

CITY OF

# Sunnyvale

## Evaluation of Study Issues Process

Final Report / October 14, 2025





October 14, 2025

Tim Kirby  
City Manager  
City of Sunnyvale  
456 W. Olive Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

**Subject: Report on Evaluation of Study Issues Process**

Dear Mr. Kirby:

We are pleased to provide this report containing the results of our evaluation of the City's long-standing study issues process. The overall objective of this assessment was to develop recommendations leading to the most efficient and effective approach to identify, prioritize, and analyze policy priorities. The City desired to understand how it could leverage existing resources to address the increasing number of study issues and complete them in a timely manner. Additionally, the City asked that we consider the related resourcing processes already in place.

We have carried out this work through careful data gathering, analysis, and application of best practices. The City Council Study Session held on August 26, 2025 was helpful in providing feedback on our preliminary strategies for improvement. This draft report contains our observations and recommendations. We believe that our recommendations, if implemented, will result in significant savings – both in time and money.

Our recommendations result in some aspects of the current study issues process being retained and others being changed. Key elements include retaining a method to advance priorities, along with an opportunity for board and commission deliberation and input. One change is to acknowledge the City Manager's operational authority to handle some requests through regular channels rather than through a formal Council process. A second change is to eliminate most of the preliminary staff reports traditionally prepared on a large array of study issue ideas, except for the final few for which a majority of the Council agrees could be added to the budget, pending City Manager recommendations. Other changes are consolidating the budget and study issue forms, changing terminology for clarity, and moving toward development of a Citywide strategic plan.

We have appreciated the partnership with you and your team, and the engagement of the City Council, as we conducted this assessment for the City of Sunnyvale. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jan Perkins'.

**Jan Perkins**  
*Vice President*

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# Executive Summary

This report contains the results of Raftelis' evaluation of the City's long-standing study issues process. The assessment was the result of Study Issue OCM 24-02 to "Evaluate the City of Sunnyvale Study Issues Process." The overall objective of this assessment was to develop recommendations leading to the most efficient and effective approach to identify, prioritize, and analyze City policy priorities. The City desired to understand how it could leverage existing resources to address the increasing number of study issues and complete them in a more timely manner. Additionally, the City asked that we consider the resourcing processes already in place.

Raftelis carried out this work through careful data gathering, analysis, and application of best practices. Our team interviewed all members of the City Council and 16 members of City staff and designed and administered a survey to the City's boards and commissions as well as to City staff who have some responsibility related to the study issue process.

In July 2025, Raftelis met with members of the City's executive and management team working on study issues to review data analysis and initial observations, and to receive feedback. Then, in August 2025, the City Council held a Study Session which offered an opportunity for Raftelis to present our preliminary observations and suggested strategies for improvement and receive Council feedback. The Council input from that session informed final recommendations contained in this report.

## Key findings resulting from Raftelis' analysis include:

- **The current process is expensive in time and money.** The analysis of the pre-approval phase of the study issue process reveals a substantial annual investment. It is estimated that over 2,500 staff hours, representing a fully loaded cost of approximately \$347,000, are expended each year on activities such as generating, reviewing, discussing, and seeking approval for study issues. It is important to note that this significant expenditure precedes any actual implementation, as it does not account for the time or cost associated with working on approved issues.
- **Many proposals are never ultimately approved for funding.** The approval rate for proposed study issues has been consistently low at an average of 26.73% over the past decade. While this reflects necessary prioritization amidst limited resources, the substantial effort invested in the pre-approval process warrants a critical evaluation of its cost-benefit and overall efficiency.
- **The start date for tracking and the deferral process skews the perspective of implementation time.** Study issues are numbered and tracked commencing at the initial proposal stage, *before* Council approval. Since staff work on a study issue cannot begin until a majority Council vote and the City Manager's commitment to resource them, this methodology inflates perceived project durations. Study issue ideas are then deferred and brought back repeatedly for consideration in future years. This numbering and deferral process does not create an accurate view of the actual time to completion.
- **Study issues are part of a larger system but treated as separate.** To fully optimize the study issue process, it is essential to embed it within the broader operational and governance framework of the City. As a municipal corporation, the City operates under a City Manager responsible for standard operations and departmental execution, while the City Council establishes policy and approves the budget. Study issues compete for attention and resources within this dynamic environment, alongside numerous ongoing departmental projects, emergent community needs, and the daily problem-solving efforts of the City.

Manager and department directors. Recognizing their place within this broad resource landscape is crucial for effective prioritization.

- **Case study cities have disciplined ways of setting priorities that are less complicated than Sunnyvale's.** Our research included case study cities to provide points of comparison. These cities have effective methods of setting priorities that are streamlined, take resources into account, and limit adding new projects outside the annual priority setting process.
- **Sunnyvale's practice of involving boards and commissions in creating proposals for study issues diverges significantly from standard municipal governance.** Their level of involvement in the study issue process is outside of a typical advisory function, which is to provide advice within a defined scope. Additionally, the current practice involving numerous meetings and substantial staff time in idea-generation by boards and commissions takes significant staff time with hours that could be allocated to other uses. Raftelis has identified a streamlined approach for boards and commissions to contribute their best ideas while minimizing staff time.
- **Key drivers for implementation time vary widely.** The analysis included preparing case studies of several City study issues to understand actual timelines for both the study issue proposal and implementation phases. The primary timeline driver for proposals was the duration an issue spends on the deferral list. In contrast, implementation timelines exhibit significant variability, influenced by a diverse set of factors. These include, but are not limited to, lengthy consultant procurement cycles (typically 4-6 months), involvement of external entities (e.g., Caltrans), extensive public outreach processes, and internal staff vacancies. Understanding these distinct drivers is crucial for realistic planning and expectation management.

Raftelis has prepared 15 recommendations for change and improvement. The recommendations, if implemented, will free up staff time that can be reallocated to important service delivery and implementation of approved projects.

The objectives of suggested changes in the process are to:

- ✓ Save time for everyone involved
- ✓ Simplify the process
- ✓ Retain board and commission input
- ✓ Retain Council authority to set top priorities

Table 1 below provides a list of 15 recommendations for improvement for the City.

**Table 1: List of Report Recommendations**

| A. Study Issues Proposal Process |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                                | Eliminate most study issue papers pertaining to the study issue proposal process.                                                                                  |
| 2                                | Modify the board and commission input process.                                                                                                                     |
| 3                                | Eliminate the January public hearing on potential Council study issues and budget proposals.                                                                       |
| 4                                | Expand the focus of the February Council workshop to incorporate a review of key projects, a check-in on Council Strategic Priorities, and a broad fiscal outlook. |
| 5                                | Modify terminology for clarity.                                                                                                                                    |

|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>6</b>                                                                                               | Eliminate any deferral of study issues. Study issues not approved for implementation will not remain on a deferral list.                                                         |
| <b>7</b>                                                                                               | Create one consolidated form to be submitted by Councilmembers to the City Manager in January for Council Priority Projects (to capture both study issues and budget proposals). |
| <b>8</b>                                                                                               | Prepare a clear description of the new Council Priority Projects and scopes of work recommended in the budget for review and approval by the Council.                            |
| <b>B. Process to Complete Council Priority Projects (formerly Study Issues &amp; Budget Proposals)</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>9</b>                                                                                               | Establish a transparent and informative reporting dashboard.                                                                                                                     |
| <b>10</b>                                                                                              | Provide targeted project update discussions with the Council on an as-needed basis.                                                                                              |
| <b>11</b>                                                                                              | Identify key tasks or phases that would be value-added for tracking staff time.                                                                                                  |
| <b>C. Related Prioritization and Resourcing Processes</b>                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>12</b>                                                                                              | Conduct a biennial review of the Council's Strategic Priorities (to be renamed "Strategic Goals").                                                                               |
| <b>13</b>                                                                                              | Create a comprehensive Strategic Plan.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>14</b>                                                                                              | Apply an agreed-upon set of criteria for adding projects mid-year.                                                                                                               |
| <b>15</b>                                                                                              | Conduct a review of the effectiveness of the City's budget and strategic priorities process every five years.                                                                    |

With careful and thoughtful implementation of these recommendations, Raftelis is confident that the City can improve the efficient use of staff resources and efficiency and throughput of requested priority projects, as well as ongoing City services.

# Introduction

## Background and Methodology

Raftelis was engaged to assess the City of Sunnyvale's study issues process and to develop recommendations that lead to the most efficient and effective approach to identify, prioritize, and analyze policy priorities. The longstanding process was first introduced as part of the City's Planning and Management System (PAMS), which was initiated in the mid-1970s. The stated intent of the study issue process was to connect new items with long-range comprehensive planning, short-range action planning and service delivery, and performance reporting and evaluation. Use of the process has evolved over time.

Several factors prompted this assessment, including:

- An increase in the number of study issues
- Concerns about timeliness and efficiency of the process
- Demands for study issues exceed available resources
- Limited staff capacity
- Multiple parties of interest
- A need for the process to be workable for all

Raftelis' project work was organized in three phases—discovery, ideation and evaluation—resulting in recommendations. During the discovery phase, the project team conducted a kick-off meeting with City staff to confirm established objectives and further guide the assessment. Raftelis submitted an initial data request to the City, which contributed to the full volume of information gathered throughout the project. The methods for gathering and analyzing the data included:

- **Interviews:** All seven City Council members and 16 senior staff who spend significant time on study issues.
- **Two Surveys:** Responses from 39 staff who regularly interact with the process and 21 of a possible 60 board and commission members.
- **Case Studies:** Eight cities with sound priority setting practices with which Raftelis were familiar – Elk Grove, Fremont, Gilroy, Pleasanton, Redwood City, Rohnert Park, San Mateo, and Victorville.
- **Data Analysis:** Estimating time spent on the process and associated cost, summarizing volume and assignments of new study issues, select analysis of proposal and implementation timelines.
- **Existing Resourcing Methods:** Raftelis obtained information about the key resourcing processes used by the City, which are the annual budget process and the capital improvement program.

As a result of the information gathering and analysis, Raftelis developed preliminary observations and strategies for improvement. Informed by feedback from City leadership, the project team presented these findings to a broader group of staff at a half-day workshop in early July. Staff provided feedback at the workshop and through subsequent engagement as Raftelis prepared for a Study Session with the City Council to be held on August 26, 2025.

The Council Study Session offered a valuable opportunity to update the Council members on the work completed to date and to seek feedback on options for process revisions. This report summarizes the information learned and clarified throughout the project, reports the input gathered from various users of the study issue process, and offers the finalized recommendations for improvement.

# Stakeholder Input

As previously noted, stakeholder engagement was completed through interviews with Councilmembers and City staff, as well as through a survey distributed to City staff and members of the City's boards and commissions. Interviews were conducted with all seven Council members and 16 staff, and survey responses gathered input from 39 staff and 21 board or commission members.

Despite the fact that input was gathered from groups that view and use the study issue process very differently from each other, there was a common theme: **Change the process, but do not eliminate a way to prioritize.**

## Interview Themes

Interviews with Council members and staff identified several points in common. Both groups believe it is important to have a way to set priorities, but the study issues process—both for the proposals and implementation—takes too long. Council members also expressed a concern that study issue implementation involves an over-reliance on consultants, which adds time. Council and staff alike agreed that the City Manager's ability to determine which study issues or budget proposals to move forward into the recommend budget is useful in understanding and aligning to operational priorities and staff capacity.

In addition, interview participants from Council and staff highlighted opportunities for improving the study issues process, including:

- Clarify study issue scopes at the start and, if needed, at a mid-point.
- Provide frequent project status updates once approved.
- Reduce time for the annual ranking process.
- Reduce reliance on consultants to speed up the timeline.
- Refine definition of what should constitute a study issue.
- Tie study issues to Strategic Priorities.
- Provide more clarity about workload and what staff capacity exists to work on study issues.
- Reduce the length of time that proposed but not approved study issues remain on a list (deferrals).

## Surveys

Surveys with similar questions were conducted with staff and the board and commission members to gather feedback and gauge differences in how they perceive the study issues process. As with the interviews, several themes were common between staff and the board and commission members. In fact, when asked to rate the effectiveness of the process on a scale of one to 10, with one being least effective and 10 being the most, both groups rated the process 4.8 out of 10.

The commonalities of themes from survey responses from staff as well as board and commission members were:

- The volume of proposed study issues is too high (too many proposed).
- Typical timeline from study issue creation (proposal) to project completion is too long.
- Much effort can be spent on a proposal for a study issue that goes nowhere.
- Too many deferrals, non-ranked proposals that carry over from year to year.
- Not all study issues have the same potential for impact.
- The amount of time preparing and considering a study issue proposal is the same regardless of whether it is a small or large impact item.

## BOARD AND COMMISSION MEMBER SURVEY THEMES

The survey for board and commission members highlighted several specific themes.

- There was an appreciation for the opportunity to submit study issues, and respondents hoped this would continue.
- Several respondents felt they are able to recommend their ideas to Council in other ways, but overall most respondents understood that the time invested in the process does not match the outcomes.
- Other themes included shared frustrations with the length of time to complete studies, and an awareness or appreciation that the current process forces topic prioritization, but that aspects of the process—especially the “above the line” and “below the line” or ranking decisions—can feel opaque.
- Finally, most responding board and commission members were not very familiar with the budget proposal process, which is a parallel idea solicitation opportunity at the City.

Table 2 below shows the number of board and commission members who were sent the survey and the number responding. After the initial email sending the survey, at least two additional email reminders were sent to board and commission members to complete the survey. The overall response rate was 35%.

**Table 2: Board and Commission Survey Responses**

| Board or Commission                        | Number of Members | Complete Responses |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Arts Commission                            | 5                 | 3                  |
| Parks and Recreation Commission            | 5                 | 3                  |
| Planning Commission                        | 7                 | 4                  |
| Housing and Human Services Commission      | 7                 | 3                  |
| Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission | 7                 | 2                  |
| Heritage Preservation Commission           | 7                 | 2                  |
| Sustainability Commission                  | 7                 | 2                  |
| Board of Library Trustees                  | 5                 | 1                  |
| Human Relations Commission                 | 5                 | 1                  |
| Personnel Board                            | 5                 | 0                  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>60</b>         | <b>21</b>          |

## STAFF SURVEY THEMES

Different themes were highlighted in the staff survey as follow:

- A key concern was that the study issues process itself and the time to complete the studies take time away from core work, including mandated activities and other Council goals. At the same time, not all ideas for study are equal in their level of effort or potential impact on the community.
- Similarly, staff reported that study issues do not consistently align with City goals or adopted plans and sometimes are even counter to them. Incorporating approved study issues into existing workloads can feel frustrating, discouraging, and “never-ending,” with many staff sharing concerns on study issues volume.
- There is value in ranking all the study issues together annually to help filter and prioritize them in a holistic setting. Filtering was also discussed in the context that some study issues being sponsored by a board or commission could lead to conclusions that would not be acted on for financial or political reasons, risking resource investments without feasible outcomes.
- Lastly, staff noted that some study issues that are proposed impact more than one department and/or are beyond on board or commission’s purview, but interdepartmental staff review of various board and commission proposals (beyond the specific staff liaison to the body) adds more time to the proposal process.

