

Creating Civil Public Conversations about the Role of Government

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ICMA Conference Presenters



Presenter

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...dedicated to building public will for the common good and support for a government empowered to address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

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CivicPraxis
— Moving from Talk to Action —

ICMA CMS
Center for Management Strategies

CivicPraxis

— Moving from Talk to Action —

has been designated by ICMA as a

**LEADING PRACTICE
SERVICE PROVIDER**

The Work of Public Works

Research

- Government
- The Economy
- Budgets & Taxes

In the Field

- Policy Shops
- Advocates
- Unions
- Coalitions
- Organizers
- Electeds & Managers

Polling:

**Looking for Visible
Attitudes**



Our Research:

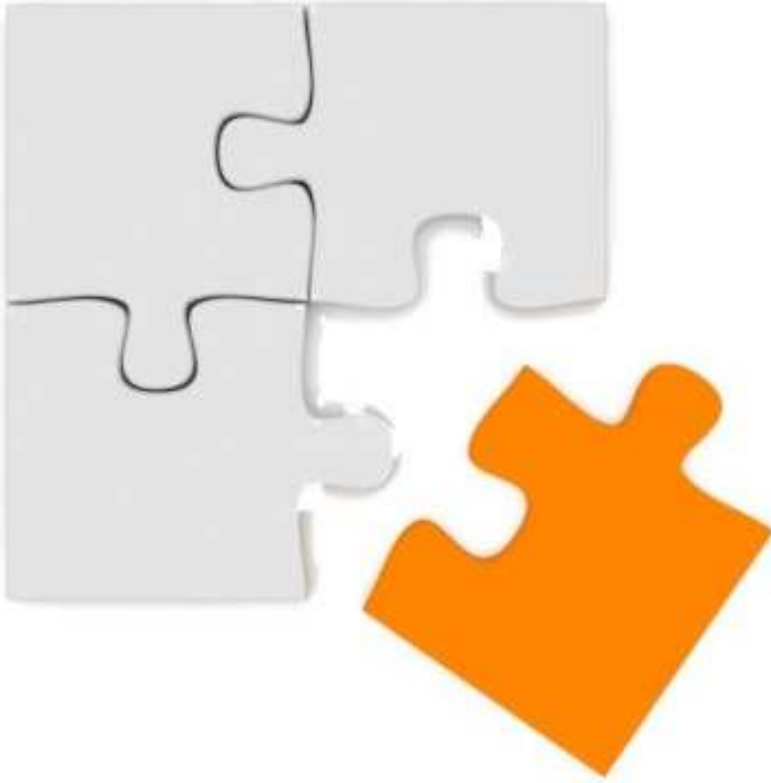
**Looking for Hidden
Reasoning**



Opening Discussion

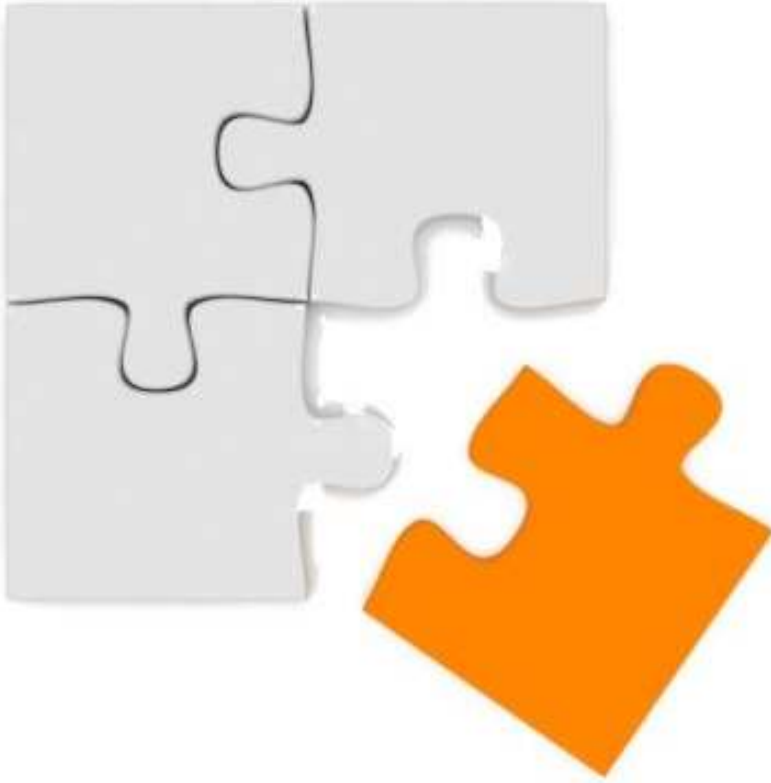
- What is one thing you wish people in your community understood about government?
- How does a lack of trust and an abundance of cynicism affect your organization's ability to accomplish its goals?

Today's Session



- Understanding and navigating public attitudes
- Tools for a new conversation
- Case Study
- Get started – group exercise

Today's Session



- **Understanding and navigating public attitudes**
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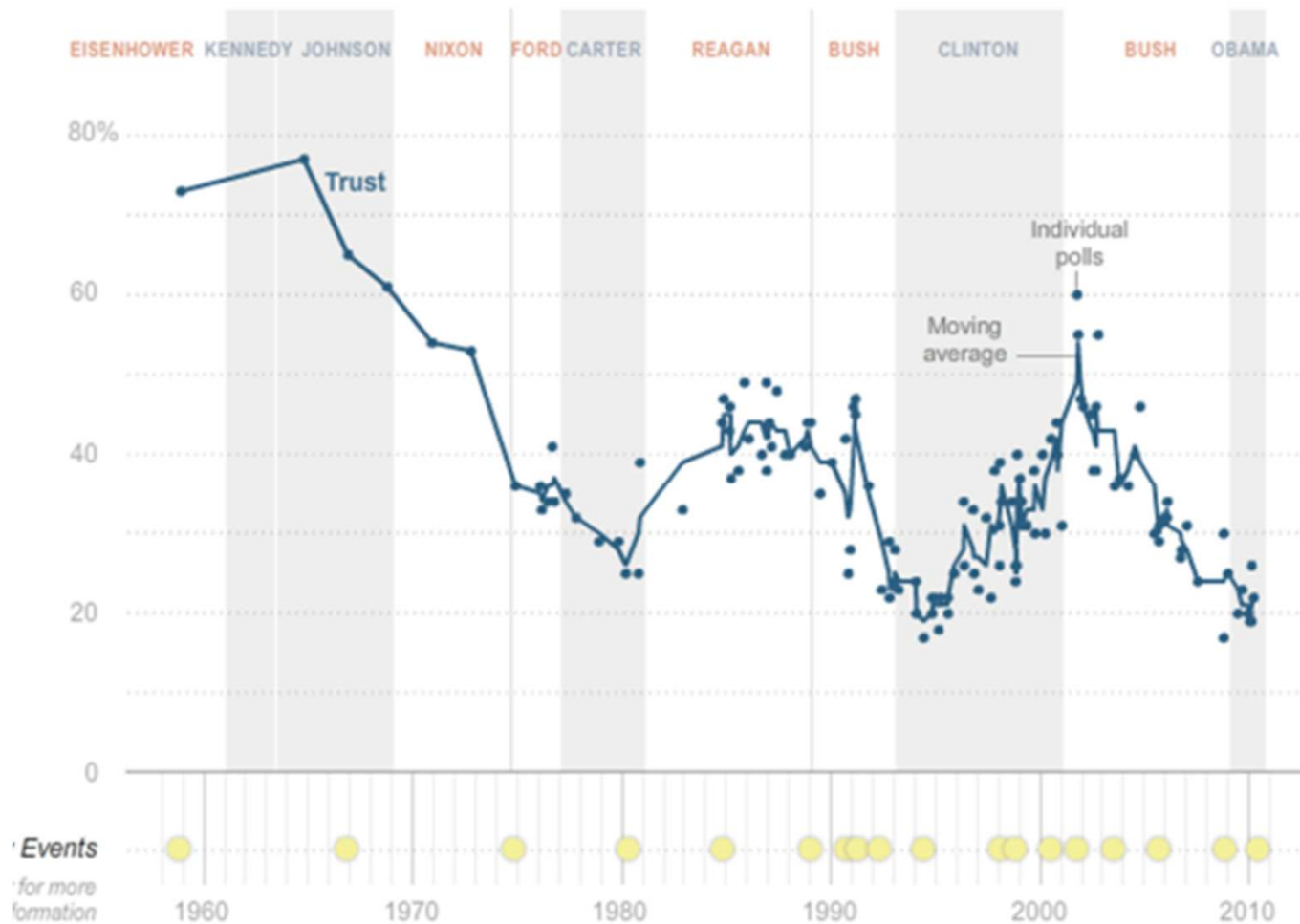


