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Disaster Recovery: A Local Government Responsibility

Most agree that the key factor in successful long-term recovery is local leadership. A clear vision, a well-defined plan, broad and diverse funding to finance the recovery, a supportive and involved business community, and effective partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels all contribute to successful long-term recovery. The biggest difference, however, is effective leadership.

Christine Becker, Washington, D.C.

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COVER STORY

Disaster Recovery: A Local Government Responsibility

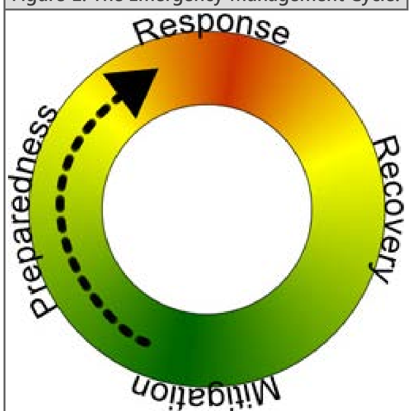
by Christine Becker

Disasters happen. A massive flood inundates a central downtown. A tornado levels a small town in a matter of minutes. A hurricane ravages a community.

And, all disasters are local. They happen in cities and towns and counties of all sizes where citizens look to their local government managers and elected officials to lead the immediate response, guide the longer-term recovery, and reassure them that life will be normal again . . . someday.

Regardless of community size or the nature of the disaster, local government leaders are responsible for overseeing all four phases of emergency management—preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation (see Figure 1). Federal and state governments play a supporting role in the immediate aftermath and in providing funding and guidance for long-term recovery and mitigation.

Figure 1. The Emergency Management Cycle.



Emergency Management is an ongoing process with four mutually dependent and overlapping components. Source: Institute for Building Technology and Safety Disaster Management Group.

Preparation and response—half of the emergency management cycle—generally get the most attention, particularly in high-risk areas. Preparing to respond usually involves significant training and practice to ensure that key local employees and supporting resources are ready to jump into action quickly and that local residents understand their roles and responsibilities in preparing for and responding to disasters.

Local government leaders—particularly those who have been through a major community disaster—recognize that preparing for long-term disaster recovery demands as much attention as preparing for short-term response. After a major disaster, the recovery process takes months and even years to bring a community back to a "new normal" and as strong as or better than before the disaster.

Frances L. Edwards, associate director of the Collaboration for Disaster Mitigation in San Jose, California, and former director of emergency services in San Jose, California, says the recovery process begins "when the situation is no longer getting worse, all the living have been rescued, and the community has found the floor."

Brett Kriger, director of the Institute for Building Technology and Safety's (IBTS) Disaster Management Group, says the recovery process begins even before the response stage is complete because decisions made while responding to the emergency can affect the recovery process (see Figure 2). "There's usually a 30 percent overlap in the middle where the community is still responding while gearing up for recovery," Kriger says.

Kriger, who has worked in numerous disaster response and recovery operations with and for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), says actions taken during the response phase can have an impact on overall results once the community moves into recovery.

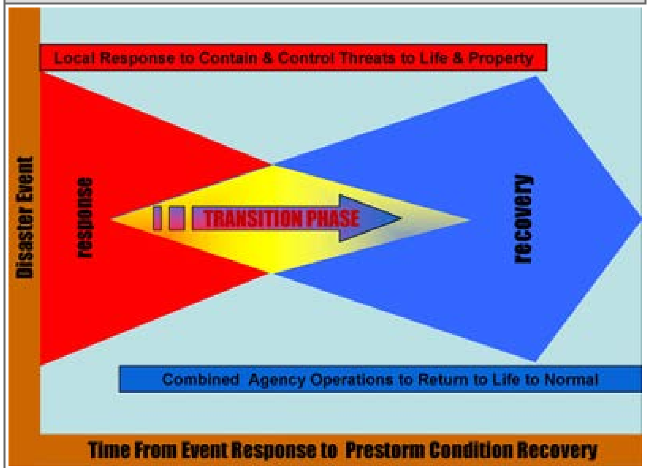
"Sometimes local officials become so wrapped up in the urgency of the response that they don't do the necessary documentation to qualify for reimbursements and longer-term recovery funds," Kriger says. "That's why planning for recovery is as important as planning for response."

And, according to Kriger, good work at the response stage supports recovery. "The four phases of emergency management produce the ebb and flow of a preparedness-based community life and define how the community perseveres before, through, and after times of crisis," he adds.

Marcy Douglas, city administrator of Northwood, North Dakota, a community of 1,000 that was leveled by a category 4 tornado on August 26, 2007, believes that a commitment to recovery from the first day of the emergency has helped that tiny community rebound.

"If you respond to a disaster with recovery in mind, recovery will happen," Douglas says.

Figure 2. Transitioning from Response to Recovery Process.



When a crisis occurs, the needs are vast and the humanitarian response relatively proportional. As the humanitarian community provides for the vulnerable population, the crisis fades away. But to establish good foundations and effective linkages to longer-term development, the recovery from the crisis needs to start as early as possible. As can be seen from the diagram, the transition phase overlaps both the relief and development phases. Recovery is the process of transformation from relief to development. Source: Institute for Building Technology and Safety, Disaster Management Group.

Focusing on Long-Term Recovery

Long-term recovery involves more than debris removal and restoring power, which are considered short-term recovery actions. According to FEMA, long-term recovery refers to the "need to re-establish a healthy, functioning community that will sustain itself over time." In its ***Long-Term Community Recovery Planning Process: A Self-Help Guide***, FEMA outlines a recovery approach that emphasizes a community-driven process with significant public involvement and local control.[1] The process also emphasizes a "project-oriented" focus on actions that will have the greatest impact on community recovery.

In this guide, FEMA also urges a significant focus on mitigation as part of long-term recovery to prevent or at least minimize similar damage in the event of another disaster.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which serves 109 cities and counties in the San Francisco, California, area, has developed a program designed to help cities and counties be better prepared for long-term recovery in the event of a disaster. Based on a survey and a series of meetings and workshops, ABAG identified four areas that cities and counties should address to prepare for long-term disaster recovery:

- Financing.
- Expediting long-term housing recovery.
- Supporting recovery of downtown businesses and the local economy.
- Ensuring local government facilities and services recover smoothly.[2]

Long-term recovery strategies and needs will vary depending on the scope of the disaster. In small communities like Northwood, North Dakota, and Greensburg, Kansas, tornadoes damaged or destroyed everything—homes, businesses, municipal buildings, schools, recreation facilities, and more. For those communities, deciding to rebuild was a first step, followed quickly by engaging the entire community to ensure that their hometowns would come back, and then bringing other resources to the table.

