



## Section 2e: Public Services

### Introduction

A key component of any community is its public service programs. Providing suitable, accessible public services is a principal function of local government, and one that affects the quality of life of every citizen. Services, such as police, fire, and emergency medical (EMS), clean drinking water and sanitary sewers provide not only a sense of security, but also for the safety and welfare of the general public. Therefore, the effectiveness of local government many times is measured, to a great extent, by its ability to adequately plan for, maintain and finance these services.

Public services such as available and affordable utilities, skilled emergency responders, an efficient street maintenance program, and professional waste collection not only help a community identify itself, but can also affect many aspects of the community's development. For instance, a town with a well-developed utility infrastructure is more likely to attract new businesses as opposed to a community that lacks the necessary lines and capacity. Or, a municipality with a professional full-time fire department and adequate water supply can greatly affect the town's ISO<sup>1</sup> insurance ratings, in turn reducing insurance costs for all residents and businesses.

This section of the Lathrop Comprehensive Plan will examine the public services in Lathrop, and develop a set of goals and objectives to support the community's vision for the public services offered by the City of Lathrop.

### Emergency Responders/Service Providers in Lathrop Today

Three important public services to a city are capable law enforcement, ambulance/emergency responders and fire protection. This follows the belief that the safety of its citizenry is one of the primary responsibilities of any municipal government. The threat of crime and fire, as well as other individual or community disasters, calls for considerable thought towards the facilities and services that provide protection for citizens and their property.

The Lathrop Police Department protects the life and property of all residents within the community. The department maintains a positive relationship with the



**One of Lathrop's police vehicles.**

<sup>1</sup> ISO is the leading source of information about property and liability risk. An independent organization, ISO serves insurance companies, fire departments, insurance regulators, and others by providing information about risk mitigation. ISO's field staff visits communities around the country to collect information about their fire departments, their fire alarm and communications systems, and their water supplies. For each of more than 46,000 fire districts in the United States, ISO analyzes this information and assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) — a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents exemplary fire protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria.

Insurance companies use ISO's PPC in marketing, underwriting, and pricing homeowners and commercial property insurance. In general, the price of fire insurance in a community with a good PPC is substantially lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal. The City of Lathrop's ISO rating is currently seven.

community as well as fostering a positive working environment for police employees. The department is charged with a wide range of law enforcement activities, including location of missing persons, recovery of stolen property, traffic and parking enforcement, protection of life and property, crime prevention, serving as the Lathrop School District Resource Officer and the apprehension of law offenders. The department operates on a 24-hour basis from its headquarters at 117 Pine Street. The department has five full-time (one chief, one sergeant and three patrol officers) and four part-time sworn police officers and three patrol vehicles. A 911-system serves the community and is maintained and operated continually by the Clinton County Sheriff Department.

Based on information gathered through conversations with Police Chief Raymond Sprague, the department generates approximately 500 to 600 reports annually. This number does not include the total number of calls addressed by the department, but only those assigned a case number. Funding for the Police Department is generated through the General Revenue Fund. In addition, the department seeks federal and state grants, such as Homeland Security grants, for equipment, vehicles and staffing assistance.

The City of Lathrop is serviced by the Tri-County Ambulance District. Tri-County Ambulance is charged with preserving the lives and health of those residents living in Buchanan, Clinton and portions of Platte counties (a 620 square mile service area). Tri-County operates on a 24-hour basis from its headquarters in Plattsburg, Missouri. The district has 11 full-time and 16 part-time staff members and three vehicles. Two of these ambulances are always in service while the third serves as a reserve vehicle. Each ambulance is operated by one paramedic and one Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Tri-County responds to approximately 1,100 calls annually. The district generates roughly one half of its operating budget through a property tax, with remainder of the budget collected through billing. The district is governed by a board of directors.

The City of Lathrop does not have a city-funded, full-time Fire Department; the municipality relies on the Lathrop Fire Protection District (LFPD), which is headquartered on Pine Street in Lathrop. (LFPD also has a second facility, which is located in Turney, Missouri.) The LFPD is tasked with a number of responsibilities, including responding to emergency medical calls, public education, firefighting services, training, assisting with hazardous material spills and clean-up, and rescue services.



