

services a city must offer; for example, Oklahoma City, unlike Chicago, has little use for snow removal equipment but must have alarm systems in place to warn of approaching tornadoes. Roads, bridges, subways, public buildings, wastewater treatment facilities, and so on are all part of the built environment, which defines the city infrastructure. Since the early part of the twentieth century, cities have used zoning to regulate land use and thus have significantly affected what the built environment in a city can and will look like.

- As we note later in this chapter, it is important that urban executives understand the political culture of the cities they manage. This concept, while slippery and hard to measure, captures the attitudes and expectations of a citizenry about the proper role and scope of government in a community. James Q. Wilson and Edward C. Banfield gave us the often-maligned “ethos theory,” arguing that cities had two fundamental political value systems—public-regarding and private-regarding—each associated with different ethnic and income groups in cities. One ethos could dominate politics in a city, or the two value systems could be competing for dominance.⁶⁷ Although research on this theory was subjected to much criticism and found little empirical verification, it still presents a useful dichotomy of competing cultures in cities. For example, a number of large cities in the United States assess a local income tax that is often used to supplement welfare benefits to city residents, but the political cultures of some other cities in America would not support such a tax.
- Of the four latent subsystems, the socioeconomic situation is probably the most recognizable. Common sense tells us, for example, that if a city’s economic base is declining, tax revenues will also probably decline. Cities with dependent and elderly populations have a different economic base and very different service needs than do cities with thriving business districts, sports arenas, fully utilized convention facilities, and populations of young, highly educated professionals living in posh apartments and townhouses in the central city. Clearly, the demographic, social, and economic features of a city have a profound impact on local policies, politics, and management.
- The final latent subsystem is defined by the relationships among and between governmental units. As we see in Chapter 2, cities operate within a complex system of intergovernmental relations. Not only must they rely on the federal and state governments for financial support, but they must also bargain, negotiate, and compromise with other local governments within large metropolitan areas.

This focus on the environmental inputs to a political system is characteristic of systems theory, which provides the context for this entire book. In the remainder of this section, we use the examples of citizen participation and e-government to further illustrate the importance of environmental influences on city politics and management.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY GOVERNMENT

Simply put, citizens own city government. In keeping with the concept of political culture discussed earlier, the citizenry of a city or town set the expectations for and define the proper role and scope of government in their community. The failure to meet such expectations, based on fact or fiction, may well mean the loss of community support. Research also shows that citizen participation leads to greater public perception of government responsiveness and greater tolerance for those who have opposing viewpoints⁶⁸—both of which are laudable outcomes. It is the job of the urban executive (1) to understand the nature of community values, (2) to determine the means and under what conditions to foster citizen participation, and (3) to strengthen community through civic engagement. The importance of understanding community values as one key to enlarging management capacity is discussed later in this chapter. For now, let's focus on how to foster citizen participation in the decision-making process. The case study in Policy and Practice Box 1.2 illustrates how citizen participation can lead to true citizen collaboration and civic engagement.

BOX 1.2 Policy and Practice**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE HAMPTON, VIRGINIA, BUDGETARY PROCESS**

According to professors Pamela Dunning and Pamela Gibson, using social media to encourage civic engagement for some might be like "borrowing trouble and just increasing . . . [one's] workload!" This is especially the case when you are asking for citizen input in the politically charged budgetary process. But, this is exactly the opposite of what these two professors found when they studied Hampton, Virginia (population about 137,000) city manager Mary Bunting's community engagement campaign initiated to solicit greater citizen input into the city budget. The citizen engagement campaign was called "I Value" and manager Bunting put the following question to city residents:

The City can do many things, but we can't read minds. We are facing budget challenges and need your input. Please tell us what you value and together we will shape our future. I value your input. What do you value?

Using a number of civic engagement techniques, the city management was able to resolve a \$19 million shortfall in the 2011 budget, "with minimal conflict due to the dynamics of . . . [the I Value] campaign." Citizen participation mechanisms included the following:

- *Informal gatherings:* Manager Bunting ventured out from city hall and met with citizens where they lived, worked, and socialized. She held informal chats of small groups of ten to fifteen at coffee shops and libraries. She visited with groups at meetings of professional and civic organizations and at neighborhood associations. In addition, "Meet, Greet, and Get Feedback" sessions took place at shopping locations and at concerts.