# Case Study Cities and Best Practices

In order to provide greater context for Sunnyvale's processes, Raftelis identified what other best practice cities employ regarding priority setting as a point of comparison.

## Case Study Cities

Based on Raftelis' knowledge of their effective practices, eight cities were selected to provide information on how they approach setting priorities with their City Councils. These cities each have a disciplined, streamlined process that is adhered to. They do review and update priorities annually, but they emphasize planning longer term.

Of the eight cities listed, six elect Council members by district and the remaining two elect Council members at-large. One of those two will be moving to election by district. The cities are a combination of charter and general law cities, with a range of populations. Table 3 below summarizes relevant details from the case study cities and for Sunnyvale.

**Table 3: Key Characteristics of Case Study Cities**

| City         | Population (Jan. 2025) | County         | Council Size | Mayor Selection     | Council Election | General Law or Charter City |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sunnyvale    | 159,673                | Santa Clara    | 7            | Elected At-Large    | District         | Charter                     |
| Elk Grove    | 182,842                | Sacramento     | 5            | Elected At-Large    | District         | General Law                 |
| Fremont      | 232,619                | Alameda        | 7            | Elected At-Large    | District         | General Law                 |
| Gilroy       | 62,205                 | Santa Clara    | 7            | Elected At-Large    | At-Large*        | Charter                     |
| Pleasanton   | 77,232                 | Alameda        | 5            | Elected At-Large    | District         | General Law                 |
| Redwood City | 82,073                 | San Mateo      | 7            | Selected by Council | District         | Charter                     |
| Rohnert Park | 44,062                 | Sonoma         | 5            | Selected by Council | District         | General Law                 |
| San Mateo    | 104,315                | San Mateo      | 5            | Rotational sequence | At-Large         | Charter                     |
| Victorville  | 141,013                | San Bernardino | 5            | Selected by Council | District         | Charter                     |

*\*Will be moving to District elections*

## SUMMARY PERSPECTIVE

Each of the case study cities has a structured process that is tied to the budget, either on an annual or two year basis. For these cities, this is the primary method of establishing Council priorities and enabling the City Manager to manage workload and advise the Council most effectively on what realistically can be accomplished, along with timelines.

Additionally, all cities, including the case study cities, have methods for members of Council to raise issues outside an annual (or every two year) priority setting process. These include informal discussions with the City Manager, and formal processes documented in a Council procedures manual. The City Manager has an important role of determining what staff capacity is available to handle requests, as well as determining whether the request is consistent with Council policy. The formal method of having an item placed before the Council is a common method for the Council, as a body, to determine whether the request is both within staff capacity and consistent with what the Council, as a whole, wishes to pursue. Appendix A provides detailed information on the processes used by each of these cities.

Several common factors in the case study cities' processes are:

- **Alignment** with a strategic plan or adopted goals and priorities
- **Respects the ongoing work** of departments and understands that day-to-day operations must be well managed—and that takes time
- **Set priorities with workload and staff capacity in mind**, as determined by the City Manager
- **Majority of Council support** required for items (through the budget process or to be added in other ways)
- **No involvement of boards and commissions** in Council priority setting
- **Clear roles between Council and staff**, with Council focusing on policy and top priorities, and the City Manager determining what is realistic to be achieved with staff resources

One city manager's quote is representative of what was heard in other interviews with case study cities:  
*"Councilmembers here have recognized that having too many priorities means you have none."*

The project team identified commonalities regarding approaches taken by the case study cities, as follows:

- **Most take a multi-year approach** to provide context, either through a strategic plan or having broad multi-year goals toward which project priorities are directed.
- **Annual or two-year priorities are tied to the budget process**; typically a workshop setting to establish the priorities, many of which can continue from year to year.
- **Council and staff exercise discipline in focusing on established priorities**; if new items are added to the list, the impact on existing workload is discussed with the city manager and is understood.
- **Recognition of the primary work of the city, which is the delivery of day-to-day services to the community**; recognition of the various master plans, capital projects, and other major initiatives that have already been approved as part of staff work plan.
- **Process for Councilmembers to raise issues at Council meetings but this is used sparingly**, with discussions with the City Manager and understanding of the impact on the existing workload if something is added.
- **Clarity of roles between Council and staff, with Council focusing on policy and top priorities**, and the City Manager determining what is realistic to be achieved with staff resources, and focusing on work plans; City staff provide professional expertise as relates to any issues raised, including feasibility, timelines and other factors.
- **It is uncommon for boards and commissions to be involved in a formal process of proposing projects to the Council**; most common is for boards and commissions to respond to agenda items brought to them by staff; any board or commission member, just as any member of the public, can suggest something as a priority to the City Council, but there is no formal process for asking for such projects – viewed as outside the role of boards and commissions by the other cities.

## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH SUNNYVALE

In its review of case study cities, Raftelis specifically identified similarities and differences with the Sunnyvale process.

### *How Sunnyvale is similar to the case study cities:*

- City has a mission, vision, core values, and strategic priorities
- City staff provides status information a wide range of projects
- Workshop discussion of priorities is held that lead to budget adoption
- City Manager provides staffing resource and capacity information to the Council to advise on what projects can move forward
- All cities have a method for members of the Council to bring forward new items during the year, which includes informal discussions with the City Manager and formalized processes through an adopted Council procedures manual

### *How Sunnyvale is different:*

- The Study Issue process in Sunnyvale is more complex, time consuming; it adds steps and staff time not seen in the case study cities
- None of the case study cities invite boards and commissions to propose projects for staff
- Some of the other cities have a formal Strategic Plan to which priorities are tied

## Best Practices

In addition to a review of processes in case study cities, Raftelis reviewed best practices as they relate to the roles of the Council, City Manager, and boards and commissions, and how other municipalities minimize adding new projects mid-year.

## ROLES

City of Sunnyvale's elected officials and staff are fully aware of the primary roles of the Council, City Manager, and the boards and commissions. They are shown in Figure 1 below.

| Council                                                                                                                                                                                    | City Manager                                                                                                                                                         | Boards and Commissions                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set policy</li> <li>• Adopt budget</li> <li>• Appoint City Manager and City Attorney</li> <li>• Stay connected with community concerns</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage operations</li> <li>• Appoint and supervise staff</li> <li>• Recommend policy</li> <li>• Recommend budget</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out designated assignments</li> <li>• Policy advice to City Council in specific areas – mechanism to identify is in annual B/C Work Plans that Council approves</li> </ul> |

**Figure 1: Role Clarity**

The Council-Manager form of government is the dominant structure for local governments in California, with over 95% using this model. Roles are characterized by the details shown in the figure above. The Charter for the City of Sunnyvale sets forth a Council-Manager form of government in Section 500. The Charter defines the powers of the City Council and those of the City Manager. The National Municipal League first adopted this form of government

in its Model City Charter in 1915. The City Council's primary responsibilities as shown are to make decisions as a body about policies and to adopt a budget. Seeking input from a wide variety of community members, including boards and commissions, is good government and upholds democratic ideals.

Regarding roles, the City of Sunnyvale's practice of asking boards and commissions to provide their opinion and recommendations on all study issues is atypical. Not only does it take added time and effort by staff to place those discussions on the board or commission agenda, but it is also an expansion of their role as an advisory body. It can likewise establish unfulfilled expectations by members of those advisory bodies when their recommendations are not followed.

## MINIMIZE ADDING NEW PROJECTS DURING THE YEAR

The case study cities (as many others) have methods for members of Council to suggest new projects (whether large or small) during the year. The question is not whether or how, but capacity to do that new work within context of the already approved work.

### The best practice approach is to:

- **Focus:** Do not take staff time away from established priorities and work plans that support those priorities
- **Full Council Support:** Once decisions are made, support them and the implementation involved
- **Choices:** What drops off or is delayed if something is added?

### Best practice criteria for adding projects mid-year:

- Emergency (natural disaster, pandemic, civil unrest)
- New outside funding opportunity that is time sensitive
- New multi-agency opportunity that cannot be delayed
- Community safety issue that must be addressed in near term
- Changes in laws or mandates

Projects can be added by the City Manager advising the Council of these situations and gaining Council direction, or through an establish process of the Council (such as Colleagues' Memo in Sunnyvale) to bring such a situation to the attention of the full Council. In the latter approach, the Councilmember would first have a discussion with the City Manager to obtain professional perspective and information from staff. Otherwise, wait until the next budget cycle to consider.

For Sunnyvale, this best practice criteria for adding a project mid-year could be incorporated into the policy for Colleague Memos. The advantage of having this within the policy would be to serve as a reference point when new items are considered to be added to a project list outside of the annual priority setting process. (See Recommendations section below.)

# Analysis and Recommendations

This section contains a summary of the data analysis conducted by Raftelis, as well as the recommendations resulting from the analysis.

## Data Analysis

During the analysis phase, the project team focused most on the study issue **proposal process** (from sponsorship to funding) for two reasons: (1) that is where significant time is spent before any study issue process becomes an actual project, and (2) the documented proposal process contains the most data available for analysis. Additional details on the data analysis conducted are available in Appendix B.

## TIMELINES

A previous analysis by City staff of implementation timelines for the 44 approved study issues completed between June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025 found that nearly one third (32%) were completed within one year. Cumulatively, the **majority (55% of 44) were completed within two years**, and 80% of 44 were completed within three years.

Raftelis evaluated proposal timelines for seven randomly-selected study issues from sponsorship to approval/funding. For these study issues, the **proposal (pre-implementation) process ranged from 182 days to 1,704 days, with an average of 618 days (over 20 months)**.

Raftelis also evaluated completion timelines for eight randomly-selected study issues once approved and funded. **Timing for completion/implementation ranged between 182 days to 1,451 days, with an average of 976 days from funding to completion (over 32 months)**.

**Drivers of implementation timelines.** There are some commonalities that drive timelines (such as being deferred to the next year's workshop and procurement time for consultant selection), but other variables are unique to each study issue project. Study issue scopes vary widely, as does the volume of other workload items that compete with study issues during a given time period. Additional tracking of time on particular tasks would be needed to properly assess where efficiencies could be gained.

## PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Sunnyvale's current procurement process, specifically for consultant engagement, contributes four to six months to project timelines. Raftelis ascertained that City staff have been actively working to reduce this timeline where possible. Initial improvements include recent updates to the Municipal Code, which offer enhanced flexibility in purchasing thresholds, and the implementation of some technology improvements. An internal Staff Innovation Team for Procurement Improvement presented its report in May 2025 after reviewing the City's existing purchasing program. That report not only outlines identified issues but also proposes concrete solutions with clear implementation assignments.

Another opportunity to further streamline procurement lies in expanding the use of pre-selected vendor lists. While already in place for key areas like information technology, public works and infrastructure (e.g., engineering, construction), and professional legal services, City staff advocate for broadening their application. Purchasing teams have identified recurring needs in sustainability and green initiatives, emergency and disaster response, and

community programs (e.g., workforce development, housing, or youth engagement) as ideal candidates for this approach. Raftelis concurs that City departments should be encouraged to proactively collaborate with Procurement to identify and leverage pre-selected vendor lists wherever possible. This is a best practice that other cities employ and can reduce procurement time.

## DASHBOARD

A best practice for tracking projects and informing elected officials and the public about status of key projects is to maintain a reporting dashboard. Sunnyvale staff are nearing completion of a dashboard that will provide more accessible information about the status of study issues and other major work plan projects in each department that support Council strategic priorities. That dashboard will be useful to the multiple parties with interests in the various projects of the City.

## RESOURCING METHODS

Sunnyvale has a well-defined operating budget process and capital projects processes. These are long standing processes that are grounded in a long range perspective. It is a best practice for a city to look and plan long term. Both are best practices that are models for other cities.

Sunnyvale voters have mandated a City Charter provision requiring a balanced 10-year budget, reflecting a minimum of 10 years long-range financial forecasting. Further, the City Council Policy 7.11 requires decision-making focused on long-range implications of current budgeting decisions with a focus on a balanced 20-year resource allocation plan. The policy states that “all major financial decisions should be made in the context of the Twenty-Year Financial Plan.”

Additionally, the City of Sunnyvale has a robust capital improvement plan with a 20-year Projects Budget. This biennial process is an opportunity for members of Council to suggest that projects move from unfunded to funded, and to reprioritize projects within the Projects Budget.

The Projects Budget is divided into 15 sections by major service area or initiative: Traffic and Transportation, Downtown, Housing, Water, Solid Waste, Wastewater, Cleanwater, Stormwater, Public Safety, Community Development Block Grant, Outside Group Funding, Parks and Recreation, Library, Governance & Community Engagement, and Administrative Facilities. Individual projects are categorized as follows:

- **Capital projects:** Relate to new construction, improvements that significantly enhance an asset, or the acquisition of a new asset.
- **Infrastructure projects:** Relate to the long-term renovation and replacement of the City’s existing physical assets like streets, water and wastewater systems, roof replacements, etc.
- **Special projects:** Typically one-time projects designed to address a specific community need or problem such as grant projects or study issues.
- **Outside group funding:** Special projects that identify City contributions to local community-based organizations.

Each capital project has a project information sheet that includes the project number/name, project description, evaluation, and fiscal impact. Each project is also tied to the relevant General Plan goals.

Project costs, revenues, and operating savings/costs are planned across the 20-year planning period. Additional information includes the department responsible for project administration and the scheduled completion year. Every other year, the City performs an in-depth review of that projects budget and every project is updated. The Projects Budget also highlights unfunded, critical infrastructure needs of the City and has many such projects that can be moved into the Project Budget when funding becomes available and the project can be delivered.

From a funding and staff capacity standpoint, this is the optimum time for the City Council to provide input on capital project prioritization.

# Observations and Recommendations

This section contains summarizes Raftelis' key observations and recommendations to improve the City's study issues process, based upon the analysis.

