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The One-Stop Permit and Plan Review Center: Three Case Studies

Kenneth John Schilling
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THE ONE-STOP PERMIT AND PLAN REVIEW CENTER: 
THREE CASE STUDIES

by

Kenneth John Schilling

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Public Administration
School of Public Affairs and Administration
Peter Kobrak, Adviser

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2005
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Kenneth John Schilling

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AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Doctor of Public Administration

School of Public Affairs and Administration
(Department)  ..........................................

Public Administration
(Program)  ..........................................

Dr. Peter Kobrak
Dissertation Review Committee Chair

Dr. James Visser
Dissertation Review Committee Member

Dr. William Hoyt
Dissertation Review Committee Member

APPROVED  

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Dean of The Graduate College

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Distinct recognition is offered to Dr. Martha Feldman and Dr. Anne Khademian, whose recent essay, “Principles of Public Management Practice: From Dichotomies to Interdependence,” provided the theoretical backdrop for this study. Their work offered both the inspiration for undertaking this research and the conceptual framework around which it is organized and to which it is addressed.
Acknowledgments—Continued

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Kenneth John Schilling
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PREFACE

From 1979 through 2001 I was employed as Assistant Planning Director by the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zoning administration was my chief responsibility over much of this period. I also served as one of two co-leaders of the city's one-stop Development Center from its inception in summer of 1998 until leaving city employment.

In the role of co-leader I shared in the leadership of the Development Center and in many of its managerial activities. As Zoning Administrator assigned to the center, I continued to serve as the city's development gatekeeper: project review coordinator, zoning compliance officer, staff to the Planning Commission, and reviewer of construction plans.

These activities offered the opportunity for observing firsthand the application of the one-stop concept to the city's permit and plan review process. Promotion of the one-stop concept by the reinventing government (ReGo) movement further whetted my interest. Instrumental, however, was the publication of "Principles for Public Management: From Dichotomies to Interdependence," a theoretical framework confronting a long-standing dilemma of public governance: "How to manage flexibly and accountably" (Feldman & Khademian, 2001). Taken together, these experiences provided the inspiration and basis for this research.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The review and approval of development plans and issuance of building permits allowing construction projects to proceed is a vital and ongoing activity of municipal government. Seemingly straightforward on its face, the intricacy of this activity is realized as one grasps the diverse city codes, ordinances and procedures that come into play, each controlling different aspects of development, and executed individually by various city departments and offices.

A proposed apartment project in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for example, at a minimum confronts the Zoning Code, the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, Building Codes (comprising separate building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and fire prevention provisions), and various ordinances and practices governing site access and internal circulation, construction standards, sanitary sewer extension, and water main extension. These are administered by the Planning, Environmental Protection, Neighborhood Improvement, Fire, Traffic Safety, Engineering and Water Utility Departments, respectively. But, invariably, there will be additional needs and issues associated with project development that either have been anticipated early in the project review process or that must be dealt with along the way. These may include several of the following: driveway permit for construction,
encroachment permit (right-of-way), historic preservation approval, lot split, paving permit, private street approval, sign permit, street vacation, temporary occupancy permit (right-of-way), and zoning variance. Review of these concerns may involve one, several, or many of the departments noted above. Before the city's one-stop Development Center was instituted in 1998, development-related plan and permit intake and review staff occupied offices in individual departments at five separate and remote locations.

The former permit and plan review system had been put in place piecemeal over the years as the need for better control of construction and land use development was recognized. However, it had grown increasingly complex and was not well understood even by the staff that administered it, much less the clientele it purported to serve. Moreover, the system required refined communication, coordination and cooperation among the players to achieve even passable performance. But the probability for problems was great, ever-present and widespread so that too frequently the system did not work well. As a result, delays in processing plans and permits became endemic and substantial. The issuance of a building permit might require upwards of 60 days or much more depending on project complexity whereas a reasonable expectation was a 10-day turn-around period for the majority of projects. Eventually, as delays became intolerable and conditions of approval sufficiently onerous, the development community rebelled and demanded reform. Given the economic development stakes, the desire to realize certain strategic objectives in the downtown, and the political stature of some of those demanding reform, the Grand
Rapids City Commission opted to streamline the system. Thus began an ambitious assessment of the Grand Rapids permit and plan review process that lead to the establishment of the city's one-stop Development Center within a period of about 18 months.

Grand Rapids' experience was not unique in this respect. Other American cities had traveled this same road to reform and arrived at the same destination—the one-stop center. The fruits of their efforts can be observed on city home pages on the Internet that display the presence of the one-stop center, its organization, and available services. Services and information offered on-line by many cities include: contact directories, organization charts, business hours, informative brochures, development-related definitions, permit requirements and applications, review standards, meeting schedules, fee schedules and online payment provisions, and the status of projects under review.

Some cities offer far more. Pasadena, California, for example, also exhibits its floor plan and service desks, describes its experience in creating its one-stop center, explains its information management system, lists pertinent codes and regulations, details how to obtain a building permit, describes its pre-application process, offers a development guide, spells out its case management (single point of contact) provision, offers property information, and finally, presents a suggestion box for online feedback (Pasadena California Permit Center, 1997).

The prevalence of the one-stop reform is not coincidental. Its popularity, seemingly, rests on its superior performance in resolving longstanding problems with
the development approval process and on the successes experienced with its use. Its appeal also is attributable to the reinventing government movement ushered in by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), bolstered greatly by the National Performance Review program of the Clinton Administration.

Use of the one-stop center for improving the performance of the permit and plan review process, however, is not well documented. Examples of one-stop applications to diverse settings are readily found, including that of city permit and plan review processing. However, while the name itself suggests its purpose, little reporting of analytical rigor can be discovered that classifies its diversity of form, examines its organization, traces its antecedents, considers its future prospects, contrasts it with the system it replaces, explores the rationale and process that led to its adoption, registers the issues it resolves, enumerates its helpful features, reveals innovations associated with its introduction, or reports on its benefits and beneficiaries. The outcome of such research could make practical contributions to the workplace while also adding to applied theory in the ongoing dialog of public administration. That is the purpose of this dissertation.

Proposed Research

This study provides a detailed description of the one-stop permit and plan review center, an organizational innovation that is being introduced in numerous U.S. cities to improve governmental performance. This change represents a streamlining of local development review and code compliance functions, responding in part to the
reinventing government movement now influencing the field of public administration. The research is based on case studies of three Midwestern cities of comparable size: Grand Rapids, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; and Des Moines, Iowa.

On another level, this research seeks to test a theoretical framework put forth by Feldman and Khademian (2001) in their essay, “Principles for Public Management: From Dichotomies to Interdependence.” Their essay confronts a long-standing dilemma of public governance: “How to manage flexibly and accountably” (p. 339). The authors suggest that management action (flexible leadership) and governance structures (providing accountability) are in fact mutually constitutive rather than dichotomous as construed in public administration literature. Similar to speech and language, they assert, “Action creates and recreates structure while structures enable and constrain action” (p. 342). In applying the framework to the one-stop center, this effort tests whether it reflects the processes relating to this administrative setting and whether initiatives can be detected that integrate the demands for flexibility and accountability rather than trading off one against the other.

The Primacy of Process Model and a Rival Theory

Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) hypothesis proposes that flexible management action and governance structures that assure accountability are mutually constitutive, rather than dichotomous as commonly treated. Action and structure, they argue, interact to produce reciprocal change. Their theory is exemplified in their Primacy of Process Model that focuses on the process of problem solving instead of
the solution, thereby making “the structural dynamics visible and the potential actions possible” (p. 351) and also revealing how structure is influenced by actions. But, a close examination of their operating model appears to offer opportunity for challenge. An adaptation of the model is offered in Figure 1, Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory.

![Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory](image)

Note. Shaded portion comprises Feldman and Khademian’s Primacy of Process model.

Figure 1. Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory

The rival approach departs from Feldman and Khademian’s model by first identifying a city’s managerial or organizational preference or orientation. This adaptation is made: to learn why existing structures were considered deficient in the
first place, to gain insight into the choice of process participants, and to get at 
organizational presumptions and cultural biases that influence decisions and choices 
throughout the change process. This element would seem essential to better 
understand the motivating factors that underlie change processes, how they arise, and 
why they take the direction that they do.

Adhering to the Feldman and Khademian (2001) model for many of the steps 
that follow, attention then is focused on process participants to consider who should 
be involved or served by public efforts and the structures that facilitate or obstruct 
those efforts. Again, similar to the author’s model, three outcomes can occur: 
reduction of structural barriers accompanied by greater flexibility of action, greater 
flexibility in assisting identified persons or groups, and heightened expectations for 
better service and coordination of services. In centering on process, accountability 
issues and flexibility opportunities become visible, thereby opening possibilities for 
their express deliberation and potential action (p. 352).

Figure 1, then, departs from Feldman and Khademian’s Primacy of Process 
Model by depicting “unchanged accountability to uninvolved or excluded others,” 
referring to those stakeholders who were not included in, or were purposely excluded 
from, the ongoing public effort in which they have an interest. Unlike those involved 
or served, these stakeholders may not have been exposed to and so enjoy no 
improved comprehension of the permit and plan review process. As a result, they may 
have no or few expectations in relation to the provision of services and coordination 
of activities. Accountability to them, it is theorized, is largely unchanged inasmuch as
the flexibility-accountability equilibrium has shifted without their involvement, opportunity for involvement, or awareness.

Extrapolating to the level of a rival theory, it is postulated that within the Primacy of Process context, Feldman and Khademian's thesis is a selective or special case framework that holds only for those stakeholders or that class of stakeholders who are involved or served. They exercise some level of participation, from actively framing of concepts at group meetings to simply maintaining an awareness of relevant proposals or actions. For other stakeholders, the prevailing win-lose, flexibility-accountability dichotomy would seem to hold as reflected in Figure 1. The rival theory, then, purports to be the general theory, embracing Feldman and Khademian's special case model while, at the same time, applying to uninvolved or excluded stakeholders. Insofar as the rival theory is the more comprehensive model even while it also reflects the elements of the special case model, it is the rival theory that hereafter will be referenced and tested in three case studies.

Research Strategy

The research strategy undertakes multiple case studies in the interest of the validity of findings. Seven knowledgeable subjects at each site were surveyed and interviewed or simply interviewed. Observing the one-stop center in operation and the gathering of relevant documentation of activities leading to the opening of a one-stop center and to its operation provide the other two research legs of the case studies.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is: (a) to explore more fully the permit and plan review center as an organizational form and as to its practical utility, and (b) to assess whether it fulfills the authors' Primacy of Process principle as adapted in a rival theory [italics mine] (see Figure 1). By inference this assessment also is a test of the authors' conceptual framework to determine whether it accurately reflects what occurs in this specific context.

The Research Questions

To carry out the research in a manner consistent with the purpose of this study two research questions are posed:

1. How does the one-stop center change the development review process? In responding to this question, the case studies attempt to illuminate several areas of interest: the structural organization and management of the center, comparison with the traditional review process, service problems with that traditional process, the effect of the one-stop center on development services, and the beneficiaries of the one-stop center.

2. How does the one-stop permit and plan review center fulfill the Primacy of Process: A Rival Theory framework? In answer to this question, case studies pursue the following matters: the city's managerial orientation, the process of problem solving leading to the one-stop center, surfacing of structural dynamics and potential change initiatives, surfacing of initiatives that affect structures of accountability,
ongoing process of problem solving and service initiatives at the center, and participation in the problem-solving process both in giving rise to the one-stop center and following its establishment.

Significance of the Research

These questions are significant because the answers indicate whether local efforts to improve customer benefits or services can in fact be considered “win-win” as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) suppose or are “win-lose” as the dichotomous view of management action and governance structure suggests. The dichotomous view would seem to imply that this organizational change, i.e., establishing a centralized permit and plan review center, unbalances an existing equilibrium between flexibility and accountability. In this view, the center enhances service to development interests, advancing their standing in the scheme of things, and improving their flexibility of action, but it is achieved, presumably, at a cost to the public interest.

In contrast, public administrators Feldman and Khademian’s alternative framework implies that the action—accountability equilibrium has not been unbalanced but rather that it has achieved a new equilibrium through a scrutiny of the problem-solving process wherein process dynamics are made transparent. The same action that advanced the standing of development interests also improved the understanding of the permit and plan review process by the city council, city staff, and the wider community, thereby raising expectations of all for better service and
improved coordination, and thus reconfirming public accountability. The argument here is that expectations are the basis for accountability (Behn, 2001, p. 8).

More broadly, the answers to the above research questions could reinforce Feldman and Khademian's thesis and assist in reconciling the longstanding theoretical dilemma they describe. Moreover, this dissertation could help to resolve the dilemma between promoting greater flexibility and innovation in public action and demonstrating that accountability not only is addressed but also that it effectively defines the action. At the same time, adaptation of existing structures or new structures would then occur to assure accountability. Alternatively, this research may work to discredit the authors' hypothesis by adding credence to the dichotomous view of the flexibility-accountability debate.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II explicates Feldman and Khademian's theoretical framework, points to the one-stop permit and plan review center as an example of their Primacy of Process model in operation, and examines the center's various organizational forms. An account of the one-stop concept, its origins, variations, and rationales is also presented.

Chapter III offers a review of the literature that sustains this dissertation conceptually. It seeks to show how the present research "fit[s] into the ongoing dialog of science" (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993, p. 113). The chapter is organized into three parts: the essay framing the dissertation problem; concepts
pertaining to the Primacy of Process model—accountability, reinventing government, and e-government; and a fuller discussion of the one-stop concept in terms of its antecedents and its parallel models.

Chapter IV details the dissertation's research design and methodology. Initially, case study research methodology is discussed along with its suitability for this study and the topic of research quality. The dissertation's theoretical framework, i.e., the rival theory model, is introduced together with hypotheses and propositions to be tested and the survey instrument to be used. Next, the study's data collection approach is recounted highlighting the selection of survey and interview subjects and associated field adjustments. The research process then is described and illustrated. Lastly, the selection process for case study sites is reported and the selected cities are identified—Grand Rapids, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; and Des Moines, Iowa.

Chapter V places individual one-stop centers within the organizational contexts of their respective cities. City organizational structures are briefly described and illustrated. Presented also are accounts of the centers themselves together with organizational charts, pointing up distinctive elements as well as similarities. A final section on organizational contrasts draws attention to structural, managerial, and control and accountability differences among the three one-stop centers.

Chapter VI, the heart of the dissertation, presents the case study analysis. Nine propositions, based on the Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory, are put forward for testing by case study findings. Initially, responses to survey and interview questions associated with a proposition are examined one by one for each study site,
supported by documentation and on-site observations. Then a comparative analysis of findings is carried out across cases observing areas of convergence and divergence. However, because of the inbuilt redundancy of information, only the comparative analysis is presented within this dissertation. When the comparative analyses are completed for findings related to all questions bearing on a proposition, the proposition itself is appraised in light of the findings and a judgment is made regarding proposition validity. A detailed account of each one-stop center along multiple dimensions is revealed through this approach.

Chapter VII provides a brief summary of what was done and why together with a set of conclusions and policy implications. Brief characterizations of findings are provided, accompanied thereafter by judgments as to the verification of individual propositions and hypotheses. Research limitations are acknowledged together with suggested modifications. Finally, some suggestions are put forward for future research.
CHAPTER II

EXPLICATING THE THEORY

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the research problem through the introduction of Feldman and Khademian's (2001) Primacy of Process principle and relating it to the one-stop permit and plan review center. A background subsection briefly considers one-stop organizational forms, conceptual antecedents, and the future trend toward e-government. A more substantial section thereafter explores the one-stop concept, its origins, variations, and rationales, from the clientele-based organization described by Gulick (1937) to the lateral organization introduced by Galbraith (1994).

Framing the Research Problem

Feldman and Khademian (2001) in their essay, “Principles for Public Management: From Dichotomies to Interdependence,” confront a long-standing dilemma of public governance: “How to manage flexibly and accountably” (p. 339). They state that the dichotomy, implicit in the emphasis on leadership on the one side and in the emphasis on governance structures on the other, dominates the literature of public administration. Furthermore, they argue, the dichotomy has inhibited the development of theory to reconcile this dilemma and to evolve approaches that better reflect practices of modern public managers (p. 339).
Today's public managers confront a world that is dramatically changed from that of recent decades. The authors note that

Communities are increasingly heterogeneous, economies and communications are more accessible and global, connections and partnerships between organizations, and public and private sectors, and policy arenas multiply, and members of the public are better able to scrutinize governmental performance and demand better performance. (p. 339)

This new environment demands flexibility. But time-honored governance structures in the form of "command and control structures," "centralized rules," and "formulaic policy responses" no longer operate adequately (p. 339). Yet, the public is unwilling to forgo the accountability that these structures embody. Thus, if more flexibility is sought, managers must provide a substitute mode of accountability that accommodates more flexibility.

The authors point out that the dichotomy has historic roots. Woodrow Wilson and others early advocated vigorous and flexible leadership to achieve effective administration and identified the need for efficiency and accountability "through structural and procedural reforms" (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 340). There soon followed proposals for designs of city governments, scientific principles of public administration, organizational forms and administrative procedures, and business leadership concepts applied to the public sector, all in the interest of furthering accountable, effective and efficient government. "Good government," it seemed, "demanded vigorous and visible leadership as well as proper governing structures to insure that the public interest was pursued both creatively and accountably" (p. 340).
Scholars confirm the conflict between flexibility and accountability. Mosher (1982) comments that

Accountability is not commonly associated with invention or novelty or serendipity, but rather with carrying out assignments, which are more or less specifically defined...there is a conflict between the value associated with accountability and the values of originality, experimentation, inventiveness, and risk-taking. (p. 72)

More recently, Ruscio (1997) concludes that "the inherent problem of democracy in the administrative state is reconciling the political imperative of accountability with the managerial imperatives of flexibility and responsiveness" (p. 454).

This leadership-structure dichotomy, Feldman and Khademian (2001) maintain, is continued today in the debate over the New Public Management: "Some approaches...emphasize releasing and enhancing the capacity of managers to lead while others emphasize changing structures to shape or influence management actions" (p. 341). Both approaches have their critics as well as advocates. Lacking, say the authors, is "the failure to conceptualize what is in fact a tension...[having] implications not only for the practice of public management, but for the theoretical development of public management as a field of study" (p. 341).

An Alternative to Dichotomy Between Leadership and Structure

Based largely on anecdotal evidence, the authors point to an alternative framework that visualizes leadership (management action) and governance structures as mutually constitutive rather than dichotomous. Action refers to the acts of individual agents within institutional contexts. Governance structures take in
organization, rules, policy, contracts, norms, expectations, or conditions for legitimacy. The authors concur with social theorists that while "these structures and actions are separable conceptually, in practice action creates and recreates structure while structures enable and constrain action" (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 342). Similar to speech and language—separable in concept but in usage acting upon one another to produce reciprocal change—action and structure interact to mutually alter and shape, i.e., constitute, one another. Following this approach, managers integrate the demands for flexibility and accountability through efforts that accommodate the tension between them instead of focusing on actions or structures alone and so requiring the trading off of one against the other.

**Principles of Practice**

Derived from management practice, *inclusiveness* and *primacy of process* [italics in original] are proposed as "principles of practice." While the authors make no pretense that these tenets exhaust all possibilities, they are offered in place of "principles of action" (creating public value, managing the mission, and continuous improvement) and "principles of structure" (separation of policy making from operations, importance of the bottom line or performance, and specialization to accomplish specific tasks), canons the authors garner from the public management literature. Principles of action are held to exemplify the measures that leaders adopt in achieving flexibility in deciding what, how, and to what end to manage, while simply acknowledging accountability concerns in passing. In contrast, principles of structure
reflect an emphasis on structure as being crucial to management accountability while
giving but abbreviated attention to dealing flexibly with changing demands.

Principles of practice, the authors argue, overcome the accountability issues
arising with the emphasis on action and the flexibility issues endemic to stressing
structure. Some managers, they note, execute principles of practice by adopting
"aspects of . . . principles of action and principles of structure without also accepting
the constraints that accompany them. In so doing, they create new ways of managing
and new ways of being accountable" (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 346).

The Primacy of Process: A Descriptive Model

As to principles of practice, the authors offer examples that illustrate their
alternative framework. Of special interest to this dissertation is the primacy of process
principle which “draws attention to the ways in which actions are constrained and
enabled by structure” (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 351). Primacy of process
focuses on the process of problem solving instead of on the solution, thereby making
"the structural dynamics visible and the potential actions possible" (p. 351). This
focus also brings to light how structure is influenced by actions. Concerning the term
primacy of process itself, the authors observe that it reflects a particular process “that
builds the capacity of people with different perspectives to work together. . . .
Primacy refers to the notion that the ability to work together is fundamental and is
more important than the outcome in most instances” (p. 351). The authors illustrate
this principle in operation in Figure 2, Primacy of Process Model.
increased expectation to provide service and coordinate activities

increased accountability to those served/involved

increased flexibility to those served/involved

attention to who needs to be involved/served and to structures that enable or inhibit doing so

efforts to reduce structural barriers

**Primacy of Process Model**

This methodology leads the process participants to consider who should be involved or assisted by public efforts and the structures that facilitate or obstruct those efforts. As indicated, three consequences can arise: reduction of structural barriers accompanied by greater flexibility; greater flexibility in assisting identified persons or groups; and heightened public expectations of better service and coordination of activities. Hence, through focusing on process, accountability issues and flexibility opportunities become visible, thereby opening possibilities for their express deliberation. As Feldman and Khademian (2001) explain:

When the effect of the process is as or more important than the particular outcome, then the need to maintain structures of accountability can be an explicit consideration. If we take this action, will it injure the legitimacy of all or part of the organization? Is it worth the risk? Thus, flexibility and accountability become parts of a system in tension with one another rather than contradictory systems. The flexibility supported by the emphasis on process allows people to account for the effects their decisions have on
structures and even to accommodate the inevitable unintended consequences that decisions have on structures. (pp. 352-353)

Accountability

Behn (2001) identifies three areas where public agencies should be held accountable: finances, fairness, and performance. Accountability, he asserts, has its basis in expectations: “You can’t have accountability without expectations. If you want to hold people accountable, you have to be able to specify what you expect them to do and not do” (p. 7). For finances and fairness (process accountability), expectations are specified by rules, procedures and standards (p. 8). Expectations for performance accountability are specified differently, i.e., by objective, goal, or target (p. 10).

Feldman and Khademian (2001) do not take note of these distinctions; they treat accountability as an undifferentiated concept. Judging by the governance structures they reference, such as rules and procedures, one might conclude that they speak only to process accountability. But the general language employed in their model suggests a broader application, encompassing performance as well. In fact, Feldman and Khademian list “performance” among the principles of structure that they reference and supersede with their principles of practice. Initially, then, Behn’s taxonomy does not appear to take away from the conceptual framework that Feldman and Khademian propose in their work. Moreover, the linkage shown by the model between expectations and accountability now can be thought of as more clearly established.
A Model Application: The One-Stop Permit and Plan Review Center

One of the examples the authors offer under primacy of process is that of the Grand Rapids Development Center, a one-stop permit and plan review office instituted in 1998. The authors comment that it exemplifies the importance of process in relation to customer service. "Such relocation of services," they note, "often creates teams of people who are geographically and substantively rather than hierarchically related. Such restructuring can have profound effects on the actions of the people in the team" (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 350). They point to emergent actions and structural adaptations arising out of making the process primary.

The Development Center represents a streamlining of development review functions similar to practices surfacing in other U.S. cities over recent years, in part responding to the reinventing government movement (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). These centers consist primarily of city employees who have responsibility for varied aspects of local code compliance, i.e., building, zoning and allied codes. Many of the employees have been reassigned from various parent departments. These centers exist chiefly to serve building development interests, the customer in this case, when they seek project approval and issuance of building-related permits. This process in recent decades has grown ever more complex, hard to understand, and prone to delays, under the common organizational model, i.e., by department.
Organizational Forms

These centers appear to adopt various organizational forms including the departmental form (traditional center), an office that more loosely affiliates representatives of parent departments (affiliate center), and a virtual form that permits remote employees to interact by computer as a substitute for actual collocation at a separate office (virtual center). No doubt examples can be found of organizations incorporating aspects of two or all of these forms. Table 1, Kind and Character of One-Stop Centers, summarizes and contrasts the organizational characteristics of these various center forms in a more or less unreconstructed state.

Table 1

Kind and Character of One-Stop Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Organizational Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Center</td>
<td>Separate department/division, hierarchy and identity; parallels existing administrative structure, prerogatives and obligations; entails personal interaction of staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliate Center</td>
<td>Separate office and identity; novel management, organizational form, prerogatives and obligations; staff supervised by parent departments and hierarchy; requires personal interaction of staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Center</td>
<td>No separate office, supervision or identity; staffs’ departmental and hierarchical relationships remain unchanged; staff interaction largely electronic.</td>
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The traditional center presumably takes the familiar departmental form paralleling other municipal subdivisions in all important respects. This form also includes the variation of the separate office or center within an existing department. Centrally located for customer convenience, it has its own separate hierarchy and identity. Conduct of business requires staff to collocate in common office space and to interact with each other and with customers on a face-to-face basis.

The affiliate center is similar to the traditional center in terms of occupying a centralized office and enjoying separate identity. Supervision, however, is most likely a hybrid type tailored to the center’s operational needs, to the relationship to executive leadership, and to the unaltered ties of staff to parent departments from which they come. Because its form is unique, the prerogatives and obligations of the affiliate center are presumed also to differ from the traditional center and to be defined uniquely by the individual municipality that adopts this approach. But, similar to the traditional center, affiliate center staff share common office space and interact face-to-face with each other and with customers.

With no separate office, hierarchy, or identity, the virtual center is perhaps best characterized as principally an “electronic office.” Various departmental staff view plans and weigh in electronically with approvals, denials, and/or comments, on applications for building- and development-related permits and plan reviews. Staff interaction with each other and with customers remains largely faceless, it is thought, although periodic review sessions presumably require staff’s actual presence. In addition, developers denied approval can be expected to demand and to get
opportunity for conferences with individual staffers to resolve issues. Relationships of staff with their respective departments that are party to the virtual center remain unchanged.

Transition to E-Government

With the maturing of the Internet and emergence of e-government, the distinctions among these center types may become less manifest. Many cities and towns now have their own Web pages and the ability to carry out various functions by way of the Internet. These range from basic information on municipal contacts, meetings, and the reporting of activities to the more sophisticated posting and receiving of application forms, payment of fees, and the interaction with citizens in a wide mixture of ways (Tat-Kei Ho, 2002). In fact in his recent article, “Reinventing Local Government and the E-Government Initiative,” Tat-Kei Ho (2002) declares that a paradigm shift is occurring among municipalities away from the traditional Weberian model of bureaucracy to e-government. He observes that

the Internet provides a powerful tool for reinventing government. It encourages transformation from the traditional bureaucratic paradigm, which emphasizes standardization, departmentalization, and operational cost-efficiency, to the “e-government” paradigm, which emphasizes coordinated network building, external collaboration, and customer services. (p. 434)

In this way, the traditional, affiliate, and virtual centers all may be thought of as transitional forms en route to the more comprehensive one-stop e-government form.
In Search of One-Stop Centers

A number of U.S. cities were found through a search of the Internet and electronic academic databases, such as LEXIS-NEXIS and FirstSearch: PAIS that utilize one-stop permitting and plan review centers, licensing and permit centers, or similar permit and development centers. These include Berkeley, Livermore, Pasadena, San Francisco, and Sunnyvale, California; Westminster, Colorado; New Haven, Connecticut; Tampa, Florida; Boise, Idaho; Grand Rapids, Michigan; St. Paul, Minnesota; Kansas City, Missouri/Kansas City, Kansas; Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada; Cincinnati, Ohio; Austin, Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth, Texas; Redmond and Seattle, Washington; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

One-Stop Concept: Early Experiments, Current Proliferation

The one-stop concept is not a new one. During the 1960s and 1970s, the federal Social Security Administration’s Bureau of Retirement and Survivors Insurance (BRSI) began experimenting with small organizational units or modules within its regional service centers (Rainey & Rainey, 1986). The idea “was to isolate certain types of work and create a subunit to handle all of that work from beginning to end . . .” (p. 182). Similarly, reorganization in the mid 1970s of 8 of Florida’s 9 independent human service agencies into a single department, Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS), then decentralizing into 11 regional offices, served to integrate multiple services at the local level and greatly simplify service delivery from the end users point of view (Calista, 1986). Florida’s reorganization was a particularly
noteworthy example of numerous state demonstration projects, federally subsidized, that experimented with human service reforms (pp. 198–199).

A search of electronic academic databases reveals that today, the one-stop concept has proliferated in the United States and abroad to include a wide variety of consolidated client-service offices, many of them at the municipal level (LEXIS-NEXIS, FirstSearch: PAIS). In the United States these include banking centers, cancer patient centers, disaster aid centers, economic development centers, domestic violence services centers, employment and employment training centers, family and children services centers, indigent relief services centers, information centers, licenses and permits centers, senior citizen services centers, taxpayer services centers, and troubled youth services centers.

One-Stop Concept: Origins, Variations, Rationales

Organizationally, where does the one-stop concept fit in? What is its lineage? What are its antecedents? What are some of its advantages and disadvantages? In what context does it arise? What are some of the problems experienced with its use?

Organization by Clientele

The one-stop center, especially in its traditional and affiliate forms, appears to correspond to the clientele-based organization described by Luther Gulick (1937) in his classic essay, “Notes on the Theory of Organization.”

Organization on the basis of the persons served or dealt with . . . tends to bring together in a single department . . . all of those who are working with a
given group . . . In many communities the school is . . . such a service, as it concentrates most of the community services touching children in school . . . (p. 25)

Gulick enumerates advantages and disadvantages of clientele-based organizations. Advantages cited are: “the simplification and coordination of the service of government” to clientele; “the increasing skill which attends the handling over and over of the same material”; and “the elimination of duplicate travel, particularly in dealing with widely separated . . . work” (p. 25). Disadvantages noted are: “it tends to sacrifice the efficiency of specialization”; there is an “impossibility of applying the principle . . . to all of the work of government, without encountering extensive conflict and duplication”; and there “arises a danger of dominance by favor-seeking pressure groups” in opposition to the public interest (p. 26). These insights have been tested by time and found to be perceptive. They appear no less discerning as applied to one-stop centers.

