goal.

Project Highlights 2010

Focus Area: Fiber Optic Challenge!

Selected achievement area:   

Changes in state legislation led to the City of Asheville losing affordable access to fiber optic lines supporting public safety communications and other public functions. With the choices to discontinue use or pay an incumbent broadband provider unacceptably high prices for the once affordable network, the City elected to install a replacement solution for all sites. Through partnerships with local agencies and a local vendor, the City turned this difficult situation into an opportunity by deploying emerging, cutting-edge wireless wide area network technology to keep public safety sites running reliably at a much lower cost to citizens.



The new network needed to provide the same critical high speed public safety communications for telephone, emergency alerting, and data to fourteen public safety sites including regional fire stations and police substations. All totaled, 22 City facilities relied on the former fiber network. The provider presented a proposal of \$450,000 per year for continued use. This equates to 9 jobs at the City of Asheville, or an increase in property tax rate to citizens of from 42 cents to 42.5 cents. Inspired by the need to keep the budget low and citizens safe, the City developed an alternative approach.

The implementation of this wireless technology has helped the City of Asheville to navigate through a very difficult budget environment without having to look for new funding, as well as increase the safety of its citizens.

The beautiful, mountainous terrain in Asheville attracts tourism, and led Fodor's magazine to name Asheville as a top travel destination in 2011. That same mountainous terrain provided challenges obtaining line-of-sight connections as did numerous hillsides, trees and adjacent buildings.

Wireless radio paths were established between public and privately owned tower sites, the City Hall bell tower, and each facility. Facilities without line-of-sight to towers or City Hall were relayed through nearby facilities with better tower visibility. In one case, a radio relay was installed at the peak of a neighborhood church to provide for that neighborhood's fire and police stations. Staff also constructed extension mounts at several locations to establish radio connections over trees and other obstructions.

With a tight timeframe, staff worked nights and weekends to adapt existing network components to work with the new equipment and partner agency networks. These agencies worked well together to complete the wireless network prior to two major snow events. Heavy snow and wind dramatically affect all but the most expensive of older-generation wireless backhaul technologies. This cutting-edge network performed well and maintained critical data communication through the snows and beyond. As plans develop to restore permanent City managed fiber-optic connections to all facilities, the wireless network will provide redundant connectivity to critical public safety operations. The wireless network was completed for approximately \$20,000, far less than a single month of continued use of the fiber solution as proposed by the provider.



Business Technology Improvement Project (BTIP)

Selected achievement area:  

The City of Asheville's Business Technology Improvement Project (BTIP) is a multi-year effort to increase the City's operational efficiency and accountability, to expand citizen services and raise citizen satisfaction, within an open system architecture, which allows for the future development of new capabilities.

After the success of Phase 1 in 2009, with notable improvements in paperless processes and automation, Phase 2 was completed during 2010, with deployment on-time (and within budget) on January, 3, 2011. Highlights of the new payroll & human resources system include staff time savings and paperless distribution of employee pay stubs and a paperless, automated routing of work orders and approvals. Saving staff time through automation is a key strategic step along the way to reducing City staff growth over time. Many



times, projects that change business processes create problems in the organization, but through hard work by all departments and City management, business processes have been improved to the betterment of all.

Emergency Responder Deployment

Selected achievement area:  

Like many private firms, the City uses technology known as "VoIP" (voice over internet protocol) to create efficiency, consolidate lines, and save money. All outgoing calls for the City's phone system are consolidated in a primary and a backup location. An unintended consequence of VoIP, industry-wide, is that 911 calls from a desktop phone received by the emergency 911 center are listed as coming from the system location, which, in many cases, would not be where the caller was.

The Emergency Responder keeps track of telephone locations and ensures that the system will send emergency calls to the appropriate 911 center for the caller's location, including the street address and building floor. This ensures that the center can identify the caller's location for accurate emergency response. In addition, the system automatically tracks and updates equipment moves and changes which helps with continued accuracy. Deploying this capability helps ensure that our employees and visitors stay safe and are able to get help from emergency responders when they need it.



New Spyware Detection and Blocker

Selected achievement area:   

We have implemented a Spyware Detection and Blocker module that complements our existing anti-virus program. This tool detects, blocks and removes spyware, keyloggers, adware, and other harmful internet malware not trapped by our conventional firewall and anti-virus programs. It provides real-time protection from spyware by preventing its installation, not just removing it afterward. The implementation of this system provides increased protection during web browsing activities on all of the City's computers.

Sidewalk GIS Inventory

Selected achievement area:



We worked with Public Works to build a database of all sidewalks. The effort resulted in the creation of 9000+ segments and an ongoing maintenance plan for Public Works. We also assisted the City's Pedestrian Master Plan project by collaborating with the departments of Public Works and Transportation to develop a project model and prioritize 500+ potential sidewalk additions throughout the City. IT staff performed detailed analysis utilizing automated GIS tools to create quantified priority scores based on criteria from the Pedestrian Master Plan.



This assisted Transportation staff in allocating scarce capital funding for new sidewalk construction. This new automated analysis can be performed within an hour saving weeks of staff time. This also allowed Transportation staff to produce visual maps of proposed new sidewalk construction to gather public input at community meetings.