BOX 1.2 Policy and Practice

- *Social Media:* The city used a host of social media to engage and inform citizens. For example, the city created an "I Value Hampton" website that informed citizens of the various methods available that they could use to provide input on the budget. These methods included calling a "311- customer call center, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and comments drop boxes located around the city." Google Maps was used to guide people to where engagement chats were going to be held and to show the location of suggestion drop boxes. Finally, an informational budget video was created by city management that provided information about the status of the budget process. The video was available for viewing on the local city television station as well as online.
- *Online Survey:* City management created an online survey for citizens to complete at their convenience. The survey provided a list of major city services and asked citizens if each service was a "want" versus a "need," if the service should be increased, maintained at current level, reduced, or eliminated; and to rate the relative importance of one service compared to others the city provided.
- *Online Chat with the City Manager:* Manager Bunting held online chats during the lunch hour and after work which allowed citizens to ask questions about the budget and receive detailed responses in real time. The chats were archived and made available on the city website.
- *Meeting Polling:* At city formal budget sessions, citizens could use "state-of-the-art keypad technology" to anonymously provide input about various services and receive instant feedback from city officials.
- *Website Information Sharing:* Information gathered from various civic engagement mechanisms was posted to the city website within twenty-four hours of the event.

In 2010, the first year of the campaign, more than 2 million positive comments about the process were received from citizens. Attendance at public budget meetings increased from the previous year by 2,900 percent. The "I Value" campaign cost only \$860 dollars for posters, information, comment cards, reusable drop boxes, and design templates. In 2011, more than one hundred citizens participated in Budget Week, which featured five formal public events that allowed citizen feedback using audience polling. Given the success in the city budget process, the "I Value" campaign strategy was also used to update the city community plan, waterways management discussion, and the five-year capital spending plan.

Speaking about the "I Value" civic engagement effort, manager Bunting said: "All of us—myself, the City Council, the larger community—felt that this outreach process put us all in a better place for understanding and making important decisions. That's a healthy thing for our community."

To be sure, American cities and towns historically have been and will continue to be the bedrocks of *direct democracy*. Like the ancient Greek city-states, the birthplace of democracy, local public leaders and citizens can meet and hash out the details of public policy. This face-to-face interaction is often far different from the more insular *representative democracy* practiced by state legislatures or the national Congress. Unlike ancient Athens, however, manager Bunting brought local civic engagement into the twenty-first century through the use of an arsenal of social media techniques, including a city website, 311-customer call centers, online surveys and chat rooms, and website information sharing. One should also be impressed that the budgeting process was the focal point of manager Bunting's civic engagement effort. Perhaps no other government issue is more contentious than the budget. Indeed, the budget is *the* supreme political document since it allocates scarce resources. While all government budgets (federal, state, or local) are open to

(continued)

BOX 1.2 Policy and Practice (continued)

public scrutiny, budgets are often hammered out largely by political elites working in executive and legislative committees.

One of the critical roles of the urban executive is to facilitate the process of citizen participation. Manager Bunting's citizen engagement effort went "above and beyond" the normal practice. As such, in October of 2012, Mary Bunting and Hampton were honored by the White House as one of thirteen Champions of Change in Local Innovation.

SOURCE: Pamela T. Dunning and Pamela A. Gibson, "Successful Collaboration in the City of Hampton, Virginia Budgetary Process," *Public Administration Times*, March 22, 2013, at <http://patimes.org/successful-collaboration-city-hampton-virginia-budgetary-process/>.

In Chapter 4, we examine closely other ways in which citizens influence city government—by voting; by joining organizations such as political parties, interest groups, and neighborhood associations; and by contacting city officials with complaints or requests for services.

E-GOVERNMENT REFLECTS TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CULTURE IN CITY GOVERNMENTS

Information technology (IT) is the engine that drives the modern city, promising increases in productivity, reduced costs, and better access to government by citizens.⁶⁹ Moreover, the IT future seems boundless in possibilities and opportunities. IT's child at the dawn of the twenty-first century is e-government, or, the "electronic village."

As explained by public administration and IT expert M. Jae Moon, e-government can be narrowly defined "as the production and delivery of government services through IT applications" and broadly defined "as any way IT is used to simplify and improve transactions between governments and other actors, such as constituents, businesses, and other governmental agencies."⁷⁰ Moon explains further that e-government includes four major internal and external components:

1. The establishment of a secure government intranet and central database for more efficient and cooperative interaction among governmental agencies
2. Web-based service delivery
3. The application of e-commerce for more efficient government transaction activities, such as procurement and contracts
4. Digital democracy for more transparent accountability of government⁷¹

The extent to which city governments have adopted these internal and external e-government components is well documented in a recent series of articles in the 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2012 editions of the *Municipal Year Book*. In 2001, John O'Looney

reported on the use of the Internet for service delivery and citizen participation in a group of about 145 cities and counties with 50,000 or more residents.⁷² In general, most cities (96 percent) report providing basic, static web pages for city and county departments. But only 54 percent allow users to search or query databases, and only 9 percent allow for e-commerce activities online. In terms of citizen participation opportunities, 68 percent of the responding cities and counties publish the e-mail addresses of all elected officials, 60 percent post e-mail addresses for professional staff, 58 percent route e-mail to the appropriate departmental staff, and two-thirds (66 percent) of the cities and counties post meeting minutes online. In contrast, less than 10 percent of the jurisdictions offer web audio or video presentations of decision-making deliberations (7 percent), allow citizens to engage with decision makers during deliberations (5 percent), or facilitate citizen-to-citizen discussions (4 percent).