**Managerial-Pull Theory**

Golembiewski (1969) describes the Managerial-Pull theory and contrasts it with the dominant Managerial-Push theory (bureaucracy) illustrated in William H. Whyte’s (1956) *The Organization Man*. Golembiewski explores four polarities as he considers future organizational patterns and their implications for personnel administration. “The four polarities are: differentiation/integration; repression/wiggle room (freedom to act); stability/newness; and function/flow of work” (p. 11). He predicts that organizational integration, due to impacts of the systems approach and
computer technology, will receive future emphasis. This will open modern establishments to a crafts methodology, departing from organizing only along functional lines, in a sense revisiting work processes from a period prior to the industrial revolution. He observes also that “changing and complex technologies require the careful husbanding of selective kinds of innovation or adaptability in a widening range of employees,” stressing “the growing importance of . . . [the] freedom to act” on the part of employees (p. 12). Moreover, he believes that the stability of bureaucratic attributes is out of step with the pace of change, newness and vigorous workflow, further promoting an integrative approach. Finally, bureaucracy’s organization by function, to work adequately, requires a precise meshing of complex parts that are not readily understood or adaptable so that change is slow and frequently difficult. Organization by workflow, on the other hand, facilitates change and growth because it simplifies and makes transparent organizational parts, integrates related processes and services, and decentralizes decisions (p. 14). It seems clear that Golembiewski, in outlining polarities associated with the Managerial-Pull theory that underlie his future patterns of organizations, anticipates the one-stop center with some precision.

The Matrix Structure

The one-stop center, the traditional center in particular, closely resembles a matrix structure that Teasley and Ready (1981) describe as “the division or sharing of organizational authority between two or more chains of command” (p. 261).
Originating with the aerospace program, these structures have spread rapidly to both the public and private sectors. "While this two-boss concept promotes flexibility and balanced decision making," the authors note, "it has the obvious difficulty of increasing organizational complexity" (p. 261).

Organizational Integration

Organizational integration is the expression applied in the federally sponsored efforts of the 1970s to reform state human services agencies. It also appears serviceable here in application to the reorganization of municipal permit and plan review activities into one-stop centers. Calista (1986), referenced earlier, employed the term in his examination of Florida’s human services reform. Organizational integration refers to "a common approach . . . to reduce the autonomy of separate functions or activities and to increase their cooperation by . . . integrating them into fewer agencies" (p. 198).

Comprehensive Modules

Rainey and Rainey (1986), in their paper on the modularization of the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) claims process, describe this "counter-hierarchical reorganization" as an example within a public bureaucracy of the successful reduction of "a long-linked production process to small, comprehensive modules . . ." (p. 171). This effort involved the "consolidation of all major claims-related functions except critical inquiries into groups of 45 to 50 employees who would be assigned complete
responsibility for specified groups of beneficiaries, under supervision of a manager and two assistant managers responsible for the entire range of work” (p. 182). SSA, in its experiment with modules, experienced several useful outcomes including: a decentralization of work and production controls, workable variations in application styles, greater work satisfaction among employees, and improved work performance. Concerning success in organizational change, the authors agree that it is “a highly situational phenomena . . .” (p. 192). While there may be no change strategy that can assure it, successful change seems to require “certain situational prerequisites: A durable power center, committed to successful change; Appropriate timing for collective support; and Possession or development of an alternative functional process which is comprehensive, clear, and above all, realistic” [italics in original] (p. 192). The one-stop center may be viewed as an approximation of SSA’s modules. Based on firsthand observation, similar situational prerequisites and outcomes were in evidence in relation to the setting up and operation of the Grand Rapids one-stop Development Center.

**The Social Security Experiment**

Hugh McKenna (1977), former Associate Commissioner for Program Operations in the Social Security Administration, supervised the experimentation with SSA modules. He provides useful insights into the change experience. In experimenting with modules, McKenna recalls that improvements in operations were
significant and swift. “The old shibboleth of ‘when in doubt, route’ was replaced with a much more efficient and practical ‘let’s talk this over’” (p. 6). He explains that

the physical proximity and team-identification of the clerks and technicians encouraged cooperation. The employee in the old functional branch could only wonder what happened to the claim after it was dropped in the ubiquitous out basket. Now, the employee could “see” what happened to it, and if it bounced, a coworker would probably hand-carry it back to discuss how they could correct it. (p. 6)

McKenna also identified job enrichment as a benefit of the module (p. 6).

Elsewhere, comments by employees register improvements of the module over the earlier functional approach. Clerical employees report that they now can see the entire work process; they have the opportunity to learn many aspects of it; and they can appreciate the value of their own part in the work flow, which gives them a sense of pride in their work (McKenna, 1977, p. 8). They note that people get to know each other better and they see how their efforts interrelate, there is more unity and sense of cooperation, and the work atmosphere is improved with removal of the old competition between branches (p. 8). Module managers report that employees learn the entire operation, managers have a better knowledge of others work, and problems now can be spotted and solved faster (p. 9). There is better access to managers by employees, employees show more enthusiasm and seem to like their work more, and there is a greater sense of teamwork (p. 9). And, with the module, mistakes cannot be passed along; employees are accountable for their work (p. 9). In terms of service to the public, McKenna comments that, generally speaking, claims processing time has been reduced with introduction of the module (p. 9). However, McKenna did not feel that accuracy of claims processing had been significantly improved as yet.
The Lateral Organization

Another fitting term for the one-stop center is the lateral organization, described by Galbraith (1994), in a publication intended for the private sector. "The lateral organization," he writes, "no matter what its form, is a mechanism for decentralizing general management decisions" (italics in original). It accomplishes the decentralization by recreating the organization in microcosm for the issues at hand" (p. 6). The lateral organization achieves its name in establishing itself across an organization's vertical hierarchy. It "arises to perform tasks of lateral coordination . . . across the ranks" (p. 12). Advantages noted are: enhanced "capacity . . . to make more decisions more often," "facility to make different types of decisions," and "ability to be multidimensional and flexible" (pp. 6-7). Galbraith also identifies some disadvantages: "decisions [that] may be no better than those of management," "time . . . involved in communicating and deciding on cross-unit issues," and "increased level of conflict" among unit members (pp. 7-8).

Best Practices in One-Stop Customer Service

Finally, a publication entitled, "Serving the American Public: Best Practices in One-Stop Customer Service" (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1997), sponsored by the Clinton Administration's National Performance Review, is referenced both because of its relevance and its broad treatment of the one-stop idea. Sounding its general theme, the report notes that "one-stop service" [italics in original] offers a powerful antidote" to the rising difficulty in locating, accessing, and using
public services (p. 3). In addition, it offers a workable summation of the one-stop concept.

Under the one-stop paradigm, all of a customer’s business can be completed in a single contact be it face to face or via phone, fax, Internet, or other means. One-stop customers do not have to hunt around, call back, or repeatedly explain their situation. One-stop customer service is convenient, accessible, and personalized. (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1997, p. 3)
CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature, as Loche et al. (1993) note, achieves essential functions that are both methodological and conceptual. These include “seating the study in the foundational literature of the paradigm . . . using scholarly works to create a frame of constructs and theory for the particular area of study, and demonstrating how the proposed research would fit into the ongoing dialogue of science” (p. 113). This chapter thus is organized into the following sections: the framing of the dissertation problem; concepts pertaining to Primacy of Process Model; and antecedents, parallel models, and best practices relating to the one-stop concept.

Framing the Dissertation Problem

It is important here briefly to review the Feldman and Khademian model that frames the dissertation problem: to summarize what it is about, to clarify further its relationship to the dissertation, and to provide a critique that proposes changes considered crucial to its use by this dissertation. Such a review also should indicate how this work relates to on-going scholarship in the field of public administration.

In their essay, “Principles of Public Management Practice: From Dichotomies to Interdependence,” Feldman and Khademian (2001) provide a new approach to
thinking about the concepts of flexibility and accountability in governance. They hold that flexible action and structures of accountability are in tension with each other and are mutually constitutive, i.e., they act upon each other to produce reciprocal change. This contrasts with the popular view that flexibility and accountability are contradictory so that an increase in one is obtained only at the expense of the other.

The authors make the case that early writers in the field of public administration focused their attention chiefly on organizational and procedural structures and on organizational methods as being crucial to good management (Knott & Miller, 1987; Roberts, 1994). Leadership emerged separately as a focus of study by business scholars and practitioners (Barnard, 1938) who associated the terms entrepreneurial, innovative, flexible, and creative with marketplace leaders who were much admired. Detached by time and focus of interest, the separate pursuit of these management elements, in part at least, explains the popular dichotomous view. This view still is accepted as authoritative, although the practice of modern public managers challenges this conviction (Feldman & Khademian, 2001, p. 339).

The authors offer anecdotal evidence of the ways that managers integrate the requirement for flexibility and accountability at the practical application level. They explore “principles of practice” (inclusiveness and primacy of process) [italics in original] as recognizable approaches to such integration and contrast these with the more familiar “principles of action” and “principles of structure” that perpetuate the apparent dichotomy between flexibility and accountability. Of special interest to this proposal is the authors’ Primacy of Process Model. It is applied to the specific
context of the one-stop permit and plan review center to exhibit the model's utility in examining the center's operation and conceptual background and also to test the framework as to its validity and efficacy.

Feldman and Khademian (2001), in their work, take on a formidable challenge. Even so, their theoretical framework appears plausible as initially applied to this observer's place of employment, Grand Rapids' one-stop Development Center. In fact, the framework is considered sufficiently plausible to have become central to this dissertation, involving its examination across three case studies. Yet, there are two areas that the authors' Primacy of Process Model seems not to account for: managerial preference or orientation, and the unchanged accountability to stakeholders who are uninvolved or excluded by the process. The former is seen as essential to discerning the organizational culture which, in turn, would seem to rationalize why existing structures were held to be deficient in the first place. It also would seem to influence the choice of process participants, and to shape decisions and choices throughout the change process. The latter brings attention to other stakeholders who may not have been included as process participants. These two components are added to the Primacy of Process Model in proposing a rival theory [italics mine] model which is presented hereafter in preparation for testing through case study research.
Concepts Pertaining to the Primacy of Process Model

Three key conceptual areas of the dissertation are treated here: accountability, reinventing government, and e-government. These concepts are crucial to the dissertation because they ground its area of interest and proposed research within well recognized areas of academic concern and scholarship. The volume by Behn (2001), for example, offers a well-rounded discourse on accountability which is essential to its fuller understanding and to this effort’s needed support. Osborne and Gaebler (1992), Kettl (1998), Riccucci (2001), Garvey (1995), Moe (1994), Wilson (1994), and Kobrak (1996) develop and critique the notion of reinventing government, a popular movement in public management presently and central to comprehending the one-stop center and its resurgence. And Tat-Kei Ho (2002), for his part, makes clear how the Internet, in fact, reinvents government through offering one-stop access to government goods and services and raises public expectations for continuing improvement in services, the basis of accountability according to Behn (2001).

Accountability

Working with Feldman and Khademian’s conceptual framework requires a familiarity with the concept of accountability. Behn’s (2001) recent volume, *Rethinking Democratic Accountability*, is useful in this regard. Accountability, he asserts, has its basis in expectations: “You can’t have accountability without expectations. If you want to hold people accountable, you have to be able to specify what you expect them to do and not do” (p. 7). The author describes three types of
accountability—for finances, fairness, and performance—and differentiates among them. He notes that performance accountability requires the gauging of expectations for outcomes, consequences, or impacts, and is not satisfied with the common approaches to finance and fairness accountability, i.e., through the formulation of rules, procedures, and standards. In fact, Behn describes an accountability dilemma: the inherent conflict wherein performance is effectively hindered or thwarted by accountability structures related to finance and fairness. He references Peter Self who calls this the classic dilemma of public administration, i.e., “the tensions between the requirements of responsibility or ‘accountability’ and those of effective executive action . . .” (p. 11).

Elsewhere, Behn labors to develop a useful concept of performance accountability, one that speaks to questions of political accountability raised by the New Public Management. In so doing, he explores the traditional public administration paradigm of accountability, basic questions of democratic accountability, discretion and trust, and retrospective accountability for performance. Out of this examination, he proposes a new compact of mutual collective responsibility, an agreement among public management and the elements of its accountability environment expressing reciprocal obligations. In terms of utility to this proposal, Behn’s work clarifies the dimensions of accountability, verifies the linkage between expectations and accountability—immediately pertinent to the Primacy of Process Model—and generally provides the background essential to a fuller understanding of accountability and its meaning for public and democratic processes.
Reinventing Government

Although initiated in the late 1980s, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) are largely credited with the doctrine and the emergent national movement of the same name—"reinventing government." Embraced by the Clinton Administration under the National Performance Review (NPR) appellation, Osborne and Gaebler’s canon comprises 10 principles “through which ‘public entrepreneurs’ might bring about massive governmental reform” (deLeon & Denhardt, 2000, p. 89). These now familiar principles instruct public officials to: steer more than row; empower communities, not simply deliver services; support competition; instill missions, not rules; require outcomes over inputs; respond to customer not bureaucracy needs; focus on earning, not spending; stress prevention rather than cures; decentralize authority; and leverage market solutions in place of creating new programs (Osborne & Gaebler, pp. 25–310).

The NPR’s assertion “that government had to work better and cost less resonated profoundly” with Congress and constituents alike, although its built-in contradiction would be the source of continuous disagreement between those supporting better performance versus those backing reduced cost (Kettl, 1998, p. 9). Nonetheless, and in spite of uneven bureaucratic response, the NPR recorded numerous early “successes” at the federal level: simplification of rules and processes, reform of the procurement process, improved coordination of the government’s management activities, and widespread innovation by federal managers (pp. 9–11). Inspiration of federal, state, and local initiatives were also part of NPR’s effort
through reinvention labs set up to demonstrate practical solutions to bureaucratic problems. Through this project, the one-stop service center and many other ideas gained currency. Kettl concludes that overall “The NPR has the potential, together with the New Deal and the Hoover commissions, to be one of the most important administrative initiatives of the twentieth century” (p. 13).

Scholars have challenged Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) doctrine on a variety of grounds. Among them: it disregards constitutional legitimacy; it overlooks the many conflicts between customer service values and broader democratic ones; it assumes a negative stance on bureaucracy and sanctions bureaucrat bashing; and, unlike other historic efforts to enhance the executive at a cost to essential democratic values, it fails to preserve accountability (Riccucci, 2001, pp. 172–173).

Garvey (1995) provides an historical perspective spelling out the need for “administrative action in any political system, but especially in a democracy” to balance management capacity with control (p. 87). “The historic challenges to administrative reformers have been to change the nature of the existing structures of capacity and control while at the same time serving both these values and, indeed, maintaining a proper balance between them” (p. 88). The effort by NPR to improve administrative capacity is not matched by the requisite effort to provide adequate control and therefore, accountability. “The NPR is mainly about government capacity—to the point, indeed, of carelessness about the value of control” (p. 101). A cursory treatment of the matter points to its substituting of bottom-up control of public officials by customers whom they serve in place of the traditional top-down
control offered by government's archetypal hierarchy. This makeover is in stark contrast to Weber's legacy and to the counsel offered by numerous and prominent studies over the years.

Another scholar observes that the NPR breaks with the management philosophy that has underpinned the government's organizational and managerial structure since at least the Progressive Era and seeks nothing less than a displacement of the "administrative management paradigm" with an "entrepreneurial paradigm" (Moe, 1994, p. 112). The old "emphasis on the Constitution, statutory controls, hierarchical lines of responsibility to the President, distinctive legal character of the governmental and private sectors, and the need for a cadre of nonpartisan professional managers ultimately responsible not only to the President but to the Congress" is supplanted by "economically based values." Political accountability, in short, is eclipsed by customer satisfaction (p. 114), underscoring Garvey's complaint. The author finds other fundamental flaws with the NPR as well. It wrong-headedly relies "on 'interagency committees' for basic management leadership and implementation" (p. 117). It displaces mid-level career managers increasing the dependency on outside consultants and contractors (p. 118). And it weakens further the institutional capacity and legitimacy of the presidency (p. 118). Much of the problem, claims the author, is a misunderstanding of the "role of public law in the designing and management of agencies and programs... and of how Congress is organized and operates" (p. 117). In failing to understand the problem, Moe concludes, NPR's solution is wide of the mark.
Although finding merit in Osborne and Gaebler's ideas, Wilson (1994) notes that their prescriptions for governmental afflictions lack three things. "First, the authors . . . ask only how it should operate, ignoring the fundamental question: 'What should government do?'" (p. 39). This omission fails to differentiate what government must do regardless of performance and what it need not do, and thus fails to recognize the limitations of recommended reforms. "Second, the authors provide almost no guidance as to which reforms are suitable for which agencies," thereby offering unsuitable or poor counsel to many (p. 39). "Finally, Osborne and Gaebler offer no strategy by which agencies can be freed from excessive constraints and motivated to be mission driven" (p. 40). Hence, even where public executives may be open to reinventing government principles, their minimal administrative control, experience with vague goals, steady exposure to outside forces that impact operations, and recall of hard lessons learned, make them risk averse and difficult to persuade. Wilson notes also that these reforms run counter to the unrelenting efforts to reduce public manager discretion yet offer no compelling incentives to adopt them. Finally, Wilson asks, "How can government delegate and trust and still maintain accountability?" (p. 46). Granted, the existing bureaucratic ethos presents undeniable issues in search of solutions. Nonetheless, its hierarchical form does offer accountability. Where does one turn for redress in a public entrepreneurial ethos run amok?

To these criticisms, Kobrak (1996) adds several more. "Entrepreneurship," as represented under reinventing government (ReGo), does not fully satisfy the notion of
"leadership" in the public realm. It fails to "capture the political and ethical dimensions of the task now confronting public managers" (p. 210). In addition, the movement displays a puzzling disconnect between politics and administration with troublesome implications. Lastly, Kobrak observes that "the ReGo agenda is too limited to capture the daunting series of social responsibilities that... face us as public administrators today" (p. 210). These failings—the "trivializing" of leadership and the skirting of congressional and political involvement—present troubling barriers to governance. Concerning the first obstacle, the public entrepreneur's sole apparent responsibility is to rein in spending.

Nowhere in the ReGo movement is there a sense that public entrepreneurs must also possess a commitment to the agency's mission, a mastery of technical subject matter, and a willingness to garner support by working through the internal and external political processes relevant to their mission. (p. 233)

With respect to the second obstacle, ReGo turns the old politics—administration dichotomy on its head.

In the old days, debate centered on what role public administration should play in politics. Now the question has become how much of a role should the national political parties and designated congressional party leaders have in making policy alongside administrators. (p. 233)

To Kobrak (1996) the reinventing government reform represents half a model, "based on economic assumptions, grafted onto an administrative model that must continue to function as a government based on the Constitution and on the laws passed by Congress" (p. 233). The ReGo reform, in having public entrepreneurs concentrate on cost cutting while avoiding the political process, in and of itself is not sufficient for addressing the crises facing the federal government today.
Although these criticisms are focused mainly at the federal level of government, their relevance at the state and local levels is readily seen. Persistent issues for all governmental levels include: constitutional legitimacy, market values over democratic ones, service contracts diminishing public capacity and control, customer satisfaction in place of political accountability, a trivialized concept of leadership, and avoidance of political involvement. But in spite of these and other concerns and shortcomings, scholars have also acknowledged some merits attributable to the ReGo movement and recognized its popularity and impact.

Kettl (1998), for one, takes a more sanguine view of reinventing government and the NPR. He comments that the traditional top-down model of bureaucratic authority is not effective any longer in steering public management. “It must be adapted to a new reality of shared responsibility for common purposes. Customer service, for example, offers fresh insights to attacking new and inescapable administrative realities” (pp. 74–75). Still, he acknowledges that there is much work yet to be done to reconcile internal theoretical inconsistencies and to work out unresolved issues of reinvention.

Scholarly criticisms leveled at this work are conceded. However, its importance to this dissertation are several. More generally, it reflects many of the philosophical underpinnings of the New Public Management and frames the debate that has raged among public administration scholars for a generation over issues arising out of applying market cures to problems of public governance, issues of managing flexibly and accountably, among others. More specifically, it energizes the
movement from which springs the study context for this research—the one-stop permit and plan review center, and the one-stop service concept generally. Acknowledging the conflicts it introduces in relation to broader democratic values, the work nevertheless supports the proposed research in demonstrating the fundamental value of customer service to realistic notions of improved governmental performance. Finally, the organizational structures adopted in relation to the one-stop centers that are studied here maintain hierarchical ties between staff and parent departments so that organizational accountability is not lost (see Chapter V). And it can be argued that the presence of the one-stop center, by virtue of its visibility, its transparency in relation to the development process, and its convenience in terms of collocation of development-related staff contributes significantly to improving accountability to clientele and to citizens in general.

E-Government

Tat-Kei Ho (2002), in his article, “Reinventing Local Government and the E-Government Initiative,” ties together several concepts that are useful here. He portrays the Internet as crucial to reinventing or transforming local government. His research shows that many municipalities have incorporated a one-stop tactic together with customer-friendly practices in Web design. The evolution of the Internet and World Wide Web, he adds, has served to reorient governance toward external relationships, emphasizing citizen information and service needs. Further, this new access to goods and services is raising citizen expectations “of customer service in a
range of contexts including interactions with government" (p. 435). Increased expectations followed by responsive governmental action in meeting those expectations suggests an increased accountability of government to citizens achievable here, attributable to the Internet.

The author points to the Internet and to the shift in philosophy on the delivery of municipal services that it provokes as instrumental to the reappearance of the one-stop service center, which had its origins in the 1960s and 1970s. His definition of the one-stop service center basically describes the affiliate center that was differentiated earlier in this study: “an umbrella organization that operates on top of existing functional departments and is intended to maximize the convenience and satisfaction of users through service integration” (p. 436).

Lastly, Tat-Kei Ho demonstrates that his forecasted paradigm shift from bureaucracy to e-government is reflected in city Web sites. Early sites, and those of cities characterized as bureaucratic, tend to mirror their own municipal administrative structures. Cities of the e-government stripe commonly use “portal designs” : either “information oriented” or “user oriented” (p. 437). These designs reflect a change from a departmental orientation to one of user interest and perspective. Both make use of the one-stop service model.

My own experience with the concept and operation of the one-stop center, with Internet home pages of numerous cities, and with municipal organization based on lengthy employment at that level, tends to confirm the author’s findings and judgment. Tat-Kei Ho appears especially perceptive in observing the impact of the
Internet on local government in terms of orientation. He demonstrates how the Internet influences a shift from self-absorbed bureaucracy toward outward-looking service to citizens. While not unequivocally stated, the reader concludes that this comes about through a demand-response mechanism induced by the Internet. Citizens make demands through their inquiries, comments, and suggestions, and government responds with more information, techniques that facilitate easier response, and new services that better use the technology. In short, the heightened expectations of citizens begets improved service by government. In this way technology has increased governmental accountability and, at the same time, offered greater service flexibility. In this vein, a recent Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2003) publication, “The E-Government Imperative,” concurs: “The impact of e-government ... is simply better government by ... greater engagement with citizens” (p. 1).

The One-Stop Concept

Antecedents or parallel models of the one-stop concept as well as a report on best practices in one-stop customer services are treated in this section. These include: organization by clientele or materiel (Gulick, 1937), the managerial-pull theory (Golembiewski, 1969), the matrix structure (Teasley & Ready, 1981), organizational integration (Calista, 1986), autonomous modules (Rainey & Rainey, 1986), lateral organization (Galbraith, 1994) and best practices: one-stop customer service (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1997). These sources tend to
underscore that there is "little" new under the sun even while illuminating the lineage, efficacy, and constraining issues of the one-stop concept.

Organization by Clientele

The abundant contributions of Gulick's (1937) essay, "Notes on the theory of organization," include a discussion of organizational patterns, i.e., subdividing from the top downward and aggregating from the bottom upward. With certain cautions, Gulick considers either approach viable. The second approach is of singular interest here, i.e., aggregating by work unit, which the author separates into subsets: by purpose, by process, by persons or things dealt with, and by place of service. In turn, Gulick illustrates each organizational type and specifies its distinct advantages and disadvantages.

Organization by clientele or materiel, is of leading relevance; it best characterizes the one-stop center. As noted earlier, advantages include: (a) "simplification and coordination of . . . service," (b) "increasing skill" achieved in repeated handling "of the same material," and (c) "elimination of duplicate travel" with respect to "widely separated work sites" (Gulick, 1937, p. 25). Gulick's enumerated disadvantages are: (a) loss of "specialization," (b) limited applicability within the wider organization, and (c) "danger of dominance by favor-seeking pressure groups . . . at times in opposition" to the public interest (pp. 25–26).

Gulick's specific advantages and disadvantages for organization by clientele are especially compelling for this dissertation. All appear to be borne out in the
experience of the Grand Rapids Development Center. More generally, Gulick's
“Notes” strike one as a succinct, yet complete, discussion of organizational structure
and its principal dimensions, including division of labor, span of control, unity of
command, method of departmentalization, and coordination of tasks. There is about it
a practical realism; it captures the complexity, the contradictions, and the needed
balance among principles. And Gulick’s discussion of these elements has the feel of
cautions and flexibility. Finally, the significance of these insights is well established.
Fitch (1990) observes that the essay “made . . . contributions that became reference
points for much of the later development of public administration . . .” (p. 604).

Managerial-Pull Theory

Golembiewski (1969), in his essay, contrasts the prevailing “managerial-push
time” with an emergent “managerial-pull theory” (p. 9). The former is consistent
with McGregor’s Theory X wherein employees are prodded by management to work
hard to escape foreseeable bleak outcomes. With the managerial-pull theory, the
emphasis is on seeking to achieve and reaching toward something rather than
avoiding harsh effects. In this view, employees also work hard, but they do so
because their labor satisfies an inner need. “The goal is dual: doing the job better, and
doing it in ways that permit unprecedented personal freedom in organizations”
(p. 10).

The author suggests that the managerial-pull approach is more hospitable to
developing technology and to the transitional period that it ushers in. Here, the author
displays four sets of polarities that reflect these two managerial views: differentiation/integration, repression/wiggle room (freedom to act), stability/newness, and function/workflow (p. 11). Integration, freedom to act, newness, and workflow, the polarities associated with managerial-pull, appear to accommodate, if not describe, the one-stop center as well as other New Public Management organizational strategies.

Golembiewski is prophetic concerning the organizational impacts of technology: the divergence from organizing by function only, the reintroduction of a crafts approach, the demonstration of bureaucracy's increasing obsolescence in the face of change, and the pointing out of the merits of workflow arrangements. He foresaw the direction of change and the forms it would take.

The Matrix Structure

Teasley and Ready (1981) offer the matrix as a possible means of attaining the elusive goal of service integration and reduced organizational fragmentation. They analyze the reorganization of Florida's human service delivery as such a case, involving change “from a pyramidal to a matrix structure,” that was carried out “to achieve ‘one-stop shopping’ for clients of the various programs under the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) umbrella” (p. 261). Teasley and Ready examine the resulting structural changes, observing matrix problems and looking for possible solutions along the way.
The authors note that a matrix's central characteristic is that managers are responsible to two superiors, which has both positive and negative attributes, i.e., advancing "flexibility and balanced decision making," but also "increasing organizational complexity" (p. 281). They remark that customarily organization is based on specialization either by product or service or by function. The power of the matrix is that it "offers the flexibility to emphasize two organizational demands simultaneously" (p. 262). This is borne out with the one-stop center, as an example of a matrix organization, where functional program requirements are carried out even while integrated services are offered for client convenience.

Teasley and Ready also treat matrix implementation, observing that it involves four phases: decision, installation, institutionalization, and exit (p. 262). Institutionalizing this new structure is not a simple matter; the authors compare it to radical surgery. It involves cultural change, behavioral issues, and reworking of systems, and is in actual danger of foundering if care is not taken. With HRS, an on-going problem was confusion about managerial roles and obligations. Other significant issues, typical of matrix organizations in general, were: tendencies toward anarchy, power struggles, navel gazing, and decision strangulation. Finally, the authors report that successful performance of a matrix structure is dependent upon three crucial areas: planning, conflict management, and support. Planning contributes "clarity and direction." "Conflict must be viewed as necessary and used constructively." And "managers must create a sense of trust and support by giving up personal goals in the interest of organizational goals" (p. 266).
Organizational Integration

Calista (1986) examines the comprehensive reorganization of Florida’s human services organizations under the rubric of organizational integration. It involved the integration of 8 separate functional agencies into one department, Health and Rehabilitative Service (HRS), then the decentralizing into 11 regional offices. He confides that human and social services offices are generally among the first to be censured in terms of organizational fragmentation or staff redundancy patterns when issues of accountability are brought up (p. 198). Florida’s reform is the vehicle for the author’s challenge to this recurring theme suggesting that reform success is dependent upon clarity of intentions. Calista’s purpose is in discovering “an analytical framework that links the way different organizational configurations connect the intention of reform proposals with implementation” (p. 202). The purpose served in utilizing the article for this proposal, however, is its substantive contribution to the development and background of the one-stop concept.