In other communities, when significant damage is confined to one area, local leaders must balance ongoing public service expectations with urgent long-term recovery needs while ensuring that the vision for "new normal" keeps the community together.

The following sections highlight long-term recovery approaches and lessons; they draw on the direct experience of managers who have been there.

Economic Recovery

Most managers who have experienced disasters recently say getting the local economy working again is vital to launching a successful comeback. Restarting the economic engine depends on a number of factors:

- A willingness and capacity of business to reopen quickly if facilities aren't severely damaged or to rebuild in the community.
- Affordable and available housing for workers.
- Large employers with business continuity plans who can get up and running quickly to launch the economic comeback.
- Strong connections between government and business to facilitate a recovery partnership.

Bruce Moeller, city manager of Sunrise, Florida, says open communication with the business community is essential.

"The city manager needs to have a frank discussion with the business community regarding the importance of business continuity plans in the event of a disaster," Moeller says. "This is particularly true with small businesses to help them understand how to prepare to recover quickly after a disaster."

Because Florida experiences frequent hurricanes, Moeller says both government and businesses learn with each disaster and get better prepared for the next one.

Kyle Hayes, city manager of Beaumont, Texas, which was hit by Hurricane Rita in 2005 and more recently by Hurricane Ike, notes that businesses ramped up quickly in both cases, which helped sustain the local economy. Because 35 percent of Beaumont's revenue comes from sales tax, the rapid recovery of retail businesses was essential to community recovery.

Hayes explains that the massive devastation sustained in Louisiana and Mississippi from Hurricane Katrina only a few weeks before Hurricane Rita occurred helped Beaumont and other cities in Texas get ready. "We hadn't had a hurricane in decades, and when we saw what happened from Katrina, we started getting ready," Hayes says.

In Biloxi, Mississippi, where 35 percent of city operating revenue comes from taxes on the gaming industry, the city had purchased a business interruption insurance policy at the beginning of the 2005 hurricane season. The policy guaranteed $10 million in income if the gaming industry were shut down because of a disaster. Hurricane Katrina shut down the gaming industry, but the payment from the business continuity insurance policy provided some financial breathing space as city leaders launched the city's recovery.

In Northwood, North Dakota, city officials met with all the local businesses right after the tornado to identify needs and figure out how to encourage local rebuilding. "They all had a scared, stoic look but eventually we talked about plans to rebuild," says City Administrator Marcy Douglas. "In a small town like Northwood, buying local is a way of life, and everyone wants everyone else to survive. But the local government is an essential spark to encourage small businesses to stay."

A 2001 study published by the Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) looked at factors that affected the ability of small businesses and not-for-profits to recover from natural disasters and thus contribute to long-term local economic health. The study found these five factors that were critical to long-term survival:

- The disaster's impact on the organization's clientele.
- The availability of convenient substitute goods and services that can replace the business while it is trying to rebuild.
- The status of the business before the disaster.
- Financial resources lost by the business.
- The owner's ability to adapt to the new, post-disaster environment.[3]

Leading the Recovery

Most agree that the key factor in successful long-term recovery is local leadership. A clear vision, a well-defined plan, broad and diverse funding to finance the recovery, a supportive and involved business community, and effective partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels all contribute to successful long-term recovery. The biggest difference, however, is effective leadership.

In Greensburg, Kansas, where recovery was difficult to envision on May 5, 2007, the day after one of the strongest tornadoes on record leveled the town, City Administrator Steve Hewitt led the immediate response and helped coordinate development of an ambitious recovery plan. Hewitt was recently named ***American City & County*** magazine's municipal leader of the year for "creating a vision for a better Greensburg and leading his town toward it."[4]

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is still in the early stages of recovering from massive flooding in June 2008 that completely submerged the downtown. With floodwaters still rising, City Manager Jim Prosser created a recovery and investment coordinating team that has led the charge from immediately after the flooding, beginning with response and moving now to recovery. The team includes representatives of every sector of the community and has met regularly to guide long-term recovery.

The team wasn't part of the city's response and recovery plan. It was just something Prosser knew he needed to do quickly to bring the community together. He says the broad team has been an effective resource for leading the recovery and coordinating diverse activities.

But the role of the manager in sustaining the momentum and helping the community weather the ups and downs of long-term recovery is essential. "There's a delicate balance between acting fast to meet the community's need to see progress and waiting for better information, a better plan, a solid response," Prosser observes.

"There's a big push to do something now. But if you don't have a

Guidelines for Employee Support and Continuity of Service

Here are guidelines that can be useful for maintaining local government service levels:

- Prepare a clear plan for enabling employees to participate in response and recovery by helping them meet family needs in advance.
- Establish a disaster housing plan for essential first responder employees—police, fire, emergency operations center staff, shelter workers, and damage assessment and repair teams.
- Maintain the necessary financial relationships to ensure that employees' paychecks are issued and a backup plan for delivery when direct deposit is not used.
- Ensure that employees and their families have guidance on developing a personal support kit and family disaster plan.
- Establish expectations of all employees—both essential first responders and all other employees—in personnel policy and labor agreements, with options for dealing with failure to meet those expectations.
- Establish a clear communication method for employees only—an 800 number, a radio station, an e-mail system, a meeting place for information, or other means—to provide up-to-date information about employee expectations and public service needs.

good plan and you can't get the resources, you're setting up people for more disappointment. Overpromising can be fatal in long-term recovery."

Source: Adapted from Frances L. Edwards, "Businesses Prepare Their Employees for Disaster Recovery," The Public Manager, Winter 2006.

Prosser points out that Cedar Rapids was lucky to have already carried out a visioning process well before the flood as part of a change in government structure.

"Pre-flood, we had a clear sense of where we were going as a community," he says. "If you don't have that vision in the aftermath of a disaster, you'll lose the community's confidence."

Financing the Recovery

Financing long-term disaster recovery poses significant and often frustrating challenges for local leaders who must rely on the state and federal government as major sources of disaster recovery funds. Those challenges are exacerbated in the heat of a crisis when funding is urgent, not optional or negotiable That's why incorporating a framework for financing long-term recovery improves the odds of success when disaster strikes.

Strategies that can be put in place well before a disaster include (1) understanding all federal requirements for response and recovery grants, including required documentation for reimbursements; (2) identifying all potential sources of funding for long-term recovery; (3) establishing lines of credit to provide cash flow for direct expenses and matches while waiting for federal funds; and (4) identifying internal staff, or external resources, or both, to manage the financial side of recovery.

