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# Taking Stock of the Council-Manager Form at 100

With the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the city manager position in Staunton, Virginia, which ultimately led to the council-manager form of government, it is appropriate to take stock of what the form means, its current status in local government, and its continuing significance. Some suggest that the time of substantial growth for the C-M form is over (and reversals may be coming) and that changes in structure and politics make the council-manager and mayor-council forms indistinguishable. But arguments presented in this article are that the C-M form continues to make a difference and its use is still growing.

James H. Svava, Phoenix, Arizona, and Kimberly L. Nelson, DeKalb, Illinois.

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**Frank Straub, Ph.D., is the commissioner of public safety for the city of White Plains, New York.**

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PM MAGAZINE

COVER STORY

# Taking Stock of the Council-Manager Form at 100

by James H. Svara and Kimberly L. Nelson

In 1908, a single city adopted what would eventually become the council- manager form of government. In 2008, more than 3,500 cities with populations exceeding 2,500 persons and more than 370 counties use the form. Beyond the direct effect of introducing a new structural option for the organization of local government, this new form also elevated the option of appointing a centrally located generalist administrator in other forms of government. Almost half of mayor-council governments and more than half of the commission and town meeting governments have a chief administrative officer (CAO) or city administrator, and such a position is often found in elected county executive governments as well.

With the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the city manager position in Staunton, Virginia, which ultimately led to the council-manager form of government, it is appropriate to take stock of what the form means, its current status in local government, and its continuing significance. Some suggest that the time of substantial growth is over (and reversals may be coming) and that changes in structure and politics make the council-manager and mayor-council forms indistinguishable.

Furthermore, there are signs of unease among local government managers about the future of professionalism. The arguments presented here are that form continues to make a difference and the use of the council-manager form is still growing. Despite challenges that the council-manager form and professionalism generally face in local government, the future is bright.

There has been much emphasis recently on the supposed “blurring” of distinctions between forms, “adaptation” of forms, and development of “hybrid” forms. The impression is created that the changes that are occurring in the structures of local governments have erased the distinctiveness of form.

Most notably, H. George Frederickson, Gary A. Johnson, and Curtis H. Wood argued in 2004 that a breakdown of two contrasting models of local government based on “traditional” and “reform” elements had by the 1990s altered forms of government: “the fusion of these two *models* had resulted in the dominant modern *form* of American local government, the adapted city.”<sup>1</sup> These impressions affect how practitioners themselves perceive what is happening to their world.

The environmental scan developed for the ICMA Strategic Planning Committee, for example, concluded that “numerous studies suggest that the council-manager form of government has been adapted continually.” Commentator Alan Ehrenhalt has argued that mayor-council and council-manager forms are “merging,” and he asserts that an increasing number of cities “have jumbled the systems together so thoroughly that it’s impossible to put them in any category at all.”<sup>2</sup>

All these statements confuse “form” and “plan” or “model.” The original reform *model* consisted of the council-manager form and the electoral practices of choosing the mayor within the council, selecting councilmembers at-large, and using a nonpartisan ballot. This combination was contained in the second Model City Charter and also was commonly referred to as the council-manager plan. Changes in electoral practices are important, but they do not alter the form of government itself.

The council-manager form can be and is combined with a wide range of structural features. Beyond direct election of the mayor and district representation, most counties including those with the council-manager form use partisan elections, and cities in Europe that use parliamentary systems that approximate the council-manager form usually have active political parties.

The form can create a balanced relationship between politics and professionalism regardless of how the political dimension is organized. The image of instability and corrosive change in the council-manager form is not warranted.

The idea that forms themselves are unimportant or indistinguishable can be challenged on conceptual and empirical grounds.

The debate over form of government continues because American local governments have a choice of which form they will use. The United States is unusual among countries in the world with widespread use of two major forms of government based on different constitutional principles. The overwhelming majority of cities do not change their form, but circumstances can arise in any local government that puts the question of changing form on the public agenda.

The council-manager form is still competing with the mayor-council or county executive form for the support of elected officials and citizens (and vice versa). Advocacy of the council-manager form is no longer a crusade to reform corrupt and incompetent governments. Most cities and counties are highly professionalized at the departmental level. Many cities with mayor-council governments have CAOs.

Proponents make the case that distinct advantages can be attained with the council-manager form because of the essential features of this form compared with the mayor-council form. To understand the claims that can be made in support of the council-manager form, it is important to review the essential features of the major forms as practiced in the United States and other countries.

## Features That Differentiate Forms

There are three major features that differentiate the mayor-council and council-manager forms of government, and all three can be traced back to the origins of the form. Analogous to the distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems, the first feature is the allocation of authority.

The council-manager form places all governmental authority in the hands of the council, with certain functions assigned by law, charter, or convention to the manager appointed by the council. Authority is unified in the collective leadership body of the council. To the early reformers citing the practice of English local government, eliminating separation of powers and strengthening the council was as important to the council-manager form as the creation of the manager's position.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between the council and the manager is based on this allocation of authority. Despite all the words that have been written and spoken about the *separation* of politics and policy from the administration, the unique feature of the council-manager form is the *interaction* of councilmembers and administrators in both policy and administration. As intended by drafters of the model city charter in 1915, the form ensures that a professional perspective will be presented to the council by the manager on all policy decisions and that council oversight can be directed to any administrative action.

With separation of powers, the mayor can limit the policy advice given to the council and can shield staff from council oversight.<sup>4</sup> In the mayor-council form, mayors can also have a substantial impact on the amount and quality of professional advice they receive and share with the council and on the level of professionalism that is present in the administrative organization. In contrast with the council-manager form in which the council has authority over the manager, the mayor in the mayor-council form is a separate and independent executive.

The second feature that differentiates forms is how executive responsibilities are assigned to an elected or appointed administrator. In the council-manager form, executive functions are the responsibility of the city or county manager even if some functions on occasion are shared with other officials. In parliamentary-style local governments in northern Europe, the mayor or other top political figure commonly shares executive authority with the top administrator, but this administrator is still the chief executive officer.

In the mayor-council form, executive responsibilities are exercised under the authority of the mayor. A central coordinating administrative position can be created—a CAO—but in contrast with the clear delegation of executive authority to the city manager, the assignments to the CAO may be determined by the will of the executive mayor.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the council-manager form ensures the linkage of executive responsibilities with a professional top administrator.

When a top administrator is present in the local government form, the third distinguishing feature is whether the administrator is responsible to the entire council or to the mayor. Responsibility to the entire council is an essential characteristic of the council-manager form and helps to ensure both transparency and a focus on the public interest rather than the political interests of a single elected official.

Along with its endorsement of the council-manager form, since 1969 ICMA has also supported CAOs and other generalist administrators in mayor-council cities or elected executive governments in counties. The presence of a CAO does not create a hybrid form in the sense of altering the basic features of the governmental structure. CAOs are universal in the cities of European countries that use the strong-mayor form—France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Germany—and in English cities that elect executive mayors.

Executive authority is still divided from legislative authority and assigned to a mayor who may in turn delegate assignments to the CAO. Most CAOs appointed by the mayor consider themselves to be agents of the mayor. Council confirmation of the CAO adds accountability to the council as well as to the mayor and helps make the CAO a bridge between the mayor and council but does not change the essential features of the form.

A possible hybrid can be found when the council is solely responsible for appointing the CAO—the situation in about

one mayor-council city in four that has a population greater than 10,000 and in a higher proportion of smaller cities. The conditions of unified authority and responsibility of the CAO to the council can be found when the CAO is appointed by the council.

The presence of an elected mayor in the council-manager form does not create a hybrid so long as most executive responsibilities are assigned to the manager and the manager is responsible to the council as a whole. In a small number of council-manager cities—approximately 20 American cities with populations greater than 10,000—the mayor has been formally “empowered” with a greater role in developing the budget and selecting the manager and, in a few cases, removing the manager.

In Long Beach, California, for example, the mayor can veto the council’s selection or removal of the manager; and in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Columbus, Georgia, only the mayor can initiate removal of the city manager. These practices may represent a hybrid because the manager is aligned with the mayor alone for continuation in office.

When only the mayor can initiate termination of the manager, it is possible that the manager will seek to serve the mayor rather than the entire council and, therefore, be more a CAO than a city manager. Although this specific practice is still extremely rare, observers should continue to monitor its impact.

