



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Lee Wilcox

**SUBJECT:** Citywide Customer  
Experience Transformation

**DATE:** May 4, 2026

---

Approved

Date:

5/6/26

---

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the status report on the Citywide Customer Experience Transformation as part of the multi-year effort of implementing the City Council approved Customer Service Vision and Standards to transition existing San José 311 (SJ311) services to a new technology platform, improve service delivery, and establish the foundation for a scalable, citywide digital front door for City services.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

The City Council will be informed of the progress and path forward for the Citywide Customer Experience (CX) Transformation, as part of the multi-year effort of implementing the City Council approved Customer Service Vision and Standards to improve how residents and businesses experience City services while strengthening service reliability and operational effectiveness. The City Council update highlights progress to date, spotlights the service delivery analysis for the City's Junk Pickup service, and provides leading practices from peer cities.

## **BACKGROUND**

In March 2023, the City Council approved the Customer Service Vision and Standards as part of the City Manager's Foundational Strategic Support Focus Area of Delivering an Excellent Customer Experience, establishing a shared set of expectations for how the City serves residents and businesses. That action marked an important shift toward consistency and accountability in customer service interactions.

Since that time, the City has strengthened individual service practices and clarified expectations across departments and offices. However, residents and businesses

experience City government as one organization, not as a collection of departments and offices. While individual services may perform well within their operational silos, the overall experience is shaped by how effectively services connect across departments and offices, channels, and systems from start to finish.

Today, most City services operate within decentralized systems, processes, and data environments. While this structure provides flexibility for departments and offices, it also limits end-to-end visibility, consistent communication, and coordinated service management across organizational boundaries. As a result, customers may encounter unclear service pathways, inconsistent status updates, duplicative intake processes, and multiple handoffs between departments and offices.

The Citywide CX Transformation builds on prior foundational work and extends beyond traditional customer service interactions alone. It leverages the successful implementation of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system within City Council Offices as an initial step toward enhancing community engagement and enabling more seamless, integrated service delivery. The CX Transformation is defined as the design and management of the end-to-end customer journey, from information seeking and service intake through fulfillment, follow-up, and resolution, regardless of which department and office owns the service. This effort focuses on improving system coherence, clarifying handoffs, standardizing expectations, strengthening accountability, and modernizing supporting technology to enable coordinated service delivery.

Importantly, the CX Transformation is not a customer satisfaction initiative in and of itself, nor is it limited to expanding the City's 311 platform. Rather, it represents a structural modernization effort that integrates culture, operations, and technology to improve reliability, transparency, and long-term service performance. Satisfaction is an outcome of well-designed systems, service delivery, and customer interactions; the CX Transformation focuses on strengthening those systems.

While this work is part of the City Manager's Foundational Strategic Support Focus Area of Delivering an Excellent Customer Experience, it also aligns with and complements the City Manager's Foundational Strategic Support Focus Area of Driving Organizational Performance. While Driving Organizational Performance strengthens outcome alignment, performance governance, and service optimization within departments, the CX Transformation strengthens how services connect and function across departments and offices from the customer's perspective. Together, these efforts advance operational effectiveness, fiscal stewardship, and public trust.

The CX Transformation, therefore, represents the next phase in the City's modernization efforts: moving from improving individual services to improving how services operate as a coordinated, citywide system.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Overview**

The City of San José provides 74 Core Services that are delivered across 259 Programs across 14 departments, seven offices in the City Manager's Office, five Appointee Offices, and 11 Mayor and City Council Offices that keep San José running on a daily basis. However, residents and businesses do not consistently experience these services as a unified, coordinated effort. Today, services are largely built around departmental and office structures, budgets, and funding mechanisms rather than the end-to-end customer journey. As a result, customers often encounter unclear pathways, limited accessibility, inconsistent communication across channels, disconnected systems, and multiple handoffs when navigating City services.

From an operational perspective, staff lack unified tools, shared data, and clear processes to collaborate across departments and offices. While SJ311 provides an important access point for a limited set of services (20 of our total City services), most City services remain outside that ecosystem, requiring manual coordination and limiting visibility into service status, performance, and outcomes. These conditions create friction for customers and constrain the City's ability to manage services consistently, scale improvements, and use data to drive continuous performance optimization.

It is important to distinguish this effort from individual service delivery optimization and realignment initiatives underway across departments. Service delivery optimization and realignment focuses on improving operational efficiency and performance within specific services. The CX Transformation focuses on improving how services connect, coordinate, and function across organizational boundaries. Optimization improves how a service performs; the CX Transformation improves how services operate together as a system.