Sanitation Inventory and Utility Account Merge

Selected achievement area:



In July of 2010, the City made improvements to the Sanitation Division's existing garbage can inventory database including the merge of 80% of the can inventory with existing City Utility Billing accounts within our new ERP software system. This project was in preparation for the BTIP Utility Billing go-live onto the new system scheduled for July 2011. These efforts will also support policymakers as they evaluate the potential for a "pay as you throw" sanitation service.

NCDOT & City Owned Roads mapAsheville Application

Selected achievement area:

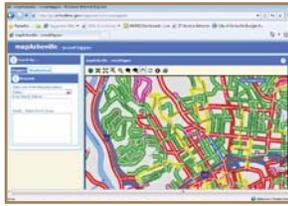


New for 2010, we unveiled another mapAsheville application that allows citizens to access ownership information for all roads and corridors within the City limits so residents can find out who maintains their street. While many of the streets inside the Asheville City limits are owned and maintained by the City, others are a mix of North Carolina Department of Transportation property, privately-owned roads, or roads owned by the National Park Service. The new application is a good example of the versatility of the award-winning mapAsheville system first unveiled in 2006. Like previous applications that supply developer information and map instances of crimes within the City, the update consists of data the City is already working with in some fashion. Because of the way mapAsheville was structured in its creation, it is easy to follow up by plugging in new information and making it available to the public.



SnowMapper mapAsheville Application

Selected achievement area: 



Also launched in 2010, Snowmapper is an addition to the mapAsheville suite of applications that allows citizens to see the snow removal priority within all areas of the City. This application visibly displays the snow removal priority of all streets in any geographic area and provides governmental transparency to citizens.

Water Meter Replacement Project Assistance

Selected achievement area:  

Information Technology Services assisted the Water Department with their multi-year water meter replacement project. By providing extensive database reporting of water meter readings and customer data, I.T. Services helped the Water Department identify the physical location of water meter equipment and associate it to customer accounts. Those databases also provided the means to track the ongoing status and progress of the meter replacements to easily identify equipment still in need of attention. The Asheville Water Department has successfully replaced or retrofitted 8,500 of 56,500 water meters so far. The ongoing replacement project will increase water staff efficiency by allowing electronic drive-by meter reading.

RecTrac System Upgrade

Selected achievement area:  

In order to provide new functionality and increased efficiency in serving the public at Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts locations, the City upgraded their existing recreation management software system. This system handles the onsite and web-based registration and point-of-sale services to citizens at many recreation sites. Perhaps most importantly, the system integrates with the City's accounting systems, and provides transparency into financial operations, improving daily business accountability.



Some examples of improvement include the Nature Center, where the upgrade facilitated the processing of the credit and debit cards to a more modern system, allowing for quicker customer credit card swipes. The project provided Parks staff with training during the upgrade that will help them to manage the citizen-friendly web based registrations for classes and programs at recreation centers. The upgrade also provides the capability to use "key fob" type swipes at many locations, in order to provide customers with quick entry and access to programs, classes and activities. In addition to increased functionality, the project provided automation at all Parks locations without point-of-sale terminals. For example, citizens can now pay via credit card at the City's three public pools.

Facility Improvements

Selected achievement area:  

Our department is frequently called upon to assist with moves, adds, and changes that occur during the course of business at the City. For example, APD's Oakley substation, a key partnership with AB Tech, and a facility that is much-needed by the community, required various wiring for PCs, radios and document imaging capabilities. Other facilities that required attention in 2010 included the relocation of Facility Maintenance, the City's Government Channel studio, Engineering, and Economic Development. We also assisted with PC and wiring needs during the remodeling at City Hall and a building at Recreation Park.



Infrastructure Improvement

In addition to projects, IT Services is always working to improve infrastructure. In 2010, we:

- Tested and prepared for the latest PC operating systems, since it is now impossible to get hardware that runs on the older PC operating system
- Replaced several public safety generators that were failing due to age
- Improved password security by using technology that enforces secure password requirements and auto-lock of screens
- Decommissioned several older email and web servers to save on maintenance and lessen complexity, which increases uptime
- Improved communication lines between fleet gas stations and accounting systems



Cloud Computing

Selected achievement area: 

While the City does rely on capital infrastructure, leaders also encourage consideration of cloud computing technology. For example, in 2010, IT Services established a blog for Community Relations with a software-as-a-service vendor. Also in 2010, Public Works worked with IT Services and a multi-tenant public cloud provider to dramatically enhance service and reduce future operational budgets. Sanitation drivers are provided inexpensive GPS smartphones to identify where large appliance or brush pickups are needed. Instead of burning gas patrolling neighborhoods for a pickup, drivers who see that a pickup is needed can use a smartphone app that lets them log a work order with precise location information. Or if a worker sees a damaged street pole, he or she can take a photo and attach it to the location-based work order. In the long run, the City estimates more than \$200,000 annually in gas savings.

Process Improvement

Knowledge Sharing & Staff Training

Selected achievement area: 

IT employees facilitated several onsite classes, webinars, and distance learning activities for City staff this year. They included continued core and end user training for our BTIP software implementation.

In order for the City of Asheville to operate in a dynamic technology environment, ITS employees must complete many hours of training yearly and even monthly. Compared to an average of 152 hours per quarter in 2009, IT Services employees completed an average of 281 hours per quarter in training and professional development in 2010.

