

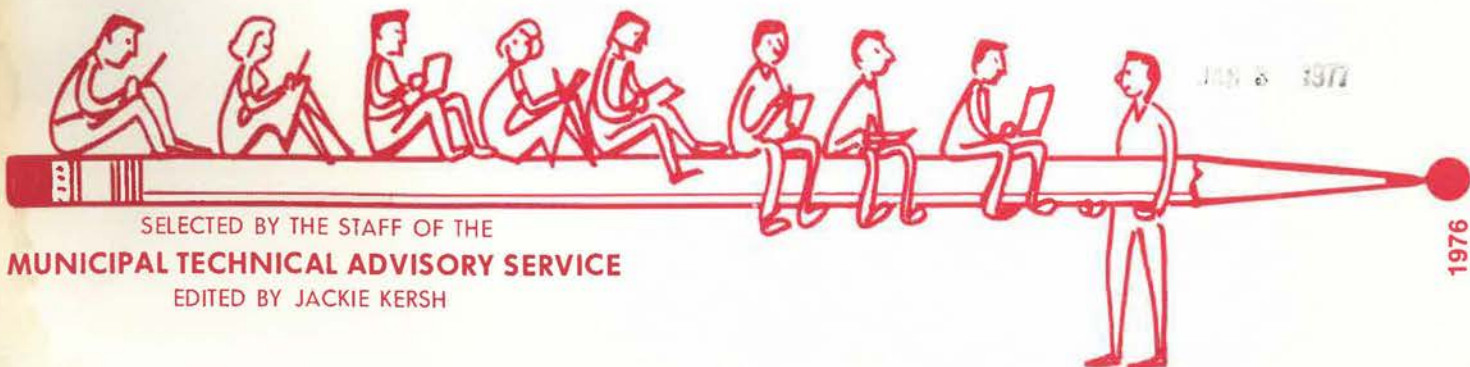
Municipal Government - Administration

Municipal Government—
Administration

ARCHIVES

UT MTAS Library
37996001465 0

ideas for a better city



SELECTED BY THE STAFF OF THE

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

EDITED BY JACKIE KERSH

1976

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Edward J. Boling, President

Charles E. Smith, Vice President for Public Service

A.B. Biscoe, Jr., Associate Vice President for Public Service

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Robert S. Hutchison, Executive Director

Leonard R. Rogers, Associate Director

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Victor C. Hobday, Executive Director

TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Herbert J. Bingham, Executive Director

MTAS, a unit of The University of Tennessee's
Institute for Public Service, is operated in
cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League.

I D E A S
F O R A B E T T E R
C I T Y / 1976

Selected by the Staff of the
Municipal Technical Advisory Service

Edited by Jackie Kersh
Consultant, Municipal Information

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
in cooperation with the
TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
December 1976
\$4.00 per copy

FOREWORD

MTAS receives virtually all periodicals in the area of municipal government and also obtains many other publications in this field. These contain a "mass of information" (when trying to sift, classify and assimilate, we sometimes wish it were much less!). Materials are routed to staff members for their examination; they mark items that appear noteworthy; and the editor writes the summaries for this publication.

These are not necessarily "new" ideas; the term has a relative meaning. There is little, if anything, in the field that is really unique. What is new to one city may be old to another. Nevertheless, we hope that this "catalog of municipal ideas" will be useful to the officials of cities in Tennessee and elsewhere.

Additional copies are available, free upon request, to Tennessee municipal officials and at \$4.00 each to others.

C O N T E N T S

PAGE

Improved Environment	1
Finance and Taxation	3
Health, Safety and Welfare	6
Housing.	8
Parks and Recreation	9
Personnel	12
Police and Fire	14
Public Relations	20
Public Works	25
Refuse	28
Traffic and Parking	30
Water and Sewage	31
Miscellaneous.	32

Improved Environment



.... WOULDNT THIS BE NICE ?

I M P R O V E D E N V I R O N M E N T

A FLOWER SHOP . . . in a service station? It's happened in one city. Flowers are cultivated in large boxes where pumps once stood. Other reuses for downtown service stations are as snack bars, photo shops, tire and auto businesses, and shoe stores. (Downtown Idea Exchange, Dec. 1, 1975)

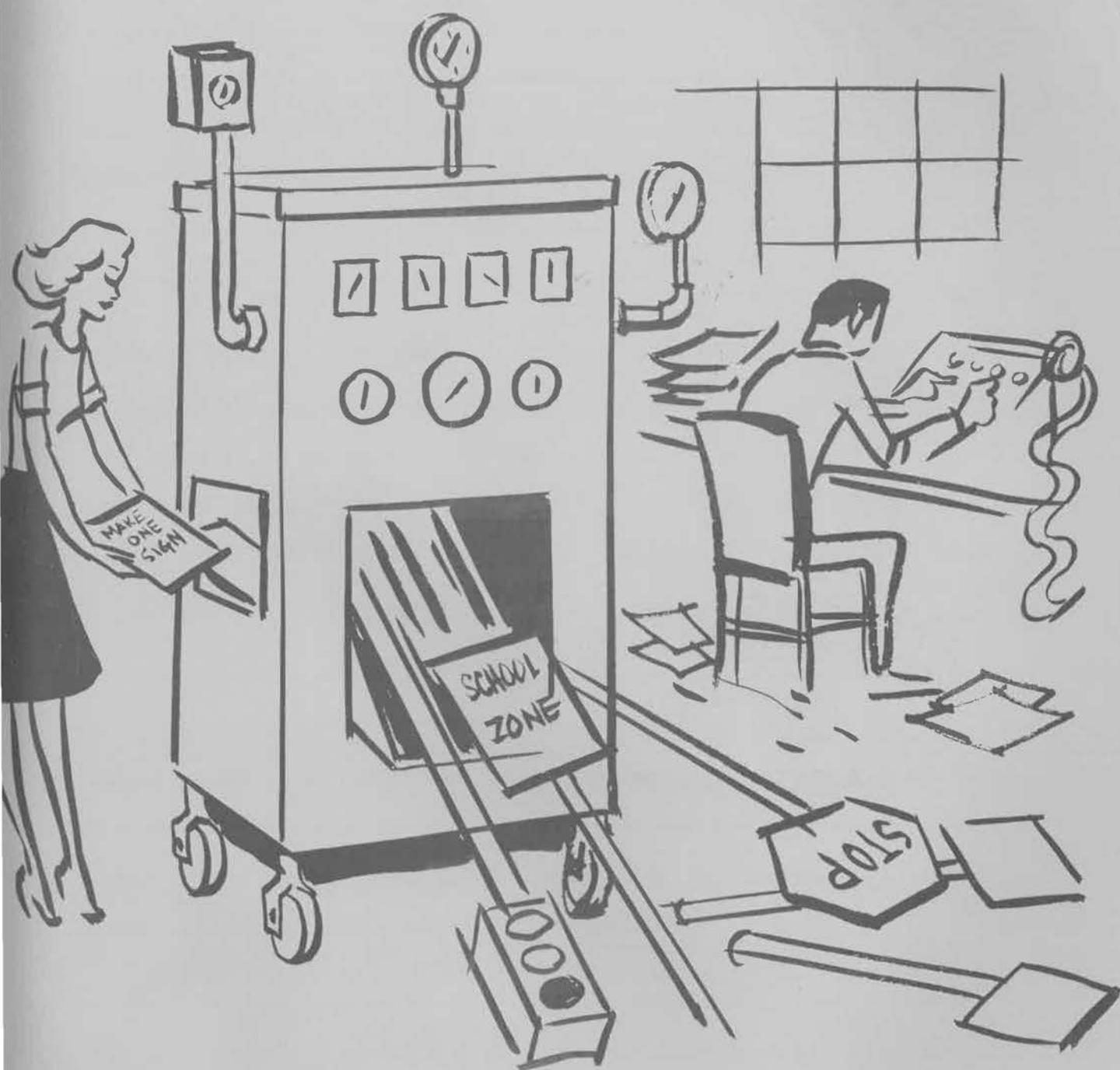
JUNK CARS . . . got you worried? An experimental program in Traverse City, MI, shows that officials and a private industry can cooperate in ridding a community of this type of litter. The key to the successful car clean-up campaign was thorough planning involving local officials, members of civic groups, a legal advisor, a large industry, auto wreckers, scrap dealers and processors. To locate the abandoned vehicles, the industry placed ads in local papers and dealers took on the task of answering the phones. After the abandoned cars had been accurately located, legal releases were obtained to remove them to central drop points. Here junk autos were stripped of all reclaimable parts. Portable flatteners then crushed them on the spot into easily transportable hulks. (Mechanics Illustrated, April 1972)

