

THE STRATEGIC PAUSE

A MUNICIPAL LEADER'S MANUAL
FOR RECLAIMING REST,
REBUILDING ENERGY, AND
LEADING WITH CLARITY



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FOR RECLAIMING REST,
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BY SETH WINTERHALTER

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About the Author

Seth Winterhalter is a nationally recognized keynote speaker, leadership strategist, and executive coach specializing in municipal government and public-sector transformation. He is the founder and president of HaltingWinter Municipal Solutions, where he equips city managers, administrators, and municipal teams with the tools to lead with clarity, purpose, and resilience.

With over two decades of leadership experience spanning roles as a lead pastor, nonprofit founder, and orchestral conductor, Seth brings a rare blend of empathy, strategic insight, and real-world wisdom to every room he enters. From church plants to city halls, from burnout to boardrooms, he has helped leaders across the country recalibrate their approach to work, rest, and sustainable impact.

Seth's approach is deeply shaped by his own journey through burnout and renewal, including a life-changing sabbatical that now fuels his mission to reshape how public leaders approach rest, rhythm, and responsibility.

He is the creator of the “**ABCs of Impactful Municipal Leadership**” framework, host of *The HaltingWinter Podcast*, and a trusted advisor to city governments navigating the real-world pressures of modern leadership.

Dedication

To the **City Managers and Administrators-**
who live in the constant tension of political pressure and professional responsibility,
who lead through shifting expectations, limited resources, and public scrutiny,
who hold communities together behind the scenes, quietly carrying a weight few could ever fully comprehend,
and doing it with grit, grace, and a resolve that shapes cities for generations.

To the **Municipal Leaders-**
the department heads, division directors, and key staff
who choose collaboration over silos,
who solve the problems no one sees,
and who faithfully do the work that goes largely unnoticed by the citizens you serve;
your presence matters more than they know.

And to those who are **aspiring to serve in the public sector-**
may you build rhythms now that protect your purpose,
sustain your energy,
and shape your leadership for the long haul.

This is for all of you.

You are seen.

You are needed.

And you don't have to burn out to make a difference.

A Note from the Author

When I opened my eyes on the first day of my sabbatical, I didn't realize I was about to learn lessons that would transform not just my approach to leadership, but my understanding of sustainable service. This book represents both my journey and the insights gained from working with municipal leaders who share the unique burden of constant public service.

The pages that follow aren't just theory – they're battle-tested wisdom from those who have walked the path of leading communities and citizens. My hope is that this book serves as both a guide and permission slip for the renewal you need to lead effectively for the long haul.

Your community needs you at your best. This book will show you how to get there and stay there.

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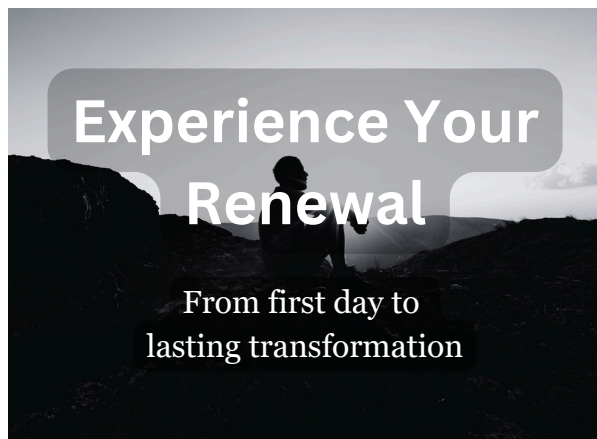
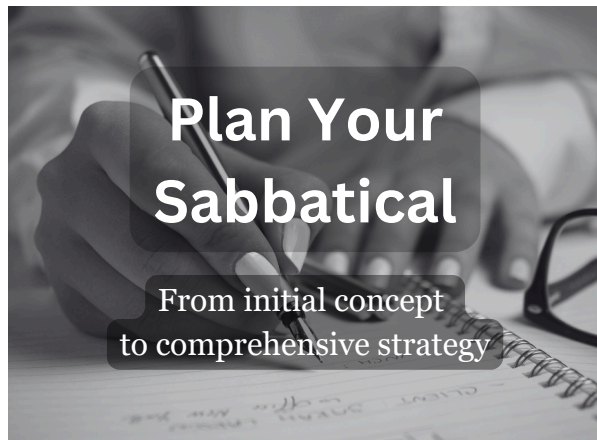
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Sabbatical Coaching

At HaltingWinter, we guide city managers and municipal leaders through every phase of the sabbatical journey, from initial consideration to successful implementation.



To explore how we can support your sabbatical journey and transform your leadership, schedule a strategy call:

[HALTINGWINTER.COM/SABBATICAL](https://www.haltingwinter.com/sabbatical)

INTRODUCTION

When I opened my eyes on May 3, 2021, to the first day of my 90-day sabbatical as a lead pastor, I expected to feel immediate relief. I anticipated that first deep breath of freedom would settle into my bones, marking the beginning of a restorative journey.

Instead, it felt more like what I imagine the first day of addiction treatment might feel like. Because that's exactly what it was. **I was an addict.** Addicted to the work. Addicted to the weight. Addicted to the need to be needed. Addicted to the rush of the urgent.

My sabbatical was three things: too late, too unplanned, and too unproductive. Those might sound like simple problems with simple solutions. They're not. This book exists to ensure you don't make the same mistakes I did. Because trust me, without proper guidance, you will.

As I've transitioned from pastoral leadership to working with city managers and leaders across the country, I've noticed striking parallels in the challenges of sustainable leadership. Both roles share a unique DNA: we're called to care deeply for people, to ensure their well-being, to be present in their moments of crisis and celebration. It's beautiful work. It's meaningful work. And it's slowly draining us dry.

This book draws from both my personal experience with rest, restoration, and sabbaticals as well as my professional expertise in municipal leadership development. It's designed to guide you through the complete sabbatical journey, from initial consideration to successful return.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

There are three ways to get the most from this sabbatical guide:

1. Read & Implement

Work through each chapter sequentially, using the end-of-chapter reflection questions and action steps to begin planning your sabbatical journey. This approach is ideal if you're in the early stages of considering a sabbatical.

2. Read & Work

For a more comprehensive approach, pair this book with The Municipal Leader's Sabbatical Workbook (not available yet). The workbook provides detailed planning tools, templates, and frameworks to implement everything you learn in this guide. Use them together to create a complete sabbatical strategy.

3. Read & Transform

For municipal leaders who want expert guidance and support, our Executive Sabbatical Coaching program provides:

- One-on-one strategic planning sessions
- Council presentation support
- Team preparation guidance
- Monthly sabbatical check-ins
- Re-entry planning
- Spouse/family coaching sessions
- Visit www.HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical to schedule a complimentary strategy call.

RESOURCE NOTE: Look for the [W] symbol throughout the book indicating detailed worksheets and tools available in the companion workbook.

Let's begin.

CHAPTER 1: THE STRATEGIC PAUSE:

RECLAIMING REST TO LEAD WITH CLARITY

Thriving in the Tension

If you've spent any time in public service, you know leadership isn't balanced. It's a life lived in tension.

