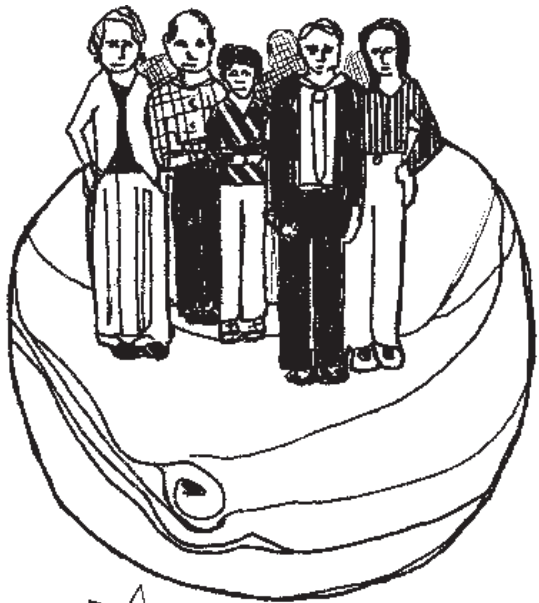
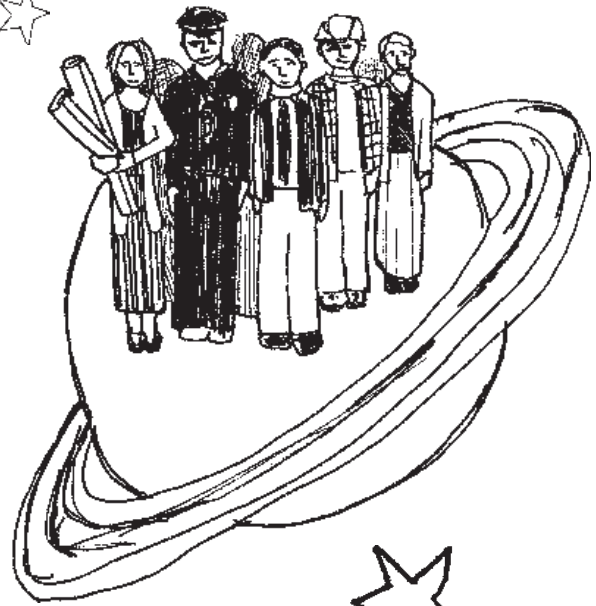


Governments are
from Saturn...

Citizens are
from Jupiter



★ Strategies for
Reconnecting Citizens
and Government



Governments are
from Saturn...

Citizens are
from Jupiter



Strategies for Reconnecting Citizens and Government



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Preface

In recent years, the work of local government has been handicapped by declining citizen confidence and involvement in government. Whether the lost trust has resulted primarily from government's own failures, or is a reflection of dramatically changing times, action is needed. It is time to remind ourselves and others about what government is, what it does for us and what our mutual responsibilities are, to make government work for all of us. We must get out the word about government successes, without whitewashing the problems that must be addressed. We must honestly look at what changes are needed to reconnect citizens with government, and to make government work in the new information age.

This publication briefly explores evidence and sources of this growing distrust, and highlights valuable benefits that government provides. The publication focuses on examples of a variety of successful strategies that communities have used to reconnect citizens with government, to rehabilitate government's tarnished image, and to restore civility to the ongoing debate on public policy.

Special acknowledgment is given to Susan Enger, MRSC Planning Consultant, who researched and wrote this publication. Appreciation is also given for the excellent work contributed by other members of our staff: Holly Martin designed the format and prepared the document for publication, Terri Sanders computerized and scanned graphics, and Nicole Stiver created all illustrations for the publication. Special thanks to Carol Tobin and Ron Bartels, Public Policy Consultants, and to Tom Sutberry, Finance & Public Policy Consultant, who reviewed the draft and provided helpful advice.

We would also like to acknowledge Beverley Stein, Chair, Multnomah County, Oregon Board of County Commissioners, whose insightful comments provided us with the title for our publication: "Governments are from Saturn... Citizens are from Jupiter".



Richard Yukubousky, Executive Director
Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington

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Introduction

"The record of American government successes may well qualify as the greatest story never told," according to political columnist, Mark Shields. U.S. citizens can readily recite problems with government, but stumble badly when asked to name government successes. The day-to-day services of local government are all too invisible to the naked eye, until things go awry. In the face of these widely-held public perceptions, it's all too easy for local officials to lose heart. Turnover, burnout and political casualties are high in an era when:

"The record of American government successes may well qualify as the greatest story never told..."

- Numerous opinion polls reveal basic lack of knowledge about the political process, declining voter turnout, declining participation in community organizations and perhaps the lowest level of trust in government since the Civil War.
- Disgruntled citizens oppose proposed plans, programs, budgets or private projects, but do not become involved in proposing alternative solutions.
- Some elected officials rant about the evils of government, as if they have no part in government.
- Citizens seem more inclined to solve conflicts with baseball bats and guns, modeled after the conflict resolution techniques of road raging motorists.

Government may be guilty as charged on some accounts, and certainly our approaches to governance must change to meet the demands of dramatically changing times. But it is misguided to view government as if it is some foreign occupying power. Governments in this country were established by the citizens of this country for their mutual benefit. (Remember government of, for and by the people?) As citizens, we all share a responsibility for how our governments perform. "We have met the enemy and he is us (Pogo)."

There are small signs that we have begun to turn the corner and are moving toward improved confidence in government. However, given the pervasiveness of negative perceptions, it is time to get on with the job of telling the story of what government really is, what it does for us, and what our respective responsibilities are. We must begin the job of rebuilding trust, reconnecting people with their government, and fostering citizen involvement in governance and community affairs. It is important that we succeed, not

only to overcome impasses to solving community problems, but also to overcome threats to American democracy itself.

This paper will begin with a brief overview of the problem. It will then provide a few reminders about why we need government. The paper will then present a number of successful strategies that local governments have employed to dispel negative attitudes toward government, to reconnect people with government and to restore civility to the public dialogue and community problem-solving process. It will also suggest some resources for further information and ideas.

Evidence of a Problem

Declining Confidence in Government

Opinion polls in recent years have painted a grim picture of citizen understanding and trust in government. One survey revealed that two out of three people surveyed could not name their representative in Congress. They were also misinformed about how the federal budget was spent. For instance, almost 60 percent believe that foreign aid outlays are greater than expenditures for Medicare. In fact, foreign aid constitutes less than two percent of federal spending compared to 13 percent for Medicare (Williams, 1996).

The Washington Post/Harvard/Kaiser poll and other surveys indicate that trust in government has eroded significantly. In 1964, when asked "How much of the time do you trust the government in Washington to do the right thing?" 76 percent of the people responded all or most of the time. Thirty years later, only 25 percent were so trusting. Such a low level of trust is cause for concern and even a threat to democracy. The poll found that 61 percent of the trusting respondents voted compared to 35 percent of those exhibiting low trust (Williams, 1996).

