



CITY OF ATASCADERO

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Fiscal Years 2023 - 2025

CITY OF ATASCADERO ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FROM CITY MANAGER JAMES R. LEWIS

It is a privilege to serve as the City Manager for the City of Atascadero. I am excited to share that 2023-2025 has been another successful budget cycle for both Atascadero residents and the local business community. Thanks to the leadership of the City Council and the dedication and hard work of City staff, Atascadero continues to work together to serve its people, foster community, and improve the quality of life for all.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

An integral part of the budget planning process is the development of strategic priorities and actions to be taken in Fiscal Years 2023-2025. Three current strategic priorities were carried forward from the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan and were reshaped with revised key areas of focus. The Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2025 focused on the following:

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

- Downtown Viability
- Activation of Underutilized Sites & Nodes
- Business Support and Jobs/Housing Balance
- Neighborhood Compatibility and Wellness

FISCAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Asset Management/Replacement/Modernization
- Financial Strategies
- Transparency and Accountability

ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL CITY SERVICES

- Staff
- Flourishing Community
- Unhoused Population



ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Creating a True Downtown Experience

- Prepared the Centennial Plaza property for redevelopment through a competitive bid process and provided general design and project direction on the successful bidder's proposal, which will result in the construction of a vibrant three-story mixed-use activity hub.
- Continued economic development activities to attract new business, and support and retain existing businesses by facilitating the redevelopment of underutilized downtown properties, transition of non-conforming uses, and creation of the Restaurant Low-Interest Loan Program.
- Completed the Downtown District Pavement Rehabilitation Project, including 1.7 miles of paving, adding 25 additional parking spaces, upgrading curb ramps, and improving street surfacing and striping (*photo below*).
- Broke ground on the El Camino Real Downtown Safety and Parking Enhancement Project (The ECR Project) in June 2024. The project includes adding 100+ parking spaces, ADA-accessibility improvements, installation of a full overhead signalized pedestrian crossing at East Mall, and addition of 25+ new street trees. Construction is expected to be completed in Summer 2025.
- Processed several downtown development projects:
 - New mixed-use La Moda Project (5700 block on El Camino Real) that will emulate the former La Moda Theatre and include a ground-floor commercial space with residential above.
 - Redevelopment of the Winter and Ward Garage building (5600 block on El Camino Real) to become a marketplace with several new restaurant spaces.
 - Conversion of Pflum's muffler and Used Cars to Beach'n Biscuits Restaurant.
- Implemented a robust ECR Project community engagement program including meetings with downtown businesses, providing weekly construction updates to businesses and residents, and promoting the downtown through billboards, postcards, videos, social media posts, and the website.
- Fostered collaboration with Downtown businesses to enhance vitality through events and promotions, such as support of First Friday's events, to increase use of The Plaza on El Camino, and tourism-driven initiatives.



- Supported Downtown visibility and growth by relocating the Cider Festival to, and launching the "Garden Lights & Winter Nights" holiday event in, the Sunken Gardens.

Investing in Our Products & Places

- Hired a contractor to repair displaced sidewalk joints in the downtown, on El Camino Real, and around schools, resulting in the repair of 949 lifted sidewalk panels.
- Engineering design for the new Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is anticipated to begin in Summer 2025, with construction slated for completion by 2029. Preliminary work is underway, including completion of an alternative analysis, design/cost estimates, and discussions with the Atascadero State Hospital about a potential connection to the WWTP.
- Hired a transportation consultant to evaluate the San Anselmo Road corridor and develop concept plans for transportation improvements.
- Continued expansion of energy infrastructure (such as backup generators, redundancy). Higher capacity generators were replaced at the Pine and Castle repeater sites and the Fire Station 1 generator was repaired.

