AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLANNING OFFICIALS
1313 EAST 60th STREET — CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS

Report No. 217 December 1966

ANNUAL REPORTS

The preparation and publication of an annual report is a task than can consume many man-hours of valuable staff time and hundreds of dollars from budgets that always seem too small. In some agencies the report is viewed as a perennial nuisance, a requirement to be disposed of with a minimum of time, money, and thought. In most cases, however, the annual report is considered an important element of the planning agency's public information program.

A recent questionnaire survey of a sample of planning agencies that subscribe to ASPO's Planning Advisory Service revealed that approximately 75 per cent regularly prepare annual reports. For about one-half of these agencies the report is a legal or administrative requirement. The remaining agencies, however, voluntarily allocate some of their resources to a yearly report. Certainly, the amounts allocated for these reports are one indication that they are viewed by some commissions as something more than a required summary of the year's activities.

Every agency should periodically re-evaluate its annual report procedures. It should address itself to a series of difficult questions: "Do we need an annual report?" "Would some other form of reporting be more effective?" "Are we reaching the right audience?" "Are we spending too much or too little on the report?" "How can we improve the report without increasing the unit cost?" "What should go into the annual report?"

The purpose of this Planning Advisory Service Report is to assist planning agencies in this evaluation process, to provide technical assistance to those who prepare reports, and to provide guidance to planning commissioners who ultimately must determine what is or is not to be included in their report to the public.

One of the purposes of this report is to encourage agencies to give more attention to the preparation of their reports and more thought to what the report can and cannot do. A substantial number of planning agency annual reports are difficult to read and, what's worse, they are uninformative. They contain pages of data that can only be considered filler material. The data are not explained or interpreted. The reports lack the candor that one would expect

Prepared by Frank Beal.

from publications of this kind. They ignore major issues and dwell on the trivial. Routine items are given the same attention as events of major importance. The purchase of a new drafting table is treated no differently than a proposed elevated highway through the center of town. There is no balance or sense of perspective in many of the reports, and as a consequence they often fail to interest or inform the reader.

There are, of course, exceptions. Many reports are stimulating as well as informative. The majority, however, can be improved if the agencies devote a little more thought and attention to their production.

Material for this report is taken from about 150 recent annual reports that were sent to the ASPO offices, from published material on public reporting, and from the results of the questionnaire sent to 127 PAS subscribers. Completed annual report questionnaires were received from 104 city, county, and multi-jurisdictional agencies serving populations ranging from over one million to less than 10,000. Seventy-eight of the 104 agencies reported that they regularly prepare annual reports. The background data in this report are based upon the replies from these 78 agencies.

THE ANNUAL REPORT—WHAT IS IT?

In reviewing today's annual reports it is impossible not to be struck by an apparent confusion of purpose. In a surprising number of cases it is not at all clear who is reporting to whom. The reports seem to be a combination administrative report to the city council, information report for public consumption, and historical record to be filed away for the benefit of future generations. The reports lack a well-defined purpose. Probably the single greatest fault of many annual reports is that they try to combine the administrative report with the public information report. The result is a report that is either too detailed for public use or not detailed enough to be useful to the council. The report ends up satisfying no one.

Although little has been written on the subject of public reporting, the information that is available stresses the difference between two types of annual reports -- public information reports and administrative reports submitted to the chief executive or legislative body. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Community Development, in its Procedural Guide for Planning Commissions, put it this way:

> Most municipal legislative bodies insist upon a thoroughly comprehensive report from their planning agencies once each year, for the mere preparation of the report can result in an improvement in administrative processes of the commission. The main legislative interest is program and finance. In short, the council wishes to know what has been done and how much has been spent. Secondly, the council is concerned with the degree to which the accomplished program has met the promise or expectation of the planning commission presented at the beginning of the year. The legislative body does not require pictures of the planning commission members,

> charts of staff structure or wide-angle lens views of the downtown shopping center. It wants facts and figures to enable it to evaluate programs and expenditures. The council may find it useful to have a complete listing of all subdivision plats submitted and approved, a complete resume of all work performed toward the creation of the comprehensive plan, or an analysis of the progress made on special code preparation for the local municipality. It will require an accounting of all monies spent on salaries, equipment, supplies, travel, pension contributions and the like. Obtaining this information is one of its basic methods of controlling the planning function, as it must control every other function within the community's government.
>
> The public, on the other hand, cares very little about the $245.00 for planning library maintenance, the $167.00 for postage, or even the salary of the planning director. The people prefer to learn about the broad outlines of the planning commission's work for the year, . . .
>
> Obviously, the report created for one set of readers is not suitable for another. However, this may be added: in the preparation of the more comprehensive report for the legislative body, there are points at which a summary is necessary, and these summaries can form the basis for the report to the public.[1]

There can be no doubt that the planning commission has an obligation to keep the city council informed about its activities. However, the utility of a once-a-year report to the council is, at least, open to question. The annual administrative report may well be a carry-over from a period when there was little contact between the planning commission and the council. The council, in its relative isolation from the planning program, probably did not want anything more than a year-end summary of the commission's activities. However, as planning becomes an integral part of local government, most councils want and need more frequent briefings. In response to this need a number of agencies have given up the yearly summary report in favor of detailed quarterly or monthly reports that keep the council informed of new problems and past accomplishments.

Those who prepare annual reports should very early in the process decide whether their report is for a city council, which should be aware of the details of the planning operation, or for the interested citizen, who wants to increase his understanding of the broad features of the program. Both kinds of reports are necessary and useful but they can rarely be effectively combined into a single document. This PAS Report will only be concerned with one type of report, the report designed for public use. Thus the annual report discussed in the following pages is a report meant for the downtown business man, the league of women voters, the real estate board, neighborhood organizations, the high school civics class, and any member of the community willing to spend a half-hour reviewing the progress of planning in his area.

---

[1] Procedural Guides for Planning Commissions. Pennsylvania Department of Commerce, Bureau of Community Development, Harrisburg, 1959, p. 91.

THE ANNUAL REPORT AND THE PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

To understand the annual report fully it must be viewed as one element of a total public information or public relations program. When viewed from this perspective it is easier to see what the report is or is not, and to decide whether or not preparing the annual report is a useful endeavor.

Every planning commission has an obligation to keep the public informed about its work. It must provide information to as many people as possible, as frequently as possible, through as many media as possible, in order to establish a clear understanding in the public's mind and as favorable an attitude with respect to the program as possible. The commission must present enough factual information to enable the public to make its <u>own</u> judgment as to the quality of the planning effort.

The public to which it must report is made up of a variety of individuals and organizations with a wide range of interests and commitments. A good public information program cannot ignore these differences. It must appeal to specialized interests. It cannot, for example, issue press releases aimed at everybody in general and nobody in particular. Because the program must appeal to a range of particular interests, it is obvious that an effective program must make use of a variety of techniques to reach the many different subpublics. The annual report alone cannot do the job.

Planning agencies use a variety of techniques for keeping the public informed. Techniques that are used frequently include: speeches to various interest groups; press releases; special programs for radio and TV; school programs; films; and printed materials such as newsletters, quarterly information reports, special reports aimed at particular interest groups, and annual reports. Each method of public reporting has its advantages and disadvantages. The speech can be very effective but usually requires a high expenditure of time to reach a small audience. Exhibits may attract considerable attention, but they do not convey much detailed information. The press release is always useful, and if it is effectively used it can reach a large audience with a low investment in preparation time. However, the press release, like the radio or TV presentation, is best used for a brief discussion of a specific problem, not for a discussion of the full range of planning activities.