There's tension between what your council wants and what your staff can deliver. Between the long-term vision and the short-term fires. Between who you are at work and who you are at home.

You can't escape the tension. You lean into it, lead through it, and attempt to thrive (if not simply survive) in its imbalance.

But here's what no one tells you: **You can live in the tension...and still burn out.**

Not because you aren't capable.

Not because you don't care.

But because you never learned how to pause.

Not just to stop working.

But to strategically recalibrate your mind, your energy, and your leadership rhythms.

Most leaders don't fail because they're lazy.

They fail because they try to lead without intentional rest and rejuvenation, and eventually, their health, their clarity, and their families pay for it.

You don't need a new system for managing your time.

You need a better one for managing your capacity.

That's where **The Strategic Pause** begins.

The Triangle of Rest

Leadership is demanding. But exhaustion isn't just a result of long hours. It's the result of sustained output without meaningful recovery—mentally, physically, emotionally, and even spiritually.

And most of us, as leaders, don't know how to rest well.

We take time off, but don't actually recalibrate.

We confuse vacation with restoration.

We crash, rather than pause.

What we need is a sustainable rhythm, a framework for rest that doesn't just help us survive, but helps us thrive as we lead from strength.

I call it **The Triangle of Rest**.

It's made up of three intentional pauses:

1. **Evening Pause** — A daily reset to transition from public leadership to personal presence
2. **Weekend Pause** — A weekly rhythm that reconnects you to joy, identity, and non-productivity
3. **Extended Pause** — A strategic sabbatical designed to reset your leadership operating system

Each point of the triangle serves a different function. But together, they form the rhythm that supports long-term clarity, energy, and emotional stability.

You don't need more time off.

You need a rhythm of rest that matches the weight of your work.

Let's take a closer look at each.

The Evening Pause: Daily Recalibration

Most leaders transition from work to home like a rookie pilot landing on a short runway—fast, loud, and out of control.

There's no off-ramp, no space to downshift. Just inboxes to errands. Meetings to meals. Deadlines to dinner.

And we wonder why we feel disconnected at home.

Why we end up numbing out with TV or scrolling through social media.

Why our sleep isn't restorative.

Why we carry the weight of work right into the next day.

What's missing is the evening pause, a daily rhythm of intentional recalibration.

This pause isn't about doing nothing.

It's about creating a moment, however small, that shifts you from being “on” to being available.

Leaving Early

After a health scare that startled me awake to my foolish inaction regarding my health and well-being, I made a decision that seemed counterproductive as an executive leader setting the standard of “first one in, last one out”: I started leaving the office by 4:00 PM almost every day.

Not because I was coasting. Not because I didn't care.

But because I started to care with as much intention about my presence when I walked through the door at home as I did when I walked through the door of my office.

And I didn't go home to rest at 4:00 PM.

I went to the gym.

One full hour of pushing my body, lifting heavy things, sweating through the stress of the day.

It didn't look like rest. But it was—**for my mind**.

That hour allowed me to clear away the emotional strain and mental fog of leadership. To move the tension out of my body. To arrive home ready to be the version of me my family needed and deserved.

It wasn't a shutdown. It was a reset.

What If You Don't Have an Hour?

Maybe you can't hit the gym five days a week. Maybe your schedule is tighter. Your responsibilities different.

But you likely have something just as powerful: **A commute**.
Ten, twenty, maybe thirty minutes between work and home.

What if you made that time sacred?
Not filled with noise or mindless distraction but used as a mental transition?

Close the Tabs

If I opened your laptop right now, how many browser tabs would be open?
Twenty? Thirty?

That's how most of us are living internally—all day, every day.
Tab after tab after tab: conversations, decisions, conflicts, to-dos, worries, reminders.

They're all open.

And they're all running in the background when you walk in the front door.
If you don't take time to close them you bring all of them into every room, every conversation, and every attempt to fall asleep and experience deep rest.

The evening pause is your moment to close the tabs of your mind so you can show up, not just physically, but fully.

The Practice

This should be simple. Quiet. Repeatable.

- A walk around the block before you go inside
- A silent drive home—no podcast, no music, just breathing
- Journaling a single sentence: What did I carry today that I don't need to bring into tonight?
- Saying out loud: “The work day is done. My presence starts here.”

And when possible, do something physical. Not simply to burn calories but to release the energy you've held all day. You don't need to lift weights to do this.

Stretch. Move. Feel your body again. Let your nervous system reset. Because the people who need you tonight don't need your answers.

They need your attention.
They need your **presence**.

The Weekend Pause: Weekly Rhythm Reset

There's a rhythm woven into the fabric of the world:

Six days of work. One day of rest.

It predates your calendar. It outlasts your inbox. It was never about religion. It was always about humanity.

But most of us treat weekends like overflow buckets. Whatever didn't get done during the week spills into Saturday. We call it "catching up," but it's really just delaying collapse.

The result?

We enter Monday more tired than when we left Friday.

Sabbath Isn't Just Stopping. It's Shifting.

The weekend pause isn't about sitting still all day. It's about creating space for presence, for joy, and for non-productivity.

You are more than what you produce.

But if you never stop producing, you'll forget that.

This kind of rest isn't passive. It's active disengagement, intentionally shifting from effort to enjoyment.

It might look like:

- Making pancakes with your kids, with no rush
- Walking a trail you've never been on
- Reading something you don't "need" to read
- Gardening, hiking, cooking, journaling, woodworking

You don't pause to escape your work.

You pause to remember you're more than your work.

Use Your Freedom with Intention

Now, let's be honest.

Some of you get your clearest thinking on weekends—when the building is quiet, the inbox isn't dinging, and your brain can finally breathe.

And I'm not here to shame that.

In fact, I've interviewed multiple city managers on The HaltingWinter Podcast who've said the same thing.

- Joe Irvin, City Manager of South Lake Tahoe, uses Saturday mornings to go into an empty city hall. His wife is out with friends, his kids are sleeping in, and he gets three undisturbed hours to think strategically.
- Lawrence DiRe, Town Manager of Chestertown, does the same thing on Sunday mornings. For both of them, it's sacred space—not catch-up, but clear-up.

Here's the key:

Joe also carves out time during the week for his hockey rec league. He plays hard, laughs with teammates, and resets a part of himself that leadership doesn't always engage.

This isn't about how many hours you work. It's about how intentional you are with your energy. You have the freedom to design your rhythm. Just don't use that freedom to drift deeper into work when your soul is asking for something else.

What This Really Is

The weekend pause is about identity recovery.

Because if you're not careful, leadership will shrink you down to your role.

- You're the city manager.
- The department head.
- The one who always has the answers.

But you were someone before that title.

And you need space every week to reconnect with that person.

Because when you lose access to who you are...You stop bringing your full self to your leadership.

And when you stop showing up fully, your people feel it.

The Extended Pause: Strategic Sabbatical

Now we enter the deep reset, the space that many of us hesitate to imagine: a strategic sabbatical.