Charles Paddock Zoo



- Obtained Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Accreditation for the Zoo for a full five years, following accreditation submission in 2024. Only 10% of Zoos across the world meet AZA Accreditation standards.
- Addition of Beaver Brigade Mural by Chumash artist, John Khus, to the Zoo thanks to the California Coastal Commission WHALE TALE grants program.
- Ongoing renovations and improvements, including the addition of the Cerrado Aviaries exhibit with Toco Toucans and Hyacinth Macaws, Caribbean flamingo habitat makeover, the relocation of the Zoo's iconic bronze tiger sculpture to the Thelma Vetter Red Panda Experience, and the arrival of three Mexican Spider Monkeys.
- Ongoing collaborations with the Friends of the Charles Paddock Zoo to maximize fundraising and increase awareness of the Zoo in order to develop a Zoo capital improvement and funding plan.
- Ongoing partnership with the Master Gardeners, through the UC Cooperative Extension SLO County, for the Monarch Butterfly program.

Targeted Business Support

- Established a Developer Roundtable to identify areas that can be simplified and streamlined in the current development processes.
- Participated in regional economic development planning conversations to encourage investment in Atascadero, attract business, and work with neighboring jurisdictions on improving business, housing, and other economic conditions.
- Continued creative support of development at commercial nodes throughout the City (*scan QR code below to learn more*):



- The Home Depot Center at the Santa Cruz/San Ramon exit has a prospective new restaurant looking to develop on the vacant pad in front of Springhill Suites, which may catalyze more interest in the other available properties in the center.
- The Barrel Creek Project (west side of HWY 101 off Del Rio Road) includes a 120-room hotel, several commercial buildings similar in style to the Tin City development in Templeton, and single-family and multi-family homes.
- The Del Rio Marketplace (the Valley Fresh Center) is under construction, with commercial stores opening in the spring of 2025. Later phases include a jobs center with spaces for various types of business with housing above.
- The Del Rio Ranch Project is across the street from Big 5 and is approved for a high-end RV Resort with supporting commercial uses.
- The Kmart property is now actively leasing after years of vacancy and is envisioned to be a revitalized retail center with several new tenants and the possibility of additional development pads.
- The Dove Creek Commercial Project at Santa Barbara Rd. and El Camino Real is approved to include a neighborhood retail center surrounded by lodging and residential uses.



Learn More!

Sustainable Community Growth

- Developed the 2045 General Plan Update and concurrently began the City Zoning Code Update, which will provide a blueprint for our city's changes over the next two decades when completed in 2025. The General Plan assumes a moderate growth rate of less than 1% annually in keeping with the average over previous years.
- Incorporated provisions in the General Plan and Zoning Code to increase community vibrancy through mixed-use development, increased flexibility in allowable uses, opportunities for density, concentration of retail in key nodes retail health, incentivized occupancy of vacant spaces, relocation of nonconforming uses to more viable locations, and adjusted height limits to allow for concentrations of activity.
- Adopted new Objective Design Standards to reduce development steps and provide more certainty to developers.
- Adopted secondary housing unit "stock plans" to facilitate streamlined and more cost-effective units for residents interested in adding a unit to their eligible property.
- Adopted development standards and thresholds that allow for additional housing projects to be developed by streamlining environmental review and saving significant time and money for new housing.



FISCAL & INFRASTRUCTURE EFFICIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY

