

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on May 20, 2025 at 6:00 PM, Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

I. Staff Discussion Items

Mayor Rusty Paul called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. 2025-102 Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration Updates

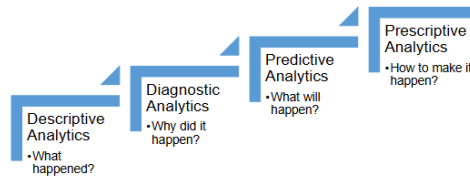
Keith McMellen, Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration, presented the Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration Updates.

This is an update on the City's data and artificial intelligence ("AI") and includes definitions of analytics and AI, examples of how AI could be applied, where Sandy Springs is today on its journey toward a data-driven culture, and future work plans for the City.

Definitions

Analytics

Of the different types of analytics, the City is at the Descriptive Analytics. This is looking in the past and is the least complex form of analytics.



What is AI?

How it works

- Uses statistics and logic to simulate human reasoning
- Analyzes data to make predictions or take actions
- Processes new information quickly and accurately

Examples

- Siri, Alexa, ChatGPT
- Self-driving features on cars
- Home values

What AI is Not

Unlimited

- Emotionless, lacks self-awareness
- Incapable of moral judgements
- Capable of generating ideas, not be confused with originality

Bias

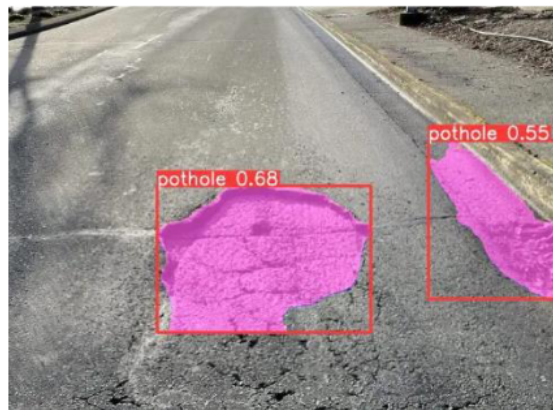
- Lacks empathy and emotional intelligence

Work Session of the City of Sandy Springs City Council
Studio Theatre, Sandy Springs City Hall and Broadcast Via Live Webinar and Teleconference
May 20, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Page 2 of 7

- Reflection of its programming
- Subjective decisions lead to unexpected results

Prediction versus Recognition

There was interest in predicting when potholes might occur based off of what another city is doing. That city was not predicting when a pothole would occur but was doing a road survey. This image is an example of them using AI recognition models to determine the likelihood that is a pothole. Statistics above 50% is a high likelihood that the crater is a pothole.



Where Sandy Springs is today?

Data maturity Stages



Sandy Springs is Unique

The City has what (few) others do

- Uncommon to have dedicated data leadership and resources
- Commitment by Council and City Leadership

The City is aligned with national trends

- Policy development and governance around AI still emerging
- Many peer cities are in similar early phases of AI testing/adoption
- Projects are in early stages

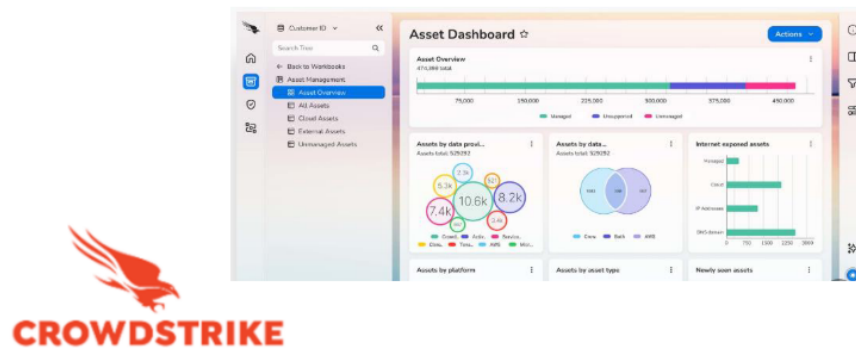
GIS

GIS has been doing significant work with the canopy study for some time using the image recognition model. This is not dissimilar to what is being used by other cities for potholes but trained for vegetation to recognize what is a tree and what is not.