In sum, the essential differentiating characteristics of the major forms of government in the United States continue to depend on how authority is allocated between the council and the executive, the assignment of executive functions, and the reporting relationship of the top administrator. The cities and counties that fall within one form of government or the other may demonstrate extensive variation in specific formal and informal practices but share the basic defining characteristics.

Status: Use of Council-Manager Form and CAOs

The use of the council-manager form has expanded dramatically and continuously throughout its history. Some suggest that the dramatic growth is over, and there has been a widespread impression that the form is losing ground in large cities. Even when examining changes since 1990, however, it is obvious that use of the council-manager form has increased. Overall percentages of cities using the major forms and other forms of government are presented in Figure 1.

There continues to be extensive growth, with a 45 percent increase in the number of council-manager cities. In cities under 10,000 population, there has been a large-scale decline in the use of the mayor-council form and a corresponding increase in council-manager cities, suggesting that many cities are converting their forms. In cities over this population size, the number of council-manager cities has also increased substantially along with stability in the number of mayor-council cities.

Figure 1. Use of Major Forms of Government and Change, 1990–2007.					
All U.S. cities over 2,500 in population	1990	2007	Change		
	% (number)	% (number)	% (number)	Cities smaller than 10,000	Cities larger than 10,000
Mayor-council	54.5% (3,645)	43.5% (3,131)	-14.1% (-514)	-515	1
Council-manager	36.2% (2,420)	48.9% (3,520)	45.5% (1,100)	574	526
Other	9.2% (617)	7.5% (543)	-12.0% (-74)	-47	-27
Total	100.0% (6,682)	100.0% (7,194)	7.7% (512)		

Source: *The Municipal Year Book* 1991 and 2008. The number of cities under 10,000 was 3,914 in 1990 and 3,926 in 2007. The number of cities over 10,000 was 2,768 in 1990 and 3,268 in 2007.

The expansion has occurred in cities of all sizes. Council-manager governments represented a slightly larger share in all but one of nine city size categories in 2007 compared with 1990, as indicated in Figure 2. An absolute majority of cities between 10,000 and 250,000 in population use the council-manager form, council-manager cities have a plurality over mayor-council and other forms in cities between 5,000 and 9,999, and the two forms are almost evenly divided in the cities between 250,000 and 500,000 in population.

The mayor-council form has a higher share of the cities with fewer than 5,000 and more than 500,000 inhabitants, although the number of council-manager cities is growing in these cities as well. Since 1990, the council-manager form has been replaced with the mayor-council form in nine cities with populations of more than 100,000: Fresno, California; Hartford, Connecticut; Miami, Florida; Oakland, California; Richmond, Virginia; St. Petersburg, Florida; San Diego, California; Spokane, Washington; and Toledo, Ohio. The council-manager form replaced the mayor-council form in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; El Paso, Texas; and Topeka, Kansas.

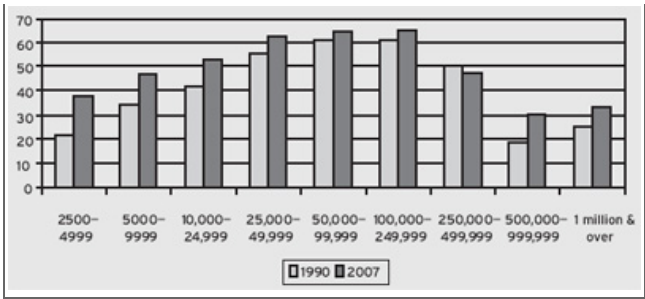
Abandonment of the council-manager form was rejected during this period in nine cities. With these crosscurrents of change, there is no clear trend in the use of form in large cities. The council-manager form is used in 55 percent of these cities, and with expected demographic changes there will be more cities over 100,000 population and more of them will use the council-manager form in the future.

To get an accurate measurement of the use of CAOs in mayor-council cities, we have combined the responses to surveys with other data sources. When all mayor-council cities over 10,000 population are examined, it can be seen that 48 percent have a

Figure 2. Percentage of Cities Using the Council-Manager Form by Population Category, 1990 and 2007.

CAO.<sup>6</sup> About half of these CAOs are appointed by the mayor with the approval of the council, one-quarter are appointed by the mayor alone, and one-quarter are appointed by the council and in many respects are the functional equivalent of city managers, as noted previously.

In addition, 597 of the mayor-council cities under 10,000 population in the 2001 Form of Government survey have a CAO. Overall, the use of CAOs has probably increased since 1990.



### Significance of Form

City and county managers have always made a contribution to the administrative competency and standards for service delivery, on the one hand, and to the policy direction of their governments, on the other. During the past century, managers have advised elected officials on the issues that are challenging their communities—from expanding the services provided by the local government in early decades to promoting sustainability by managing growth, preserving resources, and advancing social equity at the present.

A variety of studies document that form of government makes a difference in process and performance. As is normally the case in social science research, the differences are not black and white, but there are tendencies that are related statistically to form of government.

Mayors in council-manager cities are more likely to be facilitative leaders and enhance the performance of all officials, although these mayors are less likely to be visionaries and policy initiators. Councils perform better at handling their governance responsibilities—setting goals and priorities and overseeing administrative performance. City managers are more capable than executive mayors at providing professional advice to elected officials and supporting the council’s policy making and oversight. There is a greater degree of cooperation and less conflict among officials.

Studies show that when council-manager cities are compared with mayor-council cities the council-manager cities are more likely to have greater efficiency, sounder finances, and stronger management performance. They have greater representation of minority groups in staff positions. Council-manager cities are more likely to pursue long-term goals, use strategic planning, base service delivery on need and other professional standards, have ethics codes and boards, integrate management functions, and adopt innovative management practices.<sup>7</sup>

In these comparative studies, there is usually no distinction between mayor-council cities with and without a CAO. It seems likely that the mayor-council cities with CAOs will occupy an intermediate position between council-manager cities and mayor-council cities without a CAO.<sup>8</sup> Comparing the perceptions of persons who have served as both CAOs and city managers, scholar David Ammons concludes that “professionalism tends to be advanced by the appointment of a city administrator and advanced even further by the appointment of a city manager.”

The First City Manager (Excerpt from <i>The Origin of the City Manager Plan</i> in Staunton, Virginia, 1954)
<p>The City Council, on April 2, 1908, elected Charles E. Ashburner of Richmond as the first general manager of Staunton.<sup>40</sup> There had been many applicants for the position, the majority being local men. The City Council deserves credit for conscientiously seeking, and finally selecting, the best qualified applicant and establishing the precedent of selecting an out-of-town man for the job.</p> <p>The Council’s selection of the new manager augured well for the success of the new form of government. Charles Ashburner, the son of a British army officer, was born in Bombay, India, in 1870. He was educated in England, France, and Germany, and received his engineering degree from the University of Heidelberg. After arriving in the United States, he had wide engineering experience in diversified positions in Virginia.<sup>42</sup></p> <p>Ashburner was no stranger to Staunton, as he had been the maintenance engineer for the Staunton division of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad several years before. At that time, the Council was receiving bids to repair a washout that had resulted from a leaky dam. The lowest bid from local contractors to repair the damage was \$4,000 and some of the councilmen, particularly W. O. Sydnor, considered the bid too high. Sydnor, the railroad’s local agent, consulted with Ashburner who advised him that the job could be done for \$737. The Council took his advice and the repairs were actually accomplished for \$725.<sup>43</sup></p> <p>The first city manager was an aggressive, capable person who was essentially a builder and a promoter. [In <i>The City Manager</i>], Leonard D. White has painted a vivid description of Ashburner [as]</p> <p>“ . . . an inexhaustible human dynamo, forever driving ahead with constant acceleration, never content with the achievements of the past. . . . Surcharged with energy as he is, Ashburner never creates an impression other than that of complete sincerity. His loyalty to his city, to his profession, and to his own high standards of personal conduct is carried to the last degree. . . . ”</p> <p>This picture of Ashburner, as a man of action and impatient of detail, is confirmed by Samuel D. Holsinger who served as Ashburner’s clerk and later succeeded him as general manager in 1911.<sup>45</sup> While Ashburner concerned</p>



himself with the primary task of building streets, bridges, and sewers, he left the office work and the details of administrative management to his clerk who actually served as his administrative assistant.

