



New City Manager's Checklist for Immediate Improvements

Kevin Northcraft
Retired City Manager



northee@aol.com



559-805-9076

This presentation will

Describe how needed improvements *can* be located no matter past actions in your new city

- (What not intended to provide)
- The nature of abilities of past city management
- My experiences—the potential for quick and major improvements
- A checklist to find improvement potentials



Other Sources for Advice on Orienting to New City Manager Job



First 100 Days Checklist for a New City Manager

1. Meet with Elected Officials:

Schedule one-on-one meetings with each council member to understand their goals, priorities, and expectations. Establish regular monthly meetings to maintain open communication.

2. Meet with Employees:

Get to know your staff by having one-on-one meetings with each full-time and permanent part-time employee. Discuss their backgrounds, job responsibilities, and goals.

3. Establish Trust:

Create a safe space for dialogue where employees, elected officials, and stakeholders feel heard and respected. Actively listen and demonstrate empathy.

4. Review Governing Documents:

Clarify roles and responsibilities by reviewing all governing documents with legal counsel. Ensure ordinances and policies align with your new role.

5. Identify Key Stakeholders:

Invest time in building relationships with informal influencers, department heads, and community leaders. Tailor questions for each meeting to maximize impact.

6. Set Clear Expectations:

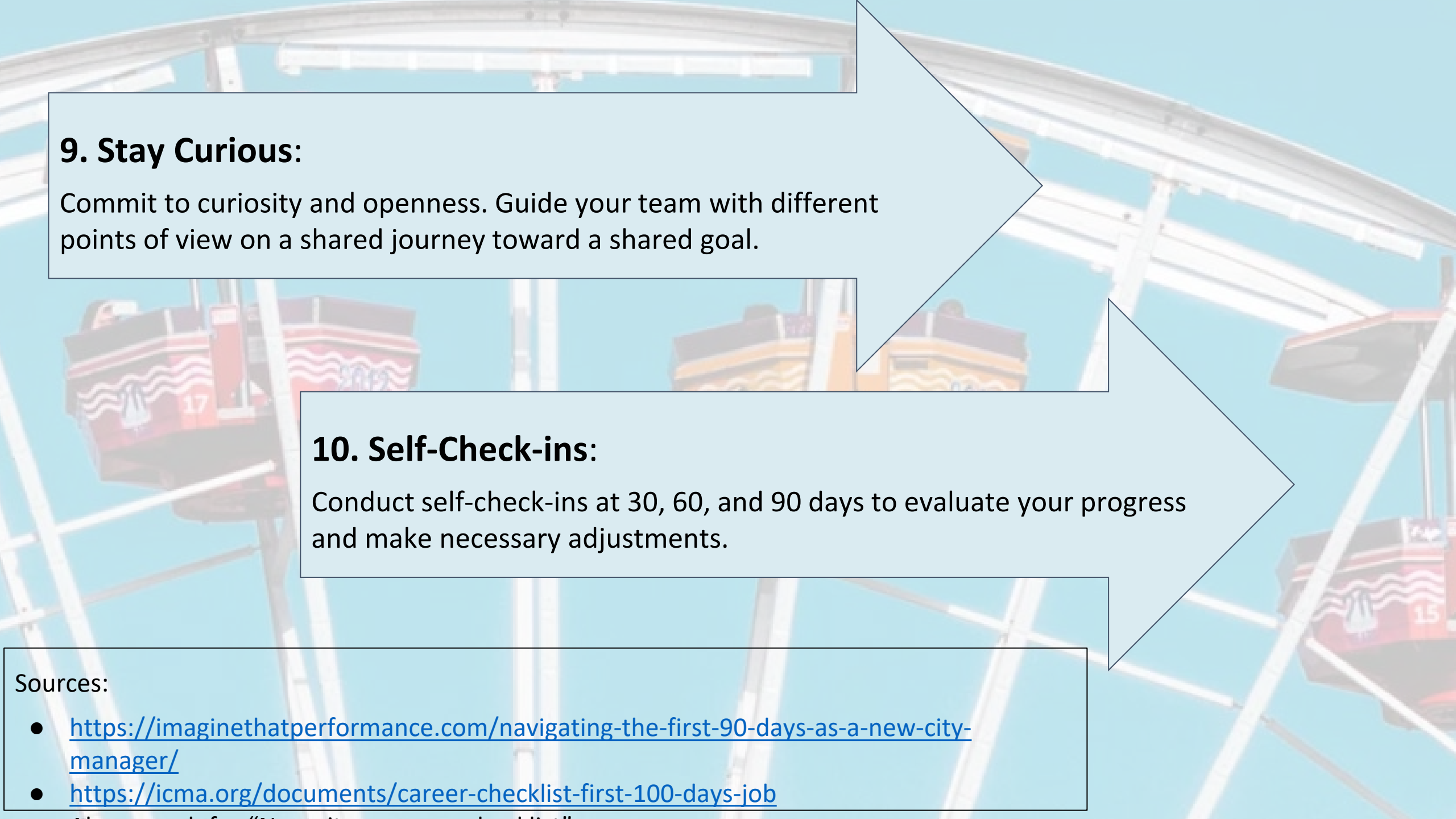
Communicate your expectations about communication and collaboration. Foster an environment of transparency and trust.