## Key Observations

The following observations highlight key findings from throughout the engagement.

**The cost is high for the study issues process from sponsorship to approval for funding.** Based on staff estimates, the annual cost is over 2,500 staff hours, which equates to 64 weeks of staff time and over \$347,000 in salary and benefits. This excludes the cost and staff time to implement study results. Of this proposal time, an estimated 610 hours at \$78,000 are spent supporting the board and commission proposal process. Raftelis notes that time spent on the overall study issue proposal process takes time away from implementation of study issues approved in the budget, as well as other Council priorities and core services. See Appendix B for data analysis.

**Significant time is spent by staff in meetings and report writing for study issues that do not get ranked by Council nor approved by the City Manager for funding and implementation.** Of study issues sponsored by boards and commissions in the past six years, almost two-thirds do not get approved and implemented. Of study issues sponsored by the City Council in the past six years, half do not get approved and implemented. The meeting and report-writing time associated with that work represents hours that could go into achieving Council's priority projects and implementing study issues. See Appendix B.

**Board and commission involvement in the proposal process is unique.** Sunnyvale is atypical among cities in asking its boards and commissions to propose projects for City staff to work on. The typical role of advisory bodies is narrowly defined to advise the City Council on specific matters as defined in authorizing ordinances or resolutions. As noted in the first observation above, the current type of involvement is expensive for the City in time and money.

**Study issues are part of a larger management system, but not enough focus is provided on the overall context to integrate them among other City priorities.** The City's primary responsibility and allocation of staff time is on core services and its many approved projects. When study issue projects are viewed separately, this larger context can be clouded. Study issues are new projects added to staff workload and greater context may help convey that better. The new strategic priorities "work plan" is a useful tool in conveying the larger context of projects.

**False expectations can be raised about study issue approval when a study issue is on the deferral list for multiple years.** On average, only about 25% of study issues prioritized by City Council during the February workshop make it "Above the Line" for implementation. The remaining issues are carried forward year after year, which can create unrealistic expectations that these study issues will eventually be approved. Many may never move forward due to limited resources, changes in Council priorities, or other intervening factors. Additionally, deferring these projects requires ongoing staff time each year to update analyses, adding to the workload without guaranteeing progress.

**Terminology is confusing.** The historic use of the term "study issue" can imply that a matter is simply being studied. A study issue can be a policy matter or a project, and, over the years, study issues have been of both types. Since any item being approved is expected to have a beginning and an end, everything approved is actually a project of one

type or another. Some may be best directed toward the capital improvement plan and not designated as a “study issue.” *[Suggested changes to terms are offered below in the Recommendations section.]*

**Tracking and visibility could be improved.** Approved major projects and Council priorities are updated by City staff now on a quarterly basis. Staff are working on a new reporting dashboard. This will be helpful for the Council, public, boards and commissions and City staff as an easy reference point as to the status of approved projects and priorities. Currently, study issue tracking after approval for implementation is at a high level and is not broken down into phases in reporting. As a result, easy analysis of time spent on major tasks, including how specific portions of the implementation processes might be improved, is not feasible.

**There is no need for two separate forms for study issues and budget proposals.** For streamlining purposes as well as clarity as to how the proposed item fits into various systems (i.e., study issues, operating budget, capital budget), proposals can be consolidated.

**Some proposed items can be handled through the City Manager’s discretion in directing City operations.** The City Manager’s guidance to City staff and understanding of workloads as well as existing Council policy can be used to decide some actions outside a formal study issue process. This is sometimes referred to as “just do it” by the City Manager. It is normal within a city manager’s authority in the council/manager form of government. This is also the case with some items that may otherwise come through the study issue process for the City Attorney, who should be able to decide whether it can fit within that office’s workload, as long as it is within current policy.

**Capital projects that otherwise might be added as a study issue can be considered as part of the scheduled biennial Capital Projects update process.** Every other year, all capital projects are updated, and the City Council has an opportunity review and modify the project list.

**Strategic Priorities are multi-year in nature and can be reviewed every two years.** Having consistency and continuity is important for planning purposes as well as resourcing at the staff level. This is also where terminology could be modified so that the use of the word “priority” is not used in multiple ways. As is suggested below in “strategies for improvement,” changing “Strategic Priorities” to “Strategic Goals” would differentiate this set of desired outcomes from the list of Council priority work efforts or “projects.”

**The major pieces are in place for a comprehensive Strategic Plan.** Alignment of vision, mission, values, strategic priorities, and major projects to achieve the strategic priorities would unify the perspective for Council and staff. All new proposals can be evaluated as to whether they support the Citywide strategic plan or not, focusing the work of staff and boards and commissions toward the achievement of over-arching Citywide goals. The Strategic Framework Work Plan recently developed is a good implementation tool for a Strategic Plan.

## Recommendations

Recommended strategies for improving the study issues process fall within three areas:

- A. The study issue proposal process (from sponsorship to funding)
- B. The implementation process to complete study issues (from funding to completion of the work)
- C. Related prioritization and resourcing processes

### A. STUDY ISSUE PROPOSAL PROCESS

**Raftelis has identified eight strategies related to the study issue proposal process that, if taken together, will reduce the time staff spend on this component of study issues.** Given the significant staff time spent on the proposal process, reducing time here will allow staff to reallocate hours toward implementing Council priorities as well as the ongoing service delivery work of the City. An underlying premise is that the study issue proposal process can be streamlined and integrated into the City's budget process.

1. **Eliminate most study issue papers pertaining to the study issue proposal process.** The only study issue papers for newly-sponsored study issues would be a final few following a narrowing process to be held in February with the City Council (*described below*). Only the top items supported by a quorum of Council would be fully analyzed for final resourcing and budgeting decisions.
2. **Modify the board and commission input process.** As noted earlier, unlike in the best practices cities, Sunnyvale's board and commission participation in the study issues process uses significant staff resources. For this reason, it is recommended the City streamline this aspect of the process to free up staff resources for implementation. The following revised process is recommended:
  - a. Each year in the fall, the staff liaison for each board or commission should ask if the body would like to agendize a discussion of ideas for future Council Priority Projects by the November meeting; this discussion is optional.
  - b. If agendized, the discussion would be verbal, without any staff analysis or reporting. No study issue papers would be prepared. Staff liaisons and/or department management would be present at the meeting to provide comments, ensure factual accuracy, and clarify potential overlap with projects planned or already in progress. In this way, the value of having a deliberative process to share and discuss ideas among members is retained. Additionally, boards and commissions would not be involved in any ranking of Council proposals as they are now. That responsibility would remain solely within the Council's purview. (This approach is consistent with the process in other best practices cities.)
  - c. Following discussion, upon majority vote, the board or commission can identify one potential Council Priority Project idea for the staff liaison to send to the Office of the City Manager and be posted online as a potential idea, along with ideas from the prior year. Councilmembers may reference this idea list and may decide to include an idea(s) in their three ideas submitted to the City Manager for consideration at the February Workshop.
  - d. At the Workshop, City Council would consider a total of up to three proposed Council Priority Projects per Councilmember per year. Some of those may come from boards and commissions, at Councilmember discretion.
  - e. The subset of highest priority proposed Council Priority Projects that receive a Council majority vote would be approved to move forward to the next step. That would be for staff to prepare a report

containing analysis of each item. The number moving forward for analysis each year would be guided by the City Manager, given capacity and project ideas in a given year.

- f. The City Manager would then make budget recommendations based upon funding and staff capacity. The City Manager's recommendations would be informed by the staff analysis of the subset of the Council Priority Projects coming out of the February workshop.
3. **Eliminate the January public hearing on potential Council study issues and budget proposals.** This would not be needed under the simplified process. The February workshop would be the key time for the Council to review any ideas submitted from the public or boards and commissions. Public comments can be provided per Brown Act requirements at the February workshop as well as at the budget public hearing in May.
4. **Expand the focus of the February Council workshop to incorporate a review of key projects, a check-in on Council Strategic Priorities, and a broad fiscal outlook.** The current focus is on ranking study issues. The new focus would be on considering study issues ("Council Priority Projects") as part of the overall City Council goals and priorities process. At this prioritization workshop, the discussion would begin with a financial update and City Manager's assessment of staff capacity to take on new items. Next, there would be a review of existing approved work plan items (including study issues but also other significant work efforts) and confirming or modifying the project list. Then the Council would discuss the proposed study issues and budget proposals (Council Priority Projects) and through majority vote would determine which several would move forward for a staff report on feasibility. The City Manager would then use that information to inform their recommendations regarding which items could be implemented to be presented in the proposed budget. *[See more complete description of the February workshop in the Transition Planning section below.]*
5. **Modify terminology for clarity, as follows:**
  - a. **Rename "study issue" to "Council Priority Project."** This clarifies that the items approved in the budget and/or associated staff work plan are priorities. Additionally, for any project to ultimately be implemented, appropriate feasibility assessments will need to be done. That is the "study" phase but does not need to be in the name of the item. Further, for change management effectiveness, renaming "study issue" to "Council Priority Project" may convey more clearly that the item is a priority and is a project.
  - b. **Rename "Strategic Priorities" to "Strategic Goals"** to differentiate the broad, multi-year desired outcomes from specific Council priority projects. Additionally, as "Council Priority Projects" are proposed, tie them to the "Strategic Goals" so that as new projects are approved, and funded if needed, they are moving the City forward toward the longer term, desired outcomes reflected in the "Strategic Goals."
  - c. **Eliminate the terms "above the line" and "below the line"** and replace with City Manager's recommendation for items to be included in the budget. Only a subset of proposed items can be resourced in the budget and through staff capacity in any given year; this will be a straightforward method of addressing that reality.
6. **Eliminate any deferral of study issues. Study issues not approved for implementation will not remain on a deferral list.** Items can be raised again in the following year's priority setting process; staff will keep ideas on a high-level reference list for a one-year period for Councilmembers to review when identifying their three priority ideas. Eliminating deferrals will meet the objective of simplifying the process, reducing process-related staff time and expenditures, and focusing attention each year on what is most important to the seated City Council in the current City context.

7. **Create one consolidated form to be submitted by Councilmembers to the City Manager in January for Council Priority Projects (to capture both study issues and budget proposals).** Since most new projects are likely to have a budget impact, having one form will be efficient. If the proposed project pertains to capital improvement, it will be considered within the context of other capital projects during the budget workshop. These forms would come from Councilmembers to the City Manager in advance of the Council Goals and Priorities Workshop with each Councilmember submitting up to three forms per year between November and January.
8. **Prepare a clear description of the new Council Priority Projects recommended in the budget for review and approval by the Council.** Staff's understanding of the Council's intent regarding approved new Priority Projects would be documented in writing for the Council to review and approve as part of the budget process. The City Manager retains the ability to include a subset of items that Council directs staff to study in the recommended budget, and to explain why others may not be recommended (e.g., insufficient funding and/or staff capacity, external timing factors, new legislation).

## **B. PROCESS TO COMPLETE COUNCIL PRIORITY PROJECTS (FORMERLY STUDY ISSUES & BUDGET PROPOSALS)**

Three strategies are recommended in this section, which is the process from funding approval until the study issue (Council Priority Project) is completed. As noted above, **by eliminating the vast majority of time that staff spends working on proposals and meetings associated with that process, hours can be reallocated for this completion process.**

9. **Establish a transparent and informative reporting dashboard.** Regularly update the Council and community via a dashboard on the City's website on the Council's Priority Projects and other major projects. This is underway now by the City Manager's Office. The "work plan" that has been developed to highlight both Study Issues and significant departmental work efforts will be part of this reporting. Reporting could be in two parts: (a) Council Priority Projects and (2) Major Organizational and Departmental Projects. Tracking should be strengthened as to project status after approval and inclusion in the budget and should include information as to whether or not external consultants are being used. The City would add more specific fields which track time spent on major tasks involved in the various projects. The purpose of the tracking would be to aid the City in making process improvements in the future.
10. **Provide targeted project update discussions with the Council on an as-needed basis.** Members of Council expressed an interest in a mid-point update or review of study issues (Council Priority Projects) to be informed and to ensure that the intent of the project remains on track. City management would provide such opportunities as needed, within the confines of Council meeting agenda cadence, via regular updates to the public dashboard, or other means (to be determined).
11. **Identify key tasks or phases that would be value-added for tracking staff time.** If City management and the Council would like to understand what goes into implementing any given study issue (Council Priority Project), identifying key tasks or phases and tracking time against those tasks will provide that information. Management will then be able to see trends, what systems may need attention or improvement, and what factors are helping or hindering implementation. Continuous improvement can then be applied once greater information is available. Given the diverse scope of Council Priority Projects, this tracking may look different for different projects.

### C. RELATED PRIORITIZATION AND RESOURCING PROCESSES

At present, the City's key prioritization process is periodic review of the Council's Strategic Priorities (to be renamed "Strategic Goals"), and the City's key resourcing process is the budget process. No changes are proposed to the budget process specifically. Approved Council Priority Projects (study issues) are budgeted or, if no new dollars are needed, are assigned for work in a City department.

Additionally, the City's Twenty-Year Capital Projects Budget and biennial review is recognized as an ongoing method for the Council to reprioritize capital projects and introduce new capital projects. This is a sound practice and should be continued.

Three other processes are recommended.

- 12. Conduct a biennial review of the Council's Strategic Priorities (to be renamed "Strategic Goals").** These goals are broad in nature and would typically not change from year to year. A schedule of every two years would give the Council and executive management an opportunity to reflect on whether a new condition has arisen or major factor has changed that would warrant a modification to one or more of the goals.
- 13. Create a comprehensive Strategic Plan.** The City has important components of a comprehensive Strategic Plan. Pulling them together may be helpful in clearly focusing Council priorities for accomplishment. Progress would be reported not only on discrete projects but on how the projects move the City toward achieving the outcomes intended in the Strategic Goals in the Strategic Plan, and overall vision of the City.
  - a. A Strategic Plan would set the overall direction for the City of Sunnyvale and would provide the framework for major decisions and resource allocation. It would contain the City's mission, vision and values. The Strategic Plan would incorporate existing master plans and major projects by reference. The work plan would be the implementation vehicle for the Strategic Plan.
  - b. A Strategic Plan answers four key questions:
    - What do we know to be true? **Who are we?**
    - What do we hope will be true in the future? **Where are we going?**
    - What must go well in order to make it so? **How are we going to achieve it?**
    - How will we know if we are successful? **How will we measure our performance?**
- 14. Apply an agreed-upon set of criteria for adding projects mid-year.** Case study cities are disciplined in focusing on the established priorities and/or strategic plan. When new issues arise, they are handled either (1) by the City Manager if a matter can be comfortably incorporated into daily operations, or (2) considered by the full Council based on input from the City Manager regarding resource capacity and impact on other work. Otherwise, a new project will wait until the next budget cycle. Sometimes issues arise that require immediate attention, such as in situations characterized by the criteria below. .