Using four implementation models—Systems Management, Bureaucratic Process, Organizational Development, and Bargaining—Calista analyzed Florida’s newly integrated and decentralized Human Resource Services (HRS) agency. He found that the Bargaining Model best fit HRS. “Bargaining assumes that a given policy implementation represents only the appearance of convergence among organizational participants with divergent preferences and resources” (p. 208). Further, even though parties may seek to satisfy their own interests, “the process is . . . self-disciplining. That is, as parties succeed at building coalitions with others, the
organization acquires credibility and tenability” (p. 209). In the process, the public interest is served. The threat of disclosure of sensitive information relevant to one party by another obliges participants to cooperate. And, through experience, parties tend to find that mutual forbearance of each other’s dissimilarities is easier to manage than to have to trust one another. . . . In sum, serving the public interest does not necessarily mean that the disparate parties (both “internal” and “external”) to the agency adopt commonality of purpose; their primary task is to prevent differences [from] simply overwhelming them. It is through such linkages, however, that purpose might coalesce. (p. 209)

**Comprehensive Modules**

Rainey and Rainey (1986) identify the restructuring of the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) claims adjudication process in the 1960s and 1970s as a successful example of a public organization escaping the apparent hierarchical imperative asserted by influential theoretical literature of the era. Disputing Downs’ Law of Hierarchy, the reform demonstrates that a public establishment can successfully innovate or decentralize in ways similar to private corporations. In examining the SSA’s redesign effort toward “small, comprehensive modules with heightened employee autonomy,” the authors sought more fully to explore the “theoretical implications and broader applicability for public organizations” (pp. 171–172). Review of the arguments for the inevitability of bureaucratic hierarchy is undertaken in conjunction with examination of the SSA case. The authors conclude that in fact “public agencies are capable of significant, purposeful change to reduce hierarchialism and improve performance” (p. 188). Moreover, they caution, a failed
attempt at reform in itself "does not substantiate the stereotype of rigid, inflexible public agencies" (p. 188).

Instructive also are the "situational prerequisites" identified as crucial to successful organizational change. Rainey and Rainey concur that it is "a highly situational phenomena" (p. 192). While there may be no change strategy that can assure it, successful change seems to require the following: "A durable power center, committed to successful change; Appropriate timing for collective support; and Possession or development of an alternative functional process which is comprehensive, clear, and above all, realistic" [italics in original] (p. 192). The one-stop center may be viewed as an approximation of SSA's modules. Similar prerequisites and outcomes in relation to the setting up and operation of the Grand Rapids Development Center appear to apply.

The Social Security Experiment

Hugh McKenna (1977) is the manager who supervised the planning and execution of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) one-stop claims processing modules. In recalling the experience, he lists increasing workloads, changes in legislation, and availability of new technology as major factors playing a role in reorganization. The key issues constraining change were: deep-set linear organizational patterns and culture, an entrenched managerial class, and massive daily workloads that could not be set aside. Makeover necessarily would be slow.
Committees helped to isolate and analyze problems and to recommend answers. One of the committees proposed one-stop modules, that is:

- to reorganize into smaller self-contained groups, each responsible for completing most or all of the necessary processing actions on a specific, identifiable part of the total workload. This was in contrast to the traditional functional branches that had responsibility for completing only a part of the work. (p. 5)

Implementing the module had to be planned and carried out with great care to avoid losing ground with the ongoing work effort. With the help of a consultant, much experimentation and analysis, and not a few delays, the idea was introduced finally in the Philadelphia regional office. The author notes that “Each experiment had to meet the test of providing some value in itself as well as achieving a basis for flexibility and control from which we could undertake longer range changes” (p. 6). All six SSA regional offices ultimately adopted the module as its advantages for clients, staff, and system performance became apparent.

*The Lateral Organization*

Although Galbraith (1994) orients his writing to the private sector in context and intent, his volume, *Competing with Flexible Lateral Organizations*, contains ideas having public sector application as well. “Building organizational capability” (p. 1), in terms of lateral organizations, is the author’s stated purpose. Three fundamental organizational types are identified which are similar in concept but differentiated by dissimilar problems of implementation: “coordination across functions . . . for new products; coordination across business units in a diversified corporation; and
international coordination across countries and regions” (p. 5). The first type appears to come closest to describing this dissertation’s area of concern, the one-stop center.

The need for lateral coordination, and thus lateral organization, arises out of the multiplicity of decisions that must otherwise be made by a firm’s hierarchy within a narrow time span (p. 16). In addition, the author lists five specific business imperatives that motivate lateral coordination: “diversity or variety, unanticipated changes, work interdependencies, total quality initiatives, and time compression” (p. 9). This coordination occurs spontaneously through voluntary efforts by employees experiencing the need, or more formally as management takes on responsibility for it. Where management assumes a role, a formal design process is recommended to develop lateral capability, incorporating strategy, people, rewards, processes, and structure (p. 81).

Under considerations of strategy, questions of lateral capability and organizational location must be considered. In terms of organization staff, Galbraith advocates “generalists and team players” that the firm should “train, develop and rotate” (pp. 81–82). Rewards for lateral participants should include career and promotion opportunities, compensation correlated with skill and gain-sharing or other group benefits. Under processes, management must also shoulder responsibility for development of “information technology, shared, integrated databases, and planning and review processes” (pp. 81–82).
It seems plain that Galbraith's counsel has relevance to the public as well as the private sector. His lateral organization appears to describe well the Grand Rapids Development Center and, presumably, other one-stop permit and plan review centers.

*Best Practices in One-Stop Customer Service*

In recent years, a body of information about one-stop customer service has been assembled under the umbrella organization of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (1997) and is accessible by way of the electronic archive, University of North Texas Libraries, Dallas. A brief exploration reveals the range of topics: "An Approach to Offering One-Stop E-Government Services; Available Technologies and Architectural Issues," "Transforming Organizational Structures," "One-Stop-Government in Europe: An Overview," "Create One-Stop Centers for Career Management," "Hassle-Free Services," and "Philadelphia/Camden One-Stop Capital Shop." Offerings are wildly uneven in terms of depth and erudition, varying between the polarities of scholarly analysis and press release.

Of special note within this body of information is "Serving the American Public: Best Practices in One-Stop Customer Service." The report, a federal benchmarking consortium study, is standardized in style and content. Nonetheless, it offers what are held to be tried and true strategies for improving customer service. These strategies, states the report, reflect the widespread approaches or "best practices" used by study partners—private and public enterprises chosen for exemplary performance—in serving customers. Study findings point up the need for
action on a series of interrelated fronts. Leadership must be involved and center its attention on customers, inspire its workers, and properly execute the one-stop approach. Front-line workers must be continuously furnished with timely and complete customer-related information. Ongoing strategic planning must assure and fortify customer service with a consistent mission statement and set of service objectives. Employees, as the key facilitators of one-stop service, must be carefully selected, properly trained, and materially and technologically supported to promote pride in work and excellence in customer service. Cross-functional processes and teams must be instituted to overcome structural barriers to seamless customer service. And feedback must be methodically employed to adapt and update, i.e., steer, agency service, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction (p. 4).

Summary

Providing the conceptual backdrop to the research, the review of literature chapter has consisted of three sections: the essay framing the dissertation problem; the related concepts of accountability, reinventing government, and e-government; and the one-stop center, its antecedents, parallel models, and best practices related to its development and operation. The first section summarized Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) conceptual framework, clarifying further its relationship to the dissertation and providing a critique that proposes changes considered crucial to its use by the dissertation. The second section treated the concepts of accountability, reinventing government (ReGo), and e-government with particular attention given to ReGo’s
public entrepreneur and to issues raised by the ReGo movement in relation to accountability and governance. Lastly, the third section dealt with the concept of the one-stop center, illuminating its lineage, its efficacy, and certain constraining issues.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores case study research demonstrating how this study fits that paradigm, specifically the explanatory case study approach described by Yin (1998). Use of this methodology to test theory employing a rival theory tactic is discussed. Research quality of qualitative studies then is reviewed focusing on case study validity and the management of researcher bias and reactivity. At this point the dissertation's theoretical framework is introduced: which summarizes its operational model based on the rival theory, specifies the hypotheses, presents the propositions to be tested, outlines the survey instrument to be used, and notes instrument changes based on pilot testing. Thereafter, the approach to data collection is discussed in terms of key informant surveys, follow-up interviews, collection of records, and on-site observation. An accompanying account is given of initiating fieldwork and field adjustments necessitated by nonresponsive or unavailable survey subjects. The research process then is described and illustrated, comprising data collection, data summary and analysis for individual cases, comparative analysis across cases, synthesis relating comparative findings to individual propositions, the verifying or negating of propositions, and the drawing of conclusions. A data analysis section follows that discusses data management routines, summarizes activities, and speaks to the use of pattern matching, explanation building and triangulation procedures.
Finally, the rationale underlying site selection is explained and the one-stop centers are identified, completing chapter topics.

Case Study Methodology

Merriam (1988) introduces the case study and places it within the context of qualitative research. Citing other scholars, she notes that qualitative research sets out to describe reality as it is found without the intent of intervening in it. "The purpose of most descriptive research is limited to characterizing something as it is, though some descriptive research suggests tentative causal relationships. There is no manipulation of treatments or subjects; the researcher takes things as they are" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1984, p. 26, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 7).

Nature of the Case Study

The case study, writes Merriam (1988), is suited to examining recent events, conditions, and processes, again without the prospect of behavioral manipulation. Similar to writing a history, the case study relies on documentation, archival information, and artifacts. But unlike history, the case study can draw upon direct observation and systematic interviewing to enrich its investigative strategy (p. 8). Described in terms of its descriptive, holistic and inductive dimensions, the "case study has . . . been differentiated from other research designs by what Cronbach (1975) calls 'interpretation in context'" (p. 10). Prominent aspects of case studies are identified: concern with process over outcome, focus on meaning of experiences, the
researcher as principal instrument in gathering of information and analysis, and on-site fieldwork.

*When to Use the Case Study*

The question of when the case study is the appropriate research methodology turns on several considerations. These include: the dominance of "how" and "why" research questions, a low level of researcher control over the subject being examined, and an end product comprising "a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon" (p. 9). Merriam adds a critical fourth issue, the presence of a *bounded system* [italics in original] that "can be identified as the focus of the investigation." (p. 9). The bounded system is characterized as an obvious perimeter based on common sense, e.g., a leader, a successful program, or perhaps a novel organization (p. 10).

*Interpretive Case Study*

Merriam surveys the various types and uses of case studies. Of central interest is the interpretive case study that can be employed to demonstrate, sustain, or test theoretical propositions. "Interpretive [italics in original] case studies, too, contain rich, thick description. These descriptive data, however, are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering" (p. 28). With the interpretive case study, "Understanding and interpreting the findings of a case investigation in light of established theory..."
serves to test theory.” Accordingly, “Valid theories ‘compel’ particular case interpretations. The import of that possibility . . . lies in the corollary that a case compelled by a theory does not fit’ (Eckstein, 1975, p. 104)” (p. 59).

Merriam, referencing Guba and Lincoln (1981), also brings attention to case study limitations: overstating or oversimplifying a situation leading to mistaken inferences, and treating a part as if it is an account of the whole (p. 33). A problem of ethics is another concern with the case study method wherein a researcher could deliberately pick and choose from the data to demonstrate whatever was desired. Possible biases that can influence the write-up need to be kept in mind as well (p. 34).

*Explanatory Case Study*

Yin (1998), in his chapter, “The Abridged Version of Case Study Research, Design and Method,” in the *Handbook of Applied Social Science* (Leonard Bickman & Debra J. Rog, Eds.) emphasizes the explanatory case study. This is similar to Merriam’s interpretive case study, having “working assumptions that researchers can objectively establish the facts of a case, theory-driven inquiries are preferred, and multiple case studies are best designed around . . .” (pp. 229–230). Among the researchers tools introduced is triangulation, i.e., evidence from three different sources, by which a robust fact is held to be established. Yin emphasizes the importance of developing propositions in the research design to hypothesize causal relationships between variables and constructs. Further, he presents the notion of *rival theories* [italics in original], or alternative explanations, to “strengthen research
design” and “sharpen theoretical thinking.” (p. 234). Notes Yin, case study research will be productive the closer its keeps to this strategy.

Useful design procedures and research tactics are presented and discussed: question asking, listening, adaptiveness and flexibility, and grasp of study issues. Yin (1998) advocates case study protocol as a tactic for maintaining research quality. The protocol, initiated as part of pilot testing, clarifies research questions, indicating how these might be reframed in the field, and also reflects initial thinking with respect to topics, reporting expectations, and desired documentation. Yin also provides helpful comments on organizing the case study report narrative, suggesting that it can reflect the questions and propositions out of the research design. Finally, Yin stresses the need to integrate evidence from multiple sources on the same topic, avoiding the creation of data bases that keep various sources of evidence separate. Although an abridged version of the author’s complete text, this article provides assistance with many crucial aspects of the explanatory case study.

Application of the Case Study Research Approach

Use of the case study approach offers a suitable means of examining an intricate social phenomenon (the one-stop permit and plan review center) consisting of numerous variables of possible importance to its understanding (Merriam, 1988, p. 32). Above and beyond offering a detailed understanding of the case, this study design can be employed in testing theory. Accordingly, it seems plain that Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) Primacy of Process principle may legitimately be assessed
within the context of the case study methodology. The case study design, thus, appears suited to the purposes of this dissertation, especially the explanatory type discussed by Yin (1998).

**Rival Theory**

Expanding on the explanatory case study, Yin (1998) describes the concept of rival theories. "[A]s . . . two theoretical propositions are elaborated in their hypothesized form, the ideas will increasingly point to the relevant data that need to be collected to compare the propositions" (p. 234). As Yin explains:

For a case study, identifying such rivals . . . become[s] part of the theoretical foundation for the study. Thus, use of rivals not only strengthens the research design but also sharpens theoretical thinking. Within a single case, theory can be ‘tested’ if there are rivals . . . (p. 234)

**The Single Case Study Rationale**

With the case study, “the focus of research . . . is one [italics in original] unit of analysis” (Merriam, 1988, p. 46). Numerous sites, participants, and phases may be involved in the investigation, but they are all considered to be included in the unit of analysis, i.e., the case study. The reason for fixing the unit of analysis has to do with the need for a “bounded problem.” Setting the limits of enquiry establishes the perimeter of what is to be included in the study and what is not (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The unit of analysis responds to the question: “How can the inquirer know what is relevant and what is not relevant?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 89).
Multiple Case Study Rationale

For these reasons and because of the unified analytical approach taken, this research could be treated as a single case study. However for convenience, i.e., ease of discussion, the three sites are more readily treated as separate case studies. This too is an acceptable approach, recognizing that each center comprises a unique bounded problem, arising out of distinctive contexts and conceptual experiences, having singular compositional and operational characteristics, and subject to separate local ordinance and state legislation. From Yin's (1994) perspective, "the choice between single- and multiple-case study designs remains within the same methodological framework ... The choice is considered one of research design, with both being included under the case study strategy" (p. 45). The research undertaken here, then, consisted of three one-stop permit and plan review centers, including the separate sites, the two distinct phases of their development, and key participants tied to their individual establishment and operation.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Yin (1994) comments that there are certain advantages to multiple-case study designs as well as disadvantages compared with single-case designs. "The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriott & Firestone, 1983)" (p. 45). Disadvantages include the inability to undertake "the unusual or rare case, the critical case, and the revelatory case [which] are all likely to involve only single cases, by
definition” (p. 45). Other drawbacks include the greater resource and time requirements posed by the multiple-case approach.

Replication Logic

Deciding on the multiple-case study design is a significant step. As Yin (1994) states, “Every case should serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of enquiry. Here, a major insight is to consider multiple cases as one would consider multiple experiments [italics in original]—that is to follow a ‘replication’ logic” (p. 45). In pursuing this course, each case must be chosen with care “so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication), or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication) [italics in original]” (p. 46).

Research Quality

The following discourse deals with the several threats to research quality that are common to qualitative and case study research. Maxwell (1998), in “Designing a Qualitative Study,” in the Handbook of Applied Social Science, describes researcher bias and reactivity as the two principal threats to validity in qualitative research and offers a checklist of tests for detecting and managing threats to validity in general. Speaking to the management of research quality in case study research specifically, Yin (1994), in his work, Case Study Research: Design and Methods, enumerates four types of threats: those affecting construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. He then systematically advocates specific tactics as a check on their
negative effects. Jointly, these scholars identify the threats to research quality, provide the tools to perceive those hazards, and offer the procedures for their management.

**Validity**

Maxwell (1998) speaks to the larger purpose and various aspects of qualitative study designs. He offers an interactive model bringing forward five study components, each addressing distinct sets of issues crucial to study coherence: purposes, conceptual context, research questions, methods, and validity (pp. 70–71). It is the last component, research validity and its two principal threats—researcher bias and reactivity—that is of interest here. By “researcher bias” is meant the “ways in which data collection or analysis are distorted by the researcher’s theory, values or preconceptions” (p. 92). “Reactivity,” on the other hand, is “the effect of the researcher on the setting or individual studied” (pp. 91–92). The author provides a useful checklist of validity tests for general application in undertaking qualitative research. These tests include: the modus operandi approach (treating possible causes as events not variables), searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases, triangulation, feedback from colleagues or others, checks by study participants, rich (detailed, complete) data, use of derived quasi-statistics, and comparison.

Maxwell speaks to qualitative analysis generally, providing much penetrating comment. He comes to issues from a broader qualitative perspective so that the reader has a view of the larger paradigm and can visualize where the case study enters in. In any event, his observations on validity threats are no less applicable to case
study research so that this dissertation turns to Maxwell for explanation and awareness of researcher bias and reactivity.

Managing Researcher Bias and Reactivity

In the introduction to his book, Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Yin (1994) states: “The object of this book is to guide investigators and students who are trying to do case studies as a rigorous method of research” (p. xiv). Pursuing this objective, the author fully explores case study methodology. Indicative are his major topic areas: different study types but common definition; research design and quality; preparation issues, from researcher skills to pilot studies; gathering the evidence including sources and data collection principles; analyzing the evidence, strategies, and modes; and approaches to composing the final report (pp. vi–vii). Particularly relevant here is the chapter on research design and quality. The author lists five components as vital: “the study’s [research] questions,” “its propositions,” “unit(s) of analysis,” “the logic linking the data to the propositions,” and “the criteria for interpreting the findings” (p. 20). Fulfilling these components effectively compels the advancing of a theoretical framework, which Yin feels is vital to the study. “The use of theory, in doing case studies, not only is an immense aid in defining the appropriate research design and data collection but also becomes the main vehicle for generalizing the results of the case study” (p. 32). Focusing then on research quality, Yin provides four tests—construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability—and
helpfully recommends appropriate tactics for their execution (p. 33). Tests and tactics are considered essential to maintaining the quality of this research.

**Theoretical Framework: The Rival Model**

The following is a summary statement of the theoretical framework posited by Feldman and Khademian (2001), exhibited in their Primacy of Process Principle, as amended by the dissertation’s rival theory. The final statement, further, represents this writer’s own presumption of the effect of the exercise of this principle on flexibility and accountability:

Within the context of a problem-solving process, the Primacy of Process model implies managerial or organizational preference or orientation. It brings attention to who needs to be involved in or served by public efforts and the structures that enable or inhibit doing so. It makes visible the structural dynamics, revealing potential actions and structural adaptations that can increase service flexibility. It raises expectations for improved service and coordination of activities. It leads to increased accountability to those who are served or involved in the process but not to stakeholders who are not involved or not served by the process. Finally, for those served or involved, it produces actions and reciprocal structural changes that, nonetheless, sustain equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.

A definition of terms is provided to assure statement clarity. The terms *process, structure, and flexibility* are used frequently in this section. It is essential that they be understood as used here.

*Process:* A problem-solving activity initiated to resolve issues concerning the performance of public functions.
Structure: Organizational arrangements, rules, procedures, contracts, norms, expectations, or conditions for legitimacy, established to provide governance accountability.

Flexibility: Diverse, alternative actions within institutional contexts that address governance issues or emerge out of confronting these issues.

Dissertation Hypotheses

Summary statement elements are broken out as hypotheses to be tested in the case studies. These nine hypotheses reformulate the summary statement in a manner that isolates or focuses attention on a single construct. At this stage, hypotheses are stated in general language. Afterward, they will be expressed as propositions applicable to the specific context of the one-stop permit and plan review center, suitable for testing.

1. The Primacy of Process model implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation.

2. The Primacy of Process methodology directs attention to who should be involved or served by public efforts.

3. Primacy of Process focuses attention on structures that enable or inhibit service or involvement.

4. Primacy of Process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers to involvement or service, accompanied by increased flexibility of action.
5. Primacy of Process reveals possibilities for increased service flexibility without structural change.

6. Primacy of Process increases expectations for improved provision of service and coordination of activities.

7. Primacy of Process increases accountability to those served or involved in the process.

8. Primacy of Process leads to explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions, thereby upholding the equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.

9. Primacy of Process leaves unchanged accountability to stakeholders who are not served or not involved in the process.

Propositions to Be Tested

Propositions facilitate the gathering of case study information whether through interviews, examination of documentation, observation, or other means. Yin (1998) points out that as . . . theoretical propositions are elaborated in their hypothesized form, the ideas will increasingly point to the relevant data that need to be collected . . . Thus stating the theoretical propositions will help . . . to design the entire case study.” (p. 234)

Propositions developed here are essentially restatements of hypotheses expressed above. They are stated in terms specific to the one-stop permit and plan review center for several reasons: to guide the gathering of data in the study of these
centers, to facilitate the challenging or testing of hypotheses, and to serve as a basis for the development of a questionnaire for surveying and interviewing purposes.

In the testing of hypotheses, this study proceeds on the principle that if a proposition does not hold in the specific case, then its corresponding general hypothesis will be considered fallacious. Conversely, where the proposition is supported, its general hypothesis will be considered to be validated, at least in the specific context.

Propositions to be verified in undertaking these case studies were as follows:

1. A focus on process implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation, revealing core assumptions affecting means and ends in relation to assessing permit and plan review procedures.

2. A focus on process establishes who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of municipal permit and plan review procedures.

3. A focus on process brings attention to structures that enable or inhibit service under permit and plan review procedures.

4. A focus on process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct more flexible service related to permit and plan review procedures.

5. A focus on process reveals more flexible services in relation to permit and plan review procedures.

6. A focus on process raises expectations for improved service and better coordination of activities related to permit and plan review procedures.
7. A focus on process increases accountability to those served by or involved in the process.

8. A focus on process induces explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions with respect to permit and plan review procedures, thereby upholding an equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.

9. A focus on process leaves accountability unchanged for nonparticipants, i.e., persons or groups having an interest in but not involved or served in the process.

**Survey Instrument**

Questions were posed in relation to each proposition. Taken together, they comprise the dissertation’s survey instrument. Questions were intended to elicit responses from interview subjects that were on point with propositions and that also assisted in describing the one-stop center. Also, questions reflect the tentative findings of an initial assessment of Grand Rapids one-stop Development Center, an exercise at the dissertation proposal stage to examine the one-stop center as apparently fulfilling Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) thesis and as a suitable vehicle for testing it. Lastly, questions speak separately to a one-stop center’s conceptual and operational phases. In all, 31 questions were written and later reduced in number following a pilot test as the first order of business in undertaking research, begun after approval by the dissertation committee and university’s Human Subject Institutional Review Board.
**Pilot Test**

Grand Rapids served as the site for a pilot test of the instrument and of the follow-up interview approach. The city also served as one of the case studies. The pilot test involved three staff persons, two of whom worked at the city's one-stop Development Center. All three had earlier participated on the task force that assessed the permit and plan review process that led to the creation of the center.

The pilot test consisted of subjects completing the survey questionnaire and responding to follow-up interviews, precisely as intended for all subjects in each of the case studies. This exercise was meant to test the coherence and efficacy of the survey and interview approach. Afterward, adjustments were made in an effort to reduce areas of confusion and misinterpretation. Subsequently, the survey instrument was shortened to 24 questions (see Appendix A). Pilot data were integrated into the Grand Rapids case study so that subjects were not approached again with the refined survey questionnaire.

**Data Collection**

Three methods were used to gather information on one-stop centers at study sites: a survey of knowledgeable subjects and follow-up interviews or independent interviews with those subjects from whom completed survey questionnaires could not be obtained, collecting of pertinent records, and direct observation assisted by periodic informal discussion with center personnel.
Subject Selection

Suitable survey and interview subjects were crucial to the project. It was imperative to include subjects who had experience with both the review process assessment and the operational phase of the one-stop center. In the interest of balanced reporting, it was also imperative that some subjects be representative of the development community being served by a city’s development process as well as of the public officials who provide the service.

Eight to 10 names of potential subjects were obtained from primary contacts at study sites. I acted as my own primary contact in Grand Rapids. Primary contacts were public officials who had direct experience with the assessment of permit and plan review processes and with the operation of the emergent one-stop centers in their cities. In both Dayton and Des Moines, primary contacts held the title of Chief Building Official. They had firsthand knowledge of the assessment process, participants, and resultant center and its operations, and thus were able to identify knowledgeable subjects for surveying and interviewing purposes. I had served as Grand Rapids’ Zoning Administrator. I was not a member of the process assessment task force as such but had met with it on occasion to provide information on zoning and development practices, and afterward had served as co-leader of the one-stop center that evolved. I was, therefore, familiar with virtually everyone associated with process assessment and with the center and could identify knowledgeable subjects for Grand Rapids.
Follow-up Interviews

Interviews with subjects were intended to follow-up on survey responses. It was anticipated that clarification of answers given in the extensive survey instrument would be required inasmuch as questions were open-ended and likely to evoke some uncertainty. As a practical matter, nearly half of the subjects in each city did not complete the survey instrument, instead responding only to an alternate set of survey questions presented at the interview itself.

Initial Contact With Subjects

Initial interaction with subjects was conducted by e-mail and telephone. Following the subject selection and interview protocol approved by the university's Human Subject Institutional Review Board, a letter of introduction describing the study and requesting participation was forwarded to potential subjects. Soon after, the survey questionnaire followed with the request that it be completed and returned quickly so that a set of follow-up questions could be prepared for interview purposes. Thereafter, subjects were contacted to schedule interviews.

Initiating Field Work: The Primary Contact

Interviews and other data-gathering activities required site visits. Authorization of case studies by the respective cities was sought and granted. Initial survey and interview subjects were identified in cooperation with a primary contact who served, to a greater or lesser extent, as coordinator of the site visit in the case of
Dayton and Des Moines. Primary contacts also were helpful in providing an overview of a city’s history regarding permit and plan review problems and efforts to resolve them; customer, citizen, and economic development issues; and the city’s regional and political context.

Field Adjustments

In the field it became apparent that adjustments were needed which affected survey instrument and interview. The survey instrument required about 1½ hours of a subject’s time. Follow-up interviews, generally scheduled at the subject’s place of work during working hours, required an additional hour. It became clear very quickly that some subjects resisted filling out the survey questionnaire because of its length and the apparent burden it imposed. No further progress with them could be made employing the designed approach. Meanwhile, other subjects had to be pursued on short notice as substitutes for subjects who proved unavailable or nonresponsive. To gain input from these subjects required going directly to the interview, supplanting the planned approach. For these subjects, an alternate set of questions was prepared (see Appendix B) in order to come away with at least some response. The alternate set of questions necessarily has fewer questions than the original questionnaire in order to complete an interview within a time frame of 1 hour. Nonetheless, the alternate instrument attempted to elicit much of the same information as the survey questionnaire. Where gaps occurred, we trusted to a redundancy in responses to fill
the breach or to manage the research effort without the benefit of those specific responses.

Final Respondents

Survey and interview subjects for each site were identified by primary contacts. Primary contacts also provided substitute candidates where initial ones did not pan out. In all 21 persons, 7 for each city, participated as respondents. For Grand Rapids and Dayton, 4 of 7 subjects in each case filled out the questionnaire and completed the follow-up interview. In Des Moines, 3 of the 7 subjects completed survey questionnaires. The remaining 3 or 4 subjects in each city, respectively, responded to the alternate set of questions at their interviews. For substitute subjects, 2 in Des Moines and 1 in Dayton, the interview protocol was adapted slightly, omitting the questionnaire, its accompanying completion request letter, and, in other correspondence, directing subjects to disregard references to questionnaire and follow-up interview questions. All surveys and interviews took place between September and December, 2003.

Composition of Respondent Groups

Identities of individual subjects are not disclosed to preserve anonymity. However, the composition of respondent groups can be described. Subjects comprising the survey groups for the three cities were similar. In each case, subjects from both the public and private sectors were surveyed. All had experience and a
relationship with their respective one-stop permit and plan review centers, i.e., with the conceptual work that led to center realization, with its ongoing operation, or with both. Public sector subjects included current and former city executives and department heads, building and zoning officials, and several miscellaneous employees assigned to one-stop centers. Private sector respondents included architects, land use planners, builders, and representatives of building trade organizations.

Collecting Pertinent Records

Records were gathered that appeared to shed light on both the conceptual and operational phases of a city’s one-stop center. Documentation of the conceptual phase included meeting agendas and minutes, assessment of practices, problem summaries, reports, newspaper stories, and other recorded evidence of the thought processes that supported the creation of the center. Documentation in relation to a center’s operational phase included mission statement and goals and objectives, service brochures and handouts, ordinances, flow charts, customer surveys, information pieces, TV coverage, floor plans, and other evidence of a center’s existence, role, internal workings, and response to clientele. The approach followed is outlined in the “Case Study Documentation Protocol and Instrument” (see Appendix C).
Direct Observation and Informal Discussion

Visits to Dayton and Des Moines, spending 8 and 10 working days at each site, respectively, provided an opportunity to observe firsthand the day-to-day operations of one-stop centers, to carry out interviews, and to learn about and seek copies of useful records. Visits also afforded the prospect of speaking informally to staff to clarify center operations, practices, and efforts at enhancing center performance and customer convenience. As an employee with the City of Grand Rapids assigned to its one-stop Development Center, 1998-2001, I had the opportunity to observe its operations over a prolonged period, to speak informally with staff, and to gather records. In observing a center in operation, the interest was in interior design and staff performance, practices that enhance customer convenience, activities and ideas that improve process coherence and workflow, and other measures that refine a city’s permit and plan review process. The approach taken to site observation is illustrated in “Case Study Observation Protocol and Instrument” (see Appendix D).

The Research Process

The research process (see Figure 3) began with the rival theory and the postulating of propositions to be tested by the case study. This constitutes the conceptual framework for the study. As noted earlier, “stating the theoretical propositions will help . . . to design the entire case study” (Yin, 1998, p. 234).
Figure 3. Research Process.
survey questionnaire was prepared based on the propositions. The process, then, proceeded along three fronts. Surveys and subject interviews were conducted at individual sites. Records, including media coverage, were collected. And site observations were made and recorded, incorporating informal discussions that helped to interpret them.

