SUCCESSFUL SOUTH BEND IMPLEMENTATION PRIMES THE PUMP TO IMPROVE CITY WORKFLOW

BY STEVE SCHWABE, WOOLPERT

The City of South Bend, Indiana, manages 700 miles of sanitary and storm sewers and 10,000 catch basins, inlets, and drains through its Department of Public Works Office of Sewers. For years, the department relied on multiple siloed software solutions to maintain these assets, navigating congested and outdated processes that hampered productivity.

To more effectively maintain these assets and unclog the department's workflow, South Bend reached out to Woolpert to conduct a pilot of the Cityworks Asset Management System (AMS). The Office of Sewers is now live with an on-premises implementation of Cityworks AMS, and field crews use Cityworks Respond and mobile native apps on iPads.

The Office of Sewers can now easily schedule and coordinate crews, communicate work assignments, track materials and labor, and mitigate risks by analyzing problem spots and proactively managing inventory.

"The biggest successes in the implementation have been a reduction in paperwork, especially for field crews, and increased communication between crews and supervisors," said Jeff Weaver, asset and capital improvement manager for South Bend. "Cityworks provides the ability to see work geographically, and thus coordinate our resources more efficiently."

Weaver said prior to the Cityworks implementation, documenting sewer backups—which are heavily regulated and closely monitored due to the potential ecological impact—led to paperwork snarls.

"The documentation process included passing information back and forth between 311, sewers, sewer dispatch, sewer insurance, wastewater, and even engineering," Weaver said. "All records of communication had to be written out and copies sent to four different organizations. The sewer backup workflow in Cityworks allows the crews to keep all information in one location, eliminate redundant information, take photos and videos, and track and monitor all actions. It's now a completely paperless process that's available to all departments."

Some of the immediate benefits of the implementation include:

- Digitizing service requests and updates to field crews to eliminate all paper processes.

- Tracking and dispatching jobs in the same geographic area to increase productivity and reduce travel.
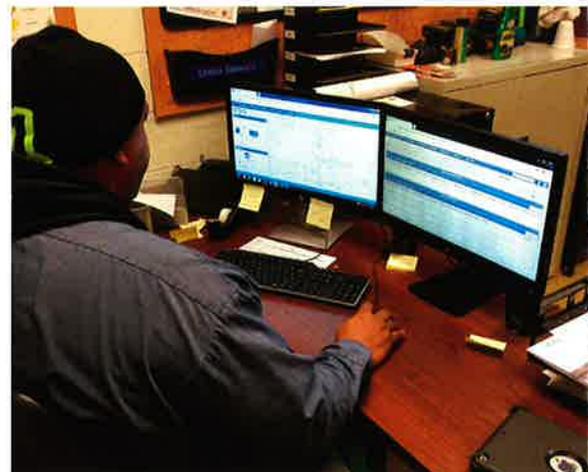
- Streamlining the process of noticing or researching problems, not only by the location, but also by the type or age of the pipe. South Bend is now able to digitally pinpoint potential "hot spots" through simple queries of the system instead of searching through piles of paperwork that detail past problems.

The streamlined workflows have also freed up more time for thoughtful planning. Instead of supervisors driving around the city to approve completed jobs, they now receive an emailed link to a digitized work order in the system with attached before and after photos—saving them valuable time and effort.

This pilot project in South Bend benefited from lessons learned from prior implementations. Since 2016, Augusta, Georgia, and Carmel, Indiana, have partnered with Woolpert for the implementation of their Cityworks AMS programs, both of which started with their utility departments. Both communities found success by starting in a single department and gradually expanding to other departments.

In South Bend, Woolpert has conducted on-site demonstrations for multiple departments to examine the Office of Sewers' success and how its improved asset management system can be applied to other departmental needs. South Bend Chief Technology Officer of Innovation and Technology Dan O'Connor said the meetings were well received.

"Department members learned more about how to use the system as an enterprise solution inclusive of multiple departments," O'Connor said. "We will take a phase-it-in approach, making sure we can maintain and build upon what we have as we expand. By working with IT and discussing the needs of each department, we can collaboratively prioritize and plan which departments will be added to Cityworks next." 📍

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A Cityworks inbox helps South Bend sewer managers track the status of open sewer backup service requests.