The 2002 *Municipal Year Book* report on e-government was based on *The Electronic Government Survey 2000*, with a much larger sample size—about 1,500 cities and counties of the approximately 3,000 surveyed.⁷³ Findings show that most local governments have websites—86 percent of responding cities and 75 percent of counties. In 1997, the corresponding figure for cities was 40 percent; there was a 115 percent increase between 1997 and 2000. In 1997, when queried if their city had an intranet, only 12 percent of the cities responded affirmatively. In the 2000 survey, over half of the cities and counties (59 percent) reported the existence of an intranet.

Fifty-six percent of the local governments report the employment of a web manager or administrator. This position is full-time in about 25 percent of the cities and counties and is part of another position in about another 68 percent of the jurisdictions; the remaining 7 percent are contract, part-time, or volunteer personnel. Only one in ten local government officials report that they have an overall e-government strategy or master plan.

When asked about citizen satisfaction with local websites, city and county officials report satisfaction ratings among the citizenry of 65 percent stating that the website “meets expectations,” 17 percent saying that it “exceeds expectations,” and 18 percent noting that the website is “below expectations.” Few cities (11 percent) offer financial web-based transactions, but 31 percent said that they post requests for bids and/or proposals on their website.

Respondents noted that barriers to implementation of e-government include lack of expertise, insufficient financial resources, and security issues. Major impacts of e-government activities include (1) increased demands on staff, (2) reengineering processes, (3) changed staff roles, and (4) processes becoming more efficient.

In the 2003 edition of the *Municipal Year Book*, Evelina R. Moulder offers a summary of findings on “E-government: Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges” that is based on a survey of nearly 8,000 cities and counties.⁷⁴ The response rate was about 53 percent, from 4,123 cities and counties. As in previous surveys, a supermajority of cities, 74 percent, offer websites in this larger survey. The percentage rises to 88 percent of local governments

that have populations in excess of 10,000 (the threshold used in the 2000 survey outlined above), for a 4 percent increase since 2002. Also as in previous reports, topics such as barriers to e-government, changes introduced by e-government, and e-government services offered are discussed and analyzed. In our opinion, one impact of e-government is particularly noteworthy: 48 percent of the cities and counties report that the use of e-government has increased citizen contact with elected and appointed officials.

Two years later in the *2005 Municipal Year Book*, Florida State University Professor David Coursey notes that the percentage of local governments reporting that they have a website had increased from 74 percent in 2002 to 91 percent in 2004.⁷⁵ Of the reporting 3,410 cities and counties (a 43 percent response rate) that do have a website, in 51 percent of the cases an Information Technology (IT) department (31 percent) or the city/county manager's office (20 percent) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the site. Survey respondents cite three major barriers to e-government activities in their cities—lack of financial resources (64 percent), lack of technology/web staff (63 percent), and lack of technology/web expertise (43 percent). Between the 2003 and 2005 ICMA e-government surveys, not much occurred at the local level in terms of expanding services offered online. Of the nineteen services reported, with one notable exception, the percentage of services offered in the two years were “nearly, if not exactly, the same.”⁷⁶ The one exception noted above was that the percentage of cities/counties that offer citizens downloadable forms via the Internet increased from 3 percent in 2002 to 58 percent in 2004. As in previous years, the most widely offered web services were informational in nature, posting the council agenda and minutes (76 percent), listing codes and ordinances (66 percent), online communication with elected and appointed officials (66 percent), and providing employment information and applications (60 percent).

Writing in the *2012 Municipal Year Book*, Professors Donald Norris and Christopher Reddick analyze trends and innovations in e-government based on an ICMA survey mailed to 4,452 municipalities and counties in the spring of 2011.⁷⁷ A total of 1,021 cities and 305 county officials returned or completed the survey online, for a response rate of approximately 30 percent. The most often cited reasons for adopting e-government among the respondents were providing citizen access to: local government information (98 percent), local government (90 percent), elected officials (70 percent), and appointed officials (67 percent). In addition, 69 percent of the respondents said they developed e-government to save money, while 65 percent said they did so to allow for greater citizen participation in government/e-democracy.