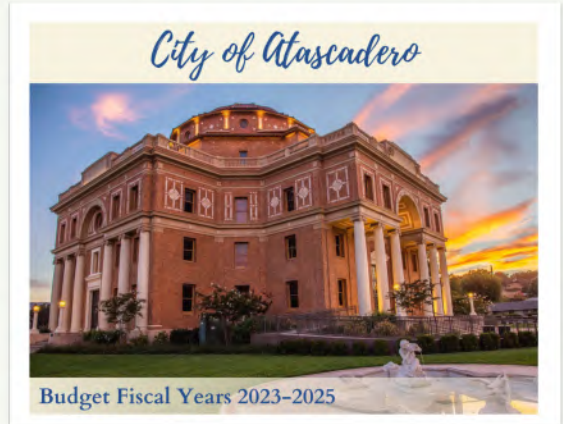
Powering Progress

- Replacement of financial system underway with selection of Tyler Technologies ERP system approved by Council in January 2025 and implementation expected to begin July 2025 and be completed January 2027.
- Chose Asset Management Software with a contract expected to be signed in Spring 2025. The project team anticipates a 12-month timeframe to configure the software, inventory assets, establish procedures for proactive monitoring, and develop a sustainable replacement plan.
- Accepting credit cards online and over the counter for permits and business licenses went live in 2024, with vehicle inspections, citations, classes, events, and more coming online in 2025.
- Facilitated enhancement of fiber-optic broadband infrastructure access with award of a contract to Astound for fiber installation to provide increased bandwidth at various City facilities, approval of a zero-fee fiber permit, and preparing the drafts for micro-trenching and "Dig Once" policies.
 - 25 miles of broadband fiber currently installed.
 - \$6.8M grant to extend access to underserved areas in Atascadero and Paso Robles by the end of 2026.
- Integration and training of eScribe Agenda Management Software to streamline creation, management, and distribution of agendas, minutes, and public meetings.
- Creating workplan to update City Engineering Standards in the next two years once staffing shortages in Engineering are resolved.
- Examining the life cycle costs for capital projects and purchases and continuing to look for opportunities and grants to fund infrastructure utilizing assistance from grant consultants and state and federal advocacy firms.
- Completed a mobile fleet conversion from Verizon to T-Mobile.
- Wi-Fi network was installed at the Charles Paddock Zoo.
- Launched eSignatures.
- Issued RFP for and awarded contract to update, replace, and expand audio-visual equipment in the Council Chambers and update and outfit audio-visual equipment in conference rooms in several City facilities.
- Implemented "Essentialism Task Force" to review processes that are non-essential or could be made more efficient. Processes reviewed include fleet maintenance, business license applications, and internal meeting conduct.



Stronger Financial Future

- Continued development of a balanced strategy of operational expenditures vs. capital/one-time expenditures to accommodate future growth through review of the Comprehensive Financial Strategy and Council's goal-setting workshop to position the organization well for creating the next two-year budget plan, and filing of the audited financial statements with a clean opinion.
- Active participation in the League of California Cities through membership on the Board and Policy Committees to actively advocate for the City's legislative platform, as well as defend and expand local control statewide and protect and secure fiscal resources for cities. Continued pursuit of FEMA/OES and insurance reimbursements for 2023 Storm damage repairs.
- Renewal of Measure F-14, Measure L-24, was placed on November 2024 ballot and passed with almost 71% approval by the voters. Measure L-24 will become effective upon the sunset of Measure F-14 in April 2027.
- Refunded the 2004 and 2010 bond issues with the 2024 Tax Allocation Refunding Bonds to save tax dollars and be fiscally responsible. It's estimated that the refunding would save \$5.49M across affected taxing entities.
- Continuing to actively look for creative investment opportunities, capitalize on grant opportunities and explore public and private partnerships to accomplish Action Plan goals including hiring and onboarding a grant writing consultant.



Leading with Transparency & Delivering With Accountability



- Continuing to utilize technology to increase and clarify transparency and accountability such as implementing the City's records management program to facilitate online access to records, budgeting for a City-wide scanning project in FY24-25 to increase the availability of records, employing an online payment and tracking system for City fees and payments, and ensuring messaging is accessible and consistent across all media platforms.
- Continuing to refine the annual Measure D-20 and Measure F-14 reports and utilizing the Community Engagement program to highlight use of funds generated by these sales tax measures.
- The Council adopted a Debt Management Policy to put a strategic framework around borrowings.
- Utilizing the Fire Inspection Program to improve and increase emergency planning communications with the business community.
- Completed total overhaul of City website with a new site launched in November 2023.

ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY & PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL CITY SERVICES

Culture Counts!

Investing in Our People

- Since 2023, 25 service awards were given out to recognize staff with 5 or more years of service.
- Launched the annual all-staff event, *All for Atascadero! All In!*, in 2023 to highlight the importance of a cohesive culture that emphasizes working together as one team and treating each other like family. Hosted the second annual event in November 2024.
- Rolled out the “*Cookies and Kudos*” quarterly recognition program, offering employees an opportunity to nominate and recognize their co-workers for their service and commitment to the internal and external community of the City. Since then, 86 Kudos have been awarded.
- Continue utilizing the Atascadero Employee Development Advisory Committee (AEDAC) to promote Citywide employee wellness.
- Continued support and promotion of mental health and wellness services through the implementation of peer support programs, behavioral health services, and a Health and Safety workgroup to address any safety issues, concerns or incidents in the Police and Fire Departments.
- Updated employee insurance and investment plans resulting in lower cost and better investments for employees.
- Successfully negotiated three-year contracts with all bargaining units providing competitive salaries/ benefits and appropriate classifications for all employees.
- Completed a rebranding campaign updating the City’s brands to modernize the City’s image and enhance staff and community credibility and pride.