Governments in the state of Washington by no means have evaded such criticism. The Mood of Washington poll revealed that only 32 percent of those polled expressed satisfaction with the way government works, and only 34 percent agreed that they "have a real say" with what government does. Seventy-two percent agreed that they were "frustrated with the way government works." Only 23.3 percent could agree with the statement that politicians look out for the interests of the public before looking out for their own interests (Paulson, 1996).

A national survey conducted by Hart/Teeter for the Council for Excellence in Government found that 9 out of 10 respondents could readily cite examples of the "biggest problems" with government, while 42 percent could not name any successes. However, when asked about the value of specific government programs, large majorities judged federal programs in 10 areas to be successful. More than eight out of ten even agreed that spending on a number of programs such as social security, armed services, Medicare, enforcing workplace safety and health regulations, college loan programs, environmental protection regulations, and federal law enforcement was a good use of their tax dollars. Reminding respondents about specific government programs apparently elicited a more positive response toward government (Shields, 1997).

Parallel Disengagement from Civic and Religious Groups

A number of studies suggest a parallel decline in the level of participation in civic, religious and other voluntary associations. As early as the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville identified "American's propensity for civic association... as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work." Today, however, researcher Robert Putnam observes, symbolically, that more people are bowling than ever before, but they are bowling alone—no longer in teams. Participation in church-related activities has declined modestly since the 1960s. Membership in unions, PTA, the national Federation of Women's Clubs, League of Women Voters, Boy Scouts and the Red Cross has dropped more precipitously, often by more than 50 percent. Fraternal organizations/service clubs such as the Elks, Jaycees and Masons have all experienced significant declines (Putnam, 1995).

These declines in participation are a concern because of evidence that the social connections formed in such organizations tend to build trust between people. Studies also show there is a strong relationship between basic trust in human nature and trust in government. Such organizations function as training grounds for future leaders and build skills and habits of cooperating for mutual benefit.

Some scholars cite evidence that Americans have switched allegiances rather than simply stopped joining. Young adults today may be more inclined to join national mailing list organizations (such as the National Rifle Association or Children's Defense Fund), special interest groups or professional organizations. Such organizations focus on narrow interests (rather than community-based issues) and provide less opportunity for direct participation, local leadership and deliberation. In addition, some of the growing organizations may be more inward-looking, fostering bonds among members, but distrust of outsiders (Galston and Levine, 1997). In any event, it appears that membership has declined in some types of organizations that have in the past played significant roles in building bonds between people and in addressing community needs.

Roots of the Problem

"...when citizens start seeing themselves only as customers, they focus on their own needs without much thought to the needs of others. The citizen as customer is passive role with no responsibility attached to it."

The seeds of current citizen discontent may be explained, in part, by the failure of at least some governments to stay in touch with or meet current needs. However, government may also be blamed for societal trends and revolutionary changes that government did not create. Changing demographics and family relationships, global competition and an impersonal technology revolution have triggered anxieties about job loss, isolation and other social ills. Many feel left behind, even as a robust economy rewards those who are better positioned. These fears may get redirected toward government agencies which don't seem to be doing enough to cushion Joe Citizen from a very bumpy road as we transition into the information age.

Some degree of distrust in government has existed since the founding of this country as evidenced by the separation of powers at the federal level and the division of powers between federal, state and local governments (McCormick, 1996). Vietnam and Watergate may represent turning points when our faith in our political leaders was badly shaken. As our population and government agencies grow in size, representatives in government begin to seem less accessible, less accountable, and less in tune with the needs of all of the groups they are expected to represent.

Overly complex environmental regulations, and lengthy, duplicative permit processes that have evolved in some communities, have also reduced support for government. As an example, King County's building and land development permit department had developed a backlog of over 1,000 permit applications and an average waiting period of 18 months before reforms were instituted (Municipal League, 1992). Where these conditions have developed, they have contributed to eroding citizen support.

As government services and agencies grow, government delivery of services may seem faceless. Services are provided to "customers" without direct contact, interaction or consultation about the choices offered. Many publications on reinventing government advocate that government agencies should follow the private sector model and place increased emphasis on responsive customer service. In the delivery of certain services, such as water service or garbage pick-up, government may appropriately act in the role of a business providing services to a customer. For these transactions, citizens should expect courtesy, promptness, efficiency and quality, or they will continue to vent their frustrations about government. However, when citizens start seeing themselves only as customers, they focus on their own needs without much thought to the needs of others. The citizen as customer is a passive role with no responsibility attached to it. Unlike many private

sector transactions, government transactions, such as the issuance of a development permit, can affect many people other than just the "customer." The "business" of government must be conducted in a way that considers the broader interests of the community. Some types of programs may be better served by the "barn-raising" approach where citizens join together to accomplish what they cannot accomplish alone. In this model, they share responsibility for shaping/tailoring programs that best meet their needs, balanced with the needs of the community as a whole. Citizen involvement is essential for tasks such as developing a vision for the community's future or choosing strategies for community development, meeting housing and transportation needs, and participating in making communities safe (Miller, 1996).

Citizens also have become alienated as they feel less able to influence the political process. Many share the wide-spread perception that special interest groups and those with money control public policy decisions. Negative campaigning, misleading soundbite ads, broken promises, and trends in campaign financing practices, including the seemingly unending quest for dollars to finance expensive television advertising, have further eroded confidence in elected officials. Citizens appear to be increasingly disgusted with divisive debates, name-calling, and lack of civility displayed by politicians who have forgotten the art of compromise.

Meanwhile, the media too often fails to deliver the hard information and analysis the public needs to make informed decisions about candidates for office. Looking for the spice that attracts readership, the media may play up divisiveness and seek catchy soundbites. Political candidates may manipulate and spoon-feed the media with a spin-doctored slant on the facts.

A host of other socio-economic trends likely have contributed to the reduced sense of connection with others and government. Higher divorce rates, an increasing share of single parent households and households with two wage-earners leave less time for participation in community affairs. People are moving more often, to the suburbs, employment centers or the Sun Belt, in pursuit of jobs, affordable housing, and more pleasing environment. Such mobility can curtail participation since it takes time to put down roots and establish new connections. As Americans move away from traditional towns and close-knit neighborhoods, they may also be less inclined to interact with others. Longer commutes from remote suburban locations to less centralized job centers can also steal time that might have been used for social or civic interactions. Perhaps also significant are the effects of 78 million baby boomers (who some argue tend to place personal choice before all other values) going through a midlife crisis at the same time, as National League of Cities futurist Jim Kruppes observes.