A BICENTENNIAL BENDER . . . campaign in Nashville, TN, is providing exercise to citizens and cleaning up litter at the same time. The campaign slogan is "Be a Nashville Bicentennial Bender." Volunteers are being asked to bend a little just twice a day to make the city more beautiful. On fliers distributed to all residents are telephone numbers to call for litter pick up including abandoned cars, improperly disposed-of garbage, and other types of trash. (MTAS)

A BACKYARD ENERGY SUPPLY . . . may have been found by a Detroit school. Coty High School is using wood chips from the city's diseased trees to provide heat for its buildings. After approval of the County Board of Health Air Pollution Bureau, the school has been burning large quantities of wood chips during the peak heating demand period. The plan helps the parks and

recreation department by disposing of unwanted trees and is at the same time saving taxpayers' money on fuel cost. The department removes diseased, storm-damaged and other problem trees from the city's residential areas and recycles them into wood chips. These are then used for fuel. (Park Maintenance, March 1976)

Finance and Taxation



WANT TO KNOW . . . how effective your municipal services are? Randolph Township, NJ, recently conducted a municipal effectiveness survey of township services. The questionnaire included 145 items relating to services. A select sample of township residents were asked to respond. The results of such a survey can be invaluable in evaluating budget decisions regarding various services. (New Jersey Municipalities, November 1975)

BRING COUNCIL MEMBERS . . . into the early budget process. In Phoenix, AZ, council members are assigned to different departments and participate in the early management budget review as observers. Each council member observes approximately five departments. Then when the final budget document comes before the council, members have a better feel for the underlying reasons on which the budget was built. (Western City, September 1975)

PAYING UTILITY BILLS . . . is less of a headache in Raleigh, NC. Through the cooperation of various banks, the city has arranged for residents to pay their bills directly from their checking account. They don't have to write a check and they save the cost of postage. Some banks honor the water/sewer bill itself as the bank draft and include the bill as a cancelled check in the customer's next bank statement. (MTAS)

A GARAGE SALE . . . can make money for a city as well as its citizens. In Detroit nearly 100,000 shoppers grabbed up municipal merchandise so fast the "world's largest garage sale" had to shut down a day early. The event grossed nearly \$100,000; almost all of it was clear profit. The merchandise, uncovered from warehouses and other storage areas, ranged from bed pans to Gay Ninety lamp poles, old barber chairs, and 600 firemen's helmets. (MTAS)

COST CUTTING . . . was made easier in Overland Park, KS, with the help of task

forces made up of representatives from local businesses and the chamber of commerce. Among subjects studied by the groups were fire service, street lighting, data processing, records management, vehicle maintenance, and copying and printing practices. The estimated cost saving to date was \$81,700. In addition, a new and stronger partnership was created between the city and the business community. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, July 1976)

PAYING UTILITY BILLS . . . is no longer a problem for senior citizens in Greeneville, TN. Representatives of the telephone, electric, water and cable tv agencies come to the senior citizens center to receive payments. This eliminates so much traveling, the greatest problem for older people. (MTAS)

COUPON BOOKS . . . allow property tax payments in Brooklin, ME, to be spread over a seven-month period for those who wish to pay their taxes in installments rather than one lump sum. (Maine Townsman, June 1976)

MULTIPLE-USE EQUIPMENT . . . holds down the cost of street cleaning in Morton Grove, IL. A street sweeper and catch basin cleaner also is used in the spring to pick up broken asphalt from the street. In the fall the vacuum collects leaves. It also has been used to collect loads of tin cans, which are taken to a neighborhood recycling center. (The American City & County, April 1976)

HELP FOR SENIOR CITIZENS . . . in correcting code violation such as high weeds, litter, and minor building offenses is provided by volunteers in Dallas. The city's action center has compiled a list of persons willing to contribute a Saturday morning to mowing and clearing a lot or applying a coat of paint to a house. The cases are referred to the center by the municipal courts and volunteers are given 60 days to complete the work. When the violation is brought into compliance the case can be dismissed. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, July 1976)

ELECTION SIGN LITTER . . . can be eliminated. Montgomery County, MD, has a workable answer. First adopt good sign regulations in your zoning ordinance. Second,

inform all candidates, through an attractive pamphlet, where they may or may not place campaign signs. The ordinance restricts size, location, and types of signs. (The American City & County, May 1976)

Health, Safety and Welfare



THREE DOGGY CITIES . . . have joined to form an animal control authority. After trying various other alternatives including contracted animal control services, the joint agreement appeared the best solution for Pico Rivera, Norwalk, and Downey, CA. The new animal control authority has reduced cost to under \$24 per hour, with an apparent increase in the effectiveness of the service.

(ICMA Nuts and Bolts, April 1976)

A TICKETING SYSTEM . . . has replaced summons for dogs found running at large in Toronto, Ontario. Humane officers write the ticket, similar in design to parking tags, on the spot. It can be paid directly to the court by a person with a guilty plea, without a court appearance. The new procedure saves the agent's time required by the summons or the court appearance in settlement cases or non-service of summons situations. It has not replaced the policy of warning first-time offenders. (Shoptalk, April 1976)

NEUTERING PETS . . . pays in Colorado Springs, CO. Dogs get free life-time licenses when they are neutered. Annual license cost for unaltered dogs is \$10. Since 1974, when the licensing differential went into effect, the number of stray dogs picked up has dropped from 434 to only 228 per year.