The City became an ESRI Certified Training Program Center recently, saving \$6000 by delivering GIS training in-house to seven City employees.

Street Centerline Improvements

Selected achievement area:  

The City is responsible for basic street data called the “centerline”. In 2010, point and site address errors were corrected, helping the 911 center and other County departments. Data such as centerline topology and missing address structure points were also corrected, allowing better routing analysis capability and dispatch. The 911 center’s Computer Aided Dispatch system relies heavily on the centerline ranges, so this effort has improved emergency response in the City. The Public Works department, as a heavy consumer of GIS data, also benefits from these improvements.

Mobile Phone Management Improvements

Selected achievement area:  

Centralization of mobile phone management meant that staff could focus on improving this for all departments. For example, \$28,000 in cost savings were realized by moving City laptop mobile data devices from one contract to another with no interruption in service through our existing cellular provider.



Centralization of cellular account management also provided benefits to other areas including the internal audit of City-wide cellular accounts which allowed for ongoing cost savings through detection of unused devices. Cost allocation coding was also improved allowing for reduced time in bill processing and the transition to paperless billing.



Green Initiatives

In April 2007 City Council passed a resolution committing to reduce the municipal carbon footprint 80% by the year 2050 and requiring a strategic plan to lead this effort. The City's carbon footprint is the amount of greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide) that are emitted into the atmosphere each year by the organization. We take this goal seriously, and participate by reducing power requirements and helping employees to engage in activities that support this goal.

howlowcanavlgoo?
raise the bar. lower the carbon.



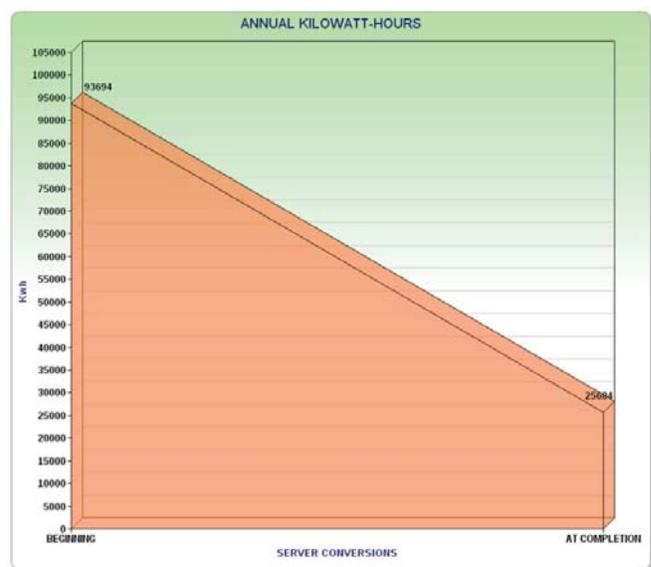
- The City of Asheville has reduced its municipal carbon footprint 8.42% in 3 years
- Last year alone the City has reduced its energy spending by 5.9%, totaling \$336,216
- To date, the City's carbon reductions equal the positive environmental benefit of planting 76,026 trees

Server Virtualization Project

Selected achievement area:   

Server virtualization is a technology that shares hardware between many servers – an efficient financial decision, to be sure, but also a decision that reduces power consumption. The additional consolidation of physical servers to virtual servers continues our efforts towards the City's goal to be the southeastern leader in clean energy and environmental sustainability. Our server virtualization project was funded by an Energy Efficiency and Conservation block grant awarded to the Office of Sustainability, which means these improvements are at no additional cost to the City's operating budget.

Following our test deployment in 2009, we have replaced additional physical servers this year in our ongoing energy saving initiatives. We are well on our way to achieving this significant City Council goal of reducing our energy consumption and carbon footprint, while improving service.



Business Focus



Organizational Development



Security & Reliability



Quality & Timeliness



Measurement & Action

Telecommunications Budget Reporting

Selected achievement area: 



We provided next fiscal year projections City-wide to better assist City departments as they prepare their budgets on recurring IT supported telecommunications expenses including: radios, desktop phones, independent land lines, mobile data service, and remote access licenses. The addition of this reporting to departments each year will continue to serve as an internal audit and support further cost savings opportunities for the City's telecommunications operating expense.

Cost Savings & Grant Support Initiatives



\$450,000 – Cost avoidance by building and utilizing backup wireless system in lieu of sole-source telecommunications provider

\$315,000 – Re-engineered maintenance, contracted services, and restructured management of the department for a 12% budget reduction from the previous fiscal year

\$28,000 – Re-negotiation of mobile data card contract

\$23,375 – Recovered from franchise fee audit

\$8,000 - Cost savings from distance learning activities

 **TOTAL: \$824,375 in cost avoidance and savings**

\$100,000 – Cost savings from Energy Efficiency and Conservation block grant

\$850,000 – Provided GIS and mapping support for successful grant from USDOT for a Community Development grant award

\$160,000 – Provided GIS and mapping support provided for Transit planning grant award

 **TOTAL: \$1,110,000 in grant support**

Energy Conservation Assistance

Selected achievement area:  