A sabbatical is not your typical vacation. It isn't a two-week getaway to recharge superficial energy. It's a comprehensive operating system upgrade for your mind, body, and spirit—a time to unlearn destructive patterns and reprogram your leadership from the ground up.

You see, a vacation charges your battery briefly. A sabbatical does something much more radical. It clears out outdated software, the ingrained habits and thought patterns that have kept you running on fumes. It allows you to confront the internal weight you've carried for years, to examine the costs of urgency, and to rebuild a new model of sustainable leadership.

The Invitation to Reset

Imagine this: a full, uninterrupted break of four to twelve weeks: a period devoted entirely to renewal, reflection, and strategic recalibration. This isn't about escaping work; it's about preparing to lead in a new way when you return.

A sabbatical lets you:

- **Reframe Your Narrative:** Step back and ask, “Who am I beyond the endless meetings, decisions, and crises?”
- **Process and Heal:** Use expert support—coaching, therapy, or deep meditation—to work through past trauma, recover from burnout, and embrace personal growth.
- **Reinvent Your Approach:** Experiment with new leadership models, study innovations in municipal service, or even embark on creative projects like writing a book.
- **Empower Others:** When you step away, your team has the opportunity to rise. Your absence creates space for emerging leaders to step forward, transforming your organization to the next level of greatness and impact.

Real-Life Reflection

Let me share a moment that reshaped my own understanding of the extended pause:

I had meticulously scheduled the first week of my sabbatical as a solo retreat. It was supposed to be intentional time with a professional counselor in a secluded retreat center. I intended it to be a period of deep silence, reflection, and soul work. It was my planned sanctuary to unpack a decade of relentless leadership, to clear the clutter of unresolved pain, and to pave the way for a reinvigorated way of leading.

But then, a familiar sense of guilt crept in.

Our family car was too small for our growing crew—four kids, piles of luggage and endless gear for camping trips, and the logistical nightmare of taking two cars everywhere we went. My car was a cramped box on wheels, and my wife's car had the trunk space to accommodate a family of squirrels, not children. I realized that to accommodate the trips we had scheduled, I felt forced into a choice: cancel my solo retreat and invest that money in a larger SUV.

I told myself the familiar motto I often told my leadership team, “Hard on me, easy on them.” It felt noble, responsible, even selfless.

Yet, that decision ultimately sabotaged the very renewal I needed. I traded my space for a temporary solution. I sacrificed deep personal restoration for an act of avoidance. And if I'm completely honest, we could have afforded both...I simply felt guilty about starting my sabbatical exclusively focused on “me” so I found an excuse to show I cared about others ahead of myself.

And that is the lesson of the extended pause: When we continually postpone our own renewal, even when we outwardly do everything right, we not only risk burning out; we diminish our long-term wisdom, our capacity to lead, and, ultimately, our legacy.

The Spectrum of Sabbaticals

Your extended pause can take many forms. Perhaps it's a well-being sabbatical dedicated to physical and emotional recovery. Or maybe it's a personal development retreat where you explore new ideas and leadership techniques. It might be a creative sabbatical—time spent writing, painting, or generating a new vision for your career. It could even be a healing sabbatical, aimed at processing past traumas or difficult experiences.

Whatever form it takes, naming your sabbatical is an important first step:

- **Well-Being:** For those who need to rebuild their body and mind.
- **Personal Renewal:** For those who must reconnect with who they are beyond their title.
- **Creative or Developmental:** For those who crave not just rest, but transformation through learning or creation.
- **Healing:** For those facing deep-seated issues that have been masked by constant urgency.

This isn't an all-or-nothing decision—it's about finding the mix that suits your unique challenges and aspirations.

The Strategic Value of the Extended Pause

Let me be clear: a strategic sabbatical is not a sign of weakness or absence of commitment.

It is a profound investment in your long-term leadership capacity and in the sustainable success of your organization.

By stepping away in a structured, thoughtful manner, you not only gain the clarity needed to lead more effectively, but you also empower your team to innovate in your absence. Your temporary departure becomes a catalyst for real growth, both for you and for those you lead.

The Rest You Need for Success

The Triangle of Rest offers you a new rhythm, something you can begin living today.

It invites you to build margin, reclaim presence, and reset your energy in ways that ripple through your leadership, your home, and your community.

You don't need a title to implement it. You don't need permission to begin. But if you're ready to go further, if you're starting to feel the deeper pull, this book is here to guide you.

Because while daily and weekly pauses will sustain you, there comes a time when what you really need... is **a strategic, extended pause**.

Not an escape.

A reset.

A full-system recalibration that makes you more whole and more effective as a leader.

The chapters ahead will walk you through exactly how to design that experience:

- How to prepare for time away without everything falling apart
- How to bring your team along for the journey
- How to use your sabbatical as both a personal and organizational investment
- And how to return—renewed, re-centered, and ready to lead again

You don't have to figure it out alone.

Let's walk this out together.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF SABBATICALS IN MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP

As a city manager, you stand at the helm of a complex organization, navigating waters that can become treacherous in an instant. Your role is unique, demanding, and often misunderstood. You're expected to be a visionary leader, a master of operations, a political diplomat, and a community champion – all rolled into one.

But let me share something I've observed in my interactions and work with city managers across the country: the very qualities that make you excellent at your job – your deep care for community, your sense of responsibility, your drive to solve problems – can also lead to a dangerous pattern of continuous depletion.

The Triple Threat to Municipal Leadership

Let's be honest about three critical challenges that can make or break your success and, by extension, the prosperity of your city:

1. The Leadership Labyrinth

It's Monday morning, and your desk is already piled high with urgent requests. The mayor wants an update on the new downtown revitalization project. The police chief is pressing for budget increases. Meanwhile, citizens are flooding your inbox with complaints about a recent policy decision.

In this maze of competing priorities and stakeholders, how do you chart a clear course? How do you make decisions that are not just reactive, but truly effective and forward-thinking?

Many city managers find themselves trapped in a cycle of crisis management, unable to lift their heads above the daily grind to lead with vision and purpose. The result? Stagnation, missed opportunities, and a city that merely survives instead of thrives.

2. The Work-Life Tightrope

Now, let's talk about your personal life – or what's left of it. Your phone buzzes at 2 AM with news of a water main break. Your family vacation is interrupted by an emergency council meeting. Your child's recital? You're there in body, but your mind is on the budget proposal due tomorrow.

The demands of city management don't neatly fit into a 9-to-5 schedule. The line between work and personal life isn't just blurred, it's often nonexistent. This constant state of "on-call" takes a toll not just on you, but on your relationships, your health, and ultimately, your effectiveness as a leader.

3. The Culture Conundrum

Let's zoom out to your organization as a whole. City halls are often seen as bastions of bureaucracy, where innovation goes to die and enthusiasm is in short supply. Red tape tangles up new initiatives. Silos prevent effective collaboration. And in an environment of public scrutiny and tight budgets, risk-taking and creativity are often the first casualties.