Mr. Ashburner remained in Staunton for three years, from 1908 to 1911, and went on to serve as city manager of Springfield, Ohio; Norfolk, Virginia; and Stockton, California. The value of his services is indicated from the growth of his salary from \$2,500 while at Staunton to the \$20,000 annual salary which he received at Stockton. Ashburner was chosen as the first president of the City Managers' Association in 1914.<sup>46</sup> This honor probably stemmed from a recognition of his services as the first city manager. Staunton was indeed fortunate to have selected, both as its first city manager, and as the first to represent a new profession, a man whose educational background, experience, and character have seldom been surpassed by later managers.

Note: Original footnote numbers were retained in this excerpt.

Conclusion

The council-manager form is growing and continually incorporating new practices to strengthen democratic leadership, citizen involvement, and administrative effectiveness. When the basic principles that define the council-manager form are used as points of reference, it is evident that the form has demonstrated flexibility while it has preserved its basic characteristics.

The council-manager form and other forms based on parliamentary principles operate with various combinations of electoral features and differing degrees of shared executive authority with the mayor. Still, they incorporate the essential features of unified authority, assignment of executive responsibilities to the professional top administrator, and accountability of the administrator to the entire council. At the same time, the use of a chief administrative position is slowly expanding in local governments that use elected executive forms of government although the United States lags behind European countries in which such a position is universal.

The external forces working on all local governments are the same—increased media pressure, fracturing of interest groups, and a decline in social capital that ties groups to each other and to the community. Furthermore, the changes in the orientation of elected officials—more assertive mayors and more activist and constituency-oriented councilmembers—are similar in all governments.

All local governments need the same qualities—leadership, responsiveness, and administrative effectiveness—as Ehrenhalt has argued. How localities achieve and sustain these qualities is likely to be shaped by their structural features and the principles on which they are based.

The council-manager form does not automatically produce good government without the appropriate contributions by elected and administrative officials. If, however, one is choosing the form of government most likely to produce sound, long-term governance; effective implementation and service delivery; capable management; and transparent, ethically grounded, and citizen-oriented processes, the council-manager form is the preferred choice based on its essential structural features. The experiment of 1908 continues to offer a distinct constitutional option in American local government.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>H. George Frederickson, Gary A. Johnson, and Curtis H. Wood, *The Adapted City: Institutional Dynamics and*

**Capture Professional Management History: Be Part of ICMA's Legacy Celebration**

During the four ICMA Regional Summits held in March and April 2008, ICMA Executive Director Bob O'Neill encouraged attendees to participate in a special project to document the history and value of the management profession, the council-manager form of government, and ICMA.

ICMA's 100th Anniversary Legacy Celebration kicks off this year at the 2008 annual conference in Richmond, Virginia, with a series of activities commemorating the city of Staunton, Virginia. Staunton is celebrating its 100th anniversary as the first community to establish the position of city manager this year. ICMA will recognize its 100th anniversary in 2014.

But the celebration doesn't stop with just those communities that will have amassed 100 years of professional management by 2014. ICMA is encouraging all state and affiliate associations to help capture the history of professional management by collecting stories as told by the people who made it happen! To join in this effort, ICMA asks that you:

1. Identify those individuals in your state (early managers, academics, or elected officials involved in the creation of charters) who played a major role in creating or furthering professional management, or who knew or worked for those who helped create the profession. Who, for example, are the "local government heroes" in your state or region?
2. Conduct video interviews with these individuals—interviews that are similar to the one Bob O'Neill conducted with former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, whose father was the first city manager in Teaneck, New Jersey. You can view an abbreviated version of that interview online at [icmatv.com](http://icmatv.com). To watch the longer 13-minute version, visit <http://video.google.com>.

A list of suggested interview questions is available at <http://icma.org/interviewquestions>. To link together our past, present, and future, we recommend that you consider having a young professional conduct the interview.

3. Submit a copy of your video interview to ICMA for use on [icma.org](http://icma.org), ICMA tv, and in a larger commemorative video that will be featured at the 2014 annual conference in Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

Set aside some time at your next state or affiliate

*Structural Change* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 7. (Italics added.)

<sup>2</sup>Alan Ehrenhalt, "The Mayor-Manager Merger," *Governing*, October, 2006,

[www.governing.com/articles/10assess.htm](http://www.governing.com/articles/10assess.htm).

<sup>3</sup>James H. Svara, "The Structural Reform Impulse in Local Government," *National Civic Review* 83 (Summer-Fall 1994), 323-347.

<sup>4</sup>In a 2001 council survey, roughly three councilmembers in five gave the mayor-council mayors only satisfactory or poor ratings for providing information about policy options and supporting the council's oversight function. James H. Svara, *Two Decades of Continuity and Change in American City Councils* (Washington: National League of Cities, 2003)

<sup>5</sup>Among CAOs, the scope of responsibilities and ability to professionalize administration varies with the method of the CAO's appointment. James H. Svara, "Do We Still Need Model Charters? The Meaning and Relevance of Reform in the Twenty-First Century," *National Civic Review* 90 (Spring 2001), 19-33.

<sup>6</sup>A complete count of cities has been achieved for cities over 10,000 in population by using the 2001 ICMA survey results as a base, adding the National League of Cities database, and checking with other cities that are missing from the databases. Because cities with CAOs are more likely to respond to surveys, the apparent percentage of cities with CAOs in the results of the form of government surveys is inflated.

<sup>7</sup>James Keene, John Nalbandian, Robert O'Neill, Jr., Shannon Portillo, and James H. Svara, "How Professionals Can Add Value to Their Communities and Organizations," *PM*, March 2007, 32-39.

<sup>8</sup>Karl Nollenberger ("Cooperation and Conflict in Governmental Decision Making in Mid-Sized U.S. Cities," in *The Municipal Yearbook 2008* (Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association, 2008) finds intermediate levels of cooperation and conflict in mayor-council cities with CAOs compared with council-manager and mayor-council cities.

<sup>9</sup>David N. Ammons, "City Manager and City Administrator Role Similarities and Differences: Perceptions Among Persons Who Have Served as Both," *The American Review of Public Administration* 38 (2008), 39.

association meeting to develop a plan for participating in this important (and fun!) historical project! More information concerning ICMA's Legacy Celebration is available at [icma.org](http://icma.org). In the meantime, contact Michele Frisby at [mfrisby@icma.org](mailto:mfrisby@icma.org) or 202/962-3658 if you have questions or want to express interest in participating in the project.

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The article "Taking Stock of Form and Structure in County Government" is scheduled for publication in the December 2008 issue of *PM* magazine.

Bob O'Neill Captures History of Professional Management With Former Fed Chairman Paul Volcker

As part of ICMA's 100th Anniversary Legacy Celebration, ICMA Executive Director Bob O'Neill sat down with Paul Volcker, 12th chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, to capture Volcker's recollections about his boyhood, which included growing up with a father who served as the first town manager of Teaneck, New Jersey.

According to Wikipedia:

"Rapid growth led to financial turmoil and inefficiencies in the town government resulted in the adoption of a new, nonpartisan council-manager form of government under the 1923 Municipal Manager Law in a referendum on September 16, 1930. A full-time town manager, Paul A. Volcker, Sr. . . .was appointed to handle Teaneck's day-to-day business affairs. Volcker's 20-year term, from 1930 to 1950, provided Teaneck with economic stability, zoning and long-term development plans, a paid fire department, and civil service for township employees. It also established a model for future administrations."

Here is a transcript of the abbreviated interview between O'Neill and Volcker. To watch the three-minute interview online, visit [www.icmatv.com](http://www.icmatv.com) and click on "Bob O'Neill Chats with Paul Volcker" under the Latest News section of the site.

**O'Neill:** Thank you for agreeing to talk with us today. I want to test your memory here, and I want you to reflect on both your childhood but more importantly, your father's contribution to the work that we do in public service. . . .

**Volcker:** I will do that with great pleasure. I hope I remember more or less accurately.

**O'Neill:** One of the real values that city managers have brought and that was illustrated by the work your father did was...of bringing this sort of ethical principles, this focus on performance and service to the community. Could you talk a little bit about that from your experience with your dad?

**Volcker:** Well, it was very clear to me as a child, as a young man. . .that my father had great pride in being a city manager; there was no question about that, this was part of the family. And, he was an early city manager, and he was not politically involved. He became clearly a leading citizen of the community as time passed. It was rather controversial, I think, in the early days but as time passed, the town was doing well and considered a model town. In some ways, he became a leading personality in the community.

