

City of Berkeley, Public Works Department

Introduction

For this project, I interviewed Efren Ramos, the Associate Management Analyst for the city of Berkeley. He has worked for the Public Works Department for seven years.

The City of Berkeley Overview

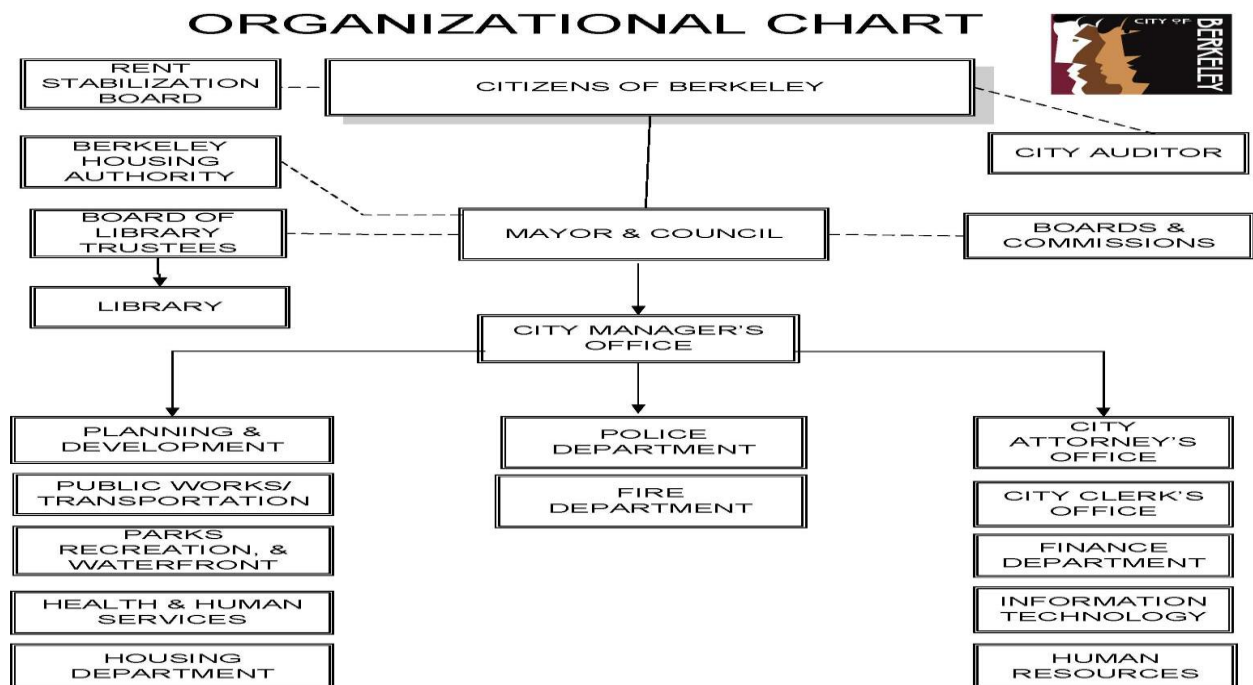
The city of Berkeley was founded in 1864 and is among the oldest cities in California. Berkeley is part of Alameda County and close to Contra Costa County and Silicon Valley. It is located on the east side of the San Francisco Bay approximately ten miles east of San Francisco. The city encompasses a total area of about 10.9 square miles and has an estimated population of 106,347 giving it the highest population density of any city in the East Bay. The city is largely defined both culturally and economically by the presence of the University of California which is located on the eastern side of the city. Berkeley's economic base comprises of businesses including Bayer Labs, Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, manufacturing, light industries, and various commercial retail and wholesalers.

The city of Berkeley's mission is to provide quality service to its diverse community. The city aims to promote an accessible, safe, healthy, environmentally sound and culturally rich city, initiate innovative solutions, embrace respectful democratic participation, and respond quickly and effectively to neighborhood and commercial concerns in a fiscally sound manner. Berkeley provides a full range of services exceeding that of most similarly sized cities in California. Services include public safety (police and fire), sanitation and sewer, housing, leisure (parks,

recreation and marina), health and human services, including city funded health clinics, animal control, public improvements, planning and zoning and general and administrative services. The city comprises 8 jurisdictions represented by council members. The city council is elected by the city residents. The members meet during regularly scheduled public meetings such as council meetings, hearings, closed sessions, and special hearings. Berkeley is famous for its high rate of civic involvement. Consequently, participation in regular city council meetings can be filled to capacity. Community members are actively involved in all areas of crime prevention and disaster readiness, and work with city staff teams on problems like graffiti, neighborhood crime, and earthquake preparedness.

