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INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN METROPOLITAN  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

by

James M. Kadlecek

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

Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
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# INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN METROPOLITAN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

James M. Kadlecsek, D.P.A.

Western Michigan University, 1996

This case study contributes to the understanding of governance in metropolitan areas of the U.S. by examining cooperative activity among local units of government in the Grand Rapids, Michigan metropolitan area. A conceptual framework identifies the factors which impact cooperation, and displays a theoretical continuum of approaches to metropolitan governance.

The research methodology is qualitative and includes four years of participant observation, extensive records analysis, a survey of local government managers and 21 interviews with key informants.

The findings identify 151 examples of formal and informal cooperation occurring in Grand Rapids metro, as well as eight categories of factors which impact cooperative activity. The study concludes that local governments in Grand Rapids metro are unlikely to consolidate, but intergovernmental cooperation is occurring. Economics, the political culture of the area, and metropolitan leadership are key factors influencing cooperative efforts.

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My Committee Chair, Dr. Susan B. Hannah, has provided valuable advice and information which materially improved this work. Dr. Peter Kobrak and Dr. Ben Rudolph similarly provided valuable assistance and encouragement.

Numerous elected and appointed public officials, and many citizens of the Grand Rapids metro area have generously provided information. Further, they allowed me to observe and participate in metropolitan activities for the 4-1/2 year duration of this research. I am grateful and earnestly hope this work will be of value to the leaders of this community.

A special thanks to Linda L. Kadlecsek whose encouragement and editorial assistance made possible the completion of this research.

James M. Kadlecsek

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## PREFACE

From August, 1991 through May, 1996 I was employed as Director of the Office for Economic Expansion at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A part of my job responsibility was to observe and participate in activities of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC).

In that role, I attended GVMC meetings regularly, served on its Growth Management Committee and was a member of the study team for the Metropolitan Development Blueprint. I also supervised a study of cooperative purchasing for GVMC.

In addition, the Office for Economic Expansion operates a regional data center which I supervised. The data center compiles economic, demographic and business information for the Counties of Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon and Allegan. The Grand Rapids metro area includes Kent and some portions of Ottawa counties.

These activities provided the basis for my participant-observation role and the foundation for this research.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This case study research examines cooperation among local governments in metropolitan Grand Rapids, Michigan. The study contributes to an understanding of how governance occurs in the growing metro areas of the U.S. The literature relating to intergovernmental relations provides a conceptual framework identifying the concerns resulting from metropolitan growth, approaches to governance and factors impacting interlocal cooperation.

The study of Grand Rapids metro involves extensive participant observation, records analysis, survey and interviews. I examine area history, politics, economics, government structure, metro organizations and existing cooperative activity. As a growing metropolitan area, Grand Rapids metro provides an appropriate setting for this study of interlocal cooperation.

Chapter II provides a full discussion of the purposes and significance of the study. Four focusing questions point the research toward specific data sought in the examination of Grand Rapids. These questions relate to (1) cooperative activity, (2) encouraging and inhibiting factors, (3) comparisons with other case study research, and (4) conclusions about metro governance approaches.

In Chapter III, I review the post World War II history of vertical intergovernmental relations to set the context for the discussion of interlocal relationships.

Chapter IV describes the status of governance in the growing metropolitan areas of the U.S. and examines the literature from the perspective of the four focusing questions. I discuss the ACIR Case Studies of St. Louis and Pittsburgh and describe other metro area case studies. I review the status of cooperative interlocal efforts as well as the factors which either encourage or inhibit cooperation. I elaborate upon the several theoretical perspectives about metropolitan governance and the ongoing debate about theory.

The analytical process of a qualitative study is similar to solving a jigsaw puzzle. One must collect all the pieces that might possibly fit into the whole picture, sort them out, and try to assemble those that seem to fit (forcing a few reluctant ones occasionally). Chapter V describes the methodology and the sources which were utilized to collect and analyze the voluminous data which were eventually assembled.

A case study tells a story. Chapter VI, a brief primer on Grand Rapids' history, people, industry and the political culture and governments, provides a basis for understanding Grand Rapids metro.

The core of the case study is Chapters VII through XII, which present the findings of extensive records analysis, a survey of local public managers, interviews with key informants and four years of participant observation. These six chapters describe the

findings as responses to the focusing questions. The Grand Rapids area organizations which focus on metro-wide planning and public services are described in Chapter VII. Chapter VIII provides survey results of cooperative public services now being provided in Grand Rapids metro. I examine perceptions of key individuals participating in or closely involved with local government about levels of cooperation in Chapter IX. Chapter X focuses on the factors which are influencing cooperative efforts in Grand Rapids metro and compares these findings to those noted in the literature. Chapter XI is a comparison of the Grand Rapids findings with those of the ACIR Case Studies and other research. Chapter XII provides the results of the inquiry regarding theoretical approaches to governance and how practices and events in Grand Rapids can be described in the context of literature-based theory.

Finally, in Chapter XIII, I offer conclusions about the research, as well as several recommendations for further inquiry based upon ideas which emerged from the Grand Rapids case study.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OBJECTIVES AND VALUE OF THE STUDY

#### Purpose and Significance

A principal purpose of this case study is to identify factors that impact interlocal government cooperation in the Grand Rapids, Michigan metropolitan area. The study identifies services and activities which are being conducted through interlocal arrangements in Grand Rapids and identifies the factors which support or inhibit such collaboration. The study adds to the understanding of the complex network of local governments within metropolitan areas.

The question of the appropriate relationship between units of government is not new. The founding fathers wrote the Constitution to require shared governance between the federal government and the states. Later, the states followed that example when powers were delegated to units of local government. Consequently, governmental authority has been dispersed among levels in the United States since the nation began. Because intergovernmental power sharing and cooperation are imbedded in our most basic national policy, their study and examination are of pre-eminent importance. It would be difficult to study any public policy topic of significance in the United States without considering intergovernmental relationships.

An examination of the history of U.S. intergovernmental relationships since 1950 reveals changes in both intergovernmental relationships and the direction of trends in governance. These trends impact public policy formulation and the development of theories of governance.

The nation has yet to settle on a single governance model for metropolitan areas. Because an increasing proportion of the U.S. population resides in metropolitan areas, this lack is a significant issue. According to the 1990 Census, nearly 200 million persons, or 79 percent of the population, live in metro areas. That compares with 63 percent in 1960 (U.S. Census, 1960, 1990). Of even more significance here, the number of local governments in metro areas has increased from 18,442 in 1962 to 33,004 in 1992 (Census of Government, 1962, 1992). Yet, despite growth trends, we still have no generally accepted scheme of metro governance. The political theorists remain divided between advocates of the consolidationist theory on the one hand, and the polycentrist view on the other, with federationist variations between.

Meanwhile, life goes on in the cities, suburbs, townships, and special districts of our nation's metro areas. Governing happens through delivery of services, utilities, and fire and police protection. Governments build and maintain streets and highways. While one can certainly produce ample evidence of problems, inefficiencies, inequities and even crises in metropolitan regions, nevertheless, meaningful activity occurs. Commerce is transacted. People commute to work, go to school, to parks, and to shopping areas. Society does not function perfectly in metro areas, but it does function.