Economic trends, such as global competition, corporate consolidation and down-sizing, and the decline of unions have left many vulnerable. The same technology that has fueled impressive gains in economic productivity, has

created job instability for those who fall victim to automation or lack technology skills required for new jobs. While some benefit disproportionately from the booming economy, those in the bottom fifth of income levels are experiencing precipitous drops in real wages. Wages remain stagnant for the average middle-class American (Stein, 1996). Workers can no longer expect a secure job with one company for life. Instead, life-long learning and more frequent job changes may be the rule of the day. Meanwhile, welfare reform, regulatory reform and decreased federal and state funding have punched holes in safety net programs. Again, government may receive the blame for inadequately cushioning those who are falling through the cracks.

The computer, and communications and transportation improvements can serve to bring people at great distances closer together but at the same time, allow transactions with less face-to-face contact, contributing to isolation. The lack of face-to-face contact may contribute to some less than civil dialogues on various Internet chat lines. Studies indicate that TV (and VCR) viewing are consuming increasing amounts of our leisure time, rather than more interactive pursuits. The Internet and other communication innovations transmit what Mindy Cameron, editor of the Seattle Times editorial page, terms a "babble of information"—which doesn't distinguish between well researched information and opinion not based on fact. New communications tools can contribute both to information overload and the rapid spread of misinformation (Cameron, 1997).

Finally, many newer residential areas seem to be designed more to "protect people from community rather than to connect them to it (Oldenberg, 1997)." For instance, the proliferation of gated communities may indicate that concerns about safety have taken precedence over neighborliness. Town squares and other gathering places may be lacking in newer communities. At the same time, the corner store and diner, which afforded more opportunity for meeting one's neighbors, are being replaced by large-scale, more impersonal enterprises rather than neighborhood-oriented establishments. People have less opportunity to know and trust their neighbors.

Government Exists for a Reason and Offers Real Value

"We come together as people to form government because together we can accomplish goals we cannot accomplish alone."

Opinion polls cited earlier indicate that the average citizen is acutely aware of government shortcomings, but far less conscious of the day-to-day benefits government provides. The message about government failures has been more vigorously promoted than the story of its successes. We, who are involved in local government, need to stop and remind ourselves about why we created government in the first place, and what benefits government provides us. We must then aggressively tell the story about the value of government and our mutual responsibility to make it work.

As former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice eloquently explains, "We come together as people to form government because together we can accomplish goals we cannot accomplish alone. Unless we join together, we have no hope of protecting our quality of life or our individual freedoms (1995)." Many expensive and extensive services and networks, such as roads, sewer, public safety or a human services safety net cannot be accomplished if we proceed as individuals, pursuing only our individual interests.

As Dan Kaline, a Missouri planner further observes, "A community requires that its members accept limits on personal choice for the common good (1996)." In other words, civilized people living together in communities, must agree to certain ground rules in order to live together in peace and harmony. The "tragedy of the commons" parable provides a particularly clear illustration of this point. In this tale, a pasture exists which is open to all to use. Each herdsman, in pursuit of his own interests, can be expected to graze as many cattle as possible on the common area pasture. As a rational being, each herdsman will want to continue to add cattle to his herd to maximize his gain when selling the cattle. For some years, the pasture may continue to support the separate herds, if disease, poaching, or predators keep the number of cattle below the carrying capacity of the land. At some point in time as the number of cattle grows, the land will become overgrazed and will be able to support fewer and fewer cattle. Eventually, even the original number can no longer be supported. The moral of the story is that complete freedom in a commons brings ruin to all. Unless the herdsmen can agree to limits on their individual rights, the benefits they receive from the commons will be diminished or lost altogether.

When we focus on unrestricted freedom as the supreme value, we sometimes forget the logic behind infringing on the "rights" of would-be

"politics should not be a grubby confrontation of competing interests but an arena in which citizens learn from each other and develop an enlightened self-interest in common."

robbers, or the rights of an upstream property owner to fill land which will cause a downstream neighbor to experience flood damage. Similarly, no one enjoys paying taxes for public services, "but we accept compulsory taxes because we know that voluntary taxes would favor the conscienceless (Hardin, 1968)."

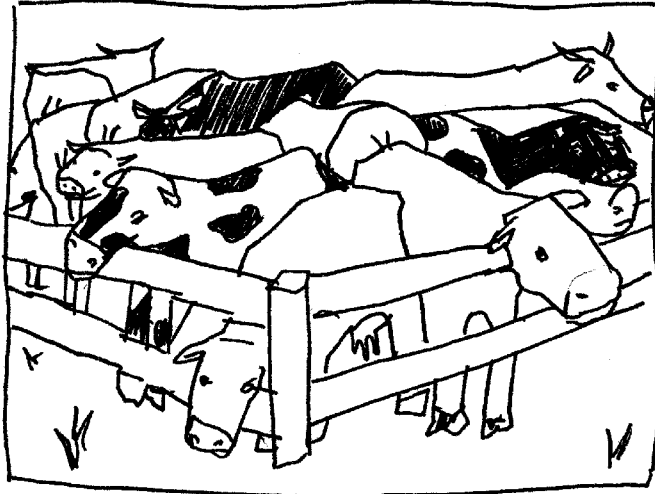


Figure 1 Complete freedom in a commons brings ruin to all. In a community, we must agree to accept limits on individual freedom.

Local government and our political process provide the means to sort out competing interests and diverse needs that exist within a community. The political process and a public dialogue on issues also can lead to compromises and solutions which may be more equitable and fair to diverse groups in a community. As noted in an article in the *Municipal League's Issue Watch*, "politics should not be a grubby confrontation of competing interests but an arena in which citizens learn from each other and develop an enlightened self-interest in common." Government is a vehicle which facilitates our pursuit of individual self-interests when we respect the interests of others and cooperate with others to promote our collective interests and the common good.

Government officials are frequently accused of imposing their will on that of individual property owners and citizens. Local officials are not elected to impose their will on others. Instead, local officials initially gain legitimacy because citizens of the community have elected them, believing that they will represent their interests. Local officials maintain legitimacy to the extent that they maintain open, honest lines of communication, provide opportunities for citizens with diverse viewpoints to be heard, work with the community to develop a shared vision and agreed upon goals, and then follow those goals.

As long as they follow those goals, which represent the will of the people, they maintain the right to make decisions for the community. This is a different concept of leadership than the Gary Cooper heroic form of leadership, as Otis White, editor of the *Community Leadership Quarterly* points out. Gary Cooper is a man who rides into town and stands alone, relying on his own resources and principles to "do the right thing." He has no followers. The more affable Andy Griffith may be a bit dull by comparison, and unlike Gary Cooper, doesn't wear a gun. Instead, he has cultivated a personal relationship with his town's citizens. When the sheriff has the town behind him, presenting a united front, as Griffith does, it is a safer community. The gun is no longer the main key to the community's safety (White, 1996).