The City of Berkeley Organizational Chart

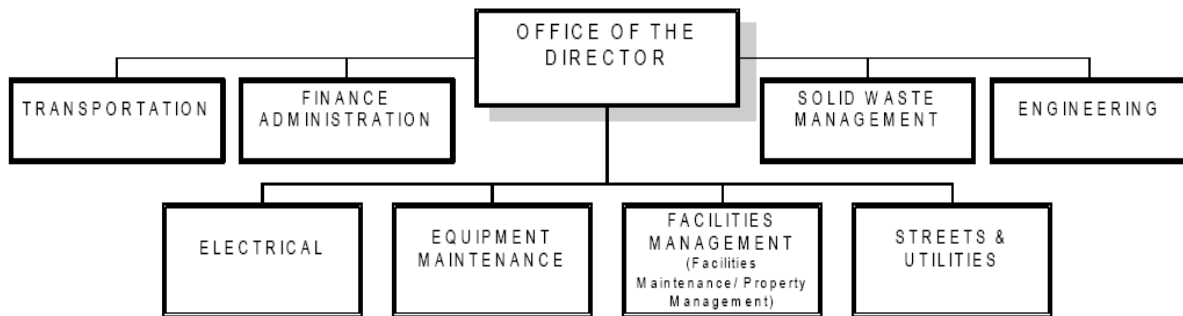
The Berkeley city council consists of the mayor and eight council members. The city is divided into eight council districts. The mayor is the president of the council and votes as an individual ninth member. The City Manager’s office manages all other departments.



The Public Works Department Overview

The mission of the Public Works Department is to provide quality service to the Berkeley community with pride, courtesy, and commitment. The vision to make Berkeley a leading city in the country by being an outstanding provider of public work services is achieved through developing and offering efficient, cost effective services in partnership with its citizens.

The Public Works Department for FY2008 has 330 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employees. An organizational chart of the Public Works Department is presented below:



The director provides leadership and direction to all divisions responsible for operations, policy implementation and administrative systems, including information technology projects, accreditation programs, and employee training & development. This position requires considerable public contacts with citizen groups, boards, commissions, and other city departments, and governmental agencies.

By Type	Total Expenditure	Salaries and Benefits	Services and Materials	Capital Outlay	Internal Service	Indirect Cost Transfer
FY 2007	72,539,449	31,994,204	16,643,095	14,499,484	6,637,928	2,764,738
Actual	100.0%	44.1%	22.9%	20.0%	9.2%	3.8%

FY 2008	86,521,869	37,418,022	19,488,412	18,682,138	7,424,199	3,509,098
Adopted	100.0%	43.2%	22.5%	21.6%	8.6%	4.1%

The financial summary of the Public Works Department is presented below.¹

The total expenditure of FY 2008 adopted budget in the Public Works Department is about 86.5 million and occupies 22 percent of the total expenditure of the city budget. It comprises of more than twenty-four funds including the general fund, refuse, sanitary and sewer, gas taxes and equipment maintenance. The actual total expenditure of FY 2007 was 72.5million. Salaries and benefits, services and materials, and capital outlay comprised 87 percent of the total expenditure.

The Strengths and Shortcomings

Last year, the internal organizational assessment and management audit revealed the following strengths and weaknesses of the department. The strength of the Public Works Department included a pool of dedicated, diversified, and experienced staff with the ability to accomplish job tasks with very little resources. This factor was very important during the downsizing of the divisions in FY 2005. The staff had the ability to passably carry the burden of attrition caused by a hiring freeze. The department performed its work effectively by cooperating with citizens in the community and encouraging them to participate in various issues. The department took advantage of the regional trait in which community participation in the city is inherent. The Public Works Commission, Utility and Undergrounding Technical Committee, Disability Commission, Ad-Hoc Committees, Neighborhood Associations, University Students, and other interest groups were proactively involved in the discussion of public works issues including the formulation of short and long-term capital planning. In addition, the Public Works Department diversified its revenue sources; it has more than twenty-four funds including the

¹ City of Berkeley FY 2008 & 2009 Adopted Biennial Budget (2007)

general fund, refuse, sanitary sewer, gas taxes and equipment maintenance. As a result, in spite of the downturn in the sub-prime real estate market in direct proportion to property taxes collected, the Public Works department has been less affected in performing their duties.

