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Want the Keys to the City?

Unlock the secrets to a complete Asset Management Plan

Cities and towns have an increasingly difficult job – to create and maintain a livable community and keep taxes reasonable every year, even while public infrastructure ages. But city budgets can't keep up with the maintenance required on existing assets, let alone anything new that is being built. Short term repairs take the place of longer-term asset investments, and the deferred maintenance backlog grows every year. It has always been difficult to maintain public assets, but it is getting even harder now as:

→ Pandemic funds are drying up.

→ Employees are retiring at a higher rate.

→ Recruiting new employees is becoming more difficult.

→ New and increasing natural disasters are making it harder to be prepared.

These challenges are driving governments to continually look for ways to spend taxpayer money wisely, make their assets last as long as possible, and understand when to replace assets vs. continue repairs.

We've noted five "keys" for city leaders to drive a more Asset Investment Planning mindset.

I.
Don't lose institutional knowledge

It's not enough for one person to know the 'ins and outs' of a particular public asset. When that individual retires, the knowledge goes with them and in government, employes are leaving at an alarming rate. According to **Route 50**, a publication focused on state and local government,

"State and local governments across the nation are facing staffing shortages, with burnout and stress from the Covid-19 pandemic, along with a desire for better pay, eroding the public sector workforce. Some states are also seeing a "gray tsunami" of retirements as members of a workforce that trends older reach the end of their careers."

City leaders need to ensure that assets will continue to be properly maintained despite changes in personnel.

Having a technological solution to capture, centrally store, and structure that knowledge so it can be used is one effective way of combatting this challenge. With one central place to store information, employees can see every asset's location, maintenance history, user manual, and even additional notes that divulge the secrets to keeping it running. And with all this information on their mobile device, it's fast, simple, and goes where they go.

II.
Be prepared for the unexpected

More unexpected events are happening that impact our communities than ever before. They range from natural disasters to sudden major asset failures or large protests to river flooding. These can all impact the safety and comfort of the community. Citizens expect their city to be resilient in the face of danger and be prepared for the "what-ifs" that could happen in their community.

Knowing the location and condition of your assets is one way to be prepared. For example, understanding how many trucks and sandbags your city owns, where they are located, and how many are needed for a local flooding event allows for a faster and more coordinated response. Sending the right people, equipment, and materials to the right place at the right time provides residents with a sense of ease and comfort that their city is prepared to protect them.

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Make good long-term financial decisions

Your community trusts you with their hard-earned money and as a city leader you are bound to do your best to use that money wisely. But sometimes a short-term view can lead you to a bad financial decision because you don't have the data to support longer-term planning.

Consider the maintenance of your fleet for example. A proposal to cut preventive maintenance could be made to save money in the short term, but this will also decrease each asset's life costing the community more money when they need to be replaced altogether down the road. Now, multiply that across all the public assets in your jurisdiction, and it can seriously erode your financial position.

Looking at the total cost of ownership and budgeting activities that can extend the useful life of expensive assets can help make better investment decisions and develop policies that support those assets. There will, of course, come a time when the asset is no longer worth fixing. But with data showing weakness over time, you can strategically plan for a replacement.

Be able to defend your decisions with data

No city can please everyone at the same time. There will always be competing points of view about how to spend taxpayer money and questions around who is benefiting. With data, cities can make decisions that make good operational and financial sense in the long-term. City leaders can leverage data to show how they are saving the taxpayers money, delivering a better level of service, or accomplishing a community goal, like sustainability.

This is especially important when a big investment is being considered. A new building, school or highway can be controversial. Combining asset data with other important considerations such as service area trends, weather impacts, and community needs can create a more compelling story. Having the hard data to explain and defend these decisions can help your community better understand how you are responsibly meeting their expected level of service.

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Continuously communicate with stakeholders

Once you have all the data and are making good long-term financial and operational decisions, you need to clearly communicate them to all your stakeholders. Federal and state agencies may need specific information when you are looking for additional funding. Your constituents and local businesses are particularly interested since they are the ones paying taxes.

Communicating just once a year during budget time might not be enough to build the trust and understanding you need. Consider engaging in conversations with town council or individuals about setting service level agreements (SLAs) and publishing measurements against predetermined KPIs. If sustainability is a goal, you can use the data to have a conversation about how the community can begin to act more sustainably as a group.

Why Brightly?

Combined, these five keys can help bring city leaders, residents, and businesses together with a better shared understanding and mutual trust. Brightly is in the business of helping that happen.

Brightly's **Asset Management for Government** solution enables you to capture and centrally store your asset data, simplify maintenance scheduling, and monitor the health of all your public assets. It can store details, locations, conditions, and maintenance histories to help new employees take care of your assets starting on day one. It also has advanced GIS capabilities (embedded or integrated) allowing you to 'see' your assets and connect to their details so even employees on the move have access to complete information.

The real power, however, is in leveraging your data to make smarter operating decisions and capital budgeting plans. You can model multiple funding scenarios to explain what happens to public assets with changing levels of investment, allowing you to look ahead and plan effectively, rather than scrambling at the last-minute to replace a failed asset causing downtime and community impact.

Want to see our government solution in action? Read about the **City of Asheville** and how they increased their maintenance budget by 3x using Brightly's capital planning tools and asset management software.

About Brightly Software

Brightly Software, a Siemens company, enables organizations to successfully plan, maintain, and sustain the entire lifecycle of their assets, facilities and infrastructure. As the global leader in intelligent asset management solutions for more than 25 years, Brightly's sophisticated cloud-based platform is expertly designed to improve capital planning through smarter, data-driven decision making, empower technicians to predict, prioritize and manage preventative maintenance activities, and support organizations to achieve sustainability, compliance and efficiency goals. Combined with award-winning training, legendary support and managed services, more than 12,000 clients worldwide depend on Brightly to optimize their teams, operations and strategic planning initiatives. For more information, visit **www.brightlysoftware.com.**