What are our
stories and
frames about
government?

**IF GOVERNMENT IS
THE ANSWER, IT WAS
A STUPID QUESTION**

01/03/2010

Trust in Government Declining

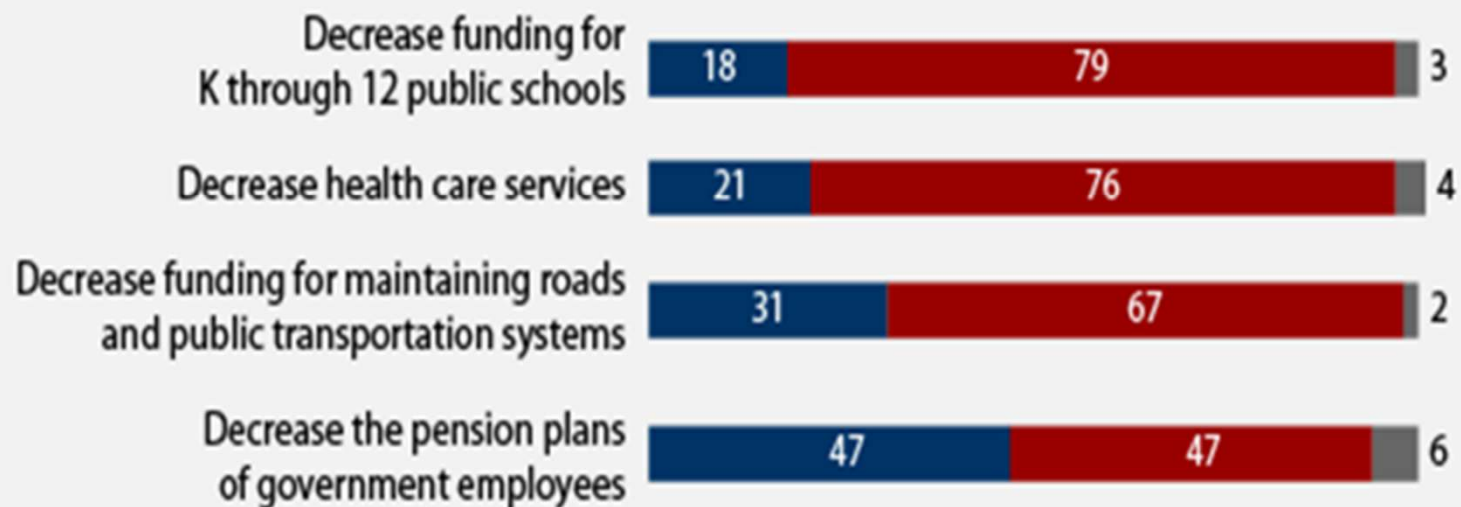


<http://people-press.org/2010/04/18/public-trust-in-government-1958-2010/>

But....most Americans don't want services reduced

If your state government needs to find ways to balance its budget this year, do you think your state should do the following or not?

■ Yes, state should ■ No, state should not ■ Don't know/refused



Source: February 2-7, 2011 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press political survey. N=1,385.

Do you think the government does too much, not enough, or about the right amount for the following people?

1. Older people



2. Middle class people



3. Children



4. Poor people



5. Wealthy people



Source: Sept. 22- Oct. 4, 2011 Pew poll.

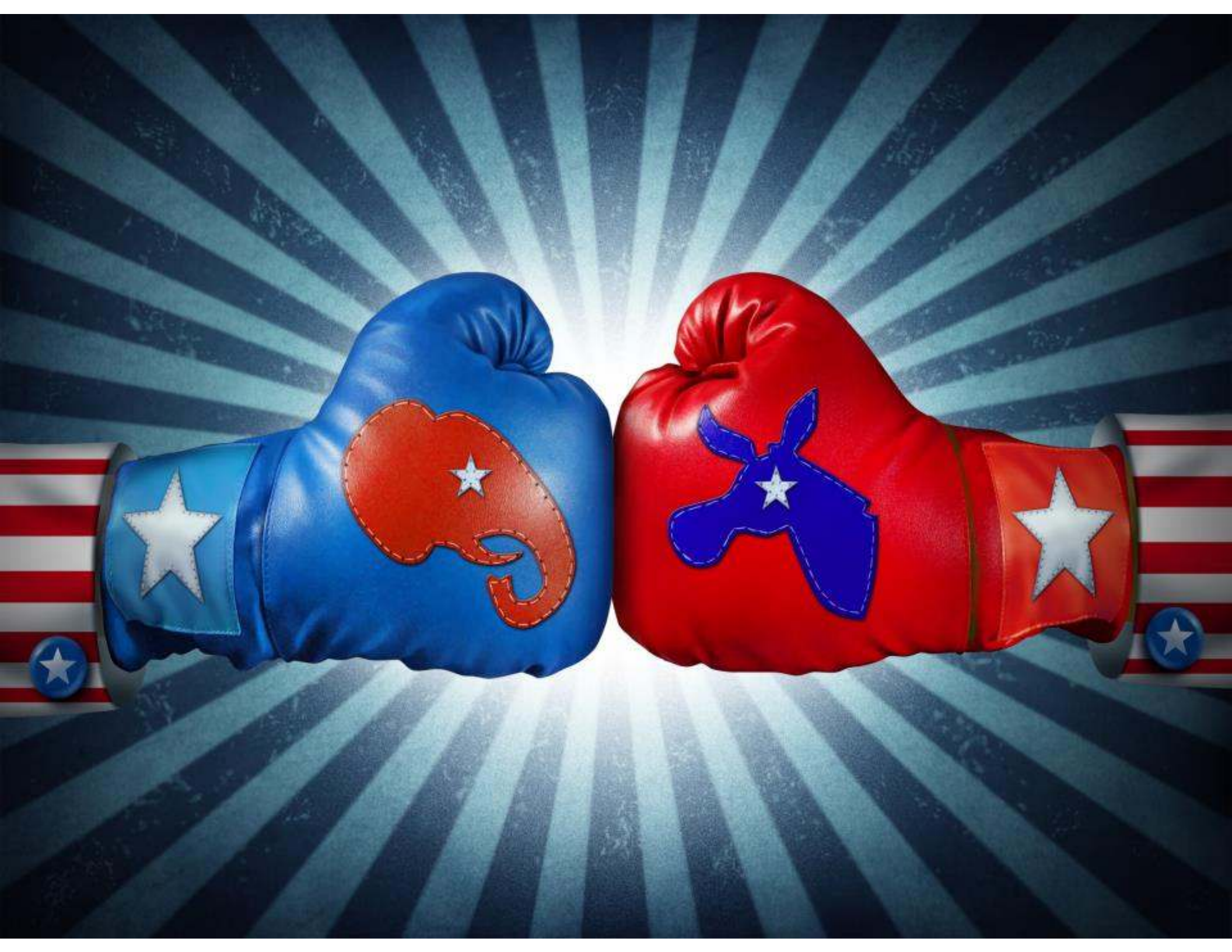
And they believe that government is not doing enough for most groups.