(Shoptalk, May 1976)

A SAFETY SHOE PROGRAM . . . is reducing refuse collectors' injuries in Chicago. After determining that specially designed steel-toed safety shoes were an injury deterrent, the city decided on a fifty-fifty subsidy program to provide two pair for each full-time employee. An extensive information program stressed the safety angle. Then fliers were posted in each work area, displaying the different styles and price information. Arrangements were made for a fleet of "shoemobiles" to visit central locations during the work day. Notices detailing the shoemobile visits were included with each

employee's pay check. The city feels the program would work for any size municipality since the total cost of the shoes is less than one-fifth the cost of one accident. (APWA Reporter, February 1976)

Housing



SENIOR CITIZENS' HOME REPAIRS . . . get a helping hand through a new program in White Bear Lake, MN. The "chore service" is designed to help senior citizens on low incomes remain independent in their homes in a safe and comfortable environment and to prevent the market value of their houses from decreasing due to poor maintenance. Largely funded by the city, the plan enlists the help of retired handymen and workers from the youth service bureau. Citizens are charged \$3 per hour for work done if they are able to pay. They provide their own materials. (Minnesota Municipalities, April 1976)

DOCTORING OLD HOUSES . . . was the subject of a home improvement clinic sponsored by Shorewood, WI, in an effort to upgrade its housing stock. Local businesses set up an array of booths, provided free "how-to-do-it" advice, and contributed \$600 in prizes for a home improvement contest. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, June 1976)

Parks and Recreation



A DEVELOPMENT CREDITS . . . provision in the Hillsborough Township, NJ, zoning ordinance allows developers to exceed density requirements in apartment and one family zones. However, they must deed to the township a certain amount of open space in outlying areas of the municipality. In this way land is conserved while developers' needs also are met. (New Jersey Municipalities, November 1975)

ONE SOLUTION . . . to vandalism in park areas could be to establish a permanent location for mobile homes to be leased to responsible senior citizens. They would be charged with limited patrol or observation duties and perhaps some clean-up work. This plan is being used in Santa Rose, CA. Many retirees with mobile homes would be happy to live in an uncrowded manner and accept the challenge to be of service to the park system. (Park Maintenance, January 1976)

DEVELOP A SYSTEM . . . for making your own park tables and benches and you can save money. The park department of Pinellas County, FL, has developed a unique, time-saving procedure. By utilizing two separate, permanently assembled jigs, a skilled craftsman and helper can fully assemble a picnic table in less than 30 minutes. Before it took more than two hours. One jig is used for seat assembly and the other for both top and final complete table assembly in an inverted position. In addition, replacement of worn out parts has been made substantially easier by utilizing the table top jig. It will hold one eight-foot table in an inverted position at a height suitable for working. Both the seat jig and the table top jig are complete with slots for various supports; compartments for bolts, nuts, etc.; and electrical outlets for power tool use. (Park Maintenance, February 1976)

VENDING MACHINE VANDALS . . . giving you problems? One rather simple solution to this problem is being implemented by the Metropolitan Park District of Columbus,

OH. Each machine is put behind a good strong door, with slots for coins to go in and the product come out. The slots provide an adequate view of the merchandise. The doors are fronted with formica to improve their appearance and make them easier to wash. Frames and jams are metal so they can't be broken with crowbars and each door is double locked. There are also concealed hinges. A roll-down steel door is locked over the front of the shelter at night. The doors aren't cheap, but concession business has boomed since their installation. (Park Maintenance, December 1975)

CITY-SCHOOL SHARING . . . of the cost of a new multi-million dollar sports facility has resulted in a break for taxpayers in Apple Valley, MN. The city and an independent school district will share equally in the cost of the facility. Under the agreement, the school district and the city will each get 2,000 hours of free use time during high priority hours of the day. The city expects to sell its hours at a competitive rate that would generate revenue to partially repay its bonds and its share of operating costs. (Minnesota Municipalities, March 1976)

RECORDED MESSAGES . . . provide citizens with information about recreation programs in Birmingham, MI. Using a "Code-a-Phone," an announcement of up to three minutes can be dictated that will answer the phone throughout the day. The message can be changed daily to keep citizens up-to-date on activities. Officials estimate the recording has saved the city the cost of one employee's salary. (Park Maintenance, March 1976)

DISCARDS FROM HOME GARDENS . . . can make a city's park bloom. Greeneville, TN, provided landscaping for a small city park area by asking residents to share their shrub trimmings, extra bulbs, unused plants, etc., from their own yards. The effort not only saved money for the city but involved the community in the project. (MTAS)

A FRISBEE "GOLF COURSE" . . . is the latest addition to Los Angeles County, CA, recreation facilities. The "frizz" course is the regulation 18 "holes." Frisbee "golf" is played like regular golf but using a plastic flying saucer. Competitors try to sail the disc around trees and other obstacles and strike a pole. (The American City & County, June 1976)

SAVE THOSE STREET SWEEPINGS . . . if you want lush, green city parks. Huntington Beach, CA, has found that they make a great base for a material which cuts top dressing and fertilizing costs. Tree clippings, compost, animal manure, grass clippings and street sweepings are blended for a dressing which park people say gives "dramatic results." There is an extra bonus, too: The street sweepings do not have to be taken to the landfill. (The American City & County, May 1976)

Personnel



A CITY TOUR . . . is part of a new-employee orientation program in Santa Monica, CA.

The monthly, two-hour program is divided into three phases: a description of city benefits; a slide presentation; and a tour of the city and its facilities. Although it is given primarily for new city employees, any worker who has never attended may participate. Employees are encouraged to ask questions during any part of the orientation program. The slide presentation depicts various municipal facilities and services. The 75-minute bus tour allows employees to see, first hand, the variety of services offered by the city. (Public Management, March 1976)

PAINT YOUR PACKER GOLD . . . and reward outstanding refuse collection workers. This is what Tulsa, OK, has done with its "crew of the month" program. The winning team is honored with a gold-painted packer truck, distinctive hard hats and attendant public attention. The monthly award provides an incentive for collection personnel and helps boost morale. (Municipal Maryland, September 1975)

EMPLOYEE FITNESS PROGRAMS . . . can be conducted with no formal facilities at all. It's being done in Palo Alto, CA. The program, for all city workers, is published in a leaflet which includes a sales pitch for fitness and is based primarily on five city-wide walking tours. The city's recreation director recommends that walking be done every day. (Management Review, January 1975)