7. Create Early Wins:

Focus on achieving quick wins without overwhelming yourself. Prioritize projects that will generate the biggest impact in the first 90 days.

8. Develop a Leadership Playbook:

Assess the organization's current culture and develop flexible strategies to adapt to different situations. Create ongoing feedback loops to evaluate effectiveness and adjust as needed.



9. Stay Curious:

Commit to curiosity and openness. Guide your team with different points of view on a shared journey toward a shared goal.

10. Self-Check-ins:

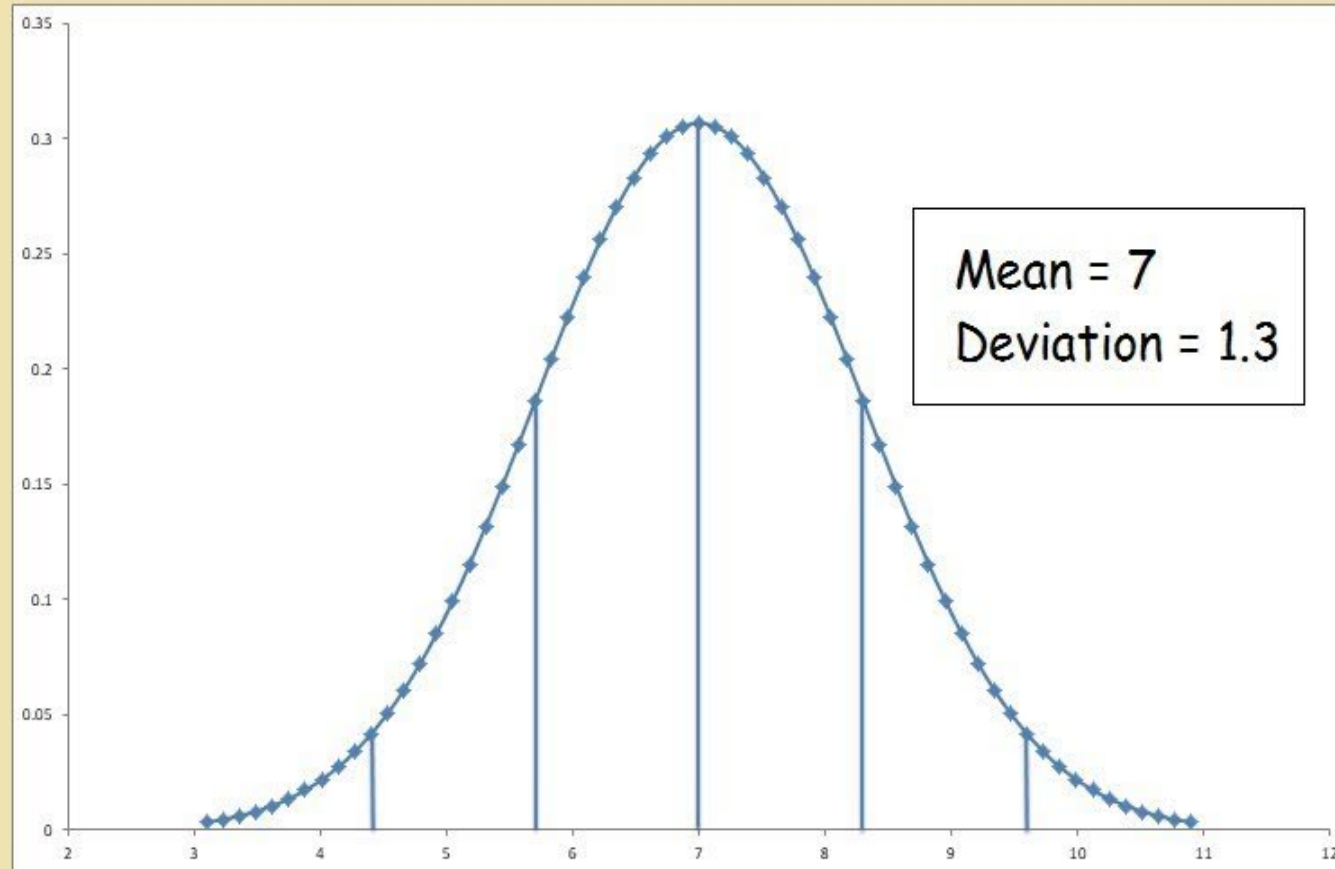
Conduct self-check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days to evaluate your progress and make necessary adjustments.