Security

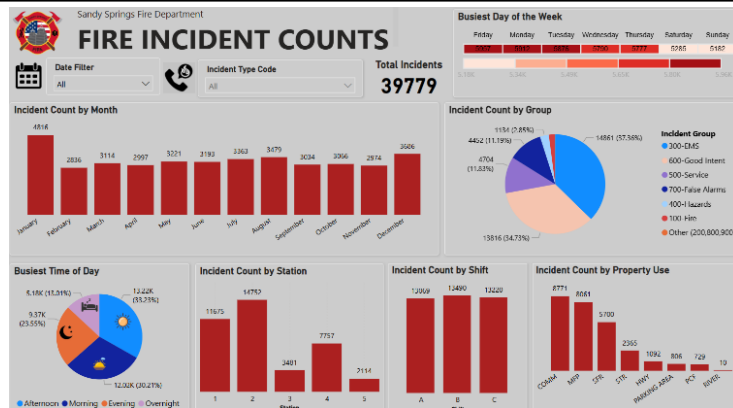
CrowdStrike is used to monitor threats on the City's network and is connected to devices and AI tools.



Fire Department

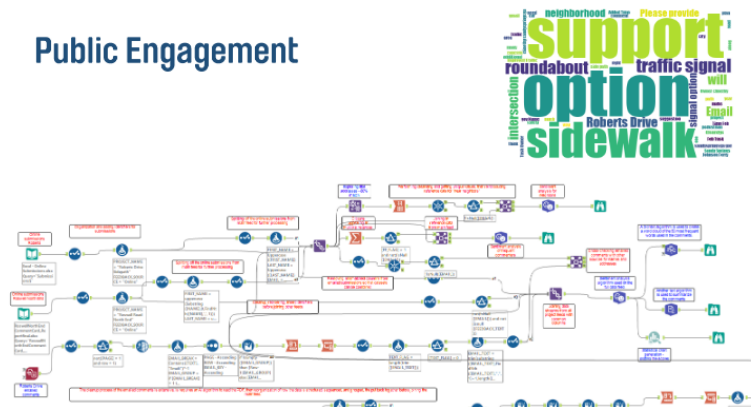
The Sandy Springs Fire Department is an early adopter of Microsoft Power BI which is an industry leader in reporting and self-service analytics. We would like to share the data across the department and externally as part of the certification.

Work Session of the City of Sandy Springs City Council
Studio Theatre, Sandy Springs City Hall and Broadcast Via Live Webinar and Teleconference
May 20, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Page 4 of 7



Public Engagement

This was working with the Communications team to analyze sentiment from public comments on projects using character recognition models. After that data is cleansed and combined, which is an extensive process, it is put through an AI model which recognizes positive, negative, and neutral sentiment and scores each of their comments.



Future Work Plan

Future Efforts



- Foundation items
- Breaking down silos
- Data and AI literacy program
- Digital Innovation Initiative

PIN Grant Application

- Partnership for Inclusive Innovation (PIN) Community Research Grant – application submitted May 15, 2025
- Theme for 2025 program is artificial intelligence
- Idea: AI-Powered Document Review for Permitting
- Goal is to reduce the average number of reviews per permit application
- Extract and categorize data from Development Code and permit documents
- Improve citizen satisfaction by accelerating timelines
- Partnering with Georgia Tech
- Costs
- Researchers: \$95,000 – AI model development and testing
- City Staff: \$25,000 value estimated for staff time (in-kind) – testing, validation, project management

What Works Cities Certification

- Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification, led by Results for America
- Internationally recognized
- Standardized framework
- Validation of data-driven City
- Completed initial assessment
- Requests for documentation
- Meeting contacts at similarly situated cities
- Aligning City's data strategy with criteria

Councilmember John Paulson said this is fascinating. In the first couple of stages, you discussed things recorded by hand and putting them into a system so they can talk to each other. Is the City measuring and recording everything we need to be analyzed later? Is enough information being captured from each segment to get a good answer?

Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration McMellen said the City does not have a data problem but a data integration problem. We collect a lot of data and have received from every conceivable department and source. It is getting it talking and why I am here. The long term goal is to get it into a centralized data location where it is modeled, cleansed, and integrated.

Mayor Rusty Paul said **Councilmember Melissa Mular** has been asked to be the Council liaison and lead on this. A lot has been done in a short period of time.

Councilmember Mular said it is foundational for **Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration McMellen** to join the City's staff. Many people do not realize the importance of data. This is a timeless problem that all entities have and, if you do not have the data at the right levels, the right quality, stored, and all that was mentioned, you cannot do anything with it. If things do not talk, that could create chaos. When you are doing internal reporting, once we get this foundation and focus on that, it is going to take off when working with your plan, getting the grant, and test, that will put us forward.

Mayor Paul said there was an opportunity for me to go to Johns Hopkins with other mayors and discuss what cities were doing in this realm of utilizing data, more importantly figuring out how to solve data problems. Everyone was interested but nobody had any real answers yet. There is an opportunity for the City to be a leading community in this area. It was the mayor of San Jose who was using AI to find potholes. They are trying to figure out that kind of analytics and be predictive and prescriptive to get there ahead of time and solve problems. The easiest problems to solve are the ones that have not occurred yet. That is what these tools have the power to do for cities like Sandy Springs. This is an exciting new opportunity for the City and the community and the goal is to be faster, cheaper, better, and deliver results with the technology and the data that is not being used properly.

Councilmember Andy Bauman said this is a great presentation. Count me among the early stage of my use of this. Are you also working with our public safety departments? For many years, I have heard the term predictive policing and the City also has done some predictive emergency response work. Will you be in that area as well or is that going to be carved out for a different specialty? There is a lot of opportunities in predictive policing and predictive emergency response.

Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration McMellen said yes, that is a long term goal. I have been working with public safety and will continue to do so. It is on a limited basis with the Police. My goal for them sits on a technical working group that we started, which is power users of data. We have not had a conversation about potential predictive policing. It is a long way off and you get to touchy data ethics areas when talking about policing. Those are some of foundational policies that we have to work on first.

Councilmember Bauman said it is a great observation. Some of it is done intuitively. A lot of this work was seen at higher levels of government such as the FBI. We will be interested in pursuing improved public safety which is our core competency but, in a way that is fair, law abiding and ethical.

Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration McMellen said the ethic part is not just about public safety but other areas like the call center. What are we collecting about people and how are we using it? Those are things we have to be cognizant of.

Councilmember Bauman asked where do you layer in that conversation and when that reaches the level of a policy decision at the elected official level as you are doing this work, are there known places at which you say to take a pause or do you embed that in the process on the front end? These are very serious and important concerns. I agree with Mayor Paul to do things cheaper, better, and more. When do the policy makers weigh in on this process? What is the role of the elected body and when?

Director of Data Strategy, Analytics, and AI Integration McMellen said a local city is working on a data classification program and that is part of the more extended work plan that we have but is not included in this presentation. This is to start to classify the types of data we collect by varying level of sensitivity, that we can work on internally on the staff side to develop and define those levels and share with this body. More information can be provided to Council.

Councilmember Bauman said the opportunity is incredibly exciting. Ultimately we are the guardrails on this. At some point we will have to make those judgements.

Eden Freeman, CityManager, said we are not there yet.

Councilmember Bauman said it is good that we are sensitive to this.

II. City Council Discussion Items

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.