GIVING THE FACTS . . . to employees can save you problems. Workers in one Iowa city turned down membership in an international union after a memo was prepared showing the benefits won over a period of three years without union aid. City officials and employees were surprised when the "fringes" added up to nearly \$1.00 an hour. One caution: Word the message carefully and don't make any threats. (Iowa Municipalities, January 1976)

ROTATING SUPERVISORS . . . is giving top level people in Sunnyvale, CA, a "total city" approach. After a thorough training program, department directors were asked to make a first and second choice of departments for a 60-day job rotation. Three days before the actual rotation, department directors notified all other management personnel, who in turn announced the plan to other employees. In addition, all employees and the news media received written announcements of the plan and its objectives. The aim: to provide better coordination and understanding between operating departments; to present opportunities for more diversified management experience; and infuse the programs with new ideas and approaches. Each rotated director had full authority to manage the department, recommend and make changes. At the end of the assignment, all rotated employees discussed their experience in individual half-hour interviews with the city manager. (LMRS Newsletter, March 1976)

BROADER TRAINING EXPERIENCES . . . are provided through an inter-city exchange of park employees begun by Costa Mesa, CA. Four cooperating cities agreed that through greater exposure to various operating procedures, employees gain a greater understanding of the problems common to many park agencies. Exchange periods range from a day to a week. The agency receiving the trainee provides exposure based on specific needs and desires. Upon completion of the training period, an evaluation or report is completed by the trainee. This is useful because it provides all agencies involved with a new insight into current operations. Trainee exchanges are arranged informally by telephone. (Park Maintenance, April 1976)

Police and Fire



TWO STREET FLUSHERS . . . provide enough water to fight brush fires in undeveloped areas without the cost of tankers in Palm Springs, CA. Each flusher, which holds 1,750 gallons of water, is moved to the scene of fires in parts of the city not protected by fire hydrants. When not being used to clean streets, the flushers are parked at one of the fire stations. Piping modifications were made to connect the flushers to fire fighting apparatus and fire personnel were instructed in the maintenance and operation of the vehicles.

(Western City, November 1975)

MOTORISTS GET THE FACTS . . . in St. Joseph, MO. Arresting officers issue a fact sheet along with traffic violation citations. This fact sheet explains to the motorist how to dispose of his case with a minimum of trouble and expense. Officers report motorists seem less upset over receiving a ticket because they know what it will cost and how to handle the case. The city also is saving about \$10 per week in postage on reminder letters. (Missouri Municipal Review, February 1976)

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE . . . in combating home burglaries. In Ferndale, MI, a community awareness program has helped reduce home breakins by 30 per cent and armed robberies by 45 per cent. Hugh billboards throughout the city remind residents to "Support your community's awareness program. We are all in a heap of trouble unless we are informed--concerned--involved." The billboards also give a number to call if residents need help or if they have information that could aid police. (The American City, March 1975)

A FIRE SCIENCE PROGRAM . . . helps Orange, CA, high schoolers learn more about the fire department. Designed especially for eleventh and twelfth graders, the program provides an over-view of all fire service activities and the background knowledge needed to successfully pass a fire department entrance examination.

Ten hours per week are devoted to classroom and drillground learning experiences. Weekly quizzes and midterm and final examinations are an important part of the curriculum. Each student, graduating in a full ceremony at the end of the school year, will have obtained an advanced first aid card and a background of hose, ladders, ropes, apparatus, equipment, hazardous materials, fire chemistry, and many other subjects. If hired following graduation, they need little training, are a known quantity, and can begin a career in the fire service with no problems. (Western City, November 1975)

A PEACEFUL USE . . . for confiscated handguns has been found by the Memphis, TN, police department. The weapons are melted down in a foundry and recast into covers used by the Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division to plug holes in the streets where safety valves are located. (Memphis Commercial Appeal, May 18, 1975)

CLINICS FOR BUSINESSMEN . . . are run by the police in Roanoke, VA. Topics covered include shoplifting, internal theft, burglary, robbery and trespassing. (Downtown Idea Exchange, May 15, 1975)

HISTORY'S ON PATROL . . . in Seattle, WA. Police foot-patrol officers are wearing turn-of-the-century uniforms identical to those worn by city police officers in 1910. The uniform is the department's contribution to the historical redevelopment of the oldest section of the city. Officers were asked to volunteer for the special "pioneer squad." Those wearing the vintage uniforms are regular policemen doing normal police work. (Western City Magazine, September 1975)

T-SHIRTS AND TENNIS SHOES . . . are the uniform for teams of undercover police officers in Hopkins, MN. The men carry hidden two-way radios, guns and mace. They patrol the city on bicycles, in an attempt to curtail burglaries, thefts and other crimes. (Minnesota Municipalities, September 1975)

FEMALE OFFICERS . . . are an important part of special rape units. A prototype group, operating in New York City, has found that many women talk more easily to female detectives. As a result police are getting more information, more cooperation, more reports of rapes--and thus a better chance to solve cases. (Readers' Digest, March 1974)

RENTING POLICE OFFICERS . . . helped Mont Vista, CO, solve some severe law enforcement problems. When the city's department was beset by special problems with which it was unable to cope, five neighboring cities joined in a cooperative effort to enable Mont Vista to "rent" eight experienced police officers. They worked under the direction of the Colorado State Patrol. At the same time a recruitment program was initiated and new patrolmen were assigned to the experienced officers for training. (Colorado Municipalities, May 1975)

HOME SECURITY INSPECTIONS . . . are offered by the St. Louis Police Department. Under the program, specially trained officers advise residents of steps they may take to protect their homes and property against burglars. (Missouri Municipal Review, April 1975)

FIREFIGHTER FLYING SQUADS . . . are an important element in the St. Petersburg, FL, fire department reorganization that includes men and special new firefighting equipment. The six-man units, stationed in three areas around the city, use vans to respond to fires. As a result fewer men are needed to man the regular firefighting trucks. (St. Petersburg Times, May 4, 1975)

A MECHANICAL SUPER-FIREMAN . . . is being used by Scottsdale, AZ, to replace firemen in dangerous situations. Called the Snail, the device is a tracked, remote control machine which can work in temperatures of approximately 700 degrees. It can drag hose and operate a nozzle which normally would be the task of three to six persons. It is controlled by one person standing up to 200 feet away from the device. The Snail also moves backward and forward, turns corners, and

climbs stairs. (Public Management, December 1974)

BIDDING MAINTENANCE WORK . . . has cut police vehicle repair costs in half in Holmdel Township, NJ. Carefully worked out specifications for bidding called for routine service to vehicles at stated minimum intervals. Routine service to all accessory equipment also was included. The specifications stipulated that no vehicle would be out for service more than one day. The contractor is responsible for supplying all parts and labor necessary both for maintenance and repair. An optional road service agreement was included in the specifications but was not accepted by the council. The contract terminates on marked police vehicles when they have been driven 55,000 miles and on unmarked cars one year from date of execution. The successful bidder offered a monthly charge of \$90 each for marked vehicles and \$55 each for unmarked cars. (New Jersey Municipalities, June 1975)