Initial assembly of individual site data then was undertaken involving much data reduction to isolate that which was material to survey questions. Some analysis was done to interrelate data sources for individual sites both to achieve a full response to each question and to check for data convergence. Afterwards, analyses for the three sites were synthesized into a comparative view that sought commonalities across cases and pointed out divergences, still focusing on individual questions. Then, in a grand synthesis, comparative views were related to propositions on an individual basis bringing together analyses for all questions bearing on that proposition. Yet another step involves a judgment verifying or invalidating the proposition. Finally, a conclusion was drawn in light of the judgment made with respect to a proposition.

Data Analysis

Following the field studies, data were combined into individual case study databases organized around the substantive agenda. Data chiefly comprised the completed survey questionnaires, transcripts of interview recordings, field notes on observations made, and field materials or documents. Data analysis then involved categorizing, summarizing, condensing and recombining of data. The general strategy
was to utilize the propositions that guided the case studies to learn whether assumptions withstand the evidence of the data. Following this approach, the procedures of “pattern matching,” “explanation building,” and “triangulation” were employed.

Pattern Matching

With the first procedure and as the name suggests, the experiential-based pattern is compared with the predicted one. As Yin (1998) notes, “If, for each outcome, the initially predicted values have been confirmed, and at the same time alternative patterns from rival predictions have not been confirmed, strong causal inferences can be made” (p. 251).

Explanation Building

As regards explanation building, a phenomenon is explained through the specifying of causal links in relation to it. Again, as Yin (1998) explains, “In the explanation-building mode, you may begin by taking the data you have collected for a single case to see whether they converge over a logical sequence of events . . . that appears to explain your case’s outcomes” (p. 252).

Triangulation

“Triangulation,” states Denzin (1989), involves “the use of multiple methods . . . that will raise [research] above the personal biases that stem from single methodologies” (p. 236). He notes four types of triangulation involving varied data
sources, investigators, theories, and methodologies. Of interest here is triangulation by varied data sources. Comments Denzin, "By triangulating data sources, analysts can efficiently employ the same methods to maximum theoretical advantage" (p. 237). He goes on to explain that by investigating different settings, researchers can distinguish among attributes that may be deemed common across case study settings and those that may be considered unique. Moreover, the data source subtypes of time, space and person listed by Denzin (p. 237) appear to underscore the mixture of prospects open to triangulation. It is recognized, then, that the case studies pursued here can triangulate not only within individual studies by the combination of survey/interview respondents, documented findings, and site observations, but also across case studies by these individual data sources and by a mixture of these sources (see Table 2). Additionally, survey/interview respondents, divided as to public and private sector representatives, also offer varied data sources. As perceived in Chapter VI, this research relies on a number of these approaches and patterns for verification purposes.

It is argued that the 10 distinct patterns exhibited in Table 25 comply with Denzin's notion of data source triangulation across three separate sites involving three differing data sources. Patterns range from similar sources at separate sites to distinct sources at separate sites with various pattern mixtures in between. Each of these patterns was found to occur in this study (see analytical tables of Chapter VI) although half occur only in common with others but are not found in isolation, e.g., Patterns 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10. The most frequently occurring patterns are 1 and 2.
Table 2

Cross Case Data Triangulation: Complying Patterns

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<th>Possible Patterns</th>
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*= survey/interview response; ^= documented findings; # = site observation.

That is, findings attributable to survey/interview respondents and documentation were found to be confirmed across cases in 49 and 32 instances, respectively. In 18 instances, findings of these two data sources were mutually reinforcing across cases. Attention also directed to Patterns 3, 4, and 5 which exhibit good frequency, primarily in combination with the first two patterns. Frequency of occurrence is displayed here to provide some indication of the degree of correspondence among findings experienced in this research. Finally, although not represented in Table 2, many patterns are exhibited in Chapter VI tables where findings reinforce across two cases.
These are of lesser standing in triangulation terms, but are noteworthy nonetheless in showing some convergence of findings and have been taken into account in this research.

Case Study Site Selection

From a list of U.S. cities having one-stop permit and plan review centers, three were selected for intensive study. These centers were sought for a number of reasons. Validity of findings by a qualitative dissertation suggested a multi-case strategy. Also, three case studies better reflect the diversity of substantive functions represented at one-stop permit and plan review centers. Preliminary investigation and life experience suggested differences among them. Finally, it was thought that several case studies would more likely capture the variation in organizational structure employed by cities in implementing one-stop centers, and in changes made to organizational structure afterward in response to need. Again, preliminary investigation and the experience of the writer suggested such organizational variation.

Site Selection Considerations

In the interest of comparability, identification was made of U.S. cities in the Midwest that exceeded 100,000 in population based on the 2000 census. Costs related to 2-week site visits limited the range of the study to the Midwest. The proposed minimum population is a cutoff that assumes that cities above that population are of a size where development review functions tend to be dispersed.
organizationally and geographically so that there is be a distinct advantage in centralizing to a one-stop center. Smaller cities, it was felt, might already have key departments that are responsible for permits and plan review in one location and under the supervision of one or two persons. For these cities, the one-stop center advantages may already exist in many respects, precluding the need for a formal process of establishing one and excluding them as suitable sites for this study. 

Subsequently, population-eligible cities were explored by way of their Internet home pages to discover the presence of one-stop permit and plan review centers. This proved fruitful. The literature of institutional resources also was surveyed but without useful result.

Initially, it was hoped to identify and survey the different types of centers that are illustrated in Table 1, Kind and Character of One-Stop Centers, on page 22. However, the virtual center appeared less suitable for analysis than did the traditional and affiliate centers. While all center types appeared suitable for analysis at the conceptual level, the dispersed character of virtual center reviewers did not appear to make visible the structural dynamics at the operational level and so did not seem likely to suggest new actions or structural adaptations that could be taken in the interest of flexibility and accountability. Thus, the fuller test of theory suggested that this analysis focus on centers of the traditional and affiliate stripe.
Selected Study Sites

After much preliminary spadework, three cities emerged from the selection process for detailed study: Dayton, Ohio; Des Moines, Iowa; and Grand Rapids, Michigan. All are Midwestern cities. City populations are quite similar, ranging from 166,200 for Dayton to 197,800 for Grand Rapids, and with Des Moines at 198,700 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Selected Case Study Sites: Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids, MI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (2000)</td>
<td>197,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change (1990–2000)</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Area (2000)</td>
<td>44.6 sq. mi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Stop Center Type</td>
<td>Affiliate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Opened</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices Collocated</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: County and City Data Book: 2000; State and Metropolitan Area Data Book: 2000.

All three cities are organized in the Council-Manager form of government.

Dayton and Des Moines produced traditional one-stop centers, one a full department,
the other a division within a department. Grand Rapids created an affiliate center without embedding it firmly within the city's departmental structure. The centers also vary in operational age: 5 years for Dayton, 6 for Grand Rapids, and 14 for Des Moines. Finally, as a gauge of transformation achieved, Table 3 also records the number of separate offices from which center personnel are collocated: 7 for Grand Rapids, 6 for Dayton, and 5 for Des Moines. All centers carry out basic review and code compliance functions related to land and building development approval and permitting processes. At this point, however, center functions may depart somewhat from a standardized model, instead relating to the unique responsibilities and institutional arrangements of individual cities.

Concluding Notes on the Research Process

Specialized terms and phrases are prevalent in the literature and invariably are made use of in studies of this kind. Moreover, permit and plan review organizations, like other bureaucracies, develop their own shorthand or jargon that is employed here for the sake of convenience or to accurately reflect sources. To clarify these terms and phrases, definitions have been provided in the Glossary of Terms (see Appendix E).

Summary

In this chapter the case study method was explored in terms of its relevance to this research. Use of the case study approach to test theory then was considered.
Afterward, research quality under the case study method of enquiry was discussed. Here the dissertation's theoretical framework was introduced summarizing its operational model, specifying the resultant hypotheses, presenting the propositions to be tested, outlining the survey instrument to be used, and noting instrument changes based on pilot testing. Thereafter, the collection of data was discussed in terms of subject surveys, follow-up interviews, collection of records, and on-site observation. This section also was accompanied by an account of subject selection for survey and interview purposes, the initiating of fieldwork, and field adjustments necessitated by nonresponsive or unavailable subjects. The research process then was described and illustrated, portraying data collection, data summary and analysis for individual cases, comparative analysis across cases, synthesis relating comparative findings to individual propositions, the verifying or negating of propositions, and the drawing of conclusions. Afterward, the strategy for data analysis was offered. Lastly, the rationale for site selection and selection of specific one-stop centers for case study research was presented completing the chapter topics.
CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

Sound case study research requires that study sites—one-stop permit and plan review centers—be located within their organizational contexts. The following sections portray city organizations and illustrate how their one-stop centers integrate into the larger wholes. Accounts are provided of the centers themselves, their management and supervision together with organizational charts, indicating their similarities and contrasts. Lastly, a map locating case study sites (see Figure 4) illustrates Midwestern settings and placement with respect to major regional cities, to the great lakes, and to respective state boundaries.

City of Grand Rapids

In traditional fashion, Grand Rapids is organized by relatively self-contained departments (see Figure 5, City of Grand Rapids Organizational Chart). Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson (1950) comment that

The level at which relative self containment is achieved may be the departmental level, the bureau level, the divisional level, or even lower. They have an independence from other organizations or units not enjoyed by any of their parts. In city governments the fire and police departments can be regarded as relatively self contained. (p. 267)

Grand Rapids’ departments are aligned by service groups, many of which are headed by Assistant City Managers. These groups include Cultural Services, Fiscal Services,
Figure 4. Map Locating Case Study Sites.

Figure 5. City of Grand Rapids: Organizational Chart.
Human Resource Services, Management Services, Planning and Community Development Services, Public Safety Services, and Public Works and Economic Development Services. Departments within service groups can be categorized as line or overhead units. By "line units" is meant "unitary organizations—those organized around a socially meaningful program" (Simon et al., 1950, p. 281), for example the city's Public Library, Police, and Water Utility Departments. The "overhead unit" encompasses auxiliary and staff functions.

[A]uxiliary units are supposed to assist the line organizations by performing certain common tasks for them, while the staff units are supposed to assist the chief executive by performing certain tasks for him that he could not otherwise delegate to the line units. (p. 281)

Examples of city auxiliary units are Fiscal Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology Departments. Examples of staff units include the Planning Department and the Economic Development Office. All departments are answerable to the Executive Office. In turn, the Executive Office or City Manager answers to the City Commission, which, in turn, is accountable to the Citizens. In the hierarchy, power and control may be said to flow from the citizens downward even to the lowest departmental echelons while accountability flows upward (Chandler & Plano, 1988, p. 191). The City Commission directly appoints and supervises not only the City Manager but also the City Comptroller, City Attorney, City Clerk and City Treasurer. Not represented in Figure 5 are the many boards and commissions that serve the city and that are appointed by and responsible to the City Commission.

The city's one-stop Development Center is shown neither on this simplified chart nor on the more detailed chart published on the city's Internet Web site.
illustrating departmental divisions and offices. As a practical matter, however, the Development Center is located under Planning and Community Development Services and is administered by the Assistant City Manager heading that service group. This seems appropriate inasmuch as fully half of the Development Center’s staff have direct supervisor-subordinate linkages to either the Neighborhood Improvement or to the Planning Department and are answerable to their hierarchies and to the Assistant City Manager in charge of their common service group.

**One-Stop Development Center**

Opening for business in the summer of 1998, the Grand Rapids’ Development Center is considered to be an affiliate center type as defined in Table 1, Kind and Character of Centers, Chapter II, page 22. It has its own separate identity and offices on the second floor of a three-story renovated warehouse at 1120 Monroe, NW, a mile from City Hall in the downtown. As a code compliance activity, the center is considered a line function. However, in light of the city’s traditional departmental structure, the center’s organization is considered novel. It can be thought of as a “matrix” or “lateral” organizational module, discussed earlier, that fulfills functional program requirements even while offering integrated services for customer convenience. Staff is assigned to and works out of this organizational module at the same time as it maintains ties to parent departments and its hierarchy in such important ways as supervision, payroll, seniority, advancement opportunity, and departmental prerogatives. The presence of multiple departmental staff under one...
roof is not only convenient to clientele, who benefit from integrated services, but it also is productive for the staff itself which is better able to understand and implement the city's overall development process and to realize the potential for cross training.

Management and Supervision

As indicated in Figure 6, two team leaders supervise center operations. Leader 1, the Building Inspections Supervisor, is an employee of the Neighborhood Improvement Department, a line unit, and is responsible to its hierarchy. He directly supervises the various inspection groups—building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing—which are headed up by senior inspectors who are assigned to the center. Leader 2, an Assistant Planning Director, directly supervises planning specialists assigned to the center and the Zoning Enforcement Office which is located there. He or she is an employee of the Planning Department, a staff department, and is accountable to its Director. These direct, formal relationships are indicated by solid lines on the organizational chart.

The remaining personnel who are assigned to the center are only nominally answerable to its leaders who have no direct authority over them. This limited, informal relationship is indicated by the dashed lines interconnecting them. Because Fire Inspection is concerned with building-related code issues, it is shown as relating to other building-related inspections that are under the direction of Leader 1. Others, having site-related concerns—Civil Engineering, Stormwater Management, Traffic Safety, and Water Engineering—are shown as technically under the supervision of
Leader 2. As a practical matter, these staff members maintain an undivided allegiance to their parent departments which monitor and supervise their work, again inferred by the chart's solid interconnecting lines. They may be understood, simply, as carrying
out permit and plan review responsibilities of their parent departments at the
Development Center in cooperation with its leaders and staff.

City of Dayton

Dayton too is organized by function or department (see Figure 7). Unlike
Grand Rapids, all city departments report directly to the City Manager without
reporting to intervening group managers. The City Manager reports to the City
Commission, which in turn is accountable to the Citizens. The City Commission
directly appoints the City Manager and the City Clerk. Indicated also are the boards
and commissions appointed by the City Commission, at least the most important ones:
Board of Zoning Appeals, Plan Board, Civil Service Board, Human Relations
Council, Environmental Advisory Board, Public Arts Commission, and Landmark
Commission. Building Services, Dayton’s one-stop center, is shown as having equal
status among peer departments, responsible to the City Manager.

One-Stop Building Services Department

Dayton’s Building Services Department became operational in October 1999.
Organized as a city department with a director overseeing its three distinctive divisions,
it is regarded as a traditional one-stop center as it appears in Table 1. Building Services
has its own separate offices and identity on the second and third floors of a refurbished
office building at 371 W. 2nd Street, downtown, three blocks from City Hall. The
Divisions of Building Inspection and Zoning Administration occupy the second floor;
Figure 7. City of Dayton: Organizational Chart.

the Division of Housing Inspection, the third. For comparative purposes, Building Inspection and Zoning are here regarded as comprising the essential one-stop center. Placing these divisions together in facilities equipped with architectural features for receiving, aiding and interacting with clientele seems to give implicit recognition to these activities as a unity. Again, the presence of relevant service staff under one roof represents a major convenience to customers and holds benefits for staff as well.
Management and Supervision

Building Services has the appearance of and may be considered a line unit paralleling the existing departmental structure of the city. Many functions align neatly along hierarchical lines as one would expect, under Zoning Administration and Building Inspections (see Figure 8). These are indicated by the solid lines interconnecting these functions ultimately to the Director. But, to fulfill the one-stop principle of integrating development-related services under one roof, Building Services necessarily must include services out of other departments as well, overhead as well as line units. As depicted in Figure 8, these include Economic Development, Fire Prevention, Civil Engineering, Traffic Engineering, and Water Engineering. Regarded as Building Services "partners," these staff are depicted as relating to the Director to whom they are assigned by dashed lines. Conversely, solid lines are used to connect partners to parent departments demonstrating a fuller vertical employer-employee relationship. Parenthetically, Traffic Engineering, although it may be regarded as a distinct activity, is nonetheless a function here of the Engineering Department. This portion of the one-stop center may be regarded as a matrix or lateral organization similar to the Grand Rapids Development Center. But, unlike Grand Rapids’ looser arrangement, where partners are only nominally under the direction of center leaders, Building Services partners are both directed and evaluated by the center’s hierarchy as well as by their own parent department hierarchy. In this way, partners are effectively bound to the one-stop center even while remaining
employees of parent departments in all important respects. As indicated, the parent departments include the Executive Office, Fire, Engineering, and Water.

Source: Adapted from charts gathered during site visit, October 20–29, 2004.

Figure 8. Dayton’s Building Services Department: Organizational Chart. (Effective October 1999)
City of Des Moines

Similar to Grand Rapids and Dayton, Des Moines government also is structured by department (see Figure 9). Lines of authority also are the same: between departments and City Manager, between City Manager and City Council, and between City Council and the citizens of Des Moines. The City Council appoints the City Manager, the City Clerk, the City Attorney, and Boards and Commissions. The Human Rights Commission is shown separately from Boards and Commissions apparently to call attention to the fact that it has its own staff that is accountable to the Commission, not to the City Manager. Note, however, that the Library Board governs the city’s library system and also supervises staff but is not shown separately. The city’s one-stop Permit and Development Center, a line activity, is organized as a division of the Planning and Community Development Department, primarily a staff unit. The center’s presence is indicated on the organizational chart in small type face.

One-Stop Permit and Development Center

In March, 1989, Des Moines’ one-stop Permit and Development Center began as part of the stand-alone Building Department. In the late 1990s that department together with Planning was merged with Community Development to become the Planning and Community Development Department, often referred to simply as the Community Development Department. Now, the Permit and Development Center is one of six departmental divisions. It is considered a traditional one-stop center as defined in Table 1. The other divisions are: Neighborhood Inspections, Housing
Source: Adapted from City of Des Moines Internet Home Page, August 22, 2004.

Figure 9. City of Des Moines: Organizational Chart.

Conservation, Planning and Urban Design, Neighborhood Development, and Community Services. Much or all of the department now is located on the first floor of the refurbished Armory Building at 602 E. First Street, next door to City Hall in downtown Des Moines. The Center is at one end of the building with immediate side access to the street.
Management and Supervision

In organizational terms, the Permit and Development Center appears to parallel the city's structure, i.e., organization by department and divisions within them. Similar to Grand Rapids and Dayton, many staff functions fall within the typical purview of the Chief Building Official, the center administrator in this case. As revealed in Figure 10, these activities include Field Inspection Services, Development Zoning Services, and Building Development Review and Permitting Services. These functions are shown using solid lines to relate in a direct hierarchical way to the center's Administrator.

Again, similar to the other cities, a number of site development review functions are fulfilled by outside staff who are assigned to the center effectively transforming it into a one-stop operation. These activities are Planning Review, Engineering Review, and Fire Inspection. These staff are directed and evaluated by the center's administrator, but in all other respects are held to be employees of parent departments that assigned them to the center. The dashed line interconnecting these functions to the Administrator and the solid lines connecting to parent departments reflect this matrix or lateral organizational arrangement. Unlike Grand Rapids' organization, but similar to Dayton's, the Administrator enjoys true supervisory authority over staff assigned to the center as well those working directly for him.
At this point, contrasts between Grand Rapids' affiliate center and Dayton's and Des Moines' traditional centers become apparent. While the traditional centers are clearly embedded within the framework of their larger city organizations, the

Source: Adapted from the chart gathered during the site visit.

Figure 10. Des Moines' Permit and Development Center: Organizational Chart.

Organizational Contrasts
affiliate center of Grand Rapids' seems ungrounded. Where the centers of both
Dayton and Des Moines have single administrators in charge who can be held
accountable for center operations and staff, Grand Rapids' center is guided by team
leaders with divided responsibility for center operations and with little authority over
the staff assigned from outside their Planning and Community Development Service
group. On behalf of the traditional center, one official performs most of those
essential managerial activities considered common to all organizations, i.e., planning,
organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. However, two
officials and outside assistance must be involved in these activities on behalf of the
affiliate center. The task of center leaders is further complicated by the question of
who has the final word. Taken together, based on these models, the traditional center
looks to be better integrated, more coherently managed, and potentially less conflicted
than does the affiliate center. Moreover, the existence of a single administrator to
whom all center staff are directly responsible appears to clarify the traditional center's
position within the city's chain of command simplifying the flow of power and control
down the hierarchy and accountability upward. Conversely, the affiliate center's
unconventional co-leadership and lack of direct supervision over all center staff,
appears to muddy its status in the hierarchy and to impede these reciprocal flows.
Whether the apparent superiority of the traditional center over the affiliate center will
translate into more effective performance, remains to be seen.
CHAPTER VI

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Analytical Approach

This chapter undertakes a comparative analysis of the case study findings detailed in Chapter IV (see Figure 3). The comparative analysis is carried out across cases seeking convergence of findings. The analysis proceeds with the restatement of a proposition and listing of pertinent survey questions followed by a comparative view, or case findings synthesis, for each question bearing on that proposition. Findings that are common across cases are highlighted; those mutually reinforced through survey and interviews, documentation and observation are noted. Unique findings and those common to two of three cases also are recorded. After treatment of all such questions, comparative views are merged in a kind of grand synthesis that relates findings jointly to the individual proposition. Subsequently, a judgment is made as to whether or not the proposition is verified, and the analysis moves on to the next proposition.

Proposition A, to Be Verified: Managerial Orientation

A focus on process implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation, revealing core assumptions affecting means and ends in relation to assessing permit and plan review procedures.
Three questions were raised bearing on this proposition. The first asked survey subjects to characterize their city's managerial orientation between the polarities of concern for production and concern for employees. The second question inquired as to why cities decided to review their permit and plan review procedures. The final question prompted respondents to describe the process that eventually led to instituting a one-stop center. The first and second questions were found not to be directly applicable in verifying Proposition A, although they still were useful in providing balance to the overall findings. The first lacked context, i.e., did not focus on process, and so could not directly confirm or refute Proposition A; the second question preceded a focus on the review process itself and therefore did not seem functional in supporting or opposing the proposition. Thus, only the last question was held to be directly relevant for verification purposes.

**Comparative View: Managerial Style**

Viewed comparatively, levels of measurement tell similar stories for the three cities, but with a twist. Mean and median values, at 4.5, 5.3, and 6.3, and 4, 5.5, and 6, respectively, cluster toward the center of the scale, indicating similar managerial styles (see Figure 11). The cities look to have a balanced concern for productivity and employees, with a slight emphasis on productivity in Grand Rapids, a bit more stress on employees in Des Moines, and a well-balanced orientation between productivity and employees in Dayton. A mode of 3 exposes a penchant for productivity in Grand Rapids, while Des Moines' mode of 6 validates its mean and median. However, given
the limited underlying data in each city’s distribution, these are not robust indicators
and must be regarded with some caution.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Concern for Production</th>
<th>Concern for Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial Style Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Rapids

Dayton

Des Moines

* = mean; ^ = median; # = mode. N = 4, Grand Rapids; 4, Dayton; 3, Des Moines.

Note. Dayton has no mode.

Figure 11. Comparative Managerial Styles.

Comparative View: Reason for Review

How do motivations for review concur and how do they differ? Interview
respondents in all three cities agree that assessment of development processes was
prompted by their respective development communities. In general, processes were
found to be complex, conflicted, slow, scattered, unpredictable, and unfriendly (see
Table 4). Additionally, respondents in Dayton and Des Moines cited loss of
development activity and the desire to remain economically viable as incentive for
review. For Dayton and Grand Rapids, parking of contractor trucks also was a
problem that needed attention. Dayton alone identified lack of process ownership and
citizen input overload as contributing to developer dissatisfaction. In fact, lack of
process ownership can readily be inferred as applicable in all three cases. With scattered departments all seemingly in charge of the development process, none are in charge, i.e., no one "owns" it. Processes appeared to lack suitable organizational structure and accountability in terms of classic public administration theory.

Table 4

Reasons for Reviewing Development Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Given</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process too complex</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process too conflicted (code interpretation)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process too slow, unresponsive to users</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process too unpredictable</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process/staff not business friendly</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewers too scattered geographically</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of economic development</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of coordination/communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among reviewing offices</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking of contractor trucks a problem</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No single &quot;owner&quot; of process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community input too extensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process duplicates work of licensed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ N \]

7  7  6

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

Regarding citizen input overload, Dayton appears unique in terms of citizen participation in local government affairs. The city is partitioned into nearly 60
neighborhood associations, which in turn are assembled into seven districts and represented by elective Priority Boards. Boards act on behalf of their associations, individually or collectively, before the City Council and its numerous boards and commissions respecting land use, zoning, and other areas of public concern. To perform adequately, this structure requires sufficient time at various levels to meet, discuss, react, and strategize with respect to projects being advanced or issues being surfaced. Developers, who are required to present their proposals to neighborhood associations and who must confront this structure, understandably have a concern with the added complexity and delays occasioned by it.

Comparative View: Process Leading to One-Stop Center

How do assessments of the respective permit and plan review processes compare in the three cities? The approaches appear much the same in many respects (see Table 5). All involve conscious inclusion of the development community in the appraisal of development processes at some level of detail. Dayton is noteworthy here in terms of including representation from its neighborhoods and Priority Boards, although there are conflicting responses elsewhere that Grand Rapids may have included neighborhood representation as well. All of the cities involve review staff, often in conjunction with the development community, but invariably on separately appointed task forces. Each staff team is appointed by the City Manager and is led by a city executive, demonstrating its status on the city’s agenda and the level of commitment to process improvement. All assessment activities embrace implementing
Table 5

*Process Leading to One-Stop Center*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Activities</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique of development process by development community</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of task force, city staff</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership by city executive</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review regulatory standards and practices</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify problems</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best practices models</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/recommend process improvements</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart approval process</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize customer service</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review resource materials/critique issues</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of public/private task force</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen participation</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

process review, identifying process problems, seeking best practice models, and recommending improvements. Two of three assessment activities emphasize customer service. As noted in Table 5, Dayton alone engaged citizen participation and the appointment of a public/private group to assess its development review processes. The city staff task force still was needed to resolve process issues identified by the private/public group.
Synthesis: Verifying Proposition A

Concern both for production and employees is revealed in these case studies in a number of ways. It is directly reflected in responses to the question regarding a city's managerial style. Questionnaire responses exhibit fairly balanced concern for production and employees. Grand Rapids gives slightly more weight to production; Des Moines, to employees. However, the few responses to this question in all three case studies, and the variance of responses in Grand Rapids and Dayton, would seem to limit the force of these indicators. Even so, the inquiry on managerial style does provide a kind of gauge to help interpret findings in relation to the other questions here. However, it does not focus directly on process and so does not directly confirm or refute Proposition A.

Responses concerning the reason for examining development review process, generally confirmed by documentation, primarily reveal concern for production. The core issue is process productivity: the ways in which the jurisdiction's permit and plan review process fails to meet the needs of the development community and, ultimately, may threaten the community's own economic well-being. Respondents concur that processes were inefficient and ineffective. Dayton recognized a lack of process ownership as a crucial deficiency, i.e., a basic failure of organizational structure and, hence, of accountability, that is deemed applicable across the three cases. There is ample evidence, then, that it is primarily a concern for production—suitable structure, effective hierarchy, and better control, although couched in performance terms—that drives the review of development processes in these cities.
Behind this concern, of course, is the political pressure for improvement by the development community, that group’s demand that something be done to correct a deficiency that heavily impacts its ability to achieve. These findings, however, really precede a focus on the review process itself and therefore do not appear directly to support or contradict Proposition A. Nonetheless, the findings are indicative of the cities’ managerial or organizational orientation even though their apparent emphasis on productivity here is not entirely in agreement with direct characterizations of managerial orientation in response to the first question in this section.

In describing the review process that led to establishing the one-stop center, respondents and available documents give strikingly similar accounts in terms of methodology, process membership, staff and executive involvement, and tasks to be carried out. Managerial orientation, underscored by robust executive leadership exercised in each city, is clearly denoted in the approach and character (means and ends) of the review process. Concern for production, employees, and the public interest all are manifest, although not equally or uniformly across cases. Clearly, a concern for productivity is seen as overriding in these findings. But then the overriding issues are production oriented, perhaps inducing a prominence of that managerial polarity. Thus, findings here in relation to the cities’ focus on process do not clearly verify Proposition A. They reflect more emphatically in the direction of the managerial polarity appropriate to the issue at hand. Therefore, the final judgment remains in doubt. Additional research is needed to more adequately evaluate this proposition.
A focus on process establishes who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of the city's permit and plan review procedures.

As above, three questions were prepared to test this proposition. The first question sought the identity of individuals or organizations involved in assessing the adequacy of the city's permit and plan review procedures. The second question asked how it was decided who would participate in assessing the city's development review process. Lastly, inquiry was made concerning the role of assessment participants in ongoing center operations upon its establishment. The last question was determined not to be relevant and therefore was set aside, although useful discussion followed from it. Thus, verification of Proposition B rests on findings derived from the first two questions.

Comparative View: Individuals or Organizations Involved in Process Review

In answer to what individuals or organizations were involved in process review, respondents and documents demonstrate that cities followed similar paths (see Table 6). Cities universally sought a critique of their development processes by primary user groups, and also established internal teams to refine these assessments and to propose workable solutions to problems. Table 6 makes clear that the development community dominates external task forces and also that internal task forces have the full attention of city hierarchies and review staff. It is also apparent that cities recognize the economic development implications of development review
Table 6

*Individuals/Organizations Involved in Process Review*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals/Organizations</th>
<th>Grand Rapids</th>
<th>Dayton</th>
<th>Des Moines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Task Force</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects/Engineers</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developers/Builders/Contractors</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Builders Assoc.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Owners &amp; Managers Assoc.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realtors</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City executives/key officials</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen/neighborhood representatives</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service Union representative</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic preservation representatives</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Commission President</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process consultant</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside public building officials</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Board of Zoning Appeals President</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Task Force</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Executive</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key review staff</td>
<td>*^</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development staff</td>
<td>^</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process consultant</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Budget staff</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

Processes. Clear also is that Dayton’s approach differed from the others by recognizing neighborhood interests among its external stakeholders and by formally
acknowledging its user group in giving it a name, the Development Enhancement Services Team, and in formally appointing its membership by the City Commission. On the other hand, Grand Rapids and Des Moines seem to have stressed staff task forces both by giving official names—Development Process Improvement Team and City Manager’s Review Team, respectively—and by internal appointment of memberships.