Retiring and Rehiring



Between 2023 & 2025, the City had 8 long-time employees retire, collectively contributing 180 years of service.

Over the past two years, a total of 97 staff members; 47 full-time, 35 part-time, 15 seasonal, and 1 elected official, have been onboarded, including a new Police Chief, City Attorney, and Zoo Director.

Investing in Our People MORE...

Continuing to ensure employees have adequate resources to perform duties.



- Replaced outdated body-worn cameras.
- A new Wildland Engine was delivered, and a new structure engine was ordered.
- Purchased new turnouts for Fire Department staff.
- Replaced 6 aging police vehicles.
- Replaced all Fire mobile data terminals with iPad tablets.
- Replaced all Fire Department heart monitors and City facility AEDs.

- Replaced all Fire Department thermal imaging cameras.
- Purchased a new freezer and x-ray machine for the Zoo.
- Purchased a new 4X4 vehicle for building inspections, a compaction roller, mini-excavator, leaf sweeper, 3 utility carts and dump trailer and budgeted for replacement pickup trucks and utility trucks in Public Works.



Building & Growing Together

- Continue to plan and host signature events such as Fiesta Friday, leading into Tamale Festival, and the already popular Inaugural Mother & Son Dance.
- Expanded Zoo Boo to two nights in 2024 and will continue into 2025.
- Implemented new recreation leagues for youth and adults, such as adult kickball and youth pickleball. Continue to look for opportunities to provide additional recreational activities to the community.
- Working collaboratively with the Atascadero Unified School District and middle and high school principals on common issues and partnering to increase community access to recreation activities.
- Actively participating on the California Park & Recreation District 8 Board.



- Continue to maintain Atascadero Creek as a quality aesthetic feature in the downtown through voluntary clean-up programs, partnerships with non-profit organizations like Earthshine, and ongoing management of vegetation and fuels in the creek.
 - Launched online volunteer application option in 2023, with seven submissions received in 2024.
- Received a \$1M grant from the Fire Safe Council to address fuels management in creeks, the riverbed, and right-of-ways.



Community Engagement

- Diversified and improved outreach methods on social media, via campaigns to improve citizen engagement.
- Implemented a Community Engagement program for large-scale projects, to provide weekly construction updates to businesses and residents. Additional engagement to build trust and rapport with the community at large includes presenting at quarterly Chamber hosted Talk on the Block events, electronic newsletters, and increased use of social media.

Risk Reduction and Safety Success

- Welcomed 5 new officers, 3 dispatchers, 1 part-time evidence technician, 1 K-9 unit and a new Chief of Police to the Police Department.
- Introduced advanced forensic technology in the Police Department to more efficiently analyze data.
- Fire completed 100% of school and care facility inspections, 96% of apartment inspections and 78% of hotel inspections in 2024 and 100% of hotel and school inspections, 82% of apartment inspections and 79% of care facility inspections in 2023.
- Established a two-person Special Enforcement Team (SET) dedicated to addressing long-term concerns related to drug activity, graffiti and trespassing and focusing on public spaces such as the downtown corridor.
- Implemented Tablet Command in Fire and Emergency Services, a CAD to tablet interface that provides emergency call details, sophisticated mapping capabilities, resource location and assignment details to all the City's engines and command vehicles.
- Continuing robust communications regarding emergency preparedness such as working with every school in the City to update their Safety Plan annually, promotion of preparedness campaigns and the Countywide alert system AlertSLO.





- Traded, with Morro Bay Fire Department, a surplus Wildland engine for a Rescue Unit resulting in a major upgrade of the Disaster Response Trailer.
- Launched the Into the Cloud Campaign to empower youth on how to navigate the digital world safely.
- On-going success with the Wildfire Consultation Program, including feedback from property owners that it has helped them keep their fire insurance. A total of 37 consults were completed in 2024.