The Council's Colleague Memo Policy could be modified to incorporate the following suggested criteria for considering when a new project should be added. These criteria are:

- Emergency (natural disaster, pandemic, civil unrest)
- New outside funding opportunity that is time sensitive
- New multi-agency opportunity that cannot be delayed
- Community safety issue that must be addressed in near term
- Changes in laws or mandates requiring immediate City action

**15. Conduct a review of the effectiveness of the City's budget and strategic priorities process every five years.**

In the interest of continuous improvement, City staff identify what is working well with the process, impediments or gaps that are being experienced, and provide recommendations for improvement.

Figure 2 below illustrates the revised timing of the recommended new process for Sunnyvale.



**Figure 2: Timeline for Recommended New Process**

# Transition Planning

Should the City move forward with the revised process recommended in this report, a thoughtful transition process will be helpful. Raftelis has developed a transition plan outline below to assist the City.

| Month                                             | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 2025                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate with boards and commissions about the new process, timeline and changes to their roles.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| November 2025                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare guidelines outlining the new process and new terminology. Change all documents to reflect the new terminology (e.g., Council Priority Projects, Strategic Goals, removing “above” or “below” the line).</li> <li>Create a new “Budget Submittal and Council Priority Project Form” that merges the prior two forms. Communicate to staff and the City Council regarding its location and access.</li> <li>Remove all study issues currently on the deferral list. The result is that proposals to be reviewed at the 2026 February Workshop would be those emerging from the new process, with the Council starting with a “blank slate.” Ideas on the deferral list could be proposed as part of Councilmembers’ limited number of proposed Council Priority Projects, if desired. (November 2025)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| January 2026                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create as a reference a list of dropped or deferred items, and up to one idea (listed item, not papers) from each board or commission via staff liaisons. Post this list on the City’s website. Update the list after each year to include items from the prior year that did not move forward and new board or commission ideas. This list will not be analyzed by staff and should be treated as a brainstorm list of unvetted items.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| February 2026                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a new agenda for the annual February Workshop to expand beyond Council Priority Projects ranking. Primary contents of the new Workshop agenda would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A review of existing major projects (Council Priority Projects and Key Departmental Projects).</b> Staff will provide updates on changes that would cause drop-offs or modifications to the work plan, ascertain whether Council direction has changed, and get Council confirmation on changes to or deletions from the list (additions would be handled as new project proposals).</li> <li><b>A financial update from the City Manager and guidance on the capacity for staff to take on new projects.</b> Both the financial and capacity updates will set the stage for discussion of the new project proposals. Capacity may be available in some departments but not others and will vary from year to year.</li> <li><b>A review of new Council Priority Project proposals (formerly study issues) to be considered.</b> Council will review the full list of new proposals from Councilmembers and determine which subset are of sufficient (majority) interest to the Council for potentially being funded in the upcoming budget and in light of the City Manager’s assessment of staff capacity. Council will also hear staff and Council ideas about what existing projects could be eliminated to make room for new projects. While ideas will not have been analyzed by staff yet, staff will be present to answer preliminary questions about them (e.g. legal compliance/constraints, similar efforts underway).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| After February Workshop during Budget Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff will prepare short (3-5 page) summary reports only on the subset of priority projects approved by Council for further consideration in the budget, pending the City Manager’s recommendation of what is achievable.</li> <li>The City Manager will utilize this staff analysis to inform decisions as to what is included in the recommended budget. Recommendations will be presented to the Council at the May Budget Workshop for consideration, including seeking Council assurance that the</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

| Month     | Activities                                                                                                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | scope of work outlined for priority projects that are moving forward aligns with Council's intent.                |
| FY2026-27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a timeline for creating a comprehensive Strategic Plan.</li></ul> |

# Conclusion

For over four decades, Sunnyvale's study issue process has played a vital role in surfacing and deliberating crucial ideas. As is often the case with any long-standing institutional process, the study issue process has evolved. This report represents the next critical step in that evolution, aiming to strike an effective balance between open deliberation of community ideas and the realities of limited staff capacity and resources.

Our findings indicate clear pathways to achieve significant efficiency gains and enhance implementation success. By streamlining the priority setting process and integrating it directly into the annual budget cycle, the City can more effectively manage expectations and align proposed initiatives with available staff resources. Furthermore, optimizing board and commission input is expected to free up substantial staff capacity, which can then be reallocated towards the implementation of approved projects.

The annual February review of proposed ideas will be within the larger resource context and previously approved projects and Council priorities. Enhanced tracking of priority projects, once approved, will ensure greater transparency and accountability for results.

The desire to align priorities and the work plan with a cohesive Citywide Strategic Plan is a shared objective among the City Council and staff. Having this in place will provide even greater context for setting annual priorities and planning for the future.

Raftelis is confident that through the thoughtful and deliberate implementation of these recommendations, the City of Sunnyvale can gain efficiencies and enable staff to focus more time on implementation of projects. With finite resources, and daily City services to deliver as well as significant projects, being efficient with staffs' time is always an important consideration. Providing a better way to implement the City Council's direction and policy priorities is the desired outcome of the improvement recommendations in this report.

**APPENDIX A: CASE STUDY CITIES**

# **Appendix A: Process Details from Case Study Cities**





| City                | Priority Setting Framework/Process Overview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Keys to Success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Elk Grove</b>    | Council has an adopted Mission, Vision, and broad Goals. Reviews and adopts Priority Projects at biannual retreat that support the identified goals. City Manager and all department heads participate in this retreat. Comprehensive dashboard on the City's website. Staff provides updates twice a year. Additionally, the City Manager provides an <a href="#">Administrative Report</a> at each City Council meeting that updates the Council on a variety of items including several standing citywide initiatives.                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• Cohesive framework</li> <li>• Retains focus from year to year</li> <li>• Respect for roles and staff time</li> <li>• Effective <a href="#">online dashboard</a> for Priority Projects</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Fremont</b>      | Council sets <a href="#">annual priorities</a> in a retreat. Typically limited to four priorities. Staff provides mid-year and annual report on progress of the goals set in the prior year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direction on an annual basis</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> <li>• <a href="#">Progress reports</a> provided (mid-year and annual)</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager (including comprehensive monthly briefings regarding priority projects/initiatives)</li> </ul>                  |
| <b>Gilroy</b>       | Council has an annual <a href="#">Legislative Agenda and Work Plan</a> process which involves several meetings. It begins in February to review the existing goals and priorities; next meeting is the mid-year budget forecast; followed by Council determining a set of annual goals. After this session, the staff returns with refinement of these goals into "legislative" (policy) and operational work plans (mandated, core, discretionary).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• Cohesive framework that takes into account Council priorities and staff workload</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul>                                                                                                       |
| <b>Pleasanton</b>   | Council adopted a five-year <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which serves as the basis of its priorities. Each year, Council identifies limited number of "Council priorities" (ranges from 4 to 7) from within strategic plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall Strategic Plan framework is helpful</li> <li>• Communication regarding resources required to implement priorities is essential to help manage workload</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Redwood City</b> | Council sets goals annually tied into <a href="#">multi-year strategic plan</a> . Priorities are set for several years. The process begins in January or February with a facilitated offsite meeting with the Council to preview fiscal trends, and for Councilmembers to surface their current priorities (limited to 2-3 each). The City Manager indicates how those are related to the existing work plan ( <i>work assigned through activities in the budget, prior Council direction, or routine practices such as budget adoption</i> ) and/or what would be needed to advance them. The purpose of this is to assist in channeling these interests through the work plan throughout the year. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• Council focuses on the goals established</li> <li>• Established priorities provide clear direction</li> <li>• Respect for roles and staff time</li> <li>• Supports workload management</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul> |
| <b>Rohnert Park</b> | Council has a <a href="#">strategic framework</a> and four broad, multi-year goals. Council annually sets three priorities that support and are in context of the goals. City staff reports progress to the City Council on these priorities, as well as other work plan items.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• Cohesive framework</li> <li>• Respect for roles and staff time</li> <li>• Department heads determine timeframes of specific projects and actions within the priorities</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul>                 |
| <b>San Mateo</b>    | Long standing "blue sky" annual priority setting process in advance of the budget. Priorities are tied to the Council's <a href="#">strategic goals</a> and vision. Council meets annually to set goals. <a href="#">Priorities</a> are assigned timeframes of (1) upcoming fiscal year, (2) two to five years, and (3) five or more years. Staff identifies resources and timeframe necessary, returns to Council, and the                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• Suggestions from Councilmembers limited to a small number and must have support of majority for consideration</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| City               | Priority Setting Framework/Process Overview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Keys to Success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | approved one-year priorities are included in the budget. Study sessions are held for each major policy item and staff brings back the options. City Manager updates Council on progress mid-year.                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> <li>• Future step for City is to create a Strategic Plan to enhance alignment with of Council priorities</li> </ul>                                                                                                              |
| <b>Victorville</b> | In second three-year <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> , which serves as the guiding framework for work plans and budgets. Through the budget process, the City Manager adds items of interest to the Council as resources permit. The City Manager prepares a scorecard annually that updates the Council about staff's progress in achieving each of the adopted goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplined process</li> <li>• City Manager prepares a budget in alignment with Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Emerging items can be incorporated into the budget if majority of Council agrees and resources permit</li> <li>• Strong communication between Council and City Manager</li> <li>• Tied to the budget process</li> </ul> |

| City              | Methods for Councilmembers to Raise Issues Outside Priority Setting Processes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Elk Grove</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councilmembers can raise issues for consideration through (1) biannual priority setting session, (2) budget process, (3) mid-year for an operational need or key opportunity, or (4) protocol for requesting an item to be considered on a future agenda per the Council's Norms and Procedures Manual</li> <li>• Councilmember can request, if majority agrees then staff prepares a report to bring to council</li> <li>• <a href="#">City Council Norms and Procedures Manual</a></li> <li>• The City Manager's <a href="#">Administrative Report</a> provided at each Council meeting includes the status of Council direction on matters raised at Council meetings. Some of these items are addressed through the budget process and in other cases staff prepares a report to present at a future meeting. The list usually has about five or six items on it.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Fremont</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councilmembers can raise an issue informally to the City Manager through regular briefings; City Manager can act on the item if within operational context and consistent with policy and resource availability</li> <li>• Councilmembers can raise an issue formally through a "Council Referral" process for placing an item on the agenda for consideration by colleagues; City Manager can either ask staff to review or bring it through the budget development process; if the item is administratively easy it will be implemented; if not, staff will tell Council the time, cost, and operational consequences</li> <li>• City Council <a href="#">Handbook of Rules and Procedures</a> (page 10, section 5: City Council Referrals, describes the process for a Councilmember to place an item on the Council agenda)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Gilroy</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councilmembers can bring up issues with the City Administrator who can determine whether to take action.</li> <li>• Councilmembers can bring up an issue through the Future Agenda Item Report (FAIR) process which is a formal policy. Requires the councilmember to write a report to put it on the agenda, then get a majority of council to support the item at the council meeting. If the Council supports it, then the City Manager provides the full list of priorities, including the Legislative Agenda and Work Plan and asks the Council where they see this new item fitting into the priorities. This policy requires the councilmember to discuss the item with the City Administrator before it goes onto the agenda, which allows the City Administrator to see if there is another way to accomplish the item, and to understand the work involved and make clear what the impact of this new item will be.</li> <li>• City Council <a href="#">Norms</a> policy document (item 2.1) establishes the ability of Councilmembers to propose items for the agenda. The FAIR process describes how this specifically works.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pleasanton</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process uses "matters initiated" during meeting Agenda for Council to raise new priorities or projects; City Council's <a href="#">Rules of Procedures</a> (page 15, item 9.6: Matters Initiated by Council and Council Reports)</li> <li>• Mayor or Councilmember gives City Manager a heads up, usually for discussion/initial thoughts</li> <li>• Proponent raises the topic, if majority agrees then staff commits to bringing the item back at a future meeting for more discussion/consideration, which Clerk tracks</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| City                | Methods for Councilmembers to Raise Issues Outside Priority Setting Processes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Manager updates council in one-on-ones and might give general estimate on when it will return to Council; if a large item, staff will give more information</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Redwood City</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councilmembers can raise issues with the City Manager during their briefings. She reinforces the “one hour” rule in place (amount of time staff can spend studying a topic), or suggests the item be referred to a Council committee, or use the Council referral process.</li> <li>Council referral process allows individual councilmembers to raise topics they would like staff to address; if a Council majority supports action the City Manager provides a timeline for when this can be accommodated in light of other planned work. Typically, only 1-2 a year come through this process which are raised during the “matters of Council interest” portion of the agenda with procedures set forth in the City Council’s document: <a href="#">A Guide to City Council Communications and Business</a>.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Rohnert Park</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a new issue comes up that may require staff’s attention the City Manager advises the Council about staff capacity and impact on the established priorities</li> <li>If the City Manager determines issue needs to be addressed immediately, meets with Department heads to decide the timeframe to address issue, and updates Council on the plan</li> <li>City Manager meets weekly with each Councilmember; strong communication</li> <li>The adopted <a href="#">City Council Protocols</a> document provides procedures for Councilmembers to add items to the agenda (page 5, section G)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>San Mateo</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If Council requests new items they are held until the next “blue sky” session or City Manager asks Council what will come off of the list or be deferred</li> <li>City Council’s <a href="#">Rules and Procedures</a> Manual provides the procedure for a Councilmember to request an item to be considered on a future agenda. The policy requires that before a decision is made to place an item on the agenda, staff provide information on how much staff time is estimated to be required to produce the agenda report. Then a majority vote or consensus of Council is required for the staff to prepare an agenda report and place the item on a future agenda.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Victorville</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councilmembers can bring up issues during their regular briefings with the City Manager. City Manager can decide whether to take care of the issue through operations if consistent with policy and resources are available.</li> <li>Councilmembers can also bring up items at the Council meeting through the established protocol in the <a href="#">Council Policy and Procedures Manual</a>.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**APPENDIX B: DETAILED DATA ANALYSIS**