Is this differing placement of emphasis significant? We would suggest that it does reflect a city's underlying value system and that it should be foretold by a city's indicated managerial style. Grand Rapids’ apparent penchant for productivity and the associated values of structure, hierarchy, and control would seem to explain the prominence of internal efforts to evaluate and improve performance. Dayton’s more balanced managerial style also would seem consistent with its recognition of external stakeholders and the formal inclusion both of neighborhood and city administrative interests on its Development Enhancement Services Team. On the other hand, Des Moines’ emphasis here on internal productivity would seem counterintuitive when viewed from its managerial style, which can be characterized as preferring adaptation and openness as well as employee participation and enrichment. One is led to conclude either that too much is made here of this placement of emphasis or that managerial style for Des Moines rests upon too little data.
Comparative View: How Participants in Process Review Were Chosen

Responses by informants to “How was it decided who would participate in the assessment review?” were virtually unanimous with respect to their reliance on external panels or focus groups, and documentation confirms that participants in each city were chosen by city managers (see Table 7). Two of three cities concurred that the city manager appointed the internal staff task force. It is noted, however, that manager appointments were guided by several considerations. Choices of external participants in Grand Rapids tended to be self-recommended through complaints about the process, were experienced with city process, and were representative of various development-related businesses. In Dayton, similarly, preference was given not only to process experience and a balanced mix of process users, but also to other non developer stakeholders and to recommendations of City Council and city staff. Des Moines, it seems clear, also chose based on experience with process and its cross section of development-related businesses. Based on news stories, however, it seems safe to infer that customer complaints, the city’s competitive economic condition, and earlier reports and recommendations to City Council played a role. It can be shown in response to other questions that participant choice in Grand Rapids and Dayton also were driven, in part, by economic concerns and user complaints.

Choice of participants on Grand Rapids’ internal task force, as confirmed, was based on role, knowledge, and ability to make improvements with respect to the development process. Dayton indicated that role and experience in inspections and building trades influenced its choice. For Des Moines also, role and experience
Table 7

*How Participants in Process Review Were Chosen*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Maker/Influencing Factor</th>
<th>Grand Rapids</th>
<th>Dayton</th>
<th>Des Moines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External task force decision maker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing factor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience with development process</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff suggestion</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>^</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad cross section of consumers</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants self-recommended (complaints)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other permit stakeholders</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development interest</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review role in development process</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Council suggestion</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in inspections, construction and building trades</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Task Force decision maker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing factor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in development process</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning exercise</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated knowledge</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to contribute</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[N\] 4 5 3

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.
respecting the development process can be inferred by the departments from which participants were appointed: Building, Engineering, Fire, Planning, Traffic and Transportation, and others.

Comparative View: Role of Review Participants in Center's Operation

Replies to the question on the roles participants have now in the center's operation reveal in each case that some participants in the review of the development process subsequently assumed roles in the resulting one-stop center, its operations or its oversight (see Table 8). In Grand Rapids, two participants collocated at the new center, one as co-leader, the other as part-time assignee. Four process participants, including a leader, became members of the center's permanent, if informal, oversight board. No continuing external input into center operations was discernable in response to this question. In contrast, Dayton formally set up a Customers Advisory Group, comprised of nine external stakeholders who had served among its Development Enhancement Service Team (DEST) participants, to regularly monitor center performance and to suggest changes as needed. Two of the DEST's public participants became division managers of the emergent one-stop Building Services Department. In Des Moines, two process review participants went on to lead the city's one-stop Permit and Development Center. A continuing role for external stakeholders, adopted by Des Moines as part of an eight-point streamlining program, was to monitor and evaluate the city's overall permit review process through the use of survey cards and semi-annual meetings of the development community. It was not
Table 8

Role of Review Participants in Center’s Operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Staff</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Supervisor</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversight Board</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.

verified whether the development community in fact served in this capacity or whether provisions were made beyond the normal oversight provided by departmental and executive hierarchy.

Synthesis: Verifying Proposition B

Findings in relation to what individuals or organizations were involved in assessing permit and plan review processes appear to bear out this proposition, at least in part. In these three cases, a focus on process consistently compelled the recognition and inclusion of at least two sets of stakeholders: the external development community that creates projects, and the internal regulatory staff that reviews and approves or denies projects. Of course, these are the most obvious interests—one being served, the other serving—without which process review may be looked upon as futile. For our purposes, regulatory staff may be held as being served
in the sense of themselves being affected by the efficacy of the process they implement. Only one of the cities, Dayton, also included citizens—as neighbors affected by projects—as being served by the process and needing involvement in its assessment. Although other stakeholders in the development game may be recognizable, these three sets appear primary in the context of a city’s regulatory function.

Why does a focus on process determine participants? Interview responses and documentation suggest that the process tends to define the actors; it gathers those with problems together with those holding solutions. In a kind of symbiosis, the surfacing of one set of stakeholders tends to surface the others. In this way, with process as context, awareness of developer issues immediately engages other parties in the issues.

Findings with respect to how it was decided who would participate in the reassessment process tend to illuminate the distinction between “who needs to be involved” and “who gets to be involved.” Interviews and documentation show consistently that it was the City Manager who chose participants, both internal and external, and also that the basis for choosing was similar, but not identical, among cities. Again, Dayton varied from the other cities in choosing to include neighborhood interests among its process review participants. Thus, in terms of Proposition B, while “a focus on process may surface who is served and who needs to be involved,” it does not determine who, in fact, is involved in process review. That, apparently, is up to the decision maker and his or her guiding impulses. For our purposes, then, findings
to this question are held to verify Proposition B in a limited way—"A focus on
process establishes those who are served [as indispensable stakeholders] and who
need to be involved . . . ."

In answer to the question of roles that review participants have in the resulting
one-stop center, the findings steadily demonstrate a continued involvement both in
terms of day-to-day operations as well as oversight. In each case, several of the
internal participants assume administrative or supervisory roles within the one-stop
center, providing a sense of continuity. Similarly, some review participants in each
case took on an oversight role, imparting some assurance of continued center
performance. This latter role, however, is managed differently by each city. Dayton
gave this role to external stakeholders formalized into a Customer Advisory Group, a
spin off of its Development Enhancement Services Team. Des Moines commits to
surveys and periodic meetings of user groups, its external stakeholders. In contrast,
this oversight role in Grand Rapids is assumed by former members of the
Development Process Improvement Team, comprised of all internal stakeholders.
Thus, while each city provides for center oversight, only Grand Rapids, it seems, does
not visualize this role as regularly involving external stakeholders. Then again, it was
learned through an interview that Grand Rapids had in fact very recently conducted a
meeting with external user groups and had received useful feedback. However, the
city had not institutionalized such meetings as a regular practice as far as it could be
determined.
How do these forces play out? Having determined who is served, who needs to be, or is, in fact, involved, and having identified process improvements through participant interaction, municipalities each have instituted a one-stop center as a crucial process upgrade. By involving external stakeholders in center oversight, performance issues and opportunities seem more likely to be perceived and adjustments made than if oversight is left to internal staff only. Because they stand to benefit, external stakeholders may be more apt to take an interest in keeping the entire development process on track and to spur efforts toward yet greater efficiency and effectiveness. The advantage of external over internal oversight, then, is seen as its greater motivation and potential for gauging the adequacy of municipal permit and plan review procedures on a continuing basis.

On the other hand, and more on point with Proposition B, external oversight bodies may be disinclined toward further diversifying their membership for fear of watering down the focus of their efforts and potentially working at cross purposes. In which case, they would seem unlikely to seek out others who are served and need to be involved in assessing the adequacy of the development process on an ongoing basis. From this perspective, it is not clear whether a limited external oversight board is in fact superior to an internal oversight board. That determination is beyond the scope of this research.

Findings relative to continuing roles of review participants in one-stop center operations suggest that administrative and oversight roles do not really speak to the proposition “who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of
the city’s permit and plan review procedures.” One may suppose that exposure to the rich and often controversial development environment would make everyone aware of the range of players who are affected by the development process, but the findings to this question do not reflect this expectation. Thus, this question is set aside and not considered with respect to verifying Proposition B.

Proposition C, to Be Verified: Surfacing Structures That Affect Service

A focus on process brings attention to structures that enable or inhibit service under permit and plan review procedures.

Two questions were entered in relation to Proposition C. The first inquired why the city chose to establish a one-stop center, given other possible options. The second question asked how the one-stop center affected service. Findings deriving from both questions were found relevant to verifying Proposition C, although at first glance, they appeared overly narrow to be reflective of broader issues and solutions.

Comparative View: Choosing to Establish a One-Stop Center

“Why did the city choose to establish a one-stop center?” This question drew two types of responses: one registering perceived improvements over the existing system, the other noting the few alternatives that had been considered (see Table 9). Each city concurred that perceived improvements included: a more efficient and effective development process; a reduction in permit review time, an improvement in customer service, and a more development-friendly attitude on the part of staff. To this list, Grand Rapids adds process accessibility, staff interaction and cross training,
Table 9

**Choosing to Establish a One-Stop Center**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements/Alternatives</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived One-Stop Improvements</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces review time</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accessible service</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifies review procedures</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better workflow management, more efficient and effective</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates development-friendly environment</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach to review</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhances staff interaction</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best solution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolves communication disconnects</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment of immediacy</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers cross training opportunity</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved staff attitudes</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosts economic development</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralizes plan intake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers shared vision by staff</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for synergy</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce command and control culture</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce command and control culture</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ample parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-county service integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatize part of review process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial one-stop center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ N = 7 \quad 7 \quad 5 \]

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.
and an environment of immediacy. Dayton contributes consolidation of reviewers and review process, favorable reception by the development community, and a best practices solution to a common problem among cities. In turn, Des Moines offers greater predictability in process outcomes and a logical solution to developer issues. All of the cities thus perceive the creation of a one-stop center as enhancing economic development, generally, and their competitive position within their region, specifically.

A virtual alternative to an actual one-stop center was considered briefly by Grand Rapids and Dayton but rejected because they did not achieve the many advantages associated with staff collocation. In Grand Rapids' case, a virtual approach also was thought not doable from the standpoint of technological capability. For Des Moines, a virtual alternative probably was not yet feasible in the late 1980s when the city opened its one-stop Permit and Development Center. However, in passing, Des Moines did consider the alternatives of contracting out some of its development services as well as a partial collocation of its reviewing offices but quickly dismissed the idea as largely ineffective in dealing with basic process issues. Dayton too sought an alternative in looking at integrating county development services within its one-stop center. But even collocating staff from different agencies within the same building was more than could be achieved politically.

Documentation associated with Grand Rapids and Dayton suggests that the one-stop concept gained currency early in the review of development processes. In Dayton's case, its City Manager had had experience with one-stop shops at two
former places of employment so it comes as no surprise that it would be advocated for Dayton. It is not clear how early in the process review the idea arose in Des Moines. No documentation for any city was found that records alternatives considered to the one-stop center. Commonly perceived improvements associated with the one-stop center over existing systems, however, were noted, including: centralization of development reviews, simplification of the development process, improved customer convenience and service, greater processing efficiency, faster issuance of permits, and more customer-friendly staff. These, apparently, were potent attractions for the development community. Thus, the one-stop center seemed the proper medicine to cure process ills.

Comparative View: The Effect of One-Stop Center on Service

The cities’ key informants concurred in a number of respects in response to the question, “Once instituted, how did the one-stop center affect service?” (See Table 10.) All three cities agreed that plan and permit review times were much reduced, that customer convenience was greatly enhanced, that customer-staff relationships had improved, and that the process had become more user friendly. Moreover, Grand Rapids and Des Moines found that their centers improved the understanding of varied code perspectives among staff and facilitated cross training. More uniquely, Des Moines felt that the review process was made more predictable, while Dayton noted greater customer satisfaction. At the same time, Dayton admitted to recent slippage in review times and staff attitudes, attributable to loss of staff
Table 10  
Effect of One-Stop Center on Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect on Service</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce plan and permit review time</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: *^A# Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhances customer convenience</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: *^A Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better customer-staff relationships</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More user-friendly process</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates cross training of staff</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better customer access to review staff</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: *# Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves staff understanding of various code perspectives</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: ^ Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves service efficiency</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: ^ Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodates concurrent review of plans</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces time-related expenses</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More predictable process</td>
<td>Grand Rapids: * Dayton: * Des Moines: *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.

through budget cuts and the redistribution of their work loads. Some respondents felt that Dayton’s review times had regressed to pre-center conditions.

Documentaation on service effects of one-stop center installation presents mixed views, lacks certainty, or is not available. Based on early responses to customer service questionnaire forms, Grand Rapids’ service is “excellent” in answer to standardized questions dealing with: acknowledging customer presence, respectful staff response, knowledgeable/resourceful staff, useful assistance, and overall service.
rating. A prepared script for the city cable TV program, "Insiders Insights; Grand Rapids’ Development Center," also speaks positively on service effects in opening the one-stop shop. "A visible positive effect has been the time reduction in building permit review time . . . Opportunities for staff enrichment and cross training is occurring through team meetings and joint review sessions" (Lumas & Schilling, 1999). On the other hand, one of the few news stories found on topic tends to focus only on complaints about the center’s public meeting room and its failings. Dayton too indicates much reduced review times together with greater processing efficiency and more customer convenience, although use of the future tense in describing these effects creates uncertainty as to actual performance even though publication postdates the center opening by several months. No documentation was found regarding service effects in Des Moines; virtually all useful accounts pre-date the center opening and are predictive in nature.

The account of observations in this section apply only to Grand Rapids’ Development Center. They are based on the author’s personal experience as the city’s Zoning Administrator assigned to the one-stop center (1998–2001) as well as periodic visits since then. Regular customers often remarked on the convenience and rapid response of the one-stop center compared to the old system. Also, the ability to meet simultaneously with multiple staff on short notice was viewed as a big advance in service. Most of all, customers applauded the turn-around time on permit reviews, reduced to 7–10 working days on average compared with 30 days or more under the old system. However, in recent times, fiscal woes have meant staff reductions to
Engineering, Planning, Stormwater Management and other partners at the center accompanied by loss of service in terms of inspections and review capacity. Personnel cutbacks are continuing. Although negative, their impacts are not entirely clear as yet.

**Synthesis: Verifying Proposition C**

Questions posed with respect to this proposition at first appear overly narrow, concentrating as they do on the one-stop center and depending on it to be reflective of broader issues and solutions. But as we proceed, it may be granted that Proposition C is adequately tested after all. Responses and documentation with respect to why the city chose to establish a one-stop center would seem to support this proposition by pointing up perceived positive characteristics of the one-stop center that enable service while, at the same time, inferring problems, i.e., service inhibitions, being overcome. Positive characteristics that were registered in common took in: greater process efficiency and effectiveness, reduced review times, better customer service, and development-friendly staff attitudes. Positive characteristics noted individually by cities were: better process accessibility, more staff interaction supporting cross training, enhanced immediacy of environment, greater consolidation of reviewers and review process, boosted development community acceptance, best solution to a common municipal issue, and improved process predictability.

Without taking the trouble to classify these characteristics, it nonetheless can be observed that virtually all of them infer service inhibitions that are overcome. In this way, "greater process efficiency and effectiveness" infers a process that elsewhere
is shown to be inefficient and ineffective, due in part to complexity, service dispersion and incoherence. "Reduced review times" infer problems of scattered reviewers, communication disconnects, and document misplacement or loss. "Better customer service" infers a process rife with inconvenience and uncertainty. And "development-friendly staff attitudes" infer reviewer staff that is isolated, lacking understanding of overall workflow, and indifferent to customer concerns. Thus, in responding to the question, "Why did the city choose to establish a one-stop center?" we find that "structures that enable service" come to mind in the case of review participants almost as ingredients surface in a stirred stew, and that they in turn infer "structures that inhibit service." It is expected that the converse is true as well, i.e., that in attending to "structures that inhibit service," those that enable service are inferred. It is argued that this pattern, surfacing enabling structures and, in turn, inferring inhibiting ones, satisfies Proposition C.

Interview responses, documentation and, in Grand Rapids' case, observation, in relation to the question, "Once instituted, how did the one-stop center affect service?" do not speak directly to Proposition C. Centers now are in place; operation takes precedence over process. Even so, changes in service may be held to reflect the assessment of permit and plan processes that precipitated the creation of the centers. Thus, the common service improvements experienced by cities—reduced review times, enhanced customer convenience, better customer-staff relationships, and more user-friendly review process—are manifestations of the focus on process that surfaced these probable service enhancements. Similarly, better understanding of varied code
perspectives, enhanced cross training, greater process predictability, and increased
customer satisfaction that were experienced by several or individual cities represent
other service enhancements brought forward by a focus on process. Thus, it can be
argued that findings in relation to this question also confirm Proposition C, if only
obliquely.

Proposition D, to Be Verified: Reducing Structural Barriers to Service

A focus on process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct
more flexible service related to permit and plan review procedures.

Three questions were prepared to test Proposition D. The first asks what
issues or problems surfaced in assessing a city's permit and plan review procedures.
The second question sought emergent ideas that would reduce obstacles to better
service. And the final question required respondents to examine their one-stop center
in operation and to enumerate helpful features, services, practices, or conditions that
were not present before. The first and second questions are viewed as two halves of a
whole. The first speaks to "structural barriers," the second to "ways to reduce" them.
The two questions are then considered together in substantiating Proposition D. The
third question is considered complete in and of itself and is so utilized.

Comparative View: Issues or Problems Found in Assessing Review Procedures

Two concerns consistently and severally emerged through surveys and
interviews in each city responding to the question of issues or problems that surfaced
in assessing review procedures: delay in processing of permits and difficulties
associated with scattered reviewing offices (see Table 11). These correspond nicely with certain responses to the earlier question of why cities decided to review their permit and plan review procedures in the first place. (Procedures were found to be complex, conflicted, slow, scattered, unpredictable, and unfriendly.) Other common concerns emerging here included: lack of process oversight and accountability; inconsistent interpretation and application of codes; poor communication and coordination among reviewing offices; and confusion among staff and customers related to process complexity, disorganization, or incoherence. Departmental turf issues with respect to process were problems raised in common by respondents in Grand Rapids and Dayton.

Beyond this point, responses were distinct to individual cities. Grand Rapids was concerned with adversarial relationships between staff and developers, outdated procedures, low priority given to review process reform because of the disconnect with the city’s strategic plan, resistance to change by some officials, and fear of challenging code officials on code interpretation in view of their ability to deny permits. Of concern to Dayton were inadequate parking, acceptance of incomplete applications, unpredictable process outcomes, lack of automation, inadequate staff knowledge of process and roles, poor communication with applicants, and delays and uncertainty attributable to citizen participation. Finally, Des Moines raised concerns with informal work-flow procedures; less able departmental staff being assigned to review roles; separate ordinances, fees, and sign-offs by individual departments; and
the disconnect between reviews and inspections under the existing organizational design.

**Table 11**

*Issues or Problems That Surfaced in Assessing Review Procedures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues or Problems</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay in processing permits</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered reviewing offices</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible or inconsistent code interpretation/application</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review process disorganized/incoherent</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of process oversight and accountability</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication and coordination among reviewing offices</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion because of process complexity</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication with applicants</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delays and uncertainty attributable to citizen participation</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of incomplete applications</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal workflow procedures</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turf issues among departments</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less able staff assigned to review roles</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying design standards beyond code requirements</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fast track process for qualifying projects</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor staff attitude toward economic development and developers</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

*Note.* Findings unique to individual cities are not shown.
Documentation in the three cities shows a concurrence of concern here with a single issue: slow permit processing. Beyond that, concerns are common to two of three cities or are individual. Dayton and Des Moines recorded concerns with scattered review offices; acceptance of incomplete applications; process uncertainty, i.e., lack of check lists and information on code requirements; and no fast track process for qualifying projects. Des Moines agreed with Grand Rapids on concerns with lack of process clarity, deficient communication with permit applicants concerning reviewer responses and project status, poor attitude toward economic development or developers, and inflexible interpretation of codes. Finally, Grand Rapids and Dayton were in accord on concerns over applying design standards beyond code requirements, and excessive influence of citizen groups concerning development. Individually, Grand Rapids recorded concerns with, too many public hearings, lack of experience of some review staff, and unwillingness of some staff to exercise available discretion. Unique to Dayton were concerns over process uncertainty, inconsistency of review, no central responsibility for process, and unnecessary review of sealed plans.

Comparative View: Ideas That Emerged That Would Improve Service

The one idea for improving services, identified repeatedly by interview respondents in each of the three cities, was the setting up of a one-stop center (see Table 12). This seems to follow from common concerns with delays in permit processing and difficulties inherent in scattered reviewing offices, identified earlier.
### Table 12

**Ideas That Emerged to Improve Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Ideas</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish one-stop center</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-application meetings with developers or more joint staff review meetings</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowchart the review process</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign single contact person for projects</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify and publish review requirements</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast track review for qualifying projects</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking of existing process steps</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient off-street parking, especially for contractor trucks</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software to better support review functions</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach to review</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater customer focus with continuous feedback</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent code interpretations, allowing for alternative solutions</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Internet for filing applications, payment of fees and checking project review status</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require more complete permit applications</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing public-private oversight of development process</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease plan re-submittal requirements</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

**Note.** Findings unique to individual cities are not shown.

Other ideas in common include: pre-application meetings between staff and developers or more joint staff review meetings on projects, flow charting of
procedural steps in the review process, and assigning or continuing to assign a single
staff person in terms of project contact and to shepherd projects through the review
process. Grand Rapids and Dayton agreed on the following ideas: convenient off-
street parking, especially for contractors; software to better support review functions;
a team approach to review; and greater customer focus including continuous
feedback. An idea common to Grand Rapids and Des Moines was consistent code
interpretation by staff with emphasis in Grand Rapids on allowing alternative
solutions for building reuse.

Individually, Des Moines interviewees pointed to the ideas of time goals for
various process tasks, consolidation of all reviewer approvals in one sign-off, merging
of all development-related fee systems, and publication of all developmental
regulations and policies in one document to the extent possible. Dayton's distinctive
ideas included: more complete permit applications, more staff discretion with respect
to approvals, relaxation of some citizen participation processes, a partnership with the
regulated community, fast track processing for qualified applications, and the
electronic filing of applications and payment of fees. Finally, respondents in Grand
Rapids mentioned concurrent review of documents; resolving problems, not just
critiquing plans; and organizing seminars for developers and officials on planning
issues, code interpretations, and revitalization tools.

Similar to interview responses in the three cities, documentation unanimously
upholds the establishment of a one-stop center and collocating of all development-
related staff as key to service improvement. Other ideas in common include: clarifying
and publishing review requirements; separate review processes based on project complexity, i.e., fast track for simple projects; and benchmarking of existing process steps. Dayton and Des Moines found common ground on requiring more complete permit applications, continuing public-private oversight of the development process, and easing of re-submittal requirements for modifying approved plans or adjustments to proposed plans. An idea common to Grand Rapids and Dayton was the use of the Internet for filing and processing of permit applications, payment of fees, and checking on review status.

Ideas that were distinctive to Grand Rapids included: an additional staff review meeting per month, a new building code facilitating reuse of buildings, concurrent review of documents, “process champions” to shepherd plans through the review process, and matching staffing and training to benchmarked process steps. Ideas unique to Dayton included: reform of the Priority Board system, easing citizen participation requirements, quarterly staff-industry meetings, a management position with responsibility for overall development process, firm timetables for review, user workshops on the review process, a city-industry mediation process, and consistent development process county-wide. Lastly, service improvement ideas that were individual to Des Moines included: improvement of staff attitudes toward development; checking regulations and policies for reasonableness; and combination code inspectors (building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and fire) for single family residential construction.
Comparative View: Helpful Features, Services, Practices, or Conditions at One-Stop Center

Respondents in each city repeatedly noted that the collocation of development process review staff was a helpful feature, service, practice, or condition not present before its one-stop center was created (see Table 13). This would seem to follow from the common response—the setting up of a one-stop center—to the earlier question on ideas emerging to improve service to the development community. It would be surprising if these common responses did not arise in tandem as they appear quite inseparable, i.e., the one-stop center solves a problem common to each city, that of remote reviewers in far-flung departments. Other responses were common to two cities or were unique to individual cities. Grand Rapids and Dayton both listed customer-friendly staff as a helpful condition, while Dayton and Des Moines identified pre-application meetings with developers as a helpful service.

Individually, Grand Rapids interviewees catalogued the following characteristics as helpful: unified letter consolidating review comments, ease of application tracking, improved coordination among reviewers, free off-street parking, collocation of public meetings and hearings of development-related boards, and centralization of files. Distinctive attributes identified by Dayton included: on-line development services, customer feedback, partnership with the development community, and more complete applications being filed. Finally, Des Moines’ list of helpful and explicit aspects of the one-stop center included: an automated means of managing the development process, one-point and consolidated payment of fees,
Table 13

*Helpful Features, Services, Practices, or Conditions at One-Stop Center*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Attributes</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocation of review staff</td>
<td>*^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved coordination among reviewers</td>
<td>*^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralization of files/records</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross training of staff</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansive service counters, booths</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference room visible from customer Service area</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient freeway access</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashier station and provision for payment of all development-related fees</td>
<td>#^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer friendly staff</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre application meetings</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple staff with view of customer counter/booth area</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, off-street parking</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction survey forms</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to City Hall</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*= survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.

*Note. Findings unique to individual cities are not shown.*

cross training of staff, a fast track process for less complicated projects, automated inspection field logs, and a dedicated computer for entering staff comments at review meetings.
By way of documentation, floor plans were obtained for one-stop centers in each city. Plans assign space by recognizable functions: customer service area and counter; administration and support staff, building code officials, engineering, and other units; and conference rooms, library, files, and storage. Space assignments and the interrelationship of assigned space are meaningful; valid inferences can be made from them. Accordingly, floor plans universally depict the collocation of review staff at one-stop centers, confirming the common responses among cities’ interviewees concerning helpful attributes. The following attributes also are assumed to be universal although identified as individually applicable. Improved coordination of staff effort is inferred as an adjunct to collocation and the accompanying proximity of work stations and opportunity for interaction, although identified only by Grand Rapids respondents as a helpful facet of its one-stop center. Cross training of staff, a beneficial feature noted by a Des Moines’ respondent, is also inferred from floor plans as a common attribute insofar as it occurs based on informal learning that takes place by bringing staff together under one roof. Centralization of development-related records, another response given in Grand Rapids, and the new opportunity for research, the cross checking of information, and automation of files, are inferred from floor plans and the knowledge that records necessarily accompany collocated review staff.

Beyond this point, floor plans are useful in their own right in discerning helpful common traits that were not present earlier. In each city, expansive service counters, multiple booths in Dayton’s case, provide good client access to services.
Five customers can be served at the same time in Dayton and Grand Rapids; seven or more, in Des Moines. A cashier or provisions for payment of all development-related fees exists in the service area at each center. One or more conference rooms for more extensive dialog with staff exist and are visible from customer service areas in all cases. And in Des Moines and Grand Rapids, multiple staff persons have a view of the counter area so that customers can be seen at once and served. In Dayton, staff must be called to a service booth by the receptionist.

Site visits each at Des Moines’ and Dayton’s one-stop shops in fall of 2003 and a 40-month personal assignment at the center in Grand Rapids (1998–2001) provided the basis for observing these facilities in operation. Collocation at these one-stop centers of key staff to the development approval process was observed, verifying respondents’ common identification of this helpful attribute. This condition was not comprehensive in all cases, however. For example, Des Moines’ Traffic Engineering partner, although recognized as part of the one-stop center, is separated by location on the floor below. And in Grand Rapids, many building code inspectors are located on the floor above the one-stop center, split from their supervisory group who perform plan review. Also in Grand Rapids, since the opening of the center, all of Zoning Enforcement has been relocated to adjoin the one-stop center which has required the opening of a second counter for zoning issues and removal of the Zoning partner from the center proper. In addition, center conditions are not fixed. It was learned through informal discussion that both Dayton and Grand Rapids have suffered serious staff loss in recent times in response to budget contractions. Moreover,
Dayton's shop has also lost the collocation of its Engineering partner in a move reassigning staff to the main Engineering Office at City Hall, thereby posing a sterner challenge.

Other observations that confirm interview responses on helpful aspects of one-stop centers are common to two cities or are individually applicable. For Grand Rapids and Dayton, free off-street customer parking is confirmed, for Dayton and Des Moines, consolidated payment of fees. Individually, observation in Grand Rapids revealed: improved coordination of review staff, presence of the public meeting room as integral to the center and development process, direct approach to City Hall and convenient freeway access, simplification of the development process through flowcharting and unifying of services and resources, opportunity for informal and concurrent consultation by users with staff, and cross training of staff based on informal learning. In Dayton, observation or informal discussion disclosed: the presence of the computer kiosk in the customer service area; availability of on-line capability for permit applications and payment of fees; availability of customer satisfaction forms; location and symbolism of the Economic Development partner; speed and efficiency of development processing, although much diminished recently; and continued convenience of the one-stop center despite loss of personnel. And, through observation, it was confirmed that Des Moines' center has the following helpful attributes: fast track review, serviceable software automating its development review process, checklists informing of correct submittal requirements, and dedicated computer for recording of staff comments at review meetings.
Synthesis: Verifying Proposition D

Issues or problems that surfaced in assessing permit and plan review procedures, the first question under this section, speak only to "structural barriers" themselves in order to clarify what those barriers are before the remaining questions seek "ways to reduce" them. Concerning this question, then, two informant responses and recorded comments converge. Delay in processing of permits was identified by respondents in all three cities; problems related to scattered reviewing offices were documented in two of them. These findings concur with particular responses to the earlier question: why cities undertook, originally, to review their procedures. (Procedures were held to be complex, conflicted, slow, scattered, unpredictable, and unfriendly.) Other common concerns, those of respondents, included: lack of process oversight and accountability, inconsistent interpretation and application of codes, poor communication and coordination among reviewing offices, and staff and customer confusion related to process complexity.