The annual report is one means of reporting, and like the others it has advantages and disadvantages. One of its advantages is that it is comprehensive. It can tell the full story of the commission's activities and policies in a single package. Once it is in the reader's hands he knows what it is and why he is reading it. The material in the report does not have to compete with the comics in the newspaper or a TV show on a competing station. The reader's interest is captured at least for the time it takes to read the report. Another advantage of the <u>annual</u> report is that the public will become familiar with, and begin to expect, a periodic report.

The periodically scheduled report has another advantage. It can be scheduled as a regular part of the agency's work program and budget. The speeches, special exhibits, and other non-routine reporting methods always seem like an intrusion into the work schedule. The schedule doesn't have to be juggled to "fit in" the annual report.

The recurring nature of the report can, of course, become a handicap rather than an asset. The preparation of the report can become a dull routine, where no effort is made to enliven its contents. After a few years the best reason anyone can give as to why the report is prepared is that "we did one last year."

The greatest disadvantage of the annual report is that it is a "shotgun approach" to public reporting. It is a general report aimed at a general public. Parts of it will be of interest to some readers, but not to others. The report usually cannot focus on any particular audience. Some respondents to the PAS questionnaire reported they had given up the annual report for this reason and were spending more time preparing special purpose reports aimed at more specific audiences, such as members of the real estate board, the home builders, or school children. There can be no doubt that these specialized reports are more effective in reaching particular interest groups than the generalized annual report.

Clearly, the decision to prepare an annual report depends on a number of factors. The report must be looked at in conjunction with other types of reporting methods. The advantages and disadvantages of each form must be carefully weighed in order to come up with the most effective mix of reporting techniques. A preliminary judgment would suggest that an annual report is appropriate in almost any city. In some cases it will be the only feasible method of reaching a significant number of people at a cost that is manageable. In other cities it will be an effective way of rounding out a public information program. It will serve as a supplement to more precise and detailed reporting practices.

THE FUNCTIONS OF AN ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report can serve one or more of the following six functions: (1) provide an accounting to the public, (2) generate support for the planning program, (3) educate the reader concerning the purposes and procedures of planning, (4) provide public recognition to those who have contributed to the program, (5) serve as a quasi-planning document, and (6) provide a mechanism that forces the agency to evaluate its performance periodically. This particular categorization of function is based upon a careful reading of a number of reports and the replies to an item in the PAS questionnaire that asked the respondents to "describe the major functions of an annual report." The categories are, therefore, a compilation of the opinions of a number of observers.

The six functions listed here are not of equal importance. Some are clearly more important than others. However, when these six functions are considered together, they form a strong argument in favor of the annual report as a part of any city's public information program.

A Public Accounting

Every public agency is obligated to keep the public informed about what it is doing. It must "account" for its activities and expenditures, and this "accounting" is the primary function of the annual report. Like every other pub-

lic body in this country the planning commission is ultimately responsible to the people it serves. Thus it must make every effort to tell every citizen what it has done, how much it has spent doing it, and what it plans to do in the future.

The accounting function of an annual report means that it is a "report." The public accounting has nothing to do with education, and it is not another way of winning support for the specific features of a program. Public accounting is not synonymous with a sales campaign. It is an obligation that is part of the public trust, and violation of this responsibility reduces the confidence in the commission's integrity and responsibility.

If this function is taken seriously, it has important implications for the content and presentation of the report. The report should not be a simple recitation of past good deeds. It is not enough to say, "we have been doing a good job." The report should present enough unvarnished information so that the reader can begin to evaluate for himself the performance of the commission. It should explain the rationale behind all the commission's major decisions. It should emphasize the why as much as the what and should convey as nearly as possible the objectives and purposes of the commission. It should report the accomplishments and the failures, the good news and the bad. The report that overlooks problems is not "accounting"; it is whitewashing the record in order to influence public opinion.

Although the respondents to the PAS questionnaire were unanimous in their opinion that the function of an annual report is to provide a public accounting, the reports themselves are rarely effective in this function. They do not explain and interpret enough to permit the discerning reader to evaluate performance. Admittedly, the evaluation of planning performance is not an easy task. There is nothing analogous to the profit and loss statement of private corporations that shows at a glance "how we are doing." Despite this handicap, it would seem that a greater effort could be made in presenting information that would help in evaluating performance.

Commissions do deal with controversial topics and they do take positions on a variety of issues. If the commission would make known how it stood on certain questions of community interest the reader would at least get a chance to see if he agreed. In other words, if the reports devoted more attention to issues instead of staff activities they would come closer to performing their accounting function.

A Method of Generating Public Support

The annual report can also be a mechanism for generating support, a type of public relations document. It is, however, a unique kind of public relations document. The general purpose of the report is to increase the reader's store of information about the planning program and thereby gain his support. The information may influence the reader's actions at some future date, but he is not being asked to take any specific action or lend his support to a particular program. This is in contrast to a more direct promotional publication, such

as a news release, that lists a number of reasons why the community will benefit from the passage of a particular zoning amendment and, in effect, asks the reader to support the commission's decision.

The annual report is an investment that yields an indefinite return at an unspecified time. It tries to leave the reader with a favorable attitude toward the work of the commission. This attitude is created by directly or indirectly answering the reader's question, "what have you done for me lately?" Most reports are designed to answer this question specifically with a list or several pages of "accomplishments." However, not enough reports treat the accomplishments in a way that is meaningful to an individual reader. They do not spell out how any given accomplishment is going to benefit the reader. The accomplishments are abstract and communitywide rather than specific and personal. People are interested in what they understand and what is close to them. Thus the report should discuss accomplishments in terms of the reader's own experiences. For example, the simple presentation of the fact that the staff has completed its study of the new radial expressway can be improved by adding interpretive material such as, "when completed, the highway will result in a 15-minute reduction in travel time between the central business district and the airport." This is something the reader can relate to.

A clear and direct effort to generate support for the planning program is illustrated by the 1964 Spokane, Washington, annual report. The report begins with a section titled "Planning Pays."

> The greatest benefits of planning are the human values of good living, safety, security of property values, and beauty that cannot be measured directly in dollars and cents. Nevertheless dollars saved and earned can in many cases be attributed to the specific efforts of the Council, the Plan Commission, City administration, and other public agencies to intelligently plan ahead for the future and coordinate effort to achieve desirable goals at least expense. Examples of these achievements are itemized below to illustrate some of the specific benefits of planning:
>
> /What follows is a listing of 16 examples of how planning has saved the city money. One of the 16 examples is reproduced here./
>
> 5. By planning for future fire stations the need for 3 new locations was identified and the sites were acquired before they were built up, thereby avoiding clearance of buildings. Estimated saving $30,000.

In some instances the public support function of the annual report takes an unusual form. One western city of 100,000, for example, reported a rather unique use for their annual report. According to the planning director it is used to "discredit allegations of a local newspaper . . . which has dedicated itself to downgrading planning and zoning along with public schools and other forms of government domination."

Education

Another important function of the annual report is education. The annual report provides an excellent opportunity to tell the public about the procedures

and purposes of planning, how planning decisions are made, why planning is necessary, the differences between the zoning ordinance and a general plan, the relationship between planning and urban renewal, and a host of other items that are often a source of confusion. With a little imagination the annual report can become a rudimentary lesson on the nature of planning.

The education function can be handled by careful attention to the way in which information is presented. For example, a common entry in many reports goes something like this: "The staff spent considerable time last year working on population projections for community sub-areas." Although this "accounts" for the use of staff time, it does nothing else. Statements such as these can be supplemented by a brief nontechnical explanation of how the projections were made, by a listing of the assumptions that had to be made in order to do the projections ("the interstate highway linking us with Springfield will be completed by 1970"), or by pointing out the significance of the projections ("the need for new schools will increase rapidly as a result of the large anticipated increases in the under 18 population groups").