There will always be disagreement about the proper extent of government. Whatever we ultimately define as the proper roles for our local governments, we need to recognize that existing government regulations or services did not generally come about by accident. For instance, we adopted environmental protections in response to instances of flood damage, declining water quality, and other undesirable effects that we agreed were problems. Sewer systems and garbage disposal programs were set up to address community-recognized needs. From time to time, local governments and their citizens will need to re-evaluate whether these needs still exist or whether a better approach to the problem can be adopted. Yet, we need to recognize the events that led to the adoption of such programs and controls before discounting the need for them and arbitrarily abandoning them.

Strategies for Reconnecting Citizens and Government

Too often we forget that the citizens of a community have a mutual responsibility for the community's future. Local officials must focus on how to draw people into caring about their community. To succeed, they must help citizens to recognize common values and to develop the commitment to each other's welfare that is necessary for a community to be a community. They must help citizens to understand the connection between their own self interest and what is good for the community as a whole. Citizens will be more inclined to become involved to the extent that they believe that something will come of their efforts and they can understand how their long term interests are served. Local officials will then need to provide suitable vehicles for staying in touch with and involving citizens. The best government policies, and those which are best supported, result from collaborative efforts among government, citizens and stakeholders, and the civic and religious organizations which are the moral anchors of our communities. As former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice observes, we need "to build partnerships, not draw lines in the sand." As Beverly Stein, Multnomah County (OR) Chair stresses, it is not enough to ask whether government is providing good service. Instead, we must ask ourselves whether government is advancing democracy by serving as a catalyst to bring resources, people, and plans together to accomplish our common goals (1996).

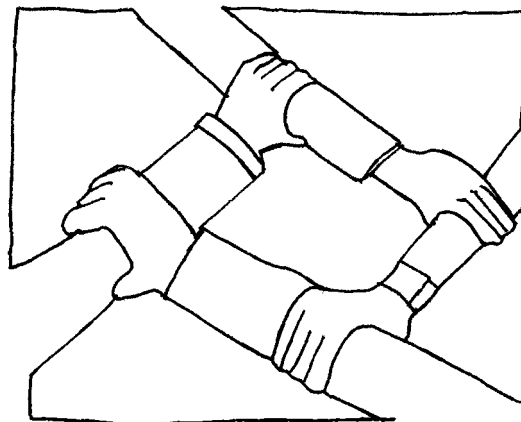


Figure 2 Government is our mutual responsibility. We need to build partnerships, not draw lines in the sand.

"The East Lansing study provided convincing evidence that government services are a good value relative to the value received from purchasing private services."

As the following examples illustrate, many communities have begun innovative efforts to reach out, to raise understanding, to get out the word about beneficial government services and programs, to restore trust and to strengthen connection between citizens and government:

Getting the Word Out—Government Value/ Tax Dollars Well Spent

▲ Budget in Brief (Grand Junction, CO)

As a part of its budget process, the city of Grand Junction, CO prepares "Budget in Brief," a simplified, user-friendly summary report of the city's budget. Prepared by a city department, the document is reviewed by a citizen panel for readability, content, format and usefulness. The document is distributed to business and is available at libraries, city hall, neighborhood meetings and upon request. The brief provides citizens with a clearer picture of city services and what tax dollars pay for. It has made the budget accessible to more of its citizens. It also provides officials with a quick reference tool helpful for answering questions contact: 970/244-1515, City of Grand Junction, CO. Finance Department.

▲ Value Received for Taxes Study (East Lansing, MI)

Tom Dority and Associates conducted and publicized a mini-study comparing the amount typical households in East Lansing, MI, pay in taxes for various public services with the amount they pay for various private services. The study provided convincing evidence that government services are a good value relative to the value received from purchasing private services. For instance, the typical East Lansing household paid only \$205 a year for police protection in 1993, but would have spent \$240 that year to purchase cable TV service. Similarly, the study revealed that it cost the typical family less to support the public library each year (\$24) than for one family dinner out in a nice restaurant. The price of two movie tickets a month for a year is significantly more than fire protection per household per year. *Contact:* Thomas C. Dority, (former East Lansing city manager), 517/333-1781, Tom Dority & Associates, East Lansing, MI.

▲ Speakers Bureaus and Marketing Plan Measures (Walla Walla/Steilacoom, WA)

Walla Walla offers presentations and tours on over 50 municipal-related subjects to schools, clubs, neighborhood groups or other interested groups. The city draws on the expertise of speakers from a variety of city departments ranging from the city manager's office to police or public works. The city will provide the needed audio/video equipment, help with locating meeting space and will often tailor the presentation to the time requirements of the organization. The city has also adopted a many-pronged marketing plan to improve the city's image. Strategies include sponsoring a bi-weekly "City

Focus" radio show, preparing written press releases, audio broadcasting of city council and planning commission meetings on cable TV (local access channel), reorganization of a city services directory in the phone book by functional categories instead of by departments, holding a series of public forums on city service priorities and economic development, and other programs. Since plan strategies were initiated, applications for city council elections increased 100 percent in 1996. Other indicators include increased applications for boards and commissions (up 65 percent) a reduction in complaints about service, and success with bond issues requiring voter approval. *Contact:* City Manager's office 509/527-4522 or individual departments. Steilacoom coordinates with the school district to offer Community Education Team programs. That program utilizes staff from a variety of city departments to present programs directed at students. *Contact:* Nancy Covert, Public Information, 253/581-1900.

▲ **The Great Debate (OR)**

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Portland MetroHomebuilders Association, co-sponsored a "great debate" to get out issues that weren't being thoroughly aired through other means. The central issues debated were whether the state's approach to growth management was working and whether regional planning and government should be abandoned. Following a statewide survey on these and related issues, a public forum, attended by 300 people, was held. The forum consisted of several panels and a luncheon speaker followed by several debates. The first part of the program focused on presenting the facts and survey results. The debates then followed. The forum and debate were taped for the Town Hall TV program aired at a later date. In addition, many other people were reached through in-depth media coverage in the *Oregonian*, the *Business Journal*, talk radio and other sources. The debate and follow-up coverage was successful in providing deeper public understanding of complex issues and differing viewpoints. *Contact:* Rick Carson, APA, Oregon City, OR, 503/657-0891.

Education to Improve Understanding/ Develop Collaboration Skills

▲ **Neighborhood Leadership Institute (Dayton, OH)**

Dayton's Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI) was established to (1) expand the pool of skilled neighborhood and potential city leaders, (2) broaden their understanding of community and city government, (3) encourage networking among neighborhood leaders, and 4) build skills to resolve neighborhood problems on their own or in collaboration with other institutions. The 14-session program covers topics such as the role of government and various departments, and issues such as cultural diversity.

It also includes skill building sessions such as public speaking or small group dynamics. Participants also are expected to complete a practicum (a project that benefits their own community such as working with the city to set up a neighborhood recreation activity or crime watch program). *Contact:* Shelly Dickstein, city of Dayton, 937/443-3775. A number of cities, including Renton, WA run police academies that seek to accomplish similar objectives, but focused on citizen/police understanding/relationships.