CIVILIAN ACCIDENT INVESTIGATORS . . . are saving police manpower and time in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Each civilian aide goes through a 200-hour training program, one-third of that given the department's regular officers. Aides are paid approximately \$3,000 per year less than a regular officer. Given the authority to issue only citations relative to an accident investigation, the aides are dispatched to accident scenes in vans equipped with police radios. The vans, which are actually mobile offices, allow the aides to seat all involved parties inside in sheltered, air-conditioned comfort. Use of the civilians has enabled the department to reallocate officers to new task forces. (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, April 1976)

CB RADIO OWNERS . . . are providing extra manpower for the Danvers, MA, Police Department. Radio listeners to police calls are asked to contact police emergency when they see vehicles or offenders wanted by the department. Apprehension often is immediate. (ICMA Nuts and Bolts, May 1976)

COORDINATED DISPATCHING . . . sends the closest available fire company to a reported fire in Fairfax County, Arlington and Alexandria, VA. Citizens reporting fires still call the department in their own jurisdiction. However, dispatchers relay the alarms for fires in border areas to assure service by the nearest company. (Virginia Town and City, March 1976)

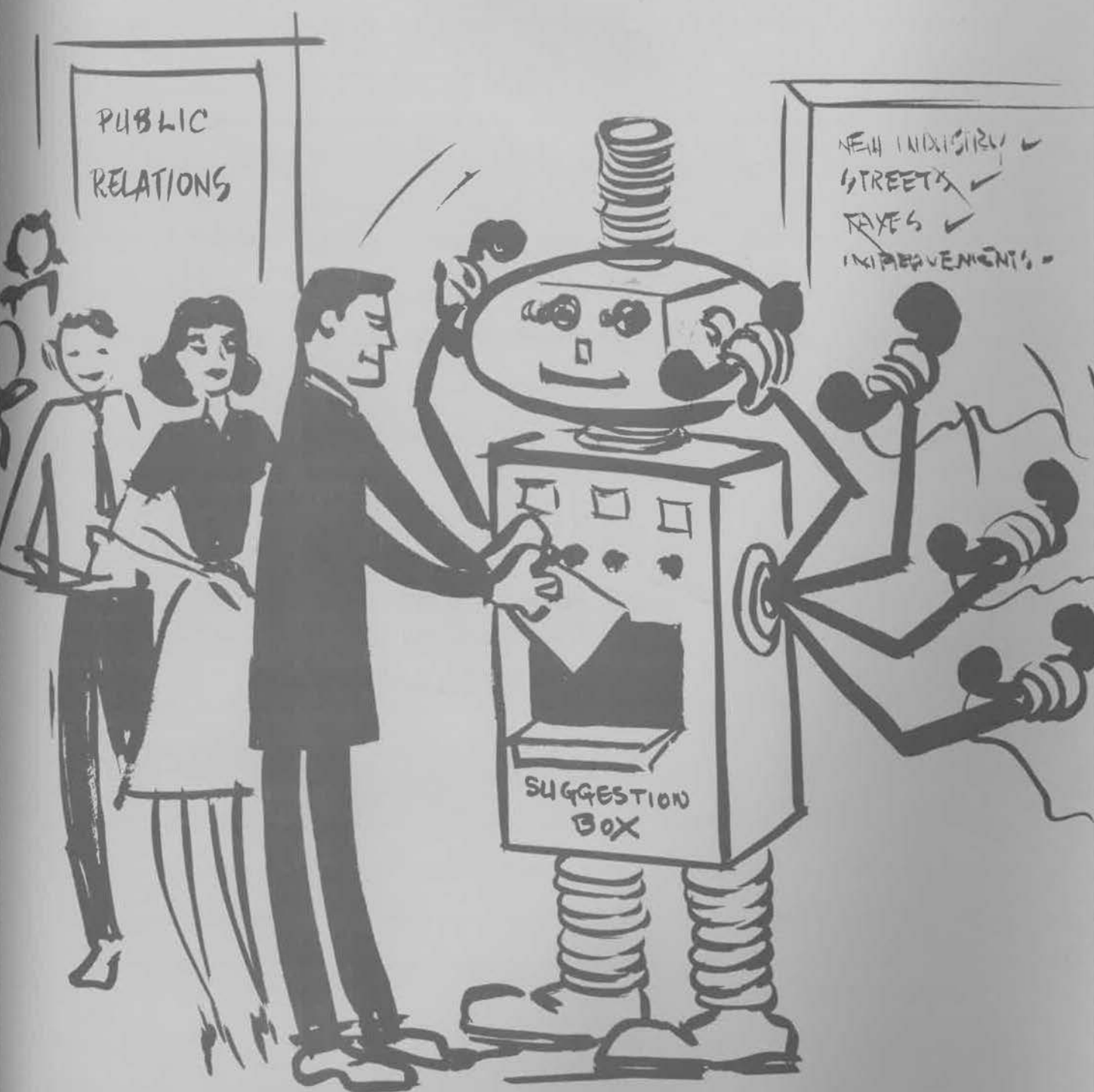
CABBIES ARE EYES . . . for the police department in Tidewater, VA. Officers have enlisted taxi drivers to assist them in discovering accidents, fires and crimes. The civilian radio motor patrol program trains the drivers in what to watch for and what to do when they see trouble. Each trained driver reports incidents to his or her dispatcher, who temporarily stops all other transmissions and notifies the police department. (Virginia Town and City, March 1976)

JOINT POLICE RECORD-KEEPING . . . is being tried between a city and county in Minnesota. Rush City and Chisago County have signed an agreement which calls for a five-member advisory board to outline areas in which the two law enforcement agencies, the city police department and the county sheriff's office can cooperate. The record project is the first to be undertaken. The agreement is renewable at the end of each year. (Minnesota Municipalities, April 1976)

FITNESS MEANS MONEY . . . in a program initiated by the Santa Monica, CA, police department. Participating officers train voluntarily on their own time. The incentive portion of the program is similar to the marksmanship program. Participants may earn a monthly bonus of \$2 to \$16, depending on their point totals. Tests are administered by the personnel and training division on a quarterly basis. Injuries incurred are handled as industrial injuries and covered by state compensation insurance. Five events are included: sit ups, squat thrusts, pull ups, push ups, and one-mile run. To encourage participation of all personnel regardless of age, a separate point system is based on the officer's age. A perpetual trophy honors the officer who achieves the highest score each year. (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, August 1976)

ACCIDENT REPORTING TIME . . . can be reduced by allowing beat patrol officers to handle minor "fender bender" collisions. The officers enter only basic information (who, when, and where) on a two-page form. The forms can be completed at the scene in about 20 minutes. (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, August 1976)