Some of the educational efforts are more straightforward. A page or two in many reports is devoted to an explanation of what a plan is and is not, and the steps necessary to produce one. The commentary is not related to any particular plan or to a specific community. It stands by itself as an attempt to inform, or educate, the reader about an important element of any planning program.

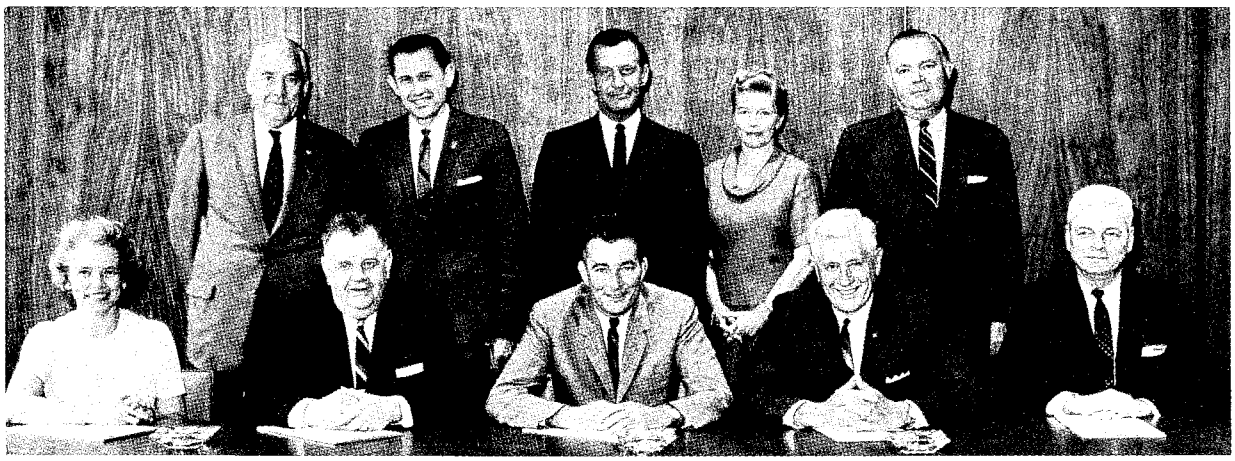
A high proportion of those who commented on the purposes of an annual report specified education as one of the more important functions. Most of the reports examined were educational to a limited extent. They were educational in the sense that the presentation of any new fact or piece of information is educational. Only a very few, however, seem to have that additional sentence or paragraph that is needed to turn a simple presentation of information into an educational experience. The majority missed excellent opportunities to add to the community's knowledge about the nature and purposes of planning.

Public Recognition

In some respects the annual report is like a school yearbook for staff members, commissioners, and others who have been a part of the planning effort. It is an opportunity to publicly recognize and thank those individuals and organizations that have made a contribution to the program. Although this is clearly not a primary function of an annual report and can easily get out of hand, it is a function that should not be ignored.

The acknowledgements in annual reports are usually directed toward one or more of the following: members of the staff, members of the commission, and individuals or groups that are not a permanent part of the program, such as a boy scout troop that helped with a traffic count or a technical advisory committee.

Some form of recognition for the staff is evident in almost every annual report. Nearly two-thirds of the agencies surveyed indicated that their reports contained at least a list of the names and titles of all the staff. Many reports go beyond this. In some cases members of the staff are specifically



Top photograph is one of the better pictures of a commission taken from a recent annual report. The posed photo is usually better than trying to capture them "at work" as attempted in bottom photograph. On-the-job photographs almost never work. The settings are usually not photogenic. Also, in the bottom photograph, the foreground takes up more space in the picture than the commissioners themselves.

---

cited for their contributions. The citation may be in the letter of transmittal or it may be part of a special message in which the director thanks the staff for a "job well done." Many reports include photographs or sketches of each employee, and a few have even included detailed biographies.

It is always difficult to judge how much is enough in such an area. A listing of the staff is always a good practice, and photographs can usually be used effectively, but personal biographies or special citations seem uncalled for in reports designed for large audiences. The value of this kind of token recognition is, of course, open to question. It is certainly of little importance to the director and his top level staff, but it may be of considerable importance to a junior draftsman who is never in the public spotlight. A photograph in the annual report is, of course, no substitute for challenging work and good pay, but it could be of some help in maintaining staff morale.

Public recognition for members of the planning commission is included in almost every report. The recognition may come in the form of photographs (see illustrations on page 9) and brief biographies, or it may take a more subtle twist as indicated by this passage from one city's report.

> If the hours spent by Plan Commission members during the entire year were accumulated into one total, each member would be devoting approximately 150 working hours to the work of guiding the planning and development of the City. This is approximately four five-day weeks per year for each Commission member. Commission members serve without pay.

Statements of this kind are, of course, designed to inform the public of the valuable volunteer work of the commissioners. The commissioners undoubtedly deserve a note of public thanks for their efforts, but the emphasis in an annual report should always be on what the commission does, not on how long it takes to do it.

Many communities use the annual report to acknowledge the contributions of advisory committees or other special groups that have assisted the commission and staff during the year. This is an important function of the report and one that can be handled with little difficulty. All that is needed is a simple statement that expresses the gratitude of the commission. Philadelphia's report provides an excellent example. The last page of their report is entitled "Acknowledgements." A typical entry on the page is quoted below.

> The Planning Commission acknowledges, with gratitude, the continuing service and assistance of the Technical Advisory Committee on Recreation, which was organized in 1945. During 1965 members who contributed to the work of this group included: . . .

Twenty per cent of the agencies answering the PAS questionnaire indicated that they have, at times, dedicated their reports to someone on the staff or commission who has died or retired during the preceding year. The intent of this practice is not open to question, but there is some question as to the appropriateness of these highly personal memorials in the annual report. The International City Managers' Association had this to say concerning personal citations in city reports:

> It seems that these attempts at testimonials or memorials rarely are successful in conveying the community's tribute or its sense of loss. Not only are they ineffective in their obvious purpose, but very often they clash head-on with the tone or approach of the report generally.[2]

Every individual who contributes to the planning program undoubtedly appreciates these direct and indirect efforts to praise his work, and the praise is usually well deserved. In every community there are many who serve long hours without pay and they deserve some form of public recognition. However, it must be remembered that the primary purpose of the report is to inform the

---

[2] Municipal Reporting to the Public. Chicago, The International City Managers' Association, 1963, p. 29.

public of the purposes and accomplishments of planning. It is not primarily a vehicle for personal citations to the individuals performing the work. Most reports handle the public recognition function with restraint, but there are a few that would be substantially improved by deleting some of the accolades and self-congratulatory messages. The public recognition aspect of the annual report shouldn't be overlooked, but it should be approached with considerable discretion.

A Planning Report

The annual report has some of the characteristics of a planning report. Many reports present summaries of planning documents prepared during the year, or they alert the public to emerging problems and make preliminary recommendations for solutions.

It is not uncommon to find annual reports that include a summary of a recently completed general plan or special study. This takes the annual report out of the realm of a simple report on performance and makes it a report that deals with substantive issues. Every chance to publicize the findings of a planning study should be pursued, but if the summaries become too long they tend to obscure the major purpose of the annual report. A few cities have experimented with the idea of presenting these summaries as a special supplement attached to the report. The supplement is distributed with the report, yet it is clearly meant to be read and considered apart from the annual report.