Knowledge of federal resources and the rules governing access to those resources is essential to maximize funds to support long-term recovery.

ABAG offers these pre-disaster financial recovery action steps for local governments:

- Modify purchasing and contracting procedures to expedite emergency purchases.
- Adopt a repair and reconstruction ordinance to facilitate use of FEMA public assistance dollars.
- Establish an internal claims reimbursement process for FEMA funds.
- Adopt a local hazard mitigation plan as part of the general plan to facilitate access to additional FEMA funds.[5]

In Cedar Rapids, financing recovery remains a major challenge. Lower than expected allocation of community development block grant (CDBG) funding to the state has left the city far short of the federal funding it had hoped for.

"CDBG is a primary source of funding for our recovery plans, and it is coming a lot slower than expected and at lower levels," Prosser says. "That adds complexity to what we're doing. We could move much quicker if more resources were available sooner."

But, he remains optimistic, which is essential for his community's recovery. "Cedar Rapids is still Cedar Rapids despite the devastation, and we will emerge as a better, greater community—our new normal," he says. "But that process will take three to five years, and the community needs to understand that."

Disaster Management: An International Scenario

After the devastating tsunami of December 2004, ICMA's CityLinks program provided disaster recovery, mitigation, and preparedness assistance to two coastal cities in southern India. The Post Tsunami Recovery Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, created a partnership between Cuddalore and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu state and three hurricane-prone Florida cities—Palm Bay, Oldsmar, and Port Orange.

A team made up of ICMA staff, officials from the three Florida cities, and representatives of the India-based Urban Management Centre provided pro bono, hands-on technical assistance, capacity building, and focused exchanges. The CityLinks team helped the cities rebuild damaged parks and playgrounds and improve municipal services. They undertook flood mitigation projects to improve the cities' ability to respond to natural disasters, plan for seasonal weather, and mitigate recurring flooding in low-lying areas through improved drainage systems.

Because mapping is a crucial element in disaster preparedness and planning, the team also completed computer-aided design (CAD) base maps for the two Indian cities and showed municipal staff how to update them. The maps identify geographic features, low-lying areas vulnerable to flooding, public infrastructure systems and facilities, land uses, and important structures. Later the Tamil Nadu state government purchased CAD mapping software for cities in the state to sustain the commitment to mapping as a vital disaster preparedness and planning tool.

Although the CityLinks program came to an end, it left in place sustainable improvements—and an international partnership between local government professionals in Florida and in India—that will continue for years to come.

For more details about the program, visit the ICMA Web page at http://icma.org/inter/ns.asp?nsid=3925.

Community Care

Long-term recovery from a major disaster can be a long, slow process. In Grand Forks, North Dakota, it took more than 10 years. On the Gulf Coast, since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and, more recently, Ike and Gustav, recovery has been an ongoing process—almost a way of life.

Constant information and community connections are vital. Even when there's no real news, having some news is important to assure a tired community that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Frances Edwards says a long-term recovery plan should include strategies for dealing with the psychological impact of a disaster and the pace of recovery. "It is important to know your community and how segments will be affected by the disaster and the recovery process," Edwards says. During a recovery from a major flood in San Jose, Edwards explains that the city's large Cambodian community was particularly affected because the flood brought back memories of traumas in their home country.

"Once traumatized, individuals relive the first trauma while going through the second, and the city needs to be prepared to deal with that," Edwards says.

Trees became a focal point in Northwood, North Dakota, after the tornado. "People didn't have roofs over their heads, but they wanted to plant trees because Northwood was always known for its tree-lined streets," City Administrator Douglas says.

"They wanted that normalcy instantly, and we had to manage that need carefully." The city eventually developed a tree recovery program as part of its plan that led to the planting of 1,000 new trees.

In Florida, with each hurricane, local leaders focus on refining their long-term recovery processes. Broward County, for example, has created a "vulnerable population registry" to help local leaders pinpoint those most in need after a disaster.

"There are so many people who are just getting by," says City Manager Bruce Moeller. "A significant event that interrupts normal life will push them over the edge. This registry helps all the local governments in Broward County anticipate those special needs."

Keeping an eye on the pulse of the community—and on the pulse of local government employees who are leading the recovery process—is important for sustaining the momentum and preserving the community spirit.

"We were blessed with strong people who, in many ways, started the road to recovery before the city could do it," says John Schmisek, director of finance and administrative services in Grand Forks. "Their attitude was 'we know we need to recover and we can do it.' Ten years after the flood, I'm here to tell you—don't ever say never."

[1]***Long-Term Community Recovery: A Self-Help Guide*** (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency, December 2005), www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=2151.
[2]Linda Min and Jeanne Perkins, "Summary: Long-Term Disaster Recovery Planning by Local Governments in the San Francisco Bay Area" (Oakland, Calif.: Association of Bay Area Governments, October 2008), 1, http://quake.abag.ca.gov/recovery/SURVEYresult2008.pdf. Visit the Web site for the Regional Long-Term Disaster Recovery Initiative at http://quake.abag.ca.gov/recovery/ for additional information and available resources.
[3]Daniel J. Alesch, James N. Holly, Elliott Mittler, and Robert Nagy, ***Organizations at Risk: What Happens When Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Encounter Natural Disasters*** (Fairfax, Va.: Public Entity Risk Institute, October 2001), https://www.riskinstitute.org/peri/images/file/Organizations_at_Risk.pdf.
[4]"Municipal Leader of the Year: Come-back Kid," ***American City & County***, November 2008.
[5]"Financing Disaster Recovery," Local and Regional Disaster Recovery Planning Issues Paper (Oakland, Calif.: Association of Bay Area Governments, July 8, 2008), http://quake.abag.ca.gov/recovery/PR-Recovery-Finance.pdf.

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Aftermath: Rescuing Essential Records after a Disaster

"They were very nasty, wet, and stinky." That's how Cynthia Mahner describes tax records inundated during Hurricane Katrina. The records were essential to Mahner's real estate business, and she was fortunate to be able to dry them and remove enough mud to make them useful again.

In the immediate wake of a disaster, life and safety issues take priority, but as the immediate crisis passes, governments and businesses turn to rescuing the records on which their functions depend. Safeguarding such records in advance of disaster is the best strategy, but no amount of planning will rescue every record. Knowing how to rescue damaged records is critical to disaster preparedness.

PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE: WATER

Nearly every records disaster comes down to one thing: water. Certainly, disasters can affect records in many ways: they can be burned, carried off by strong winds, buried by a muddy landslide. But in such cases the records are often lost beyond recovery. Records that survive fires, floods, landslides, and even tornadoes are likely to be damaged by water. Water can quickly obliterate hard drives and other electronic storage devices; fortunately, water is often less damaging to paper records than people think.

This last point is important because responders may mistakenly believe that they have no alternative but to destroy wet records. Records professionals sometimes arrive on the scene to find that

Special Handling Required

PHOTOGRAPHS:

- Keep wet photographs in clean water until able to air-dry (no longer than 72 hours).
- Blot excess water carefully with a color-free paper towel.
- Air-dry, emulsion side up.
- Large quantities of wet photos may be frozen (never freeze early glass formats).

FILM NEGATIVES, MICROFILM, AND MICROFICHE:

- Fill watertight container with cold water.

there are no records left to recover. The first thing to remember, then, is that even badly soaked and dirty records may be salvaged.

Even electronic devices might be salvageable if treated quickly enough. The tips here will help you rescue damaged records, and these suggestions apply equally to electronic and paper records (except where noted).

Stabilize the environment by lowering the temperature and humidity and increasing air circulation as much as possible. High temperature and humidity, and stagnant air, contribute to mold growth, a major long-term threat to records. Stabilizing the environment will prevent further deterioration until the records can be removed from the disaster area and treated.

Call a professional and get advice as quickly as possible. Your state archives can provide—or point you to—experts who can give advice tailored to your specific disaster. There are many options for recovering wet records, so the sooner a professional arrives on the scene the better the chances of recovery become.

Handle records carefully to prevent further damage. Wet records are especially vulnerable to greater damage and should be treated as if they are fragile. Don't try to clean dirty records or storage media yourself. Don't flatten pages or book covers. And don't attempt to open wet books or computer casings.

- Submerge items so that they don't move around.
- Make sure water is at least 1 inch above packed materials.
- Ship to a film processing lab for recovery.

CDS AND DVDS:

- Wipe dry using a soft, lint-free cloth.
- Wipe only from the center of the disk to the outside edge (never use a circular motion).
- If necessary, clean with gentle soap-and-water solution.

HARD DRIVES:

- Unplug all power and peripherals.
- Remove hard drives and place in airtight plastic bags to prevent hard drives from drying out.
- Arrange for hard drives to be shipped to a data recovery specialist as soon as possible.

Instead, carefully pack the damaged materials in either plastic milk-carton-type crates or cardboard boxes lined with plastic trash bags. Separate wet items, especially bound volumes, with wax or freezer paper and freeze within 72 hours.

Protect identifying information as you pack damaged records. Identifying information such as box and binder labels can become separated from the records they identify, making recovering that much more difficult. Even identifiers written directly on boxes can wash or fade away unless they are written in permanent, non-soluble ink, so record the original location of records before removing them from the area. Take photographs to help document original order.

Air-dry slightly damp records. Records that are only slightly damp may be air-dried. Even electronic storage media may continue to function if they have become only slightly damp and not dirty. Distribute damp records in a way that allows air to circulate freely. If it is sunny, you can dry records outside. However, do not leave them overnight or unattended. Inside drying can be done on tables covered with plastic sheeting or on absorbent paper, such as unprinted newsprint. Place fans around the room to circulate the air.

Freeze wet paper as soon as possible. Extremely wet paper will stick together and begin to mold within 48 hours; inks will run and feather. It is important to freeze wet paper as soon as possible after a disaster. Freezing paper stops the deterioration process so that decisions about recovery can be made carefully over time. Note: Some items should never be frozen. See "Special Handling Required," below, for more information.

Transport carefully. Such oversized materials as maps, plans, blueprints, and ledger books should be transported using bakers' trays, pallets, or plywood covered in plastic sheeting.

Clean the area thoroughly before returning rescued records to their original locations. Carpets, ceiling tiles, wooden shelves, and other surfaces can harbor mold long after cleanup from a disaster has been completed. Records returned to such an environment can be damaged by a recurrence of mold. Be certain the environment that houses the records is actually clean before returning the records to their storage location.

—David Carmicheal is director, Georgia Division of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia, and a former president of the Council of State Archivists, Iowa City, Iowa (www.statearchivists.org). Christine Wiseman is preservation administrator for the Georgia Division of Archives and History (www.statearchivists.org).

Check Your Emergency Supply Kit

Daylight saving time begins in the United States on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November. Thanks to public education by fire and rescue officials, U.S. residents are made aware that the batteries in smoke alarms should be changed every six months, and a good way to remember is to change the batteries when clocks are changed at the beginning and end of daylight saving time.

The Fairfax County, Virginia, Office of Emergency Management also reminds county residents to use the beginning and end of daylight saving time as a reminder to check and restock emergency supply kits. The county offers information about what can be included in a kit on its emergency information Web page at www.fairfax county.gov/oem.

Here's what the county recommends for its residents.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN A BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT

- One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for both drinking and sanitation.
- At least a three-day supply of nonperishable food, such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables; protein or fruit bars; dry cereal; peanut butter; nuts; crackers; and canned juices.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA weather radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both.
- First-aid kit.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air; plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food).

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO CONSIDER ADDING TO AN EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT

- Prescription medications, eyeglasses, contact lenses, and supplies and denture needs.
- Infant formula, powdered milk, bottles, diapers, diaper rash ointment, medications, and moist towelettes.
- Pet food and extra water for your pet.
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification, bank account records, and Medicare cards, all in a waterproof, portable container.
- Cash or traveler's checks and change.
- Emergency reference material such as a first-aid book.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Change of clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper. When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use bleach to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Mess kits, paper towels, paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils.
- Paper and pens or pencils.
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children.

ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, and list of any allergies.
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries; extra wheelchair batteries, and oxygen.
- A list of the style and serial number of medical devices.
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards.
- List of doctors, relatives, or friends who should be notified if a person is injured.

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FEATURE

Support the Farm Stand to Feed “Locavores” and The Economy

by Nadejda Mishkovsky

On a typical mid-March Saturday morning in Florida, Coral Gables Development Director Cathy Swanson arrives at the parking lot behind city hall by 6 a.m. After tying on her promotional apron and setting up a city information booth, she oversees the arrival of vendors at the city's weekly farmers market.