One reason metro areas function is because local governments cooperate. Even though one can point to few examples of metropolitan government, (a general government with jurisdiction over the whole of a metropolitan area) there is identifiable, if often informal, governance (the making and administration of public policy) (American Heritage Dictionary, 1982). Examples of metropolitan governance were demonstrated in the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations' St. Louis County (1988) and Allegheny County (1992) case studies. The ACIR studies examined local governance arrangements throughout these two metro areas in four functional service areas: (1) police protection, (2) fire protection, (3) streets and street services, and (4) public education. As suggested by the ACIR in the two studies, additional case studies of other metropolitan areas would provide additional understanding of how such communities are working. The Grand Rapids case study demonstrates a situation similar to St. Louis and Allegheny where governance is occurring despite the absence of formal metropolitan government.

Intergovernmental cooperation happens. What is not well known is how, why and under what circumstances such cooperation occurs.

Important social, economic and governance reasons to study intergovernmental cooperation within metropolitan areas include:

1. Problems relating to poverty, substandard housing, crime, and racial segregation are prevalent in metropolitan areas. Local government is often called upon to deal with these serious issues which impact living conditions across city lines (Rusk,

1993). Often the local government unit does not have all the powers and resources needed to address these problems. Assistance is needed from counties, states and federal agencies.

2. Financial inequities, or the unequal ability to generate revenues, are evident among the units of government in metropolitan areas (ACIR, 1987). Economic incentives and revenue sharing from other governments may alleviate these inequities.

3. Reduced federal aid and reduced rate of growth in state aid to localities in metro areas has placed financial pressures on local governments (Walker, 1995). Devolution of powers to locals has seldom meant receiving additional funds, and federal-state mandates on local governments are significant. Cooperative efforts among the levels of government can reduce the gap between mandates and funding.

4. The cost of public services in metro areas may be higher than necessary due to duplication of programs in multiple, adjacent jurisdictions (ACIR, 1988). Additional formal or informal agreements among governments can consolidate some current duplication and can certainly assist in preventing future duplicative programs and services.

5. A large number of special purpose districts have been formed which can add to the complexity of service delivery (Wright, 1988). There are 13,614 existing districts in metropolitan areas of the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). Many opportunities exist for the provision or assumption of these “special” services by already-established governments.

6. Fragmentation (multiple units of government) and sprawl (suburban growth) are issues of major concern to land use planners (ACIR, 1992). Cooperating local and state units could change laws and regulations to address this problem.

7. Only 18 city-county mergers have occurred in the United States since World War II. Few attempts to consolidate local government units have received voter approval (Peirce, 1991). Perhaps application of principles learned from the more successful school district consolidations could be utilized by cities and counties.

8. There is no generally accepted model of metropolitan government which has been agreed upon either by political theorists or by public administration professionals. The range of theory is from the views of the consolidationists to those of the polycentrists (ACIR, 1988; Zimmerman, 1991).

9. Little data or research exists on the extent and effect of intergovernmental cooperation within metropolitan areas (ACIR, 1993a). Academic research has provided little guidance to public administrators regarding improvement (Walker, 1995). More research with practical applicability is needed.

10. Of these several justifications for the significance of this research, perhaps the most serious is the growing evidence that fragmentation and sprawl contribute to the racial separation and economic inequities that characterize many urban communities. There is concern that the level of unrest is of crisis proportions (Rusk, 1993; Peirce, 1993). This concern is nation-wide and will require involvement of all levels of government for solution.



### Focusing Questions

To carry out the research in a manner consistent with the conceptual framework (Figure 1), I pose four primary focusing questions for the case study:

1. How much intergovernmental cooperation exists in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area?
2. What factors have encouraged or inhibited intergovernmental cooperative efforts among units of local government in Grand Rapids?
3. How do the findings compare with data from other case studies, especially those conducted by the ACIR?
4. What conclusions can be drawn from the Grand Rapids study regarding theoretical perspectives on governance in metropolitan areas?

The focusing questions are consistent with the review of the literature on interlocal cooperation and with the significance of the issues listed previously. To answer question 1, I will identify the areas in which cooperation among units of local government is occurring currently in Grand Rapids. Are the cooperative activities formal or informal? For what specific public service functions are such cooperative actions being conducted? Is there consistency in type of activity?

Question 2 focuses on the factors which influence local relationships. Sub-questions which will be answered are: (a) Were political factors involved? (b) What economic conditions had impact? (c) Did geographic factors affect the relationship?

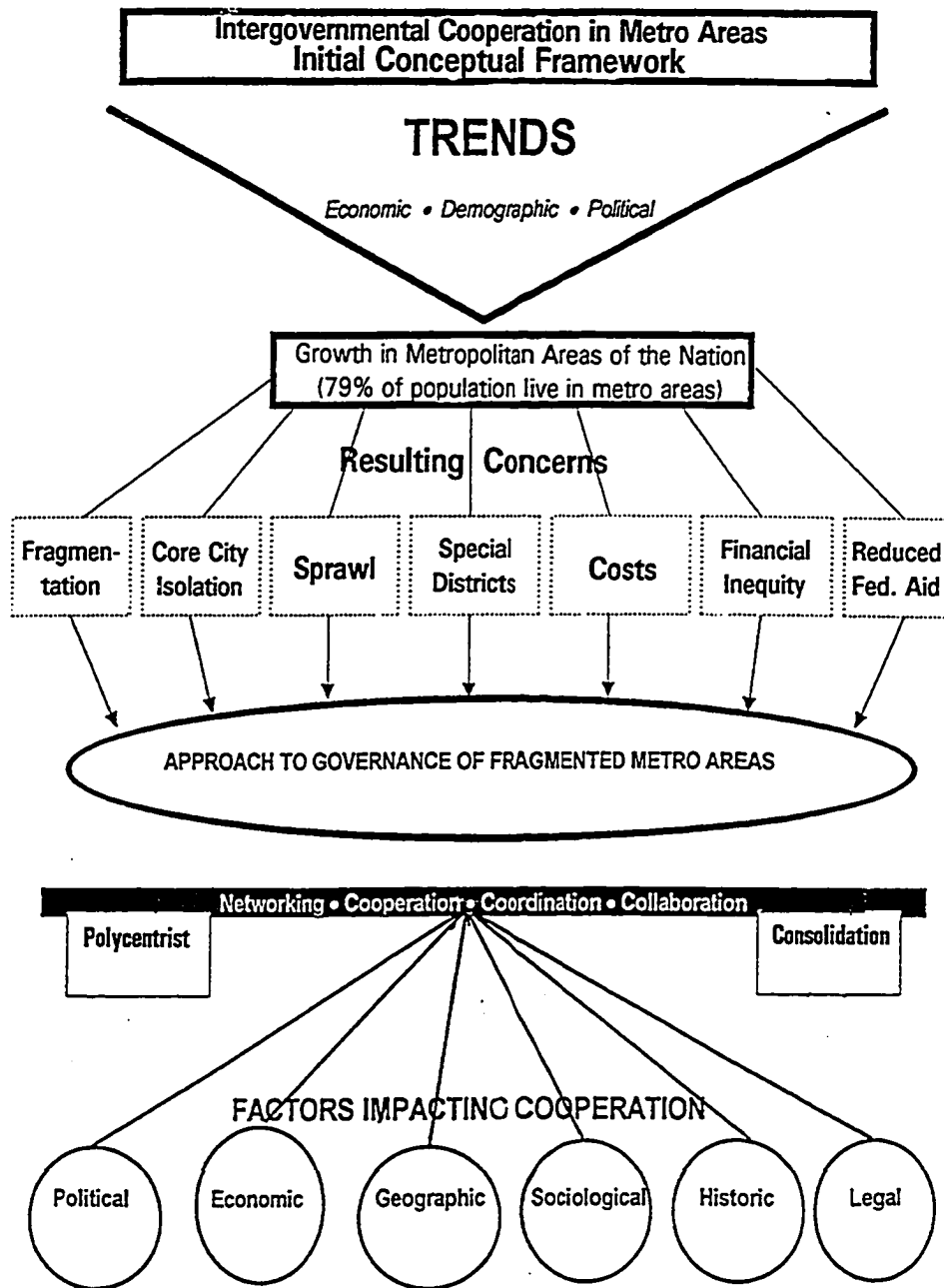


Figure 1. Initial Conceptual Framework.

