



City of Orange: Organizational Assessment ***Creating a Roadmap for Change***

The cornerstone of my 10-Point Plan is the commitment to undertake a comprehensive organizational assessment that goes further than the 2025 Grant Thornton (GT) review. That review was a targeted engagement that focused exclusively on budget-risk and economic-opportunity assessment, not a full organizational review, and it would likely surface things a targeted consultant engagement like Grant Thornton's can't fully catch.

A comprehensive organizational assessment (sometimes called an operational or management audit) looks at *how the organization actually functions* - structure, staffing, workflows, span of control, technology, and decision rights - rather than just the numbers. Given what's already surfaced in Orange's case (the "Orange Way" being called outdated, limited internal expertise to execute cost-out or economic development work, service fees 52% below peers, and a pattern of decisions getting reversed after the fact, like the Plunge reopening undoing the special-events cuts), there's real factual evidence to support structural - not just fiscal - problems are compounding the City's ongoing fiscal instability and budget crisis.

Here's what the process would typically involve and that I would like to adopt regardless of any voter approval of new revenue measures:

1. Organizational structure and span-of-control review - Map every department's reporting lines, layers of management, and staff-to-supervisor ratios against comparable cities. This catches redundant layers, overloaded managers, or departments organized around history rather than current workload - often a quiet source of the "highly lean but still inefficient" pattern GT flagged.

2. Position-by-position workload and classification audit - Rather than just counting vacant positions (as the FY26–27 budget did by eliminating 56), this evaluates whether existing roles match actual current-day work. It often uncovers duties that migrated informally between roles, classifications that no longer fit the job, and gaps that create the overtime dependence Orange is carrying (\$8.1M annually).

3. Process mapping for core services - Walk end-to-end through key workflows (permitting/DRC review, procurement, code enforcement, public safety, HR hiring) to find where work stalls, gets duplicated, or requires unnecessary approvals. This is exactly what would substantiate - and fix - the "difficult to work with" developer perception GT identified, rather than just naming it as a problem.

4. Technology and systems assessment - Evaluate whether the City's finance, permitting, HR, and case-management systems talk to each other or require manual reconciliation. We already know many of the online payment systems are incompatible, operate separately from



each other, and cause user confusion, this is simply unacceptable. Manual workarounds are a classic hidden driver of both overtime and the kind of accounting confusion that led to the Workers' Comp and General Liability funds silently running \$17.3M negative.

5. Span of decision authority and delegation review - Determine where decisions currently require Council or City Manager sign-off that could be safely delegated, and vice versa - where decisions are being made without adequate oversight. This is often where a "no sacred cows" policy breaks down in practice, as it did with the pool reopening.

6. Benchmarking against comparable cities - Compare staffing ratios, service fees, span of control, and cost-per-service-delivered against a defined peer set (which GT partially did on fees, finding the 52% gap, but a full assessment extends this across every department).

7. Culture and change-readiness interviews - Structured, confidential interviews across departments (not just leadership) to surface where institutional resistance, unclear accountability, or morale issues (Slater's "bleeding quality employees" comment) are driving turnover and inefficiency. There is no better way to kill the old 'Orange Way' than to speak to line employees who are being forced to implement bad habits or thwarted from implementing modern, best practices.

8. Findings-to-implementation roadmap - The output isn't just a diagnostic report; it should convert every finding into an owned, scheduled action with a named accountable person and a tracked metric - the same discipline the PMO concept from the prior plan depends on.

The honest caveat: this kind of assessment typically takes several months, costs real money at a time the City is trying to cut costs and only pays off if the City follows through on execution - which has been the recurring gap in Orange's recent history (commissioning assessments, then not fully acting on them). Framed against a possible November "no" vote, the case for doing it now is that it identifies genuine, sustainable savings rather than blunt, service-cutting reductions made under time pressure.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Barrios".

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