▲ **Student Government Day (Canon City, CO; Burien, WA)**

A student government day in Canon City, CO gives students a close-up view of local government. High schools seniors are first paired with a local government official to learn about what the official does. They then participate in committee meetings along with their government counterpart, discussing a typical issue that will be on the mock city council agenda. They receive advance packets of materials to study as a council member would. They then conduct a mock council meeting where issues are debated. The program has proven to be an inexpensive way to increase understanding and to involve youth in local government. *Contact:* Terry Kimbrel, Canon City Clerk, 719/269-9011. The city of Burien, WA has also conducted mock city council role-playing exercise for students. *Contact:* City of Burien, 206/241-4647.

▲ **Plan to Grow Smart (Olympia, WA)**

The city of Olympia, WA developed an interactive curriculum for 4th through 7th grade students, designed to fit into civics and history programs. The presentations provide information on Olympia's historical growth about what the city council and planning commission does, how decisions are made, how citizens can get involved in improving their communities, and about the city plan for the future. The program uses maps, slides and a poster to stimulate discussion. In addition, the city developed a slide/tape or video program aimed at older students and adults. After the council approved the program outline, city staff worked with teachers to polish the interactive program. The program has both raised understanding and provided feedback about planning issues. *Contact:* Kathy McCormick, Olympia Community Planning and Development, 360/786-5745 or 360/754-4413.

Working with Media Toward More Accurate, Favorable Coverage

▲ **Media Relations Handbook (Richland, WA)**

The city of Richland has adopted policies and prepared a media relations handbook to provide guidance to employees in dealing with media. The handbook advocates honest, timely, but thoughtful responses to calls from media, recognizing that cooperation will improve the accuracy and tone of

"The handbook advocates honest, timely, but thoughtful responses to calls from media, recognizing that cooperation will improve the accuracy and tone of news coverage."

news coverage. The handbook provides guidance on preparing for interviews and news releases. The city also has appointed a public information officer who arranges news conferences, public service announcements and news releases, and who is available to advise other employees. *Contact:* Candace Andrews 509/943-7390.

▲ **Ongoing Contacts (Tempe, AZ)**

The mayor of Tempe meets over breakfast on a monthly basis with the editor of the local newspaper to discuss city issues and programs. The newspaper offers a weekly column (The Town Crier) that highlights city/civic happenings. *Contact:* Mayor Neil Guiliano 602/350-8225.

See also a following section on Yakima's cable TV public affairs broadcasts.

Involving Citizens in Shaping Their Community's Future

▲ **Redmond Community Forum (Redmond, WA)**

Redmond's innovative community involvement program is designed to encourage participation from a broader spectrum of the community than traditionally participates at public hearings. The ongoing program provides an opportunity to discuss issues facing the community. Citizens are organized in small groups (8 to 12 people) who meet at their convenience over a three week period, three or four times a year. The meetings are often held in homes, classrooms or less intimidating settings than typical for public hearings. A volunteer citizen "convener" organizes the meeting. All citizens are invited to participate. Each forum focuses on a topic chosen by participants at the previous forum. The city produces a video and other materials providing background information on the topic to kick off the discussion. Each participant is asked to make a statement expressing his/her views on the issue, while others listen. Participants all fill out a detailed survey on the topic. The city analyzes and publishes the survey results in a newsletter, at a press conference and in a presentation before the Council. About 300 citizens are participating in the ongoing program. The program provides a deeper understanding about issues and the viewpoints of a broad spectrum of groups. It provides feedback to the council, and an ongoing dialogue between citizens and government. It also provides an opportunity for consensus building, leadership training and other benefits. *Contact:* Martha Hurwitz, 425/556-2427.

▲ **Helping Citizens Develop a Shared Vision for Their Community's Future (Yakima/Port Townsend, WA)**

Washington State's growth management plan requirement stimulated a number of innovative local government efforts to encourage earlier and more representative citizen involvement. Many communities began the process

by working with citizens toward developing a vision of what the community should be like in the future. The resulting vision statements were then used to guide plan development. Port Townsend used small group "coffee hour" discussion of basic questions such as why do people move or leave Port Townsend? What do you like, dislike about the community? What needs improvement? Similar to Redmond, Port Townsend desired more comfortable, informal ways to encourage a broader spectrum of citizens to participate in discussions about the city's future. A follow-up workshop was used to pull together common themes from the individual coffee hour discussions.

In Yakima County, a sixteen member steering committee representing a broad range of interests led the visioning effort. The committee recruited volunteers for nine subcommittees or action teams, consisting of 20 to 30 volunteers, to focus on major issues areas (growth planning/environment, rural and agriculture, economic development, quality of life, education/employee training, health care, humanity and family and housing). The steering committee also held town meetings, including one broadcast on local cable TV , which permitted viewers to call in with questions and comments.

▲ Meeting in a Box (Spokane County, WA)

Spokane County developed a highly innovative and national award-winning approach for involving a large number of citizens in its Blueprint 2000 comprehensive planning process. "Meeting in a Box" is a self-guided workshop that contains everything needed for individuals, clubs, service organizations or neighborhood groups to host a workshop in a comfortable setting, such as a home. The box contains an instruction manual, a 10-minute video, brochures, maps that relate to planning issues, and a newsletter on regional growth management. An opinion survey was also included to gauge participants preferences about future growth and development. Numerous public service announcements and ads, and extensive television and radio coverage spread the word about the workshop. Any county resident could reserve a "box" and host a workshop. Multimedia materials included in the box, and the opportunity for a more informal meeting environment, appealed to a wider range of the public than past approaches. Materials were very effective at informing, increasing understanding about complex issues, and stimulating an open, constructive dialogue. The meeting format also reduced staff time needed to carry out a more traditional meeting format. Over 2500 people participated in 100 such meetings on a very modest budget. *Contact:* Geryl Haas 509/456-3675.

"These programs seek to reach out to citizens and develop partnerships and a sense of shared responsibility for community safety and improved quality of life."

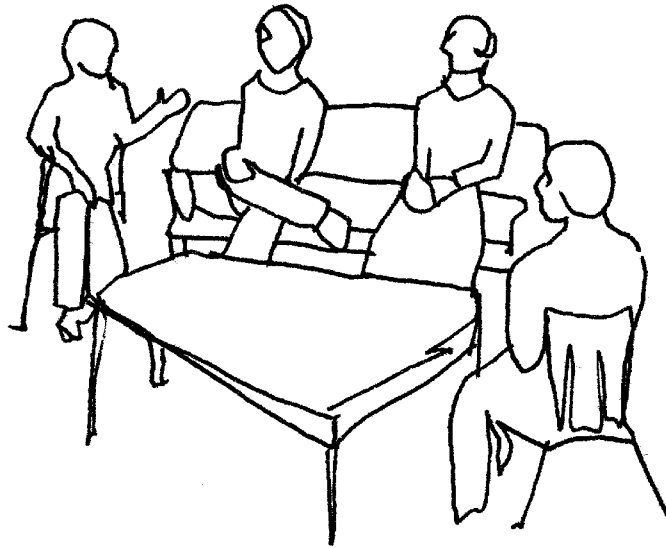


Figure 3 A convenient, informal setting can attract broader participation.