But when we try to talk to
people about government . . .

What People
Think of Government:
Default Responses

A black and white photograph of water droplets on a dark surface, with the word "GOVERNMENT" overlaid in large, semi-transparent letters. The droplets are of various sizes and are scattered across the frame, with some larger droplets on the left side and smaller ones on the right. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a wet surface like a window or a car windshield. The word "GOVERNMENT" is centered horizontally and vertically, rendered in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are light gray, allowing the background texture to be visible through them.

GOVERNMENT



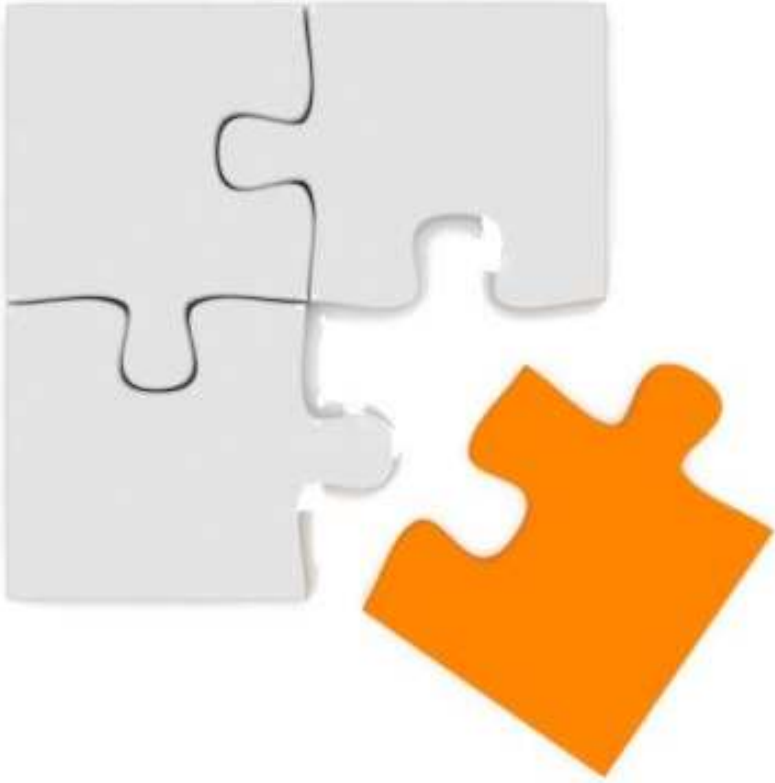




Which “stereotype” is triggered?

- a) City council members are playing games with the future of our community.
- b) Enrolling in the program has gotten harder and harder over the last year. The new computer eligibility system is riddled with problems. And, turnover in county workers means untrained workers are often ill-prepared to...
- c) The goal of this effort is to provide the best “bang for the buck” to the customers of town services.

Today's Session



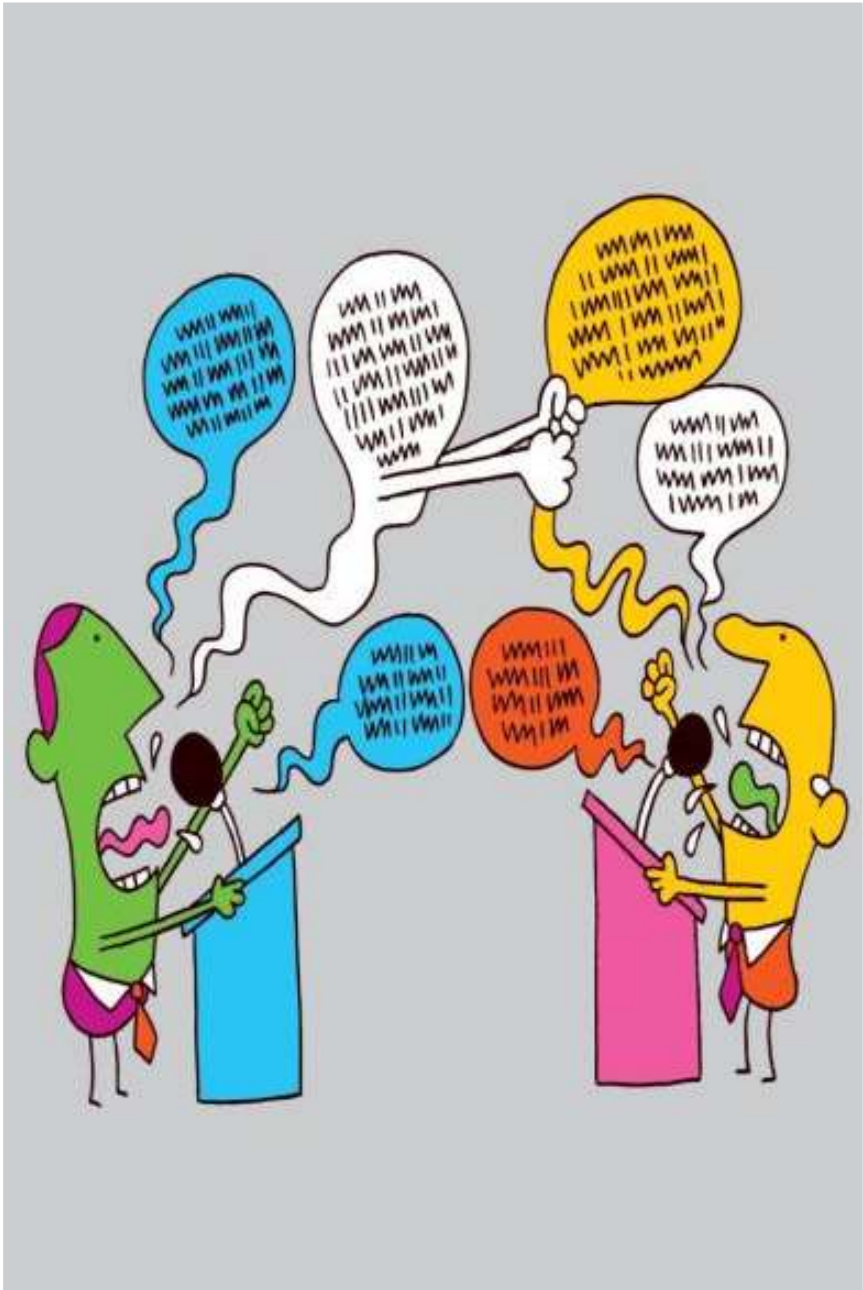
- Understanding and navigating public attitudes
- **Tools for a new conversation**
- Case Study
- Get started – group exercise