# **Appendix B: Detailed Data Analysis**



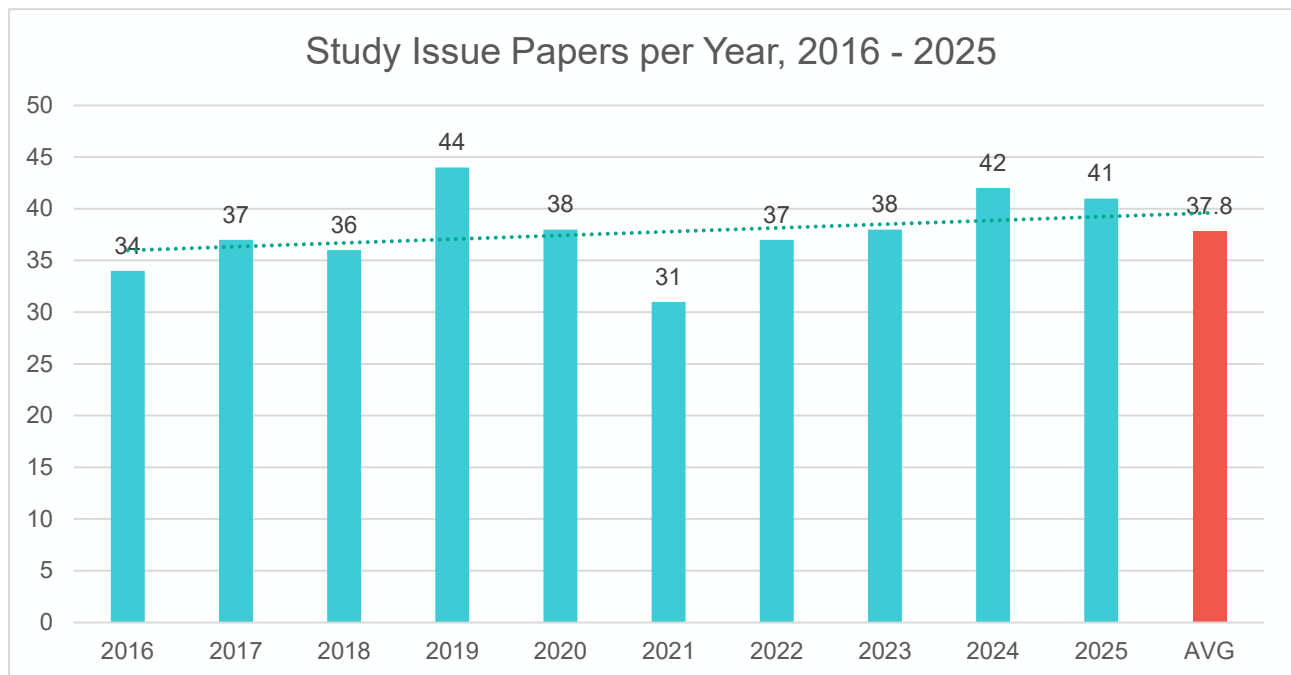
Significant time was spent by Raftelis analyzing data provided by City staff. Available data included:

- Estimates of hours spent on study issue proposals by major step
- List of study issues going to the February Workshop from 2016 through 2026 (10 years)
- Indication of who sponsored each study issue from 2020 – 2025 (six years)
- Completion dates of 44 study issues since 2020, when tracking started

Data to show time spent on various tasks on study issues once approved in the budget for implementation is not currently available. The City's tracking system would need to include input of information regarding each step along the way in implementation. The development of a dashboard that is underway now will aid in that effort. At present, however, this data was not available for analysis.

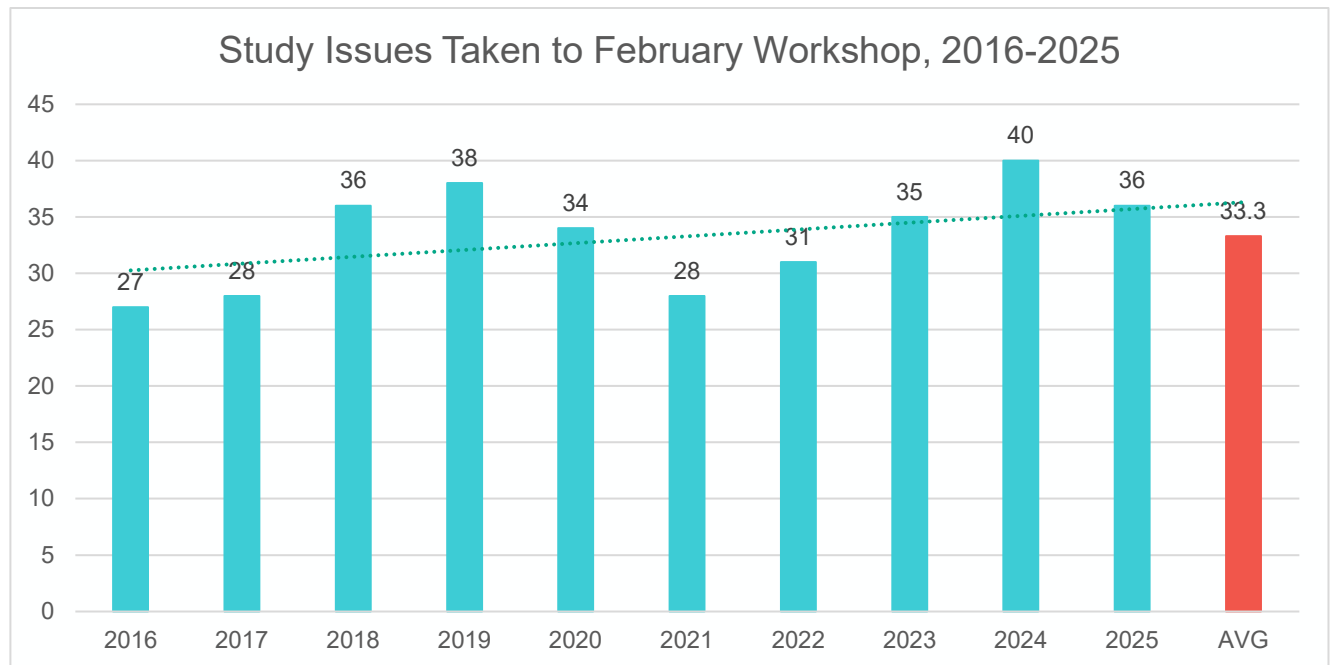
## Number of Study Issue Papers Prepared by Staff by Year

Based upon data from 2016 – 2025, there are an average of 37.8 study issue papers prepared by staff each year. This is the total prior to board and commission deferral/drop decisions and includes papers for both newly-sponsored and ongoing (previously deferred) study issues.



## Number of Study Issues Taken to February Workshop

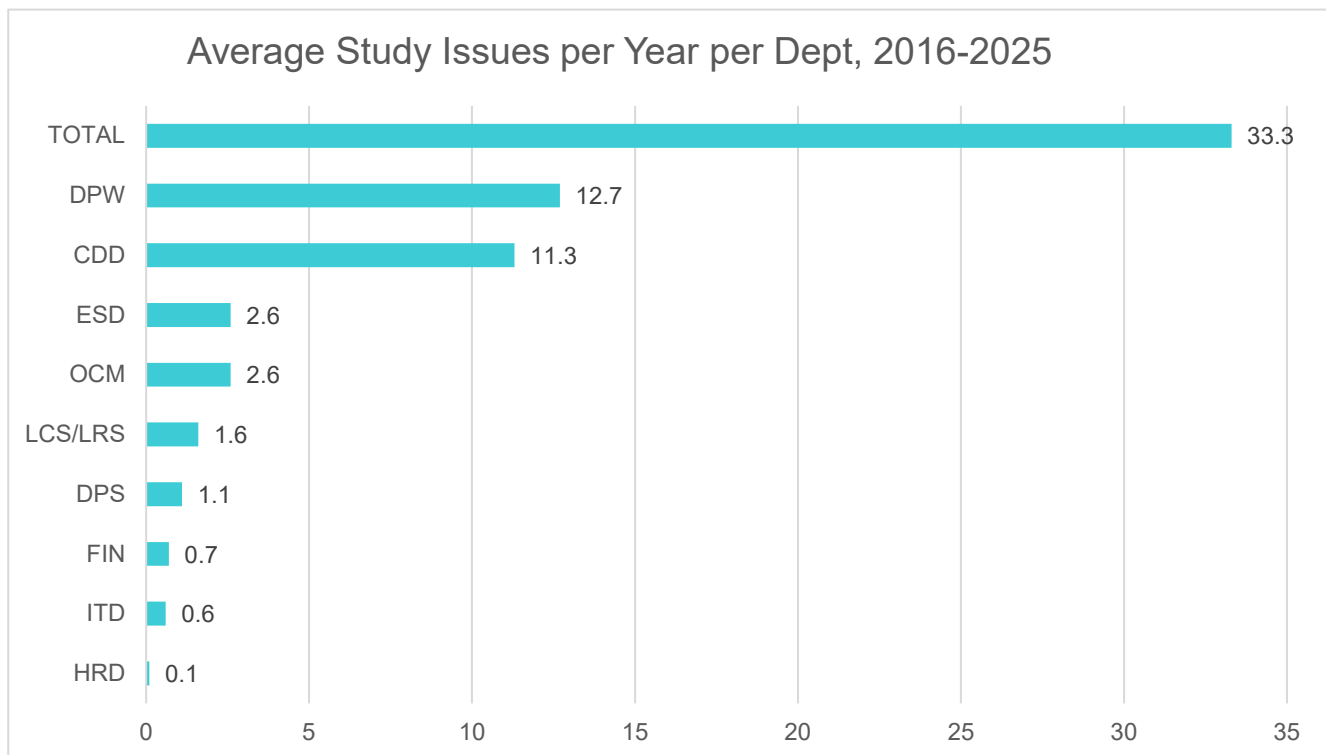
Based upon data from 2016 – 2025, there are an average of 33.3 study issues brought forth at each annual workshop. On average over the 10 years, boards and commissions have deferred an average of two study issues and dropped two prior to the workshop each year.



## Average Number of Study Issues per Year by Department

The chart below shows average study issues by department assigned over a 10-year period from 2016-2025. As would be expected, the majority are assigned to the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Community Development Department (CDD). A key to department acronyms is provided below.

| Acronym                    | Department                                                         |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DPW</b>                 | Department of Public Works                                         |
| <b>CDD</b>                 | Community Development Department                                   |
| <b>ESD</b>                 | Environmental Services Department                                  |
| <b>OCM</b>                 | Office of the City Manager                                         |
| <b>LCS/LRS<sup>1</sup></b> | Library and Community Services/<br>Library and Recreation Services |
| <b>DPS</b>                 | Department of Public Safety                                        |
| <b>FIN</b>                 | Finance Department                                                 |
| <b>ITD</b>                 | Information Technology Department                                  |
| <b>HRD</b>                 | Human Resources Department                                         |

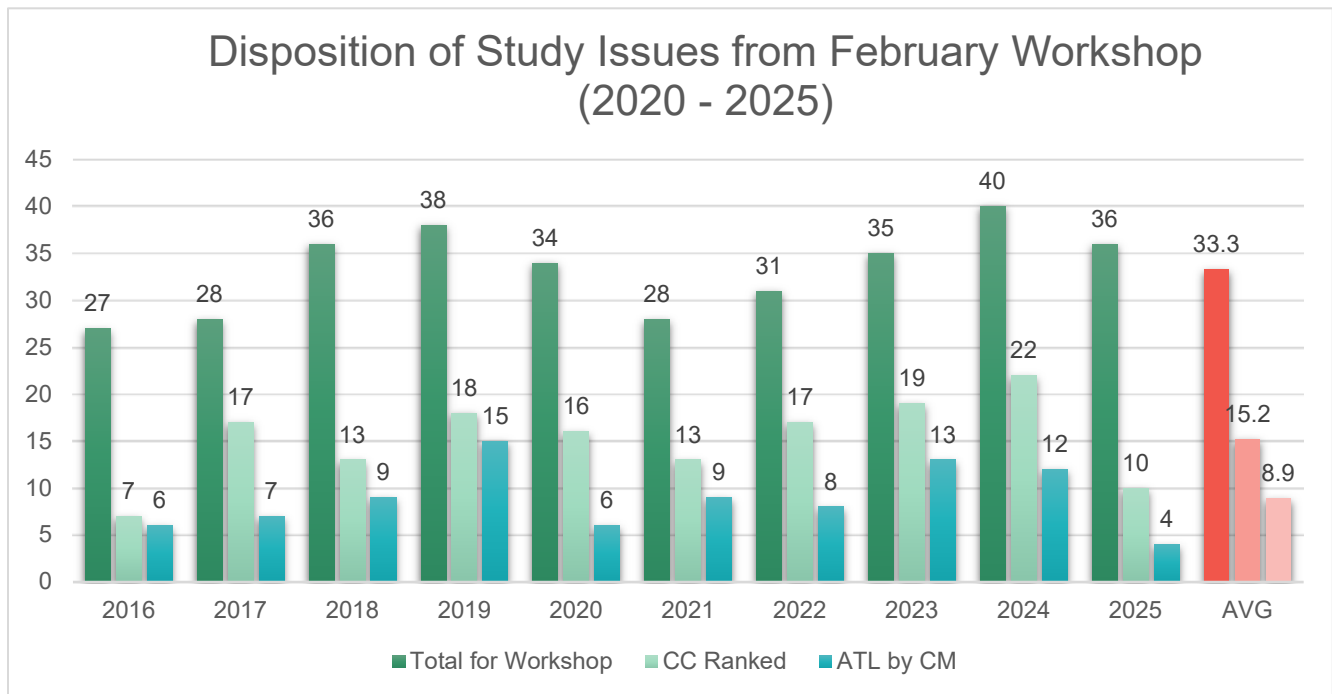


<sup>1</sup> The Department name was changed from LCS to LRS, effective 9/1/2020 (RTC 20-0761).

## Study Issue Disposition, Sponsorship, and Budget

The chart below shows the study issues taken to the annual February workshop in **dark green**, the number ranked to proceed by the City Council in **light green**, and the number that were deemed Above The Line (ATL) and moved forward for implementation by the City Manager in **blue** from 2016 – 2025 (10 years).

- Of study issues taken to the February Workshop, an average of 53.6% are ranked to proceed by the City Council.
- Of total study issues taken to the February Workshop, an average of 25.1% are deemed Above The Line by the City Manager and moved forward for implementation.