The shortcomings of the department included issues in staffing. High turnover rates of key personnel, increased worker compensation cases in corporation yard-injuries, and absenteeism caused by industrial injuries were problems identified. Time lags to complete tasks because of internal and external process of approvals of contracts, residential and business permits, and proposed developments also contributed to the department's shortcomings. In addition, the collaborative efforts with the community posed issues in new developments, re-zoning and re-development due to numerous public hearings and opposing views.

Introduction of a Program

CASE 1: The Waste Reduction Program of Public Works Department

In 2005, Berkeley city council unanimously approved a zero waste resolution—one of the first in the nation. The resolution officially adopts a 75 percent waste reduction goal for 2010, and establishes a zero waste goal for 2020. Zero waste means that if an item cannot be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled, or composted, it should be restricted, redesigned, or removed from production.

Solution and Action Plan

- Provide compost bins for organic waste to residents
- Increase fat, oil and grease inspection at restaurants, including fast food, to prevent grease from entering the sewer system. Fat and grease clogs the sewer system and causes backups
- Launch \$1,000 cash rewards for residents who have the least amount of garbage during regular trash collection, and the most number of filled recycling bins

- Approved oil and grease collection recycling centers to be used for vehicle fuel oil
- Purchase trash collection trucks using fuel oil from restaurants
- City council adopted, in FY 2005, a goal to reach reduction of landfill-bound waste by 75% by 2010

The Berkeley Student Cooperative (BSC) as a Model for Waste Reduction

In 2000, the city of Berkeley approached co-ops with a proposal to start a green waste pickup program. The city provided green bins for every co-op kitchen, making it easier to dispose green waste in compost bins rather than trash cans. Within two years, green waste bins were made available for a co-op apartment, which house approximately 400 members; it was a very successful program. The city also provided composting bins to all households in Berkeley; each household was given a small composting bin for the kitchen to be emptied into the large general green bin picked up each week. For eight years, this successful student co-op model has been facilitated and managed by several member-employees who serve as the Waste Reduction and Recycling coordinators under the Central Kitchen supervisor. The BSC are also researching green companies that recycle or reuse plastics that can not be recycled normally. The city of Berkeley has once again approached the co-ops to work collaboratively on a program to reduce their carbon footprints.

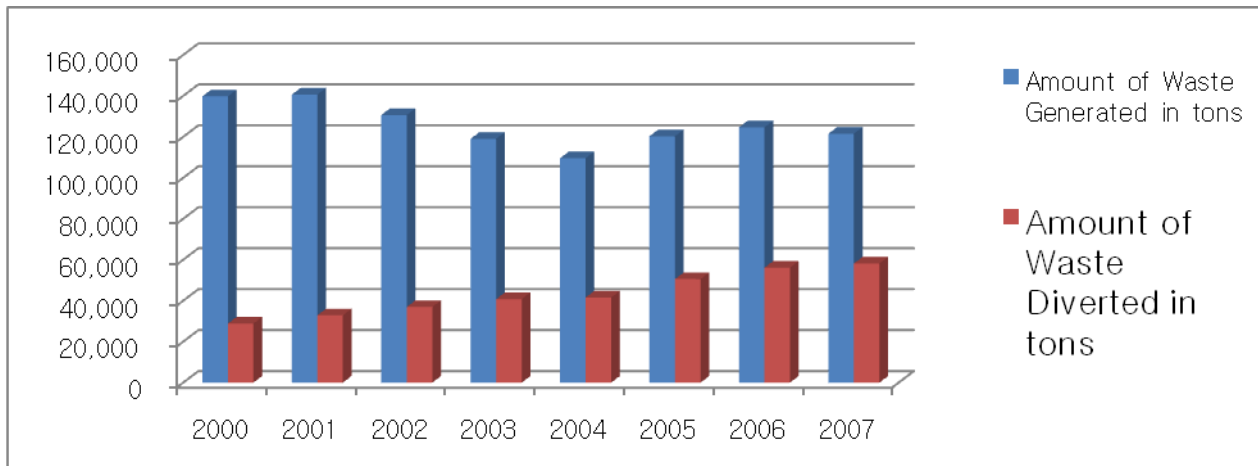
Using Biodiesel as a Recycling Effort

In 2001, the non-profit organization, Ecology Center transitioned its fleet of recycling trucks to run on biodiesel, an alternative fuel made from recycled restaurant grease. In January 2003, approximately 180 of Berkeley's 200 diesel-powered vehicles were converted to biodiesel, a process that requires no adjustments. Berkeley is unusual in its commitment to use 100% biodiesel while several cities use a 20% biodiesel-regular diesel blend to fuel their vehicles.