Sources:

- <https://imaginethatperformance.com/navigating-the-first-90-days-as-a-new-city-manager/>
- <https://icma.org/documents/career-checklist-first-100-days-job>

Create your own bell curve

(using only Mean + Standard Deviation)



A New City Manager has great opportunities!

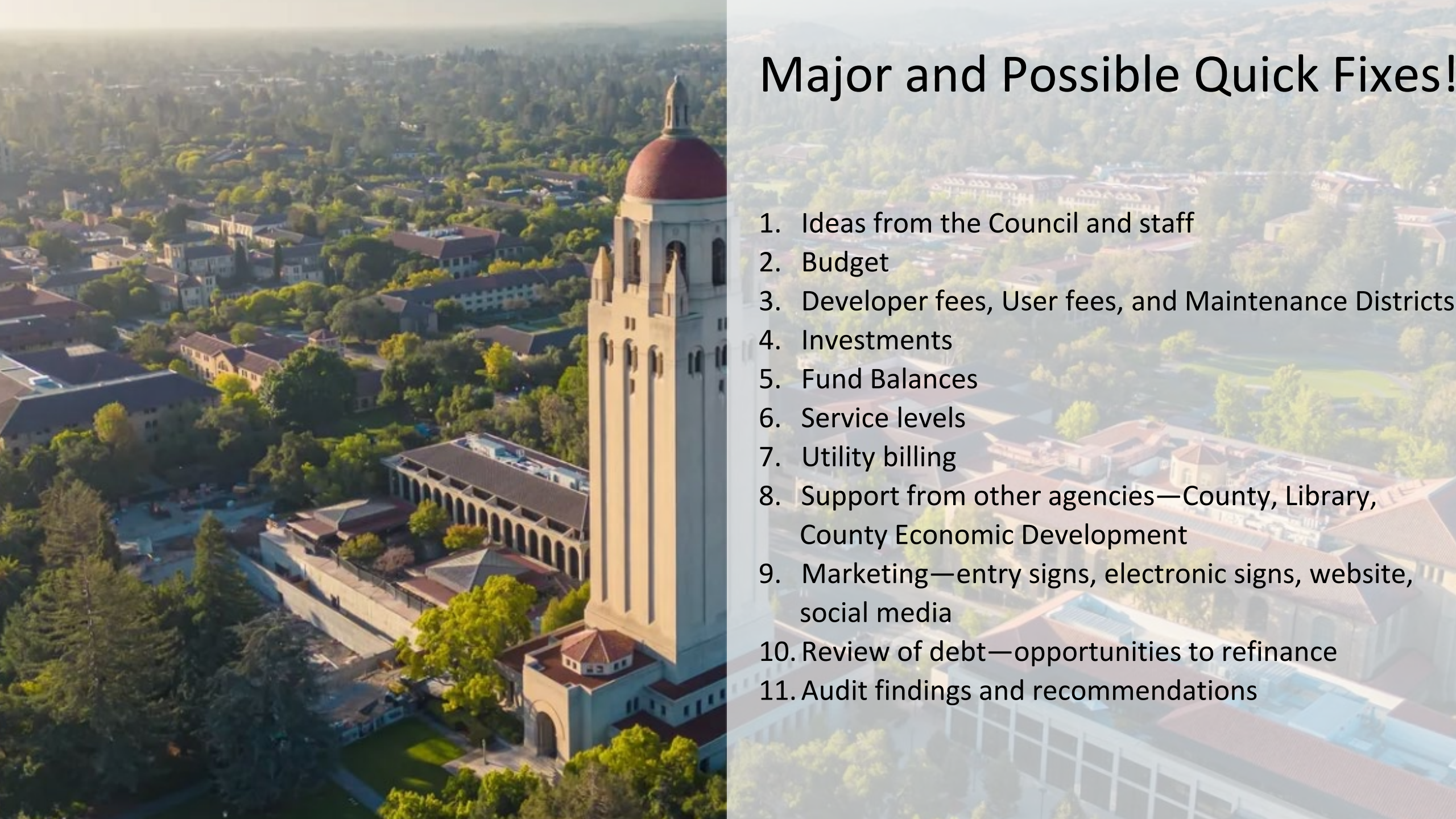
- **The “expert”**
- **The honeymoon**
- **Most deference despite least experience with the community**