**O'Neill:** You've chaired two commissions on public service and had a chance to look at both what's been good about



it and what we need to focus on in the future. Are there some lessons learned particularly for those of us who are now trying to attract a new generation to state and local government?

**Volcker:** I don't notice it in my work on the commission, but I've [personally] felt for some time that interest in the federal government for a variety of reasons has obviously gone down. It's part of the sociology of the country and lack of trust in government, but it's also that federal government tends to be a big bureaucracy, and if you're a young fellow. . .it's easy to feel you're far from the action, depending upon where you are. I think for a lot of young people [who are] interested in government and want to [work] in government, going to the city or state where they're going to have a lot more impact and opportunity to be on their own, so to speak, and have some room for initiative, is the place to be.

**O'Neill:** As you [talk] about your work in ethics, those of us who are city managers now and who are members of ICMA have benefited greatly from the generation that your father represented. [Members of his generation] were committed to the principles of ethics that created the ICMA Code of Ethics, and now we have both the [ethics] training program and enforcement program. It wouldn't have been there without their strong commitment to it.

**Volcker:** Well, I would be very disappointed on behalf of my father if that was not the case! But. . .I am delighted to have you say that because it was so much of his life and, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you. I didn't know that anybody remembered that!

Volcker had more to say about his father's tenure as a manager; leadership and management in government; the importance of ethics; and how strong professional management is the "antithesis of the corrupt and politicized environment." To view the entire 13-minute interview, visit <http://video.google.com>.

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PM MAGAZINE

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics

Ethical Considerations for Interim Managers

**Q.** The retired city manager has become active in political activities, making financial contributions and writing letters of support for candidates. Recently, she was asked to serve as interim county administrator while the county recruits. She has made it clear she is not a candidate for the position. Under these circumstances, may she continue to make financial contributions and attend fund-raising events and similar political activities?

**A.** Whenever ICMA members are working for a local government, they are expected to abide by all 12 tenets of the ICMA Code of Ethics, including Tenet 7, which prohibits political activities that support candidates running for any city, county, special district, school, state, or federal office.

**Q.** A member in transition was offered the position of interim city manager on the same day that the city manager was fired. How should he handle this situation?

**A.** The best approach is to reach out immediately to the former city manager and have a conversation with the outgoing manager before accepting the assignment. The ICMA Code of Ethics has a guideline that tells members not to "seek employment for a position having an incumbent administrator who has not resigned or been officially informed that his or her services are to be terminated." Lending support to a colleague is one of the hallmarks of the local government management profession.

**Q.** The interim town manager was hired to help the town council with the recruitment process. There were fewer candidates than expected, but the interim manager put forward two résumés that met the minimum qualifications. The town council was not interested in interviewing either of them and asked the interim town manager if he would be willing to be considered. The interim manager said the job did not pay enough for him to consider it. The council said the salary was negotiable. How should the interim manager handle this?

**A.** If the interim town manager wants to be considered for the job now that a higher salary is on the table, the most ethical approach is to advise the town council to re-advertise the position at the higher salary and to remove himself from the screening process. A broader pool of candidates might become available at the higher salary, and there would be no appearance that the town manager was taking advantage of the situation.

—Elizabeth Kellar  
ICMA Deputy Executive Director  
Washington, D.C.  
ekellar@icma.org

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## DEPARTMENTS

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PM MAGAZINE

DEPARTMENTS

On Retirement

Vantagepoint Public Employee Memorial Scholarship Recipients Honored

Of all my responsibilities as leader of ICMA-RC, none brings more emotion and enthusiasm to me than when we host the annual dinner honoring the recipients of our Vantagepoint Public Employee Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Through a partnership effort with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc., the scholarship program honors local and state government employees who have lost their lives in the line of duty in service to our nation’s communities.

Scholarship awards in amounts up to \$10,000 are provided to the surviving children or spouses of these fallen heroes each year. This year, the fund awarded 40 students a total of \$90,000 in scholarships (see the list of recipients and their colleges that accompanies this article). Since 2001, the program has awarded more than 200 scholarships worth more than \$600,000.

Recipients come from big cities and small towns. Their schools range from large state universities and Ivy League schools to small private colleges and technical educational institutions. Our award winners have pursued an impressive array of educational opportunities that allowed them to fulfill their dreams in medicine, law, and education, among many other fields. Often, many of them choose to follow in the footsteps of the loved one they lost, by pursuing careers in firefighting, law enforcement, teaching, and local government.

Our annual awards dinner offers us an opportunity to personally meet the recipients, listen to their stories, and learn more about their hopes and dreams for the future. This year’s event was held at Union Station in Washington, D.C., on July 14.

At these gatherings, I have been so impressed with the character of each of these students. They have overcome the traumatic circumstances of the death of a parent or spouse and still remain focused on and committed to continuing their academic careers. Later, when they write letters thanking us for our support, their words of appreciation truly fill my heart.

Even more remarkable is how these individuals have proven themselves also to be “true heroes.” In the face of

2008–2009 Recipients	
Matthew Abinante	Brigham Young University
Christopher Abriel	Norwich University
Lauren Androy	Belmont University
Joy Bickham	Mesa Community College
Cody Bishop	Georgia Southern University
Gretchen Calderon	University of Puerto Rico
Lillian Cherry	Art Institute of Washington
Brianne Day	University of Rhode Island
Kimberly Dillard	Texas A&M University
Gary Dundon II	Pennsylvania State University
Shane Franklin	Seton Hall Law School
Tara Franklin	Saint Bonaventure University
Jada Hardin-Noe	Creations College of Cosmetology
Amanda Hart	University of Albany
Allan Hollis	Jackson State University
Hope Holmes	University of Memphis
Meghan LaPiedra	Monmouth University
Shannon LaPiedra	Monmouth University
Everett McGuirk	Assumption College
Jacqueline McLoughlin	Parsons New School for Design
LaVar Merrell	Know College
Rasheed Merrell	Hampton University
Stephanie Moss	University of Southern California
Timothy Mulvihill	Western Michigan University
Brianna Noyes	Northeastern University
Pedro Ortiz-Colon	University of South Carolina
Alvin Palmer	Art Institute of Atlanta
Samantha Powers	University of Delaware
Nicholas Reiner	Stanford University
Justin Resch	Rasmussen College
Melinda Rose-Roberts	University of Tennessee
Timothy Salvadori	Francis Tuttle Technology Center
Frederick Soller	Hofstra University Law School
Alexandria Spruiel	North Carolina A&T University
Devan Thorne	Utah Valley State College
Amre Wilcher	Ivy Tech Community College
Roderick Winston	Troy University
Brock Winters	Indiana University
Kyle Winters	Indiana University



adversity, they have chosen to move forward and honor the memory of their loved one by pursuing higher education and going after their dreams.

We at ICMA-RC are dedicated to providing these “true heroes,” the surviving family members of fallen public sector employees, a continued opportunity to do just that.

—Joan McCallen  
President and CEO  
ICMA Retirement Corporation  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.icmarc.org](http://www.icmarc.org)

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DEPARTMENTS

Profile

John Maltbie, County Manager, Is Chair, Climate Protection Task Force

John Maltbie, San Mateo, California, county executive and Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network board member, lives a block away from the house in which he grew up in East San Jose. He has worked nearly all of his adult life in Silicon Valley. But his public sector career represents the journey of his generation.

“Every age group has its seminal events,” John reflects on his passion for public service. “In my generation, it was the election and death of John F. Kennedy and the war in Vietnam. I saw the public sector as a calling, inspired by JFK, and then, as an officer during the Vietnam War, I saw the flip side, how destructive public policy can be.”

In a graduate seminar he teaches at San Jose State, he emphasizes the intrinsic rewards of working in the public sector. “I tell my students that there are moments when you can look back and say, ‘Wow. I made a difference.’ Those moments are what make this calling worthwhile.”

Beyond his passion, it is John’s vision, his collaborative leadership skills, and his interest in getting things done that have enabled him to lead San Mateo County for the past 18 years in a job in which the average tenure is slightly longer than four years. “When I started, I was the youngest city manager in California [back in 1974],” John recalls. “Today, I am the longest tenured.”



John Maltbie is county manager of San Mateo County, California.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

“John keeps his ego in check,” says Mike Nevin, who has known John for nearly 20 years, first as a councilmember in South San Francisco, and then as a member of the board of supervisors from 1993 to 2005. “There’s an art to getting things done in the public sector. So many people overstep the bounds of their office when they have a project they’re championing.