Other key findings:

- Of total “Above The Line” study issues in the past six years from 2020-2025, **36.5% were sponsored by a board or commission.**
- Of total “Above The Line” study issues in the past six years from 2020-2025, **50.0% were sponsored by members of the City Council.**
- Of total “Above The Line” study issues in the past six years from 2020-2025, **78.9% require budget request/supplement** and move into the City’s budget review process.

## Study Issues Proposal Process Timelines (Pre-Implementation)

As part of this review, Raftelis created a process map for the overall study issue proposal creation process. While the map outlines the steps involved, it was not instructive on timeline details and, therefore, was not used for timeline purposes. The City's tracking of study issue related data has changed over time and, to this day, lacks detailed task and phase information, limiting our ability to identify process map timelines with accuracy.

### Seven Case Studies for Analysis

To gain some level of understanding of how City staff time is spent on study issue proposals, Raftelis selected seven specific case studies (actual past study issues) to analyze. These were randomly selected based upon available data and with the majority from the DPW and CDD departments, since they handle most study issue proposals.

Using information available in the City's tracking system (which has changed over time), we identified key milestones in each study issues' proposal development; these vary depending upon the information in the City's tracking system. These milestones are documents in the graphics below, which shown the number of months for each portion of the proposal process.

The study issue proposal process ranges from 182 days to 1,704 days, with an average across the seven study issues below of 618 days.

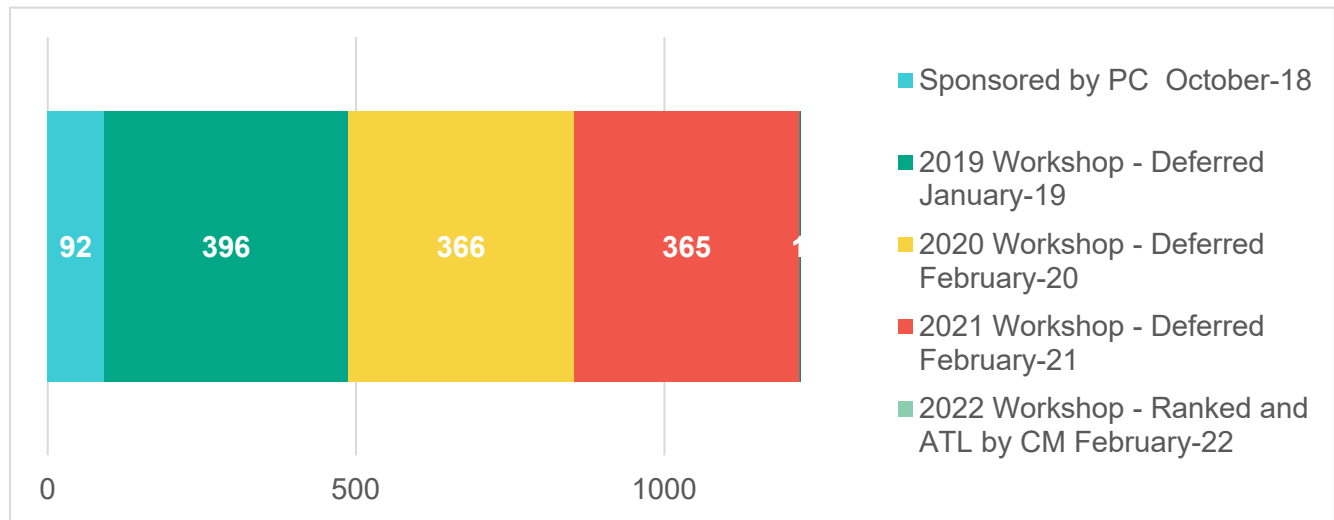
### CDD 19-04: Historical Contributions Made by Asian Americans and Other Minority Groups

Sponsorship to Funding = 1,704 days



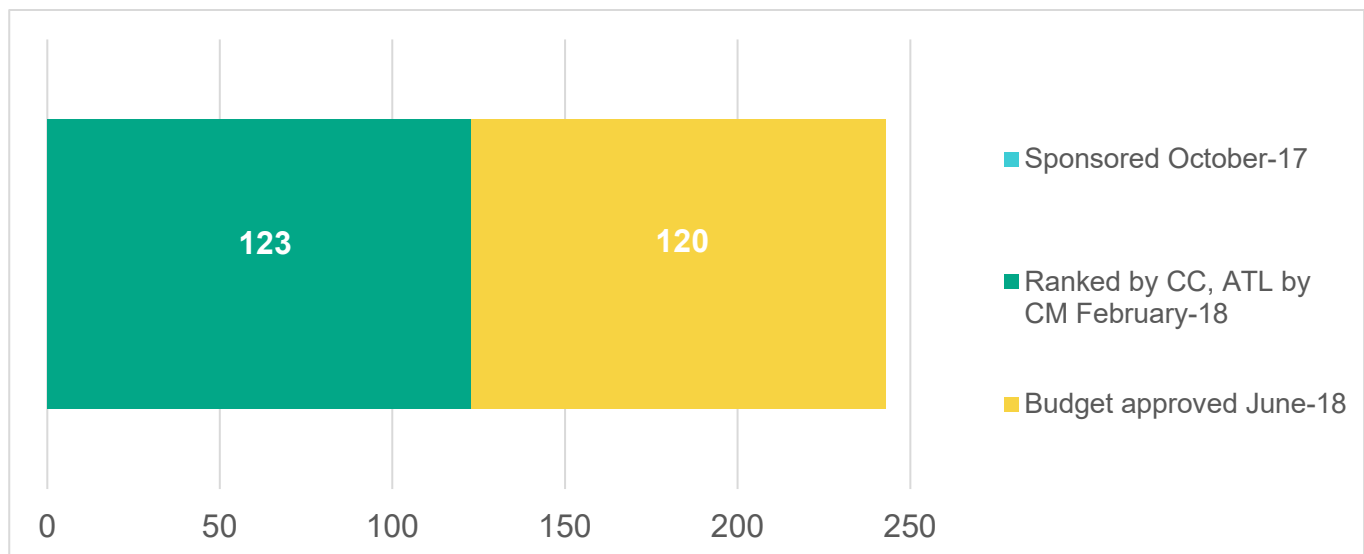
## CDD 19-07: Evaluate the Minimum Parking Requirements for Residential Uses

Sponsorship to “above the line” (ATL) = 1,219 days



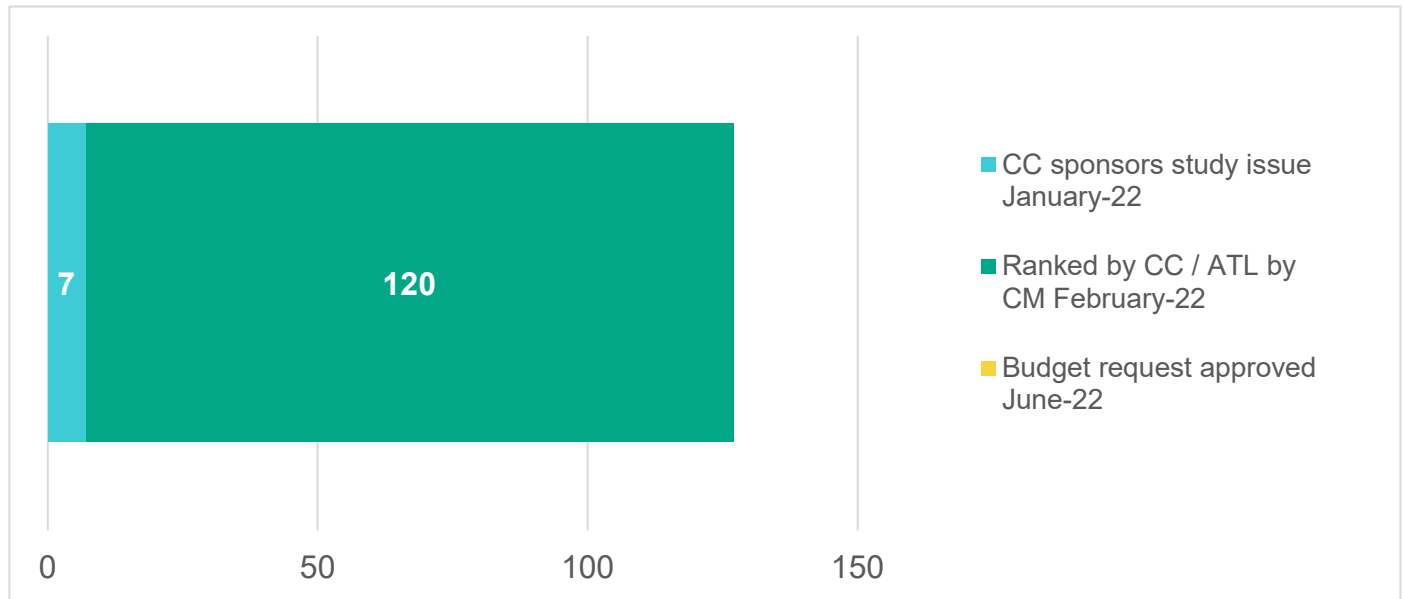
## DPW 18-07: Feasibility of Acquiring Control of Caltrans Traffic Signals on El Camino Real

Sponsored to Funding = 243 days



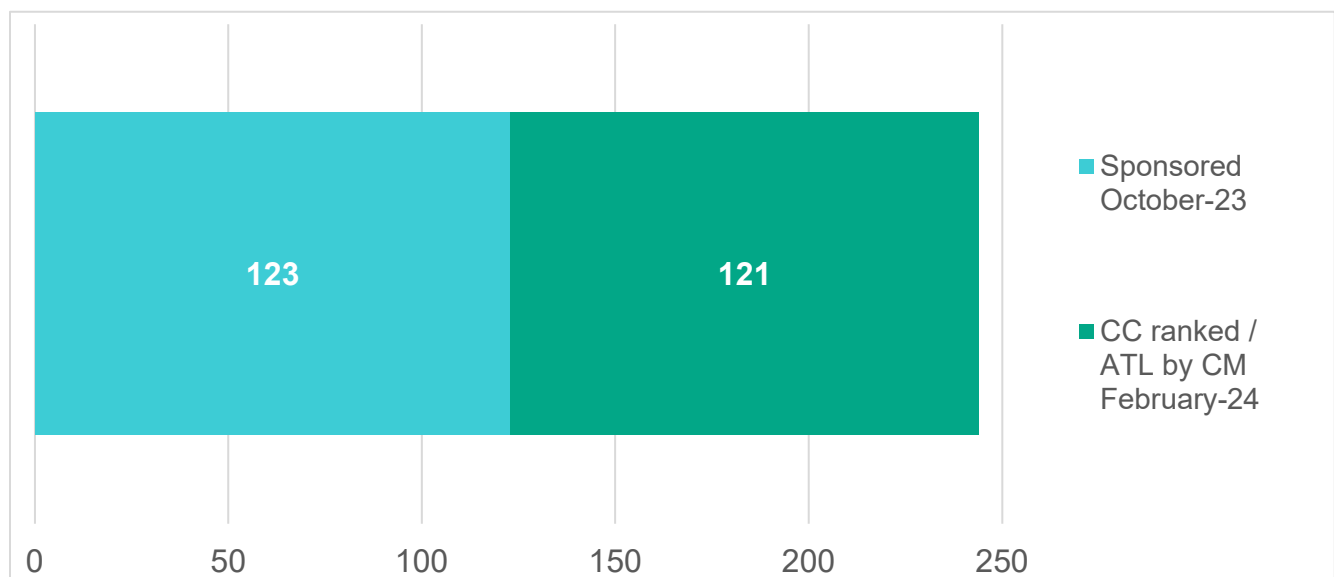
## DPW 22-06: Reevaluate traffic calming program and policy including thresholds to begin a project and types of measures available

Sponsorship to Funding = 127 days



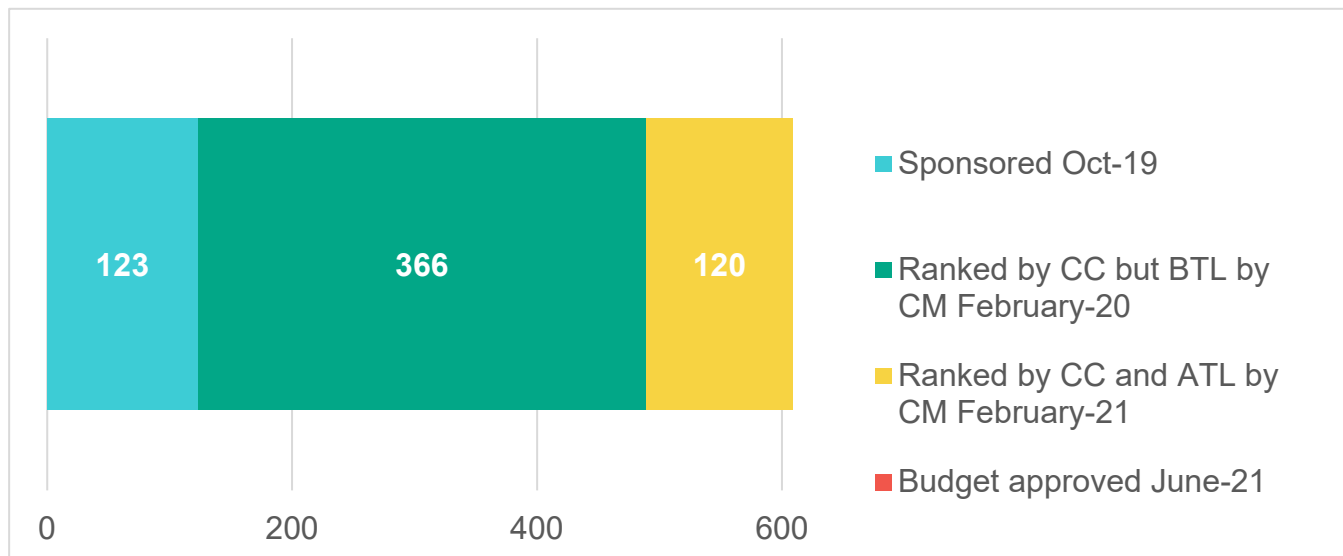
## DPW 24-09: Evaluate the Addition of Pedestrian Scrambles During School Peak Hours at Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road/Fremont Avenue and at Homestead Road/Kennewick Drive