(d) Were sociological factors involved? (e) Did any historic event(s) play a part in the relationship? and (f) Did legal factors encourage or inhibit cooperative activity?

Question 3 asks for a comparison between previous case studies of metro areas and the Grand Rapids findings. Such studies have identified whether or not certain types of services provide an opportunity for cooperation. Are other metro areas cooperating on similar or differing activities than is the case in Grand Rapids? What factors affecting interlocal cooperation were present in other cases, and what comparisons can be made to Grand Rapids?

Question 4 concerns theoretical perspectives about governance. There are multiple units of local government in metro Grand Rapids. The patterns identified in answering the previous questions provide information regarding the extent of cooperative activity and the factors which have led to or deterred cooperation. The cumulative data tells us where Grand Rapids fits on the consolidationist-polycentrist continuum.

### Initial Conceptual Framework of the Research

From a review of the literature, I have constructed a conceptual framework upon which the research is based. This initial conceptual framework is depicted as Figure 1.

Increasing growth in metropolitan areas is the result of demographic, economic and political-government patterns and trends. The increasing number of local government units has resulted in many concerns and raised the question as to the best

approach for governing and providing public services to burgeoning metro regions with fragmented governance structures.

Figure 1 depicts a continuum of the resulting approaches to metropolitan governance. Polycentrism, sometimes called the market model, is depicted on one end of the continuum. Consolidation is the opposite approach. Between these two are variations of joint arrangements, referred to as federationist. The movement from left to right on the continuum indicates an increasing degree of unification in the governance structure.

One of the purposes here is to identify factors which determine where a given metro area might fall on the continuum. Specifically in this case study, what factors impact intergovernmental cooperation in Grand Rapids, Michigan?

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORY OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS (IGR)

The federal principle has been adapted to a dynamic society which has developed in mankind's most dynamic period. It may someday be said that, indeed, it was the federal principle that provided the basis for the survival of American government as a free government during these difficult times. American federalism has been able to combine strength at the center with local control and reasonably uniform national progress with opportunities for local diversity (Elazar, 1961, pp. 40-41).

A review of the post World War II history of intergovernmental cooperation begins with an overview by decade of vertical activity (federal, state, local), as opposed to horizontal (interlocal) relations. A review of federal relations provides an overall historic context for the understanding of interlocal cooperation.

#### IGR 1950-1980

In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the Kestnbaum Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Eisenhower's motives had more to do with preserving the separateness of American governments and minimizing the federal role than it did with understanding interlocal cooperation (Grodzins, 1985). Nevertheless, the commission recommended a "permanent center for overall attention to the problems of inter-level relationships" (Grodzins, 1985, p. 45). In 1956, Eisenhower established the Office of Deputy Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations. With

the passage of Public Law 86-380 in 1959, Congress provided for the establishment of a permanent, bi-partisan body of 26 members to continue the study of the relationships among local, state, and national levels of government (Public Law 86-380). The Advisory Commission of Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) continues to function (although as this is written, Congress is discussing budget cuts or possible elimination of funding for ACIR).

The act establishing the ACIR provides that the composition of the commission includes persons from federal, state and local levels of government. Of the 26 appointees, seven are designated from the ranks of mayors and county officials and seven represent governors and state legislators.

The duties of the ACIR focus on the national government's role in the federal system. Specifically, the ACIR studies and makes recommendations regarding federal grants, tax laws, and allocation of government functions among the three levels. In a general context, the ACIR is charged with "consideration of common problems among the federal, state and local governments" and with anticipating "at an early stage, emerging public problems that are likely to require intergovernmental cooperation" (ACIR, 1961, p. 17).

In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon B. Johnson established a number of inter-agency coordinating committees for the purpose of helping to manage policy and intergovernmental connections related to the proliferation of grants established by various Great Society programs. During that same period, the Office of Management and

Budget (OMB) issued a number of A-series (e.g., A-95) administrative directives to facilitate the process of intergovernmental relations. Johnson also issued executive orders requiring the convening of meetings of federal and state and local officials to aid in the management and coordination of federal vis-à-vis state and local programs (Wright, 1988).

The plethora of federal programs associated with the Great Society led to an increased level of interest in the subject of intergovernmental relationships. The literature of the mid-to-late 1960s is replete with discussions of this “new” federalism. Concerns were expressed over the state-federal relationships, over the pre-emption of state authority by the federal government, and over management questions relative to implementation of the new programs. For example, a 1968 article by the head of the Bureau of the Budget, William D. Carey acknowledged the motivation and enthusiasm of government in the 1960s to address problems of society, but expressed strong concern over a gap that he believed existed between that enthusiasm and policy design, program definition and effective delivery. Carey emphasized the complex administrative dimension generated by multi-agency, multi-program and multi-jurisdictional undertakings. He also identified the difficulties with the consistency of information and communication inherent in administrative schemes which involve multiple elements and actors (Carey, 1968).

In response to these concerns, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act (IGCA) was passed in 1968. The purpose of the act was “to achieve the fullest cooperation and

coordination of activities among the levels of government in order to improve the operation of our federal system in an increasingly complex society” (Public Law 90-577). Additional provisions included (a) periodic congressional review of federal grants-in-aid, (b) intergovernmental administration of development assistance programs, (c) improvement in administration of grants-in-aid, and (d) reimbursable technical services by federal agencies to state and local governments.

The IGCA was significant as an expression of congressional intent that coordination and intergovernmental cooperation were expected. The same spirit produced the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (Public Law 91-648) in 1970. This law provided grants for personnel administration improvement, placed federal personnel within state and local programs to improve coordination, and, perhaps most significantly, opened federal training programs to state and local managers.

In the early to mid-1970s, Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford utilized advisory councils as well as the OMB to further coordinate efforts of federal to state and local programs. In 1974, the Committee on Policy Management Assistance was created within OMB to assess intergovernmental relations policy and specifically to examine the fiscal impacts of federal programs on state and local governments (Wright, 1988).

The post-World War II period produced a significant increase in federal control. The “Creative Federalism” of President Johnson, and the “New Federalism” of Presidents Nixon and Ford, when combined with the validation of many of these



initiatives by the Warren Court, represented important extensions of national power. As Scheiber (1985) points out, this period of American history saw many areas of policy becoming centralized. The attention given to intergovernmental cooperation and to policy coordination during the same period seems to recognize the interdependent relationship between the levels of government. Cross-cutting national domestic issues such as housing, urban renewal, transportation, civil rights and equal education dramatized the need for national policies connected to local implementation. The period was one of tension-filled civil strife in which the emotional nature of the issues combined with the federal-state power shift caused disorder, confusion, and readjustment both among states and between the state and federal governments.