“If John sees something that’s worth doing, he’s willing to let you think it’s your idea if it will help get it done. Beyond that, he has a caring and sensitivity. He’s got a human touch. He’s very bright. He can see when there’s substance. He knows when there’s truth, and he supports you with the tools he has at his disposal when he knows it’s right.”

“What has enabled John to work with the board of supervisors for so long is that we trust him,” says Jerry Hill, who has served on the San Mateo board for nine years. “Not only is he intelligent, creative, and a good listener, but when he’s wrong he says it. In a world where a huge portion of our budget is automatically allocated to health care, human services, and the courts, John focuses on the long term and sustainability. Time and again he has steered us away from intractable problems. Along the way, we’ve built a reserve fund of \$200 million, which makes other counties drool.”

“John is an extremely principled person. It’s what defines him,” says close friend Brian Lawther, an attorney at the Baccardo Law Firm. “Loyalty is his principal quality. He will stand by things that are important to him. But he’s tough.

John will do what he can to help a worthy cause, but if you try to influence him improperly, he never forgets it.”

CAREER PATH

John cut his teeth in the public sector in Santa Clara County. After receiving a BA and MA in political science at San Jose State University, both with concentrations in public management, John worked as an intern for longtime Santa Clara County Executive Howard Campin.

“Howard was a wonderful teacher,” John recalls. “Just watching him taught me so much about how to be successful in the public sector, and he gave me many opportunities to learn by doing.”

After serving two years as an Army officer during the Vietnam War, John returned to public service as an assistant city manager for the city of Milpitas, California. “I was in the right place at the right time,” he says. “After a year, the city manager retired, and I was hired to replace him.”

In 1982, after three years in Milpitas, he was recruited to become city manager of Glendale, Arizona, with a city government four times the size of Milpitas. His three-year stint there was the only time in his professional career he worked outside of Silicon Valley.

He returned to Santa Clara County in 1985, this time as assistant county executive of the fourth largest county in California, working with County Executive Sally Reed. “I have always been drawn to county government,” John says. “The difference between cities and counties is the difference between physical services and human services. Counties administer health care, social services, and criminal justice systems, and are critical to the administration of state and federal programs.”

After four years in Santa Clara, he was hired as county manager of San Mateo County in 1989, and has been there ever since. “One of the things I have loved about being in San Mateo is that the issues are the same as they were in Santa Clara—both counties are committed to health care and to programs for the most vulnerable citizens—but in San Mateo we’re 65 percent the size of Santa Clara.

Our problems are smaller in scale. In health care, for example, our indigent care population is 8,000. It keeps us from being overwhelmed. We can look at that population and say, ‘We can do this.’”

This attitude has been a key factor in John’s longevity in San Mateo. Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1977, city and county governments have been faced with an increasing mandate to provide more services with fewer funds as the state appropriates a higher percentage of tax revenues. As John puts it, “The state sneezes, and we catch a cold. With counties, there’s little relationship between the responsibility of providing services and the ability to raise funds.”

LOOKING TO THE LONG TERM

The key to success, he argues, is looking to the long term. “Seventy percent of our budget is social services, health care, and criminal justice, and in the short term we can’t control the demand for services. However, we can work to control demand in the long term by early intervention, developing programs with children and families that will remove the stressors that make them need services. “But then you have to have enough patience and flexibility in the budget to wait for 15 years as these programs bear fruit.”

In a public environment in which elected officials are constrained by term limits and professional management serves for short periods, it is this long-term perspective that has made John’s tenure in San Mateo County unique. “So much of organizational management has to do with cultures,” John says. “The board has the respect of county management, and I think that respect is reciprocated. The board takes the point of view that it’s not only the right financial thing that’s important, it’s the right human thing.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As a result, the county is able to target \$250 to \$300 million of its \$1.7 billion budget annually for innovative and forward-looking programs. Many of these have been hailed as innovative and at the cutting edge of social policy. John singles out several initiatives as those of which he is most proud:

- “Before welfare reform, we felt we needed to change the welfare paradigm. We needed to stop just giving checks, and instead become a positive force to help people achieve their potential. We created a new department of social services, grouping departments that hadn’t been put together before. We have focused on providing services for kids under five.”  
“He was the first person to advocate this,” says Supervisor Hill, and points to the children’s health initiative, which provides health care for children who are not otherwise covered, as a key piece of this initiative. “This is something John can take credit for,” he says. The program is a collaboration of multiple agencies, with a third of funding coming from the county general fund, a third from the community foundation, and a third from Sequoia and mid-Peninsula health services.
- “We took a moribund old committee, the regional planning committee, and created the City-County Association of Government, including the 20 cities in San Mateo and the county. We took on congestion management, which is something we could have given to the transit district, but we decided to use it as a way to revitalize planning in a coordinated way.  
This joint powers agreement among multiple governments is now 10 years old, and “has been a great vehicle for good sound regional planning.”
- The county started its own charter school in Redwood City. “We saw a school in which 97 percent of the students were

non-English speaking and that was underfinanced, and we thought, 'Maybe we can make a difference.' With the full cooperation of the Redwood City School District, we put a health care clinic on campus, as well as mental health and other social services, and we rebuilt the recreational facilities. The school has shown steady improvement and is now in the top tier of comparable schools.

"In doing this, we've learned a great deal about school-based services and have spread many of the lessons learned to other school districts in the county. Along the way we've developed great collegial relationships with educators, and we've formed an organization called the Peninsula Partnership for Children, with representatives from education, children's services, cities, and nonprofits. The group provides oversight and serves as a clearinghouse for services."

- "We were the first employer in San Mateo County to build and run a day care service for our employees. We service about 85 kids, which I'm proud to say has included my grandchildren. I think this is a great example of how our board supports services for children."

Over the years, John's vision, leadership, and willingness to get things done have been inspirational to others. "In the public sector, you're either a ribbon cutter or a policy man," says Nevin. "In one incident early in my public sector career, John helped give me the courage to go beyond being a ribbon cutter.

"We were working on building a home for schizophrenic patients. We fought huge NIMBYism. Nobody wanted this home in their neighborhood. As people tended to shy away, John stuck and stayed, and we got it done. That was a cherished moment for me. He gave me the courage to fight for the underrepresented."

"A county manager has the ability to stop anything, but John has supported every board initiative," says Hill. "He's such a bright individual, always thinking two or three steps ahead. I go to him to brainstorm ideas—he always sees the roadblocks ahead and helps us navigate past them."

John sees Joint Venture as the embodiment of many of the principles he regards as most important. "I talk to my class at San Jose State about this all the time," he says. "The most important thing a public manager has to do, particularly in diverse communities, is to manage in a way that perpetuates our democratic institutions and that supports fairness, the bedrocks of our country.

"Joint Venture is the only vehicle for doing this in Silicon Valley. We take on the great issues, and we're a big tent, for labor, government, business, and community interests. We look at what needs to be done, engage the community, and get it done. Joint Venture came along at the right time, and now I can't imagine what we'd do without it."

He points to the New California Network as a great example of what Joint Venture can do. "I was on the speaker's blue ribbon task force on finance. Like everyone else who looks at California finance, we saw that it was broken. It's like an immovable object versus an irresistible force.

"There have been five or six commissions like this. The results are all similar, but they always wind up in a black hole because all the interest groups are looking after themselves.

"But New California Network has come up with commonsense recommendations that will really make a difference in terms of finance and delivery of services. Equally important, it has gravitas because of the people involved. This is what JNSV should be about—bringing democracy and representative government to a diverse community that is busy but is willing to contribute if you put their time to good use."

He is also excited about Joint Venture's developing education initiative. "A lot of substantive work has been done on this, and I think it's headed in the right direction," he feels. "It's all about the teacher—training and supporting excellence."

The time requirements for John's professional activities do not keep him from playing golf, which has been his chief recreation since he was a boy. His younger brother Roger, a former PGA star and now a professional golf commentator, recalls, "We moved to a house near San Jose Country Club and our dad, John, and I all took up golf at the same time. John is really good—he played number one at James Lick High and still plays at least once, sometimes twice a week, with a seven handicap."

When pressed about whether John had ever beaten him, Roger pauses, then says, "Well, maybe when I was a boy, but he is a faster runner than I am." (John claims he also beats Roger at poker.)

His intimate knowledge of golf, coupled with his dogged pursuit of revenue and deft people skills, once resulted in a budgetary coup for San Mateo. Friend and golfing partner Brian Lawther (who has a two handicap) recalls that when the Olympic Club in San Francisco hosted the U.S. Open in 1998, it generated more merchandise revenue than any previous Open.