"We started this 17 years ago because we wanted people to connect with their community on a personal basis—we wanted them to feel better about where they lived and worked, and we also wanted to encourage people to come downtown," Swanson said. "Business owners were a little skeptical at first, but they realized that this is a huge draw, not only for local families who see it as a social event, but also for snowbirds and tourists. Now the business community actually hangs up banners announcing the annual return of the green market."

Bring the Locavores Downtown
You've heard of carnivores and omnivores, but what's a locavore? The latest epicurean buzzword spotlights the trend of more Americans wanting to eat locally grown food, a preference that's boosting the popularity of farmers markets.

Indeed, over the past few years, shopkeepers have included the market in their promotional efforts in order to harness the economic boost it provides to the community. "It takes a lot of careful planning," says Swanson. Besides finding the vendors of local fruits, vegetables, plants and trees, spices, and baked goods—no small chore in a region of disappearing farmland and large-scale farming—she lines up free activities, including tai chi, gardening workshops, cooking demonstrations, and children's activities.

For visitors to the market, the benefits of the weekly ritual are more than social. It's also a fun way to buy healthy, fresh produce. It's an excuse to get outside and enjoy the weather with a walk or a bike ride. People feel good because they know they are supporting sustainable agriculture and environmental protection. And, following several food-borne-illness scares last year and the unpredictable cost of fuel, residents—a growing number of whom have become "locavores"—take comfort knowing that their food was grown close to home.

Janice Benson, of the Michigan Land Use Institute's Taste the Local Difference program, notes that "farmers markets bring us back to those important connections: to the people, the land, and the resources that make up a region. When these connections are strong, communities are strong and growing." Such benefits have contributed to an astonishing growth in the number of farmers markets. According to the USDA, the number of farmers markets has increased 71 percent in the past decade, to about 4,700 nationwide in 2008.

Market Planning

Markets are managed in diverse ways. Some are run by farmers cooperatives, others by nonprofit organizations. Many are based on some form of partnership between local government and a nonprofit entity. Often local governments contribute financially or in kind, and in some cases they run the markets themselves.

For Carson City, Nevada, the coincidence of several factors in 2007 pushed the city to urgently establish a new farmers market. First, news came that a ring road would be constructed to divert high-speed traffic away from downtown. Second, a 2007 Urban Land Institute–sponsored


By buying organic produce from a family farm at a farmers market, local residents are helping maintain a healthy environment, a vibrant community, and a strong local economy. Landisdale Farm, shown here at the year-round Clark Park farmers market located in the University City district (West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), sells certified organic produce, cheese, and beef.

discussion between city leaders and real estate experts resulted in practical recommendations for a latent downtown redevelopment effort.

In sales tax–dependent Nevada, it was clear that the city had to act quickly to bring more foot traffic downtown and boost local businesses. "When I got the call from the city, to see whether I would run a farmers market for them, it was March. . . . I started looking at some of the literature and discovered I should have been talking to vendors back in December and January, telling them to grow more!" says Linda Marrone, Carson City's market manager.

City leaders decided to concentrate on hosting the new farmers market for a 16-week period. Alongside the farmers market, the city also sponsored other downtown activities, including weekend concerts, outdoor play areas for children, gardening demonstrations, and bicycling events. Thanks to an all-volunteer downtown consortium team that took on projects from beautification to traffic management, Carson City's downtown started to see more activity rapidly.

The city purchased a local business license and contributed a shaded public parking lot to host the market. Staff provided advertising and promotion for the new market and leased a portable storage unit on-site to facilitate weekly logistics. The city also provided dumpsters for trash and street cleaning to tidy the area for its return to use as parking on Monday mornings.

The local government also rented and purchased such conveniences as picnic tables, insulated water pitchers, and a handicapped-accessible portable toilet with a washing area outside. Finally, since the Nevada growing season is so short and many vendors were coming from as far as four and five hours away in California, the city waived its already low vendor fees of $20 per week, provided that vendors would commit to coming for the entire 16-week period.

"We worked tirelessly for crazy weeks" for about a year, says Tammy Westagard, assistant director in Carson City's Office of Business Development, "but [the market has] definitely paid its own way." She adds, "We only spent about $50,000 on salaries, marketing, and advertising because we did as much as possible in-house. . . ." Besides covering their estimated costs, Westagard credits the effort with sustaining businesses in the downtown core and getting citizens excited about going downtown again. "We brought over 130,000 people downtown during the 16 weeks, and each month we had sales tax revenue of 10 percent over the previous month."

Site Selection

A critical element in selecting a site for a farmers market is ensuring that people can reach it with a variety of forms of transportation. The site for the Carson City market, located near a residential area, wasn't the city's first choice, but as it ended up there were "more people biking and walking to the market than we would have ever dreamed....

People really came and stayed," says Linda Morrone, market manager. The proximity to a residential neighborhood is particularly valuable for a weekend market, when many shoppers are coming from home.

Transportation choices and location are particularly important for low-income residents who may not have access to a car or who are likely to be more sensitive to the cost of both fuel and food. Because many residents of low-income communities face higher rates of chronic disease than those in higher-income areas and because the risk of chronic disease can be reduced through a healthy diet, access to good nutrition is especially important. Unfortunately, many low-income neighborhoods lack full-service supermarkets that provide a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables.

A recent New York City Health Department study comparing Harlem with the Upper East Side found that supermarkets in Harlem are 30 percent less common, and that only 3 percent of bodegas in Harlem carry leafy green vegetables compared with

There are almost 2 million farms in the United States and about 80 percent of them are small farms. Farmers markets are one of the oldest forms of direct marketing by small farmers. Pennypack Farm, an educational and nonprofit organization, also attends the Clark Park market held in the University City district of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The stand is often staffed by volunteers.

20 percent on the Upper East Side. The Food Trust, a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia that works to improve the supply of healthy, affordable food in the mid-Atlantic region, found that nearly half of poor adults (44 percent) travel outside of their neighborhoods to a grocery store, compared with 30 percent of the non-poor.

In areas where full-service grocery stores are limited, fast-food restaurants and convenience stores often take up the slack, but they typically provide foods that are less nutritious but at higher cost. So-called food deserts or grocery gaps occur in rural and urban areas alike. To address its own food deserts, the city of New York has instituted a creative initiative that allows farmers to bring their produce closer to hungry residents. The city's new Green Carts Program, approved in early 2008, will permit up to 1,500 mobile food cart vendors to sell unprocessed produce in neighborhoods with low consumption of and limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Across the country, communities and nonprofit groups are working to tie farmers markets into their efforts to improve access to healthy food for residents of neighborhoods where fresh produce is largely unavailable. The Food Trust operates 30 farmers markets in the Philadelphia area, many of which are in neighborhoods underserved by supermarkets, grocery stores, and other fresh food outlets.