But over time, it's not just programs or projects that suffer, it's leaders. The slow grind of resistance, criticism, and survival-mode thinking can drain even the most passionate leaders of their fire. Comfort creeps in, apathy replaces urgency, and leadership shifts from purpose-driven to maintenance mode, where the goal becomes avoiding mistakes instead of advancing the mission.

Without intentional rhythms of renewal, even the best leaders can lose the very drive that brought them to public service in the first place.

The Sabbatical Solution

This is where sabbaticals enter the picture – not as an extended vacation, but as a strategic investment in leadership sustainability and creativity. Let me explain the difference, drawing from my experience both as a former pastor who took a sabbatical and as someone who now works with municipal leaders.

A vacation is like charging your phone, necessary for daily function, but temporary in impact. A sabbatical is more like uninstalling your current operating system and installing a complete upgrade. It's a fundamental reset that transforms how you function.

Here's why this matters specifically for city managers:

1. Depth of Responsibility

- a. Like pastors, city managers carry the weight of community well-being
- b. Your decisions impact thousands of lives
- c. The emotional and mental load is uniquely heavy

2. Constant Crisis Management

- a. You operate in a perpetual state of high alert
- b. Small breaks don't allow for true decompression
- c. Strategic thinking requires distance and perspective

3. Leadership Longevity

- a. High turnover in city management positions
- b. Increasing complexity of municipal challenges
- c. Need for sustained, effective leadership

The Common Objections

Let me address the objections forming in your mind, the same ones I heard (and made) in the pastoral world:

- "There's too much going on right now."
- "It's not a good time."
- "We'll lose momentum."
- "The city needs me."
- "The council will never approve this."

Here's what I learned: there will never be a perfect time. The city will always have pressing needs. But consider this: your city deserves a leader operating at full capacity, with fresh perspective and renewed energy. A sabbatical isn't an abandonment of responsibility; it's an investment in sustained, effective leadership.

The Path Forward

Over the next five chapters, we'll explore:

- How to plan a sabbatical that truly transforms
- Ways to prepare your team to thrive in your absence
- Strategies for managing family expectations and personal growth
- Methods for making your time away truly count
- Techniques for returning stronger and more effective than ever

Remember: A sabbatical isn't a sign of weakness. For leaders carrying the weight of community well-being, it's an essential practice for sustainable, long-term effectiveness.

Key Takeaways:

- Sabbaticals are a strategic investment in leadership sustainability, not an extended vacation
- The unique pressures of municipal leadership make sabbaticals particularly valuable
- The most common objections to sabbaticals often mask deeper fears about identity and worth
- Planning and preparation are essential for sabbatical success

Reflection Questions:

1. How have the triple threats (Leadership Labyrinth, Work-Life Tightrope, Culture Conundrum) manifested in your leadership?
2. What would be possible in your organization if you were operating at full capacity with fresh perspective?
3. Which common objection resonates most strongly with you, and what might that reveal?

Action Steps:

1. Complete a personal energy audit, rating your current levels of physical, emotional, and mental energy
2. List three specific ways your leadership has been impacted by continuous crisis management
3. Begin documenting situations where fresh perspective would be valuable
4. Schedule time to discuss sabbatical possibilities with a trusted advisor

CHAPTER 3: THE ART OF SABBATICAL PLANNING - SETTING YOURSELF AND YOUR CITY UP FOR SUCCESS

Remember how I mentioned my sabbatical was "too unplanned"? Let me share a confession that might sound familiar to many city managers: I actually thought I had planned well. My staff was prepared. The organization was ready. Projects were assigned. Everything at work was meticulously organized.

But here's what keeps me up at night: I canceled the one-week solo trip that was supposed to start my sabbatical. Why? To buy a larger car that would fit my entire family – four kids and all our stuff – so we could travel together in one vehicle on the trips we had planned. "Hard on me, easy on them," remember?

That decision became emblematic of my entire sabbatical. One by one, I cut out the elements that would have served me best: time alone to decompress, a visit with my best friend I hadn't seen in years, a retreat with a professional counselor. All sacrificed on the altar of being available to others.

I exchanged one mission for another. I didn't stop serving, I just changed audiences. And this reveals my biggest beef and the hidden trap cleverly wrapped in the myth of "work-life balance." Work-life balance often just means balancing the expectations (and usually the assumptions) of people at work and the people in every other area of your life.

Do you see what's missing?

YOU!

If you want to serve most effectively - at work, at home, and everywhere else - you have to care for the one thing doing the serving: **yourself**. If I drive a fire truck to every emergency but never change the oil, never fill the tank, or never maintain the engine, I can't get mad at the truck when it runs out of gas or seizes up on the way to the next crisis.

Leadership is the same way.

The Timeline: Give Yourself Room to Breathe

Here's something I learned the hard way: a well-planned sabbatical takes time. Not just the sabbatical itself, but the planning process. Let's break down the crucial timeline:

12-18 Months Before

- Secure formal approval from your council
- Begin initial conversations with family about expectations
- Start rough financial planning
- Plant seeds with key stakeholders

Why so early? Because this timeline allows for:

- Budget cycle inclusion
- Team development preparation
- Project timeline adjustments
- Council comfort and buy-in

6 Months Before

- Create detailed coverage plans for major projects
- Begin leadership development for key team members
- Start booking major travel or experiences
- Develop communication strategies

This is when the concrete planning begins:

- Identifying critical handoffs
- Building team capacity
- Setting success metrics
- Creating contingency plans

3 Months Before

- Finalize your personal sabbatical plan
- Begin transition preparations with your team
- Set up communication protocols
- Schedule any professional support (coaches, counselors)

The final quarter is about:

- Fine-tuning systems
- Building confidence
- Testing protocols
- Strengthening support

The Two-Track Planning Process

Here's what I wish someone had told me: you need to plan on two parallel tracks – professional and personal. Most of us excel at the professional track while neglecting the personal.

Professional Track

1. Project Timeline Review

- Map out major initiatives
- Identify critical decision points
- Assign clear owners
- Create decision frameworks

2. Leadership Development

- Identify growth opportunities for your team
- Create decision-making frameworks
- Document key processes
- Build confidence through practice

3. Communication Protocol

- Emergency contact procedures
- Regular update mechanisms
- Council communication plan
- Public information strategy

Personal Track

1. Self-Care Planning

- Solo time for decompression
- Professional counseling sessions
- Personal development activities
- Physical renewal practices

2. Family Planning

- Structured family time
- Individual attention for each family member
- Space for spontaneity
- Clear expectations setting

3. Relationship Investment

- Reconnect with old friends
- Deepen important relationships
- Create new connections
- Build support networks

The Fear You Need to Face

Let's talk about something that keeps many city managers from taking sabbaticals: the fear of being unnecessary. Here's the truth – if your city functions perfectly while you're gone, that's not a sign of your irrelevance. It's a testament to your leadership.

Think about it: if everything falls apart without you, or if they need to call you constantly, what does that say about your leadership development and organizational structure? A truly great leader builds systems and develops people who can thrive even in their absence.