Biodiesel costs about 1 cent extra for every percentage point; the cost of the 20% blend is 20 cents per gallon and pure biodiesel costs about \$1.

The Results

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Amount of Waste Generated in tons	139,790	140,648	130,665	119,062	109,587	120,328	124,641	121,555
Amount of Waste Diverted in tons	28,839	32,861	36,936	40,793	41,554	50,555	56,136	58,158
% Diversion (Recycling)	20.6%	23.4%	28.3%	34.3%	37.9%	42.0%	45.0%	47.8%



With time, the amount of waste generated has decreased while the amount of waste diverted increased. However, to achieve reduction of landfill waste by 75% by 2010, the city needs to make more efforts to encourage citizens by developing innovative ideas to promote less waste.

Analysis

The City-Nonprofit Partnership

The results from the Waste Reduction program were very effective through the City-Nonprofit partnership operation. Berkeley possesses its own recycling and solid waste facility, which is operated by the city and three local nonprofits—the Ecology Center, Community Conservation Centers, and Urban Ore. This unique situation offers many important benefits. First, local control allows for higher environmental standards and greater efficiency, as well as familiarity with their own waste stream. Secondly, the costs for these services are kept low. Finally, good green collar jobs remain in the city rather than being sent elsewhere. In 2001, for the first time, the nonprofit Ecology Center transitioned its fleet of recycling trucks to run on biodiesel. If Berkeley's recycling program been handled by corporate haulers, the progressive initiative would never have gotten off the ground. For-profit solid waste companies charge per ton for every scrap of waste that goes to the landfill. Therefore, they have a financial interest in communities continuing to generate large quantities of garbage. These companies offer recycling services, because most cities demand it, but minimizing waste is not their mission or priority. The jobs generated by the city's waste stream remain local because Berkeley's solid waste operation is locally based. Recycling is an environmental endeavor that provides local, well-paying, green-collar jobs. Recycling also helps support the local nonprofits, businesses, and community agencies that partner with the city.

The Director's Leadership Style

The director position in the Public Works Department requires considerable public contacts with citizen groups, boards, commissions, and other city departments and governmental agencies. The director's leadership is one of main reasons for the commended performance of the Public Works Department despite having eight separate divisions with different traits. The

director of Public Works Department is Claudette Ford. As a female leader, she is said to have a democratic and affiliative leadership style.² Democratic-oriented leaders share decision-making powers with subordinates and participate in group activities but try not to monopolize.³ She has tried to manage the department through negotiation and harmony with the masculine culture in the workplace. She has an open door policy for staff to communicate with her. Through these informal meetings, she often creates good ideas. According to Selznick ([1957] 1984), one of the functions of administrative leadership is to understand and influence an organization's informal social patterns. One way of influencing informal communication and behavior is to modify the formal structure of the organization to facilitate the flow of information up the hierarchy.⁴ Claudette Ford enjoys potlucks where employees bring their favorite food and have opportunities to interact informally with other staff members.