More important, the annual report also assumes the characteristics of a planning document when it alerts the public to new problems. This aspect of the report can be illustrated by some of the comments made in answer to the questionnaire.

> The report "is a stock-taking function and it gives the staff a chance to put new ideas before the commission and public."
>
> The intended function of the report is to "acquaint the governing body with needs and possibilities of the community and make recommendations for its future development."
>
> The report alerts the community "to new problems and development pressures."

Thus the annual report is considered by some to be a means of sending up a trial balloon and alerting the public to imminent problems. The report provides a preview of things to come. It is a look ahead as well as a review of past work, and the look ahead is not just a list of next year's staff projects. It is an assessment of future problems and opportunities. In effect, the report is saying: "It looks like one of the major issues facing us in the next year or so is the development of the waterfront (or any other issue). It's going to be important for these reasons. . . . We are not sure, but we think the best solution is to. . . . You will probably be hearing more about this in the future."

The annual report can serve an important function by opening up issues and encouraging the public to think about the pros and cons of alternative solutions.

It is only a preliminary attack on a variety of problems, but this kind of advance preparation can be extremely useful. The annual report is well suited to this alerting function.

Self-Evaluation

The final function of the annual report is that, in effect, it forces the commission and staff to ask each year, "What have we done?" "How well have we done it?" and "Where do we go from here?" Thus the process of preparing an annual report has a value that is independent of the published document. Self-evaluation should, of course, be a continuing process, but in the rush of daily problems it is easy to fall into the habit of looking at the trees rather than the forest. The annual reporting process provides an excellent opportunity to step aside from the pressures of routine concerns and scrutinize the successes and failures of the year.

Only four of the respondents to the questionnaire said that the "report itself isn't very useful, but the requirement is, since it forces us to pause once a year to evaluate our past work." Several others did mention that they welcome the opportunity to engage in critical self-examination. The self-evaluation function is, of course, lost on those agencies that assign a staff person to the task of "up-dating" last year's product and then get the chairman of the commission to write a "canned" letter of transmittal. In these cases, the process is as useless as the product.

PREPARING THE REPORT

Once it has been established that the publication of an annual information report is a desirable undertaking, there are a number of basic decisions that must be made. Decisions must be made in the following areas: objectives, type of report, content, assignment of duties, cost, illustrations, and distribution.

Objectives

It is essential to begin the preparation of a report with a clear definition of the report's purpose. Although everyone has a vague notion about what a report should do, it is important to spend a little extra time to formulate, and write out, a statement of purpose. Once the statement has been clearly articulated it can serve as a guide to what should be included in the report and how it should be presented. Each possible entry can be looked at in terms of the stated purpose. If the entry doesn't contribute to the fulfillment of purpose it should be dropped.

The formulation of a suitable statement is not easy, but a first effort might read as follows:

> This report will define the major goals of the city with respect to community development, describe how the planning commission

works toward the fulfillment of these goals, describe the progress made toward their fulfillment during the last reporting period, and indicate what needs to be done next.

This is a starting point. It can be refined as new variables are introduced. Is there a special point that should be made in this year's report? Will the report center on a particular theme? Who is the audience? If the report is to be distributed to every citizen it will be different from a report designed primarily for the "interested" citizen such as the banker, labor leader, civil rights worker, and conservationist. Corollary purposes can be added to the basic objective. For example, "one objective of this report is to give recognition to those individuals and groups who have made a contribution to the planning program during the year."

The time spent on this initial step is worthwhile, for the resulting statement of purpose will greatly simplify the rest of the task. In some cases, a staff undertaking this job may find that it really doesn't want an annual report. What really is needed to fulfill the purpose established is a newsletter, or a report to the council, or some other reporting device.

Type of Report

There are two basic types of annual reports: a chapter in the city's report or a separate document published by the planning agency. Approximately one-quarter of the agencies replying to the questionnaire indicated that their annual reports consisted of a few pages in a larger city publication. This practice does have some very evident advantages. For one thing it is a less expensive and less time-consuming way of getting the annual report to the public. One disadvantage is that the report must be so short that it becomes impossible to touch on anything but the high points. Another disadvantage is that the report is buried. The reader's attention must shift from playground maintenance, to garbage disposal, to curb and gutter repairs, to planning. The kaleidoscopic nature of the report tends to lessen the impact of any one section.

In most cases the agency has little choice as to whether it will produce its own report or use a section of the city's report. If it is an established practice to issue an annual city report, it may be difficult to break the custom or to justify the expense of coming out with an additional publication. This is not to suggest that the departmental report is necessarily preferable to a combined city report. They both serve similar ends. The only real difference is that one is more suited to detailed and focused reporting than the other. However, it is interesting to note that a number of planning directors who were using the combined city report expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with this practice. They indicated that they wanted to publish their "own" report.

An agency publishing its own report can choose from four basic formats:

1. Newspaper Supplements. This form of report is gaining in popularity. The supplement is easy to distribute, but the cost per copy is low only for very large press runs. Furthermore, the newspaper format introduces higher costs if there are a

large number of photographs and other illustrations, particularly if color is used.

2. Folder. This is a publication printed on one sheet of paper and folded one or more times. Folders are often printed to be self-mailers in order to cut the cost of postage and handling. The problems with the folder is that it is too small to convey much information. It is, however, an inexpensive way of reaching large audiences.

3. Newsletters. A number of agencies devote one issue of their monthly newsletter to the annual report, which usually means an 8-1/2 by 11 inch report running 4, 8, 12, or 16 pages in length. The number of pages should always be an even multiple of 4 for printing economy, and multiples of 8 and 16 pages are even more economical.

4. Booklets. Most reports fall into this category. The booklet is a soft bound publication of moderate length, usually 12 to 40 pages. In most instances it is in the standard 8-1/2 by 11 inch size and is bound by staples or spiral binders. Odd-sized reports are eye catching, but they can be expensive unless planned to take advantage of standard sizes of paper stocks available to the local printer. The covers of most reports are printed separately on heavier paper stock.

It is always wise to obtain estimates of costs from several printers and to find out their most economical size, press run, type of paper, and binding. Printing prices can vary enormously from printer to printer, depending upon their equipment and the type of publication desired. Paper stock is one large variable in the price of publishing annual reports. Generally, use of slick or embossed paper will increase costs considerably, and the use of color is always expensive.

The choice of printing process depends primarily on the number of copies printed, the type of printing facilities available, whether or not photographs are used (slightly less than half of the agencies reported using photographs), and, as always, the budget. Many cities own their own printing equipment and this becomes an important factor in deciding the process to be used. About one-third of the agencies in the survey used offset lithography equipment to print their reports. Another third used multilith, and the remaining agencies used a variety of techniques including letterpress, mimeograph, gravure, and spirit duplicator. The primary economic merit of lithography is its ability to print type (or typewritten copy) and illustrations with virtually no more trouble or cost than type alone. If no illustrations are involved and type must be set, there is usually no advantage in using lithography. Multilith, the smallest offset lithography machine, is quite economical for small runs; however, only a few hundred copies can be obtained in this way.

Content

"What should we include?" is probably the first question asked in preparing a report. Every action, activity, or decision of the commission and its staff

is a potential entry in an annual report. Most agencies will have a storehouse of information available. The problem is not one of locating material, but rather of weeding through all the available information to find the significant and important items and then presenting them in a manner that is useful and informative.