Every Manager has strengths and weaknesses!

- **No criticism intended**
- **Know your predecessors**
- **Know your own**

Start your review!

1. Either *before* you start or *in first couple of weeks* explain the plan to your department heads and get them thinking of improvements
2. Look at documents—budget, capital improvement, city ordinances, list of city owned properties, website, entryways
3. Be complimentary of past efforts - no egos!

An aerial photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, a tall, light-colored clock tower with a red dome and arched windows stands prominently. To its left is a long, low building with a series of arches. The campus is surrounded by lush green trees, and various other buildings and sports fields are visible in the background under a clear sky.

Major and Possible Quick Fixes!

1. Ideas from the Council and staff
2. Budget
3. Developer fees, User fees, and Maintenance Districts
4. Investments
5. Fund Balances
6. Service levels
7. Utility billing
8. Support from other agencies—County, Library, County Economic Development
9. Marketing—entry signs, electronic signs, website, social media
10. Review of debt—opportunities to refinance
11. Audit findings and recommendations

www.optimizedip.com

[Home](#)[Vision](#)[Team](#)[Disclosures](#)[Contact us](#)

Optimized Investment Partners is your municipal investment adviser for success.

CONTACT:
Inquiries@optimizedip.com
619-324-9510



Sample Checklist for Quick Improvements

- ☐ Meet and confer with employees and cost of living adjustments
- ☐ General Plan
- ☐ Park and Recreation Facility Plan
- ☐ Economic Development initiatives—vacant property, stagnant development plans, hotel feasibility study, marketing efforts, banner program
- ☐ Sales, transient tax—competitive?
- ☐ Stagnant capital items
- ☐ County Economic Development plan—includes elements for our city?
- ☐ Website upgrades—welcome letter, regular reports to community, kept up-to-date
- ☐ Organizational structure—strengthen your team, make work groups more efficient

Sample Checklist for Quick Improvements (cont.)

- ☐ Pride—employee shirts, name badges, service awards programs
- ☐ Security—are counters enclosed and counter employees protected?
- ☐ Health Plans competitive?
- ☐ Safety committee and programs—meet state requirements?
Monitor safety meetings
- ☐ Workers Compensation—active return to work plans
- ☐ Phone trees-emergency procedures
- ☐ Emergency preparation
- ☐ Council goals and reporting
- ☐ Donations required under ordinance enforced, promoted
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce—good, beneficial relationship, annual “state of city”, other mutual events

Have a great career
improving the lives of
your community's
residents and visitors;
it is truly a noble
profession!

If I can help in any way
or just to talk, feel free
to contact me:



northee@aol.com



559-805-9076