Involving Citizens in Community Improvement

▲ Work Involvement Now Youth Program (Lacey, WA)

Lacey continues to sponsor a successful program designed to encourage youth to volunteer time on community improvement projects. The youth completed many projects that benefit the city that might not otherwise have been done. More importantly, from the city's perspective, the program serves to involve youth in a positive way, foster good citizenship, get youth and adults working together on common goals, and foster community pride. Over the course of several years, nearly 1,700 youth and their leaders have contributed over 5,000 hours to program projects. *Contact:* Steve Beard, city of Lacey, 360/438-2671.

▲ Community Oriented Policing Programs (Spokane/Enumclaw, WA)

Enumclaw and Spokane represent large and small Washington communities that have initiated community-oriented policing programs. These programs seek to reach out to citizens and develop partnerships and a sense of shared responsibility for community safety and improved quality of life. For instance, Officers in Enumclaw are expected to make personal contacts with residents to develop a closer relationship with community residents. They are held responsible for resolving issues within their assigned area of the city, before they develop into larger problems. Several of Enumclaw's officer patrol on bicycles, bringing them closer to the community. Enumclaw also runs a police academy which provides citizens with a better understanding of police

services and citizens roles in improved safety. Both cities involve volunteers to support and extend police work. For instance, Spokane has a trained and committed core of 2,300 neighborhood volunteers, most of whom volunteer time weekly to staff neighborhood substations, take non-emergency police reports, patrol their neighborhoods, and otherwise help their neighbors. The volunteers have taken on graffiti reporting and abatement for the entire city. Volunteers also work with neighbors to document cases, contact owners and eradicate long-standing problems with drug and nuisance properties. Police departments in both cities work with neighborhoods through a number of crime prevention or safety oriented programs such as neighborhood watches, business check and security evaluations, constructive youth activities, education and mentoring, bicycle rodeos/safety instruction and many others. Contacts: Michael Quinn, Enumclaw City Administrator, 360/825-3591 and Cheryl Steele, Spokane Community-Oriented Policing Program, 509/625-3300.

▲ Community Improvement Task Forces (Entiat, WA)

The City of Entiat surveyed citizens about community needs, strengths and weaknesses and presented results at a public workshop in 1992. Following the workshop, the city set up five citizen task forces to develop ideas that would address major needs identified by the survey and to capitalize on opportunities. The task forces pursued concerns in areas such as industrial development, a civic/cultural center, youth activities, tourism/retail trade, town beautification and residential housing. Over 100 volunteers (in a city with under 600 residents) became involved in projects initiated by the various task forces.

Supporting Neighborhoods as Incubators for Active Citizenship

▲ Neighborhood Planning and Project Involvement (Seattle, WA)

Seattle has pioneered a number of programs to connect with citizens through neighborhood partnership programs. Seattle allows neighborhoods targeted for growth an unusual degree of control over shaping neighborhood plans and projects. Neighborhood groups, who can demonstrate broad representation of the stakeholders, may join together, define logical neighborhood boundaries and request planning funds and staff assistance to develop a neighborhood plan and priorities for investment in the neighborhood. The groups hire consultants to produce plans and negotiate among themselves to agree on planning recommendations. Neighborhood plans must be consistent with the city's comprehensive plan. Some 37 neighborhood planning groups in the city have formed with city assistance. Residents of neighborhoods which have clashed with the city over past zoning measures are now partners in finding solutions to problems that work

"The city of Bellevue has brought government closer to the people by operating branch city halls located in popular shopping malls..."

for their neighborhoods. The city also offers matching funds for neighborhood initiated projects. The neighborhood group must match the city's funds with donated time, materials, labor or money. Again, the program is intended to get people actively involved in improving their neighborhoods. The program has funded more than 700 projects ranging from whimsical bridge troll art to anti-violence programs, and has received national recognition. Seattle also has developed the outstanding "Outreach Tool Set," a guidebook to help neighborhood groups involve a full spectrum of participants, overcome barriers, effectively conduct meetings, and work toward a neighborhood vision. *Contact:* Karma Ruder 206/684-8493.

▲ Neighborhood Liaison (Vancouver, WA)

Vancouver has a variety of successful neighborhood programs including a matching grant program for neighborhood projects, planners assigned to work with each neighborhood, mediation assistance between neighbors, a volunteer neighborhood speedwatch, and others. In addition, each neighborhood is assigned a general city and a police liaison. The liaisons are not only expected to listen to neighborhood concerns, but are expected to serve as advocates for the neighborhood association. As such, they provide a strong communication link between the city and its neighborhoods. The liaisons serve as a focal point for complaints, work to identify neighborhood needs and solutions to problems, get to know the neighborhood and its residents, and help neighborhoods to assemble proposals for budget consideration. *Contact:* Office of Neighborhoods, 360/696-8222.

Improving Access to Local Government

▲ City Hall at the Mall (Bellevue, WA)

The city of Bellevue has brought government closer to the people by operating branch city halls located at the busy Crossroads and Factoria shopping malls. The mall city halls' extended hours allow citizens to visit after work and on Saturdays, and they can combine city business with a shopping trip. Visitors can pay utility bills, get information about city programs and make complaints or suggestions. The smaller Factoria Mall City Hall also serves as a police substation. The city halls offer a computer link to downtown city hall or visitors can talk in person to a city employee on site. Bellevue's goals for the branch city halls include improving communication, reaching the uninvolved, building neighborhood rapport, publicizing underutilized city programs, and providing superior customer service. Bellevue was especially anxious to reach out to the Crossroads community, an area with large apartment complexes and a growing minority population. *Contact:* 425/452-2800.

▲ Language Resource Guide (Bellevue, WA)

To make city services more accessible for a second-language visitors, Bellevue maintains a listing of foreign language speakers who can help with interpretation. City employees and others are listed by languages spoken, noting the level of fluency. Help is available with an impressively wide variety of languages.

Using Technology to Inform and Foster Interaction

▲ Yakima Public Affairs Cable (Yakima, WA)

The city of Yakima has received an impressive array of local and national awards for innovative programming on its cable TV public affairs channel. Yakima Community Television (YCTV), staffed by city employees, televises weekly council meetings live, with taped replays. People have actually driven down to city hall to testify, when excited by live televised meetings they were viewing in their homes. In addition, public forums, news conferences, and various presentations and public speeches are covered. YCTV offers a variety of programs on topics such as fire safety, annexation, irrigation water rates, and neighborhood clean-up. YCTV also offers a monthly call in program on growth management and frequent interviews with the mayor and other city staff. The YCTV staff provides expertise and works with city departments and community organizations to produce programs for public viewing. Some 800 citizen-producers are certified to do programs for YCTV. Citizen interest is evidenced by the positive feedback, frequent phone calls responding to programming, and the number of citizen producers who have become involved. The program is funded through the five percent franchise fees the city collects from its cable TV operator. *Contact:* Randy Beechler, Cable Communications Manager, 509/575-6000.

