

Guide To The Mayor's Management Report

by Mark Berkey-Gerard

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Different mayors have used the annual Mayor's Management Report - sometimes called the "public report card" - to different ends. Rudy Giuliani turned the annual report into a kind of performance art, presenting hundreds of graphs and charts that pointed out how well the city was doing under his supervision. Ed Koch, known for his bluntness, once said that based on the report he would give his sanitation commissioner a "C."

In his [first management report](#) , Mayor Michael Bloomberg has taken a different approach. When reporters repeatedly asked the mayor what areas he was most concerned about, Bloomberg said again and again that his ultimate concern was not the final grade (although he joked that he would give himself an A+), but presenting the facts in a more organized fashion.

"What we are talking about is getting the information out - whether it is good or bad - and getting it out in a useable format," said the mayor.

This year's Mayor's Management Report is shorter than the reports of the past, easier to read, and much of the jargon has been cut. The 186-page print version (which can be purchased from the [City Store](#) for \$20) even features fine art: the cover is a painting of the Brooklyn Bridge by Samuel Halpert, courtesy of the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) .

Mayor Bloomberg's report also includes an interactive online feature called ["My Neighborhood Statistics,"](#) which allows New Yorkers to type in their address and generate a web page with maps and statistics about where they live. This feature enables everyday citizens not only to read the report, the mayor said, but "to participate in the government of the future."

The mayor has been widely praised for his efforts. A [New York Times editorial](#) called the report "an invitation to New Yorkers to learn more about the performance of city government." City Council Speaker

[Gifford Miller](#)

called it "the best MMR I have seen in years." (For a critique of the report, read

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Editing Out the Facts

by Glenn Pasanen.)

But now that the report has been made more user friendly, what is the city supposed to do with it?

WHAT IS THE MAYOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT?

The [city charter](#) requires that the mayor issue two management reports a year: a preliminary report by mid-January and final report by mid-September. The management report must have detailed information on each of the city's 44 agencies.

This year's mayor's management report - which covers the fiscal year 2002, from July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002 -- includes thousands of facts and numbers like how much it costs the city to incarcerate an inmate (\$62,595), the number of days the average person stays in the hospital (5.3) or the mean SAT score for freshmen at the City University of New York (1066).

Some of the highlights in the new report include:

- all major categories of crime are down 10 percent
- city streets are dirtier
- there were fewer complaints about pot holes
- more New Yorkers are visiting emergency rooms, up 18 percent since 1998
- traffic fatalities rose three percent last year, with 398 people dead
- the number of people on the city's welfare rolls continues to decline
- only 58 percent of restrooms in city parks are in service

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 radically altered some statistics. Police overtime increased from \$338 million in 2001 to \$610 million in 2002, according to Commissioner Ray Kelly, because of heightened security measures.

The way the information is presented also says much about the new mayor's commitment to use of technology. Bloomberg made his billions off of a [computer system and media company](#) that provides financial news and information. Now he seems intent on using technology to

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reform City Hall.

[NYC.gov](#) has more than 50,000 pages of content and 100 online transactional services. Visitors can [pay parking tickets](#) , view property statements, obtain [birth and death certificates](#) , or [report housing code violations](#) online.

The mayor says he hopes that all of these things can not only lead to better-informed citizens, but also a streamlined government.

WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

For the first time, the report includes an interactive online feature called ["My Neighborhood Statistics."](#)

New Yorkers can type in their address or a street intersection and generate a web page with a map of their area (by community board, school district, or police precinct) and statistics in 14 categories. Visitors will learn about the condition of neighborhood parks, the number of murders, and what percentage of teachers in the area are certified. (The site also offers [instructions](#) for how to use the different features.)

By clicking on one of the statistics a user can also generate a citywide map that shows how their area compares with the rest of the city. Residents of the lower East Side, for example, will find that they have some of the dirtiest streets in the city, while people who live in East New York will find that they have the highest rates of lead poisoning in children.

However, the neighborhood statistics pages, as they are currently designed, offers only a quick snap-shot of information. Some visitors may want to know more and will have to go searching elsewhere on the site.

For example only two crime categories - the total number of major felonies and murders - are

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listed on the "My Neighborhood Statistics" page. To look up additional information, visitors have to go to the [police department web site](#) and look up information by precinct. For detailed information about agencies like the corrections department, consumer affairs, transportation, and the taxi and limousine commission, visitors much go to the

[Citywide Accountability Program web page](#)

. The Citywide Accountability Program uses the police department's statistical approach to evaluate performance of city agencies.

New Yorkers may also find that they are not sure what do with their new knowledge.

Because the information is based on [community boards](#) , there is no local elected official to complain to, or vote out of office if things do not improve. There are several community boards in each City Council district, but the site offers no way for visitors to find which council district they live in.

When Mayor Bloomberg was asked how residents should respond, he suggested that they email City Hall. The mayor's web site has a place to correspond, complain, or [request a city service](#) as well as a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section for 12 areas of city government.

The mayor also said that the city's new 311 phone number - which is still in the planning stages and will coordinate non-emergency police calls as well as complaints about city services - will be a more effective way for residents to register their concerns.

WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH THE REPORT?

Non-profit advocacy groups will use statistics to lobby for their issues. Local politicians will use the information to decide where to allocate funding and to call on the state or federal government for aid. And journalists will use the numbers as the basis for stories about where the city is lacking.

But ultimately, the task of going over the details of the [Mayor's Management Report](#) is the job of the New York City Council.

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Each year, the council must take the mayor's report and hold a series of public hearings to ensure that the city is really running as smoothly as the mayor says it is. This year's hearings, the council said, are scheduled for November, after the general election.

"Oversight is the most potent power the council has as a counter balance to the mayor," said Douglas Muzzio of the Baruch School of Public Affairs. "They can literally walk in and look at what a city agency is doing, how they are spending their money and what services they are or are not providing."

The role of oversight is especially critical now, some say.

There is a new mayor, new commissioners, and many new ways the city is trying to addressing its problems. And as the city faces a \$5 billion deficit, the council's role of monitoring city services, which are in jeopardy of being slashed, is critical.

When he released his report, Mayor Bloomberg cautioned that just because the city has the statistics and has good intentions does not necessarily mean that a problem can be solved.

"There will be things that work well, there will be things that work poorly," said Bloomberg. "Sometimes you will get lucky and it will come out in spite of your actions. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, there will be circumstances that prevent you from being successful."

LINKS TO MAYOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT ONLINE

- [My Neighborhood Statistics](#) - interactive feature which maps 14 selected categories by neighborhood using a street address or intersection.
- [Fiscal 2002 Mayor's Management Report](#) (in pdf format) - covers 41 agencies and over 800 performance categories.
- [Fiscal 2002 Mayor's Management Report Executive Summary](#) (in pdf format) - 10 page document that describes changes to the report.

- [Additional information](#) (in pdf format) - the extra web only information included in Preliminary Fiscal 2002 report, that is not include in the final print version.

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- [How Things Are Measured](#) - a description and source of each performance category in the printed fiscal 2002 report.
- [Management Report Archives](#) - Preliminary and final reports dating back to 1997.

See also: ["Editing Out The Facts"](#) by Glenn Pasanen