The Financial Framework

Here's something your council needs to understand: a sabbatical is an investment in leadership sustainability. Consider these key funding areas:

1. Professional Support

- A sabbatical coach to help plan and maintain accountability
- Professional counseling (either intensive retreat or regular sessions)
- Leadership development for acting managers
- Team training resources

2. Personal Renewal

- Travel expenses for meaningful experiences
- Retreat or conference costs
- Educational opportunities
- Wellness investments

3. Family Integration

- Special experiences that align with sabbatical goals
- Family counseling or coaching
- Memory-making opportunities
- Support system resources

Creating Your Sabbatical Blueprint

A successful sabbatical requires clear documentation and handoff procedures.

Here's what needs to be in your handoff document:

1. Key Events and Owners

- What's happening
- Who's responsible
- Success metrics
- Decision authority

2. Critical Objectives

- Ongoing projects
- Expected milestones
- Decision-making authority
- Progress indicators

3. Contact Matrix

- Who to call for what
- Escalation procedures
- Emergency protocols
- Support resources

Key Takeaways:

- Planning should start a full year before your sabbatical
- Professional and personal planning deserve equal attention
- Clear documentation and protocols are essential
- Financial planning should include both professional and personal investments

Reflection Questions:

1. What aspects of planning make you most anxious? What might that reveal about areas needing attention?
2. How could your team benefit from the preparation process itself?
3. What personal renewal elements are most crucial for your sabbatical success?

Action Steps:

1. Create a preliminary timeline working backward from your ideal sabbatical start date
2. List key stakeholders who need to be part of the planning process
3. Begin documenting your unique responsibilities for eventual delegation
4. Schedule a planning session with your family to discuss expectations

Want expert guidance in creating your sabbatical plan? Schedule a strategy call to discuss how coaching can ensure your sabbatical success at HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical.

CHAPTER 4: EMPOWERING YOUR TEAM-LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH YOUR ABSENCE

Let me share something that might surprise you: one of the most exciting aspects of my sabbatical wasn't what I would do during it – it was watching what my team would do in my absence.

As a lead pastor, I knew that stepping away from the pulpit for three months would create significant opportunities for others to step up. In your role as a city manager, your absence will create similar opportunities. The question isn't whether your team can handle it – it's whether you've prepared them to soar.

Your Absence Is Their Opportunity

Here's a truth that transformed my perspective: a sabbatical isn't just about your renewal – it's a powerful leadership development tool. Think about it. How often do your team members get real "cockpit time"? Not just observing or assisting, but actually flying the plane?

Let's be clear about something: They don't need to reinvent your city while you're gone. They just need to take ownership and lead. Which, if you've been doing your job right, is exactly what you've been preparing them to do all along.

Three months might seem like a long time when you're planning your absence, but it's the perfect duration for your team to:

- Move from tentative to confident
- Develop new leadership muscles
- Prove to themselves what they're capable of
- Create new systems and approaches

The Pre-Flight Checklist

In the three months leading up to my sabbatical, I learned that preparation isn't just about handing over tasks – it's about building confidence and clarity. Here's what that looks like:

1. Map Your Unique Value

Start by identifying what only you do in your role:

- Leading council meetings
- Key stakeholder relationships
- Critical decision-making processes
- Strategic planning initiatives
- Crisis management protocols

Remember: The goal isn't to create mini-versions of yourself, but to empower others to handle these responsibilities in their own authentic way.

2. Match Skills to Opportunities

Then, thoughtfully distribute these responsibilities:

- Consider both current capabilities and growth potential
- Look for natural alignments with existing roles
- Don't be afraid to stretch people beyond their comfort zones
- Create backup plans for critical functions

A key insight: Sometimes the best person for a task isn't the most obvious choice. Look for hidden talent and untapped potential.

3. Set Clear Priorities

This was a lesson I learned the hard way. It's not enough to provide a to-do list. Your team needs:

- Clear hierarchy of priorities
- Specific success metrics
- Understanding of what can wait
- Permission to make judgment calls

During my sabbatical, I had an important initiative fall through the cracks because I wasn't clear enough about its priority level. The team felt uncomfortable with some aspects of it, and without clear direction about its importance, they let it slide. That's not on them – that's on me.

Building Confidence Through Clarity

In those crucial three months before your departure, prioritize regular touchpoints with your leadership team, both collectively and individually. These meetings should focus on:

Individual Preparation

- Clear role expectations
- Decision-making authority
- Resource access
- Support systems

One-on-one conversations should address:

- Personal concerns
- Growth objectives
- Support needs
- Success measures

Team Alignment

- Shared priorities
- Communication protocols
- Collaboration frameworks
- Problem-solving processes

Team meetings should establish:

- Collective understanding
- Cross-support mechanisms
- Shared ownership
- Unity of purpose

The Power of True Empowerment

Here's something I observed: teams don't just need permission to lead – they need genuine empowerment. That means:

1. Real Authority

- Clear decision-making power
- Access to necessary resources
- Authority to implement solutions
- Protection from second-guessing

2. Clear Boundaries

- Understanding of scope
- Knowledge of when to escalate
- Agreement on communication protocols
- Definition of success

3. Support Systems

- Peer support networks
- External resources
- Emergency protocols
- Backup plans

Preparing for Success

Your team's success during your sabbatical will be a direct reflection of your leadership development efforts. Here's how to set them up to thrive:

1. Create Safety Nets

- Establish clear escalation procedures
- Identify backup support systems
- Provide resource access
- Build confidence through practice

2. Build Confidence

- Practice scenarios before you leave
- Role-play difficult situations
- Celebrate small wins
- Provide specific feedback

3. Foster Ownership

- Encourage initiative
- Support reasonable risk-taking
- Trust their judgment
- Celebrate innovation

The Ultimate Test

Let's be honest: your sabbatical will reveal the true depth and effectiveness of your leadership development efforts. If your team thrives in your absence, it's not a sign that you're unnecessary – it's proof that you're an exceptional leader.

Think about it this way: if everything falls apart without you, that's not a testament to your importance – it's a warning sign that you've built an organization too dependent on a single person. True leadership success isn't measured by how much your team needs you, but by how well they can function without you.

Key Takeaways:

- Your sabbatical is a powerful leadership development opportunity
- Clear priorities and genuine empowerment are essential
- Success in your absence reflects strong leadership
- Team preparation is as important as personal preparation

Reflection Questions:

1. How have you been developing your team's leadership capacity?
2. What tasks or decisions do you find hardest to delegate?
3. How can your absence create growth opportunities for others?

Action Steps:

1. Create a list of your unique responsibilities
2. Identify potential leaders for each key area
3. Begin delegation conversations with your team
4. Schedule team development sessions

Want to develop a comprehensive team empowerment strategy for your sabbatical? Let's schedule a strategy call to create your leadership development plan: HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical.

CHAPTER 5: THE PERSONAL SIDE OF SABBATICALS - THE COURAGE TO PUT YOURSELF FIRST

Let me tell you about a moment of clarity that came far too late in my sabbatical journey. I was sitting on my patio, staring at the sky, cigar in hand – my default escape when overwhelmed – when it hit me: I had turned my sabbatical into an extended vacation, and not even a good one. I had said "yes" to everyone else's expectations and "no" to my own needs.