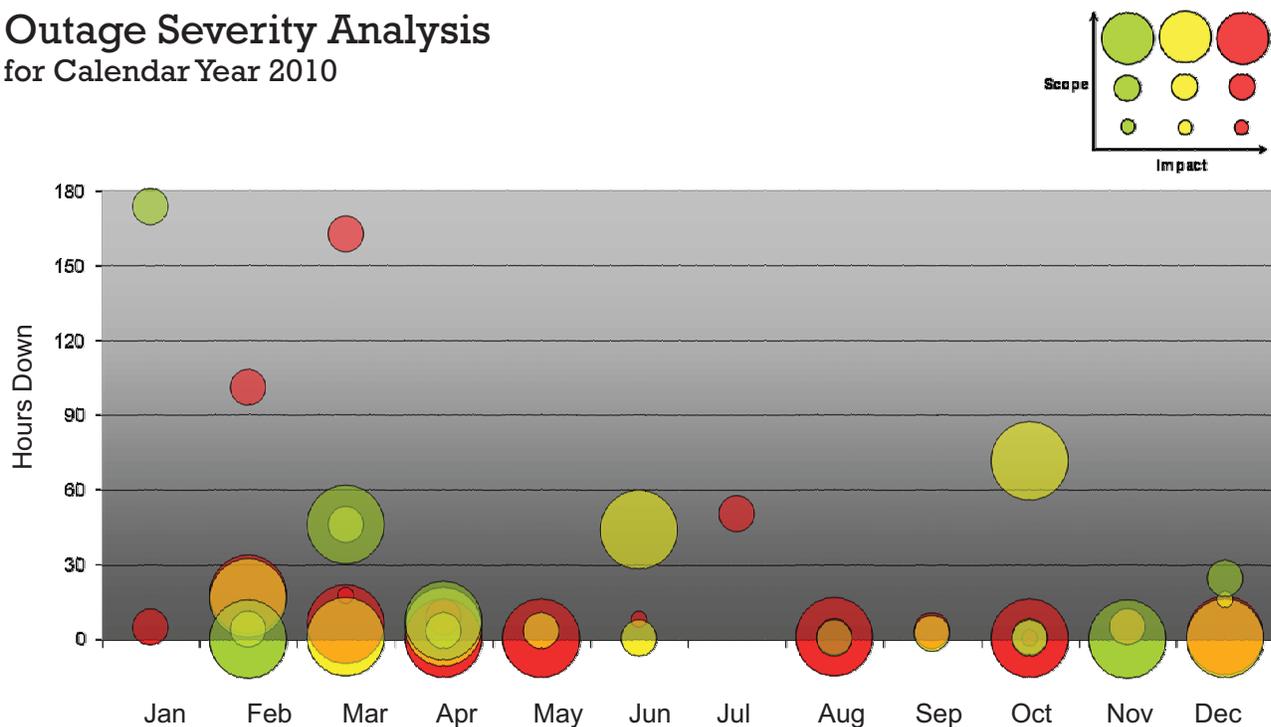
In 2010, we helped to better manage energy conservation strategies for City facilities. Our staff identified all City facilities being tracked for energy conservation improvement, verified the current location address for each, updated the energy conservation web service with current City facility data, and provided maps.

Issues & Opportunities

Back in 2007, IT Services started to measure what we call “human metrics” of downtime. “System metrics” — which are what IT departments typically measure — tell us how we have impacted the system. Our “human metrics” tell us how we have impacted the customer. We measure in real time between an incident and its closure. We feel that this is the best way to measure business impact.



Outage Severity Analysis for Calendar Year 2010

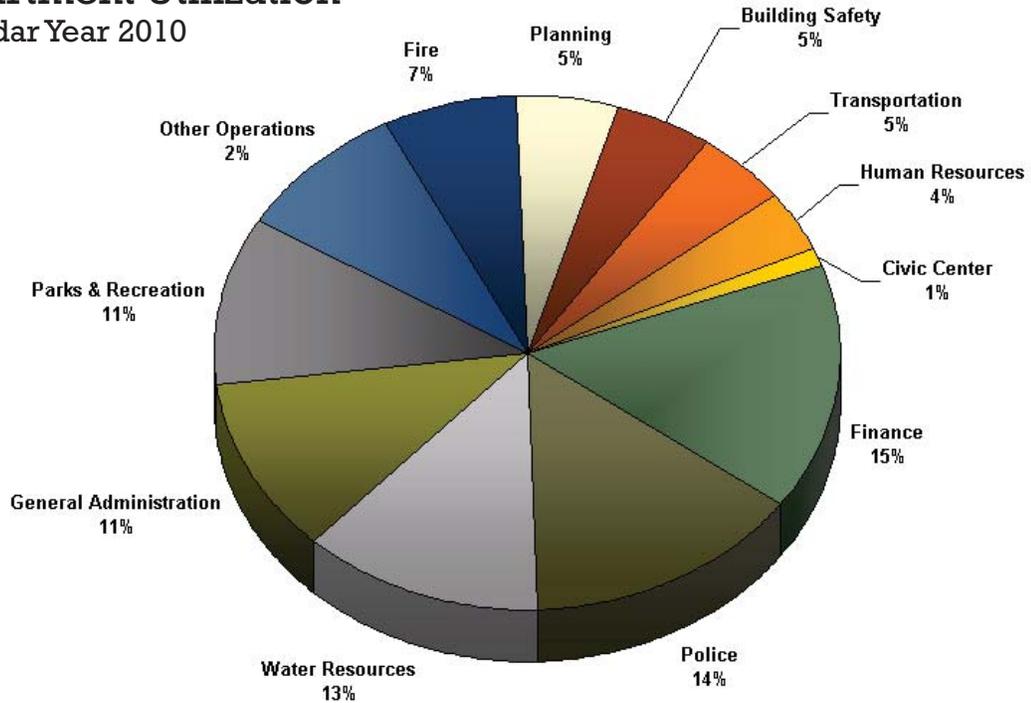


Although we have dramatically lowered our downtime compared to previous years, the outage severity analysis is a sobering report and a reminder that we have improvements to make. Despite a small workgroup’s high duration telecommunications outage in March being related to a third party telecommunications provider, we feel responsible as the broker of that service and it prompted us to seek alternatives.