In 1980 ACIR conducted a survey of its members to determine major intergovernmental events. The survey results identified the major public policy issues of the 1960s and 1970s as: (a) passage of General Revenue Sharing and Block Grants, (b) enactment of Civil Rights/Voting Rights Legislation, (c) passage of California Proposition 13, (d) *Baker v. Carr* (one-man-one-vote), (e) Economic Opportunity Act-War on Poverty, (f) NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), (g) *Serrano v. Priest* (California Equity in School Finance case), (h) New York City fiscal crisis, (i) several school desegregation cases which added to *Brown v. Board of Education*, (j) peaking of federal aid, and (k) passage of Medicaid/Medicare.

The same survey listed 10 key intergovernmental trends for the 20-year period of the 1960s and 1970s. These trends derived from the intergovernmental events (or perhaps vice versa) and included:

1. Growth in government and expansion of governmental roles into many areas formerly in the purview of the private sector.
2. Massive growth in the size, scope, and intrusiveness of federal aid.
3. Troubled cities and urban areas.
4. Increasingly significant role of the courts in intergovernmental areas accompanying a concern for equity in the system.
5. Growing local government dependency on federal and state aid.
6. Strengthened states in general and more powerful state revenue systems in particular.
7. Disaffection with government and growing concern for governmental accountability, manifested in the late 1970s by various tax revolt actions.
8. Increased intergovernmental lobbying...governments lobbying governments.
9. Increased number of government bodies.
10. Emergence of frostbelt-sunbelt regional competition, and growing tensions between rich states and poor ones (ACIR, 1980).

Expansion of intergovernmental connections was brought about by an aggressive federal expansionist role. We also see signs of the frustration and backlash brought

about by these dramatic and often controversial programs and events. The management of federalism was in a state of considerable flux (Walker, 1974).

By the Carter presidential years of 1977 through 1980, the attention of the country was on gaining control of the system. ACIR studies, pursuant to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, focused increasingly on techniques of intergovernmental management, on decentralization and devolution, and on coordinating the local delivery systems (Agranoff, 1987). The tax revolt and spending limit trend across the nation (NCSL, 1980) set the stage for the policy change attitude relative to intergovernmental relationships during the ensuing Reagan years. Clearly, the focus was moving away from centralization.

#### IGR in the 1980s

In 1982 President Ronald Reagan issued Executive Order 12372 ordering an intergovernmental review of federal programs pursuant to authority within the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 (IGCA). Interestingly, and reflective of his philosophy about government, this order put a new “spin” on the IGCA. Where the language of the 1968 law was essentially neutral and cooperative regarding the relationships between federal, state, and local units of government, Reagan’s executive order was decidedly anti-federal. It contained provisions such as: (a) utilizing the state process to determine official views of state and local elected officials, (b) supporting state and local governments by discouraging the reauthorization or creation of any

planning organization which is federally funded, and (c) allowing the states to simplify and consolidate existing federally required state plan submissions.

In his 1982 State of the Union address, President Reagan outlined a proposal that would constitute a major shift in program responsibility from federal to state governments. He suggested turning back some 35 federal programs to the states, a federal trust fund to assist states in financing these returned programs, and a swap whereby the states would take over the AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) in return for the federal government assuming total responsibility for Medicaid (Colorado Legislative Council, 1982). While the President was not successful in accomplishing this particular set of proposals, it is indicative of the philosophical direction of his administration. It is certainly true that intergovernmental aid bore more than a proportionate share of the significant budget cuts of his first term (O'Toole, 1985).

The reduction of federal intergovernmental aid to fund the various programs passed in the 1960s and 1970s brought the issue of mandated programs to the forefront. As the federal government decreased its financial commitment to the states' domestic programs, states were cutting back on assistance to local governments due to the pressures of tax revolts and spending limitations. Consequently, the states complained of programs mandated upon them by the federal government with reduced financial assistance to carry them out, and the local governments complained about federal and state governments for the same reason. A study of five states in 1981 tabulated 3,415 state mandated programs and 1,234 programs mandated by the federal government

(Lovell and Tobin, 1981). The programs crossed a number of programmatic areas including health, community development, general government, environmental, education, public assistance, public protection, and transportation.

The mandate issue and tax revolt difficulties, framed against Reagan's proposals to return significant authority to the states, raised questions about state governments' ability to perform. However, an ACIR study conducted in 1985 found that the states had reasserted their historic purpose and were assuming a major coordinative, planning, and funding responsibility in domestic programs. The new direction of the 1980s had revitalized the states' overall functional role in the federal system (ACIR, 1985b).

The same study, as well as other literature, concludes that the results of the 1980's emphasis on decentralization had the effect of reducing the federal role in intergovernmental relationships. Instead, what began to take center stage as the 1980s ended was a growing dependency of local governments upon the states in financing of programs, as well as an increasing connection in administrative and regulatory relationships. Thus, the dominance of the federal government and the earlier trends toward centralization were slowed or stopped in the 1980s. The focus became more one of growing equity vis-à-vis state and federal levels, with increasing tension between local governments and their two major intergovernmental partners. Wright expresses the view that the Reagan years represented a redirection of intergovernmental policy, "a reorientation of IGR in fiscal and political terms" (Gage, 1990, p. 161).

### The 1990s and Beyond for IGR

As the historic tracing of IGR over the past 40 years suggests, the 1990s and beyond will bring further change in relationships among various levels of American governments. Will state and local governments continue to assume proportionately greater roles as the federal government struggles with its huge deficit and its preoccupation with military matters and foreign affairs? Or, in the post-cold war period, will the federal government find new resources to redirect to state and local units? If state and local governments must take more responsibility for domestic matters, how will they afford the necessary programs to clean up the environment, build and repair the necessary infrastructure, and tend to a population with growing social and educational needs? These questions are especially pertinent when one notes the considerable reluctance of citizens to support any increase in tax burden. Can we afford the federalist intergovernmental system which splits up responsibilities for governing and carrying out programs among a myriad of governmental units?

Examination of the studies planned for the early 1990s by the ACIR is indicative of interest in changing federal relationships. ACIR's current research list includes: (a) state laws affecting local government, (b) shifting functions, (c) federal pre-emption and mandate reimbursement, (d) significant features of fiscal federalism, (e) addressing the neglected dimension of fiscal capacity, (f) mandates...cases in state-local relations, and (g) state and local autonomy and other similar topics.

What do the experts and long-time observers of intergovernmental relations say will be the policy role of IGR in the years ahead? Elazar, as quoted by Wright in the Public Administration Review, says a new phase in IGR is likely, one where federal grants no longer set the tone, but rather the area of regulation seems to be the direction where new and expanded relationships are developing (Wright, 1990). This is consistent with the declining influence of the federal role in the 1980s. The issue of mandating programs from higher levels of government to lower ones without accompanying funding also remains significant.

O'Toole (1985) observes that the fiscal aspects of the intergovernmental system are so complex and interdependent that major change will come with great difficulty. But, he also notes that this interdependency, especially in a time of scarce resources and a doubtful public appetite for increased taxes, will itself be the glue that holds the intergovernmental network together. He also warns of the possible overload of the system and suggests that the intergovernmental network has reached the stage of some difficult decision making. While skeptical that major policy and system changes are likely, he points to the fact that even Reagan, with all the public support for retrenchment that he enjoyed, was unable to accomplish wholesale reform. He states that "the current arrangement still preserves a network for cooperation and a forum for bargaining about issue-specific disputes among governments that possess both significant autonomy and numerous ties to others" (O'Toole, 1985, p. 17).