Sponsorship to Funding = 244 days



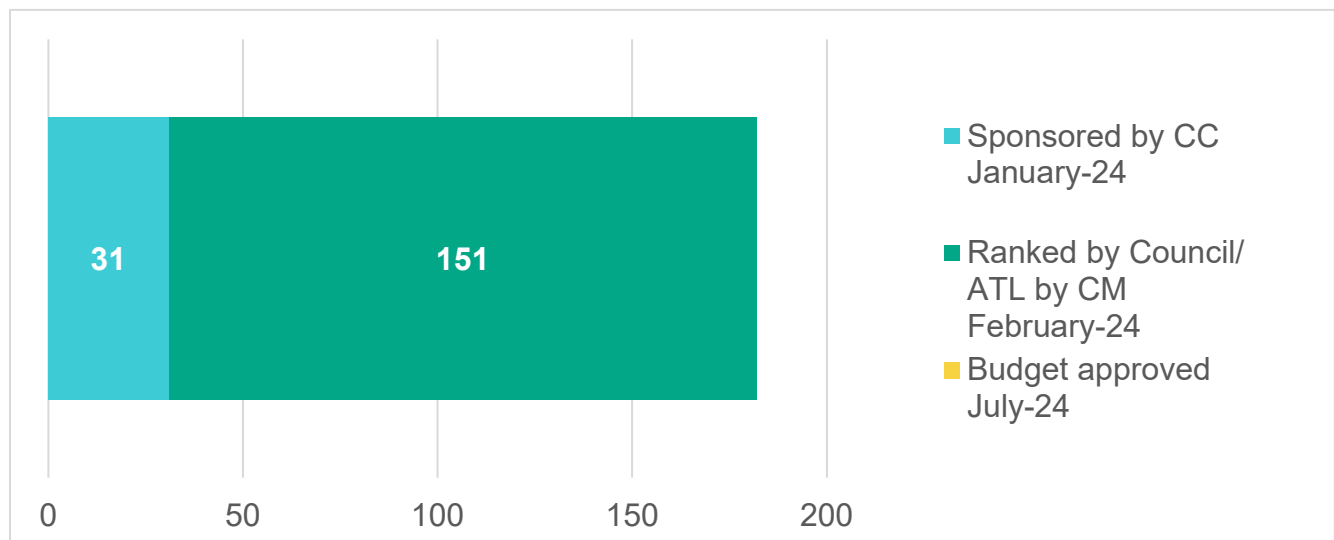
## ITD 20-01: Establish a Formal Smart Cities Initiative and Potential Program.

Sponsorship to Funding = 609 days



## OCM 24-02: Evaluate the City of Sunnyvale Study Issues Process.

Sponsorship to Funding = 182 days



## Study Issues Completion Process Timelines (Implementation)

**Overall, prior staff analysis shows that most study issues, once funded, are completed within two years.** Of 44 approved study issues that were completed between June 20, 2017 and January 28, 2025, 24 (55%) were completed within two years and, cumulatively, 35 (80%) were completed within three years. The median completion time across all 44 issues during this period was 22 months, or 1.8 years, and all but two study issues were completed in less than four years.

In this sample, all of the study issues requiring three or more years to complete were assigned to the Departments of Community Development or Public Works, including topics like “Develop a Vision Zero Plan,” “2017 Housing Strategy,” and “Comprehensive Updates of the Precise Plan for El Camino Real.”

On a more detailed level, the City’s internal tracking system for study issues has limited data on specific steps and phases by City staff in completing the study issue work product. For this reason, timeline details are incomplete.

### **Eight Case Studies for Analysis**

As with the study issue proposal process above, to gain some level of understanding of how City staff time is spent on the completion of study issues, Raftelis selected eight specific case studies (actual study issues) to analyze, including this review on the study issue process. These were randomly selected based upon available data and with the majority from the DPW and CDD departments, since they handle most study issues.

This analysis was intended to:

- Show the major categories where time is spent in days per step
- Show differences and similarities between study issues – but no two are alike

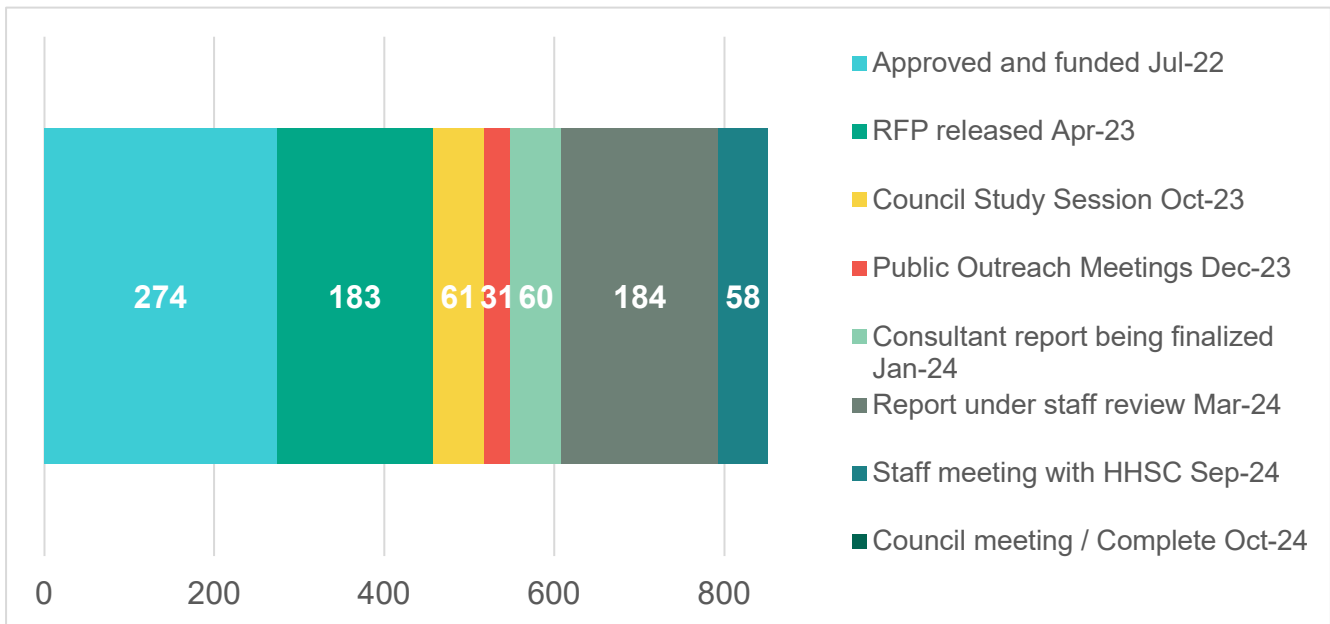
Completion ranges between 182 days and 1,451 days for the eight study issues below, with an average of 976 days from funding to completion (32 months).

**In reviewing the study issues process from proposal to completion, a few factors appear to account for significant amounts of time:**

- Time for procurement to hire a consultant (approximately five to six months)
- Time waiting on external entities such as Caltrans
- Time spent on any public outreach processes
- Delays due to staff vacancies; this was noted in a few cases we reviewed
- In some cases, delays due to the inability to meet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

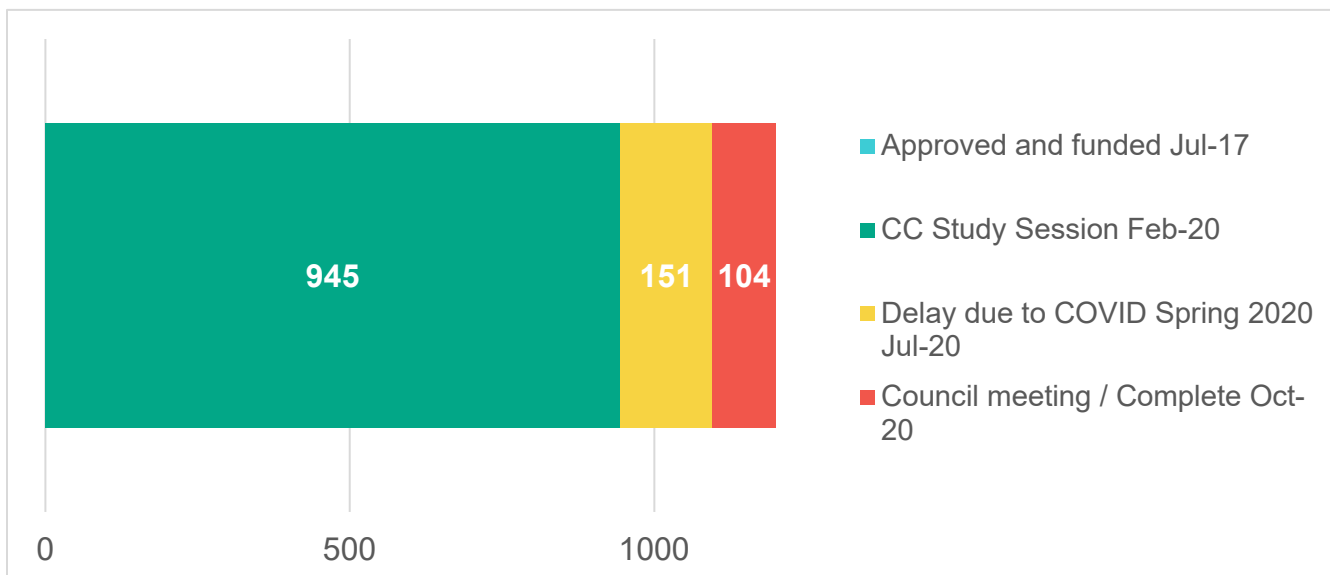
## CDD 22-07: Evaluate a Pilot Program for Universal Basic Income including Potential Funding Sources

Funding to Completion = 851 days



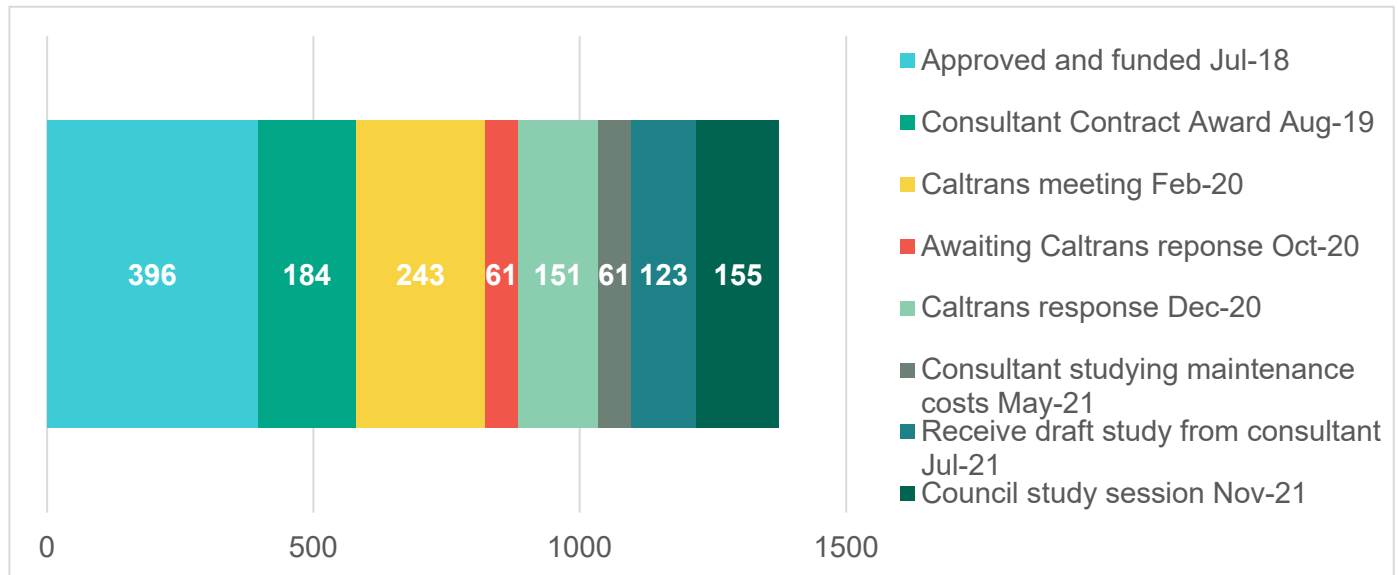
## CDD 17-09: 2017 Housing Strategy

Funding to Completion = 1,200 days



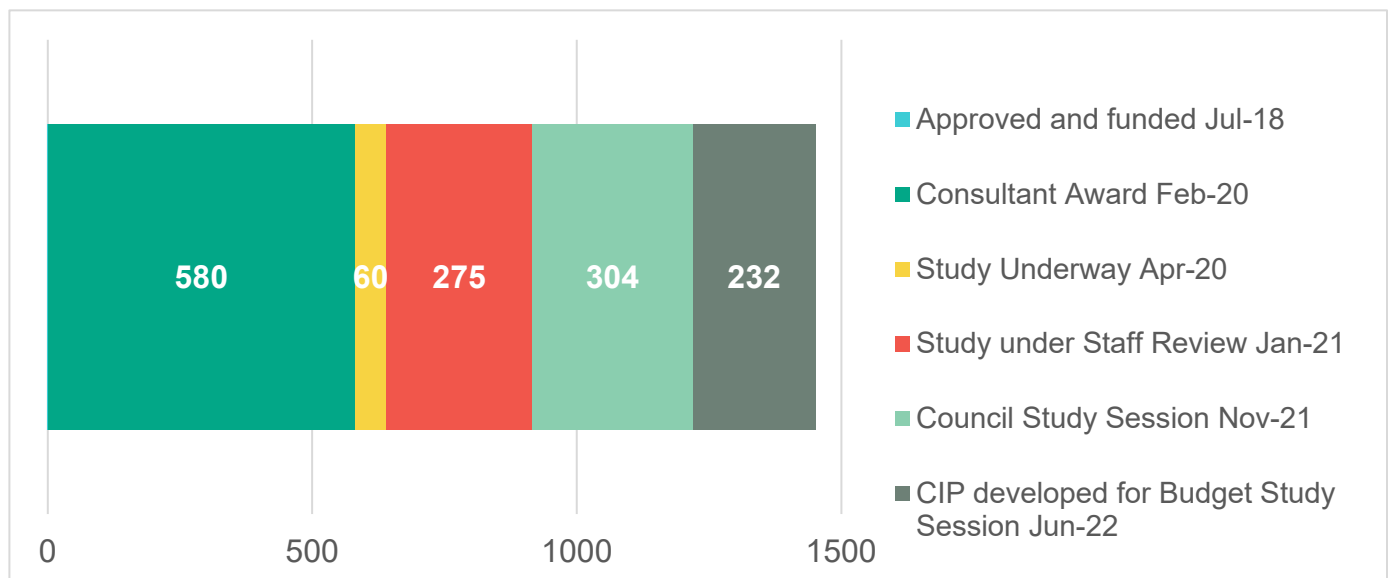
## DPW 18-07: Feasibility of Acquiring Control of Caltrans Traffic Signals on El Camino Real