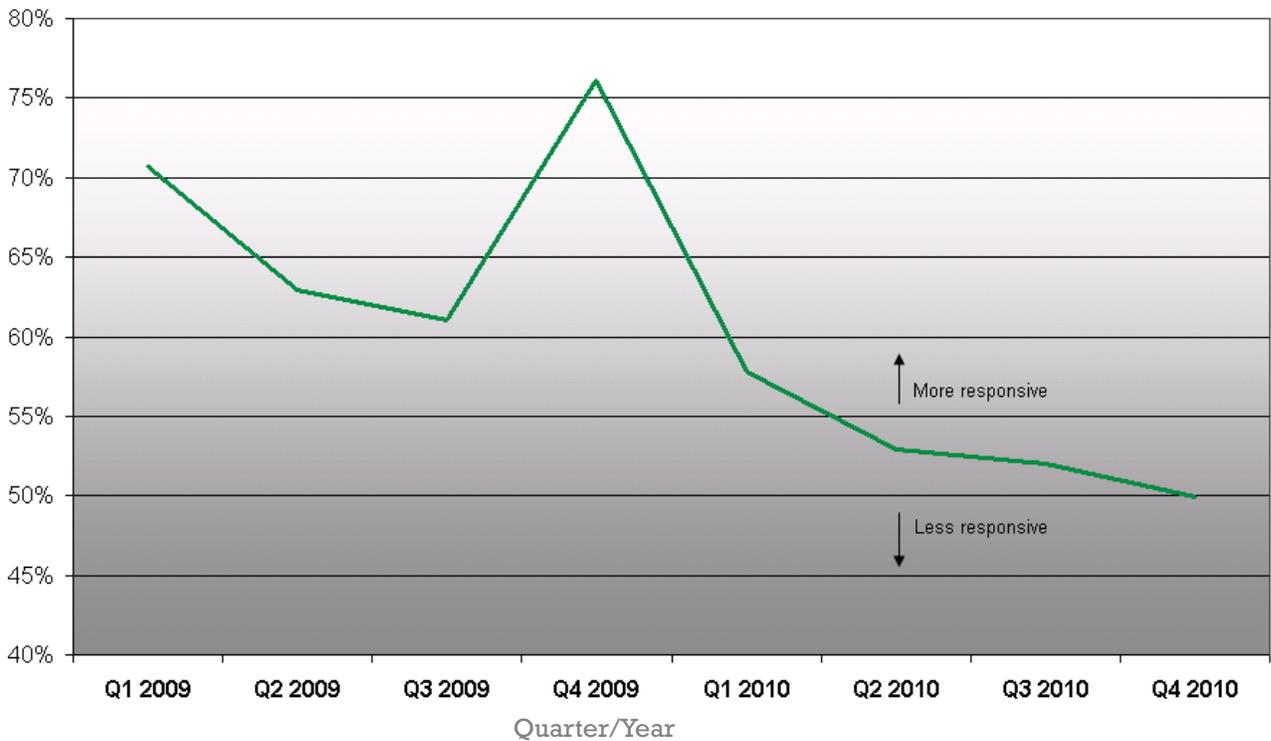
By the Numbers

Number of cell phones, PDAs, and air cards:	796
Radios managed:	1,350
Number of IT Employees:	19
Network Servers managed:	70
Number of infrastructure devices managed:	152
Number of VoIP Devices:	772
Number of City Employees Full Time:	1,099
Part Time:	457
ITS Budget as a percent of the City's Operating Funds:	1.79%
Number of desktop & laptop computers managed:	900
Average Work Orders completed monthly:	1,114
Number of printers managed:	389
Average number of emails checked for viruses weekly:	700,000