Gage (1990) suggests, based on his interviews of numerous experts, that the federal role in grants-in-aid will continue to narrow and that the current pattern of only symbolic presidential leadership in intergovernmental matters will prevail through the 1990s. His study sees some increasing importance in the roles of state and local governments in IGR, largely by default, because of what he terms, “budget-driven federalism.” He quotes Derthick in suggesting that the “federal system will gravitate toward a pragmatic middle ground, which can be understood as an equilibrium point that supports supremacy of the national authority and leaves in force more viable subnational authorities” (Gage, 1990, p. 169). Gage’s study lists four key intergovernmental issues for the 1990s, with budget-driven federalism being by far the most significant. The others, he notes, are federal regulation and mandates, structural and process issues, and the rising role of the states.

In 1990 Wright conducted a fifty-year review of IGR. His summary of the post World War II IGR history reports “the onset and continuation of fiscal austerity, sometimes described as cutback management or decrementalism, has prompted some observers to conclude that the U.S. has moved toward defacto, state-oriented, fend-for-yourself federalism” (p. 127). The reference is to the relative decline in federal aid coming to state and local units of government, as well as the 1980’s shifts that have occurred in the state and local assumption of many responsibilities. Wright suggests the use of comparative factors to analyze the status of IGR. He lists six points that should be applied when comparing intergovernmental programs: (1) entities involved, (2)



authority relationships, (3) means of conflict resolution, (4) values, (5) political quotient, and (6) the leading actors/participants.

Wright further suggests three perspectives on present and future inter-governmental relations: (1) FED, meaning traditional federal-state interactions; (2) IGR, denoting interactions among all levels; and (3) IGM or Intergovernmental Management, which is IGR plus the politics in administration or vice versa. Three sets of actors emerge from Wright's perspective: (1) elected politicians, (2) generalist administrators, and (3) professional program managers. According to Wright, his perspective can lead to the problem solving thrust that underlies IGR-IGM and encourages movement toward agreements that involve the kind of continuous interaction among the actors that is needed to cope with the issues of current and future years. Wright also predicts that there will need to be greater involvement of the private sector and non-profit entities and that this should not be surprising given the scarcity of resources and austerity which confront the public sector. This suggests an increased number of actors, considerably more reliance on cooperative ventures, and a significant degree of fusion between public and private sectors.

Such a perspective on IGR must be tempered by recent events. With the election in 1994 of a Republican majority to the Congress, there has been an increasing focus on the appropriate role of the federal government. David Walker, in his 1995 book The Rebirth of Federalism, suggests a "big swap" for the nineties to address the imbalance among units of government in our federal system. Walker compares such a "swap" to

efforts proposed in the 1980s by President Reagan in which authority for many programs would devolve to the state and local units of government in return for the federal government taking over total responsibility for Medicaid and health care. He proposes that the federal government should unburden itself of “extraneous or secondary domestic issues that the states and localities are perfectly capable of handling” (p. 326). Further, Walker believes that states should be relieved of many federal mandates and be treated as the full partners in the federal system intended by the founders. Walker is highly critical of the amount of lobbying and interest group activity at the nation’s capitol, which he believes has relegated intergovernmental interests to a secondary status. Certainly, these views are consistent with the mood of the mid-nineties of reducing the federal role (Walker, 1995).

While Walker suggests that the federal government unburden itself of certain domestic issues (metropolitan urban problems, among others), Kaplan and James in their 1990 book, The Future of National Urban Policy, emphasize that America’s attempts to forge a national urban strategy have been largely unsuccessful anyway. Cities are important and the authors believe there is a need for a national response. However, they note the trends and the pressures of decentralization and devolution:

Given constitutional prohibitions, resource constraints, and political commitments, nothing the feds could do or would be able to do would significantly impede historical trends concerning decentralization...in sum, we still lack a strong theoretically and empirically based construct to guide development of national urban policies (p. 355).

Kaplan and James describe and recommend support instead for a “nonurban” policy. They suggest focusing on what is possible to accomplish at the federal level politically and encourage reforms in education, welfare and infrastructure that may benefit urban residents.

In sum, the trends of the 1990s indicate a lessening of federal involvement, funding and attention to relationships with metropolitan areas.

### The States in IGR

The states play a key role in the governance of metropolitan areas. Because local units of government are created by state law, and because current trends indicate a power shift back from the federal level, states are at a critical point of influence.

As Nancy Burns points out in her 1994 work, The Formation of American Local Governments, “States define the relevant interested actors in local politics. In defining the bundle of institutions that constitute local government, states go a long way toward defining the political issues in local politics” (p. 95). Regarding interlocal cooperation, the states can clearly have a major impact on encouraging or inhibiting such activity. The question then becomes what have the states done and what actions have state legislatures taken recently regarding local government?

In 1993, the ACIR conducted an exhaustive study entitled State Laws Governing Local Government Structure and Administration. The study revealed trends and developments from 1978-1990 in state legislation which impacted local government

(ACIR, 1993b, pp. 7-13). It surveyed 75 specific areas of local government operations, and, not surprisingly, found significant legislative activity affecting local units. State legislatures are apparently expanding requirements of local units in: (a) financial management and budgets, (b) open records and meetings, (c) election laws, and (d) matters subject to referenda. Of particular relevance to this research, 42 states have now provided legislative authorization for interlocal cooperation agreements.

The ACIR study indicates a lack of action regarding major transfer of state authority to local units of government over the 12-year study period. The Reagan philosophy of transfer of authority and flexibility downward does not seem to have influenced state legislatures in their relationships with local units (ACIR, 1993b).

Another important point concerns the financial interconnections among levels of government. The ongoing debate about the federal government's deficit often minimizes the dependency of state and local government operations upon federal funds. In 1993, cumulative state and local government receipts totaled \$888.1 billion. Of that total, \$186.2 billion, or 21 percent, were federal grants-in-aid. State and local governments must balance their annual budgets and they have no significant surplus to cover major reductions in federal allocations. In 1993, the cumulative surplus for all state and local government operations was only \$1.9 billion (State and Local Government Fiscal Position in 1993, 1994). Clearly, the trend toward federal deficit reduction will place serious pressures on state and local government, and increase the attention on intergovernmental cooperation.

### Summary of IGR History

There has been an evolutionary policy change in intergovernmental relations and cooperation over the past 40 years. The 1950's policy reflected concern about the increased federal role during the era of the New Deal and World War II. National policy attempted to slow that growth. The 1960s and the 1970s saw a significant expansion of the federal role. Intergovernmental policy was one of active assistance to local and state governments as a means of developing consistency regarding national issues. The 1980s brought another retrenchment due to concern over the expanded federal role and rising federal deficit. The policy was one of attempting a return of authority to the states.

We began the 1990s with the federal government bearing a tremendous financial deficit burden and a focus predominantly on foreign affairs and defense matters. Despite relief from the cold war pressures and an end to the defense build-up, it seems unlikely that the federal government will be in a fiscal position to mount major intergovernmental initiatives given the burden of the debt and the pressure for new involvements resulting from the newly defined global economy. Further, the politics of the mid-1990s indicate a trend to a lesser federal role and to greater state and local responsibility. As Walker indicates, the timing may be right for a "big swap" between federal and state-local roles (Walker, 1995).

Fortunately, local governments have developed considerably greater expertise to carry out policies and programs. Nevertheless, they face tremendous obstacles in the way of resource scarcity. The focus clearly is on the network of intergovernmental

relationships to accommodate the implementation of the numerous programs and activities on which our society has become dependent. Structures which have served us historically may not function effectively today. We must now turn to the development of creative intergovernmental practices to accomplish the goals of the 1990s and beyond, namely, the continued provision of a high level of public services without major expansion of financial resources. This will involve the probable use of a number of tools: (a) intergovernmental agreements, (b) mergers of historic public organizational structures, (c) public/private partnerships, (d) service shedding of lower priority functions, (e) various hybrids of privatization methodology, and (f) networking and cooperative arrangements among organizations.