I had canceled my solo retreat. Skipped the counseling intensive. Passed on reconnecting with old friends. All in the name of being available for others.

Sound familiar?

Now, let's talk about the hardest part of sabbatical planning: protecting your own renewal. Because here's the truth I learned the hard way: you will serve others poorly if you have nothing left to serve yourself.

Start with Solitude: The Non-Negotiable First Step

Here's my strongest recommendation for any city manager planning a sabbatical: begin with 3-5 days of complete solitude. Yes, you read that right. Alone. No family. No friends. No phone (if you can manage it).

Why? Because your entire professional existence is about "people-ing." You're constantly taming that three-headed snake of city council, department heads, and citizens. Then you go home to be a spouse, parent, friend, community member, etc. That's a lot of people-ing.

Your options might include:

- A solo camping trip in the wilderness
- A spa retreat focused on relaxation
- A counseling intensive to process and release
- A silent retreat for reflection and meditation

The specific activity matters less than the solitude. Even if you're an extrovert, even if being alone sounds uncomfortable – especially if it sounds uncomfortable – this decompression time is crucial for setting the foundation for your sabbatical.

The Crucial Distinction: Vacation vs. Renewal

Let me share a fundamental truth that took me too long to learn: a sabbatical is not an extended vacation. It's a professional investment in your personal renewal. This distinction changes everything about how you approach it.

Vacation is:

- Extended rest
- Family-focused time
- Flexible and spontaneous
- Escape from work

Sabbatical is:

- Intentional renewal
- Self-focused investment
- Purposefully structured
- Professional development

This isn't semantics – it's the difference between returning refreshed versus transformed.

Managing Expectations: The Communication Challenge

Here's what's going to happen if you don't set clear expectations:

- Your spouse will see this as time to tackle the home project list
- Your kids will expect non-stop adventures
- Your friends will plan endless golf outings
- Your extended family will schedule visits
- Your social media will drain your attention

None of these are bad things. They're just not the priority. This is why I now strongly recommend having a sabbatical coach meet with both you and your spouse for at least two sessions:

1. First session: Discuss purpose and intentions
2. Second session: Review and affirm the specific plan

Why involve a third party? Because if you're like most leaders, you'll struggle to protect your own interests in these conversations. Having an objective voice helps validate the importance of your renewal plan.

Setting Your Renewal Priority List

Before you talk to anyone about your sabbatical plans, sit down and answer these questions:

1. What activities truly renew you?
2. What relationships need deep investment?
3. What personal growth areas need attention?
4. What experiences would challenge and stretch you?
5. What rest looks like for you specifically?

Create your plan from these answers, not from others' expectations.

Protecting Your Plan: The Art of Boundaries

Here are some practical steps for protecting your renewal:

1. Clear Communication

- Share your sabbatical purpose with family and friends
- Be specific about your availability
- Set expectations about communication frequency

2. Digital Boundaries

- Decide on social media usage
- Set auto-responses for emails
- Consider a "dumb phone" for emergency contact only

3. Schedule Protection

- Block off your key renewal activities first
- Build in buffer time between activities
- Keep some days completely unstructured

4. Physical Boundaries

- Consider taking some trips alone
- Have a space in your home that's yours during sabbatical
- Be willing to say "no" to drop-in visitors

The Sabotage Watch List

Watch out for these common ways leaders undermine their own renewal:

1. The Guilt Trap

- "I should be more available..."
- "Everyone else is working..."
- "My family needs me..."

2. The Productivity Addiction

- Making to-do lists
- Filling every moment
- Avoiding stillness

3. The People-Pleasing Pattern

- Saying yes to every request
- Avoiding conflict
- Prioritizing others' needs

A Final Truth

Here's what I need you to understand: your sabbatical is not selfish. It's not an indulgence. It's a strategic investment in your leadership sustainability. Every "no" to an unnecessary commitment is a "yes" to your long-term effectiveness as a leader.

Remember this: your city doesn't need you to be available for three months. They need you to be renewed, refreshed, and ready to lead with vigor for the next several years.

The courage to put yourself first during your sabbatical isn't self-indulgence – it's self-leadership. And it might be the most important leadership decision you make.

Key Takeaways:

- Start with solitude to set the foundation
- Understand the critical difference between vacation and sabbatical
- Set and maintain clear boundaries
- Prioritize personal renewal over others' expectations

Reflection Questions:

1. What activities truly renew you at a deep level?
2. What fears arise when you think about putting yourself first?
3. Where do you anticipate the most pressure to compromise your renewal?

Action Steps:

1. List your non-negotiable renewal activities
2. Draft your boundary statements
3. Schedule a conversation with key family members
4. Research solitude retreat options

Need help designing a sabbatical that truly serves your renewal? Let's schedule a strategy call to create your personal restoration plan at HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical.

CHAPTER 6: MAKING IT COUNT - MAXIMIZING YOUR SABBATICAL EXPERIENCE

Let me share a moment of near-disaster from my sabbatical: There I was, Amazon cart loaded with eight books on "deep rest," ready to turn my renewal time into an academic study of relaxation. The irony was completely lost on me until my sabbatical coach stepped in.

"That," he said, "is the autobahn to a horrible sabbatical."

He was right. I was about to do what so many of us high-achieving leaders do: turn rest into work. Today, let's talk about how to actually experience renewal during your sabbatical, rather than just studying it.

The Art of Being Present

Here's something that shocked me during my sabbatical: I didn't realize how much I had been living on edge until the edge was gone. For six years straight, every vacation had been interrupted by some urgent crisis or bombshell email. Some of those interruptions were unavoidable; many were self-inflicted by my inability to disconnect.

But during my sabbatical, for the first time in years, I knew with certainty that there would be no interruptions. The difference was profound:

- I was fully present with my family during our camping adventures
- Completely engaged during a three-day getaway with my wife
- Mentally unburdened during quiet moments alone

The lesson? True presence isn't just about being physically there – it's about being emotionally and mentally available too.

Structure vs. Space: Finding the Right Balance

Let's talk about how to create a sabbatical rhythm that actually serves your renewal:

The Foundation: Intentional Activities

Plan for key moments that anchor your sabbatical:

- Solo retreat time
- Family adventures
- Professional counseling
- Relationship investment
- Physical renewal

But remember: These are anchors, not chains.

The Breathing Room: Planned Spontaneity

Build in space between these anchors for:

- Organic conversations
- Unexpected opportunities
- Simple rest
- Natural reflection

Think of it like jazz – you need both structure and improvisation.

The Location Question

One crucial decision is how much time to spend at home versus away. Here's what I've learned:

- Being home makes you accessible to normal life rhythms
- Being away too long creates its own stress
- The right mix is personal and worth discussing with your spouse and sabbatical coach

The Learning Journey: Capturing Without Striving

Here's a trap I nearly fell into: trying to turn every moment into a learning opportunity. Instead, consider these lighter approaches to capturing your sabbatical journey:

Morning Check-ins

Start each day with a simple reflection:

- How am I feeling today?
- What am I enjoying?
- What's on my mind?
- What's giving me energy or draining it?