"They were selling merchandise beyond all comprehension. John had played at the Olympic and noticed that the concessions tent was located within the boundaries of San Mateo County. He waited until the day before the start of the Open, when it was too late to relocate, before calling the State Board of Equalization." San Mateo County netted about \$200,000 in sales tax revenue for the event.

John also points to his family as a source of pride and equanimity. His wife Greta, a lawyer, has a job as chief of external affairs for the VTA [Valley Transportation Authority], where she is responsible for public information, legislation, intergovernmental and board relations. "I'm proud that she has chosen a career in public service," he offers.

Son Jeff has followed John into the public sector as well, serving as deputy city manager of San Carlos, and daughter

Jayme is a public relations manager at Con-Way, a large trucking firm. He speaks adoringly of his three granddaughters.

He loves to travel, citing Italy and China ("I first went there in the late '80s and then returned recently. What a fascinating country—the change is dramatic.") as his favorite destinations.

As he looks to the future, John believes it will take visionary change to break the constant chafe of budget and services. "The issues of county government are the issues of society. The structural deficits in the budget need to be fixed. We are responsible for health care, criminal justice, and social services, and we've got to look at each of these in new ways to make government work in the best interests of people. Government historically overestimates problems in the short term and underreacts in the long term. We've got to change that.

"First, we've got to provide health care to everyone who needs it, and we have to figure out how to control the costs of doing so. Second, we've got to deal with prison overcrowding. We have to look at who is in jail, why they are there, and, once they are there, how we keep them from coming back. We don't have to look very far for the answer—we keep putting people in jail for drugs.

"It's time we stop and ask ourselves whether we are doing the right thing. We've been fighting a war on drugs for the past 40 years, and maybe we should just recognize we've lost. We ought to reserve prison cells for people who are the most dangerous to society, and treat users of addictive substances outside the criminal justice system by designing programs that get at the causes and treatment of addiction.

"Finally, we've got to find ways to help families be successful. The family structure in our inner city has broken down, and our primary solution in the past has been to step in when things have fallen apart. We need to find ways to remove the stressors that keep families from success. If we can do this, we will ultimately impact our prison, health care, and social services."

As John continues to look to the future, Lawther looks to the past in defining John's journey. "In 1963, when John was beginning to envision a life as a public servant, nobody could have ever predicted anything about the way the world would be today. But John has ridden all the waves, navigated all the changes, and shown government the way to make a difference in people's lives."

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PM MAGAZINE

# Reducing Violent Crime and Building Trust: The White Plains Experience

by Frank Straub

In 2000, the city of White Plains, New York, began to redevelop its downtown, replacing shuttered storefronts and vacant lots with luxury condominiums, 44-story residential and office towers, and exclusive retail stores, pubs, and restaurants. In seven years, the city has added more than 4,000 new residents, bringing the racially diverse urban population close to 60,000. During the day, the number of workers and shoppers more than quadruples, with an estimated 250,000 people circulating on the city's streets.

Downtown White Plains, like commercial districts in many communities, has rapidly become a study in contradictions, a place where the rich mingle with the poor, where a Ritz-Carlton hotel is only a few blocks away from the city's public housing complexes. And like other communities, the factors that drive crime and violence—poverty, unemployment, drugs, guns, and gangs—make an impact on crime in White Plains.

During the past six years, the White Plains police department has implemented a series of initiatives that have dramatically reduced serious crime and violence. Crime statistics tell only part of the story, though. The other part describes how the police department is using traditional and nontraditional policing strategies to disrupt street violence, to assist prisoners as they reenter the community, and to improve police-community relations.

## Grim Facts

In local governments today, the value of maintaining "street cred" has legitimized senseless killing and assaults as responses to the most minor snubs and slights. "The violence," according to criminologist David Kennedy, "is much less about drugs and money than about girls, vendettas, and trivial social frictions. The code of the street has reached a point in which not responding to a slight can destroy a reputation, while violence is a sure way to enhance it." Poverty, a lack of opportunity, disrupted families, and hopelessness exacerbate the counterproductive street ethos that is driving a nationwide surge in youth violence. In poor and disadvantaged African-American neighborhoods, homicide is ranked among the three leading causes of death among young men.

A 2006 report, *Chief Concerns: A Gathering Storm—Violent Crime in America*, by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), underscored FBI findings that violent crime increased nationwide in 2005 and 2006, reversing the significant decreases achieved during the previous 12 years. In such cities as Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Newark, Orlando and Philadelphia, homicides increased by 20 percent or more during 2005–2006. In most cities, the majority of the homicide victims were young African-American males. The murder rate for African Americans is more than three times the national average: 19 African-American murder victims per 100,000 people compared with five for the general population. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007), 77 percent of African-American men between the ages of 17 and 29 were killed with a firearm.

A follow-up PERF study, *Violent Crime in America: A Tale of Two Cities*, published in November 2007, reported that, although some cities had begun to reverse the trend, violent crime continued to increase in other jurisdictions. The FBI's preliminary crime report for the first six months of 2007 indicated that murder rates jumped 4.9 percent in metropolitan counties and 3.2 percent in cities with 50,000 to 99,999 inhabitants, two categories that apply to White Plains. Of the 168 police departments surveyed by PERF, the highest-ranked factor contributing to violent crime was gangs, followed by juvenile crime. According to Mayor R. T. Rybak of Minneapolis:

"One of the main drivers [of crime]—certainly in our case, the main driver—was the increase in violence committed by juveniles . . . juveniles who had far greater access to guns, juveniles who were more willing to pull the trigger, juveniles who were less connected to traditional gangs and were more connected to arbitrary gangs. All of that led to a much



more chaotic experience out on the streets.” Nearly two-thirds of the surveyed police departments tied impulsive violence to behaviors perceived as demonstrating a lack of respect (“dissing” or “disrespect” in street parlance), unemployment, poverty, and prisoner reentry to the rise in violence.

In response to the surge in violent crime and the public’s demand for quick, impressive action, many police departments have moved away from community policing, relying instead on traditional law enforcement strategies to fight crime. Tactical enforcement teams, stop-and-frisk initiatives, neighborhood sweeps, civil injunctions, and public housing “bar outs” have been used to target and reduce violent crime. In times of crisis, police and political leaders have declared crime emergencies to exist, increased patrols in hard-hit neighborhoods, established curfews, and cordoned off neighborhoods to create safe zones. Closed-circuit camera networks, gun shot detection and location systems, and facial and pattern recognition technologies have vastly expanded surveillance capabilities and created police omnipresence. This has created tensions between police and law-abiding citizens residing in some minority communities.

Police Do Matter

Police executives must take the lead in reducing street violence as well as shaping the broader social context through nontraditional community policing strategies that work to restore stability in our hardest-hit neighborhoods. In a 2001 Civic Report, “Do Police Matter? An Analysis of the Impact of New York City’s Police Reforms,” prepared for the Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, criminologists George L. Kelling and William H. Sousa, Jr. wrote:

“We have no doubt that in some neighborhoods, changing drug use patterns and family values have had an important impact on local crime reduction. Likewise, in some neighborhoods, the number of youth can have an impact on the level of crime. Indeed, all of those factors that can have an impact on crime—demographics—drug use patterns, imprisonment rates, prosecutorial and court policies, weapon availability, and so on—can and do have an impact on crime levels. But the strength and direction of their impacts is always dependent on the local context – *and police, by their activities, can help shape that strength and direction.*” (Emphasis added.)

As Kelling and Sousa convey, the police do matter, and the impact local police leadership can have on community issues cannot be understated, but traditional policing strategies alone are not solving the problems that confront the hardest-hit neighborhoods. As a result of our nation’s war on crime, a staggering 2.3 million people are now incarcerated in the United States, according to the Pew Center on the States report, “One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008”; and about 5 million citizens are on probation, on parole, or both. More than one in every 100 adults in the United States is confined in a jail or prison. For some demographic groups, the incarceration numbers are especially startling. While one in 30 men between the ages of 20 and 34 is behind bars, for African-American males in that age group the number is one in nine. In the poorest communities, as many as 20 percent of adult men are locked up on any given day, and there is hardly a family that does not have a father, son, brother, or uncle who has not been incarcerated.