Public Relations



PUBLIC RELATIONS

- A RUMOR CONTROL CENTER . . . can be mobilized quickly in Pinellas County, FL. As soon as a crisis develops, volunteers and a member of the sheriff's department rush to the scene. Two phones are available and the number is well publicized. The philosophy is simple: tell the absolute truth. (Trends, March 1974)
- SEMINARS FOR CANDIDATES . . . help inform citizens who are interested in running for public office in Kirkwood, MO. Subject matter is limited to the operational functions of the city and includes field trips to various city facilities. An extensive handbook on the city's structure and operations is distributed free to all seminar registrants. (Missouri Municipal Review, November 1971)
- GOVERNMENT IS A GAME . . . for students in Durham, NC. A "City Council Game" has been developed in which students must decide how to put \$3.5 million worth of programs into a \$1.5 million budget or make trade-offs and raise taxes. The game is preceded by an 18-minute slide program about city government. A teacher's discussion guide supplements the city-developed program. (Nation's Cities, March 1974)
- THE NAME'S IMPORTANT . . . in handling citizen problems in Emporia, KA. To overcome the negative feelings that often surround citizen complaints, a service request form has been developed. Now when a citizen says that he has a complaint, the response from city employees is "We will accept your service request." (ICMA Nuts and Bolts, June 1974)
- A POST OFFICE SUGGESTION BOX . . . is the collection point for citizens' complaints in Seaside Park, NJ. Comments, on topics ranging from trash collection and noise to unnecessary expenditures, have been coming in regularly since the box was set up. (New Jersey Municipalities, April 1975)
- BUDGETS TAKE SHAPE . . . literally in Ewing Township, NJ. Instead of presenting the

budget in the regular format, a film and tape show was developed. Colored slides were done on each category, illustrating needs. For example, if new typewriters were being requested, people were shown using the present ones. The final product, 240 slides long with synchronized tape narration, was shown to various civic and service organizations, plus neighborhood coffee klatsches. (Trends, March 1974)

A COMMUNITY RELATIONS TRAILER . . . is keeping citizens in Hazelwood, MO, informed. Moved from shopping center to shopping center throughout the community, the trailer serves as both the distribution point for public information and vehicle licenses and pet tags. The city obtained the trailer as government surplus property. (Missouri Municipal Review, May 1975)

A DIGEST OF DOINGS . . . is sent out weekly by Fairfax County, VA, to any citizen who telephones and asks to be put on the subscription list. Entitled "Weekly Agenda," the digest tells its readers in advance the whens and wheres of public meetings, how to contact each county supervisor, all actions taken at the supervisors' meetings, and what new services are available to citizens. (Public Management, June 1975)

LOOKING FOR IDEAS . . . for a bicentennial theme for your 1976 annual report? Brunswick, ME, used a reproduction of the cover of the city's first report. Another piece of material was a bill insert explaining the town's revenue sources and expenditures and comparing them with the very first appropriations. (Maine Townsman, September 1975)

WORK WITH REALTORS . . . to help newcomers better understand your community. In Doylestown, PA, realtors were asked for a list of the 10 most frequently asked questions and the local government answered them in a special information brochure for distribution to newcomers. (NSPRA Paragraphs, Summer 1975)

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE . . . of current educational materials? It's time local government people started pushing, too. Invite your social studies teachers and classes to meetings with your council, committees, commissions and staff. Take them to the water works, parks, swimming pool and landfill. Develop pamphlets about your city that teachers can use in the classroom. You might want to ask student councils to consider adopting a form of local government for their administrations. (Iowa Municipalities, May 1975)

A "PEANUT GALLERY" VERSION . . . of an annual report can offer an educational service to students in the sixth through ninth grades. One private company publishes two versions of its annual report: one for shareholders and the other for school children. Response to the report for students has been very favorable. In fact, many adults who have seen the students' version say it was the first annual report they could understand. (Management In Practice, August 1974)

YOU'VE GOT TO WORK . . . to get citizen participation in the budget process. In Tucson, AZ, the city arranged for full page advertisements on the budget in local newspapers during the week before the hearing. Pie charts showed the basic budget breakdown and a letter from the city manager invited public participation. The hearing was plugged in three spot announcements on local radio stations and in a 30-minute interview on the city's radio/TV show. Other advertising was placed in banks and libraries. Result: an overflow crowd and excellent citizen input. (Western City, May 1976)

CITIZEN FEEDBACK . . . is a unique program which gives citizens of Richfield, MN, a chance to "speak" directly to city hall. Small cards, included with utility bills, asked residents to comment on or inquire about any aspect of municipal affairs. The card was then returned with the customer's utility payment. Residents received personal letters in response. (Minnesota Municipalities, May 1973)

PARADES SHOW CITIZENS . . . where tax monies go in Pensacola, FL. A City Government Day parade puts on display loaders, sweepers, mobile cranes, dozers, and public safety equipment. The parade is followed by an equipment demonstration, a cake-and-coffee reception and an award presentation to the "City Employee of the Year." (The American City, December 1974)

SUPERMARKET CONFERENCES . . . are a good way to meet informally with citizens. In Bristol Township, PA, the school superintendent sets up a table regularly in local supermarkets on peak shopping nights to meet people who have jobs and/or family commitments during the day. Now people are adding school questions to their shopping lists. No topics are barred and if the superintendent doesn't have an answer, he finds it for them. (Trends, June 1973)

ENVELOPE MAPS . . . help visitors and residents find city facilities in McFarland, CA. The map of the downtown area is printed on the back of every city envelope and shows the location of city hall, the community hall, and other civic buildings. (MTAS)

EARLY BOARD MEETINGS . . . help residents, who can't make night sessions, present their views on recreation in Los Angeles. The Board of Recreation meets at 7 a.m. weekly to enable more citizens to come when matters of interest to their community are scheduled. (Park Maintenance, February 1974)

AN ANNUAL CITIZEN'S SURVEY . . . conducted by Thornton, CO, asked respondents to choose the municipal services they feel should receive increased funding if additional monies are available. City officials take the survey results into consideration when they begin determining budget priorities for the coming year. (Colorado Municipalities, November/December 1975)

HOW WELL SERVICE REQUESTS . . . were handled is something McAlester, OK, wants to know. Each time a citizen is served by a city employee, he or she is given

a blue, "We Want to Know" postcard. It begins with a short message from the city manager indicating that the city wants to know whether services are efficient and satisfactory. Residents are asked to respond "yes" or "no" to six questions about the quality of assistance provided by the department and employee listed on the card. The response can be mailed to the city or placed in drop boxes in the library or municipal building. City employees are not penalized for an occasional bad report, but failure to hand out a card is regarded as a serious offense. (ICMA Newsletter, February 2, 1976)

DRIVE-UP CORRESPONDENCE . . . boxes make it easy to contact officials in one Wisconsin community. The city has installed a "mailbox," decorated in city colors, behind its police station. Residents can drive up and deposit a variety of correspondence, postage free. It also serves as a suggestion box. (Wisconsin Municipality, February 1976)