All of the Food Trust's markets accept food stamp/EBT/Access cards, WIC, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers. Accepting diverse forms of payment is a strategic move for the markets given that U.S. Department of Agriculture contributions toward nutrition assistance programs—and to local food sources in general—will be increasing as part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

To identify strategic market locations, local governments may consider reviewing income, health, and transportation data. Making a parking lot or other publicly owned land available to a local government effort or a private partner can then provide a valuable incentive for a market to locate on a given site. Likewise, local government assistance with regulatory hurdles regarding signage or use can be helpful in getting a market started where there is a need.

Market Examples

In Traverse City, Michigan, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has been running a successful farmers market on a centrally located parking lot for some 25 years. In exchange for the revenue received from vendor fees, the DDA provides awnings for the stalls and pays for the part-time market master position to promote the market and keep things working smoothly.

The DDA contributes funds to the nearby Chamber of Commerce office in order to offer shoppers the use of its bathroom, a convenience that DDA staff consider critical to the market's success. The city also updated the signs in the parking lot to indicate the market schedule, so that car owners are forewarned.

While "the market doesn't make or lose money," says Rob Bacigalupi, department director of DDA, "it's still part of our [informal] economic development strategy." That's because when the weather is fine, the number of shoppers in this town of 15,000 is "easily in the thousands," says Bacigalupi. A 2002 study found that a number of people who attend the market don't otherwise come downtown. It also noted that about 25 percent of the shoppers at the market stayed downtown to patronize other businesses.

The historic Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia, considered the fourth most popular tourist destination in the city, sells meat, seafood, poultry, produce, and baked goods to a wide range of income levels. Eleven percent of its customers are defined as low-income, earning less than $25,000 a year.

The market is served by bus and rail lines and is located in the central business district, where walking and cycling are convenient. As a result, the market is an easy trip to combine with other destinations, and any transportation costs add little to the overall cost of food. Managers of the Fair Market Farm Stand, in the Reading Terminal Market, try to reach low-income residents of the region. "We're in an excellent location [to achieve that goal]," says Sarah Cain, who co-manages the farm stand, "because every income level in the city walks through the door."

To ensure that they are serving the entire community, all the greengrocers at Reading Terminal Market accept federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payments, formerly known as food stamps. As farm stands across the country increasingly provide EBT scanners (or a related system) for SNAP funds, it is easier for low-income residents to purchase fresh produce for their families.

Although "there was a fair amount of paperwork involved" in getting the EBT system in place, according to Cain, "now that it's in place, it's just like an ATM card." It is also common for farmers markets to accept WIC and Senior Farmers

Market Nutrition Program coupons. For local government–supported farmers markets, ensuring and promoting the availability of diverse payment options can support downtown vibrancy, the market's success, and healthy options for all residents.

Price, marketing, and education can encourage all residents of a city to take advantage of the fresh produce available at farmers markets. Mike Tabor is a 65-year-old farmer and activist who sells at several markets in the Washington, D.C., area and has a strong commitment to assisting low-income populations take advantage of the fresh produce at farmers markets. According to Tabor, there are often not enough regional and local government staff familiar enough with regional farming economics to know which farmers to choose for their markets.

This type of knowledge can have an impact on both the variety and the price of the produce, he points out. Tabor informally identifies three categories of farmers: "niche" farmers who tend to be smaller scale, "offer 12 kinds of peppers," for example, and may be able to keep their prices higher because the product is specialized; mid-sized farmers who tend to sell some variety of in-season items at a time and might be more inclined to reduce their produce prices toward the end of the day; and large-scale farmers who specialize in bulk production.

The interests of the three groups don't always coincide, and sometimes it can be a challenge to participate in the same market, according to Tabor. "I sold at the Takoma Park Farmers Market, and the other vendors complained," he recalls. "My prices were too low. The other people said I should charge more because people could pay the price. But I told them, 'I'm not a gourmet farmer. I'd rather sell at $0.69 a pound and move the tomatoes!'" On the other hand, Tabor notes, he was "swamped" by a larger-scale farmer at another market and had to stop participating because he couldn't compete.

Market vendors also have an interest in engaging consumers in trying new foods. "Generations raised on fast food have a hard time knowing what to buy if they don't have the habit of cooking," observes Tabor. While vendors are common sources of recipe tips and information, some farmers markets also host county extension agents to provide cooking demonstrations and answer questions.

At others, visiting chefs provide demonstrations that are not only informative but also entice the public to patronize area restaurants. In Coral Gables, Florida, presentations by area master chefs are just one of a series of educational and entertainment activities that keep different demographic groups visiting the downtown market all morning.

There Is Value

Put simply, there are clear opportunities for local governments to develop or partner in the establishment of farmers markets. Building on an increasing popularity with the public, strong capacity from potential nonprofit partners, and a growing awareness of health concerns for vulnerable populations, local governments have a clear opportunity to custom-fit new farmers market initiatives to address specific community priorities.

Rising levels of support from the federal government with the passage of the 2008 Farm Bill will certainly bring about additional ways to strengthen nascent efforts. And, although it is always important to ensure healthy and affordable food to the neediest in our communities, at this time of continuing economic challenge it is more important than ever.

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PM*PLUS*

The Role of Ethics in the 21st Century: A Call for Values-Based Leadership

by Merlin Switzer

The headline in the July 26, 2008, ***Sacramento Bee*** proclaimed: "City's salvage scandal spreads." This was one in a series of articles about a scrap-metal dealer who had admitted to bribing employees in three northern California cities. "Whew!" you say, "That's too bad . . . at least it wasn't here."

But it could happen in your city. What is your city doing to bolster ethical behavior? Do employees, especially supervisors and managers, understand ethics and the critical role they play in maintaining an ethical workplace? This article is a call for values-based leadership at all levels. Leaders who understand values-based leadership and follow the practical steps listed below will take progressive steps toward developing and sustaining an ethical work environment.

What Are Ethics?

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines ethics as "a system of moral standards or values; a particular moral standard or value." The Josephson Institute defines ethics as the "standards governing the conduct of a person or members of a profession." There are three aspects to ethics:

- Discerning right from wrong.
- Committing to do what is right.
- Doing what is right.

The ICMA publication, ***The Ethics Edge***, says ethics is about "good and bad . . . virtue and vice . . . benefit and harm . . . and propriety and impropriety." But, ethics is about values too. Values are defined as "traits, behaviors or qualities to which we ascribe some worth or importance."

