



City of Palm Valley

"Home of The Harlingen Country Club"

PALM VALLEY STATE OF THE CITY 2023

As we start off 2023, I would like to inform the citizens of Palm Valley of our goals for the coming year. As we know, we could not be here without your support, participation, and your continued commitment to keeping our city the hidden gem of the Rio Grande Valley. We also would not be moving forward without the selfless commitment of our city staff who keep our city functioning daily. Palm Valley is blessed to have an amazing staff who will always go out of their way to assist any resident, at any hour. Additionally, this future success could not be happening without our City Council, which has selflessly and tirelessly worked long hours to maintain a quality of life not found in other communities.

I'm Gilberto Lucio, your Mayor Pro Tem. I am a retired detective from the Denver Police Department, a USAF Veteran, and a former teacher. My wife, Lourdes, and I moved here over three years ago, and our goal has always been to make Palm Valley the best city to live in. We have one daughter, Briana, who lives in California.

Thank you for allowing me to detail our goals and projects for 2023 and even further into the next five years. Being in Law Enforcement for most of my life, I believe in direct and open communication with anyone who has concerns. Our Council shares that same belief that as a city we will be accountable, transparent, and fiscally responsible with your tax dollars. I can't thank them enough for engaging in our civic duty to serve you.

Financial Outlook:

This is a broad and general overview of our financial status. The City of Palm Valley is financially stable, and we anticipate finishing our Fiscal Year in 2023 with an estimated fund balance of 2.2 million dollars, with a combination of the reserved and unreserved funds. Our largest revenue source comes from Property Tax, followed by the Sales Tax, and then other combined revenues within the General and Utilities Budget.

This year's budget reflects no property tax rate increase. We did not increase your tax rates and kept them lower than many cities in the Rio Grande Valley. The City's Property Tax Rate remained at \$.0515463/\$100, generating \$686,000 in property tax revenue. The City will remain focused on delivering core services while also finding innovative ways to provide those services with greater efficiency, higher effectiveness, and transparency. I invite citizens to review the City of Palm Valley's Budget Plan on our website to see where Palm Valley is committed to improving our financial health.

PROJECTS:

Our goal is to enhance your quality of life. To do that, the City of Palm Valley City Council, created a much-needed Capital Improvement Plan. It will provide a 5-year plan that includes Water and Wastewater System Study and Improvement, Drainage Improvement, Street Improvement, and Recreation. Furthermore, it includes an improvement of our accounting software and practices, our contract

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management, and IT services to better serve you. This plan is readily available for you on our city's website.

In our Wastewater Treatment and Collection system, we are improving our wastewater splitter box, this is a distribution system to process wastewater more efficiently. Our manhole covers are being replaced with new rings and covers and we are going even further by using epoxy over cement lining to reduce that ugly sewer smell we all experience. It will include a bench system at the bottom to increase the flow and move wastewater faster through our pipes. Our sewer collection pipes are currently being televised to identify the needed replacement, through either pipe bursting, slip lining, or open cut.

In our Water Distribution System, to improve your water pressure, we are planning for a new elevated storage tank and a new booster pump station. We are also improving your water lines by replacing those older pipes through pipe bursting. We will be providing new Fire Hydrants and Water Gate valves and replacing those that still are operating. And finally, replace your old water meters with new smart meters providing manpower savings to the city and much-needed savings to your water bill.

In our Stormwater Improvement System, we currently have the South Drain Project that has been funded and now needs final approval from the Texas Water Development Board. This project will reduce flooding and move stormwater even faster after our yearly rains. Even further, we are installing a storm sewer extension from Palm Valley Drive West by the entrance off North Stuart Place Road to have water bypass our city, thus preventing further flooding.

As a city, we are also looking for ways to improve our beautification of Palm Valley and improve our recreation, events, and celebrations. Working together with our citizens and getting input from so many diverse backgrounds, I know we can attain those objectives while working toward the same goal. We look forward to your imagination.

We are exploring every avenue whether through grant funding, unreserved funds, or capital financing to improve your way of living in our city. There are other projects in the works and those can also be found on our City's website.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

What we have accomplished in these last few months is also worth mentioning. As a council, we came together to better improve your city services. These are just a few.