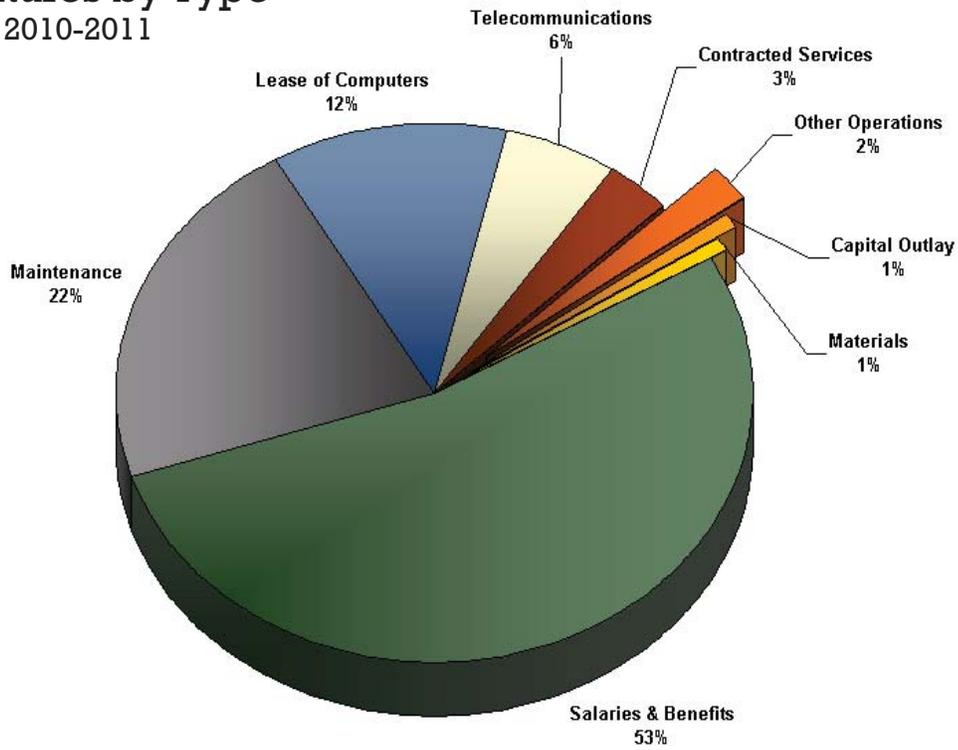
IT Department Utilization for Calendar Year 2010



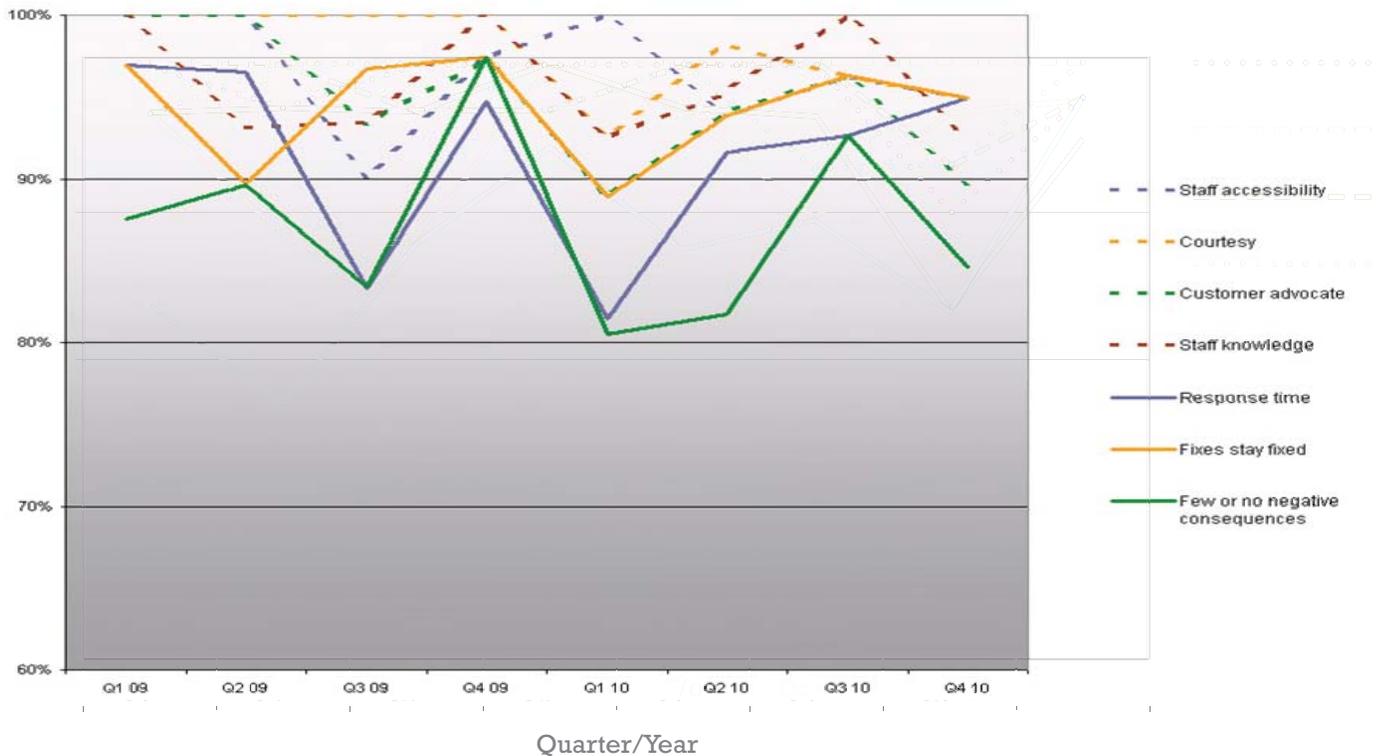
Normal Work Orders Completed Within 24 Hours City of Asheville, IT Services



Expenditures by Type Fiscal Year 2010-2011



Two Year Quarterly Trend— “Good or Excellent” Customer Service Survey



Organizational Development

Staff Re-Engineering

Much like the military promotes whole-organization thinking by job rotation, IT Services follows a tradition of internal rotation where possible when business conditions change. This year was no exception. We are proud of our staff for preparing themselves, rising to the occasion, and also welcoming new faces when other staff seeks opportunity elsewhere.