The public policy of the ensuing years will likely depend heavily upon the interaction of governmental units at all levels, as well as a heavy dose of private sector involvement. As Wright indicates, we are seeing an increasing joining of public and private sectors. An activist IGR policy using these networks will be needed to solve the problems of the 1990s (Wright, 1990).

## CHAPTER IV

### GOVERNANCE OF U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS

The purpose of this research is the examination of intergovernmental cooperation in metropolitan Grand Rapids, Michigan. Therefore, it is necessary to provide relevant background from the literature. I do so in this chapter by first discussing the status and growth of the local government units which make up metropolitan regions. Next, I examine the three perspectives or approaches to the ongoing debate about how best to govern these growing metro areas. The three approaches to governance are described in the literature as consolidationist, federationist and polycentrist. In discussing the three approaches I describe studies of governance which are relevant to each. Finally, I look at what the literature has to say about the factors which impact cooperation among governing units in metro areas. A concluding summary connects the literature review to the focusing questions of the Grand Rapids research.

#### Local Governments in Metro Areas

In 1992 there were 86,743 units of government in the United States. When federal, state, and school districts are excluded, the remaining local governments total 72,136. In 1942, the comparable number of government units providing local, non-

educational services was 46,488. That amounts to a 55 percent increase over the past half century. Table 1 displays this growth.

Interestingly, the number of school districts has declined dramatically from 108,579 in 1942 to only 14,556 in 1992 due to consolidation efforts. The growth in local units is almost totally in special districts designed to perform some single service (library, fire protection, utilities, parks, recreation, etc.), or to provide services to a suburban or rural residential development. The number of cities, towns, townships, and counties, however, has remained essentially constant.

Table 1  
Growth in the Number of Government Units (1942 - 1992)

	1942	1952	1962	1972	1982	1987	1992
U.S.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
States	48	50	50	50	50	50	50
Counties	3,050	3,052	3,043	3,044	3,041	3,042	3,043
Municipalities	16,220	16,807	18,000	18,517	19,076	19,200	19,296
Townships & Towns	18,919	17,202	17,142	16,991	16,734	16,691	16,666
Special Districts	8,299	12,340	18,323	23,885	28,078	29,532	33,131
School Districts	108,579	67,355	34,678	15,781	14,851	14,721	14,556

Source: Data drawn from the U.S. Bureau of Census, Census of Governments, Vol. 1, 1992.



A growing proportion of people choose to reside in communities within metropolitan areas; 79.4 percent in 1990 compared to 63 percent in 1960. In 1987, there were 282 MSAs (Metropolitan Statistical Areas) containing an estimated population of 198 million persons (U.S. Census, 1990). About 19 percent of the U.S. land area is included in metro areas, compared to 8.7 percent in 1960.

In addition, the number of governmental units in metro areas continues to increase (see Table 2). In 1942, there were 15,827. The most recent 1992 Census of Government, 50 years later, reports 33,004.

The fragmentation score for governments is a measure of the number of governments in a given area relative to the area's population. It is computed by dividing the number of governmental units by the number of persons residing in the subject area. The Allegheny County case study indicated a fragmentation score of 2.23 governments per 10,000 residents, St. Louis County has 1.55, while Cook County, Illinois has 0.98 (ACIR, 1992, p. 5). By comparison, the Grand Rapids area has a ratio of units of government per 10,000 residents of 1.07.

Metropolitan areas come in all sizes. The range is from 19.3 million population in the New York-New Jersey CMSA to 56,000 in the Enid, Oklahoma MSA. It is also evident that metro areas continue to spread out, moving further from the center cities. This sprawl is evidenced by calculations of population density in metro areas. Persons per square mile have declined significantly, as have household sizes. Average household size decreased from 3.3 persons in 1960 to 2.6 in 1991, and the density of population in

an urbanized area such as Chicago declined from 5,200 persons per square mile in 1970 to about 4,200 in 1990 (Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 1994).

Table 2

## Number of Local Governments in Metropolitan Areas (1942-1992)

	Number of MSAs <sup>1</sup>	Counties	Municipalities	Townships	School Districts	Special Districts	Total	Average Number of Governments per MSA
1942	140	272	1,741	895	11,822	1,097	15,827	113
1952	168	256	3,164	2,328	7,864	2,598	16,210	96
1957	174	266	3,422	2,317	6,473	3,180	15,658	90
1962	212	310	4,142	2,575	6,004	5,411	18,442	87
1967	227	404	4,977	3,255	5,018	7,049	20,703	91
1972	264	444	5,467	3,462	4,758	8,054	22,185	84
1977	272	594	6,444	4,031	5,220	9,580	25,869	95
1982	305	670	7,018	4,756	5,692	11,725	29,861	98
1987	282	735	7,488	5,036	5,975	12,690	31,924	113
1992	268	740	7,590	5,067	5,993	13,614	33,004	123

<sup>1</sup>MSAs—Metropolitan Statistical Areas. The old term Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) was replaced in July, 1983 by three new categories: (1) Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA); (2) Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA); and (3) Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). PMSAs are components of CMSAs, many of which existed prior to 1983 as Independent SMSAs. Not all PMSAs and MSAs, however, were formerly SMSAs. PMSAs may not be included in 1987 MSA count. Therefore, 1987 MSA data cannot be directly compared with the 1982 Census of Governments data earlier.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Government Organization, Census of Governments*, Volume 1, Number 1, various years.

## Approaches to Governance in Metropolitan Areas

In his 1995 book, The Rebirth of Federalism, David Walker discusses the “Interlocal and Regional Challenge” resulting from the current array of government levels in the U.S. One of the challenges Walker identifies in metropolitan America is:

Academic cacophony. For officials seeking guidance from the academic experts, theoretical harmony is more elusive than ever; more theories are in vogue as to how metro areas should be run—from public choice (market-oriented) and the more governmental providers the better, to a mixed-servicing approach combining public and private provision of services, to two and one-tier regional governmental reorganizations. The many faces of reform have produced little reform at any time (pp. 271-272).

Walker has described the essence of the debate over metro governance theory. Models range along a continuum from polycentrism (public choice) on one end to consolidationism at the other, with varieties of federationist approaches in between.

### Consolidation

For some years the prevailing view was that fragmentation was the cause of significant government inefficiency. Duplication and overlapping jurisdictions were blamed for urban sprawl, pollution of the air and water, and the sociological and economic problems of the core cities within urban metropolitan regions. The solution, many argued, was substantive structural reform, or consolidation. Arthur B. Gunlicks vividly describes the “urban crisis” and makes a case that substantive action must be

taken to “civilize the jungle” and create some better order out of the “mild chaos” of local government in the U.S. (Gunlicks, 1981, p. 11).

The conclusion that urban area governments suffered from a pathology of ills resulting from overlapping, duplication of services, and financial inequities was accepted as obvious by many observers and reformers. After all, anyone who had ever lived (or driven) in a metropolitan area could observe the sprawl, the community overlap, the pollution and the urban problems relating to crime and poverty.