Let's start with our most important asset, our staff. We have given our staff directors the autonomy to make decisions, within budgetary constraints, to address immediate issues that affect the city in normal and emergency situations, thus, reducing your wait time, addressing the problem before it gets worse, and decentralizing our services to better serve you.

We have provided our staff with very much-needed raises to keep up with the cost-of-living increases. We have also increased our staff, both in the water and sewer, police, and administration department. We will still be looking for other qualified candidates to fill other upcoming positions.

All employees have been enrolled in The Texas Municipal Retirement System, which they did not have before. This was done to provide a retirement plan consistent with other cities and again, retain our

dedicated employees. We have purchased a new Public Works truck and a much-needed police car so that staff can provide those services more efficiently.

We have streamlined the work order process, which was non-existent, and implemented a system to track those orders from start to finish. We are also improving our accounting system and software, which is significantly outdated. Gone are the days of budget items categorized under miscellaneous. You as a citizen deserve every right to know where every dollar is being spent. Transparency is of utmost importance.

Like so many other small cities, we rely on other entities to provide some of our basic services. To minimize those services and those costs, we partnered with local and state organizations to lower those costs and services.

We partnered with the Harlingen CISD to provide officers in the schools that our kids attend. Being a police detective for many years, school safety is of utmost importance to me, and providing our own officers to provide that much-needed safety for our kids, well that is a win-win all the way.

Though it does not appear beneficial to some, our new contract with Waste Connections will improve our city. It is a significant cost saving for every resident. Though blue might not be everyone's color, solid waste is never a favorite of anyone. We will be providing much more services that weren't included before, such as quarterly community cleanup, and in the very near future, brush pickup, for those annoying palm fronds. Bear with us as we implement this new service that can only improve with time.

We partnered with the Texas Rural Water Association to provide services for the city at unheard-of savings. They will provide water leak detection, flow meter testing, and water and wastewater mapping. They provide generators during emergency response situations to keep city services functioning. This will also include water rate studies when needed to ensure we are on the right track to better address your water needs. They also provide TCEQ training to prevent those unnecessary water boiling situations, that thankfully, we have not experienced here in Palm Valley. Their crews are currently conducting those services in Palm Valley.

We have upgraded our police radio communication system and brought them into the 21st century. Encryption mode and truncated systems for quicker communications are the standards in many Texas cities and Palm Valley Police are on track to continue your public safety needs. Your safety is important.

Trenchless Solutions is currently rehabilitating our manholes with not just a lid and collar as before, but they are using a cured-in-place pipe process (CIPP), using a polymer lining to rehab the entire manhole and not just what you see on the surface. This will effectively reduce that obnoxious sewer smell we experience and put us on a plan forward into the second phase of repairing or replacing sagging or damaged sewer lines. Those crews are out there now rehabbing over 300 of our manhole openings.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Lastly our communication. Quite frankly, I believe that you should never be without an explanation or an answer, to any city concern. I have always been available for every resident's questions. Here are a few things to get our message to you and ensure you are readily aware of what's going on in our city.

We are creating a social media page to keep you informed and to communicate with our city with greater ease. I think we are the only city in Texas that does not have such a service. Our staff will monitor it and let you know what is upcoming in our city. We will continue our newsletter for now and eventually phase out the door-to-door delivery.

This was done for two reasons; first, it was a costly endeavor at over a thousand dollars a month for a publication, and second, it took our city staff two days away from their normal duties to provide this service. We are implementing a text service, at no cost to you, to alert you to a newsletter when it is available, and you can sign up on your phone to have it directly sent to you. For those last holdouts, like my wife and my neighbor, who still read the paper, we will provide a hard copy that can be picked up at city hall.

This same text service subscription will also provide alerts and information that needs to be disseminated in an emergency. Our website is currently undergoing an overhaul to make it more user-friendly and direct you to the city service that you need. Our goal as a city is to give you the ease of obtaining city services, work orders, information, and up-to-date events, directly through your phone or computer. We want you to know what is always going.

Although this seems like a lot of information, this best describes the future of the state of our city. Our goal, as a council is to provide you with every service at a lower cost. We are excited about the future of Palm Valley and ready to incorporate opportunities to see success measured exponentially. The Palm Valley City Council would like to thank every one of our residents as we start the new year ready to serve you. You are what makes this city succeed.

Sincerely,



Gilberto Lucio

Mayor Pro Tem