The City's vision is a coordinated, reliable, and transparent service system that residents and businesses experience as one City. By transforming the customer experience, the City seeks to strengthen service reliability, reduce friction in navigating City services, and ensure that residents and businesses experience San José as one coordinated organization. In the future state, the City will operate through a coordinated digital front door supported by standardized processes, clear service ownership, and shared data visibility across departments and offices.

To move from the current fragmented state to the future vision, the City's CX Transformation is organized around three integrated strategic pillars:

- **Culture:** This pillar focuses on establishing customer-centric expectations across departments and offices, shifting from task completion to shared responsibility for service outcomes, and equipping staff to support customers through their end-to-end journey.

- **Operations:** This pillar emphasizes centralized customer experience coordination with departmental and office execution, consistent application of citywide service standards, and redesign of workflows to support efficient, end-to-end service delivery.
- **Technology:** This pillar provides the enabling foundation through a digital front door for City services, a shared system of record across departments and offices, real-time visibility into customer interactions, and a scalable platform that can support future services.

These pillars are implemented through a phased roadmap designed to manage risk while delivering incremental value. The roadmap begins with planning and mobilization, including governance, setting up change management, and service evaluation, followed by building the foundation through migration of existing SJ311 services to the new platform, and initial people and process changes. Subsequent phases focus on stabilizing and enhancing service delivery, scaling the platform to additional services and departments and offices, and ultimately sustaining the transformation through ongoing, data-driven improvement. Technology implementation will remain sequenced behind process clarification and governance alignment to ensure the City does not automate fragmented workflows but instead modernizes them.

Deferring action carries real and compounding consequences for the City. Maintaining the status quo would extend existing operational inefficiencies, limit the City's ability to scale services, and perpetuate duplicative intake, manual data transfer, inefficient rerouting, and unmet service commitments. A technology solution designed to be scalable and managed in-house would support the volume of services, integrations, and transparency needed to deliver a consistent citywide customer experience.

This moment represents a unique and time-bound opportunity. The City has executive sponsorship, an established cross-departmental governance structure, a strong organizational change and business process partner, and a technical implementation vendor under contract. Together, these conditions create the organizational readiness required for a transformation of this scale. Advancing the CX Transformation now allows the City to build on foundational work already completed, stabilize and improve service delivery, and position San José for sustained, data-driven improvement in how City services are delivered and experienced.

Funding recommendations for the CX Transformation (including full system implementation and stabilization by the end of Fiscal Year 2027-2028), which includes an infusion of \$3.9 million in the General Fund, along with the \$2.9 million balance of prior year investments, as well as an ongoing \$276,000 investment in the Information Technology (IT) Department to expand and transition SJ311 to the new CRM platform, are recommended for City Council approval as part of the 2026-2027 Proposed Operating Budget, released on May 1, 2026.

### ***Peer City Leading Practices***

This section provides an overview of findings from benchmarking conducted in November 2025 on six peer cities to inform San José's ongoing CX Transformation. The benchmarking examined how comparable cities structure and govern their 311 and customer experience operations, including organizational placement, reporting relationships, staffing models, use of department liaisons, escalation practices, and the role of technology and data. The analysis focused on identifying common strengths, limitations, and lessons that are relevant to San José's service delivery environment. These findings are being used to inform the governance model, organizational design, escalation structure, and accountability mechanisms that will be embedded within San José's CX Transformation roadmap. Rather than replicating any single model, the City is applying peer lessons to shape a structure that strengthens executive sponsorship, clarifies departmental ownership, and supports long-term operational sustainability.

The benchmarking demonstrates that organizational placement alone does not determine the effectiveness of customer experience operations. Across peer cities, successful models vary in location, including executive offices, communications, community engagement or IT departments, and decentralized structures. Regardless of placement, cities with stronger outcomes tend to pair their structure with executive sponsorship, clear governance, and defined accountability across departments.

Peer cities that place 311 or customer experience functions within an executive office or near executive leadership benefit from increased visibility and authority, which can support coordination across departments and offices and elevate the priority of service-level expectations. In several cases, customer experience functions report to the Mayor's Office, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, or Chief of Staff to underscore the priority of customer service and promote engagement across departments. However, benchmarking also shows that executive offices may face capacity constraints, and without dedicated, operational customer experience leadership, executive sponsorship alone may not be sufficient to address day-to-day service management needs.