Fragmented government seemed to be a contributing factor to these urban difficulties. One interesting and somewhat puzzling aspect of interlocal study, however, relates to the strong independence of the units of government and their aversion to consolidation, or even to substantive cooperation, in the face of this alleged pathology. While much lip service is given to the concept of intergovernmental cooperation and sometimes to the logic of consolidation (particularly in metropolitan areas where communities abut one another), the record of activity is unimpressive (Nice, 1987). The most notable early consolidations occurred as a result of nineteenth century legislative action in Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans and New York. Since World War II, city-county consolidations occurred in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (1947), Nashville, Tennessee (1962), Jacksonville, Florida (1967), Indianapolis, Indiana (1969), Columbus, Georgia (1970), Lexington, Kentucky (1972) and Anchorage, Alaska (1975) (Gunlicks, 1981). According to a study completed for Kalamazoo,

Michigan in 1988, only 18 merger attempts have been completed since World War II while 37 were defeated (Kalamazoo, 1988, p. 14).

The much publicized Unigov of Indianapolis has recently been critiqued in an article in Publius by William Blomquist and Roger B. Parks of Indiana University. They conclude that the 1969 reorganization fell substantially short of being a complete consolidation (Blomquist & Parks, 1995). They suggest that the central City of Indianapolis has not been significantly benefitted in financial or service delivery terms, and “has suffered a considerable loss of political influence under Unigov” (p. 37). The authors further suggest that Unigov is a situation where the suburbs have politically taken over the city as opposed to one of true consolidation.

There are still those who advocate consolidated metropolitan government. David Rusk, former mayor of Albuquerque and a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, states flatly in Cities Without Suburbs (1993) that fragmented government is partially responsible for segregation, racism, and economic discrimination. His book directly argues for the reform of local government structure and service delivery in urban metro areas. Rusk does not base his position on managerial issues related to efficiency; rather, he connects metro reform to headline public issues such as crime, jobs, education, urban blight, housing, and social welfare. Rusk describes cities which have the legal and political capacity to annex and physically expand as “elastic,” and those which are constrained from doing so as “inelastic.” Then, using 1950-90 Census data, he demonstrates that elastic cities have done a more effective job of dealing with

urban problems. Cities which have annexed their suburbs have dealt more effectively with socioeconomic issues than have those which became landlocked by surrounding suburban municipalities and townships. Rusk's point is that the governmental fragmentation of urban areas must be reversed in order to end racial and economic segregation as well as to address the physical decay of urban areas. He says "city" must be re-defined to re-unify city and suburb. Metropolitan government is his preferred solution. He also proposes definitive actions by state governments pertaining to annexation laws, tax-sharing arrangements, and city-county consolidations.

The structural consolidation of units of local government in metro areas has been extensively studied. For example, Glendenning and Atkins in 1980 examined city-county consolidations from 1921 through 1978. After tabulating and discussing the differences and similarities, the authors conclude that future changes through intergovernmental agreements and transfers of functions are likely to be the preferred methods of dealing with metropolitan fragmentation (Glendenning and Atkins, 1980, pp. 68-72). Roger K. Hedrick examined the literature on consolidation in 1991 and came to a similar conclusion. His finding was to the effect that traditional consolidation approaches did not provide evidence that structural consolidation was the best approach. He suggests that incremental rather than radical structural changes in metro governance were much more likely to occur (Hedrick, 1991).

### Polycentrism

Gunlicks (1981) and Hedrick (1991) contrast the consolidationist theory of combining local units of government to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale with polycentrist approaches based on applying the market model to interlocal arrangements.

The view of the polycentrists has been put forth principally by Vincent and Elinor Ostrom and Robert Bish who have written, conducted research, and encouraged their students to examine metropolitan governance from what has become known as the public choice perspective (ACIR, 1987). In 1988, the Ostroms and Bish wrote Local Government in the U.S., which not only provides a useful history of the evolution of local government, but also applies public choice theory to the provision of local services. Based on Charles Tiebout's theory of local expenditures, the public choice approach essentially focuses on citizen preferences for public goods and services. Tiebout's theory assumed that local residents who are not happy with local government services or taxes will have a motivation to move to a preferred community where the public policies are more to their liking (Tiebout, 1964). The Ostroms and Bish describe the virtues of fragmented local government units on the basis of choice and competition. They cite numerous studies which appear to demonstrate that smaller units of government provide more efficient and responsive service to citizens.

The Ostroms and Bish (1988) remind us that most efforts to consolidate local units of government have been defeated when subjected to a vote of the people.

Zimmerman (1991) also makes this point. He believes multiple communities are preferred because voters regard with suspicion the concentration of political power and the bureaucratic tendency inherent in a large metropolitan government. Zimmerman concludes that voters believe they lose control over their local government when it becomes too large; therefore, they prefer smaller units where citizens can easily identify the responsible local officials (p. 305).

The ACIR's Organization of Local Public Economies (1987) appears to argue for the polycentrist position:

...a diversity of local governments can promote key values of democratic government—namely efficiency, equity, responsiveness, accountability, and self-governance. A multiplicity of differentiated governments does not necessarily imply fragmentation; instead such governments, inter-actively linked through a variety of arrangements, can constitute a coherent local public economy (p. 1).

The ACIR report draws an important distinction between "providing" and "producing" public services. In essence, the provision of public services by a unit of local government means seeing that the service is provided. Provision is therefore distinct from actually performing the service. A government can provide a public service by contracting with another government or private sector entity to perform (produce) it. Viewing public service delivery in a provision-production framework opens options for transforming public sector management styles and provides a consumer orientation and an entrepreneurial spirit. Such a context involves "steering rather than rowing," as Osborne and Gaebler described the idea, in their popular 1992 book, Reinventing Government.



The ACIR points out that local government leaders can make decisions regarding the organization of public services in a metropolitan multi-jurisdictional area. There may be numerous options available for delivery of the services: (a) by the unit of government directly, (b) through intergovernmental partnerships, (c) by contracting out, (d) through franchising, (e) through a special district, or (e) by a metro-wide authority. Differentiation between provision and production allows each unit of local government the maximum flexibility in choosing the services offered and the method of delivery to meet the needs of the citizens of each autonomous community. Ultimately, the argument goes, the proliferation of units of government, formerly regarded as negative fragmentation, enables the local public economy to seek its own organizational equilibrium, satisfying citizen preferences and matching the distribution of benefits from services more closely to the economic needs of communities through choice and limited competition.

The ACIR study on local public economies is consistent with the Tiebout theory and the polycentrist approaches described by the Ostroms and Bish. The ACIR work may have been inspired by the popular political views of the 1980s. The emphasis of "Reaganomics" and the new federalism on pushing power back to local levels of government may have contributed to embracing the polycentrist theory of metropolitan governance. The local political economy concept is consistent with some of the popular political themes of the 1980s such as privatization, a reliance on market forces and a prevailing distrust of the federal bureaucracy.

### Federationist

Jane Jacobs wrote her best-selling The Death and Life of Great American Cities in 1961 extolling the virtues of a “new concept of Metropolitan Government” (p. 426). Jacobs described the federation approach wherein units of government would maintain their autonomy with most services, but be federated into a metro government having extensive planning and administrative duties. She pointed out that such a scheme was “rational” and “appealed to planners and businessmen.”

But, as Jon C. Teaford documented in his 1979 City and Suburb work, the voters disapproved. There were many proposals put forth over the years regarding issues of consolidation and metro federation, but very few such plans were approved by the public. In Cleveland, St. Louis and Pittsburgh, federated forms of metro government were suggested and supported by business and media, but rejected by the citizens (Teaford, 1979). The conflict persists and as Teaford points out “Americans continue to jealously guard the rights and privileges of their local communities” (p. 186).