**Tri-County Ambulance Rescue Unit**

The LFPD has 22 volunteer firefighters and 11 vehicles (three pumper trucks with models ranging from 1968 to 1991, three tanker trucks ranging from 1981 to 1996, three brush trucks ranging from 1991 to 2005, a rescue wagon which is co-operated with Tri-County Ambulance, and a command Blazer). With two stations, the LFPD has two crews that can operate independently. The district has a service area of 115 square miles and mutual aid agreements with all nearby fire districts or departments (Plattsburg, Lawson, Holt, Cameron,

Gower, as well as others). Based on conversations with Chief David Eads, the LFPD responds to approximately 365 calls annually.

Funding for the fire district is tax-based through an assessment of \$0.26 per \$100 assessed on real estate. The LFPD's annual budget is approximately \$100,000. In addition, the district seeks federal and state grants, such as Homeland Security and Assistance to Firefighter grants, for equipment, vehicles and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant for staffing assistance.



**Lathrop Fire Protection District, located on Pine Street in Lathrop.**

### Utilities in Lathrop Today

As noted, a key component for any community to advance and grow is available and reasonably priced utilities. The City of Lathrop provides water and wastewater utilities for the residents of Lathrop. The remaining utilities, such as electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, Internet and cable television are from other sources. (Additional information on these sources can be found in Section 6f: Community Facilities and Utilities) Based on discussions with Missouri Association of Public Utilities' J.D. Lester, it is not uncommon for a community to operate water and wastewater services exclusively.<sup>2</sup>

The City of Lathrop owns and operates water services for residential and commercial users inside city limits. Currently, there are 1,090 residential and 51 commercial water/wastewater customers. Lathrop utilizes a sliding rate scale for both its water and wastewater consumers. The minimum water rate is \$6.50, with rates climbing as usage increases. The rate structure was adjusted in 1994 to accommodate rising costs in operation and maintenance. Currently, the City is undertaking a rate study to assess the existing rate structure.

The City of Lathrop constructed their water facility in 1924, and partially upgraded the plant in 1972. At that time, the City abandoned its well system and entered into a 30-year agreement with the City of Kansas City to supply water to Lathrop. Currently, the City of Kansas City, Missouri supplies treated potable water through an eight-inch transmission line. This agreement ended earlier this year, but there are plans to enter into a new 30-year agreement in late 2006. The City of Lathrop distributes the product through city-owned and maintained transmission lines.

Lathrop is presently upgrading their existing system by financing a new pump station in Kansas City. In addition, the city is replacing the present Lathrop pump station to make it more compatible with the new Kansas City pump station (the Kansas City pump station will improve flow). Additionally, the City is installing a Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) computer program. This program will allow the city's water operator to monitor, control and adjust water flow from city hall. These

<sup>2</sup> There are a number of communities throughout the state that supply additional utilities and services. Currently, there are 87 municipalities in the state of Missouri that provide electricity to their residents. In addition, 25-30 communities supply natural gas utilities. Fifteen cities offer broadband Internet, while two communities provide cable television services.

improvements are scheduled to be completed by late 2006. Furthermore, the City is formulating a long-range 20-year plan to construct a second transmission line from Kansas City. Based on preliminary studies, the proposed transmission line would improve water quantities by increasing the diameter of the line from eight to 12-16 inches. This increased capacity would allow the City of Lathrop to better serve its existing and future customers, while increasing redundancy in the water system. The City is responsible for the administration, operation and maintenance of the water distribution system.

The City's wastewater system was originally constructed in 1924 and later improved to a three-cell treatment lagoon in 1989. As noted, Lathrop uses a sliding rate structure for wastewater. At present, sewer rates are a minimum of \$6.51, with an additional \$1.10 for each additional 1,000 gallons. The lagoon is sized to accommodate 230,000 gallons per day (GPD) flow. Currently, the average GPD is roughly 130,000. The wastewater treatment facility life will be extended by reducing inflow of storm water into the system.

Both the water and sewer systems operate independently from the General Revenue budget. All improvements to the systems are financed through revenue bonds or lease/purchase agreements, which are recovered through user fees. Additionally, the City seeks federal and state grants whenever applicable.

Few issues raise public concern like the services provided by a municipality. In January 2006, the City of Lathrop distributed a survey to assess the satisfaction with community programs and utility providers, detailed in Figure 2.22. Respondents who were satisfied with current services are indicated in green or white. Conversely, those households who were unhappy or dissatisfied with public services are designated in pink or red.