The Challenge

- Dominant and Resilient images consistently misdirect thinking.
- Concrete images of the systems and structures of government are missing.
- Consumerist thinking narrows understanding and responsibility.

The Good News

- The “idea” of government is not lost
- Responsible citizenship is still valued
- A desire for collective action, respecting consensus, and problem-solving
- Stewardship and planning for the future – roles for government



Mission and Purpose



VALUES

- Common Good
- Quality of Life
- Community Wellbeing
- Public Purpose

ROLE

- Protector
- Manager & Planner
- Steward
- Consensus-Builder



- People reason first from deeply held values.
- Values help answer: “Why does this matter to me/us?”
- Lead with **Values**, not with the policy and program details

Why Does this Matter?

“Every child should have access to immunizations but too many families in our community are not bringing their children in to our clinics. This is why we are proposing a new agency rule requiring more clinic hours . . .”

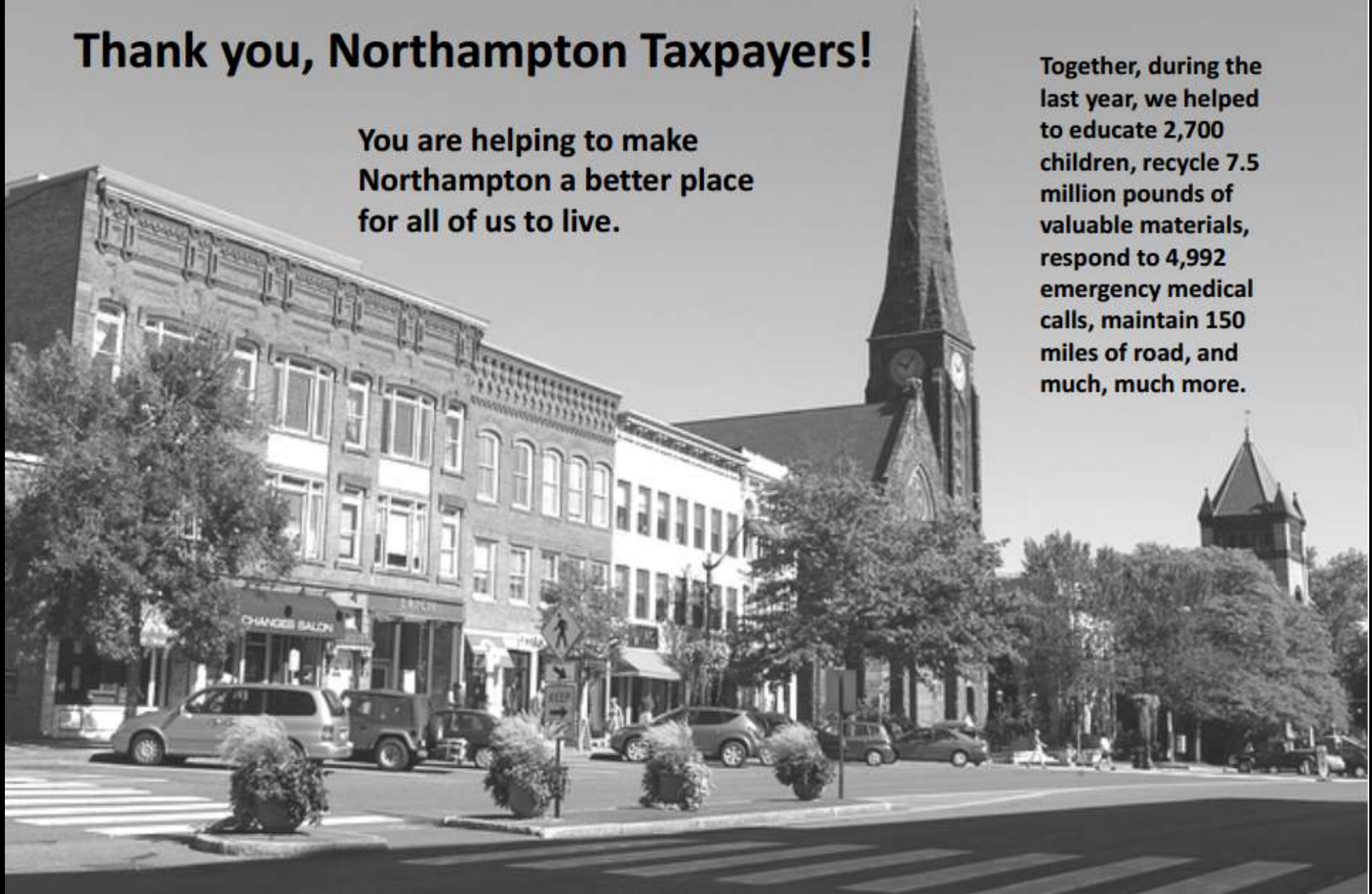
Speak to Values First

“The health of the whole community is **protected** when we ensure that our children are immunized. One of the ways we do this is through **our public health agencies** that provide free and low cost **immunizations for all children**. We need extended clinic hours to keep up with growing demands.”

Thank you, Northampton Taxpayers!

**You are helping to make
Northampton a better place
for all of us to live.**

**Together, during the
last year, we helped
to educate 2,700
children, recycle 7.5
million pounds of
valuable materials,
respond to 4,992
emergency medical
calls, maintain 150
miles of road, and
much, much more.**



Here are some important things Northampton taxpayers helped to do last year:

.....

Made the city much ***safer*** with police responding to 43,784 calls for assistance, investigating over 1,700 serious crimes, and arresting 856 suspected criminals.

Encouraged ***healthy lifestyles*** by maintaining 150 acres of recreational fields and running sports and exercise programs that served thousands of adults and kids.

Enabled Forbes Library to ***educate*** and ***entertain*** city patrons by loaning out over 340,000 items.

.....