From documentation were drawn the following issues, common to at least two cities: acceptance of incomplete applications, process uncertainty, no fast track process, lack of process clarity, deficient communication with permit applicants, poor staff attitudes toward economic development or developers, inflexible interpretation of codes, applying design standards beyond code requirements, and excessive influence of citizen groups concerning development. From this account, it seems clear that the question on issues or problems that surfaced in assessing permit and plan review procedures has unearthed numerous obstacles to satisfactory service.
Solutions, however, are not expressed, although perhaps implied. Thus, while this effort must be regarded as preliminary or incomplete, i.e., yielding “structural barriers that obstruct more flexible service” although not offering “ways to reduce” them, the problem is with the question. In consequence, the proposition is not validated here, although “a focus on process,” even if partial, is shown to be clearly revealing in its effect.

Emergent ideas to improve service can realistically be regarded as the other half of the earlier question on issues or problems that surfaced in assessing permit and plan review procedures. Together they comprise a fuller tactic in verifying the proposition being considered. Instituting a one-stop center was the collective response by interviewees to the question on emergent ideas that would improve service. Documentation concurred, adding as qualifier the collocation of development-related staff. This then was the popular choice among “ways to reduce” the prevailing “structural barriers” of delay in processing and dispersion of reviewers. Other ideas common to all cities emerging both from respondent and recorded sources were as follows: pre-application meetings or more joint staff-review meetings; flowcharting of procedural steps in the review process; assigning one person as project contact or champion; clarifying and publishing review requirements; separate, fast track review process for uncomplicated projects; and benchmarking of existing process steps. These ideas speak to problems enumerated earlier. Pre-application and more joint staff review meetings speaks to process uncertainty and delay in processing; flowcharting, to process complexity and incoherence; assigning
staff contact or champion, to poor staff communication and coordination; fast track
review, to no separate process for uncomplicated projects; and benchmarking, to lack
of process oversight and accountability.

Proposals, again from respondent or recorded sources, with concurrence in
two of the three cities included: convenient off-street parking, software to support
review functions, a team approach to review, greater customer focus and feedback,
consistent code interpretations, more complete permit applications, public-private
oversight of the development process, easier re-submittal requirements for changes to
approved or proposed plans, and use of the Internet for filing and processing of
permit applications and payment of fees. These ideas too can be matched with issues
identified earlier, but the message already is sufficiently clear. Out of this “focus on
process,” i.e., procedural assessment, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that these
ideas plainly “reveal ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct more flexible
service.” Without further discussion, Proposition D appears validated in relation to
this question.

The last question sought helpful features, services, practices, or conditions at
the one-stop center that did not exist before. This inquiry seeks new “ways to
overcome structural barriers to more flexible service” with the one-stop center having
been implemented. It seeks explicit improvements over the earlier mode of operation.
In so doing, it presumes that the focus on process continues, that it does not cease at
the completion of the assessment phase. Information here is accumulated from three
sources: interviews, documentation, and observation. The three sources in the three
cities collectively concur that collocation of review staff dominates as a helpful attribute. As noted before, this is not unexpected since the one-stop concept itself presumes collocation at some level of inclusion. Helpful characteristics attributable to centers in all cities, revealed through documentation, primarily floor plans, or observation, are the following: customer feedback forms, one or more conference rooms adjoining the customer service area; centralization of files and records, software automating at least part of the development review process, and flowcharting contributing to process simplification. Inferred from the collocation of center staff and personal knowledge are additional helpful attributes: concurrent consultation with multiple staff, improved coordination of staff effort, and cross training of staff proceeding from informal learning.

From one or more of the three information sources are listed helpful facets in two of the three cities: customer-friendly staff; pre-application meetings with developers; submittal requirement checklists; expansive counters serving five to seven customers at once; multiple staff with a view of the counter; cashier work station for payment of development-related fees; free, off-street customer parking; on-line capability for filing permit applications and payment of fees; and proximity to City Hall, location of final development-related approval. Two cities presently are experiencing serious loss of process speed and efficiency owing to budget cutbacks, although they report continuing customer convenience in relation to other aspects of the one-stop concept. Based on these findings, it is argued that the focus on process carries forward beyond the assessment phase, perhaps more on a reflexive footing,
and repeatedly "reveals ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct more flexible service." In this way, responses to the final question of this section can be considered to verify Proposition D.

Proposition E, to Be Verified: Revealing More Flexible Services

*A focus on process reveals more flexible services in relation to permit and plan review procedures.*

A single question was applied in relation to Proposition E. (Several others did not survive the survey instrument’s pilot test.) The question addressed what new actions were introduced following the opening of the one-stop center to further improve services. The question seeks service improvements or innovations resulting from staff insights, customer suggestions or other stimuli rather than those reflecting obstacles or inhibitions to service.

Comparative View: New Actions Launched Over Time to Further Improve Service

Respondents in Grand Rapids and Des Moines identified the installation of software that automated some or much of the permit approval process as a new action launched over time that improved one-stop services (see Table 14). Most actions, however, were distinctive to individual cities. Grand Rapids noted that its team leaders evolved a whip function that prodded reviewers to complete reviews in a timely manner. Also, provision soon was made for the payment of fees by credit card, thereby improving customer options. Dayton upgraded its use of the Internet to include permit services: filing of applications, payment of fees, and issuance of
Table 14

*New Actions Launched Over Time to Further Improve Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Actions</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of software automating approval process</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Whip” function of center leaders to maintain timely reviews</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of credit/debit cards for payment of fees</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion development services via the Internet</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development role widened to include meeting facilitator</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganization, one-stop center made part of Planning and Community Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-the-counter reviews of simple permit applications</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issuance of multiple permits for same house plan in same subdivision</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified review letter</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing of overdue permit reviews and delinquent reviewers</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer computer kiosk</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded cashier role</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood participation at certain pre-application meetings</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated computer to record reviewer comments at meetings</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast track review option</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development policy handbook</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submittal requirements matrix handout</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.
permits. The center also expanded the function of its Economic Development partner by adding meeting facilitator to its advocacy role. Actions taken in Des Moines were the most dramatic and far reaching, but then the center's longevity perhaps offered a clearer perception of the need for change or put it in the path of change. In addition to the installation of software that transformed its permit process, the city also merged three departments to create an overarching Planning and Community Development Department integrating many interrelated functions and acknowledging the one-stop center as a key component. In addition, the center began over-the-counter reviews for simple permit applications and began issuance of multiple permits approving the same house plan for different sites within a subdivision. The two survey/interview respondents \( (N = 2) \) in Des Moines offered unique comment here. Thus, while enriching the account of new actions, responses were not mutually reinforcing.

Observations made in the three cities tended to underscore the uniqueness of individual one-stop centers in relation to actions launched over time to improve service. Grand Rapids originated a unified response letter to permit applicants summarizing reviewer comments and plan changes required for approval. Internal discipline concerning reviews was enforced by a practice of circulating lists of overdue permit applications together with delinquent reviewers. And soon after beginning operation, the center accepted credit cards for payment of fees. After start-up, Dayton introduced a computer kiosk to the lobby of its one-stop center, allowing customers to check on the status of permit applications independent of staff
assistance. Also, the center began adding permit services to its Internet home page which it continues to expand as its expertise grows. For its part, Des Moines greatly boosted the role of the center cashier to accept payments of many kinds. It invited neighborhood participation at pre-application meetings with developers in certain circumstances. Additionally, the center dedicated a computer to the main conference room to record staff review comments. Also, a fast track review option was introduced to benefit developers needing fast response on permit processing and willing to pay extra for the time savings. A submittal requirements matrix was generated as a handout for applicants needing a summary reference page. Finally, the center modified and installed computer software that automated many of its permit processing tasks and made access widely available to city officials and offices so that retrieval of data and records became nearly instantaneous.

Synthesis: Verifying Proposition E

Informant responses and personal observations pertaining to the question of new actions launched over time to further improve service were largely unique. Responses and observations neither confirm one another for the most part nor was there significant internal concurrence among respondents even of individual cities. And little replication of new actions was observed among cities. Upon reflection, this finding should not be surprising since the question sought new actions, beyond the many common initial services provided at the opening of one-stop centers. A noteworthy exception to these findings is the software automating permit processing
in Grand Rapids and Des Moines. Dayton respondents, presumably, did not list this action here because that city’s process already was automated to some extent before the center became a reality. Generally, however, actions tended to be innovations that were conceived uniquely by individuals or staff responding to distinctive circumstances even though the working contexts were similar.

Some “actions” identified by respondents or through direct observation were indirect in effecting more flexible services. For example, Grand Rapids’ use of its team leaders as whips and its listing of delinquent reviewers, and Des Moines’ departmental reorganization and its dedicated computer for reviewer comment at meetings all were actions internal to city operations. There may have been no direct service to customers. But, clearly, such actions hold or should hold crucial indirect advantages for customers in terms of bureaucratic performance through improved efficiency and effectiveness.

Information generated earlier under Proposition D, the third question (helpful features, services, practices, or conditions at the center not present before), provided an informative list, with many items in common in the three cities. These clearly tied in with a focus on process during the assessment phase of the cities’ permit and plan review procedures. Respondent comments and observations generated under the present question, i.e., new actions launched over time that further improved service, seem also to infer a continuing focus on process after such an assessment phase and of the implementation of the one-stop center. And while new actions most frequently are unique to individual one-stop shops, they nonetheless continue to emerge,
although at a more measured rate. Clearly these actions constitute or "reveal more flexible services," although they do not reinforce one another across or within cases. Thus, Proposition E may, at best, be regarded as partially verified.

Proposition F, to Be Verified: Expectations of Improvements

A focus on process raises expectations for improved service and better coordination of activities related to permit and plan review procedures.

Five questions were raised in relation to Proposition F. The first sought explicit signs of public or participant expectations of improved service or better coordination of activities arising out of the focus on process. The second question searched for media and other reporting of the assessment process and its outcomes. The third question focused on efforts to report the one-stop center’s existence once it was established. Question 4, avenues for external input into center operations, looked for institutionalized means of outside influence to prompt continuing service improvement and responsiveness to stakeholders. Lastly, the question on how location, design, or practices convey center purposes sought expressions of center intent in concrete terms. The last two questions proved more valuable in generating responses that rounded out case studies than for their potential contributions in verifying Proposition F. Based on these findings, they were determined not relevant for confirmation purposes and so are not applied to verification of this proposition.
Comparative View: Expectations of Improved Service or Coordination

Respondents in each city indicated that the involvement of top city officials in assessing development processes was a sign that cities were serious about solving problems and, accordingly, participants expected that improvements would be made (see Table 15). Although Dayton alone noted initial skepticism about change, ongoing process problems recorded in other sections of this analysis for all three cities suggests that such skepticism was universal. In spite of doubts, city staff and client community in Dayton anticipated a best practices cure for process ills, while Des Moines looked to make its process more predictable in terms of review consistency and timeliness. In Grand Rapids, an expectation was that collocation would lead to process streamlining and standardization of review practices.

Table 15

Participant or Public Expectations of Improved Service or Coordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of Expectations</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of top city officials</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record of continuing involvement of</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private and public participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

Note. Findings unique to individual cities are not shown.
Dayton’s Development Enhancement Services Team (DEST) had certain expectations that are reflected in its public-private composition. For example, while developer participants hoped for procedural shortcuts and firm deadlines, city staff looked for more complete permit applications and code analysis from customers. And where private participants emphasized customer service, public participants sought to balance service with code compliance. Participants drawn only from the public sector on assessment teams in Des Moines and Grand Rapids tended to reflect less divergent expectations. For Des Moines, these included the following hopes: that the development process would be more efficient; that staff would provide better, more professional service; that improvements would reduce customer dissatisfaction; and that the process would be less frustrating, leading to fewer confrontations between customers and staff. In Grand Rapids, expectations were mirrored in: staff’s emergent willingness to seek solutions to problems rather than carp on non compliance with codes; staff’s growing recognition that developer and city objectives are similar, even though approaches differ; favorable customer response to pending changes; requests by customer groups for workshops explaining prospective service changes; and user group involvement in choosing the one-stop initiative and its help in “selling” the idea to the private sector.

Explicit signs of participant or public expectations for improved service and better coordination are scarce. Most must be inferred. In press accounts for Dayton and Des Moines, such signs are attributed to participants and the development community and are couched in such phrases as: “signs of changing times,” “promising
representation of the way the city ought to do business,” “streamlining should be welcomed by builders and developers,” “believe they can make improvements and . . . hopeful they will,” “area builders praised the city and said the plan may encourage construction,” and “several builders and contractors were generally supportive of the streamlining plan.” For Grand Rapids, only a comment in meeting minutes could be found that indicated that the City Commission had expectations of improvements being implemented. More telling, perhaps, is the record of development community and staff participation in addressing issues and generating solutions. Exhibited in other sections, it seems abundantly clear that their patient involvement in the assessment process demonstrated their belief and their hope, i.e. their expectations, that improved service and better coordination would occur.

Comparative View: Media Coverage and Other Reporting of Assessment Outcomes

The reporting of assessment process outcomes appears spotty and uncertain at best as reflected in respondent recollections (see Table 16). There was more certainty concerning the opening of the respective one-stop centers. Grand Rapids and Dayton seemed to recall both press and TV coverage of center inaugurations. Dayton thought there had been sporadic reporting prior to the opening. Des Moines supposed there had been presentations at a City Council decision point and at the opening of its center itself. One respondent also had the lasting impression that any media coverage had been negative. Survey/interview responses in Des Moines were fewest (N = 2), and were not reinforcing.
Table 16

*Media Coverage and Other Reporting of Assessment Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Coverage/Reports</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press and TV coverage of the opening of the one-stop center</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV coverage well after opening of center, mainly services oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press reports assessment outcomes, ties one-stop center to evaluation exercise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press enumerates other recommended changes to development review process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some reporting prior to center opening</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation to City Council at decision points and at center opening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>3 4 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

In terms of documentation, reports of outcomes of the review assessment process in the three cities present a mixed picture. News stories in Dayton and Des Moines rather explicitly identify the center as part of a set of recommendations arrived at through an evaluation exercise involving both public and private input. In both cases, several articles enumerate other recommended changes to the development review processes.

One-stop centers are seen as part of a more comprehensive effort to effect change. For Grand Rapids, however, inferences must be made to visualize the one-
stop center as a product of the assessment activity. Curiously, no media account
could be found that exhibited awareness either of the private sector focus groups that
met early on with the City Manager’s Office to identify problems and issues, nor of
the staff assessment group that met regularly for well over a year to work out
solutions. In summary, news stories tend to confirm respondents’ limited recollections
of reporting of assessment process outcomes for Dayton and Des Moines. For Grand
Rapids, based on media coverage, such outcomes and linkage to an assessment
process can only be surmised. TV coverage, mentioned by respondents in Grand
Rapids and Dayton, occurred well after the centers were in operation and tended to
be service-focused, although Dayton briefly traced the genesis of its center to the
prior assessment process.

Comparative View: Reporting the One-Stop Center’s Existence and Explaining Its
Meaning

In response to the question of reporting the presence and meaning of the one-
stop center, respondents in all three cities mentioned the use of brochures to explain
and promote their centers (see Table 17). TV programs, press releases, news stories
or interest pieces, and presentations or work-shops were common to at least two
cities as a means for getting the word out to the community. Individually, the
following techniques were cited: open house, city-developer meetings, letter of
explanation to regular clientele, and personal promotion to individual customers or
when meeting with outside groups. Dayton noted that it provides information on the
center on an ongoing basis to the city’s Entrepreneurial Center for the benefit of new
Table 17

*Reporting the One-Stop Center's Existence and Explaining Its Meaning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting/Explaining Center</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional literature/brochures</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News stories</td>
<td>(\wedge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV program on center services</td>
<td>*(^\wedge)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations/educational workshops</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal promotion to individual customers</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or when meeting with outside groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest pieces in trade journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-developer meetings</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of explanation to regular clientele</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press releases</td>
<td>*(^\wedge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>(\wedge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference by other city functions</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open house</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word got around on its own</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(* = survey/interview response; \(\wedge\) = documented findings; \# = site observation.\)

business. Finally, a respondent in Des Moines noted that even without promotional assistance, word of the center's presence and meaning spread quickly in response to fast action on the issuance of permits. Based on personal experience, it can be inferred that this form of communication was common to all three cities.

Two news stories in each of the cities record the presence of the cities' one-stop centers, although in the Grand Rapids case, the reporting is indirect at best.
News accounts in Dayton and Des Moines explain the background, staffing, service improvements, and significance of their centers. In Dayton, an editorial and city press release gave additional insight into the meaning of the one-stop Building Services Department. Press items confirm respondents' recollections of news stories and interest pieces, and in Dayton's case, a press release. Materials related to TV programs concerning their respective one-stop shops were found in Grand Rapids and Dayton which explore the importance of these facilities and confirm interviewee remembrances of this coverage. On the other hand, brochures explaining and promoting centers and their services per se were not found in any city. Available brochures do cover when and why permits are needed, the permit process, developmental steps and the permitting process, common plan review problems, explanations of building and zoning codes, and related topics. These at the centers and with center identification or references tended to define the center and its meaning by inference.

Observation in Grand Rapids, based on service at the city's one-stop Development Center, verifies several approaches utilized in reporting and explaining it. During the early months of operation, team leaders met with representatives from numerous developer and builder firms to exhibit center facilities, describe and explain its operations, contrast it with former city practices, and answer questions. Team leaders also went on the road to area design firms during the first year of operation carrying the message to interested professionals. Center staff also gave tours of the one-stop facility and made explanations individually on a continuing basis as they met
with customers. Moreover, team leaders appeared on the city’s cable TV channel, the City Manager’s program entitled “Insiders Insights” within a year of the center’s opening, to describe and explain its significance and impact. On the other hand, the announced city contract with a communication and marketing firm to increase awareness of the center’s existence through the creation of a series of brochures was not carried out, resulting in a deficiency on that score. The brief opportunity for site observations in Dayton and Des Moines did not provide an adequate opportunity for knowledge of comparable activities in those cities.

Comparative View: Avenues for External Input Into Center Operations

To a substantial degree, respondents in each city responded in similar fashion to the question on existing avenues for external input into center operations (see Table 18). All concurred on two paths: the use of customer comment cards or survey forms, and verbal complaints to city management and elected officials. In two of the three cities, respondents agreed on the following external means of being heard: by way of comment directly to staff; and through periodic meetings of development community representatives as monitors of the permit approval process, presumably with city staff in attendance. Individually, Grand Rapids and Des Moines respondents also listed outreach at code workshops and round table discussions, and public comment at board or commission meetings and hearings pertaining to project approvals, respectively.
Table 18

Avenues for External Input Into Center Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Input Opportunities</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer comment/survey forms</td>
<td>*^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint to city management or elected officials</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint/comment to staff</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback at project review meetings</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings of external monitors</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach at code workshops and roundtable discussions</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public comment at board/commission meetings/hearings</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual budget process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.

The three cities all seek customer service feedback through the use of comment cards available at their respective customer service areas. This is the one documented avenue in common for external input into center operations, confirming interviewee responses. Records were found in Dayton alone that established the existence and the ongoing meetings of an external advisory group to monitor the development approval process and one-stop center operations. Records show intent both in Grand Rapids and Des Moines for future meetings with the development community, but no documentation was found of such meetings being held.
In Grand Rapids and Dayton, the availability of survey forms measuring customer satisfaction was observed, confirming further the use of this approach to external input into center operations. Des Moines was awaiting the printing of a new batch of survey forms (on postcard stock for mail back purposes) over the site visit period so that their availability at the center was not observed. Service as an employee at Grand Rapids’ one-stop center offered wide opportunities for observation. Based on that 40-month observation period, a number of individual interviewee responses were confirmed, including: customer input and complaints made directly to staff and up the city hierarchy to the City Manager and elected officials; suggestions concerning procedures and practices, chiefly by experienced customers; and initial outreach to the customer base at workshops and seminars. Additional meetings of focus groups comprising external stakeholders after the process assessment phase was not observed, although informal discussion with center staff indicates that a meeting did occur in 2003 after the survey and interview period.

Comparative View: Conveying Purpose Through Location, Design, and Practice

In some respects, respondents in all of the cities were of one mind replying to the question: “How do location, design or practices convey the center’s purpose?” Common responses included: central location (although the Grand Rapids’ center is nearly a mile from downtown), good or adequate off-street parking facilities, collocation of all or most review staff, and floor plans that encourage interaction with customers and among staff (see Table 19). Two cities mentioned: good freeway and
Table 19

*Conveying Purpose Through Location, Design, and Practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conveying Features</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central location</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/adequate off-street parking</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocation of most review staff</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor plans that encourage interaction among staff</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous counters or semi-private customer service booths</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference rooms visible from customer service area</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good freeway and street access</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient floor plan layout of service areas, work stations, files, etc.</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster, streamlined development process</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved use of internal space in support of center service</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility/proximity of support staff to service counter/booths</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line development services</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity of center to City Hall</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible/convenient receptionist and Cashier functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meeting room integral to center</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan room dedicated to review activity</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuse of obsolete warehouse inspiring similar activity nearby</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business-like quality of center layout and finish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear, well-documented development-related practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive perception of development process and staff by clientele</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified letter to permit applicants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer kiosk in customer service area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development advocate off lobby for customer assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor space for future collocation of county permit operation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.
main street access, conference rooms visible from the customer service area, good response times with respect to building permit approvals, and improvement or ongoing effort to improve use of internal space in support of center services.

Individual city responses identified: the presence of a public meeting-hearing room attached to the center, the visibility and proximity to counter area of support staff; the presence of an expansive service counter, the use of semi-private booths instead of service counter, the availability of on-line services, the business-like quality of center layout and finish, a location within blocks of City Hall, and clear and well documented development-related practices.

Floor plans document similarities among cities regarding the conveying of center purpose through location, design, or practices. In this context, mutual design attributes confirm: collocation of all or most key development review staff; open floor plans and work stations that encourage communication and interaction; conference rooms adjacent to and visible from customer service areas; and generous service counters, or in Dayton’s case, booths, accommodating five or more interactions with customers at the same time. Floor plans for two cities show agreement regarding the proximity and visibility of counter staff to customers. Separately, Grand Rapids’ floor plan conveys center purpose in exhibiting at least two elements: a plan room consolidating document review activities, and a public meeting-hearing room adjoining the customer service area. For Dayton, a news story records the center’s convenient, central location and on-site parking facilities that accommodate contractor trucks.
Direct observation revealed much agreement among the three cities where center purpose is expressed through its location, design, or practices. In common are the following center attributes: central location, although not downtown for Grand Rapids; good street and freeway access; adequate off-street parking, although metered in Des Moines; collocation of most key review staff; open floor plan and work stations, although modified in Dayton; conference rooms visible from service areas; and generous service counters, booths for Dayton. For two of the three cities mutual attributes were found as follows: visible counter support staff, receptionist and cashier work stations, proximity of center to City Hall, and on-line development services. Observations distinct to Grand Rapids were: use of a converted warehouse stimulating reuse of other obsolete industrial buildings nearby, public meeting-hearing room as part of its one-stop center, a plan room dedicated to review purposes, and a unified letter to permit applicants listing review comments and permit approval status. For Dayton, unique observations were: a business-like interior finish in terms of materials and layout, a computer kiosk in the lobby for customer use, the location of an economic development specialist off the lobby to interact with customers needing assistance, and floor space available for the county’s permit operation should there be the political will to collocate here. An attribute unique to Des Moines is the repeated attempts to best serve customers through staff and work station relocation in response to the design issue posed by the center’s bifurcated floor elevations.
Synthesis: Verifying Proposition F

Three of the five questions here appear to have a readily perceived bearing on the proposition they would verify. The perceived bearing, for the most part, can be seen in the language of headings representing the questions posed: “participant or public expectations,” “media coverage and other reporting,” and “reporting the one-stop center and explaining its meaning.” The latter two, “avenues for external input in center operations” and “conveying purpose through location, design or practice,” do not appear to have a direct bearing on the proposition and so will be dropped from the discussion in this section. Suffice it to say that they nonetheless benefit discussion by informing and illuminating those areas of interest concerning one-stop centers.

Participation of top officials in assessing the development process in each of the three cities signaled resolute commitment to solving longstanding problems. Although explicit expression of expectations is difficult to document, it appears that both public and private participants expected that improvements would be made. This is reflected in the behavior of the respective task forces and development community stakeholders that undertook to do the assessment: their attendance at meetings, their effort to identify and classify issues, and their advocating of recommendations to their respective city councils for adoption. Each city had its own distinctive focus, but all determined the one-stop shop to be the centerpiece among the solutions proposed. Their expectations can be read in the behavior they exhibited and solutions they carried forward. Based on findings here, it seems clear that the focus on process led participants to expect improved services and better coordination of activities related
to permit and plan review procedures. There also is evidence of the larger
development community's expectations. Based on these findings and assertions, it is
argued that Proposition F is verified insofar as the development community and city
staff expectations are concerned.

Some sense of citizen expectations regarding the assessing of development
processes can be attained by way of respondent accounts and documentation of media
coverage. However, findings here are mixed. Respondent recollections in all cases
appear uncertain at best. In terms of documentation, news stories in Dayton and Des
Moines address assessment processes and outcomes, including how the one-stop
center resolves some outstanding issues. One-stop centers are viewed as part of a
larger effort to overhaul development approval processes. Local coverage in Des
Moines amounted to four articles of substance over a 2-year period. Dayton did better
with six news stories and two press releases over a 20-month period. For Grand
Rapids, however, only three brief news stories were found over a 14-month period.
Coverage was superficial, and it was necessary to infer the one-stop center as a
product of an overall assessment activity. Given these uneven findings, it is concluded
that while expectations of Dayton's citizenry for better service and coordination may
have been raised somewhat, expectations of Grand Rapids citizenry probably were
not. From these explorations, it has not been established that a focus on process raises
expectations of the general citizenry for improved services and better coordination of
activities related to permit and plan review procedures. From this perspective,
Proposition F is not verified.
Reporting the one-stop center's existence and explaining its meaning, as a test of Proposition F, presumes that the focus on process does not end with the completion of the assessment activity, but rather that it carries forward into the operational phase of a recommended solution. Accordingly, Proposition F is evaluated in light of efforts to apprise stakeholders of the reality and significance of the one-stop center. All three cities reported the use of brochures to explain and promote their centers to customers and citizens, but the existence of the brochures could not be verified. On the other side, press coverage was found that recorded each center’s existence, but adequate explanation of their meaning and value was not universal. Evidence of one-time TV coverage could be found for two of the three cities.

Direct observation in Grand Rapids indicated an assortment of approaches were used to inform principal clientele, approaches that may have applied to all three cities but, because of practical limitations, could not be observed elsewhere. Finally, it is expected that the word of a center’s opening spread very quickly in all cases without the aid of media or other institutional sources of information, but only among development community customers. In summary then, mixed findings suggest that user group customers may have been adequately informed in regard to one-stop center’s existence and value, but that the general citizenry probably was not. And, thus, it is concluded that a focus on process may indeed raise expectations of city staff and the development community concerning improved services and better coordination, but that such focus may not do so for other stakeholders.
Proposition G, to Be Verified: Accountability to Those Served or Involved

A focus on process increases accountability to those served by or involved in the process.

Four original questions prepared in relation to Proposition G have been combined into two questions. This was done because respondents frequently answered both pairs of questions in effect as though they were single questions. The first combined question should read as follows: “What benefits resulted from adopted changes to permit and plan review procedures or following the opening of the one-stop center?” The original question—the first part of the combined question—viewed benefits arising from the assessing and changing of the development process as a fulfillment of expectations. Once achieved, the process would be held accountable for benefits. The second part of the combined question sought additional benefits in the same light, as fruits of expectations for which the center, as process manager, now would be held accountable, but it also looked for unanticipated benefits.

The second set of original questions read the same way, “To whom do benefits extend?” so that combining them would not change the wording. Each of the original questions, it was anticipated, would elicit different sets of benefits. Combining the questions, it is thought, better preserves the integrity of the original questions and the subsequent findings.
Comparative View: Benefits From Changes to Permit and Plan Review Procedures or Following the Opening of the One-Stop Center

Respondents in the three cities were in accord on at least three indicators with respect to benefits resulting from changes to permit and plan review procedures or following the center opening (see Table 20). Reduced process time was a response that two or more respondents shared in common in each case. Benefits named by at least one respondent in each city were process simplification and clarification, and customer view of staff more as partners and less as adversaries. Responses common to two of the three cities were: free, on-site parking; greater customer convenience; opportunity for cross training of staff; improved communication and coordination among staff; and improved staff satisfaction or morale and pride in their work. Informants, mutually or individually at respective cities, gave the following responses respecting benefits: better coordination of customer services, more consistent code interpretations, synergy achieved with public meeting-hearing room at the center, ease of center access [street and freeway], flexibility of work schedules in light of cross trained staff, more democratic decision making involving center staff, better staff work performance, more predictable reviews, improved staff attitude, more user friendly service, more efficient work environment, consolidation of development-related permits and processes, more complete applications achieved, certain permits provided at staff’s discretion, improved on-line services, projects built more quickly, and the city’s increased competitiveness with suburbs. Two respondents in Dayton noted loss of some benefits over the past year or two, while a Grand Rapids’
Table 20

Benefits of Development Process Change or Following One-Stop Center Opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced process time</td>
<td><em>^</em> #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process simplification/clarification</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer view staff more as partners and less as adversaries</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater customer convenience, collocating of staff and services</td>
<td><em>^</em> #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of center access</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, on-site parking</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved staff satisfaction/morale</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for cross training of staff</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved coordination among staff and of customer services</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved, more helpful staff attitudes</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast track for simpler projects</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous process monitoring, oversight</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved on-line services</td>
<td>* #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre application/additional staff review meetings per month</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = site observation.