Survey results illustrate a few issues in the city where respondents are markedly divided with respect to particular services. The area where the most dissatisfaction lies is with the cable television service. Of the 78 respondents (note that not every respondent subscribes to cable television), only 27 (34%) were satisfied or strongly satisfied with cable television, leaving 51 (65%) somewhat dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied. In regards to internet services, 51 (59%) were somewhat satisfied, satisfied or strongly satisfied with the service, while 35 (41%) were somewhat dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied. Equally notable is the general approval of both the trash services and fire protection. A significant 110 (87%) of the 127 respondents were either strongly satisfied or satisfied with trash services. This trend continues with fire protection, which received a 79% (98) satisfied or

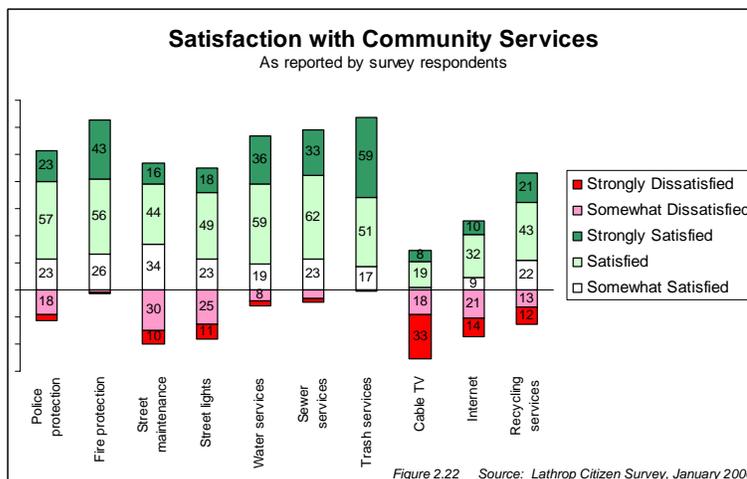


Figure 2.22 Source: Lathrop Citizen Survey, January 2006

strongly satisfied rating.

Based on survey results, the residents of Lathrop are generally pleased with the current services. There were issues that raised some concern, but for the most part, street maintenance, street lights, police protection and recycling services drew little criticism. On average, less than 30% of the respondents voiced concerns. Street Maintenance elicited 40 (30%) negative responses, but generated 94 (70%) positive comments from the 134 returned surveys. Thirty-six (29%) of the 126 street light responses indicated dissatisfaction; however, 90 surveys (71%) showed approval of the program. Recycling services also received positive marks with 86 of the 111 surveys (77%) approving of the community service. Eighty-five percent (103) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied, satisfied or strongly satisfied with police protection.

### Vision, Goals, and Action Plans

The vision and goals for public services were developed by a civic committee, comprised of Lathrop citizens with first-hand knowledge of the status of public utilities in the city. Committee members were tasked with developing an overarching vision for developing public services within the city, and devising a set of goals to support that vision.

#### VISION FOR PUBLIC SERVICES IN LATHROP

**To provide efficient and effective essential city services to the residents of Lathrop.**

**Goal 1: Effectively plan for future municipal growth by maintaining and expanding the city water distribution system, thereby improving Lathrop's ISO rating and creating redundancy to avoid service disruption.**

Saving lives and property is the most important role of an emergency responder. The Lathrop Fire Protection District serves as the primary emergency responder for the City of Lathrop. Utilizing a number of financing options, the City of Lathrop will partner with the Lathrop Fire Protection District to develop and implement a plan to improve existing fire protection and mitigation programs.

#### *Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)*

- 1) Contact ISO to assess Lathrop's current ISO rating. Determine necessary steps to reduce this rating. Examine *Fire Suppression Rating Schedule Handbook* by Harry Hickey to establish which improvements result in the biggest gain for the city.
- 2) Utilize Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) computer program to improve record keeping and management in the water department.
- 3) Design and implement maintenance program to continuously improve City's current water distribution system.

- 4) Using Global Positioning System (GPS), generate a map indicating all water transmission lines, fire hydrants and valves.
- 5) Develop a systematic approach to routinely test water flow on all fire hydrants and then color code them based on diameter and water flow/pressure.

*Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)*

- 1) Identify a sustainable funding source for full-time, 24-hour/seven-days-a-week representation at the Lathrop Fire Protection District.
- 2) Create a proposal to improve water flow throughout the City of Lathrop by constructing new water transmission lines, thereby looping water mains and creating redundancy.
- 3) Formulate a long-range plan to construct an additional transmission line from Kansas City. The proposed transmission line would improve water quantities, increasing the available potable water supply.

**Goal 2: Enhance community safety, improve law enforcement visibility and attract and retain most qualified individuals for Lathrop Police Department officers.**

Providing an effective, civic-oriented local law enforcement department is an important task for any community. Law enforcement serves a community in a number of ways, including protecting residents and responding to emergency calls. The Lathrop Police Department serves in this capacity for the citizens of Lathrop. In order for the Department to maintain a consistent level of service, the City of Lathrop will put into practice a sustained effort to properly fund the department at adequate levels.

*Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)*

- 1) Explore available options to improve the current salary range for all Lathrop law enforcement personnel. As the community grows, utilize a portion of additional tax base to systematically evaluate and adjust the officer pay-scale to that of comparable communities.
- 2) Craft relationships with higher education institutions with law enforcement programs to assist in the marketing and recruiting of qualified graduates.
- 3) Investigate and develop a plan to provide additional fringe benefits to law enforcement personnel.
- 4) Create a community safety program to educate citizens of Lathrop in regard to various issues affecting the city, such as a course on the dangers of methamphetamine.
- 5) Continuously work to provide necessary law enforcement personnel, training and current equipment. Identify and apply for relevant state and federal law enforcement grants to assist in the acquisition of additional equipment.

*Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)*

- 1) Using a systematic approach, replace patrol vehicles on a rotating schedule, or as needed. The City of Lathrop will identify and apply for all relevant state and federal law enforcement grants to assist with costs.
- 2) With consideration of the potential expansion of the geographic limits and population of the city, Lathrop should begin to plan for additional law enforcement facilities.

**Goal 3: Enhance city's lighting plan by increasing number of street lights in major corridors.**

An aesthetically pleasing community not only improves the quality of life for the residents of a town, it also serves as a tool to attract new businesses and citizens. One opportunity to improve the appearance of a city is to provide adequate street lighting. Not only does added lighting enhance the streetscape visually, the improvement also increases traffic and pedestrian safety. The City of Lathrop will work with its citizens to design a community-wide plan to improve lighting in the City.

*Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)*

- 1) Assess Lathrop's current street light situation using community input, traffic studies (traffic counts and travel patterns) and input from the City of Lathrop. Based on results of this evaluation, identify corridors that lack adequate lighting.
- 2) Working with local media, the City of Lathrop will share the results of the assessment with the residents of Lathrop. In an effort to improve community dialogue, individuals will be encouraged to provide feedback on the proposed plan.
- 3) Identify a funding source to address potential purchase, operation and maintenance of needed lighting. The City of Lathrop will explore state and federal funding options to assist in the purchase and installation of lighting. Additionally, the City will examine the possibility of forming Transportation Development Districts (TDD's) to address issues specific to particular areas of the town.

*Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)*

- 1) As the community continues to grow, the City of Lathrop will establish a long-term plan to routinely assess and make improvements to major corridors within the city.

**Goal 4: Work with non-municipal utility and public service providers to add new and upgrade existing services to enhance the quality of life in the city.**

Having non-municipal utility and public service providers operate within Lathrop places an additional burden on the city to ensure such services are appropriate for the size of the community and to meet the needs and desires of the people. As such, the city should take steps to form relationships with service

providers that are beneficial to the city's residents, without placing an undue financial hardship on the community.

*Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)*

- 1) Poll Lathrop citizens to determine what features or level of service are missing from the cable television/internet providers and, to the extent possible, renegotiate municipal contracts to reflect these desires.
- 2) Work with the Region D Solid Waste Management District and local haulers to establish a municipal recycling program within the city.
- 3) Establish an avenue by which city residents can report rough/pot-holed streets for repair or in regards to needed snow removal; i.e. a website report form or telephone hotline.

*Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)*

- 1) City should investigate the feasibility of establishing a new municipal-owned utility to provide broadband internet service to Lathrop residents. Such a service could serve as an enticement to potential businesses as well as address the dissatisfaction of current internet users, while generating revenue for the city.