Systems and Structures

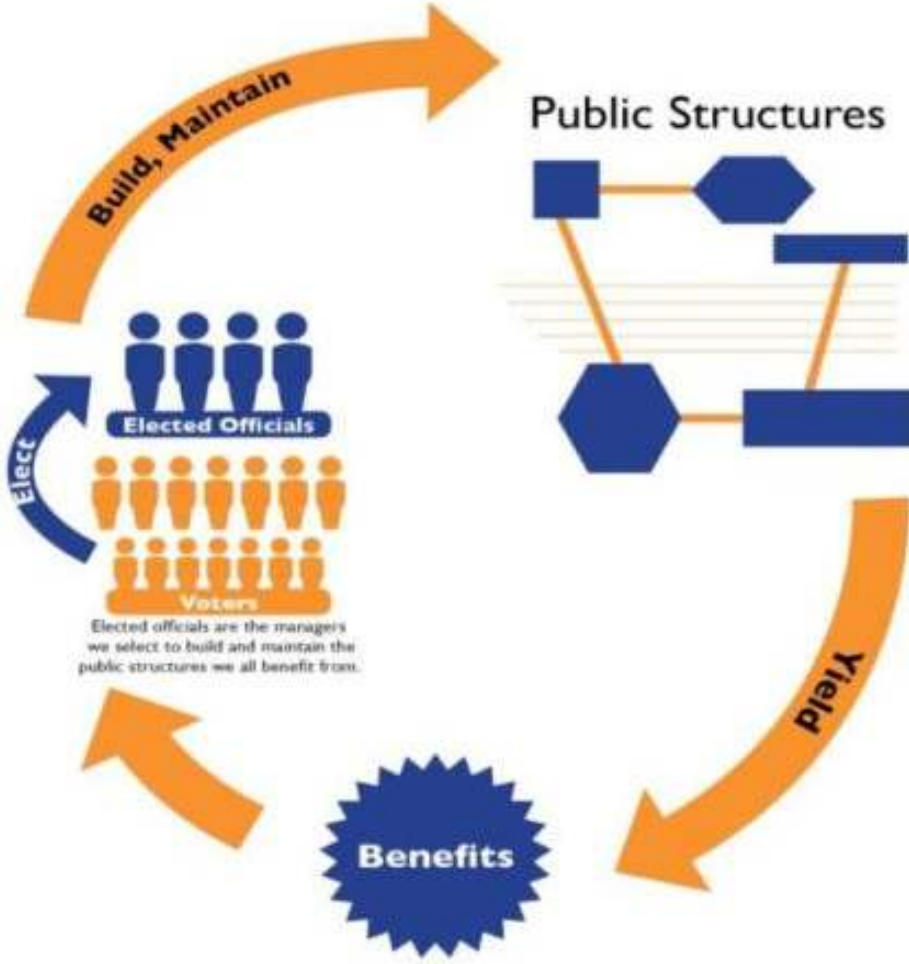
- Concrete and vivid images
- The public systems we have created
- How they work
- Why they are important



Limited View of Relationship with Government

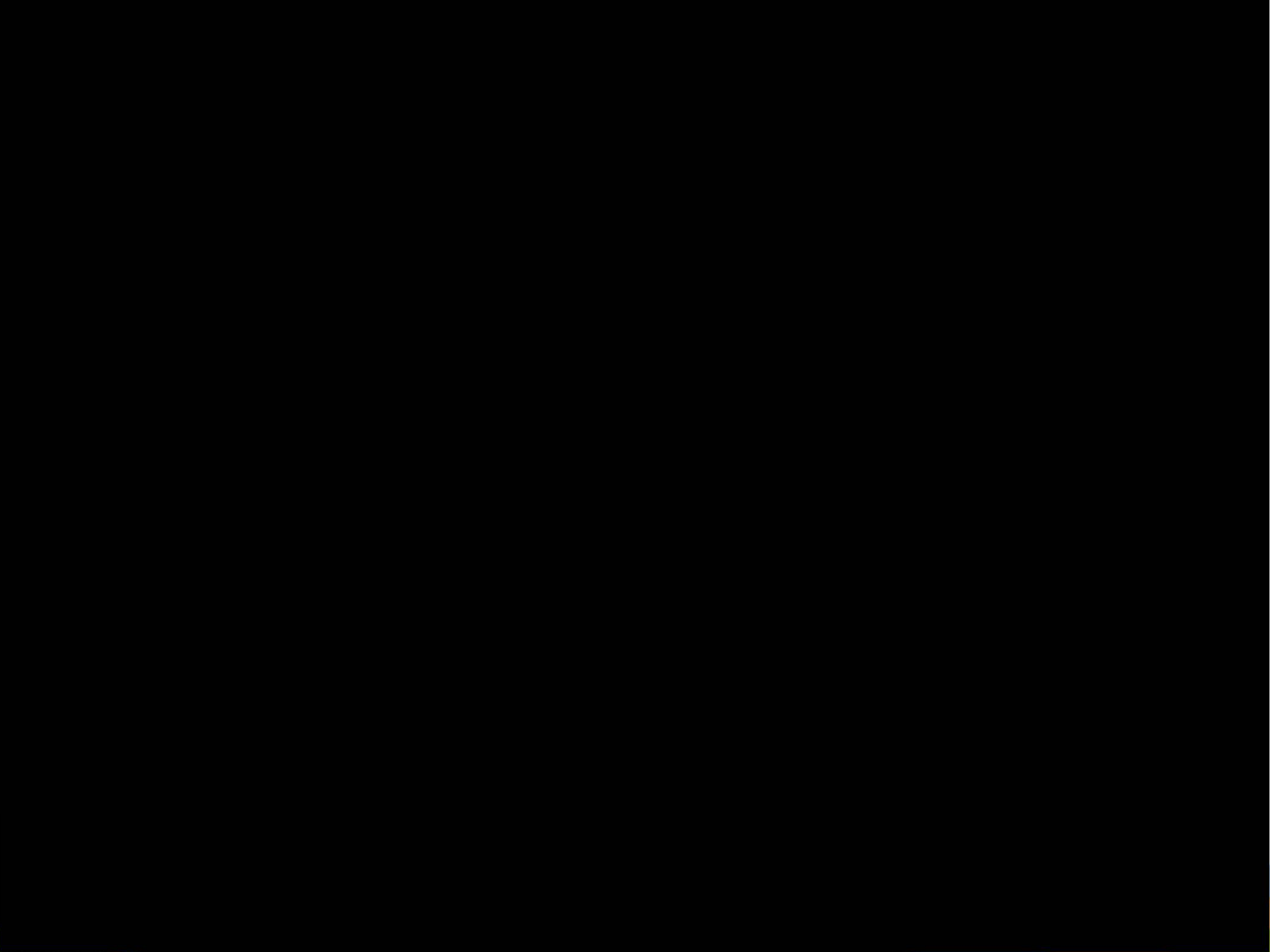


Rounding out the Story



Government as Public Structures

The main advantages that make America so successful come from the **Public Structures** it has created. These Public Structures include the **physical structures** (highways, airports, and communications grids) and the **organizational structures** (the postal system, courts) we need to get things done, and the **social support systems** that help to ensure the health and well-being of our communities. It is our well-functioning and supported Public Structures that are essential for overall success.