Gender adds another dimension to the equation. Although men still are roughly 10 times more likely to go to jail or prison, the female incarcerated population is burgeoning at a brisker pace. For African-American women in their mid to late 30s, the incarceration rate has also hit the one in 100 mark.

The strong emphasis on law and order, with the resulting increase in incarceration, has torn a hole in our social fabric. Incarceration breaks up families and disrupts social networks; deprives siblings, spouses, and parents of emotional and financial support; and ruins opportunities for young people to finish school and get jobs. People released from jails and prisons find it difficult to reintegrate into their communities. They are virtually unemployable; find it difficult to secure adequate housing; and suffer from a lack of medical, mental health, and drug treatment services.



White Plains, New York, Police Officer Michelle Feliciano speaks with one of the youth participants at a 2008 youth-police initiative training session.



White Plains, New York, Police and youth participants pose for a group photo after a 2008 youth-police initiative training session.

A street culture has been created among young African-American men in which serving time in prison is normal and even valued. According to National Public Radio correspondent and political analyst Juan Williams, “In some neighborhoods . . . going to jail becomes a rite of passage for a young male to prove himself.” Even more worrying is the sense of hopelessness experienced by young men in our hardest-hit African-American neighborhoods. Many of these men believe their lives will end in prison or violently on the street.

Communities of color suffer from the imposition of aggressive and indiscriminate police tactics as well as from the failure of such tactics to bring peace and stability to their neighborhoods. Stepped-up enforcement of public ordinances and the use of aggressive stop-and-frisk tactics can increase tension between the police and minority communities, which view such tactics as intrusive,

oppressive, misguided, and frequently based on racial profiling if they are not implemented appropriately and monitored closely. The broken-windows theory, advanced by Kelling and Wilson, in which the police and the community bring order to public places by addressing quality-of-life issues, has morphed into a zero-tolerance strategy in which the police use fines, arrests, and incarceration to rid neighborhoods of problem persons, people who are frequently disorderly or inebriated, rowdy groups of teens, panhandlers, and street vagrants.

In some communities, overly aggressive policing has reduced police credibility, particularly in those neighborhoods that need police services the most. Although curfews and sweeps are intended to reduce crime and drug sales and use, the indiscriminate use of these and other aggressive police tactics in communities of color has created or reinforced distrust of the police. According to Elijah Anderson, a Yale professor and author of *Code of the Street*:

“In the community the police are often on the street, but they are not always considered to have the community’s best interest at heart. A great many residents have little trust in the police. Many assume that the police hold the black community in low repute and sometimes will abuse its members. . . . With this attitude, many people are afraid to report obvious drug dealing or other crimes to the police for fear that the police might reveal their names and addresses to the criminals.”

Although it appears that fostering a sense of trust in the police is difficult in disadvantaged neighborhoods, *difficult* does not mean *impossible*. When citizens believe they have been treated fairly and with respect, they tend to grant more legitimacy to the police and are more likely to engage with them in resolving threats to neighborhood stability. If police departments hope to move forward, build, and sustain community trust and confidence, as well as build legitimacy, they must admit that their preoccupation with fighting the war on crime has done exactly the opposite—undermined their legitimacy in communities of color and eroded many of the gains realized through community policing.

### The White Plains Paradigm

In 2006, a series of violent events—a gang-related fatal stabbing in March; a fatal shooting in May; two more youth-involved stabbings in September; and a shoot-out in Winbrook, the city’s largest public housing complex—brought the realities of street violence to White Plains. All of the events occurred in and around the city’s public housing complexes except for one of the September stabbings, which occurred in the heart of downtown, a few blocks from a new luxury condominium and entertainment complex. The events were driven by street disputes—wearing gang colors in the wrong neighborhood, retaliation for a robbery, a fight over girls, stares, and an exchange of words as two groups of young people faced off in the heart of downtown. Although crime had dropped significantly since 2002, the community and the media called for an immediate police response to end the violence and restore order in the city’s downtown.

The police department increased foot, bike, mounted, and motorcycle patrols in the downtown. The Neighborhood Conditions Unit (NCU) stepped up quality-of-life enforcement in crime hot spots and in the city’s public housing complexes. The Intelligence Unit identified and focused on high-risk offenders and their crews. Detectives arrested gang members at the same time the Community Policing Division began conducting home visits to interrupt potential violence. Representatives from the police department and the city’s Youth Bureau met with members of the community, activists, and black ministers who expressed concern about the increased gang activity, violence, and conflicts downtown and in public housing. The meetings were challenging. Community members demanded that the police department take action at the same time that they angrily described conflicts with the police and past incidents that generated animosity and distrust in the African-American community.

Following the meetings, the police department and the city’s Youth Bureau partnered with the North American Family Institute (NAFI), a Massachusetts-based social service organization, to develop and implement a program to reduce violence among the city’s youth and improve community-police relations. NAFI was selected, in part, because it had developed successful programs to improve relations between recruit police officers assigned to patrol inner city neighborhoods in Baltimore and Boston and the communities in those cities.

The first White Plains session of the Youth-Police Initiative (YPI) brought together young African-American men from Winbrook and police officers assigned to NCU to discuss the recent violence, gang activity, and youth-police interactions. NCU officers were purposely selected because their assignments in public housing complexes and downtown frequently placed them in conflict-prone situations with the young men. In subsequent training sessions, recruit officers participated as part of their field training, and other sessions matched police officers assigned to neighborhood hot zones with the young men and women who lived there.

Through structured presentations, group learning, and problem-solving activities during training, youth of the neighborhoods and the recruit police officers have explored and discussed their values, attitudes and feelings about



Members of Bike Unit patrol the central business district in downtown White Plains.

race, violence, respect, and policing. They also discuss the choices they’ve made and the effect those choices have had on their lives. As the stories unfold, the youth and the police officers frequently find out that they are not very different from each other. During a recent session, the first session with young women, a female officer discussed her teenage pregnancy, her relationship with her mother, run-ins with the police, and the experience of being arrested. She discussed how she hated the police as a teenager and believed they picked on her because she was Hispanic. She also told the young women that after she became an emergency medical technician, she saw police officers helping people who really needed their help, and then she eventually decided to become a police officer.

A series of role-playing exercises, developed by the participants, provide an opportunity to see how the actions and language of the youth and police officers can escalate street interactions. De-escalation techniques are discussed and practiced to build effective communication and to resolve highly charged incidents. The goal is to get the cops and the kids to drop the warrior mentality, stop dissing each other, and build mutual respect.

Team-building exercises are intentionally held outdoors, in the heart of Winbrook and other public housing complexes, so the residents can see them occurring. This public demonstration of youth-police interaction has generated significant interest, curiosity, and favorable responses from the residents. For many, this may be the first time they’ve seen the police engaged in positive interactions with the young men and women who live in the neighborhood. Team-building exercises also create opportunities to discuss the program with the residents as well as more general police–community issues. It has also sent a clear message that the department is trying to improve relations with the community.

The final YPI event is a celebration dinner to recognize the participants—it also includes the young men’s and women’s families, political and religious leaders, and community members—and their success in completing the program. During the dinner, each of the participants discusses personal experiences during the training as well as their plans to continue building effective relationships. At the first dinner some 50 people attended, including the participants. At the fourth dinner, held in April 2008, more than 200 people attended. Support for the program continues to build among the city’s community, religious, and political leaders.

There is no single response to youth violence and gang involvement. Long-term solutions require comprehensive, collaborative responses that offer real alternatives, individualized services, support, and mentoring. The Youth Bureau’s Step Up program, based on the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Comprehensive Gang Model Program, is a critical component of the city’s efforts to combat gang activity and street violence. At-risk or gang-involved youth come into the program in one of three ways. Police officers refer youth to Step Up as an alternative to incarceration or as part of the department’s prisoner reentry program. Youth Bureau outreach workers identify youth in neighborhood hot zones. And, most recently, some of the young men and women participating in Step Up have recruited their friends. Once engaged, the young men and women receive individualized case management and wraparound services to address such personal issues as truancy, poor school performance, unemployment, fatherhood and motherhood, and drug and alcohol addiction.

These stories describe the effects that Step Up and the youth police initiative have had on two of the young men who participated in the programs.

Derrick

Derrick, a 19-year-old African-American male who lives in the Winbrook housing complex, was recruited to participate in the Step Up program by a Youth Bureau outreach worker. At that time, Derrick (whose nickname was D Eagle, derived from the semiautomatic pistol, Desert Eagle) was identifying with a local Blood set, wearing red clothing, and flying a gang bandana from his back pocket. Derrick was one of the youth involved in the gang-related fatal stabbing; he was arrested and charged with gang assault.