▲ Online Opportunity for Citizen Comment (Metropolitan King County, WA)

Similar to many cities and counties, Metropolitan King County provides a variety of online information about County services, organization, community profile data, employment, election results, events and other news. Recently, King County took their Web site a step further. The County now provides the opportunity for citizens to review the proposed annual Budget (and other proposed ordinances) and to submit testimony, without leaving home, via an E-Mail form provided at the Web site. The testimony is routed to councilmembers and becomes a part of the official record on the matter. The county received numerous comments on the documents and a favorable reaction to this opportunity. *Contact:* <http://www.metrokc.gov/>

▲ Permit Applications Available Online (Clearwater, FL)

Clearwater, FL provides instructions, submittal requirements and applications forms for over 30 different types of city permits or affidavits, ranging from building permits to occupational licenses. Online users can also request

information from the tourist office, review city commission agendas and minutes, submit employment or volunteer applications, reserve a meeting room, request a library loan, subscribe to publications, submit a question to the reference staff, suggest a library purchase, and benefit from other services. *Contact:* <http://public.lib.ci.clearwater.fl.us/forms.html>.

Customer Service at the Permit Counter

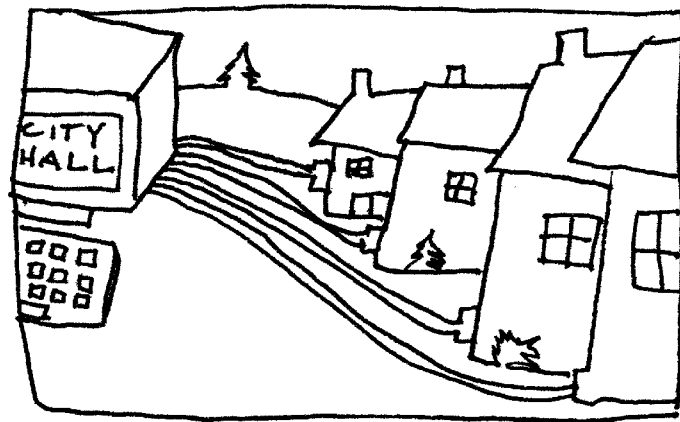


Figure 4 Technology can get the word out efficiently and provided convenient access.

Permit Assistance and Streamlined Review (Clark County, WA)

Clark County has adopted a number of measures that should reduce the frustrations of review processes without sacrificing appropriate control over the quality of development. The County requires a pre-application conference, prior to receiving an official application, to clarify requirements and discuss issues at an early stage. County staff use a checklist to provide quick feedback about obvious application deficiencies at the permit counter, typically on the same day. The applicant will then receive notice about whether the application is technically complete within 5 to 28 days. A single planner is assigned as a contact and to coordinate all department comments on the project. A review team with representation from different departments will be convened to quickly identify issues, immediately after submission. Clark County staff have developed an exemplary set of permit assistance handouts and materials to help explain various permit processes. The handouts cover purpose, procedural steps and time limits, and submittal requirements. Standardized forms, clear English, and illustrations help clarify permit procedures. Staff at the permit counter are available to answer questions, and a comfortable waiting area, complete with helpful signage and coffee, is provided. Computer programs are used to track permits.

Several computer terminals are available in the lobby for those who wish to quickly check permit status. *Contact:* Pam Stephens or Craig Greenleaf, 360/699-2375.

Physical Design to Facilitate Social Interaction

▲ Neo-traditional Design (Dupont, WA)

A number of communities are rediscovering the fact that community design can facilitate social interaction and ultimately, participation in community affairs. For instance, Dupont's plan and land use regulations encourage neotraditional development patterned after the historic town of Dupont. The plan envisions five neighborhoods, each with a village service area within walking distance of all parts of the neighborhood. An overall plan for a neighborhood/village must be prepared before portions may be platted. Each village is to contain schools, village greens or parks, pocket parks, neighborhood-oriented retail and services, daycare, recreation for residents and employees, and other facilities which serve residents and encourage interaction. Sidewalks, trail systems, narrow streets in grid patterns, traffic calming devices, weather protection, and pedestrian amenities are planned to make it easier to get out of cars and walk. Suburban-style development, which in its worst form consists of "isolated, disconnected, auto-oriented enclaves," is discouraged. Multifamily development is encouraged in the form of small-scale three to four unit townhouses or duplexes, making it easier to know neighbors in other units. Features such as front porches, locating houses closer to the street and other design features further promote interactions with neighbors. Policies to encourage mixed income development and dispersion of affordable housing types may also lessen social divisions in Dupont. The impressive success of the Northwest Landing development demonstrates a strong market for development that facilitates

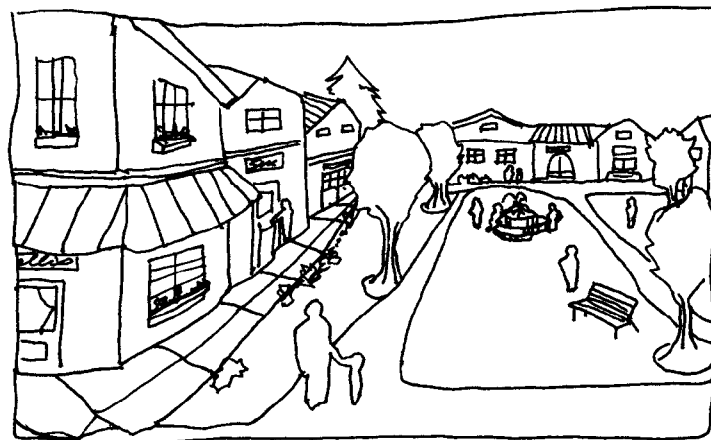


Figure 5 Community design can facilitate social interaction/participation.

neighborhood interaction. *Contact:* Dennis Clarke, Dupont Planning Director, 253/964-8121.

Conclusion

In recent years, the work of local government has been handicapped by declining citizen confidence and involvement in government. Whether the lost trust has resulted primarily from government's own failures, or is a reflection of dramatically changing times, action is needed. We, who are involved in government, must take immediate steps to reach out, restore trust, and foster renewed citizen involvement in government and community. We must remind ourselves and others about what government is, what it does for us and what our mutual responsibilities are, to make government work for all of us. We must get out the word about government successes, without whitewashing the problems that must be addressed. To succeed, collaborative partnerships between local officials, a full spectrum of citizens, and the community institutions which anchor the community will be required. Local officials must focus on how to draw people into caring about their community. They must help citizens to understand the connection between their own self interest and what is good for the community as a whole. Local government can and should serve as a catalyst to bring resources, people, and plans together to accomplish our common goals. Many communities have taken innovative and effective steps toward involving citizens in new ways and restoring trust, as presented here. In sharing some of these stories, we have the opportunity to learn from each other about new ways to make local government work for all of us in a new age.