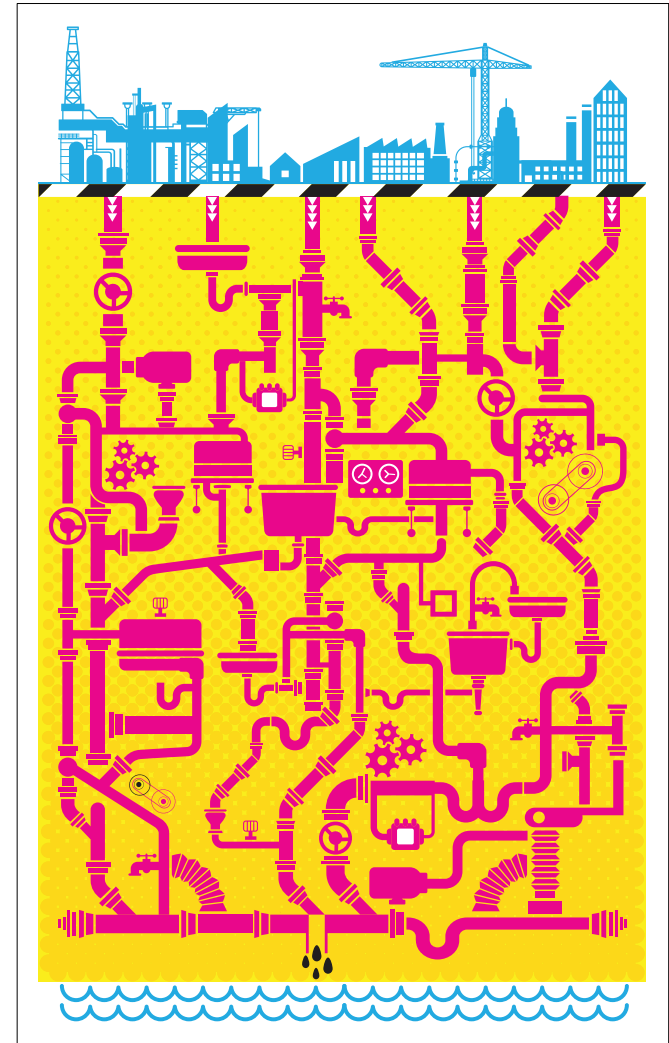




After being exposed to the core ideas in a short text . .

- Can you name some important public systems or structures?
- Why are they important?

Creating a Vivid Understanding of What Government Does



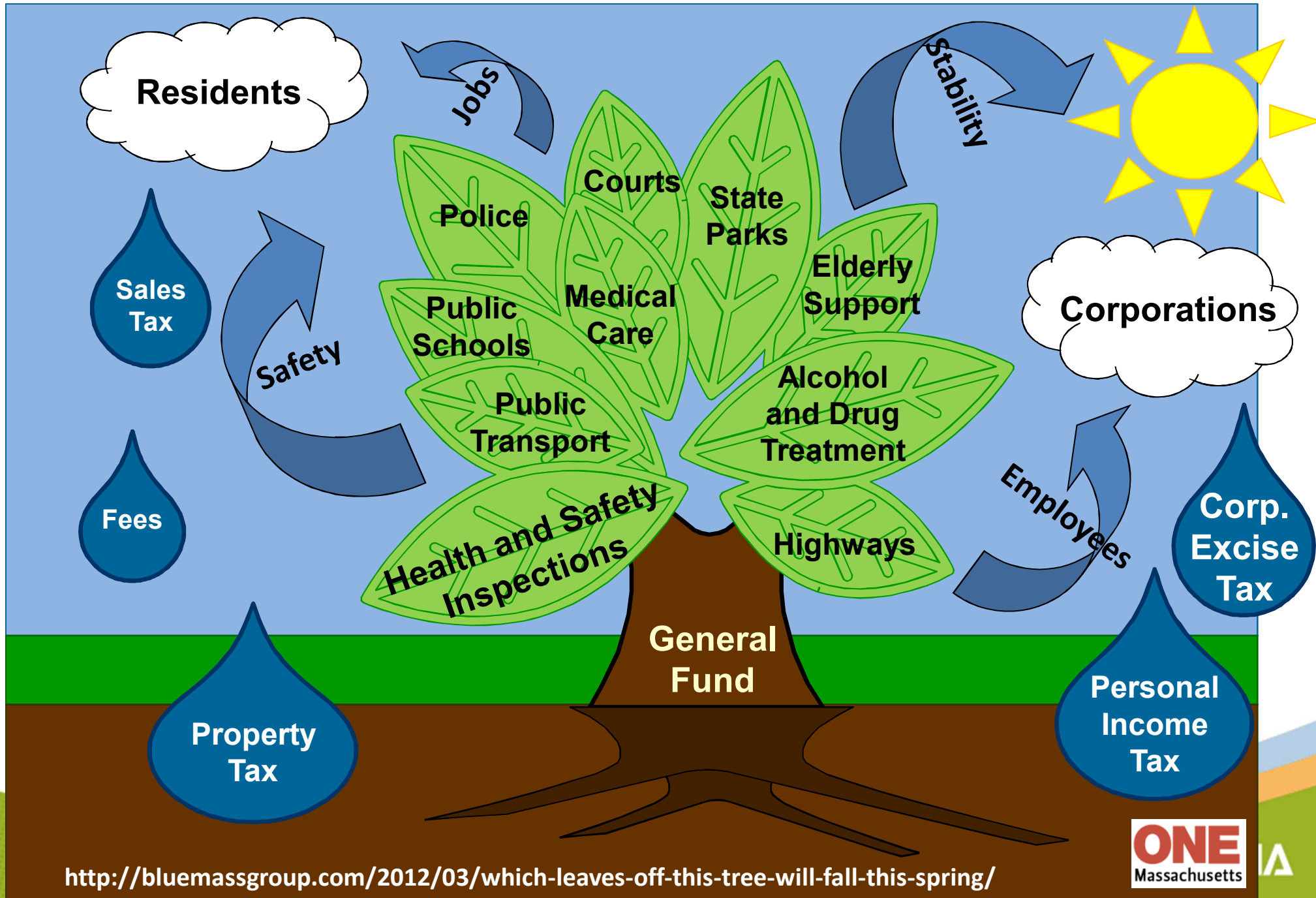
Urban renewal's power: Public investments boost prosperity for all

by Tom Hughes, president of the Metro Council and former mayor of Hillsboro. OR. November 02, 2011,

Our nation's **investments** in roads, bridges, research and other **public structures** distinguish us from countries in the developing world. Similarly, investments in local communities throughout our own urban region **help make the most of our cities**, towns and neighborhoods and distinguish us from sprawling regions around the nation . . .

If we cast aside the **important role of the public sector in creating great communities**, it will cost us billions of dollars in lost jobs and productivity, and our children and grandchildren will be poorer as a result. We need **more tools**, not fewer, to ensure strategic public investments continue to **pave the way** to prosperity for everyone in our community.