A WATER DEPARTMENT . . . open house in San Francisco gave adults and school children a first hand look at a filtration plant. The program included a 10-minute color slide presentation with an audio tape conversation narrated by two school children. Slides illustrated the role of water agencies as conservationists and traced production and distribution of water from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to San Francisco faucets. A demonstration of tools and equipment showed how the department is working to decrease noise pollution. (The American City and County, January 1976)

THE GOOD THINGS . . . about living in a city are outlined in a series of low key newspaper ads run recently by Athens, TN. The program was aimed at keeping residents in the city and attracting suburbanites as new residents. (MTAS)

Public Works



PUBLIC WORKS

A SWEEPER BROOM SAFETY DEVICE . . . has been developed by Burbank, CA. A slightly-damaged pneumatic lift discarded from the public works garage was adapted to the specifications of the city's street sweeper brooms. The lift enables a single employee to remove and replace the heavy brushes quickly and easily. Previously workers risked serious back injury. (Western City, November 1975)

INEXPENSIVE SIGN POST REPLACEMENT . . . is possible now with a new device on the market. One man can replace a post by just loosening and replacing a bolt. Posts are set in two-foot lengths of standard four-inch steel pipe anchored by two inches of surrounding concrete. The post is held by a special type of wedge which can be removed from the damaged post, a new pole dropped in its place, and the wedge screw retightened. (MTAS)

A POTHOLE SURVEY . . . can help solve a number of downtown traffic problems generated by poor pavement. The check pinpoints hazardous situations and puts street repairs on the immediate action agenda. (Downtown Idea Exchange, Sept. 15, 1975)

ADJUSTABLE MANHOLE FRAMES . . . allow repaving without replacement of manhole units. The frames can also be adjusted to the crown of the road. (MTAS)

READING THEIR ELECTRIC METERS . . . can help citizens conserve energy. But you have to teach them how. A special program in Jacksonville, FL, does just that. Not only are citizens encouraged to read their meters, but the city has developed a special worksheet for residents to use in computing the number of kilowatt hours used each day and the reason for an increase or decrease in the daily or weekly total. An analysis of this "how much do you use?" sheet can be a real eye opener for consumers. (Florida Municipal Record, September 1975)

FIRE HYDRANT CONVERSION . . . is simple with a model now on the market. In Florence, AL, old ones are lifted out and new ones screwed in in a matter of minutes.

All of this is done without excavation, without removing the protective frost shield and without raising the drain level above the frost line. The new model features a standard fire hydrant designed to fit down into the existing protective case and furnished with an adapter on the lower barrel which enables it be screwed into the existing base. (Pipe Progress, Summer 1975)

PREPARE YOUR CUSTODIANS . . . to care for new facilities. During the last few months of construction, the chief custodian for the building should be on the project to view first hand what mechanical and electrical systems he will have to operate and maintain. (The American City, March 1975)

PROBLEM SPOTS . . . get quick attention in Kissimmee, FL, thanks to a "Fix-A-Gram" program. When a city employee spots a pothole in the street or stop signs that are missing, he notes the location and checks the proper box on the "Fix-A-Gram." At the end of the day, all forms are turned over to the assistant city manager who relays a work order to the proper department. (ICMA Nuts and Bolts, May 1976)

A QUICKIE ROAD MARKER . . . was made from borrowed parts by the Okanogan National Forest in Washington. On a 1/2-ton pickup, the following material was installed: a portable gas-power compressor; a two-gallon paint bucket; a paint gun on the rear bumper about six inches from the pavement; a trigger under the dash, operated by the left foot, for tripping the paint gun; a 6-inch by 12-inch truck mirror placed back of the right door about 12 inches from the ground; and a one-foot extension of the right foot bumper with a chain hanging from it. To mark the pavement the operator positions the pickup along the edge of the roadway. In his right hand mirror, which is aimed at the large mirror, he can see the right shoulder of the road. The chain on the bumper is used as a guide. By glancing in the mirror the driver can observe the painted spot over the tailgate and estimate the 30 feet between spots. (Rural and Urban Roads, April 1976)

BUILD A BETTER FIRE STATION . . . with student help? Port Wentworth, GA, has done just that. Students of the Savannah Area Vocational-Technical School helped the city construct a fire hall. Receiving school credit and experience rather than pay, the 23 youngsters completed the brick masonry work following an agreement between city and school officials. (Urban Georgia, June 1976)

VACUUM-TYPE SWEEPERS . . . are doing the job in Salt Lake City. The equipment has a 125-square-inch vacuum nozzle which hovers over the sweeping surface. It can pick up anything from microscopic dust to heavy accumulations of dirt or stone and even tin cans. Like the housewife's vacuum cleaner, the vacuum sweeper comes with all kinds of attachments, including hydraulically operated brooms and a special hose with which workers can collect the contents of litter baskets and just about anything else that crosses their path. Although the sweepers cost more initially, they operate at a rate of 10 miles per hour, about double the speed of conventional units. (Public Works, January 1976)

LICK GRAFFITI . . . with a new epoxy coating that resists both paint and dampness. The surface can be applied with a paint roller like any other wall coating. Even spray paint can be wiped off it with a rag dampened in equipment cleaner. (Park Maintenance, June 1976)

MAKE YOUR OWN . . . pavement crown calibrator from scrap parts and \$17 in bought items. An engineering technician in Ann Arbor, MI, did. The finished product consists of a weatherboard, one inch by four inches by ten feet, "squared up." Adjustment bolts (threaded) were placed at both ends, allowing adjustments from zero to about six inches (at either end). A bracket accommodates a common carpenter's level on the top of the board for leveling and calibration screws were included. A handle was attached for easy carrying. (Rural and Urban Roads, September 1976)

Refuse



RECYCLING ALUMINUM CANS . . . works in Bayonne City, NJ, because students work. School children in all public and parochial schools are asked to take empty cans to school. Each week a city garbage truck collects them and deposits them at the city's landfill. Every three months the aluminum is sold and the profits distributed equally to each participating school. (New Jersey Municipalities, November 1975)

LEAVES BECOME LOGS . . . and in the process Clifton, NJ, has solved an expensive fall cleanup problem. In cooperation with a local industry, the city's leaves are taken to a central storage area. From that point, the company takes over, converting them into compressed logs. Some 30 logs can be made from each cubic yard of leaves. City officials estimate they now save \$100,000 annually in dumping fees at landfills. (Compost Science, July-August 1975)

GARBAGE WORKERS' STRIKES . . . are no problem in San Francisco, thanks to a unique public-private plan for garbage collection. Pickups are made by two scavenger companies, one serving residential and the other commercial areas. The plan is administered by a 3-person public board, which sets collection rates and determines policies. Consumer complaints are heard and resolved by the city health department, which has enforcing authority. Although workers for the private companies are union members, their contracts have a no-strike clause. In more than 50 years, there has been no interruption in service in San Francisco. (LMRS Newsletter, September 1975)