One of the major reasons annual reports fail to stir much interest is that they try to cover too much ground. The average report is a mosaic of one-statement paragraphs that leave the reader bewildered. Nothing sticks in his mind because all items are treated equally. There is a paragraph on the increase in the number of visitors to the office, the results of the population study, the number of meetings held by the commission, the commission's policy with respect to public transportation, the number of base maps completed, and so on. The important material is not singled out for detailed discussion, and the trivial assumes unwarranted significance. This problem -- and it is a serious one -- can be corrected if the author realizes that it is not necessary for each year's report to cover every aspect of the agency's operation. It is far better to pick a few items and give them detailed attention than to try to cover everything. If this approach is used it is possible to omit some of the more prosaic items, perhaps picking them up next year, and give serious attention to the more important ones.

Recent reports from the Cleveland City Planning Commission provide excellent examples of ways to add depth and interest to an annual report. Their reports are not a simple listing of the staff and commission activities of the year. They have an extra feature or perspective that sets them apart from reports of most other cities. Furthermore, they are of interest to readers who are not familiar with the city, an accomplishment that few reports can match.

The 1963 report traced the history of planning for the city from its beginnings in 1903. It was a 60th anniversary report that described the major planing events that helped shape the city. All of the commission's activities during the reporting year, 1963, were handled in a single summary page at the end of the report.

The 1964 report followed more conventional lines, with a series of descriptions of the commission's major activities for the year. However, bound into the center of the report was a booklet that described the major features of the plan for one of Cleveland's community sub-areas. It was pointed out in the report that the booklet had been distributed to over 6,000 residents of the community and that it was made a part of the annual report to illustrate how the commission was attempting to communicate its proposals to the residents of a planning area.

Ninety per cent of the 1965 report was devoted to a detailed discussion of the commission's responsibilities in the area of community appearance. It included a description of the commission's powers and gave a number of examples of how Cleveland's appearance has been improved as a result of the exercise of these powers. The activities for the reporting year were covered in two summary pages.

The reader of these reports may not know how many zoning cases were heard during the year or whether the staff spent two months on the population study, but he probably doesn't care anyway. After reading the report he does have a

better understanding of what the commission is and what it is trying to do. The reader is informed. He isn't given a list of activities to interpret for himself.

The kind of imaginative and informative report done by Cleveland and a few other cities requires an acceptance of the fact that it is not necessary to include every activity or function of the agency in each report. The better reports are more like magazines that contain special feature articles about planning. The authors of these reports do not care if one of the issues doesn't contain an organization chart, or a letter of transmittal, or a history of planning for the area, or any of the other time-honored entries that appear year after year after year.

Although it is highly recommended that planning agencies follow the lead of Cleveland and other similar agencies in selecting material for their reports, it will still be useful to consider briefly some of the entries that appear consistently in a majority of reports. Most reports seem to be organized roughly along these lines:

1. Letter of transmittal, introductory statement, or a page of "highlights."

2. Background -- a description of the powers and duties of the planning commission and staff, an organization chart, history of planning in the area, and other types of background information that generally explain the purposes and organization of a planning program.

3. Activities -- material that describes what the commission and staff has done during the year. This may include anything from a list of the number of meetings held by the commission to a detailed description and explanation of one of the major staff projects.

4. The budget -- this is usually a short entry that lists the income and expenditures for the year.

5. The look ahead -- a statement concerning the year ahead, problems anticipated, and the staff work program.

6. Miscellaneous reference material. Here anything goes: publications for sale, current population estimates, building permits issued, or the office telephone number.

The first page of a report is of critical importance, since it sets the stage for all that follows and either spurs the reader's interest to read the report or warns him that this is another dreary publication that can easily be set aside. Some reports begin with as many as six full pages of introductory material that is almost guaranteed to dull the reader's interest before he even gets to the heart of the report. Often the reader must wade through pictures of the commission, a letter of transmittal, a preface, a page of highlights, a list of committee members, a table of contents, and a few other odds and ends before he reaches the report. Some of these items are necessary and important, but they can be handled in a way that minimizes their ill effects. Other entries can and should be dropped.

The formal letter of transmittal, complete with letterhead, greeting, and closing, seems particularly artificial and unnecessary. A reader's attention is drawn to the form of the letter rather than its content. He may look to see to whom it is addressed and who wrote it, but he will only read the letter itself if it is no longer than a paragraph. He knows from experience that it will more than likely contain platitudes about how the city has progressed and how progress wouldn't have been possible without the splendid cooperation of the city council.

Even worse than the long letter that says nothing is the short one that gets right to the point: "In accordance with Section 8-24B, Chapter 12 of the General Statutes, 1958 Revision as amended, we take pleasure in transmitting herewith our annual report." This is guaranteed to dampen reader interest.

A recommended alternative to the formal letter is an introductory statement written by the chairman of the planning commission that highlights the purpose of the report, interprets the year's work in terms of its impact upon the community, and stresses what needs to be done in the future.

Pictures of the commission, lists of committee members, and other materials of this kind can best be handled in other sections of the report. If placed at the beginning of the report, they simply create a barrier in the way of the reader. It is, of course, not possible for every agency to capture the reader's interest as quickly as Cleveland's 1964 report, but it would help if they tried. The inside front cover of the Cleveland report begins with:

> "War is much too important to be left to the generals," said Clemenceau, Premier of France, during the great war of 1914-18. And city planning is too important to be left to the planners. . . .

It's hard to stop reading a report that begins like that.

Following the preliminary material there is often a section which describes in general terms what the commission is and what it does. This may include a history of planning in the area, an excerpt from the state enabling statutes relating to the powers of the commission, a description of the relationship between the commission and the city council, a description of the staff organization, a few paragraphs on "what is planning," and any other entry that sets the stage for the material that follows. This section of the report generally describes what planning is, how it is done in our town, and by whom.

What follows these introductory comments is the "report" part of the report, the section that describes what was done during the year. This is the point at which many reports break down, because they don't explain the significance of all the activities they list. They look more like they are written to fulfill the requirements of Section 8-24B, Chapter 12 of the General Statutes, 1958 Revision as amended, than to inform the public.

The two following excerpts illustrate the importance of the proper approach to reporting. Although the subject matter is the same in both cases, the first one is a simple accounting of staff time and the second one is an attempt to explain the significance of the staff activities.

Population. Two population reports were completed as part of the P-32 project in 1965; one report (MPR #27B, March 1965) covered the investigation and testing of available population estimating and forecasting methods and a set of preliminary current population estimates for the region; while the other report, "Population, . . . Metropolitan Area, Current Estimates and Projections of Future Population" (MPR #27C, June 1965) includes current population estimates as of January 1, 1965, for census tracts, development areas and counties and projections to the year 2000 by 10 year increments for development areas and counties.

The second report has been reprinted four times and a supplement, bringing current county population estimates up-to-date, is being prepared. Under the revised P-37 program, current estimates will be prepared for census tracts and development areas and projections will be made by five year increments for counties and development areas.

Population Study. A population study is very necessary in planning for future growth. The past and present growth trends must be taken into consideration. The character of the County's population, age, family size, and education must also be considered as well as distribution. This information is necessary when attempting to estimate how many people, what kind of people, and where the people will be located in . . . County in future years so that proper provisions can be made for all public utilities. It is of the utmost importance to have an estimate of this information if future water lines, sewer lines, electric lines, streets, schools, parks, and many other facilities are to be provided to proper standard in the proper location.