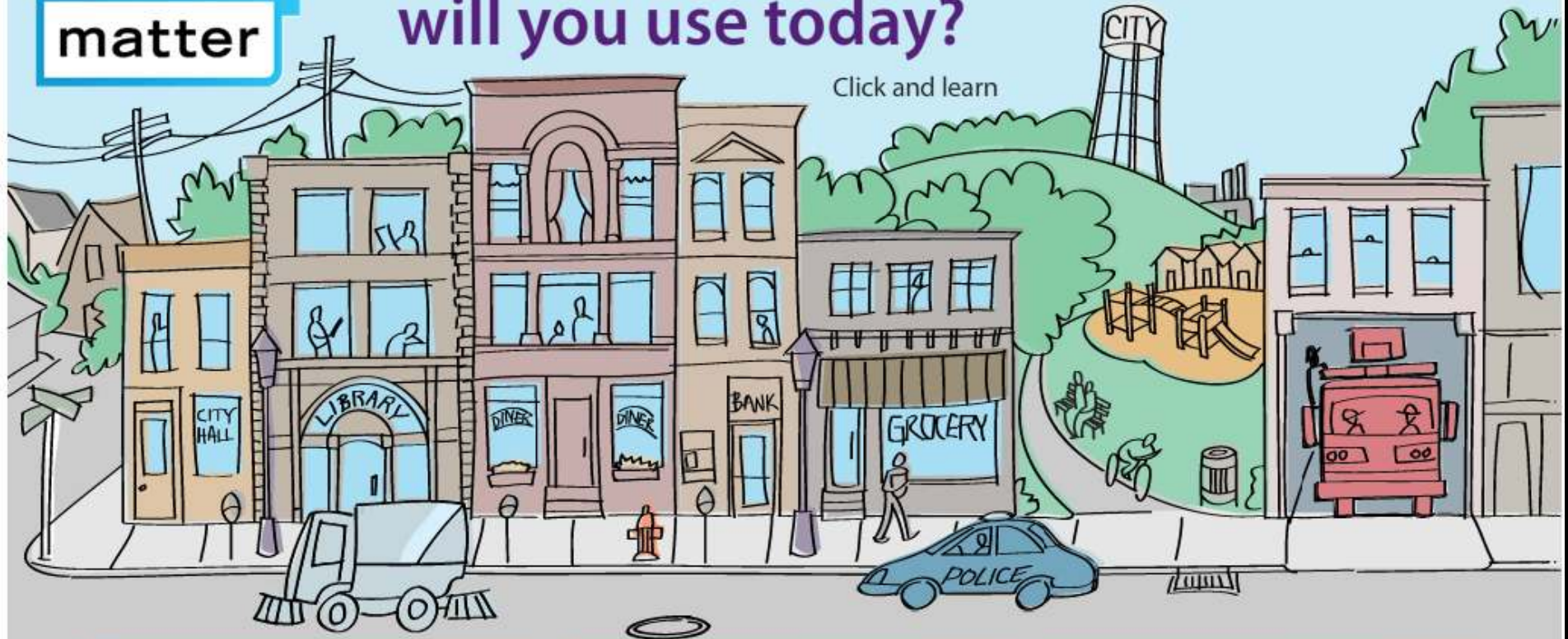
The Public Structure



**cities
matter**

What city services will you use today?

Click and learn



Broad thinking, better solutions

From brushing our teeth, to driving to work, to walking the dog, we use city services every day. Those services are getting more and more difficult to pay for.

Finding new funding solutions requires broadening the conversation - who's having it, and what it's about.

Become part of the conversation about the future of city services and funding in Minnesota at www.community-conversations.org

Featured Vid: Conversations



More great videos at youtube.com/outsidetheox

Cities Matter on Twitter



Plindstrom @lisapjackson: Local efforts "is were it's at" 4 #climatechange. #citiesmatter yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite



CSTPP RT @Plindstrom: @lisapjackson: Local efforts "is were it's at" 4 #climatechange. #citiesmatter yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite



donreeder Hartman to serve as Duluth City Council president; Boyle elected vice president. share.wthr.com/WTHRov #citiesmatter





Fostering “Citizen Managers”



- Interdependence
- Working together
- Problem-solving
- Everyone has a role to play
- The Common Interest
- “Our” Government

Government as OUR Tool

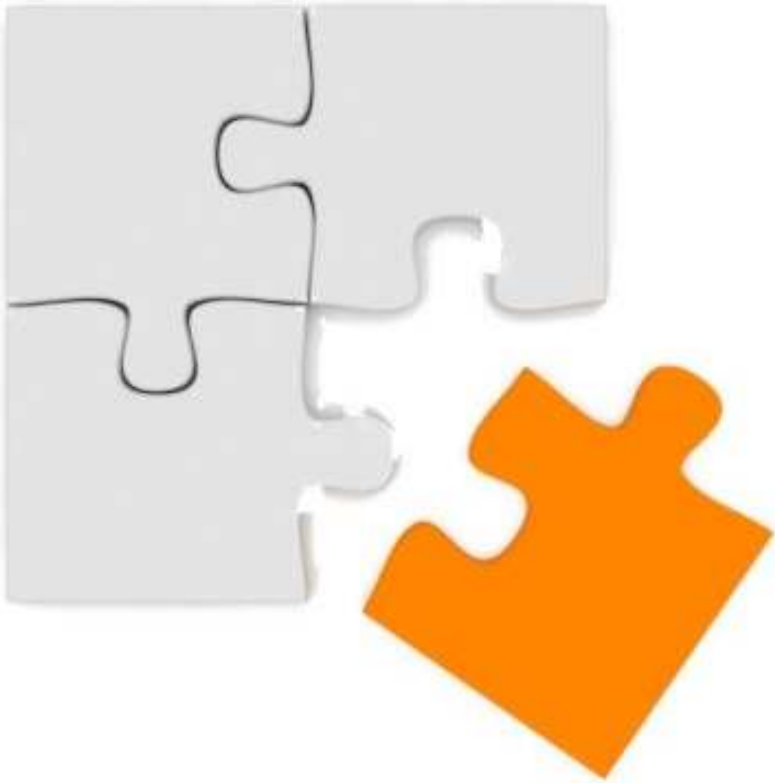
Lee H. Hamilton, Sept. 12, 2012.

“In essence, government is a tool — it’s one of the ways that **we as Americans** meet the challenges that confront **us**, whether it’s fighting a terrorist attack or educating **our children**, safeguarding **our** retirement, undergirding commerce, and protecting the country’s natural treasures for **everyone** to enjoy.”

<http://www.heraldnews.com/newsnow/x2107492984/GUEST-OPINION-We-ll-never-agree-on-the-role-of-government-and-thats-fine>

The Herald News
REALITY. DELIVERED DAILY. NOW!

Today's Session



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- **Case Study**
- Get started – group exercise

Case Study: Building Support for Public Structures in Eau Claire, WI

Examples:

- Annual Budget Introduction
- Joint Public Forum
- State of City Presentation

Budget Introduction

*“Our communities are in the midst of an historic transition that is redefining the roles and responsibilities of citizens, business, and local government. Some of the changes confronting us risk severing the vital connections between essential public structures and an enduring good quality of life. Public structures are the **physical, organizational, and social systems** that help define and connect our community, enable us as a community to get things done, and help ensure the health and well-being of our community.”*

Greater Eau Claire area has been a good place to live, work and raise a family



Excellent education



A strong sense of community that touches everyone.



