



# PUBLIC WORKS—What is it?

It is not uncommon for many people to discover that **PUBLIC WORKS** is a lot more things than they realized.

Like:

**WATER SUPPLY,**



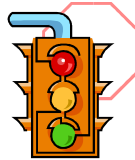
**WASTEWATER TREATMENT,**



**STORMWATER CONTROL-SURFACE WATER QUALITY,**



**TRANSPORTATION-regulating it:**



**providing it:**



**or building it:**



**SOLID WASTE**



**PLANNING**



**BUILDING CONSTRUCTION**



**POWER SUPPLY**



**MONEY or FINANCING**



**ART**



**and of course**

Public works is virtually the foundation of our society. Without well established and well maintained public works (even if it is simple) civilizations flounder or stagnate.

From finding, treating and delivering water for drinking, landscaping, hygiene, and industry to treating it after it is used, from building the sidewalks, bike paths, roads, railroads, canals and airports to providing the transportation users (e.g. Transit), from managing building of new homes to large commercial buildings, from managing water quality in our streams and lakes to building new wetlands, public works is there, the foundation of it all.

Is there a **DEFINITION** of **PUBLIC WORKS**? Most definitely—here is a very long one:

Public Works, the civilizing force: Public Works provide the physical base essential to the social and economic development of American civilization. Designed to protect and enhance the human environment, they represent investments in the future for the people who create them and for succeeding generations. The transportation networks; the facilities that control floods and provide drainage; the systems that supply water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, and power-generating needs; the public buildings required for health services, education, defense, housing, and recreation; the waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems as well as the facilities that harness the power of the atom and explore space—have all contributed significantly to the growth of the nation.

Public Works have made it possible for the people of the United States to achieve the highest standard of living in the world. Yet clean water at the turn of the tap; fresh vegetables year around; light and power at the touch of a switch; hard-surfaced roads that, during winter or summer, provide for the movement of people and good; modern airports that made safe and convenient air travel possible; extensive educational facilities, hospitals, public libraries, theater, stadiums, parks, golf courses; and many other types of public works are often *taken for granted by contemporary society*. They did not, however, just appear when they were needed. They were created through the efforts of many people working together within the framework of the American system, of government. Educated men and women dreamed, planned, and worked for a better life. And the nation's engineers, contractors, and public officials joined with them to make their dreams a reality.

From Ellis L. Armstrong, ed., *History of Public Works in the United States*.