The analysis also highlights tradeoffs associated with IT-led customer experience models. Cities where 311 is housed within an IT department often demonstrate strong data governance, centralized dashboards, and greater emphasis on digital self-service options such as mobile applications, websites, and chatbots. These models can support innovation and improved performance monitoring. At the same time, peer cities note that IT-led models may lack an executive mandate to influence departmental or office behavior and may be more inward-focused on systems and metrics rather than external customer experience outcomes, unless supplemented by dedicated customer experience leadership and change management.

Across nearly all peer cities, the presence of dedicated department and office customer experience liaison roles emerged as a critical factor for managing accountability and service performance. Cities that designate service request advocates, correspondence

coordinators, or department and office customer experience liaisons are better positioned to manage escalations, coordinate follow-up, and reinforce service level agreements. Where customer experience liaison roles are informal, inconsistently applied, or lack executive backing, cities report challenges enforcing accountability and ensuring timely resolution of service requests.

The benchmarking also indicates that highly decentralized service models provide flexibility for departments and offices to manage resources and tailor service delivery to their operational needs. However, these models often struggle with enterprise-wide consistency, shared performance metrics, and coordinated customer communication. Without standardized processes and centralized oversight, the customer experience may vary significantly depending on the department, office, or service type involved, and escalation of cross-departmental issues can be difficult.

Finally, peer cities emphasize the importance of long-term sustainability mechanisms, including dedicated escalation teams, quality assurance functions, and continuous improvement roles. Cities that invest in these capabilities generally report a stronger ability to manage complex cases, address dissatisfied customers, and use data to identify and implement incremental improvements over time. These functions help move customer experience operations beyond intake and routing toward proactive service management and continuous improvement.

These benchmarking insights reinforce that sustainable customer experience improvement depends less on organizational placement and more on clear governance, defined accountability, and disciplined performance management. San José's CX Transformation will incorporate these lessons to ensure the effort strengthens enterprise coordination and operational effectiveness over time.

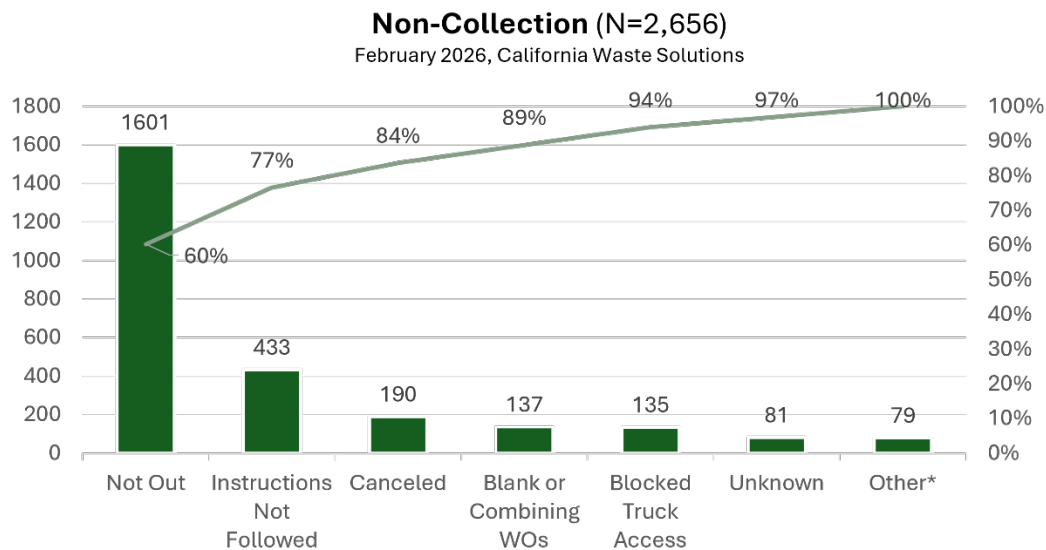
### ***Service Improvement Spotlight: Junk Pickup***

As part of the City's CX Transformation, the City is currently conducting service level analyses across all City services on SJ311 today to better understand service reliability, operational drivers, and system-level opportunities for improvement across each service delivery lifecycle. These analyses examine service performance data, customer interactions, and supporting processes to identify patterns that may impact service outcomes, clarity of expectations, and accountability. The Junk Pickup service improvement spotlight is one example of this approach and is intended to illustrate the type of analysis that will be conducted across additional service areas over time. Junk Pickup was selected as a priority service to examine due to its high volume of customer requests and reliance on coordination between City departments and external hauling vendors.

