

Listening & Leadership

“I don’t have the answers, I have the ears,” Gerald said as to why he was hired to reinvent the Department of Public Services. The city was experiencing a waste disposal crisis, and he did not know the first thing about waste or disposal. But Gerald did know how to listen. Gerald believes that leaders can’t solve problems by themselves, but they can listen to those who know how. By inviting collaboration and fostering a climate of mutual respect within Public Services, Gerald transformed a department once riddled with mistrust, bickering, discrimination, and inefficiency. Today, the Department is in better shape

than it ever has been. In the first three months of this year, Public Services filled more potholes than it did during all of 2014. An engineer by trade, Gerald described his ability to listen with a green spin on an old Thomas Edison quote: “Good ideas are 1% inspiration, 99% transpiration,” adding that a good leader must be able to see the knowledge within others—which they often times may not see themselves—and draw it out, making it available to all like the moisture in a plant.



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