Scott Barnwell filled our GIS Analyst vacancy, coming to us via eleven years of GIS consulting in the private sector. Wanda Burgess was reassigned to Technical Services Manager. Sonya Crump was promoted into a full-time position as Help Desk Technician in December to contribute to the department's responsibilities to Public Safety radio and cellular towers. Kevin Hymel was reassigned to Application and GIS services Manager. Eric LaRue moved from Systems Analyst II to our BTIP Project Manager. Debbie Messer was reassigned to Support Services Manager. As part of a cooperative effort between the City's Community Relations division and IT Services, Jeff Reble was reassigned to our department as a Systems Analyst in order to better support the City's web and media efforts. Jason Williams was reassigned from Help Desk Technician to Systems Analyst I to support BTIP and other systems. Gina Zachary was moved to full-time status as the department's Administrative Assistant in order to take on additional duties in cellular service account management and device support.



Promotions, Certifications and Awards

Jason Williams received the Volvo Construction academic scholarship awarded for the highest GPA in the Computer Science program of study at UNC Asheville.

The following IT Services staff members received the City's Quality of Service Award in January for their work on our Business Technology Improvement Project (BTIP): Wanda Burgess, Kevin Hymel, Jason Mann, Constance Markley, Debbie Messer, Dave Michelson, and Rich Rauschenbach.

Community Involvement

Better Citizen Engagement Through Technology

City Council and the Community Relations division are both looking to provide citizens tools to better interact with their government. In 2010, we deployed a modern WiFi network in Council chambers enabling citizens to interact via Twitter and other social networking sites during meetings. We also deployed live video streaming of Council meetings, available at ashevillenc.gov/gtv, for similar reasons. Previously, citizens had to have a cable TV subscription with one particular cable company. Now, any citizen with an internet connection can watch Council meetings as they occur.



Scott Barnwell volunteers with the Isaac Dickson Elementary School garden. The school garden provides a hands-on instructional environment for elementary school students to learn about ecology, biology, and healthy food. The children grow vegetables, raise chickens, harvest rainwater for irrigation, and learn to prepare healthy snacks from the produce they grow. In addition to helping with the garden operations, Scott organizes an annual seed sale fundraiser with other parents to support the garden and a summer garden camp open to all children in the community. The children decorate, pack, and sell hundreds of vegetable and flower seed packets while incorporating lessons in art, math, and science.

Jonathan Feldman participated in several Chamber of Commerce community technology planning sessions, as well as participating on an Asheville-Buncombe Technical College advisory board.

IT Services staff participate in many charitable events throughout the community, including United Way and the ALS/Muscular Dystrophy Lockup.



Several members of staff also worked with the community and the Asheville Chamber of Commerce to apply to be a Google Fiber City. There was tremendous buzz about this in our community. While we don't yet know the outcome, we are glad to have been a part of this undertaking that proved that Asheville is a community of technology-savvy and forward-thinking individuals.

But we didn't stop there. We engaged with the community to seek answers to the question of, "what pressing needs does the City have that could be solved with business technology?" That was the theme of the 2010 IBM Smarter Cities Challenge, and through involvement with citizens, the Asheville Housing Authority, City Council, and industry groups, we proposed to work with IBM on technology that could help with issues relating to affordable housing, transit and transportation, and economic development. We are almost as excited to have developed this plan of action as we will be if we receive the grant.

In continuing with our tradition of engaging with citizens prior to system design, we briefed and surveyed the development community on our proposed Development Services Center software, funded by the 4% technology fee that they pay, in order to better understand their needs.

Internships & Job Placement

IT Services has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Over the years, we have brought in their very best students, gotten a tremendous amount of help from them, and given them on-the-job experience that has led to successful outplacement here in the community. We have a 100% job placement rate for our interns over the last 5 years, an accomplishment that we are delighted to be a part of.

Margarita Apostolova

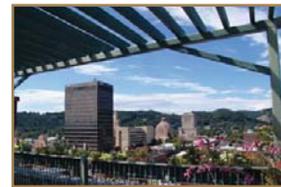
Margarita joined us as an intern in August. Margarita moved to the United States from Bulgaria after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She has the equivalent of a Master's Degree in creative writing, but decided to earn the CIT degree, which she will be completing in May 2011, in order to pursue a career in the GIS field. During her internship, she worked on Help Desk, database design, and several GIS projects.

Hunter Hall

Hunter came to us as an intern in January. During his internship, Hunter assisted with imaging and configuring laptops, computers and printers for various departments. He also answered the Help Desk line and monitored work orders. Hunter received his AAS in Information Systems and is currently working as a Help Desk tech for HomeTrust Bank. Hunter is interested in computer networking and information security.

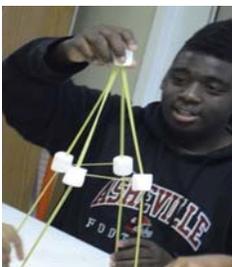
Andrew Moore

Andrew joined us as an intern in August. He completed his Associates of Applied Sciences in Computer Information Technology from AB Tech. During his internship, Andrew completed addressing edits and helped roll-out new desktop computers. In his leisure time, Andrew can be found hiking, eating out with friends, and spending time with family.