Don't turn this into a pressure-filled journaling mandate. The goal isn't perfect documentation – it's mindful awareness.

Experience Markers

After each key sabbatical moment, take time to note:

1. What worked well?
2. What would I do differently?
3. What surprised me?
4. What did I learn about myself?

The Growth Without Grind Approach

For those of us who love learning and growth (hello, fellow achievers!), here's how to engage with personal development without turning it into work:

Reading Guidelines

- Limit yourself to one growth area
- Choose just 1-2 books on that topic
- Balance with fiction or fun reading
- Don't take notes unless truly moved to

Remember: You're not studying renewal – you're experiencing it.

Learning Through Living

- Practice being rather than analyzing
- Notice natural insights as they arise
- Let experiences teach without forcing lessons
- Trust the process of renewal

Protecting the Purpose

Here's where many sabbaticals go sideways: daily life starts to creep in. Here are strategies to protect your renewal:

1. Regular Check-ins

- Schedule check-ins with your sabbatical coach
- If you don't have a coach, enlist a trusted friend
- Make these accountability conversations a priority

2. Location Strategies

- Plan key renewal activities away from home
- Create a sanctuary space in your house
- Consider shorter trips rather than one long one

3. Boundary Maintenance

- Review your sabbatical purpose weekly
- Reassess and adjust as needed
- Remember why you're doing this

The Mindset That Makes the Difference

Here's what I wish I'd understood earlier: A sabbatical isn't about achieving renewal – it's about experiencing it. The difference is subtle but crucial:

Achieving Mindset (Avoid)

- Checking off activities
- Measuring progress
- Forcing insights
- Documenting everything

Experiencing Mindset (Embrace)

- Being present in moments
- Noticing natural shifts
- Allowing insights to emerge
- Living the journey

A Word About Guilt

Let's address something that might be nagging at you: the feeling that taking time for deep renewal is somehow self-indulgent. Here's the truth: your capacity to lead effectively is directly tied to your level of renewal. Think of it this way: You wouldn't expect a phone to work without charging it, or a car to run without refueling. Why do we expect ourselves to lead effectively without deep renewal?

The Ultimate Measure

How do you know if you're making your sabbatical count? It's not about how many books you read, insights you logged, or experiences you had. It's about one simple thing: Are you allowing yourself to be truly renewed?

The goal isn't to return to work with a notebook full of insights (though you might). The goal is to return with a renewed spirit, refreshed mind, and recharged emotional capacity for leadership.

Remember: Your city doesn't need you to come back having studied renewal. They need you to come back having experienced it.

Key Takeaways:

- True presence requires both physical and emotional availability
- Balance structure with spontaneity
- Learn through experience rather than analysis
- Focus on experiencing rather than achieving renewal

Reflection Questions:

1. What does true presence feel like for you?
2. How can you create space for genuine renewal?
3. What mindset shifts do you need to make to fully receive this time?

Action Steps:

1. Design your rhythm of structured and unstructured time
2. Create simple ways to capture insights without pressure
3. Plan your check-in schedule
4. Identify your renewal metrics

Want guidance in designing a sabbatical that truly renews? Let's schedule a strategy call to create your renewal plan: HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical

CHAPTER 7: THE RETURN - TRANSFORMING RENEWAL INTO LASTING CHANGE

Let me share a truth about sabbaticals that might surprise you: The real test isn't leaving – it's coming back.

When I returned from my sabbatical, I was genuinely excited to be back. Not the antsy, couldn't-sit-still kind of excited that might signal an ineffective sabbatical. Rather, I felt rejuvenated and ready to engage with the work I loved. But I also knew something crucial: if I wasn't intentional about my return, I'd slip right back into old patterns, effectively erasing the benefits of my time away.

Today, let's talk about how to turn your sabbatical renewal into lasting transformation.

The Art of Re-entry

Here's your first crucial insight: Just as you needed a sabbatical plan, you need a re-entry plan. In fact, I recommend using your final two weeks of sabbatical to work with your coach on designing your return. Here are the key questions to consider:

What Needs to Change?

1. Your Thinking
 - Leadership perspectives
 - Priority frameworks
 - Decision-making approaches
 - Mental models
2. Your Actions
 - Daily routines
 - Meeting structures
 - Communication patterns
 - Time allocation
3. Your Rhythms
 - Work-life boundaries
 - Energy management
 - Renewal practices
 - Relationship investments

The First 30 Days: A Different Approach

Resist the urge to charge back in like a bull seeing red. Instead, think of your return as a listening tour. Here's how to structure it:

Week One: Team Processing

- Individual meetings with key leaders
- Team debrief sessions
- Questions to explore:
 - What did they learn?
 - What challenges did they face?
 - What innovations emerged?
 - What should we keep doing?

Remember: Don't rush back like a bull seeing red. Relax. Use this time to truly understand what happened in your absence.

Week Two: Organizational Engagement

- Visit different departments
- Connect with employees at all levels
- Focus on listening and learning
- Observe changes and adaptations

Your team has learned to function without you. Use this as an opportunity to rebuild your role thoughtfully, not reactively.

Weeks Three & Four: Strategic Integration

- Begin synthesizing insights
- Draft change proposals
- Engage key stakeholders
- Build implementation timelines

Implementing Lasting Change

The key to turning sabbatical insights into organizational transformation lies in clear communication and consistent execution. Here's your framework:

The Three Clarities

1. **What:** Specific changes you're implementing
 - Be concrete and measurable
 - Start with highest impact areas
 - Break down into manageable steps
2. **Why:** The purpose behind each change
 - Connect to organizational benefits
 - Share personal insights
 - Link to team experiences
3. **How:** The implementation process
 - Clear timelines
 - Defined responsibilities
 - Success metrics

Avoiding the Snapback

Here's a hard truth: We are creatures of habit who crave comfort. The only way to foster real change is to make the old way more uncomfortable than the new way. Here's how:

1. Create New Comfort Zones

- Redesign your workspace
- Restructure your calendar
- Establish new meeting protocols
- Set clear boundaries

2. Build Support Systems

- Regular check-ins with your coach
- Accountability partners
- Progress reviews
- Celebration points

3. Share the Benefits

- Help others experience the positive impact
- Celebrate early wins
- Document improvements
- Tell stories of success

Elevating Your Team

One of the most powerful opportunities in your return is leveraging your team's growth during your absence. Instead of reclaiming all your old responsibilities:

1. Affirm New Leadership Levels

- Acknowledge growth and achievements
- Formalize new responsibilities
- Create advancement pathways
- Celebrate initiative

2. Redistribute Leadership

- Keep successful delegations in place
- Create new opportunities
- Build on proven capabilities
- Foster continued growth

3. Evolve Your Role

- Focus on higher-level leadership
- Develop new initiatives
- Mentor emerging leaders
- Create strategic value

The Sustainability Plan

To maintain your sabbatical benefits long-term:

Two-Week Check-in

- Meet with your sabbatical coach
- Review initial transitions
- Adjust implementation plans
- Address early challenges

One-Month Assessment

- Evaluate progress
- Gather feedback
- Refine strategies
- Celebrate successes

Quarterly Reviews

- Track long-term impacts
- Monitor personal renewal
- Adjust as needed
- Plan next steps

A Final Word About Transformation

Here's what I want you to remember: Your sabbatical wasn't just a break from work – it was an investment in transformation. The real return on that investment comes not from the time away, but from how you integrate its benefits into your ongoing leadership.