When Norris and Reddick divided local e-government offerings into two categories (1) information and communication and (2) transaction-based services, they found that cities and counties were more likely to offer the former applications versus the latter. For example, the ten most frequently offered information and communication services and the percentage of respondents offering the service were: (1) council agenda and minutes (94 percent); (2) codes/ordinances (91 percent); (3) forms that can be downloaded for

manual completion (e.g., voter registration, building permits) (89 percent); (4) employment information/applications (88 percent); (5) communication with individual elected and appointed officials (69 percent); (6) geographic information systems (GIS) mapping / data (65 percent); (7) e-newsletters sent to residents/businesses (64 percent); (8) e-alerts (60 percent); (9) streaming video (51 percent); and (10) video on demand (45 percent).

For transaction-based services, 58 percent of the respondents said they allowed for "requests for service" such as pothole repair. Fifty-three percent of the jurisdictions allowed residents to pay their utility bills online; 50 percent accepted requests for local government records; 48 percent allowed citizens to register for the use of recreational/activities such as classes or picnic areas; and 41 percent accepted the payment of fines or fees.

About two-thirds of the governments report they have adopted at least one social medium, with 92 percent of these adopters subscribing to Facebook, 70 percent adopting Twitter, 45 percent posting on YouTube, 20 percent blogging; and 16 percent using Flickr. Twenty-seven percent of the local governments use cloud computing.

Only two barriers to adopting e-government were cited by a large percentage of respondents, lack of financial resources (67 percent) and lack of technology/web staff in the IT department (46 percent). When asked how e-government has changed local government, 87 percent of the local governments cited improved customer service, 78 percent said improved local government communication with the public, 52 percent said that it had increased efficiency of business processes, and 50 percent said e-government had increased time demands on IT staff.

While the adoption of e-government initiatives by local governments is laudatory, a caveat is in order. Slightly more than one-half (53 percent) of the respondents indicated that their e-government applications are mostly one-way communication to citizens. About one-third of the local governments (31 percent) reported that their applications and services are about half and half (i.e., one-way and two-way communications). Only about 16 percent of the jurisdictions offered mostly two-way communication. Thus, as Norris and Reddick note, "[T]here is virtually no evidence that e-government has transformed governments, changed relationships between the governments and the governed, or led to electronic democracy."⁷⁸ Ultimately, at least we would argue, the power of e-government is its use as a tool to achieve e-democracy, like city manager Bunting did in Hampton, Virginia (see Policy and Practice Box 1.2).

Finally, we note that current research is trying to determine the impact of various structural, demographic, socioeconomic, and organizational factors that influence the use and development of e-government technologies. Based on an analysis of websites among the fifty-five most populous U.S. cities, and a subsequent survey of web masters in these cities, Alfred Tat-Kei Ho, for example, offers a typology of websites according to their design.⁷⁹ Two types of website approaches emerge: administrative and nonadministrative. In turn, the nonadministrative category contained two website orientations: informational and user. Based on analysis of survey responses, the cities whose websites are in

the nonadministrative category are judged to be more open to external input and collaboration. These cities "emphasized the importance of citizen inputs and collaboration with nongovernmental organizations. Officials in these cities were also more user-oriented and believed more strongly that the web is a tool to enhance customer service for citizens."⁸⁰

Efforts to explain differences in website orientations suggest that population (size of city) and per capita income did not vary across the website orientations. But cities with larger minority populations and cities with lower average years of having a city website are less likely to have the more innovative, nonadministrative type of website. Professor Ho suggests that these findings support the "digital divide literature," which suggests that differences in socioeconomic background affect the use of the Internet and computers. And, in the case of this study, a lower socioeconomic profile leads to a more administrative-oriented city website. The "learning curve literature" is also supported by this study—that is, with time and experience, cities tend to move their websites from a more administrative orientation to a more informational and user orientation. Ho also reports that internal organizational characteristics of cities impact the decision to create websites that are more administrative or more nonadministrative in character. Cities that adopted more progressive informational and user-oriented websites were cities where non-IT departmental staff supported using the web to deliver public information and services and where sufficient funding and staffing for web development were available. Finally, research by M. Jae Moon finds that council-manager governments are more likely than mayor-council governments to have websites and to be early adopters of web technologies.⁸¹

BETTER MANAGEMENT IS NOT ENOUGH

Today's city executive must be both politician and administrator. Few, for example, would quarrel with the basic proposition that America's cities must improve their management capacity. But improving managerial skills alone will not solve all the city's problems. As the preceding discussion of systems theory suggests, we also *must* recognize the context or environment in which urban management functions. In particular, we need to be sensitive to the limits imposed on administration by such factors as the culture and values of the community, organizational inertia, the political environment, and the personal qualities of those in top leadership positions.

COMMUNITY VALUES

The technical expertise and the managerial tools for urban problem solving are available, both from the private sector and from other levels of government. Why are they not used routinely in city governments? In their early work on city politics, political scientists Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson offered the following answer:

To the extent that social evils like crime, racial hatred, and poverty are problems susceptible to solution, the obstacles in the way of their solution are mostly *political*. It is not for lack of