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Online Civic Engagement Resources

▲ **Trust in Government Project** (University of Washington Graduate School - Public Affairs)
<http://www.gspa.washington.edu/trust/tighome.html>

Trust in Government Project
Graduate School of Public Affairs
University of Washington
Box 353055
Seattle, WA 98195-3055

Telephone: 206/543-4900
Fax: 206/543-1096

This web page was established to involve local and state government, non-profit organizations, news media and business in exploring the issue of the growing public attitude of cynicism and widespread distrust for government in the US. Site includes synopses of public forums on the issue, articles and essays and links to other relevant web pages.

▲ **The Civic Practices Network**
<http://www.cpn.org/>

Center for Human Resources
Heller School of Advanced Studies in Social Welfare
Brandeis University
60 Turner St
Waltham, MA 02154

Telephone: 617/736-4890
Fax: 617/736-4891
E-mail: cpn@tiac.net

Collaborative, non-partisan project seeking to bring together diverse organizations and perspectives to focus on practice methods of public problem-solving. Includes many examples about what other communities are doing to renew communities and revitalize democracy. Includes case studies, essays, resources, course syllabi, and manuals for civic education.

▲ **Alliance for National Renewal** (Chairman, Bill Bradley; National Civic League)

<http://www.ncl.org/anr/>

National Civic League
1445 Market St, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80202-1728

Telephone: 303/571-4343
E-mail: ncl@ncl.org (Gloria Rubio Cortes)

Initiative of the National Civic League bringing together 190 community-building organizations that want to better communities, with the goal of reversing the negative cynical mood of the country. Includes many success stories of community renewal as well as resources.

▲ **Institute for the Study of Civic Values**

<http://www.libertynet.org/~edcivic/iscvhome.html>

Ed Schwartz
Institute for the Study of Civic Values
1218 Chestnut St, Room 702
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Telephone: 215/238-1434
E-mail: edcivic@libertynet.org (Ed Schwartz)

The Center seeks to promote fulfillment of America's historic values. Includes classic essay and speeches which shaped American civic values from Tocqueville to Martin Luther King (and more contemporary commentary essays.)

▲ **The Civic Network** (Center for Civic Networking)

<http://www.civic.net/>

E-mail: mfidelman@civicnet.org (Miles Fidelman)

Non-profit organization dedicated to applying information infrastructure (use of technology and communications infrastructure) to improve delivery of local government services, and the access to information people need to function as informed citizens. CNN conducts its own projects and collaborates with others on policy research, ongoing education, writing and speaking activities. Recipient of a national information infrastructure award. Focuses on citizen participation resources and models using the Internet. Includes links to telecommunications and civic networking resources directories.

▲ **Brookings Institute**

<http://www.brook.edu/pub/review/oldtoc.htm#FAL97>

This issue of Brookings Review contains a series of articles on civic society and renewal. Also, returning to the Brookings Institute homepage, the menu includes a site on campaign finance reform.

▲ **Penn National Commission on Society, Culture and Community**

<http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/public.html>

Penn National Commission on Society, Culture and Community
100 College Hall
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6380

Telephone: 215/573-6666

Fax: 215/573-6667

E-mail: pnc@pobox.upenn.edu

The commission was established to look at the contemporary explosion of intolerance, ideological extremism and incivility. The commission seeks to promote a robust and diverse public culture in which a reasoned and reasonable discourse can flourish and to reduce the tendency to polarize every issue. Working groups focus on the culture of intolerance, the failure of leadership and fragmentation of communities. The web site has limited offerings at this time including the text of speaker presentations by Bill Bradley, former U.S. Senator, and Judy Roder, President of the University of Pennsylvania

▲ Pew Partnership for Civic Change

<http://pewtrusts.com/>

Pew Charitable Trusts
145-C Ednam Dr
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Telephone: 804/971-2073
Fax: 804/971-7042

The foundation supports non-profit activities in areas of culture, education and environment, health and human services. It has given a number of grants for projects that encourage and support citizen participation in addressing critical issues and effecting social change.

▲ National Commission on Civic Renewal

<http://www.puaf.umd.edu/civicrenewal>

The commission involves individuals from across the political spectrum in assessing the condition of civic engagement in the U.S. today, and proposes specific actions which could improve those conditions. Goals include assembling important scholarly work, sparking discussion, reaching consensus on recommendations for enhancing the quality of citizenship and civic life and inspiring the creation of new institutions and alliances to carry out the work. The site includes summary working papers on these topics, a newsletter reporting on plenary sessions, transcripts from the plenary sessions and a lengthy list of links to the web sites of organizations with goals of improving civic life.

▲ Public Involvement Network (International Association for Public Participation)

<http://www.pin.org/>

International Association for Public Participation
510 SW 3rd Ave, Suite 400
Portland, OR 97204-2593

Telephone: 503/287-4876
Fax: 503/284-5015
E-mail: pin@pin.org

This organization focuses on the practical experience of designing and conducting public involvement programs. The site includes several articles, publications and a journal online on citizen participation, conflict resolution and mediation.

▲ **Planning Commissioners Journal**

<http://www.plannersweb.com>

Planning Commissioners Journal
PO Box 4295
Burlington, VT 05406

Telephone: 802/864-9083

Newsletter with articles on effective citizen participation, working with the media, conflict resolution, value of public gathering places, dealing with difficult people, building an educated community.

▲ **Civnet International Resource for Civic Education and Civil Society**

<http://www.civnet.org/>

Karen Lehrman
Civnet
110 E 59th St, Second Floor
New York, NY 10022

Telephone: 202/826-4447

Fax: 202/826-4657

E-mail: klehrman@usia.gov

Civitas is an international organization dedicated to promoting civic education and society (education for a democratic society). It is aimed at teachers and scholars as well as policy-makers, journalists and non-governmental organizations. The well-organized site includes textbooks, lesson plans, journal articles, book reviews, civic news, events listings organization contacts, a calendar of events and a forum for idea exchange. It includes great historic documents and speeches pertaining to civics and democracy.

▲ Center for Civic Education

[http:// www.civiced.org/](http://www.civiced.org/)

Center for Civic Education
5146 Douglas Fir Rd
Calabasas, CA 91302-1467

Telephone: 818/591-9321
Fax: 818/591-9330
E-mail: center4civ@aol.com

The Center is a non-profit, non-partisan educational corporation dedicated to fostering informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. The Center specializes in civic and citizen-related education, law-related education and international educational exchange programs. Programs focus on the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, American political traditions and institutions at the federal, state and local level, citizen participation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The site includes curricular materials, standards and sample lessons, research reports and publications available from the center's bookstore.