While in jail and upon his release, a Step Up case manager worked with Derrick to find him a job, and he was subsequently hired by the Youth Bureau to staff the teen lounge and gym. Currently, the case manager is working with him to help him earn his GED, so he can apply to college. Derrick participated in the youth-police initiative. He is no longer gang involved.

Jonathan

Jonathan is a 20-year-old African-American male from the Winbrook housing project. He had a history of dropping out of school, selling drugs, and stealing. As a result, he was barred from the housing project. In 2006, he attended a YPI celebration dinner to “check it out.” Wearing a “hoody,” he and a couple of members of his crew sat in the corner and watched the event. He subsequently became involved in the Youth Bureau’s basketball program and was recruited to Step Up. He received financial assistance, and he was accepted by a community college where he later enrolled. He will receive his GED and start earning college credits.

Although there is limited scholarly research regarding the impact of positive youth-police engagement, the YPI and Step Up, although relatively new, have decreased negative youth-police contacts, helped reduce violence, and provided a first step to solving broader police-



community problems in White Plains.

Derrick's story is illustrative of the successes being achieved through the police department's prisoner reentry program. This reentry program, the first in Westchester County, New York, assists individuals leaving the county jail and returning to the White Plains community. Every month, a multi-discipline team led by the police department meets with inmates selected to participate in the re-entry initiative. Team members, representing social service, not-for-profit, religious and other organizations, discuss the resources they can provide to the inmates when they return to the community:

employment assistance, housing, education, mental health services, AIDS counseling and support, and fatherhood or motherhood education. The police department informs the inmates that they must change the behavior that led to their incarceration, and the probation department explains the repercussions of future offending.

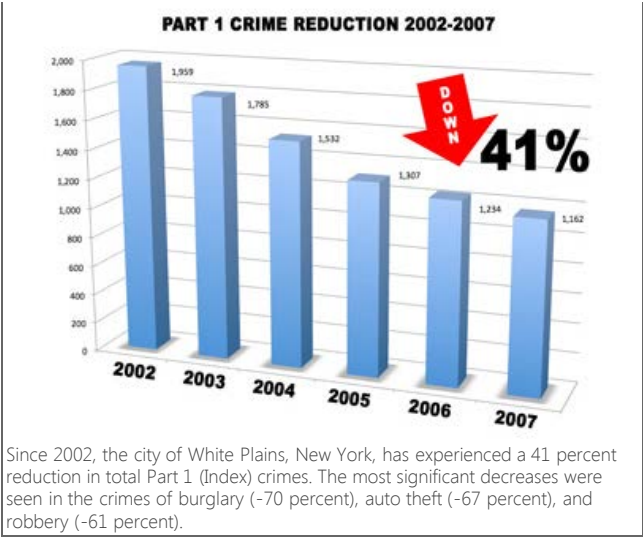
The team conveys a unified message that the White Plains community is aware of each inmate's pending release and that the community is concerned for them and will assist them in leading productive lives. It also conveys, however, that future offending will not be tolerated. In 2007, the reentry team met with 84 inmates in the county jail. To date, only seven of the inmates who participated in the reentry program have been rearrested for any offense upon their return to the White Plains community.

Six years ago, the White Plains police department committed to a policing paradigm that would fight crime on all fronts. On one front, the department uses traditional strategies to target high-rate offenders, their illegal activities, and neighborhood hot spots. On the other, the department's community policing division has taken the lead in developing and implementing non-traditional programs to target the factors that drive crime and violence. During the past six years, serious crime has declined by 40 percent to the lowest level in 42 years. There has not been a homicide in the city since May 2006, and serious crime continues to fall in 2008. In January 2007, the editorial board of the *Journal News*, Westchester County's largest newspaper wrote:

"After . . . a series of worrisome crimes last fall, the police didn't get defensive, they got to work. They and their commissioner seem determined to face and prevent crime in the city—not let it define it. [The] police have put additional emphasis on what matters to average people. . . . The department is involved in the "Step Up" program, a multi-agency effort to open up mentoring and job opportunities for at-risk youth. And it is committed to keeping police foot and car patrols highly visible."

The White Plains police department did not let a series of violent incidents define the city or allow gang activity to take hold. The police department took the lead, adopting a strong approach to end the violence, and it also built effective and sustained partnerships comprising the police, the community, and other government agency partnerships during the past six years. In the end, the White Plains policing paradigm confirms that the police matter and that, by their actions, enforcement, and community building, they can shape and define the factors that impact crime in the local context.

**Frank Straub, Ph.D., is commissioner of public safety, White Plains, New York. He was appointed to his current position in 2002. Previously, he served as the deputy commissioner of training for the New York City Police Department and as a federal agent. Commissioner Straub is an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and coauthor of *Performance-Based Management for Police Organizations* (Waveland Press, 2007).**



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People Smart: Developing Your Interpersonal Intelligence

Mel Silberman, Ph.D., with Freda Hansburg, c. 2000, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., \$18.95, paperback, 237 pages.

Professional and personal development psychologist Mel Silberman has identified eight skills necessary for successful relationships. Before delving into the skills, Silberman invites the reader to assess his or her own position on the People Smart Scale by taking a self-test. The results yield more relevance to the read.

The interpersonal skills are essential for establishing and maintaining such strong relationships as supervising others, raising children, dealing with a boss, and networking, to name a few. The eight skills fit together, with each one offering a firm foundation for the next.

The first skill is understanding people. Mastery of this skill allows for more efficient communication, develops the ability to influence what others think and do, and helps resolve conflicts. Silberman stresses active listening, empathizing, acknowledging others' viewpoints, and discovering other people's styles and motives. When you understand someone else, you gain their appreciation.

Expressing yourself clearly means getting to the point with brevity, yet providing enough details so people aren't confused. The use of memorable words embeds your message with your audience.

The third skill is asserting your needs. Others will have greater respect for you when you are your own person, are straightforward, and don't merely hint at what you want.

Exchanging feedback enlightens you and others when you give feedback without giving offense. The feedback should be descriptive, concrete, and intended to be helpful. It must be well-timed, non-blaming, and practical. You should also ask for feedback from others, and listen with an open mind.

The next skill is influencing others. You connect with others by unearthing their needs. To be influential, you must reduce resistance to change and make persuasive appeals. When you're a positive influence, others will value you.

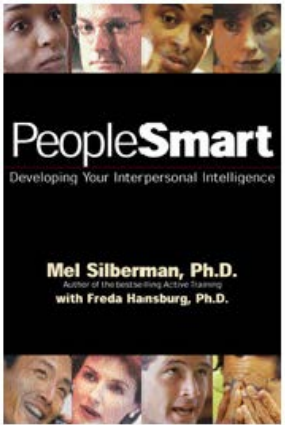
Knowing how to get the subject right out on the surface is the essence of the sixth skill, resolving conflict. You need to figure out what's bothering you and the other person and suggest creative solutions. When you resolve conflict effectively, you become trusted.

Being a team player means building consensus. You should be adept at coordinating the efforts of team members without being bossy. Teamwork is more difficult than individual work because you have less personal control over the outcome. There are fewer opportunities to make your points and to influence others. A strong team member complements the styles of others on the team.

The last skill is shifting gears. If you want to change the way you act in a relationship, you must be flexible and resilient. Relationships are renewed through mastery of this skill.

Throughout his book, Silberman offers dozens of exercises to help the reader develop the eight people-smart skills. He also identifies stumbling blocks to mastering the skills and suggests prescriptions to keep moving forward.

*People Smart* will definitely help you sharpen your interpersonal intelligence. It's essential reading if you want your important relationships to flourish.



—Ray Gosack, ICMA-CM



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Annual Swimming Pool Issue, Better Than Ever!

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If you serve in a community that provides a public pool for its citizens and your community pool has not already been featured in the magazine—or if the pool has been updated since it was featured—and if the pool is distinctive in style, structure, operation, location, cost, or other management aspect, share this information in *PM*’s special section.

Send a 250- to 500-word description of why your pool is distinctive to *PM* Editor, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201; e-mail is preferred, at [bpayne@icma.org](mailto:bpayne@icma.org). Electronic photo files in high-resolution PDF format are welcome. The deadline for submitting article copy is September 15, 2008.

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