- Received a \$7,000 grant from the CA Fire Foundation for new wildland fire shelter packs.

Bridging the Gap: Unhoused Population

- Continues to participate in crafting and developing regional solutions to address homelessness, collaborating with the County in looking for opportunities and grants to provide resources to respond to future opportunities to support underrepresented residents, and supporting partner non-government organizations' outreach efforts.
- Continued active participation in countywide task forces addressing homelessness.
- Continued implementation of strategies to address ongoing areas of public concern such as the establishment of a monarch butterfly area at the southbound US101 offramp at HWY41.
- Enhanced police presence in the Downtown/ Sunken Gardens area during peak hours. Performed 88 clean-ups of problem encampments between July 1, 2023, and December 31, 2024, removing 83 tons of debris from public spaces, improving community cleanliness and safety.
- Revised the Municipal Code to strengthen the camping ordinance and added a shopping cart ordinance to regulate and prohibit the removal of shopping carts from retail establishments and regulate the retrieval and disposition of abandoned /unattended shopping carts.
- Working with local retail establishments to create containment and retrieval plans, that do not require a large upfront capital investment, to bring establishments in compliance with the adopted shopping cart ordinance.



- Established a program with a focus on connecting homeless/underrepresented individuals with services, providing a resource for community concerns, and participating in multi-jurisdictional information sharing systems.
- Strengthened communication and partnership with ECHO. Entered into a contract with ECHO to provide homeless outreach services, case management, and programs within the City in direct coordination and partnership with the Atascadero Police Department.

- In 2024, assisted 3 individuals obtain court-ordered conservatorships for stable, permanent housing.
- Helped transition 21 individuals off the street and into temporary housing.
- Responded to over 700 calls for service.
- Finalizing a contract with the County to continue the successful deployment of a County Behavioral Clinician as part of the CAT/OUR Team programs.
- Continuing to expand training and education of staff and community members on available support resources for our unhoused population and training and educating staff and community members on compassionate interactions with our underrepresented residents.

Behind the Scenes

Every day, there's a lot of work that happens behind the scenes. This work, including tasks both big and small, help to make Atascadero an amazing place to live, work, and grow. Following are just a few highlights of what City Staff has been doing.

By the Numbers

2023	2024	
2204	1930	Permit Applications
1306	1133	Permits Finalized
255	65	New Business Licenses (commercial)
4621	4105	Building Inspections Conducted
17	-	New Recreation Classes (added since Summer 2023)
-	130	Culverts Cleaned
-	25	Miles of Broadband Fiber Installed
-	1.40	Miles of Sewer Line Cleaned & Serviced
88.6	88.6	Park Acres Maintained Annually

Paving the Way

2023	2024	
3.28	5.65	Miles of Rehabilitated Roadways
-	1.37	Miles of Resurfaced Roadways
1.36	26.9	Miles of Refreshed Restriping (2023 work focused on traffic safety features ("STOP" legends, limit lines & crosswalks) at over 100 locations)
0.6	-	Miles of New Gravity Sewer Main
1	-	New Lift Station (#13) Constructed
-	2	Miles of New Sewer Force Main Installed
-	1	Landslide Repair
2	-	Full Bridge Replacements (Via Ave. & Santa Lucia)

2024 Awards & Recognitions



- Received ASCE Outstanding Bridge Project Awards for the Via Avenue and Santa Lucia Bridge projects.
- Received ASCE Outstanding Geotechnical Project Award for the San Marcos Road Emergency Stabilization Project.
- Received the 2023-2025 Operating Budget Excellence Award from the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers (CSMFO).
- Standard & Poor's Global Ratings raised its long-term credit rating to 'A+' for the Atascadero Successor Agency of the Community Redevelopment Agency's series 2024A and 2024B Tax Allocation Refunding Bonds.
- Marcom Gold Award for excellence in Marketing & Communications for the Atascadero Tourism Business Improvement District's "All In" campaign!





Working together to **serve**, **build community** and **enhance quality of life.**

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