Joanne Ciulla, in ***Ethics, the Heart of Leadership***, contends that "Ethics is about the assessment and evaluation of values." She defines values as "the ideas and beliefs that influence and direct our choices and actions."

In short, ethics is about behaving—making choices and taking actions—according to one's values that reflect beliefs about how things should be done. The question logically follows, "Whose values are we talking about?" People come into the workplace with their own values, which may or may not be similar to those of the person next to them or yours, for that matter.

All organizations develop a culture. Culture is simply the "prevailing ideology (beliefs/values) that people carry around in their heads," according ***Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture***. Still, what are the values that drive culture? It depends!

What Are Your Values?

As a leader, you have values, too; just as do other leaders in your city. Whose values do you follow? If you are the city manager, does that mean others will buy into yours? Wishful thinking!

On the wall, on its Web site, in its strategic plan, or in other locations your city likely has its values posted, too. Are they the same as yours? How do you get others to buy into the city's values?

Clarity about values is important. Ansel Adams, the famous photographer of Yosemite, once said, "There is nothing worse than a sharp picture of a fuzzy concept." A clear understanding about values and what they mean is important for everyone in the workplace, but especially for those in leadership positions. Without clarity, values and ethics remain shadowy. Leaders are responsible for providing clarity.

Why Are Ethics Relevant for the 21st Century?

What are the challenges cities will face in the 21st century? According to the National League of Cities, the following are high-impact issues facing cities:

- The shift from goods and services to a knowledge-based economy while the revenue system remains the same.
- The interaction and flow of revenue between federal, state, and local governments.
- The significant shift in demographics that changes the services needed by residents.
- A rise in antigovernment sentiment coupled with declining civic engagement.
- The safety of communities.

Related to these are a variety of such sub-issues as maintaining constituent trust, public oversight, recruitment and retention of qualified staff, contracting out services, and maintaining employee benefits in the face of rising health care costs.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to demonstrate that there are a plethora of issues facing communities in the future. Values-based leadership will be needed to bring clarity to what is most important and how the actions of all employees are needed to strengthen trust and commitment toward a commonly understood mission.

What Is Values-Based Leadership?

James O'Toole in ***Leading Change—The Argument for Values-Based Leadership*** says "At its core . . . values-based leadership is the creation of moral symmetry among those with competing values . . . [it] brings order to the whole by creating transcendent values that provide a tent large enough to hold all the different aspirations, and in which all can find satisfaction." These tips can be gleaned from O'Toole's book:

- Demonstrate respect by being willing to listen to people's needs and wants, which leads to a trust relationship between leaders and followers.
- Identify the good in followers to create a higher-order view of the common good to create a transcendent vision.
- Demonstrate authenticity and integrity throughout the process.
- Avoid the natural tendency to lead by pushing; instead, pull by inspiring values.
- Make sure the organization acts in consistent ways to build a strong culture.
- Expect spirited debate when people have competing values.

In another expression of values, Darin Brumby, chief information officer of First Group, a U.K.-based company, defined value-based leadership as "choosing to lead your life based on the core values you hold dear . . . an overarching way of looking at the world and choosing a principled way of behaving"[1] and suggested:

- Involve everyone and communicate expectations clearly and often.
- Select the values that are core to your beliefs and attitudes about life.
- Positively discriminate and reward behaviors that reflect core values.

In essence, public sector values-based leadership is providing leadership based on values that reflect the output of a collaborative process involving employees and stakeholders. Many localities have developed values in this manner but may have stopped short of tapping into the full potential of the values they created by not ensuring leaders lead in ways that reflect those values. The next section offers some practical steps for bringing values-based leadership to life.

Practical Steps to Values-Based Leadership

As you reflect on the following list of practical steps, check each box that applies to you. Also, consider what steps you need to take to strengthen ethics in the workplace.

- Know your city's values well enough to talk about them comfortably.
- Explain or discuss the relevance of the values and ethics with employees.
- Describe behaviors consistent with those values.
- Engage employees in dialogue concerning values and ethics.
- Circulate values and ethics literature to raise employee awareness.
- Watch for and recognize employee behavior that is consistent with the city's values.
- Live the values.
- Coach others toward higher value acceptance.
- Debrief values and ethics failures to identify measures to prevent future issues.
- Create an ethics committee or similar body that has specific, though not exclusive, responsibility to promote values-based and ethical behavior.
- Include a values and ethics section in employees' evaluation and promotional processes.
- Develop metrics to track values and ethics efforts.

- Reference values and values-based leadership in recruitment literature.
- Explain how vision and values are linked.
- Use a values-based decision-making model to enhance ethical decisions.
- Admit mistakes and right wrongs to restore trust.

Conclusion

Ethics will play an important role in this century if public sector leaders are to find solutions for the challenges that lie ahead. Values-based leadership is a framework to provide an environment that will raise the ethical bar by bringing clarity to what is important and creating a stronger, more ethical culture.

[1] Darin Brumby, "Values-Based Leadership" (presentation at National Computing Centre annual conference, October 17–18, 2006, Croyden, Surrey, UK), www.ncc-conference.co.uk/presentations/18th%20October/Darin_Brumby.pdf.

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DEPARTMENTS

Ethics

Managing Conflicts of Interest

Scenario: After going through an extensive design development phase, the proposal to rehabilitate a historic section of the downtown area went to the planning commission for approval. The development phase was quite lengthy because city leadership was committed to engaging all stakeholders in an effort to reach consensus on a range of design issues.

Despite the city's efforts, the historic preservation groups and the business community still disagreed over a number of issues. A week after the planning commission granted its approval, the media disclosed that a member of the planning commission who actively participated in discussions on the issue and voted to approve the plans had a conflict of interest as a result of his financial dealings with the lead developer for the project.

The member's employment as a senior vice president of a bank was public knowledge. The fact that the bank recently approved a significant loan to that developer was not. The commission member was indignant that anyone would question his integrity, especially because he had sought legal advice from the city attorney before voting on the plan.

The city attorney had advised him that his participation in the commission's deliberation and vote did not violate city or state law because he had no direct financial ownership or investment in or benefit from the development. The historic preservation groups were outraged and thought the deal was rigged. City leadership was embarrassed and troubled by the probability that this could happen again.

Advice: There is a significant gap between what the law defines as a conflict of interest for a public official and what a reasonable person may perceive to be a conflict. Most state ethics laws are simply financial disclosure regulations that require public officials to file annual reports detailing sources of income, real estate investments, debts, and other business interests.