Skilled workers



Help in time of crisis



Strong public-private partnerships

Public structures are vital to Eau Claire's quality of life



We understand and appreciate that what breathes life and hope and happiness into our 'homes' is the quality of our neighborhoods, jobs, schools, parks, services, medical care, and transportation.

Wisconsin Realtors Association



6,500 School health screenings
4,700 Immunizations
2,600 Family health visits

5,840 Fire and rescue calls

5,900 Fire safety inspections

6 Fire stations



3,671 Fire hydrants

City of Eau Claire Public Structures



424,000 Annual Library Visits



32,000 Police calls for service

14,000 Police investigations



110,000 Emergency dispatches



1,000 acres of public parks

Chippewa Valley Regional Airport had 33,345 take offs and landings



Eau Claire County Public Structures In 2008

Human Services had 1,672 child abuse cases



Clerk of Courts --- 29,000 cases
District Attorney ---- 6,645 cases



Meals on Wheels delivered 113,782 meals to homebound people

We are all in the same boat.



The County, cities, school districts and citizens are facing serious difficulties this coming year. How can we work together to make sure that the quality of life in the greater Eau Claire area is good for all of us – and for the citizens of the future?

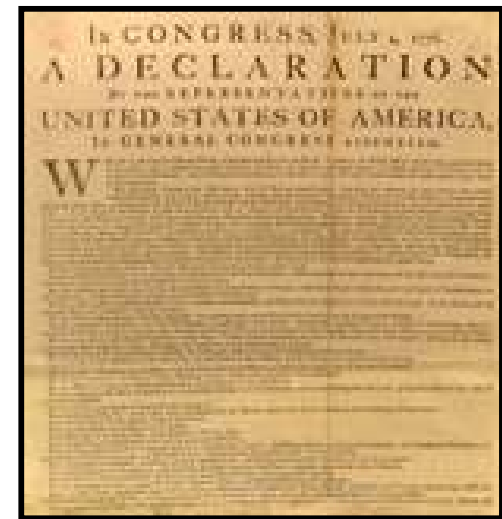
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

A City That Works

www.EauClaireWi.gov/StateOfTheCity2011

What is the Purpose of Government?

The Declaration of Independence says the purpose of government is in order “...to secure the unalienable rights of Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness, ...governments are instituted by the consent of the governed...”



How does a democratic system fulfill its responsibility?

Through the creation and preservation of a system of public structures that are fair and responsive...

- Social structures
- Physical structures
- Organizational structures



Public structures are often invisible.

Public Sector Leadership

Our job is to build public structures that are fair and responsive.

- Fair policies build confidence
- Responsive policies build acceptance



Government exists for the People – the Heart of a Public System

Like the skeleton protects and provides structure to the functions of the body, public structures organize and protect a system of public life so all people can live together in Productive and responsible ways.



Explaining Public Structures

Public Structures are like a skeleton - providing the framework on which the body's systems function.

Think of this figure as the bare-bones of a public system like a city -- Eau Claire.



Physical Public Structures

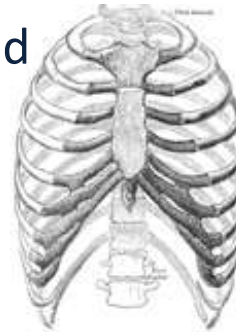
Like the rib cage protects the body's most vital organs, Public Safety structures protect the community

Police

Upgrades to Public Safety Facility shared with EC County
Principle of community visibility strengthened
West Wisconsin Drug Task Force

Fire and EMS

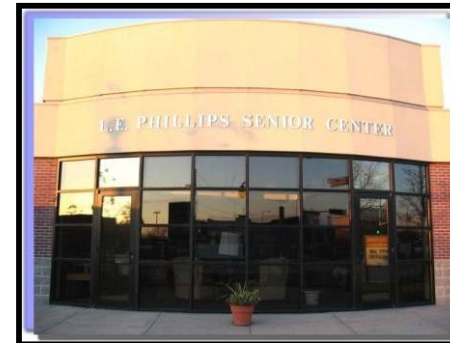
Regional EMS system enhanced



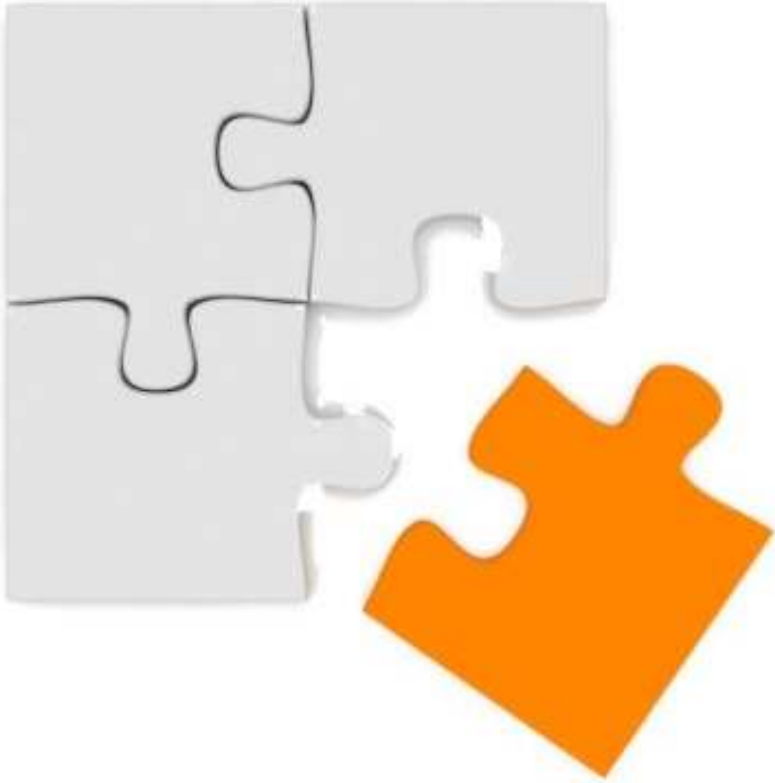
Social Public Structures

Like the arm bones help feed the body and be expressive , social public structures create a space for community interactions

- Economic Development Initiatives
 - New business at Banbury
 - Downtown Revitalization
- Arts and Entertainment
 - ECRAC allocated grant for theatre upgrades
 - Strong local Tourism
 - Sculpture Walk in downtown
- Non-Profit Network of Services
 - Bolton Refuge House move
 - Community Television funding in jeopardy



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“ . . . A talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change . . . ”

- Richard Rorty



Work With Us

- Strategic advice and consultation
- Presentations, workshops, and trainings
- Try out ideas and provide feedback
- Sign up for newsletter and webinar announcements
- Visit our website for more resources --
www.publicworks.org

Questions/Comments?

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ICMA
100th

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Charlotte
Mecklenburg County

SEPTEMBER • 14-17 • 2014