As background, the Environmental Services Department provides residents with an unlimited, no additional cost, curbside junk pickup service supported by two hauling vendors. In February 2026, approximately 11,000 junk pickup collection attempts were

generated by the community. Of the junk pickups assigned to California Waste Solutions, 76% were completed, while the remaining 24% resulted in non-collection. As indicated in Figure 1, the most common reasons for non-collection included items not being set out (60%), instructions not being followed (16%), and customer-initiated cancellations (7%). These findings suggest that a significant portion of non-collections are driven by inconsistent expectation setting, unclear communication, and fragmented feedback loops rather than service capacity constraints alone.

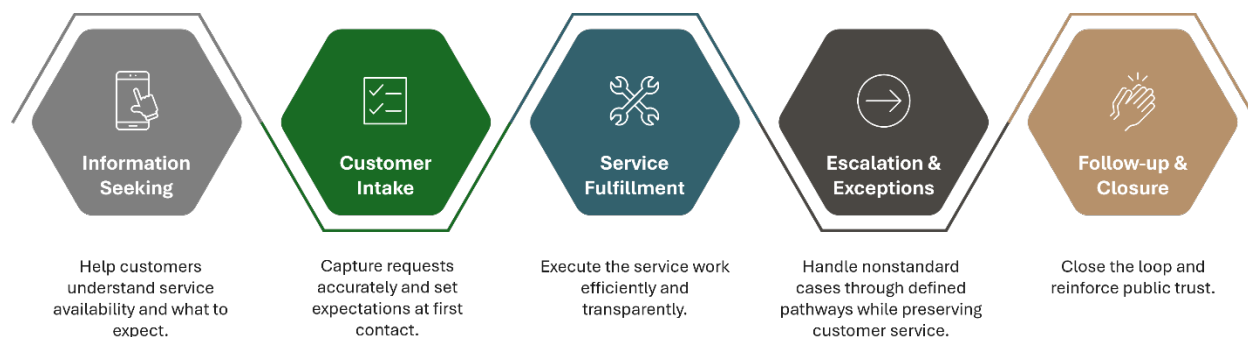
**Figure 1: February 2026 Junk Pickup Non-Collection Data from California Waste Solutions (Hauling Vendor)**



*\*Other includes items not listed set out, above the curb over 3 feet, unacceptable items, truck safety hazards, wrong workorder type, and inaccurate info*

To better understand these challenges, the City assessed the Junk Pickup customer journey using a maturity model across the five stages depicted in Figure 2: information seeking, intake, service fulfillment, escalation and exceptions, and follow-up and closure. The assessment found uneven maturity across the service delivery lifecycle. Early stages, such as information seeking and intake, demonstrated moderate performance, reflecting the availability of service information and multiple intake channels. Later stages, including service fulfillment and follow-up, scored lower due to inconsistent visibility into service status, limited integration between City systems and hauler information, and closure messaging that does not consistently align with actual service outcomes. Escalation processes were found to be functional, but largely manual, relying on follow-up activities rather than standardized workflows.

**Figure 2: Customer Service Delivery Lifecycle**



In response to these findings, the Junk Pickup team has initiated several near-term improvements focused on addressing customer experience challenges while strengthening foundational capabilities. These efforts include standardizing customer expectations and messaging across SJ311 and hauler communications, aligning and operationalizing standard service outcomes and non-collection reasons, establishing a performance measurement foundation, and providing real-time feedback to customers when collections cannot be completed. While these actions address immediate issues, they also lay the groundwork for future state improvement opportunities that will be advanced through the City’s broader technology modernization efforts to support SJ311 operations. Longer term improvements focus on enhanced system integration between SJ311 and hauling vendors, improved end-to-end visibility into service status and outcomes, and more consistent, data-driven performance management. Together, near-term and future-state efforts are intended to strengthen reliability, reduce avoidable rework, clarify accountability, and improve performance management across the service lifecycle.

## **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Staff will provide future updates to City Council as appropriate. No additional follow-up action with the City Council is expected at this time.

## **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office, City Manager’s Budget Office, Environmental Services Department, and Information Technology Department.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City Council Agenda website for the May 19, 2026 City Council meeting.

**BOARD, COMMISSION, COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

No board, commission, or committee recommendation or input is associated with this action.

**CEQA**

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

**PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.



Lee Wilcox  
Assistant City Manager, City Manager's Office

For questions, please contact Nichole Ederer, Deputy Director, Customer Experience Transformation, City Manager's Office, at [Nichole.Ederer@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Nichole.Ederer@sanjoseca.gov).