In 1960, . . . County had some 58,701 persons; by 1970 this is expected to increase to some 73,000 persons and by 1980 to some 90,000 persons. It becomes apparent very rapidly that if . . . County experiences this amount of growth there is going to be considerable growth and expansion of all types of public facilities. It is also indicated within this study that the . . . Urban Area had some 81 per cent of the County's total population in 1960. This percentage is expected to increase to 82 per cent in 1970 and 83 per cent in 1980. In numbers of people these figures represent 46,654 in 1960, 68,000 in 1970 and 72,500 in 1980. It can be seen that it is expected that the population within the . . . Urban Area will increase some 26,000 persons in just 15 years. Therefore, taking the Land Use Study into consideration, considerable thought is going to have to be given to sewer installation as well as all other utilities.

Another important point is that in 1960 approximately one-third of the County's population was 14 years or younger. By 1970 this percentage is expected to be approaching 40 per cent and by 1980 in excess of 45 per cent. As a result of such a large percentage of younger people, the need for schools is going to rapidly increase and the need will be getting larger as the years proceed.

The financial statement in an annual report should be kept simple. The average citizen will probably be a little frightened by pages of financial statistics, particularly if they are accompanied by an accountant's jargon. Detailed financial information belongs in a separate statement submitted to the council and made available to interested community leaders and organizations. The public information annual report is not the place to make a budget request.

The purpose of the financial statement is to provide the reader with a description of how much money was spent in providing all services that are described in the report. The report that simply describes the benefits of planning without giving some gross indication of the costs is inadequate.

Most of the reports examined contained a simple income and expenditures statement. This should be considered a minimum requirement. However, the operating statement should not be allowed to stand alone. Admittedly, it is not an easy task to interpret a budget when the income is from one or two sources and when 90 per cent or more of the expenses are for staff salaries. However, too many reports do not take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

An obvious possibility for making the financial statement more meaningful is to compare this year's budget with last year's. If there is a change, in either direction, it should be noted. Was the increase necessary to finance a special study? Or, is the increase due primarily to salary advances? The explanations need not be long, but differences from year to year should be recognized.

The finance section reproduced on the following page is taken from the 1964 annual report of an Illinois regional planning commission. It uses two approaches in explaining the budget. It explains the discrepancy between the amounts allocated and the amount spent, and it compares the per-capita costs with the previous year's figures and with figures from communities of similar size. These are simple devices that make the budget easier to read and understand.

It is particularly important for the author of an annual report to keep his audience in mind when writing the section on finances. He must continually ask what is of interest to the reader and how can it be made meaningful. Often he will find that a sentence or two of explanation or commentary will be far more useful than a page of numbers.

Most reports end with a "look ahead" to next year which is, unfortunately, usually given no more than a page or two in the report. Here is an opportunity to alert the public to new problems and possibilities, and to raise latent community issues. Instead of a frank discussion about what lies ahead, the reports often rely on a presentation of the staff work program that is often no more detailed than this:

> It is anticipated that activities of the planning commission will be continued during 1966, within the general framework of past years. Many of the planning projects will be advanced toward completion. The staff will begin work on a utilities plan and a housing study, and it will complete the population study now in progress.

finances

The total RPC expenditures for 1964 amounted to $80,303. This was $4,397 less than the amount appropriated. Both the appropriation and the expenditures were less in 1964 than in 1963. How this money was spent is shown in the table below. The excess of appropriation over expenditures can best be accounted for by the fact that qualified planners are extremely scarce and the RPC continually carries staff vacancies. Aside from the discrepancy this produces between appropriations and expenditures, this shortage of personnel also has a detrimental effect on the work program.

The County Board of Supervisors has entered into a contract with the State of Illinois to do a joint study — the Lake County Transportation Study. The cash value of RPC staff time spent on this project is applied to the County's share (9%) of the cost of the Study. The best estimate we can make at present is that RPC staff work will just about equal the County's share of the cost. Since the Study began the RPC has contributed $20,761 in staff services. As of 31 August 1964 the total study cost was $269,984.

BUDGET	1963		1964	
	Appropriated	Expended	Appropriated	Expended
Salaries	$71,500	$64,830	$70,200	$66,800
Supplies	5,000	3,863	5,000	3,753
Travel & Mileage	2,500	1,792	2,500	2,339
Miscellaneous	500	455	500	536
Consultants	4,000	6,040	2,000	2,000
Rent	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,875
Totals	$88,000	$81,480	$84,700	$80,303
Appropriated but not expended		$ 6,520		$ 4,397

Planning programs for agencies across the nation similar in size to Lake County's have an average cost of 36¢ per capita. The per capita cost in Lake County was 25¢ in 1963 and 24¢ in 1964. This is slightly lower than the 26 1/2¢ per capita cost in other counties in Illinois and neighboring states.

Work programs, or descriptions of what the staff does with its time, is an administrative concern, not a public concern. The public should be told why the staff is spending its time on a sewerage study, or why the utilities plan has a higher priority than the blight study.

The miscellaneous "filler" material usually ends up at the end of the report because it can't really be classified along with anything that has gone before. What is included in this category is anybody's guess. It probably depends on the number of pages left over and the whims of the author. Some of it is quite useful, such as the list of publications available, but much of it is pointless, like the pictures of the office Christmas party.

Assignment of Duties

The preparation of the report should be a continuing process rather than a two-week exercise. Far too frequently no thought is given to the annual report until shortly before due date, and then there is a flurry of activity. Someone takes out the old report and begins to change the names, dates, and numbers. There is a time-honored list of entries, and none of them are omitted. The adherence to past forms carries over into content, and instead of vigorous narrative, there is a restatement of the same over-used phrases. Perhaps one way out of this routine is to destroy all of last year's reports before starting on this year's.

The annual report can be substantially improved if one person is assigned primary responsibility for its preparation. He should recognize that the preparation of the report is a year-round responsibility. He should continually be on the alert for new material and ideas. Many good opportunities are lost because someone did not think about an event as a possible entry into the report or he didn't bring his camera. If one of the staff members gets into the habit of thinking about the annual report, there will be less chance to miss that "just right" photograph or misplace that item that would have been a perfect entry.

Every agency should maintain an annual report file for storing ideas and illustrations. It should contain copies of good reports from other planning agencies, departmental records, news clippings, photographs, and any other items that could possibly be used in a report. It should also contain estimates of the amount of time and money it takes to prepare a report.

Adequate time must be allowed for the process of actually preparing the report. If there is a deadline to meet, it is best to estimate the amount of time needed and then add a week or two to take care of the unforeseen problems that always seem to arise. The amount of time spent on a report depends on several factors, but for most agencies it will take at least four man-weeks of professional staff time. Table 1 is a summary of the replies to the PAS questionnaire of estimates for time spent writing, illustrating, and editing the reports. The figures do not include time spent on typing, reproduction, or distribution.

As would be expected, the agencies having chapters in the city's annual report spent less time than those that prepared a separate publication. Eighteen of the 25 agencies that reported spending less than one man-week were agencies

Table 1

TIME WRITING, ILLUSTRATING, AND EDITING ANNUAL REPORTS

Number of Agencies Reporting	Number of Man-Weeks
25	Less than 1
36	1 to 5
15	6 to 10
2	Over 10

that prepared a few pages for a city report. The larger agencies spent more time than the smaller ones, and the regional and metropolitan agencies spent more time than the single-jurisdiction agencies.

The actual writing of the report should be done by one person. Reports that are a compilation of memoranda submitted by division chiefs never work. It is fine to solicit ideas from everyone in the office, but the annual report is not a training ground for would-be writers. However, the report should be edited. A review of a draft by someone in city hall, a reporter on the local newspaper, or anyone else who can provide an "outsider's" view is always useful. If nothing else, they can simply ask embarrassing questions about the meaning of the jargon and the relevance of the pages of data.