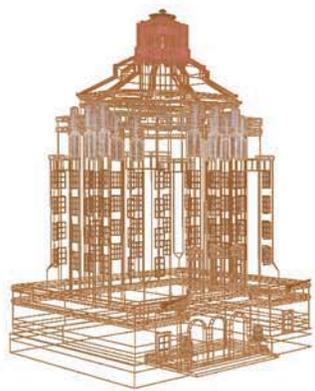
CAYLA Program

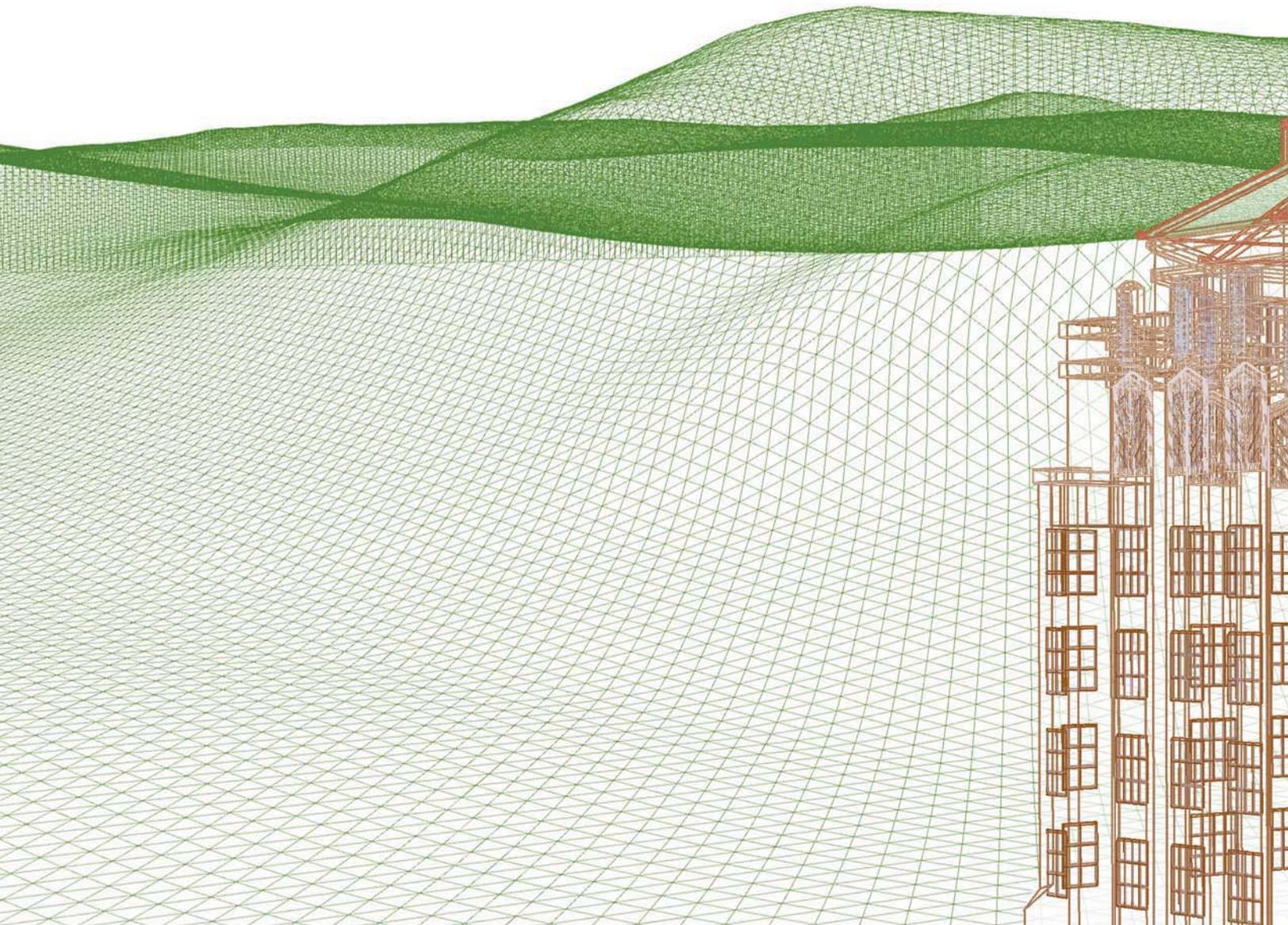
The City of Asheville's CAYLA (City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy) program recruits, trains and places local high school students at meaningful summer jobs with the City and with participating agencies, in addition to providing weekly day-long workshops on topics such as financial literacy, leadership, community service and college preparation. CAYLA engages students throughout the school year by offering career-focused enrichment activities and individualized academic support.



Marcus

We were happy to participate in CAYLA again this year by having Marcus, a junior at Asheville High School, with us. He hopes to pursue a career in physical therapy. When he is not busy with homework, Marcus can be found on the football field, swimming or using his laptop donated by AT&T Pioneers. "I really loved working with the IT Department last summer," Marcus says. "It's an office that stays busy. I learned the most on the Help Desk that people call when they have problems with their computers."





City Hall, 3rd Floor
70 Court Plaza
Asheville, NC 28801
p (828) 259.5510
f (828) 259.5509