The goal isn't to "get back to normal." The goal is to create a new normal that serves you, your team, and your city better than before. This isn't just about maintaining the renewal you experienced – it's about leveraging it to elevate your entire organization.

Your sabbatical gave you the gift of perspective. Now it's time to turn that perspective into lasting change.

Key Takeaways:

- Plan your return as carefully as you planned your departure
- Use the first 30 days strategically to implement change
- Maintain and build upon team growth
- Create systems for sustainable transformation

Reflection Questions:

1. What specific changes do you want to implement upon return?
2. How will you support your team's continued growth?
3. What systems need to be in place to maintain your renewal?

Action Steps:

1. Create your 30-day return plan
2. Schedule key check-ins and reviews
3. Draft your change communication strategy
4. Set up your support systems

Need help designing your re-entry strategy? Let's schedule a strategy call to ensure your sabbatical transformation lasts: HaltingWinter.com/sabbatical.

CONCLUSION: YOUR JOURNEY TO SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Remember how we started this book? With me staring at the ceiling on day one of my sabbatical, feeling more like I was entering rehabilitation than beginning a period of rest. That image wasn't just a story – it was a warning. A warning about what happens when we wait too long, plan too little, and resist too much.

But it was also a promise. A promise that there's a better way to lead, to live, and to serve our communities.

The True Cost of Continuous Leadership

As city managers, you carry unique burdens:

- The weight of community well-being
- The pressure of constant scrutiny
- The challenge of balancing multiple stakeholders
- The responsibility of crisis management
- The isolation of leadership

These burdens don't just affect you – they impact your families, your teams, and ultimately, your cities. When you operate from depletion, you can't possibly bring your best to these crucial roles.

The Sabbatical Difference

A well-planned sabbatical offers something unique in today's leadership landscape: the opportunity for true renewal. Not just rest, but transformation. Through this book, we've explored:

- Why sabbaticals matter specifically for city managers
- How to plan for maximum impact
- Ways to empower your team through your absence
- The importance of protecting personal renewal
- Methods for maximizing the sabbatical experience
- Strategies for turning renewal into lasting change

But here's what I really want you to understand: A sabbatical isn't just an extended break – it's an investment in sustainable leadership.

The Hidden Benefits

While renewal is the primary goal, a sabbatical offers additional benefits that might surprise you:

- Stronger leadership bench strength
- Enhanced organizational resilience
- Improved systems and processes
- Deeper team engagement
- Greater leadership perspective
- Renewed passion for service

The Call to Action

If you're reading this and thinking, "This sounds good, but..." I want you to pause and complete this sentence: "My city deserves a leader who..."

Because here's the truth: Your city deserves a leader who is:

- Fully present
- Emotionally available
- Strategically focused
- Consistently renewed
- Sustainably engaged

A sabbatical isn't selfish – it's strategic. It's not an absence – it's an investment. It's not a luxury – it's a necessity for sustainable, impactful leadership.

Your Next Steps

1. If you're just beginning to consider a sabbatical:
 - Review Chapter 2's assessment questions
 - Schedule a conversation with a mentor or coach
 - Begin preliminary discussions with key stakeholders
2. If you're ready to plan:
 - Use the planning frameworks in Chapter 3
 - Engage your team using Chapter 4's guidance
 - Start building your support system
3. If you're feeling resistant:
 - Revisit the personal renewal aspects in Chapter 5
 - Consider the cost of not taking this step
 - Imagine the potential impact of true renewal

A Final Word

Let me leave you with this thought: Twenty years from now, you won't remember most of the crises that seem so urgent today. But you will remember whether you led in a way that was sustainable, impactful, and true to your highest calling as a leader.

Your community needs you – not just for the next crisis or the next project, but for the long haul. They need you at your best, operating from a place of renewal rather than depletion.

A sabbatical is more than a pause – it's a reset point. A chance to step back, renew your perspective, and return as the leader your community needs and deserves.

The question isn't whether you can afford to take a sabbatical. The question is: Can your community afford for you not to?

Your Investment in Leadership Legacy

Remember: This book isn't just about planning a sabbatical – it's about transforming how you approach sustainable leadership. The principles and practices we've discussed are investments in not just your renewal, but in the future of your community.

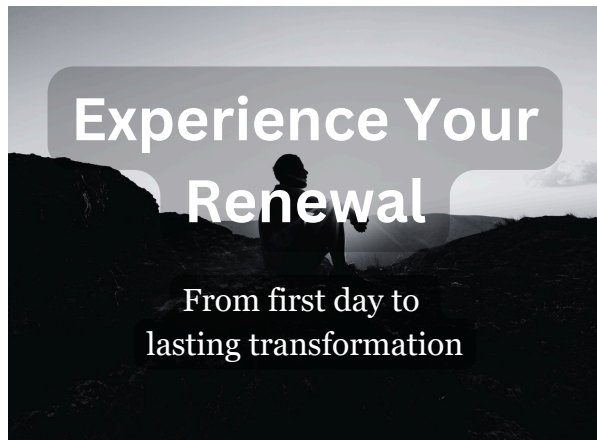
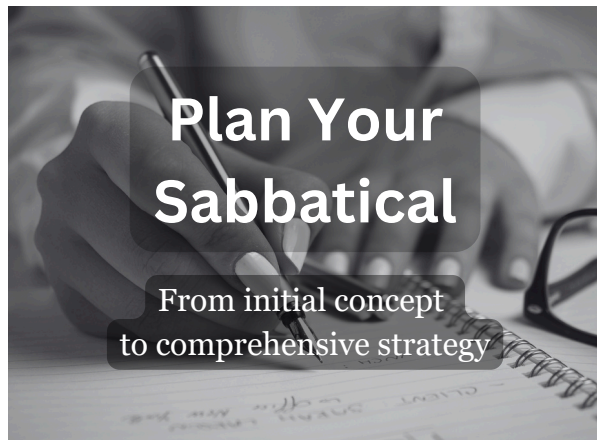
Take the next step. Whether that's scheduling a strategy call, beginning your planning process, or simply starting the conversation with key stakeholders – make today the day you commit to sustainable leadership through intentional renewal.

Your community deserves nothing less.

Ready to begin your sabbatical journey? Let's schedule a strategy call to discuss your unique situation and create a plan for sustainable leadership renewal. [Schedule your free call here.](#)

Sabbatical Coaching

At HaltingWinter, we guide city managers and municipal leaders through every phase of the sabbatical journey, from initial consideration to successful implementation.



To explore how we can support your sabbatical journey and transform your leadership, schedule a strategy call:

[HALTINGWINTER.COM/SABBATICAL](https://www.haltingwinter.com/sabbatical)