A few agencies hire consultants experienced in report preparation to work on their report or they employ an editor of their own. Although this can be expensive, in the long run it could result in a savings. The consultant or editor can suggest ways of keeping costs down without sacrificing quality. Furthermore, the only good report is the report that is read, and if it takes outside help to produce an attractive, readable product, then the money has been well spent.

Cost of the Report

There is no way to determine what an annual report "should" cost. The unit cost of a report depends upon the number of copies printed, the type of report, number of pages, page size, use of color, the use of photographs, printing technique, type of binding, method of distribution, and many additional factors. There are so many variables that enter into the cost equation that any effort to specify an optimum figure would be futile as well as foolish. There are, however, a few things that should be kept in mind when making a budget for the report.

First, it doesn't take a lot of money to prepare a good report. The most important part of the report is what it says. Attractive, readable reports can be prepared on low budgets. There is, of course, a minimum budget below which it becomes impossible to produce an acceptable report. If enough money isn't

available, it is probably best to forget the project and use the resources where they will do more good. However, once the minimum funds are made available the job becomes one of using the budget wisely.

Second, there is a natural tendency to ask whether the project is worth the time, money, and effort. It is difficult at best to know what the agency "gets" in return on its investment. There is no easy way to measure good will or to determine how many people have a better knowledge of planning as a result of reading the report. Despite the difficulties, it is important to determine whether or not this is a wise way to use the agency's funds. In many cases it looks as if insufficient funds and time are spent on the report because the agency hasn't made up its mind as to the value of the undertaking or it is preparing the report solely to satisfy a legal requirement.

One of the questions on the PAS questionnaire asked respondents to calculate the per-copy cost of preparing their annual reports. The figure was to reflect all costs including: staff salaries, cost of materials, reproduction costs, and distribution costs. Table 2 gives an indication of how much money, by jurisdiction, agencies spend in order to get a report to the public. Figures are for 52 agencies that publish their own reports. They do not include agencies that use a newspaper supplement, a special newsletter, or a chapter of the city's report.

Table 2

PER-COPY PRICES FOR PREPARING ANNUAL REPORTS

Planning Jurisdiction	Less than $1.00	$1.00 to $4.99	$5.00 to $9.99	$10.00 or More
City	6	11	7	1
County	7	8	0	1
Combined	4	5	2	0
Total	17	24	9	2

Table 2 represents what the agencies spent on their last report, but it should be noted that one-third of these agencies indicated that they would like to prepare a more "professional looking" report if they could only find the money to do so.

The combined expenditures for the 52 agencies was $52,935. The range for individual agency expenditures was from $100 to about $9,000. Approximately one-third of the agencies spent over $1,000.

Table 3 offers sample total costs of selected agencies indicating population served by the agency, number of pages in reports, press run, and method of printing.

Table 3

TOTAL COSTS OF REPORTS FROM SELECTED AGENCIES

Population Served by Agency	Number of Pages	Press Run	Method of Printing	Total Cost
2,047,000	32	3000	Offset	$ 1700
1,100,000	48	1000	Offset	1500
322,000	26	500	Multilith	1000
191,161	12	200	Multilith	350
150,000	20	400	Offset	600
142,000	23	150	Mimeograph	500
138,000	12	500	Offset	350
127,515	30	800	Offset	780
125,000	16	42	Mimeograph	100
93,400	14	100	Multilith	400
53,489	20	200	Multilith	300

In analyzing the questionnaire it appeared as if many of the respondents were surprised to find that the reports cost as much as they did. No less than nine of the 52 agencies erred in their cost calculations. After recording the number of copies printed and estimating total costs, the respondents recorded incorrect cost per-copy figures. The division was correct, but the decimal point was misplaced. If the correct price was $3.33, they recorded .33 cents. No one erred in the other direction.

Another discrepancy that appeared frequently was an apparent miscalculation in total cost. After indicating that the report took six to 10 man-weeks to prepare, the total cost was listed as $500. This isn't enough to cover staff salaries, let alone printing costs. The figures reported here, therefore, are probably low estimates.

Even though the absolute amount spent on an annual report is a small fraction of a total planning budget, it is large enough to warrant careful examination. In fact, the cost should be reflected in the department's yearly budget. It appears that many agencies would benefit from a closer look at exactly what it does cost to prepare their reports. They might be surprised.

Illustrations

It is an unusual annual report that is not enhanced by the use of illustrations. The illustrations -- photographs, drawings, graphs, charts, and maps--

are important for a variety of reasons. They can capture the reader's attention, enliven the written material, present facts in an easily understood form, illustrate a point, or convey a spirit that is in keeping with the theme of the report. Taking full advantage of the uses of graphic materials is a difficult task. Too often it looks as if reports have been illustrated as an after thought. The illustrations are not only of poor quality, but they bear little or no relationship to the text. It takes considerable time, effort, and knowledge to produce an effectively illustrated report.

Photographs. The photographs in many reports are ineffective. They either make no contribution to the report or, worse, they depreciate the report's over-all quality. There are four major explanations for these shortcomings:[3]

1. Poor Picture Quality. It is essential to begin with a high quality print, because the picture will always lose some of its sharpness during the printing process. It requires someone with a knowledge of cameras, film, and the characteristics of various printing methods to consistently obtain high quality photographic reproductions.

2. Inexperienced Photographer. It takes an experienced photographer, not necessarily a professional one, to consistently deliver good photographs. It takes someone with an eye for the right angle or the proper arrangement of material to turn an otherwise dull snapshot into an interesting and imaginative illustration.

3. Dull Subject Matter. It is unfortunate but true that a great deal of the material a planning agency might consider including in its report is rather mundane. Pictures of the new disposal plant or of a street widening simply have little reader appeal. When working with unexciting subjects, it becomes particularly important to have the skills of an experienced photographer.

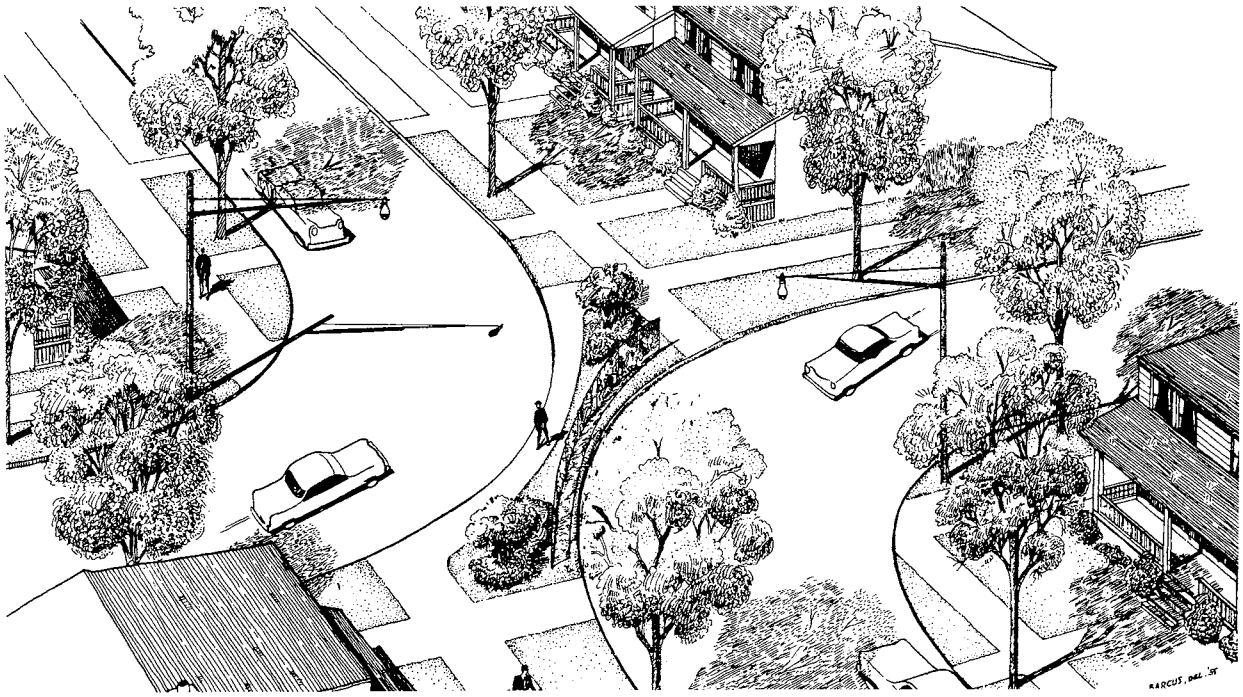
4. Inappropriate Photographs. No matter how good the picture is or how exciting the subject matter, it must relate to the report. Each picture should be chosen for its specific contribution to the report. If it is not clear how the picture will add to the report then don't use it.