DIRECT DUMPING . . . is saving time and manpower for Kokomo, IN. The unusual method of leaf pickup utilizes the city's street sweepers, with self-elevating, self-unloading hoppers, and a packer truck. The truck holds three to four times more leaves than the vehicle previously used. The only adaptation made to any of the three machines was the mounting of a wide-mouth extension box

to the rear load hopper of the packer. Compared to leaf blower/truck/crew combinations, clean up with the packer and self-dumping sweepers requires three men instead of five. And the work is done much faster. (The American City & County, June 1976)

Traffic and Parking



T R A F F I C A N D P A R K I N G

VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS . . . in Arvada, CO, provide "safe routes" for school children without impeding the flow of traffic. When the motorized panels of the signs are opened, all read the same: the word "School" in black on a yellow background is above a conventional black on white speed limit notice. Sign faces are made of high intensity reflective sheeting. Each sign is topped with a yellow light that flashes when the sign is open. During hours children are not traveling, the signs are closed and display a variety of pictorial and printed messages in accordance with the federal uniform traffic control devices manual. (Rural and Urban Roads, November 1975)

PARKING LOTS LEAD . . . a double life in Farmers Branch, TX. When five lots were needed in the city park, they were made a little bigger and some fencing, gates, and lighting added. Presto, the city had tennis, volley ball, badminton and basketball courts. The lots also are used as safe areas for bicycle classes, bike rodeos, and dog obedience classes, plus hard surface playground spaces for youngsters. Sliding walls and rolling gates let recreation employees change facility uses fast. (The American City and County, January 1976)

SIMPLE SIGNS . . . avoid motorist confusion in Evanston, IL. In preparing parking signs, the city watches its punctuation, deletes words (such as "and") and has switched from all capitals to a combination of caps and small lettering. Words are slightly larger than before and some accepted symbols have been introduced. The result is a sign that is less irritating and more understandable to drivers. (The American City & County), June 1976)

Water and Sewage



A DRIP KIT . . . to conserve water is on the market and would be a useful handout for utility departments. It consists of a folder with easy-to-read information about how much leaks can cost consumers plus an attached blue tablet to be dropped in the toilet tank. If there's leakage, the coloring shows up in the bowl in a few minutes. (MTAS)

CUT WATER WASTE . . . with a simple plastic device that fits around the drain in toilet tanks. It prevents half the water from being flushed away. The inexpensive gadget, now on the market, works this way: in conventional toilets the drain valve opens as the tank is flushed and all the water is used. When the device is attached, the water stops at the half way point. The toilet is flushed and half the water is saved. Consumers can also realize up to a 20 per cent reduction on their water bills as a result. (MTAS)

Miscellaneous



M I S C E L L A N E O U S

PROMOTING SOLAR HEATING . . . can be done through new laws. In Florida, new residents must have plumbing which would permit the installation of solar energy equipment at a later date. (Energy Reporter, October 1975)

TOOL GRAB . . . causing you problems? You can eliminate it with a color code system. Each maintenance man is assigned a different color. That color is sprayed on the handle where the hands do the least touching. The results--no more tool grab. Also helpful is a four-shelf cabinet where daily-use, essential tools are stored. Anything drawn from this cabinet must be returned every evening. The system is working well in Portland, OR. (Park Maintenance, September 1975)

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS NEED HELP . . . and in Phoenix, AZ, they get it. A program of training and continuing education for council members has been developed. The sessions give returning members and newly elected ones a chance to compare notes on what is to be expected in office, provide them with a broad background of source material, and bring them resource people who help them think ahead about what must be done. (Nation's Cities, April 1975)

DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKETS . . . can be fun and profitable. Not only are old markets being preserved but new ones are being started in many cities. In Charlotte, NC, the market operates every Saturday. It is run by the County Agricultural Extension Service. All vendors have to show up between 7 a.m. and noon and can set up a table or sell right out of the back of their car or truck. The only requirement--merchandise must be homemade or homegrown. (Downtown Idea Exchange, Sept. 15, 1975)

PICKING CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS . . . got you in a bind? In Pittsfield, MA, citizens had a chance to make a choice. Early in August the city found a firm willing to provide a selection of six different styles to try out on light poles

downtown. Everyone was invited to view the various displays and then cast a vote by indicating the pole number on a preprinted ballot, available in downtown stores. Ballot boxes were adjacent to the ballot pick-up spots. Instead of buying the decorations this year, Pittsfield decided to rent, with an option to buy, those residents had selected. This saves money initially and gives time for even greater feed-back before a large capital investment is made. (The American City, November 1974)

REPAINTING FIRE PLUGS . . . can be a quickie project when you have plenty of hands.

In Jackson, AL, the city had 86 fire plugs which needed to be redone. But money was lacking to pay high labor prices. The answer: a contest with a challenge and a cash reward. Anyone who wanted could enter. And now Jackson has a colorful array of fire plugs. In all, 36 plugs were painted by citizens and officially judged, with 20 additional ones done by the Arts and Crafts Association. Categories included civic and bicentennial scenes. (Alabama League of Municipalities, November 1975)

A MOBILE X-RAY UNIT . . . has been recycled into a pet-mobile by the Chattanooga, TN, Humane Educational Society. The van was donated to the society by the city. Its renovated interior contains a long bank of puppy and kitten cages and a desk and file cabinet. The complete adoption process can be accomplished within the air-conditioned/heated van. (Shop Talk, March 1976)

SHARING THE NEWS . . . helps Excelsior, MN, in its relations with its neighboring cities. Council meeting minutes are distributed to all other municipalities in the area to keep them apprised of items of interest. (Minnesota Municipalities, April 1976)

TRAINING MECHANICS . . . in a city-run apprentice program is paying off for Phoenix, AZ. Maintaining a municipal fleet of cars, fire engines, street graders, sanitation trucks and other equipment requires skills not found in the auto

repair shop. As a result of the city-operated program, done in cooperation with a local technical college, turn-around time in the maintenance shop has been reduced and the backlog of minor repair work has been eliminated. The city also has developed career-minded mechanics who know how to keep municipal equipment running. (Public Management, April 1976)

GOT A LIBRARY . . . that needs moving? A Midwest town saved \$25,000 in moving costs as it prepared to relocate to a newly-built library. Each card holder was encouraged to withdraw eight books from the old library, read them and then return them to the new building. (Connecticut Town & City, April-May 1976)

BORDER CITIES . . . have a unique opportunity to work together in traffic enforcement, Texarkana, AR, and Texarkana, TX, believe. A new bi-state selective traffic enforcement program is in operation in the area. It involves the assignment of police traffic units at known high accident locations throughout both cities. Personnel manning the units enforce violations shown to be the most frequent contributing causes to accidents. These locations and the violations to be enforced are predetermined through intensive statistical analysis of accident data. (Arkansas Municipalities, April 1976)