Funding to Completion = 1,374 days



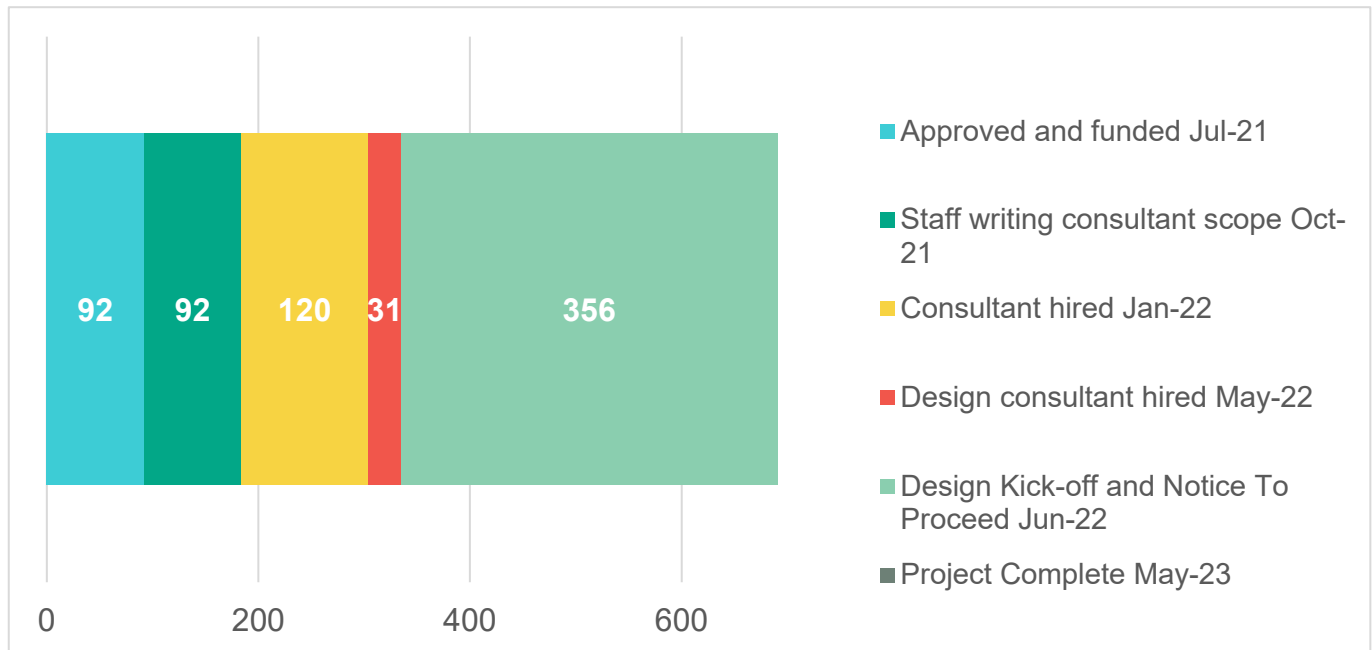
## DPW 18-11: Analysis of Sunnyvale Golf Program and Property Options

Funding to Completion = 1,451 days



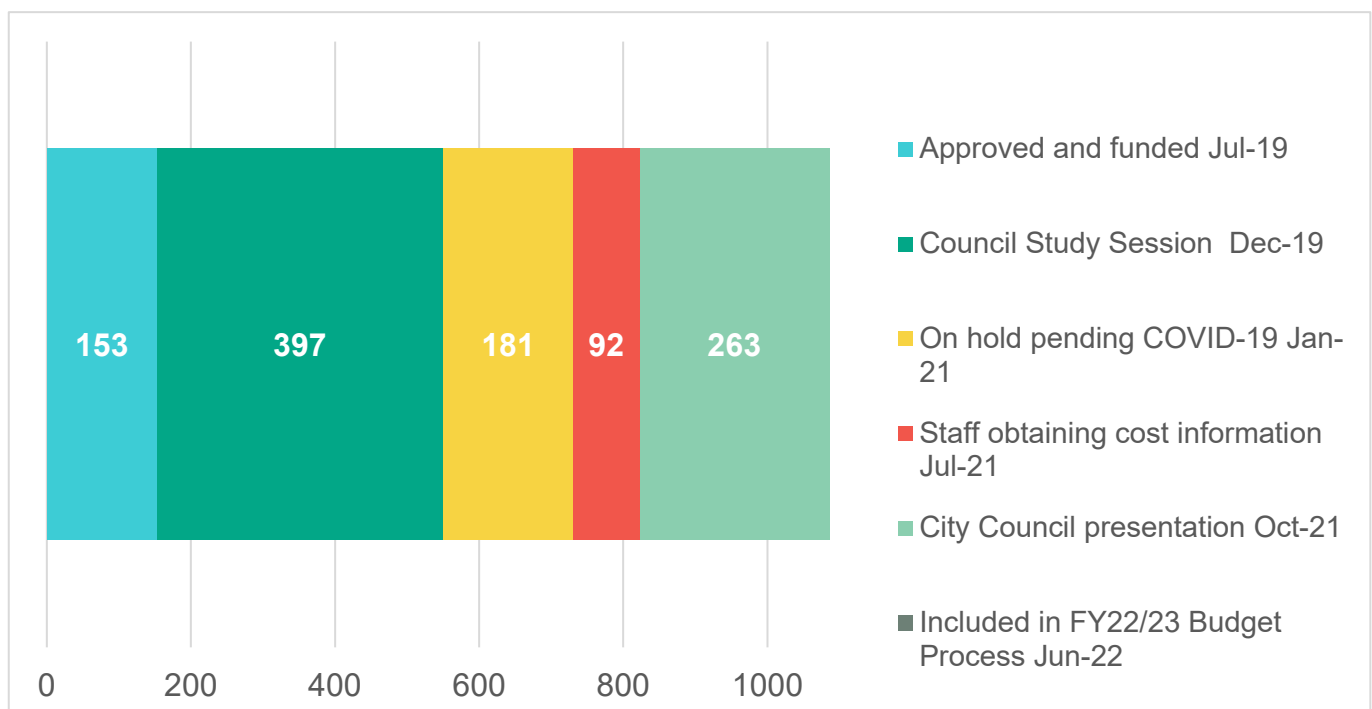
## DPW 21-04: Complete Missing Gaps of Sidewalk on East Side of Poplar Avenue between El Camino Real and Peterson Middle School

Funding to Completion = 691 days



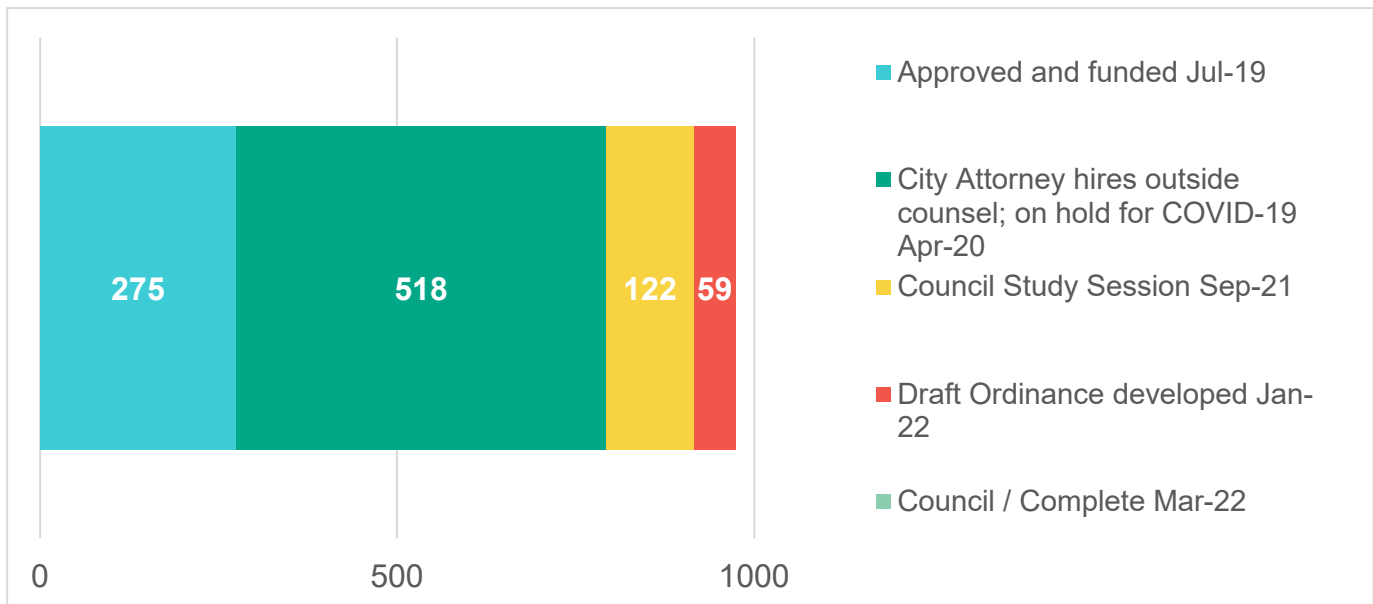
## HRD 19-01: Develop a Workforce Initiative That Creates Partnerships to Develop a Pipeline for Students to Enter Public Sector Employment

Funding to Complete = 1,086 days



## OCM 19-02: Responsible Construction Ordinance

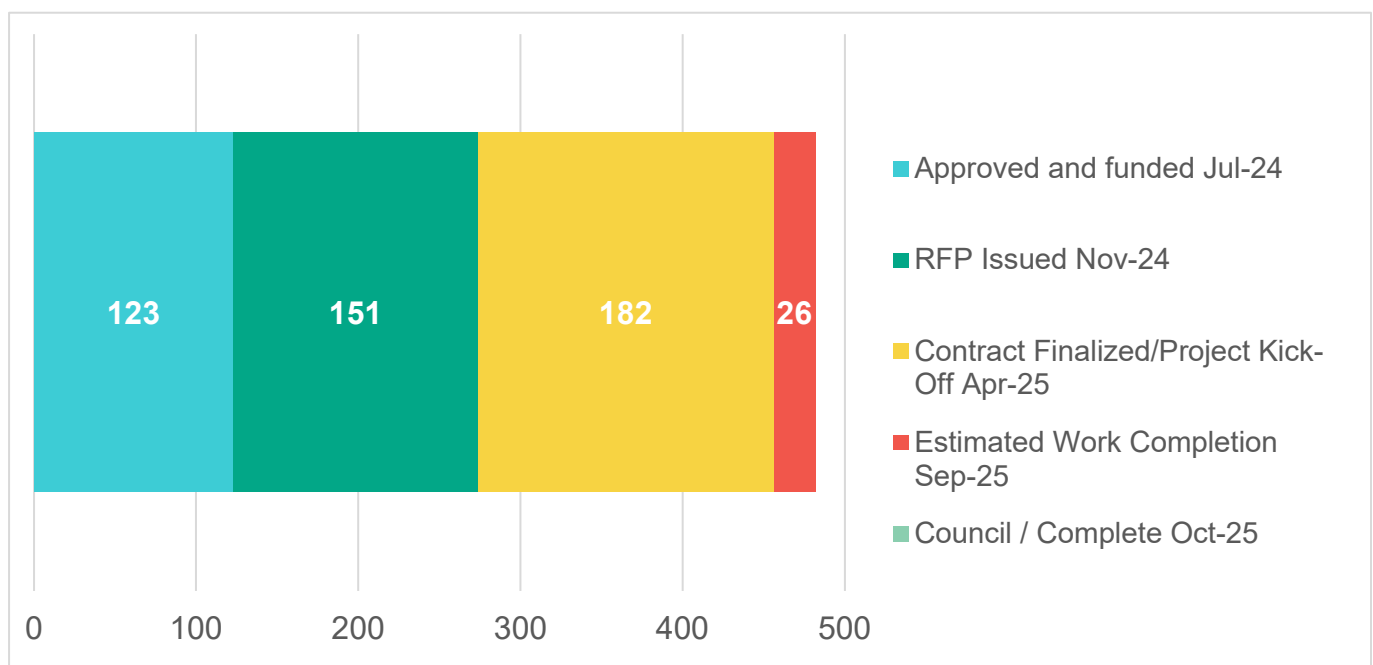
Funding to Completion = 974 days



## OCM 24-02: Evaluate the City of Sunnyvale Study Issues Process

Estimated Funding to Estimated Completion: 482 days

Note: Time from RFP issuance to contract (151 days) is almost the same as the actual consulting work time (182 days).



## Time and Cost Estimate for Study Issue Proposal Process

The table below is a time and cost estimate on the study issues proposal process (prior to funding and completion). Raftelis prepared an estimate of all staff involved and their time spent on specific process steps. Estimates have been reviewed with the City and are considered to be conservative.

The estimates below show that the City is spending **over \$347,000** annually in staff time just on the study issue proposal review process. This includes preparation and review of study issue papers, ranking workshop, and budget requests.

Total time spent is estimated at over **2,500 hours**, or **64 weeks of staff time**. As noted earlier, only 25.1% of total study issues brought to each year's workshop move forward and make it "Above The Line." The implication is that 75% of this effort is not productive, and time spent on the proposal process could be used instead for implementing approved projects.

| Activity                                                                            | Estimated Hours per Study Issue | Average Number of Study Issues 2016 - 2025 | Estimated Hours for all Study Issues | Average Loaded Hourly Rate (Salary plus Benefits) | Total Annual     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Prepare and Review Study Issues Paper /Budget Proposal (including deferred updates) | 23.8                            | 37                                         | 878.8                                | \$136.03                                          | \$119,545        |
| Board/Commission Review on Fall Agenda                                              | 16.5                            | 37                                         | 610.5                                | \$128.95                                          | \$78,724         |
| February Study Issues Ranking Workshop Preparation                                  | 27.5                            | 33                                         | 907.5                                | \$137.11                                          | \$124,427        |
| Above the Line Items to Funding                                                     | 21.5                            | 8                                          | 172.0                                | \$145.24                                          | \$24,981         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                        | <b>89.3</b>                     |                                            | <b>2,568.8</b>                       |                                                   | <b>\$347,677</b> |