Strategic Planning and Participatory

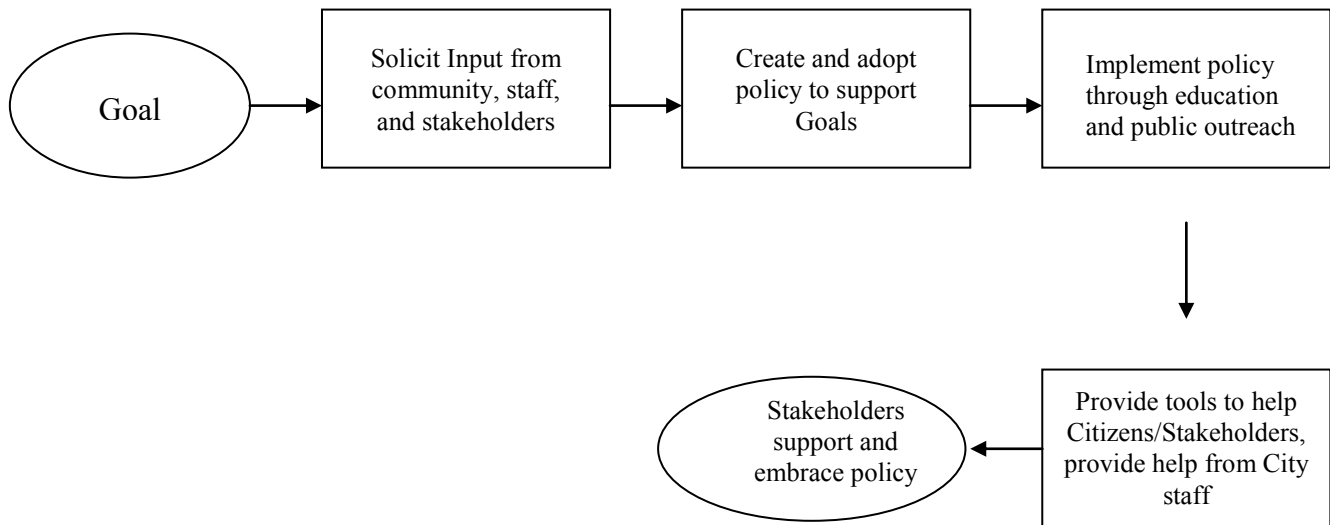
The best strategies are built incrementally over time and are based on modest efforts to engender institutional learning.⁵ To implement public policy changes effectively in the community, the city of Berkeley has made efforts through strategic planning. The diagram below shows how the department has achieved its goal effectively. However, the implementation of such an innovative policy, a variety of roadblocks such as opposition by the community, self-interest groups and staff are inevitable. The Public Works Department, and the city of Berkeley, have tried to demonstrate to its citizens and stakeholders the benefits gained from the policy. As a result, outlook of the community towards the environment has exchanged, giving them the chance to contribute locally.

² Efren Ramos (personal communication, April 23, 2008)

³ Denhardt, Rober B (2004, p. 35)

⁴ Cohen, Steven & Eimicke, William (2002, pp. 97-98)

⁵ Cohen, Steven & Eimicke, William (2002, p. 215)



The city of Berkeley has been dependent on the existence of civically engaged citizens who are active in all sorts of groups and associations. The city considers citizens not as bothersome but as proactive participants and allies to policies. These days, many people seem eager to claim their rights but refuse to accept responsibility for their actions, particularly actions that may contribute to the better of the community at large. However, Berkeley citizens seem to have the spirit of cooperation and community responsibility; they are true citizens in the new public service.⁶ In the new public service, citizens focus on the common good and long-term consequences to the community while customers focus on their own desires and wishes.⁷ If the quality of public life in America is dependent on civic engagement at a very local and personal level, activities in civic engagement would strengthen civic life at the community level.⁸ The Clean City program, Greenhouse Gas Reduction program, and Waste Reduction program

⁶ Denhardt has described an alternative to the new public management as the “new public service.”

⁷ Denhardt, Robert B. (2004, p.179)

⁸ Denhardt, Robert B. (2004, p. 177)

conducted by the Public Works department are directly connected to the quality of citizens' daily life. These programs' goals are long-term and may not bring immediate visible benefits. In spite of the difficulty to implement policies, the city performs its work outstandingly through its cooperation with the community.

Recommendation and Conclusion

As indicated by the current results of the Waste Reduction program, the goal of reduction of waste by 75 percent by 2010 may not be achieved even though waste is decreasing. Thus the city needs to make effort to encourage its citizens by developing more innovative ideas.

As mentioned earlier, the internal organizational assessment revealed that the collaborative effort with the community has a downside because it requires longer periods of time to accomplish tasks. This is largely due to the necessity for public hearings and reflection of various opinions. To be an effective public manager, the ability to facilitate proper harmony between work efficiency and democratic responsiveness is required.

"When something happens in Berkeley," said Bates,⁹ the mayor of the City, "it spreads." The success of Berkeley's policies seems to influence many other cities. The city of Berkeley, works hard to realize the vision to make Berkeley a leading city in the country by being an outstanding provider of Public Works services.

⁹ Associated Press/USA Today, 6/27/2003

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