Drawings. Sketches, like photographs, can add considerably to a report. Drawings have at least one advantage over photographs. With drawings, the artist can delete distracting material and emphasize a particular point. The drawings can be created to meet particular needs of the report.

There are two situations when a drawing is particularly useful. The first is when an event has passed and there is no longer an opportunity to take the needed photograph. The second is when the particular item being discussed doesn't easily lend itself to photographic illustration. The obvious example here is a future event, such as a proposed mall development. Another example is the routine function, such as office administration, that has no particular pictorial value. An imaginative artist can usually do something to illustrate the more mundane activities of the department.

---

[3] Municipal Reporting to the Public. Chicago, The International City Managers' Association, 1963, pp. 42-43.



Here a sketch is used to illustrate a proposal for discouraging through traffic in residential areas.

The requirements for good art work are the same as those for photographs. They must be done by someone with the necessary skills and they must contribute to the report. Usually this will mean preparing sketches specifically for the report. Drawings used for other purposes may work in the annual report, but as often as not they end up looking "tacked on."

Charts and Graphs. Most annual reports are narrative and they should be. Pages of statistics, in the form of tables, charts, or graphs are fine for the files but not for the annual report. It is true, however, that some information can best be transmitted by some form of statistical illustration. But it is important to keep in mind the distinction between reference or general purpose statistics and text or special purpose statistics.

General purpose statistics should be in a separate report or an appendix, or, perhaps better, left in the files. Special purpose statistics are employed to enforce or illustrate a particular point made in the discussion, and they belong in the body of the report where they can be readily referred to.

Each statistical illustration is a series of declarative statements, and the most important of these statements should be stated in the body of the report. In a nontechnical publication such as an annual report, the statistical material should never be allowed to stand alone. It should be translated into words. For example, if a graph of variance requests shows a sharp decrease during the year, the fact should be noted and explained ("the decrease in requests was the result of an amendment to the zoning ordinance which. . .). If there has been no significant changes in the number of requests, it is probably better to omit the graph.

Distribution

Decisions concerning the distribution of the report should be made early in the preparation process. The method of distribution cannot be separated from decisions about content, audience, report size, number of copies to be printed, and the type of report used. It is discouraging, as well as wasteful, to have 1,000 copies of last year's annual report in the basement of city hall because someone neglected to figure out how the report was to be distributed. Another reasons for giving early and serious consideration to distribution is a budget consideration. The process of getting the report into the reader's hands can be costly, and should be determined ahead of time.

The distribution of certain types of reports is obvious. The newspaper supplement has the distinct advantage of built-in distribution. However, the supplement is only useful in medium- and large-size cities where any other mass distribution method would be prohibitively expensive. Another kind of report with built-in distribution is the special issue of a monthly newsletter. A number of planning agencies send out monthly or bi-monthly newsletters, and the first issue of each year is a special annual report issue. Here, the regular mailing list solves the problem of distribution. If the planning agency's annual report is a chapter or section of a citywide report, the agency may have little or nothing to do with distribution. Seventeen of the 75 agencies that regularly prepare reports indicated that this was the situation in their community. Distribution was handled by the city's or county's chief administrator.

Although the newspaper supplement, the special issue of the newsletter, and the section of the city's annual report ease the problem of distribution, they do not solve it completely. Agencies that use any one of these three methods should arrange to have extra copies made to fulfill special requests, hand out to office visitors, send to prospective job candidates, or distribute at public meetings.

Twelve of the 75 agencies indicated that so few copies of their report were printed that distribution was no problem. The few copies were usually available "upon request." For most of the agencies, however, distribution is not so easy. About half the agencies use direct mailing. They have, over a period of years, developed mailing lists of organizations and individuals who have expressed an interest in the work of the agency. One agency reported that its mailing list contains over 5,000 names, and another reported that its list contained 2,500 agencies and individuals outside the planning jurisdiction. A few agencies tried to reach every household in the area. If the number of reports mailed is large, it may be wise to use bulk rates and self-mailing covers in order to keep costs down. The argument against this is that the report may begin to resemble the "junk" mail that innundates every home each day.

Three of the reporting agencies indicated that the Boy Scouts delivered the city's report door to door. Norwalk, California, donated $500 to the Scouts for this special service. One town reported that the city report was delivered by employees of the fire department. Some agencies indicated that their reports were placed in dentists' and doctors' offices, beauty parlors, and barber shops. While this practice may reach some of the desired audience, it should definitely be considered a supplement to more direct distribution methods.

SUMMARY

The annual report can serve a variety of purposes and, if properly done, can be one of the more important elements of a planning agency's public information program. Good reporting depends upon an early determination of who the audience is and what it will be interested in. But, more important, it depends upon a candid approach to the subject matter. Surely all communities are not as well off as their reports indicate. A good report will be one in which the citizen is asked to share the planners' concern for the problems the community faces as well as sharing their pride in the past accomplishments.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Douglass, Paul. Communication Through Reports. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentiss Hall, Inc., 1957.

Floyd, Elizabeth R. Preparing the Annual Report. New York: American Management Association, 1961.

Henry, Albert C., and Webber, Edwin W. A Handbook for the Preparation of an Annual Municipal Progress Report. Bureau of Government Research, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, 1963, 28 pp. 50¢.

Institute of Public Service. Tips on Town Report. The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, 1960, 16 pp. 50¢

Jones, Wallace H. "A New Way to Evaluate Annual Reports," Public Management, Chicago, Ill., International City Managers' Association, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 77-80.

Matthews, Lempi K. Making the Most of Your Annual Report. Chicago, Public Personnel Association, 1963, 76 pp. $3.50.

Pfretzschener, Paul A. Procedural Guide for Planning Commission. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Department of Commerce, Bureau of Community Development, 1959.

Ransohoff, Daniel J. Pictures Tell Your Story. New York, National Publicity Council for Health and Welfare Services, 1959. $1.75.

Schmid, Calvin F. Handbook of Graphic Presentation. New York, Ronald Press Co., 1954.

Sigband, Norman B. Effective Report Writing. New York, Harper and Bros., 1960.

Tolleris, Beatrice K. Annual Reports. New York, National Publicity Council for Health and Welfare Services, $1.

Wall, Ned L. Municipal Reporting to the Public. Chicago, The International City Managers' Association, 1963. $3.

Wheeler, Pan Dodd. How to Make Reports. Knoxville, Municipal Technical Advisory Service, University of Tennessee, 1957. 42 pp.