Note. Findings unique to individual cities are not shown.

respondent focused on further improvements needed before benefits could be fully realized.

Creation of a one-stop shop collocating key review staff is the central intended change documented for all three cities to their development review procedures in
order to benefit the development community. A second shared initiative to benefit
customers is reduced process review time. Two of the three cities concur on the
following changes: more convenient development services, fast track process for
single-family homes and simple projects, and continuous process oversight. Changes
unique to individual cities include: an additional staff review meeting per month,
minimum submittal requirements with evaluation checklist, additional review staff;
literature describing and clarifying the review process, one person accountable for the
entire development review process, an accelerated plan modification process, firm
review schedule, and dependable funding of center operations.

Two shared benefits, the collocation of all development-related plan reviewers
and ease of center access, were observed to follow the opening of one-stop centers in
all of the cities. The benefit of free, on-site parking and improved online services were
observed as common to two of three cities. Other benefits are identified as unique to
individual shops, due more perhaps to uniqueness of the opportunity to observe,
however, and less to uniqueness of the shops themselves. In Dayton, these
individually observed benefits include: the one person accountable for all building,
housing and zoning functions; expansion of the city’s Web site to allow status checks
by permit applicants; and the computer kiosk in the lobby. Opportunity favored
exploration in Des Moines, permitting observation of the following procedural
changes or benefits: the expanded cashier role, the pre-application meeting; the fast
track review option, the automated permitting/inspection/licensing system, and the
automated inspector logs. Finally, in Grand Rapids, where observation was
Continuous over an extended period, more direct customer benefits were seen to include: reduced process time, public meeting-hearing room at the center, ease of center access [street and freeway], acceptance of credit cards for payment of fees, and process simplification and clarification. Indirect stakeholder benefits, some procedural in nature, included: improved staff communication and coordination; cross training opportunities for staff; better staff performance; more job satisfaction, less strife; posting of delinquent reviewers; and unified letter of review comments to permit applicants.

Comparative View: To Whom Do Benefits Extend?

As expected, cities concurred on a number of the beneficiaries of changes to permit and plan review procedures or to the opening of the one-stop center (see Table 21). All identified the development community, review staff, and taxpayers as gainers. Grand Rapids and Dayton saw end users and the community in general as benefiting. Individual cities also mentioned: internal customers, neighborhoods, the city and regional economy, city visitors, and other cities seeking model process solutions.

Documentation for all of the cities saw the designers/builders/developers, i.e., the development community, as the clear beneficiary of process change or of the launching of the one-stop center. Two of the three cities agreed that citizens in general benefit. And, separately, cities identified neighborhoods and taxpayers as benefiting.
Table 21

Those Benefiting From Process Change or Opening of One-Stop Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those Benefiting</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development community</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center review staff</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax payers/city treasury</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End users of development</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens/community in general</td>
<td>*^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown reuse developers</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City visitors</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cities seeking model solution to development process</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone having anything to do with building development</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property owners</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhoods</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/regional economy</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal city customers</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings.

Synthesis: Verifying Proposition G

"Accountability requires expectations. Without specific expectations . . . it is impossible to create accountability. . . . accountability for performance requires some explicit expectations about what results will be produced by when." (Behn, p. 63).

The focus on process, i.e., the effort to assess the development review process and to
resolve its problems, it is argued, creates participant expectations that improvements will be made. Recommended improvements invariably specify the results sought and, frequently, the specific time frame in which improvements will be made. Elsewhere in this study, for example, a report to the Des Moines City Council provided that its site plan review process should be modified creating two review processes, one for small projects, the other for large. The report also estimated a date for implementation. It did the same for the other recommendations in its eight-point program to improve the city's development process, including establishment of the one-stop center. Documentation for other cities provided similar change examples if not always specific time lines for their accomplishment. Where explicit deadlines are not specified, though, rapid implementation can be inferred from the economic development context, the official pledges to effect change, its visibility on decision makers' agendas, the public-private effort invested in making changes, and the public attention given the matter. In this way, it can be said that explicit expectations about achieving process outcomes and related time lines materialized in each case.

Accountability also assumes values to be upheld and supported by expectations (Behn, 2001, p. 7). It is suggested that the benefits identified in this section comprise, or reflect, participant values. Among the most frequently recognized benefits or reflected values registered here are: reduced processing time, collocation of review staff, process simplification and clarification, and greater customer convenience. We have then, it would appear, the conditions for accountability. Expressed here are the benefits or reflected values. Recommended
improvements are found in various reports to the City Council or the City Manager in
the respective cities. And expectations are inferred in terms of process participation
by the primary service clientele, involvement of top city officials assisted by
development-review staff, and the fulfillment of cities’ charges to recommend process
improvements to decision makers, accompanied by explicit or inferred deadlines for
execution.

In Dayton’s case, a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) was established by its
original assessment task force to provide external oversight on the implementation of
recommended improvements. Grand Rapids provided an internal oversight body
involving relevant officials, and several irregular meetings with development
community representatives have occurred. Des Moines, as part of its eight-point
program, recommended that a system be established to monitor and evaluate the
permit review process on an ongoing basis, to include semi-annual meetings with the
development community to identify problem areas and exchange information. While
not uniform or assured, these efforts, on their face, seem to offer an implicit
recognition of increased accountability both to those served and to those involved in
the assessment process. On this line of reasoning, then, it is argued that Proposition G
is verified, that a focus on process increases accountability to those served by or
involved in the process. This appears to be a kind of “Political accountability . . .
imposed informally by various stakeholders in the accountability environment,
working either directly or through elected officials’ (Romzek & Dubnik, 1987, pp.
Proposition H, to Be Verified: Balancing Flexibility and Accountability

A focus on process induces explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions with respect to permit and plan review procedures, thereby upholding an equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.

Two questions were raised with respect to this proposition. Referencing the assessment phase, one question inquired why some changes to the permit and plan review procedures were adopted while others were rejected. The second question asks why some changes were chosen over others after the one-stop center was established and in operation.

Comparative View: Why Some Changes to Review Process Were Made and Others Rejected

Respondents in all cities gave somewhat divergent responses to the question of why some changes to the development review process were made and others were rejected (see Table 22). This has required a bit of interpretation. In addition, some answers were partial. Respondents in Grand Rapids and Dayton seemed to be identifying similar standards where change had to "appear beneficial from many perspectives" versus "maintaining a balance between developer and community interests." Also, there was apparent agreement between the two cities on "cost" or "fiscal standards." And Dayton and Des Moines seemed to be concurring in listing "perceived outcomes" as against "timely and efficient issuance of permits." Beyond these responses, there was little agreement. Grand Rapids identified its union contracts, infusing more flexibility into its building code, and fear of change and
Table 22

Why Some Changes to Review Process Were Made and Others Rejected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Influencing Change</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial from many perspectives/balance between developer/community interest</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/fiscal standards</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived outcomes/timely and efficient issuance of permits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union contract provisions</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More flexibility in building code regarding building reuse</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of change/technology</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal considerations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of implementation/most impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictability of outcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response.

technology, as being important criteria. Dayton listed legal considerations and the concept of "low-hanging fruit" as a deciding factor, while Des Moines asserted that predictability, i.e., timing and content of review, was key.

The role of structure is referenced here in the form of fiscal and code constraints, union contracts, the efficiency standard, and balance between political interests. These are regarded as factors constraining initiatives that emerge in the quest for workable solutions to issues. On the other hand, the concept of low hanging fruit and seeking alternative solutions within existing code language suggests an
approach to flexible initiatives. It seems apparent from this brief discussion that the focus on process in fact surfaces the interplay between structure and flexibility.

Comparative View: Why Some Changes Were Chosen Over Others After the Center Was in Place

In spite of minimal response to the question of choosing change following the opening of one-stop centers, respondents did reach some agreement (see Table 23). Grand Rapids and Dayton concurred that the cost of the change or available funding was a determining factor. Dayton and Des Moines held that efficiency and effectiveness were prime considerations against which to evaluate change. Individually, Grand Rapids identified union contracts as a major factor; Dayton, that staff and feedback sources and the city manager were important; and Des Moines, that timing, hierarchical support, and the center as a change environment were influential.

As expected for Grand Rapids and Dayton, having survey/interview response rates of \( N = 1 \) and \( N = 2 \), respectively, factors identified as influencing change were distinctive to individual respondents. Responses thus were varied and not perceived as mutually supportive.

Synthesis: Verifying Proposition H

At first glance, the two questions posed as to why some changes to permit and plan review procedures were made and others not before and following the opening of the one-stop center appears inadequate in testing the validity of this proposition.
Table 23

_Why Some Changes Were Chosen Over Others After Center Was in Place_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Influencing Change</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/available funding</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency/effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union contract provisions</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/feedback sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Manager initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness of change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center fosters environment that encourages change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response.

Sparse response by key informants and lack of supporting documentation or observation seem to underscore this deficiency. But, let us explore our findings such as they are.

By “structures of accountability” is meant governance methods such as hierarchy, centralized rules, and prescribed policy responses. Pivotal considerations under the first question that surfaced in the three cities included: “cost or fiscal standards,” “union contracts,” “efficiency and effectiveness,” and “hierarchical support.” These considerations indeed comprise structures of accountability arising in respondents’ minds as pivotal concerns as they considered change actions. It should
be pointed out that such structures did not arise in the mind of each respondent reflecting on change possibilities. But, the evidence suggests that within a group focusing on process and change actions, structures of accountability will surely arise and be taken into account. And, presumably, awareness of these structures will influence the choice of change actions so that structures are maintained or, conversely, that highly desired change initiatives that fail the accountability test must either be adapted to satisfy or to cause adaptation of structures of accountability. In this way, focusing on process and possible changes thereto reveals an explicit confrontation between flexibility and accountability. Out of this interaction emerges practical change that reflects a recognizable, if alterable, balance between them. Thus, in spite of earlier misgivings and the dearth of evidence in support, Proposition H is considered partially validated under the first question.

Concerning the second question—why some changes were chosen over others after the opening of one-stop centers—data were more limited still. Responses exhibiting some concurrence included the following considerations: cost of change or available funding, and efficiency or effectiveness of proposed initiatives. Individually, respondents felt that change initiatives had to confront: union contracts, timing issues, and hierarchical support. These factors all are structural in nature. Change initiative examples or types are not noted so that the interplay between the polarities of structure and flexibility is not exhibited here. Nonetheless, explicit consideration of structures of accountability has been displayed vis-à-vis potential actions, even though
undesignated, so that perhaps partial support can be asserted toward verifying Proposition H.

Proposition I, to Be Verified: Unchanged Accountability for Nonparticipants

A focus on process leaves accountability unchanged for non participants, i.e. persons or groups having an interest in but not involved or served in the process.

To test Proposition I, two questions were posed. The first inquires as to changes to permit and plan review procedures during the assessment process that benefited non participants. Similar to the first, the second question asks what further changes were introduced at the center that benefited nonparticipants. These questions were combined because survey respondents tended to answer the first question as though the center already existed and to not answer the second question at all. The combined question reads as follows: “How were nonparticipants benefited by changes to permit and plan review procedures before or after the opening of the one-stop center?” Nonetheless, the integrity of original questions and associated findings are held to be preserved by this modification.

Comparative View: Nonparticipant Benefits by Changes to Permit and Plan Review Procedures or the Opening of the One-Stop Center

To the combined question, “How were nonparticipant stakeholders benefited by changes to permit and plan review procedures before or after the opening of the one-stop center?” respondents in two of the three cities found agreement on at least two fronts (see Table 24). First, nonparticipants gained ground as taxpayers in terms
### Table 24

*Nonparticipant Benefits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Study Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocated development review staff</td>
<td>^#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient central location</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased/faster revenues</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good street and freeway access</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralization of records/files</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater operational efficiency/effectiveness</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More clarity and integrity in regulatory process</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free off-street parking</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved project awareness</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process simplification</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced city competitiveness</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More basic services</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job creation/retention</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of regulatory process and standards</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line permit and information services</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully staffed service counter offering assistance</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development community involvement</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integral public meeting/hearing facility</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated permitting/inspection/licensing system</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded cashier role</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = survey/interview response; ^ = documented findings; # = observation.
of greater governmental efficiency and effectiveness. With the establishment of the one-stop center, the development process functions better. Second, other city offices and citizens benefited by improved project awareness owing to improved information flow, perhaps through automated permit systems, centralization of records and files, and, in Grand Rapids, to the center's integral public meeting-hearing room. Separately, key informants gave account of the following benefits: collocation of development review staff; convenient central location of the one-stop center; increased and faster flow of city revenues; more clarity and integrity in the regulatory process; free-off street parking; process simplification; enhanced city economic competitiveness; more basic services; fully staffed service counter, especially helpful to home-owners with simple projects; and involvement of the development community in offering input to streamlining the development process.

Documentation, primarily press stories, shows minimal mutual agreement among cities concerning benefits to nonparticipant stakeholders resulting from changes to permit and plan review procedures before or after the creation of the one-stop center. As the one mutually recorded benefit, taxpayers in Des Moines and Grand Rapids were said to more quickly realize tax revenues from completed projects and to attract new projects. Other nonparticipant benefits were largely individual. In Grand Rapids, those benefiting were citizens in relation to collocation of development-related staff and the convenient location of the center. For Dayton, documentation exhibited the related benefits of more clarity and integrity in the regulatory process, process simplification, and better understanding of the regulatory
process and standards. Nonparticipant benefits identified individually in Des Moines were: greater operational efficiency and effectiveness, enhanced city competitiveness, and job creation and retention. Beneficiaries were somewhat less defined, seemingly taking in the city itself, taxpayers, and citizens as employees.

On-site observation revealed a number of mutual benefits in all cities that extend to nonparticipant stakeholders resulting from changes to permit and plan review procedures or afterwards in relation to the opening of the one-stop center. These include: collocation of development-related staff, good street and freeway access to the center, and centralization of records and files. Convenient location of centers, centralized downtown for Dayton and Des Moines, was an observed benefit as well as their on-line permit and information services. Nonparticipant stakeholders in Grand Rapids and Dayton were observed to share the benefit of free off-street parking. Separately, Grand Rapids offers the benefits of more clarity and integrity in its regulatory process, a better understanding of the process, and of the utility of a public meeting-hearing room for board and commission use within the precincts of its one-stop center. Des Moines provides a particularly spacious and well staffed public service counter, an automated permitting-inspection-licensing system offering rapid information access, and a cashier with broad service capability.

Synthesis: Verifying Proposition I

Accountability presupposes values to be upheld supported by expectations with respect to adopted standards (Behn, 2001, p. 7). The standard for performance
accountability is found in the form of goals, objectives or performance benchmarks.

"To hold a public agency accountable for performance, we have to establish expectations for the outcomes that the agency will achieve, the consequences that it will create, or the impact that it will have" (Behn, 2001, p. 10). In this context, benefits ascribed to nonparticipant stakeholders, whether determined through interviews, documentation or observation, may be regarded as performance benchmarks incorporating valued outcomes, although established after the fact. It is argued that nonparticipant expectations will have been raised in experiencing these valued outcomes: collocated development process staff, convenient and easy access to centralized development office location, increased and earlier city tax revenue, greater operational efficiency and effectiveness of the development process, better information flow through centralization of records and files and on-line services, more process transparency as a result of process clarification and simplification, and other benefits attributable to the opening of the one-stop center. Hence, there is the prospect that the agency, i.e., the one-stop center or the city itself, will be held accountable by nonparticipant stakeholders for sustaining these values and that these stakeholders will act to preserve or restore performance where it falls below an acceptable level. Based on these arguments, it is concluded that Proposition I is not verified, that a focus on process in fact serves to change expectations and accountability for nonparticipant stakeholders as they become aware of, and benefit, from process outcomes. However, this conclusion rests primarily upon the word of participant stakeholders and inference based on observation and documentation.
Nonparticipant stakeholders had no separate voice among survey/interview respondents selected for this research and therefore could not speak for themselves. Thus, the judgment of nonverification is somewhat suspect and remains in doubt pending further research.

Concluding Notes on the Analytical Approach

Much preliminary analytical work has been omitted in this chapter to avoid excessive redundancy. In omitting the preliminary work, extensive reference materials related to case study documentation and to areas of enquiry generally have also been omitted. While not critical to the text, this material was instrumental in support of case study analysis and of related thought processes. In the interest of case study integrity and completeness, these additional reference materials are listed in Appendix F.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Summary

The purpose of this research was: (a) to explore more fully the one-stop permit and plan review center in terms of its practical utility and organizational form, and (b) to assess whether it fulfills Feldman and Khademian's (2001) Primacy of Process principle as adapted in my rival theory [italics mine]. This assessment also was a test of the authors' conceptual framework to determine whether it accurately reflects the one-stop center reality.

To carry out the research in a manner consistent with the purpose of this study two research questions were posed:

1. How does the one-stop center change the development review processes? In responding to this question, case studies attempt to illuminate several areas of interest: structural organization and management of the center, comparison with the standard review process, service problems with the standard process, the effect of the one-stop center on development services, and the beneficiaries of the one-stop center.

2. How does the one-stop permit and plan review center fulfill the Primacy of Process: A Rival Theory framework? In answer to this question, case studies pursue the following matters: the city's managerial orientation, the process of problem solving leading to the one-stop center, surfacing of structural dynamics and potential
change initiatives, the surfacing of initiatives that affect structures of accountability, the ongoing process of problem solving and service initiatives at the center, and participation in the problem-solving process both in giving rise to the one-stop center and following its establishment.

Chapter IV introduced case study research methodology and justified its use for this study. The dissertation’s theoretical framework, i.e., the rival theory model, was outlined, and hypotheses and propositions were articulated for testing purposes. Subsequently, a survey instrument was prepared to achieve responses from knowledgeable subjects that would answer the research questions. The study’s data collection approach then was described involving surveying, interviewing, onsite observation, and gathering of relevant documents. An accompanying account was given of initiating fieldwork and field adjustments necessitated by nonresponsive or unavailable survey subjects. Thereafter, the research process was summarized and illustrated and brief discussion given to data analysis. Lastly, the selection process for identifying suitable case study sites was fleshed out and sites were selected.

Conclusions

Useful Concepts in the Literature

Accountability in the bureaucratic sense, “imposed formally through the hierarchy within organizations” (Behn, 2001, p. 59), appears to remain largely intact with traditional one-stop centers, although double supervision of partners by the center administrator and parent departments doubtless introduces complexity and
potential conflicts into staff management. With the affiliate center, absent a single administrator with overall responsibility for the center, its staff, and the development review process, bureaucratic accountability cannot be considered intact. And although double supervision of partners does not occur, their lack of accountability to a center administrator would appear to create uncertainty for these employees respecting their center role versus parent departmental priorities.

Accountability in the political sense, “imposed informally by various stakeholders in the accountability environment, working either directly or through elected officials” (Behn, 2001, p. 59), appeared in effect for the three centers but more expressly in Dayton’s case. In addition to simplifying, centralizing, and making the development review process more accessible, which more or less benefits all stakeholders, Dayton also gave citizen and neighborhood interests a role in its assessment process and its subsequent center oversight activity, thereby assuring their opportunity for participation and input.

Improved performance of the development review process was in evidence along multiple dimensions with the establishment of one-stop centers, e.g., reduced process time, greater customer convenience, process simplification and clarification, and better staff-customer relations. While not tantamount at this stage to performance accountability, these improvements do signify better public management to stakeholders, improving their public attitude, and potentially leading to greater public trust—a vital step among the “trust but verify” requirements of performance accountability (Behn, 2001, p. 104).
Despite its serious contradictions and shortcomings, the ReGo movement that was popularized by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and the National Performance Review (NPR) has made potent contributions in terms of the one-stop center and of this research. Because it embodies many of the ReGo principles, the one-stop concept was given currency through the efforts of the NPR. These principles are reflected in center attributes and benefits that are recounted here: improved customer services and convenience, process simplification and transparency, greater accountability to clientele, and decentralization of authority even while centralizing services. ReGo has supported this research in demonstrating the fundamental value of these attributes and benefits to realistic notions of improved governmental performance.

Findings indicate an increased offering of development-related services online by two of the three one-stop centers studied here. They support Tat-Kei Ho’s (2002) assertion concerning “the Internet as crucial to reinventing or transforming local government” (p. 435). It is apparent that the Internet and World Wide Web are reorienting governance toward external relationships, emphasizing citizen information and service needs, and are raising citizen expectations, forever increasing levels of governmental service and citizen-government interaction (p. 435). Increased citizen expectations, followed by responsive governmental action in meeting those expectations, suggest an increased accountability of government to citizens achieved here, attributable to technology. Whether the one-stop center will be eclipsed and replaced by e-government cannot be clearly envisioned at this point. That would seem
to require that the many benefits attributable to staff collocation can be fully met online.

Antecedents and parallel models to the one-stop center, discussed earlier, all were instrumental in achieving a well-rounded understanding of the concept: its origins, benefits, complexities, and issues relating to implementation. Gulick (1937) and Golembiewski (1969) were especially helpful in outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the clientele-based organization and in anticipating the organizational impacts of technology, respectively. On an operational level, Teasley and Ready (1981) offer their matrix as means of attaining service integration together with reduced organizational fragmentation but point up the increased complexity of organizational management as the price of attainment. Galbraith (1994), in describing his lateral organization, discusses the need for lateral coordination, specifies the imperatives that motivate its occurrence either spontaneously or more formally, and offers practical counsel on matters of personnel. Finally, Hugh McKenna (1977), the manager who supervised the planning and execution of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) one-stop claims processing modules, recounts the key issues constraining their introduction.

How the One-Stop Center Changed the Development Review Processes

The one-stop permit and plan review center changed the development review processes in significant ways. Central were: correction of many of the problems that had been identified under the earlier system, changes to the organization and
management of the process itself, and its effect on the provision of development services.

Assessment by each city of its development review processes had brought about an understanding of problems and issues and had laid the groundwork for change. Mutual complaints were that processes were too complex, too scattered, too conflicted, too slow, too unpredictable, not user friendly, and prone to loss of economic development opportunities. Significantly, there was no single process "owner" who could assure efficient workflow and who could be held accountable for process failings. Cities settled on instituting one-stop centers because the concept seemed best able to resolve many of these issues.

The opening of one-stop permit and plan review centers dramatically changed the organization and management of development review processes. Formerly, the process at case study sites was dispersed among independent departments. Intricate coordination and communication were required to achieve the necessary approvals among review staff located in offices within five to seven different departments at three to five separate locations. Because of system complexity, breakdowns were endemic. Introduction of one-stop centers consolidated review staff under one roof, greatly simplifying the necessary coordination and communication and contributing other benefits as well. Single administrators were appointed to manage the centers at two of the three study sites. They were charged with the overall responsibility for permit and plan review processes and were made accountable to assure proper process control. Co-leaders managed the third center. With no clear direction on how
to proceed, they divided up responsibilities in a way that seemed mutually agreeable and convenient. Accountability for the development review process was indirect at best under the latter arrangement.

The one-stop centers examined by this study were theorized to represent two different organizational types—traditional and affiliate forms. In fact, externally, all three were different. As traditional centers, Dayton’s became a full line department; Des Moines’, a division among six others within a primarily staff department. Grand Rapids’ affiliate center remained ungrounded in terms of the city’s departmental structure, but had its most substantial ties to the city’s Planning and Community Development Services Group.

Internally, however, organizational structures of the three centers were quite similar. Each center housed two staff types: customary staff and partners. The former were supervisor-subordinate units typically found in code compliance (building and zoning) offices. For them, little had changed except for their relocation to the new one-stop center. Partners comprised single or multiple personnel assigned out of other departments who continued to maintain a supervisory-subordinate relationship with those parent departments. These staff now had divided responsibilities—to the center and its mission and to parent departments and the demands and obligations placed on them from those sources. Administrators at the two traditional centers directed and evaluated both staff types. Co-leaders of the affiliate center directed and evaluated only their own customary subordinates but had little direct authority over partners.
In every case, the effect of the one-stop center on developmental services was dramatic. Permit review times were greatly reduced. Under the old system, 30- to 60-day turn-around times on permit approvals were not uncommon. Under the new arrangement, permit approval times were reduced to 7 to 10 working days for most projects. Simple permits, e.g., for a single family home, could be approved on an "over-the-counter" basis usually in a matter of minutes.

Service convenience too was much enhanced with the opening of one-stop centers. Before, customers seeking information, project approval status, or meetings to resolve issues were obliged to phone or schedule visits with review staff at individual departments. Now, a single call would suffice. And a visit to the center could assemble multiple staff on short notice to satisfy customer needs. Central location, adequate parking, and proximate freeway access were other convenient features associated with the one-stop centers.

The one-stop center ushered in a more user-friendly process, one characterized as more transparent, coherent, and accessible. Regular customers found they made more productive use of their time now and that dealing with city staff was a more positive experience. They responded with positive feedback through customer surveys, by comment directly to staff and public officials, and in spreading the word among members of the development community. More telling perhaps was the reduction in customer complaints.

As a closely related effect, customer-staff relations improved with the opening of one-stop centers. Faster approvals, better access to review staff, and more
convenient services all seemed to gratify customers, who in turn became less quarrelsome with reviewers and even complimentary of efforts on their behalf. On the other side, reviewers, having a better understanding now of the city’s development process, their mission and role, and of development community interests, were more inclined to respond with a problem-solving attitude in place of simply a code-enforcement posture. In this way, the one-stop center appeared to play a part in breaking down old antipathies and in fostering a recognition of common objectives.

*How the One-Stop Center Fulfills the Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory*

Preceding the establishment of the one-stop center and responding to demands for better service to its development community, each city undertook a problem-solving process to assess the adequacy of its existing permit and plan review procedures. Setting up task forces to carry out the work, cities sought to discover problem sources and to find ways that procedures could be improved. In each case, both the development community and relevant city staff participated in the problem-solving process. As problem sources and solutions were identified and model solutions were considered, it became apparent that the one-stop center was the preferred way to proceed. It resolved more issues than other initiatives and, at the same time, held out the promise of beneficial synergies not otherwise possible.

As task forces carried out their assessment processes, service obstacles emerged and were articulated together with corresponding potential change initiatives. Obstacles and initiatives, as opposing pairs, tended to infer one another in
those instances where only one or the other actually surfaced. At the same time, in focusing on review procedures, ideas surfaced that promised greater workflow efficiencies and service flexibility even though a specific procedural problem may not have been identified that needed to be overcome.

Assessing permit and plan review procedures surfaced initiatives that affected structures of accountability (governance methods such as hierarchy, centralized rules, and prescribed policy responses). Indeed, it is difficult to identify initiatives contemplated by the task forces that would not have an impact. Consider, for example, the following ideas which were common to all three task forces or at least two of them: the one-stop center idea itself, affecting hierarchy, centralized rules and prescribed policy; pre-application meetings, affecting established procedures or rules; a fast-track review alternative for qualifying projects, affecting rules; adoption of computer software to better support the review function, affecting prescribed policy; a customer focus with continuous process feedback, affecting prescribed policy; consistent code interpretation allowing alternative solutions, affecting rules and prescribed policy; and the use of the Internet for filing applications, payment of fees, and project status checking, affecting prescribed policy.

Problem solving and the focus on process did not cease after one-stop centers were established. Initiatives that improved service continued to be introduced. These appeared to follow from ideas surfacing during the assessment phase or in response to new opportunities arising out of the one-stop experience, customer suggestions, or staff insight. However, the pace at which initiatives were conceived was far more
measured when compared with the assessment phase. Staff was preoccupied with
day-to-day work. Problem solving as conscious effort tended to occur when issues
arose but was not found to be part of a center’s weekly agenda. Nonetheless, with
staff collocation, the potential for realizing more effective and far reaching initiatives
was enhanced, e.g., automation of process management, online development services,
unified review letter to applicants, cross training of staff, and fast-track processing for
qualifying applications.

Perhaps the most important outcome concerning the establishment of the one-
stop center was the involvement of the players—the development community, city
staff, and in Dayton’s case, the citizenry—in a productive problem-solving process. In
each case, the intent was expressed, if not specific provisions made, for the continued
involvement of these stakeholders in the oversight of the center and of the
development process. If such oversight carries forward and is not just perfunctory in
nature, it will serve as the principal source of motivation and guidance in maintaining
an effective process, in supporting its budgetary base, and in urging practical
improvements. Without this involvement, conditions can quickly deteriorate, services
can be cut back, and progress can atrophy in response to fiscal priorities, as has been
shown earlier. With this involvement, fundamental accountability can be assured
beyond the hierarchy, beyond the city, to service users and to the citizenry.

Finally, validation of the Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory was not
fully achieved although many of its individual propositions were verified or were
partially verified. Its first proposition—“A city’s managerial orientation affects the
assessment of the development review process"—was found not to be adequately evaluated by the findings. Further research is indicated. Its final proposition—"A focus on process leaves accountability unchanged for nonparticipants"—was found not verified. But it is conceded that a sufficient basis for judgment probably was not provided here. Findings were not corroborated by nonparticipants themselves who were not among those selected as survey respondents. A more representative choice of respondents in new research would be required to better evaluate this proposition. The seven propositions derived from Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) original Primacy of Process model, for the most part, were found to be verified, or partially verified requiring additional research. All propositions and their respective hypotheses are treated in the section entitled “Conclusions: Validity of Propositions.”

Some Policy Implications

1. Municipalities, particularly those with populations of 100,000 or more, stand to enhance the performance of their permit and plan review functions by instituting one-stop centers. As signified in Chapter II, application of the one-stop concept may be beneficial in other administrative areas as well.