Disclosure certainly helps to promote transparency but is not the only measure that should be considered. The set of circumstances or relationships that constitutes a legal definition of conflict of interest is narrowly drawn. One municipal attorney described the quandary as balancing conflicts of interest versus allegiance: the first is a strict legal definition; the second is a situation where a public official's personal relationships are such that they call into question whose interests the official represents.

The public interest is best served by engaged representatives who are knowledgeable about their community. When their private lives intersect with their public duties, what steps should they take to ensure that they act in the best interests of the public they serve and in a manner that promotes confidence in their actions?

If you find yourself in a similar situation, first discern whether there is any connection between an official action you are about to take and your personal life. Seek counsel to have a clear understanding of your legal obligation. If your participation meets the legal test, consider next whether it will meet the appearance test.

The ICMA Code of Ethics sets a high standard for disclosure that would be appropriate for all public officials, elected and appointed, to adopt: disclose any personal relationship in any instance where there could be the appearance of a conflict of interest. If the conflict is significant enough that a reasonable person would question whether you are acting in the public's best interest, consider disengaging from the process early on. After all, disclosure doesn't cure all conflicts of interest.

Orientations for newly appointed and elected officials are a great opportunity to raise awareness about the complexity of conflicts of interest and their potential to undermine the public's confidence in local government. When faced with a conflict of interest, remember the 3-D strategy: discern, disclose, disengage.

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Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

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On Retirement

Reduce Your Taxes and Build Retirement Security

It's hard not to notice that it's tax season again, with all the commercials and advertisements promoting tax preparation services. Whether you do them yourself or have someone do them for you, it's important to remember some key ways you can save on your tax bill long before it comes due.

One deduction often overlooked by many that can potentially reduce your tax liability is opening or contributing to an individual retirement account (IRA). IRAs are one of the few savings tools that give you up until the filing deadline to save on your tax bill. If you open a traditional IRA from now until April 15, you may be able to deduct the contribution from your 2008 taxes.

The contribution limit for an IRA is $5,000 this year and $6,000 if you are over the age of 50. Couples can contribute a maximum of $10,000 or up to $12,000 if they are both over 50.

There are two types of IRAs, and the decision of which plan is best for you depends on a number circumstances that you and your tax counselor should consider. Contributions to a Traditional IRA may or may not be tax deductible, depending on your income and whether or not you are covered by an employer pension plan.

With a Traditional IRA, your investments grow tax-deferred, and you pay taxes only when withdrawing funds from your account during retirement. Until you reach age 59 1/2, withdrawals from a Traditional IRA are generally subject to a 10 percent penalty in addition to income tax, although there are several penalty exceptions.

A Roth IRA is different in that you receive tax-free distributions of investment earnings providing at least five years have passed since the year of your first Roth contribution and you are at least age 59 1/2. You can also access your earnings without penalty if you are disabled or paying first-time home-buying expenses ($10,000 lifetime cap).

Another difference between the two IRAs is that higher-income taxpayers may not be able to contribute to a Roth IRA. The 2008 adjusted gross income phase-out ranges for Roth contribution eligibility are $101,000–$116,000 for unmarried taxpayers and $159,000–$169,000 for married taxpayers filing jointly.

If you are age 50 or older, you can make annual catch-up contributions to both types of IRAs. For 2008, the catch-up contribution limit is $1,000.

If you are uncertain which IRA is right for you, there are plenty of Web sites where you can get additional information, including the IRS Web site, at www.irs.gov, and ICMA-RC's site, at www.icmarc.org/ira.

On ICMA-RC's site, you'll find descriptions of the features of each type of IRA, a Q&A section to help you determine which IRA is better for you, and financial planning calculators. You can also use our IRA Wizard to set up an account with ICMA-RC.

Opening an IRA is one way to reduce your 2008 taxes. But remember, when you open or contribute to an IRA, you are also building retirement security. That's a goal that you can feel good about both now and in the future.

—Joan McCallen
President and CEO
ICMA Retirement Corporation
Washington, D.C.
www.icmarc.org

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DEPARTMENTS

Profile

Village Administrator Elected President of State City/County Management Association

Harold (Harry) Porr III is village administrator, Bronxville, New York.

Bronxville, New York, Village Administrator Harold (Harry) Porr III has been unanimously elected by the members of the New York State City/County Management Association (NYSCMA) as the organization's president for the 2008–2009 program year.

NYSCMA is a professional association of appointed chief executive officers, administrators and other appointed municipal officials, as well as educators dedicated to the improvement of local government and the quality of urban life. It is the state affiliate of the International City/County Management Association.

Porr takes on the job armed with experience not only as Bronxville's top administrator, but also as the city manager of Newburgh, New York, for 10 years, from 1992 to 2002, and as city manager of Long Beach, New York, from 2002 to 2004. As of February, 2009 he will have been in his Bronxville post for five years.

Porr began his government career as assistant to the executive of Orange County, which served him as on-the-job training for his ascent up the municipal government ladder. While working in the executive's office, he did stints as acting County Youth Bureau director, County Historian, acting Private Industry Council director and was responsible for relations with the state and federal governments.

He was also Orange County's public information officer with responsibilities that included work on the Indian Point four-county emergency response team and was Governor George Pataki's appointee on the Stewart Airport Commission from 1999 to 2002, when he became city manager of Long Beach. As he put it in an October 27 phone interview, "I have lived and worked my entire life in the MTA region."

In the 1970s, before pursuing a career in municipal government, Porr, who earned his B.A. at the Potsdam campus of the State University of New York (SUNY) and his M.A. at SUNY/New Paltz, had been a junior high school English teacher in the Newburgh public school system. His undergraduate and graduate studies included history, government, literature, and education.

Porr was born in New York City, but his family moved to Newburgh when he was 12 years old. He and his wife, Joan, have been married for 37 years, which, he says, "is the best." They have three children. The youngest, 22-year-old Andrew, recently returned from a 14-month tour as an Army infantryman in Iraq, where he was involved in combat. The Porrs' 24-year-old daughter, Johanna, is in graduate school at Marist College, and 30-year-old Harold is a construction contractor who lives in Newburgh with his wife and three children.

Asked how he would differentiate his experience in Bronxville from the other municipalities he has managed, Porr said, "The Board of Trustees in Bronxville is a somewhat different breed, not seen in other places. They are extremely professional; they put the community first and, always and only, focus on what's best for the village, which is not the case in many other communities."

—Stephanie Harrinriton
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