2. Review of development-related procedures prior to setting up a one-stop center affords the essential groundwork for change, assuring a thorough understanding of the problems and issues to be addressed. Such review provides the justification, context, and direction needed in support of process transformation.
3. A focus on process in procedural review leads to service innovation: it brings to light specific problems and offers insight as to solutions. This problem-solving approach carries over to a one-stop center's operational phase generating further innovation. Centers may benefit by adopting a standing problem-solving process to consciously pursue innovation thereby enhancing service performance.

4. The traditional one-stop center (with parallels to a city's customary departmental structure) appears superior to the affiliate center in terms of organizational coherence. A single administrator with overall responsibility for center, staff, and development review process seems best for proper hierarchical accountability.

5. Inclusion of all principal stakeholders—the development community and citizenry as well as public officials—in center oversight looks to be best in realizing direct political accountability and to sustaining and enhancing development processes.

6. Use of the Internet to provide development-related services is an increasingly effective adjunct to the one-stop permit and plan review center, one that is actively pursued by some centers for its transforming potential. Many services can be achieved online, increasing operational efficiency and reducing staff obligations.

Conclusions: Validity of Propositions

A summary register displaying the verification status of rival theory propositions is provided by Table 25. It reflects the judgments reached hereafter in this section upon the review of individual propositions supported by relevant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. A focus on process implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation, revealing core assumptions affecting means and ends in relation to assessing permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>In Doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. A focus on process establishes who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of municipal permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. A focus on process brings attention to structures that enable or inhibit service under permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. A focus on process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct more flexible service related to permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. A focus on process reveals more flexible services in relation to permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>In Doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. A focus on process raises expectations for improved service and better coordination of activities related to permit and plan review procedures.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. A focus on process increases accountability to those served by or involved in the process.</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. A focus on process induces explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions with respect to permit and plan review procedures, thereby upholding an equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. A focus on process leaves accountability unchanged for nonparticipants, i.e., persons or groups having an interest in but not involved or served in the process.</td>
<td>In Doubt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
analyses in Chapter VI. In their turn, each proposition is restated followed by a brief characterization of related analytical findings. Subsequently, a judgment is made on the verification of individual propositions and their related hypotheses. Proceeding in this manner, it is evident how findings have shaped judgments in determining whether propositions are fully or partially verified or whether they continue to remain in doubt.

Proposition A: Managerial Orientation

A focus on process implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation, revealing core assumptions affecting means and ends in relation to assessing permit and plan review procedures.

Based on the findings, we conclude that a focus on process implies a managerial or organizational preference, revealing core assumptions affecting means and ends in relation to assessing permit and plan review procedures, but it may not be an altogether accurate or balanced display of such a preference. More apparent here is that a focus on process surfaces an orientation that reflects the issue that originally induced the process. In this case, lack of performance in cities’ development review processes seemed to surface an emphasis toward the managerial polarity of productivity. This apparently challenges earlier findings of a more balanced managerial orientation on the part of all cities as directly characterized by survey respondents. And, while there were findings suggesting a concern for employees, these were far less forceful because they were fewer in number, not universal, and not supported by documentation or observation. Thus, the final verdict remains in doubt.
Furthermore, the general hypothesis from which this proposition derives—"The Primacy of Process Model: A Rival Theory implies a managerial or organizational preference or orientation"—also remains in doubt. We conclude that additional research is needed to more adequately evaluate this hypothesis.

**Proposition B: Process Participants**

_A focus on process establishes who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of the city's permit and plan review procedures._

Findings in relation to the first question concerning individuals or organizations involved in process review appear to bear out Proposition B, or partly so. Focus on process in all three cities consistently established the two crucial sets of stakeholders in the development process—the external development community and the internal regulatory staff. Only Dayton, however, also recognized the citizenry as a third primary set of stakeholders in the process. Findings in answer to the second question, how participants in process review were chosen, also appear to partially confirm Proposition B. Not all stakeholders who are regarded as primary are consistently included in the assessment process, although the two indispensable sets of stakeholders are consistently identified. In summary then, Proposition B is considered to be partially verified to the extent that it is satisfied by revealing the essential stakeholders without which the process of assessing development review procedures cannot proceed. To the same extent, the general hypothesis from which Proposition B is formulated—"The Primacy of Process methodology directs attention to who should be involved or served by public efforts"—is partially verified for this specific
application, i.e., revealing the essential stakeholders without which the public process cannot proceed.

**Proposition C: Surfacing Structures That Affect Service**

*A focus on process brings attention to structures that enable or inhibit service under permit and plan review procedures.*

Findings with respect to why the city chose to establish a one-stop center would seem to support this proposition by highlighting perceived positive characteristics of the one-stop center that enable service. However, findings also suggested problems, i.e., service inhibitions, that had to be overcome. Participants pointed to structures that enabled service as they assessed the development review process. Enabling structures in turn summoned to mind structures that inhibited service. It is expected that the converse is true as well, i.e., surfacing “structures that inhibit service,” conjure up those that enable service. Findings flowing from the second question, how the one-stop center affected service, are held to support Proposition C in reflecting the assessment process that precipitated center creation. These common service improvements are regarded as manifestations of the focus on process that surfaced the probable service enhancements identified during the assessment phase. In summary, both sets of findings appear to satisfy and, therefore, verify Proposition C. So also, its hypothesis—“Primacy of Process focuses attention on structures that enable or inhibit such service or involvement”—is viewed as confirmed for this particular application.
Proposition D: Reducing Structural Barriers to Service

*A focus on process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers that obstruct more flexible service related to permit and plan review procedures.*

Findings drawn from the initial two questions—issues or problems found in assessing review procedures and ideas that emerged that would improve service—reveal scattered reviewing offices as the chief structural barrier to more flexible service and the establishment of one-stop centers that collocate review staff as the shared solution in overcoming it. Other mutual barrier-solution pairs are identified as well. Participants answering the last question—helpful features, services, practices, or conditions at the one-stop center—are in accord that the collocation of review staff dominates as a helpful solution. In addition, numerous other beneficial characteristics of centers are identified in common as well. In short, Proposition D is regarded as verified by findings both of the initial two questions treated as one and of the final question. Similarly, the general hypothesis—"Primacy of Process reveals ways to reduce structural barriers to involvement or service, accompanied by increased flexibility of action"—is confirmed insofar as this specific application is concerned.

Proposition E: Revealing More Flexible Services

*A focus on process reveals more flexible services in relation to permit and plan review procedures.*

Findings generated under the question—new actions launched over time to further improve service—suggest that there was a continuing focus on process after the assessment phase that led to the implementation of the one-stop center. New
actions most frequently are unique to individual one-stop centers commensurate with
the unique circumstances of each center, although two cities identified the installation
of computer software that automated some or much of the permit approval process as
a new action that indirectly improved service. It is clear, however, that ideas and
innovations continued to be adopted after the opening of one-stop centers that
afforded more flexible service.

It is concluded that Proposition E is partially verified by these findings,
acknowledging that the common thread among cities of unique new actions in unique
circumstances rather than actions in common weakens full confirmation. Concerning
the related hypothesis—"Primacy of Process reveals possibilities for increased service
flexibility without structural change"—a significant problem is apparent. No language
was adopted in the proposition to parallel the language, "without structural change,"
in the hypothesis. Hence, insufficient account of it was taken in the findings based on
the survey instrument, interviews, or observations. Plainly, the hypothesis is not
adequately represented by the proposition and therefore cannot be validated by it.
Thus, despite having partially verified Proposition E, we conclude that the validity of
the general hypothesis is untested by these findings and must be considered in doubt
pending further research.

Proposition F: Expectations of Improvements

A focus on process raises expectations for improved service and better
coordination of activities related to permit and plan review procedures.
Explicit expression of expectations of improved service and better coordination of activities arising out of a focus on process is difficult to document. However, findings suggest that these expectations are reflected in the behavior of stakeholders participating on the respective task forces and groups that undertook to do the assessment of the development review processes. One can also infer raised expectations within the larger development community. Findings are uneven regarding media coverage and other reporting of assessment outcomes in terms of raising expectations beyond attentive city staff and the development community. Citizen expectations are thought to vary from a moderate level in Dayton, which had included citizen representation on its assessment task force and provided fair media coverage, to a low level in Grand Rapids which had no citizen involvement and comparatively poor media coverage.

Mixed findings also accompanied the third question—efforts to report the one-stop center’s existence after it was established. Again, findings suggest that a focus on process may raise expectations for improved services and better coordination of activities for city staff and the development community but that such a focus may not do so for other stakeholders.

Taken together, these findings appear to warrant verification of Proposition F for city and development community stakeholders. However, verification seems not to be warranted on behalf of the third primary stakeholder, the general citizenry. Verification of the general hypothesis—“Primacy of Process increases expectations
for improved provision of service and coordination of activities”—is thus limited to city and development community stakeholders for this application.

Proposition G: Accountability to Those Served or Involved

A focus on process increases accountability to those served by or involved in the process.

Findings emerging under the first combined question—benefits from changes to permit and plan review procedures or following the opening of the one-stop center—indicate that the conditions of accountability are fulfilled through a focus on process as exhibited in these case studies. Expectations of improved performance, rapid realization of specific service improvements, and values or benefits sustained by expectations all are found to surface here. Principal values or benefits sustained by these expectations include: reduced process time, process simplification and clarification, and greater customer convenience.

Who benefits? There was greatest agreement that it was process participants and the groups they represent. The city treasury, taxpayers, and the larger city and regional community also were mentioned. These findings reveal increased accountability to the larger development community as well as to participants in the assessment process. To a lesser degree, neighborhoods and citizens are thought to be beneficiaries. Thus, it is asserted that Proposition G is verified, and that a focus on process increases accountability to those served by or involved in the process. So, in addition, the originating hypothesis—“Primacy of Process increases accountability to those served or involved in the process”—is held to be verified for this application.
Proposition H: Balancing Flexibility and Accountability

A focus on process induces explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions with respect to permit and plan review procedures, thereby upholding an equilibrium between flexibility and accountability.

Although limited, findings under the first question—why some changes to the review process were made and others rejected—suggest that structures of accountability rise to consciousness even as potential actions are entertained that would improve service flexibility. In the interplay between recognized restraints and potential improvements, process participants seemed to seek a balance that regulates flexibility in recognition of existing structure, and yet also contemplates structural adaptation that better accommodates flexibility.

Findings with respect to the second question—why some changes were chosen over others after the center was in place—display a consciousness of specific structures but change initiative examples or types are not noted so that the interplay between the polarities of structure and flexibility is not exhibited here. Nonetheless, explicit consideration of structures of accountability has been displayed vis-à-vis potential actions, even though undesignated. In summary then, there is some evidence here in support of Proposition H and its broader hypothesis—"Primacy of Process leads to explicit consideration of the need to maintain structures of accountability in light of potential actions, thereby upholding the equilibrium between flexibility and accountability." Proposition H, thus, is considered partially verified by these findings. So also, its underlying hypothesis is held to be partially verified for this application.
Proposition I: Unchanged Accountability for Nonparticipants

A focus on process leaves accountability unchanged for non participants, i.e. persons or groups having an interest in but not involved or served in the process.

Findings indicated numerous ways that nonparticipants benefited from changes to permit and plan review procedures before or after the opening of the one-stop center. Benefits ascribed to nonparticipant stakeholders, whether determined through interviews, documentation or observation, are regarded as performance benchmarks incorporating valued outcomes. It is argued that nonparticipant expectations were raised in experiencing these valued outcomes, although after the fact. It follows that nonparticipant stakeholders likely would hold the center or the city accountable for sustaining these values. Based on findings, it is concluded that Proposition I is not verified, i.e., that a focus on process in fact serves to change expectations and accountability for nonparticipant stakeholders as they become aware of and are benefited by process outcomes. Similarly, the general hypothesis—Primacy of Process leaves unchanged accountability to stakeholders who are not served or not involved in the process—is not verified by these findings.

Some question remains concerning the judgment of nonverification, however. Nonparticipant stakeholders were not represented among survey respondents and thus did not have a voice of their own. Their responses may have contradicted or in other ways may have failed to substantiate research findings. In which case, a different judgment may be warranted. Accordingly, this judgment must be set aside pending additional research incorporating representation of nonparticipant stakeholders.
Accordingly, the nonverification of Proposition I and its general hypothesis must be considered in doubt for our purposes here.

Limitations and Recommendations

This research sought verification of nine propositions in all. In the end, three propositions were considered verified outright—Propositions C, D, and G. The other six propositions remained in doubt—Propositions A, E, and I—or were partially verified—Propositions B, F, and H. Further research is required concerning these six propositions in order to adequately validate or invalidate them. In two instances, a revision of the study’s subject selection protocol is warranted to better reflect vital stakeholders within the land use development environment and to better provide for their input.

First, requiring further research is Proposition A that implies a particular managerial orientation that affects the assessing of the city’s permit and plan review procedures. Only one of the three questions raised in relation to this proposition proved relevant to verification. However, findings in response to this question, while revealing a managerial orientation, appeared not in conformance with findings from an earlier question that was directly on point. In hindsight, a question to improve the breadth of response should have been added. It might have been stated as follows: “How was the city’s managerial orientation—its concern for production versus its concern for employees—reflected in the assessment of permit and plan review procedures?”
Further research is needed also to fully verify Proposition B—“A focus on process establishes who is served and who needs to be involved in assessing the adequacy of the city’s permit and plan review procedures.” The indispensable parties to the assessment process without whom the process could not effectively proceed were established in the study. But it did not reliably establish all primary stakeholders who are served or who might benefit from involvement. Again, the fault lies with the questions raised. To redress this failure, the following question might suitably be added to those already in place: “Who are the primary stakeholders either served by or who need to be involved in order to assess the adequacy of the city’s permit and plan review procedures?”

Although Proposition E appeared partially verified by the findings, it does not adequately reflect the meaning of its underlying hypothesis so that both must be considered in doubt. The proposition needs to be restated and retested. In its restated form, it should read as follows: “A focus on process reveals possibilities for more flexible services without structural change [italics mine] in relation to permit and plan review procedures.” The findings associated with this proposition too need strengthening by adding at least one more question. It might be worded as follows: “What changes in existing procedures or new potential services were considered without modifying existing hierarchy, rules or policies?”

Verification of Proposition F was partial. Findings of raised expectations for improved services and better coordination of activities related to permit and plan review procedures were determined for two of three primary stakeholders—the city
and development community, but not the citizens. Although Dayton provided for it, Grand Rapids and Des Moines omitted citizen or neighborhood representation on task forces that assessed permit and plan review procedures. Also, based on findings, it was difficult to make a judgment in Dayton's case whether citizen expectations had been changed in this respect. To gain knowledge of their expectations, one or two interview subjects might have been chosen from among Dayton's citizen participants and from recognized citizen or neighborhood activists in the other cities to represent citizens as primary stakeholders.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the protocol for selecting subjects should have recognized the distinct categories of primary stakeholders—city officials, development community and citizens—and provided for their proper representation among those to be surveyed and interviewed. Future research should do so.

Proposition H is considered partially verified by the few findings arising solely from survey/interview respondents. Respondents had apparent difficulty answering the two questions posed, perhaps because questions required both considerable recall and analysis after significant time lapse. The follow-up interview with subjects completing the survey instrument should have more diligently sought responses to these questions, a strategy applicable to future research. Another approach in new research might be to include a preparatory instruction in the survey instrument to aid recall before posing the questions: "Think about the problems with your earlier permit and plan review process and of changes that were considered."
Finally, with respect to Proposition I, additional research is called for that incorporates the surveying of nonparticipant stakeholders. Again, the protocol for selecting subjects is affected, requiring fine tuning in this instance. A more representative set of survey responses would offer a better basis for judging the validity of this proposition and its associated hypothesis.

Suggestions for Further Research

For the most part, this study has focused on positive aspects of the one-stop center and its effectiveness and organizational advantages in resolving issues identified during the assessment phases of development processes. But, as Gulick (1937) reminds us, each organizational pattern has disadvantages as well as advantages. Those he ascribed to clientele-based organizations such as the one-stop center include: loss of "specialization," limited applicability within the wider organization, and "danger of dominance by favor-seeking pressure groups . . . at times in opposition" to the public interest (pp. 25–26). These have not been examined here in any significant way.

The first two disadvantages may seem fairly transparent, but do provide grist for further practical research. It would be useful, for example, to know the tradeoffs in specialization that have been made in assigning partners to one-stop centers. Seemingly, parent departments would be tempted to keep their more versatile and able staff at "home." Personal experience suggests that that is the case. What does this do to the competence of the one-stop center and to the effectiveness of code
compliance? How does the center compensate? What are the implications for the review of more complex projects?

Similarly, an exploration of the potential for clientele-based modules within the wider organization would seem useful to municipal executives, not so much to seek limits to its application, but to determine how service might be enhanced in certain areas without necessarily increasing the budgetary load. Also, what are the municipal functions for which this application is unsuitable and therefore may create problems and should be avoided?

Perhaps more interesting and challenging would be researching Gulick’s last disadvantage of the clientele-based organization. Within the present area of interest, it is no stretch to suppose that the development community prefers pliable over strict code enforcement where it can be achieved. Limiting public input and restricting the discretion of public boards and commissions concerning project approvals would also seem desirable from this viewpoint. And submitting plans and applications directly to the City Manager or Mayor in an attempt to pressure project approval or to skirt code provisions would seem appealing to some seeking to gain advantage or to speed construction. Questions that come to mind are: With the opening of one-stop centers, have these or similar problems that would result from favoring the development community increased? What has been the outcome? In practical terms, how are these problems being managed or offset? What has been done to balance the advantages extended to the development community in terms of advantages extended to neighborhoods and citizens? How can neighborhood and citizen concerns be
integrated effectively into center operations? Inclusion of citizens is critical to accountability (Behn, 2001). “Democratic accountability is not optional. . . . Government must be accountable to the entire citizenry. If your system does not ensure accountability to citizens, then it is, by definition, unacceptable” (p. 34).

Response to these and similar questions seeking evidence that the public interest is being sustained will assist in determining whether the customer-oriented one-stop center may be considered a “win-win” initiative as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) suppose, or a “win-lose” scheme as the dichotomous view of management action and governance structure suggests. The dichotomous view seems to imply that this change unbalances an existing equilibrium between flexibility and accountability. Such an imbalance enhances advantages to development interests but is achieved at a cost to the public interest.

Feldman and Khademian’s (2001) alternative framework would seem to support the “win-win” claim in suggesting that the action—accountability equilibrium has not been unbalanced but rather that it has achieved a new equilibrium. In the problem-solving process that lead to the one-stop center wherein process dynamics were made transparent, the same action that advanced the standing of development interests also improved the understanding of the development process by the city council, city staff, and the wider community. The expectations of all were thereby raised with respect to better service and improved coordination, providing the basis for sustaining public accountability (Behn, 2001, p. 8).
Realistically, this research has only scratched the surface regarding Feldman and Khademian’s Primacy of Process principle. More work needs to be done in reconciling the longstanding theoretical dilemma they describe. This work should be oriented toward promoting greater flexibility and innovation in public actions and demonstrating that accountability not only is addressed but also that its structures effectively define actions. At the same time, the adaptation of existing structures or the instituting of new structures must be revealed as occurring to assure accountability. Such work is essential in providing theoretical justification to practices by public officials in this fast-paced democratic culture, one that voraciously demands solutions to problems and yet is unforgiving in exacting vigilant controls.

From the perspective of this research, more exploration must be done at the assessment level that leads to procedural or organizational change. This is where process dynamics are more readily visible and may be examined. More effective means than those employed here are needed to identify expectations of process participants and the public. And more explicit evidence of the tie between expectations and accountability will be required to assure that where expectations have been raised, accountability follows. On this latter point, perhaps the Primacy of Process model itself requires further elaboration to clarify and illustrate this linkage.

There are other fascinating questions in relation to the one-stop center that seem to invoke further research. One is suggested by Altshuler’s (1997) “umbrella strategies [or] Meta innovations . . . [that] tap effectively into popular themes of American culture” to overcome political resistance to public innovation (p. 63).
Accordingly, how have devotees of the one-stop center exploited “customer focus” to successfully appeal to political officeholders to overcome their traditional dread of failure and distrust of public employees?

Rainey (1991) comments that “Successful matrix designs . . . typically produce high levels of stress and conflict that must be resolved” (pp. 110–111). At the same time, McKenna (1977) reports, and our experience tends to confirm, that staff working within a matrix or one-stop structure develops a team identity, experiences job enrichment, engages new communication linkages, develops pride in its work, and achieves more unity and sense of cooperation in the work place. A research question might explore the nature of the stress and conflict within the one-stop context vis-à-vis job satisfaction, enrichment, and sense of pride and unity and seek whether and how these issues and benefits offset.

Finally, in a related enquiry, examining the one-stop center’s success in upgrading developmental services vis-à-vis its culture and sense of mission may provide grist for further research. Wilson (1989) notes that “A sense of mission confers a feeling of special worth on the members, provides a basis for recruiting and socializing new members, and enables the administrators to economize on the use of other incentives.” (p. 95). But, he warns, these benefits may be attained at a price. “Every culture has a blind spot, and so every organization pays some price for its culture” (pp. 102–103). It would seem useful to better understand cultural limitations to explain or anticipate agency failings and to find ways to ameliorate or minimize
them in the interest of preserving the gains experienced in adopting the one-stop center.
Appendix A

Survey Instrument
**Questionnaire**

*One-Stop Permit and Plan Review Center*

1. How would you characterize your city's managerial style—*concern for production* (highly structured, hierarchical, control oriented) or *concern for employees* (adaptive, participatory, job enriching)? Identify style on the line graph below (#1 focuses on production and is unconcerned with employees; #10 stresses employees but ignores production; values in between register concerns for production and employees with varied emphasis of one over the other).

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1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5 __ 6 __ 7 __ 8 __ 9 __ 10
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**Before Introduction of One-Stop Center**

2. Why did the city decide to review its existing permit and plan review procedures?

3. Describe the process that ultimately led to establishing a one-stop center.

4. Who—what individuals and organizations—were involved in assessing the adequacy of the city’s permit and plan review process?

5. How was it decided who would participate in the process?

6. In assessing permit and plan review procedures, what issues or problems surfaced?

7. What ideas emerged that would improve service?

8. In the assessment process, what signs emerged of participant or public expectations of improved service or coordination?

9. What was the nature and frequency of media coverage and other means of reporting the outcomes of the assessment process?

10. What benefits resulted from adopted changes to permit and plan review procedures?

11. To whom do the benefits extend?

12. In considering changes, why were some changes taken and others rejected?
13. In the assessment process, what changes were introduced to permit and plan review procedures that benefited nonparticipants (stakeholders who were excluded or uninvolved in the assessment process—perhaps city staff, neighborhood associations, citizens, others)?

14. Why did the city choose to establish a one-stop center?

**After Introduction of One-Stop Center**

15. What role do (assessment) participants have now in the center’s operation?

16. Once instituted, how did the one-stop center affect service?

17. What helpful features, services, practices or conditions exist at the center that were not present before?

18. What new actions were launched over time to further improve service?

19. Once instituted, what efforts were made to report the one-stop center’s existence and to explain its meaning?

20. What avenues exist for external input into center operations?

21. How do location, design or practices convey the center’s purpose?

22. Following center opening, what further benefits were provided?

23. Once the one-stop center was in place, why were some new changes chosen over others?

24. After its establishment, what further actions or changes were introduced at the center that benefited nonparticipants (in the assessment process)?
Appendix B

Alternate Survey Instrument
Alternate Survey Instrument

Interview Questions

Please comment on your background and relationship to your city’s one-stop center.

Before Introduction of the One-Stop Center

1. Why did the city decide to consider changing its permit and development review procedures?

2. Describe the process that lead, ultimately, to establishing a one-stop center.

3. Who—what individuals and organizations—were involved in assessing the adequacy of the city’s permit and plan review process?

4. In assessing the city’s permit and development review procedures, what issues or problems surfaced?

5. What ideas emerged that would resolve problems, improving service?

6. Why did the city choose to establish the one-stop center over some other change?

After Introduction of the One-Stop Center

7. What is the one-stop center’s purpose or mission?

8. How does location, design, or practices convey the center’s purpose?

9. What significant benefits of the city’s one-stop center would you identify?

10. Who benefits? Are there significant stakeholders who do not benefit?

11. What disadvantages of the one-stop center would you identify?

12. What innovations have you seen emerging from the existence of the center?

13. What avenues exist for external input into center operations?

14. What other observations concerning the one-stop center would you like to offer?
Appendix C

Case Study Documentation Protocol and Instrument
Case Study Documentation Protocol and Instrument

1. Conceptual Phase Documentation:
   a) Minutes or notes from permit and plan review assessment meetings
   b) Reviews of existing practices concerning permits and plan reviews
   c) Problem area summaries
   d) Other recorded evidence of the thought process that led to instituting the one-stop center.

2. Operational Phase Documentation:
   a) Center mission statement, goals and objectives
   b) Brochures describing services available
   c) Customer feedback questionnaires and responses
   d) Information pieces about the center
   e) News stories and other media coverage
   f) Other evidence that gives an account of a center's existence, role and response of clientele.
Appendix D

Case Study Observation Protocol and Instrument
Case Study Observation Protocol and Instrument

1. One-stop center floor plan drawn to scale with rooms labeled as to function

2. Practices that enhance center efficiency or effectiveness (e.g., common hours of field staff at the center, staff deadlines for review of permit applications, comprehensive plan review letter)

3. Process coherence initiatives (e.g., availability of permit/plan approval flow charts, use of charts, procedural steps associated with each type of permit)

4. Other measures that augment center performance and customer convenience (e.g., acceptance of credit cards for payment of fees, accessible permit issuer, availability of utility as-built drawings)
Appendix E

Glossary of Terms
Glossary of Terms

Accountability in Government: The restraint on the discretion that is exercised by public officials: in the areas of fairness and finances by requiring conformance with established standards, rules, and regulations; and in the area of performance by requiring achievement of adopted objectives, goals or targets.

Building Codes: These generally encompass building, electrical, fire, mechanical, and plumbing ordinances adopted by a political jurisdiction that regulate the building, repair, alteration, or addition of any structure to protect the life and safety of its occupants.

Building Permit: Written authorization by a political jurisdiction for the construction, repair, alteration, or addition to a structure within its boundary.

Case Study Research: Following the qualitative paradigm, this manner of research involves "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit . . . rely[ing] heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). Researchers focus on the meaning of a phenomenon and the process involved in its occurrence and change. Generally involving field work, researchers are the principal instrument for data collection and analysis.

Development Plans: Any visual representation of a construction project depicting the proposed treatment of land or the character of structure to be erected, altered or expanded thereon, drawn to scale and providing sufficient detail for the
proper review and approval by a political jurisdiction prior to the issuance of a building permit.

_E-Government:_ Governmental functions, information, goods, and services made generally available through electronic means, principally the Internet.

_Encroachment Permit:_ Authorization by a political jurisdiction to intrude into publicly owned space, usually a street, on a temporary basis that enables an applicant to achieve a permissible objective where also some public benefit is attained.

_Interpretive or Explanatory Case Study:_ "Descriptive data . . . are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering" (Merriam, 1988, p. 28). With the interpretive case study, "Understanding and interpreting the findings of a case investigation in light of established theory serves to test theory" (p. 59).

_Lot Split:_ The official separation of a legal lot into two or more lots that also meet the area and dimensional requirements of the zoning ordinance but fewer than the threshold number requiring processing under the jurisdiction's subdivision ordinance.

_One-Stop Center:_ A facility that locates under one roof many of the staff and services related to fulfilling a unified mission, the objective of which is to conclude all of a client's business through a single contact. Examples include: disaster aid centers, employment and employment training centers, licenses and permits centers, and senior citizen services centers.

_Primacy of Process Principle:_ It asserts that a focuses on the process of problem solving instead of on the solution makes visible the structural dynamics of the
process being examined and surfaces potential actions that can overcome problems. This focus also brings to light how structure is influenced by actions.

Reinventing Government: The managerial doctrine and national movement generally attributed to Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and popularized under the National Performance Review program of the Clinton administration “through which ‘public entrepreneurs’ might bring about massive governmental reform” (deLeon & Denhardt, 2000, p. 89).

Researcher Bias: The “ways in which data collection or analysis are distorted by the researcher’s theory, values or preconceptions . . .” (Maxwell, 1998, p. 92).

Researcher Reactivity: Reactivity is “the effect of the researcher on the setting or individual studied” (Maxwell, 1998, pp. 91–92).

Research Validity (Internal): The best estimate of the credibility of evidence with which we infer a causal relationship between variables.

Research Validity (External): The estimate of validity on which it is inferred “that the presumed causal relationship can be generalized to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different types of persons, settings, and times” (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 37).

Rival Theory: An alternative substantive concept that seeks to account for the same outcome that is explained by the target theory.

Street Vacation: The abandoning of street ownership by a political jurisdiction pursuing a public purpose and the reversion of the land to adjoining property owners in
accordance with the provisions of the jurisdiction's official action taken to abandon ownership.

Temporary Occupancy Permit (ROW): Authorization to use some or all of a public right-of-way and street on a short term basis, typically for private purposes such as marshalling and storing of equipment and materials for erecting a building, yet holding out promise for longer term public benefit.

Triangulation: In qualitative research, the establishment of fact by the convergence of findings through evidence gathered from three or more different sources.

Zoning: The marking out of districts and the adopting of regulations by a municipality controlling: the area of land upon which buildings are built; the height, bulk, and placement of buildings upon the land; and the use of such buildings and land.

Zoning Variance: An approval to circumvent the literal requirements of zoning regulations based on a showing of practical hardship inherent in the land or structure that the regulations would impose.
Appendix F

Additional Reference Materials Supporting Case Study Analysis
Additional Reference Materials Supporting Case Study Analysis

Case Study Documentation


Bolton, K. A. (1988, March 28). Easier permit process planned to draw builders to Des Moines. The Des Moines Register, Real Estate, p. 6B.


General Literature and Materials


Appendix G

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval
Date: August 11, 2003

To: Peter Kobrak, Principal Investigator
    Kenneth Schilling, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 03-06-16

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "One-Stop Permit and Plan Review Center; Case Studies" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 11, 2004
REFERENCES