Although formalized federations of local government are rare, there does exist a range of federation-type activity and structure in metropolitan regions. This spectrum of mid-range approaches to governance exists between the consolidationist and polycentrist theoretical perspectives. The Federationist approach to metropolitan

governance involves a reliance on various forms of interlocal cooperation to carry out the tasks of multi-community governance in metropolitan areas.

### Federationist Definitions

Beverly Ciglar provides definitions which help to understand the varying levels of involvement between the partners in federationist cooperative activity. Ciglar sees a steady progression of involvement and intensity from: (a) networks, (b) cooperation, (c) coordination, to (d) collaboration. The term networks refers to organizations which have quite loose arrangements or understandings, usually for exchanges of information. Cooperative agreements are usually simple, can be formal or informal, and involve little cost or risk to the participants. Coordinative connections are seen as partnerships, tend to be more formal, and involve some additional commitment of resources or time. Common goals are characteristics of coordinated agreements, and such activities are often more visible to the public. Collaborative partnerships involve the highest degree of formal, mutual involvement. Commitment of resources and the surrender of autonomy to the collaboration are descriptors (Ciglar, 1993). These terms are depicted on Figure 1 (Chapter II), Initial Conceptual Framework, as the federationist middle ground between polycentrist and consolidationist approaches to governance in metropolitan areas.

### Councils of Government

Councils of government, or regional councils, fit in this mid-range approach to metropolitan governance. Councils of government (COGS) are defined as “multi-jurisdictional cooperative arrangements to permit a comprehensive approach to planning, development, transportation, environment, and similar problems that affect a region as a whole” (Shafritz, 1986, p. 30).

COGs were popular in the 1960s and 1970s when federal legislation assigned them a strong role in programs which promoted regionalism within the states. However, once federal funding stopped encouraging substate regionalism in the 1980s, the role of such organizations changed. They have become much more closely tied to state government and have developed entrepreneurial, service, and advocacy roles on behalf of their local government members (Atkins and Wilson-Gentry, 1992). Because of this new role for regional councils, they are identified as potentially playing an important part in intergovernmental cooperation among local units of government. Observers of urban America see a renewed interest in the regional approach to metropolitan issue resolution. The significance of the regional councils could well be as a vehicle to facilitate interlocal cooperative activity. For example, Neal Peirce contends that regional governance is the issue of the 1990s. He sees a need for local government managers to work out the issues of regional governance among themselves until the public and elected officials are ready to accept different structures (Peirce, 1991).

Patterson's 1990 study of the Houston-Galveston Council points out the significance of regional councils is that they often become a central focus for metropolitan-wide issues. They clearly have the capability to promote the sense of region and the notion of cooperation which improves the possibility of joint efforts between local jurisdictions (Patterson, 1990).

### Growth Management Planning

Local communities within metropolitan areas joining together voluntarily for land use planning is an example of a mid-range federationist approach to governance.

In Portland, Oregon, the Tri-Met Strategic Plan utilizes a transit strategy to guide growth, as well as to move people (Wyss and Walsh, 1993). Portland's goal of balanced growth and improvement of the metropolitan area's quality of life are addressed through a combination of land use and transportation policies utilizing metropolitan authorities as the tool of implementation.

In Phoenix, Arizona, metro land use planning and "visioning" are occurring. The goal is cooperation among units of government which will appeal to community and family values. The hope is to discourage urban sprawl and to better manage environmental resources through land use planning techniques (Phoenix 2015, 1990).

In Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Metropolitan Council has also focused on the physical development patterns of the region, endorsing expanded mass transit and compatible land use strategies which encourage less automobile usage (Metro Council,

St. Paul, MN 1992). This metro area, like others, sees many urban problems being mitigated through mass transit and land use policies. The Twin Cities Metro Council has state granted powers as a regional coordinating and planning entity dating from its origin in 1967. It is also empowered to control large-scale development projects for the region (Walker, 1995).

Anthony Downs in his 1994 work, New Visions for Metropolitan America, observes that most metro areas now realize that the low-density sprawl which has characterized urban growth and development for the past 50 years cannot continue. He suggests growth management policies will prevail as a result of citizen concern over congestion, air pollution, lack of affordable housing and loss of open space. He believes strong and persistent leadership will be necessary to convince citizens of metro areas of the importance of addressing growth related social problems through growth management policies.

### Structure and Function

What seems to be happening within metro areas currently is a lot of “visioning,” growth management planning, discussion among concerned citizen groups and discussion among the regional councils. Interlocal cooperation is recognized as necessary to the implementation of visions and plans. Ultimately, though, the discussion gets to the significant issues of the structure and function of local

government in metro areas. The cooperating communities must get beyond planning and visioning and into implementation.

Several studies make the connection between structure and function. A 1991 California report completed by the Governor's Interagency Council on Growth Management found the service delivery status quo was often inefficient and ineffective when examining such functional topics as transportation, parks, air and water quality or solid waste. The report examined numerous structural models of metropolitan/regional government in attempting to respond to issues of a functional nature. The Council concluded "full-blown regional government is unlikely to be accepted by many local officials, by Governor Wilson's administration, or by most Californians." Rather, it suggests coordination and integration of existing entities (and presumably their functions) is likely to be more effective (California, 1991, p. i).

Similarly, in Texas, the Association of Regional Councils undertook a self-evaluation in 1987 and concluded "the future of such organizations was best characterized as voluntary areawide government services delivered with new creativity from a base of knowledge and foresight." The conclusion followed extensive examination of the structures and functions among units of local government (Texas Association of Regional Councils, 1987).

In Tennessee in 1991, the Controller of the Treasury examined state planning and service delivery and reported to the Legislature. The report recommended coordinated strategies between state and local government units and altered

development district and agency structures. While the report was primarily from the perspective of state government, the issues are the same as the local ones: (a) cooperation, (b) coordination, (c) collaboration and (d) an examination of both structure and function (Snodgrass, 1991).

A Kalamazoo, Michigan study further emphasizes the importance of cooperation and coordination of metropolitan service delivery systems. The researchers intended to propose structural models of consolidation and merger among units of local government. In response to political opposition, however, the report recommended cooperative efforts rather than consolidation to improve metro public service functional systems (Kalamazoo, 1988).

Within the metropolitan areas of the nation, the literature indicates a growing interest in multi-community, or regional cooperation. Both public administrators and academics are showing a renewed interest in the topic.

### Networking

Developing information exchanges among local units of government is a further method of approaching governance in metropolitan areas. Networking often provides the initial connection and communication between parties which can lead to more formal cooperative arrangements.

Myrna P. Mandell has made an important contribution to this discussion with her work on network management in the public sector. She examines strategies



management and leadership dynamics within inter-organizational networks generally and several types of networks based on mechanisms of coordination (Gage and Mandell, 1990, pp. 29-53). In short, Mandell and others such as Robert Agranoff, Laurence J. O'Toole, Jr., David O. Porter and Robert W. Gage are examining the implementation and management strategies and techniques of intergovernmental and inter-organizational networks. In so doing, they contribute to the understanding and use of such collaborative efforts to solve urban problems.

#### St. Louis and Allegheny Cases

The ACIR completed two major case studies: St. Louis County in 1988 and Allegheny County in 1992. These were attempts to explain how governance was occurring in the two metropolitan areas.

Both have populations of approximately 1.4 million and are characterized by significant fragmentation. Allegheny has 323 governments and St. Louis has 145. The studies focused on four public services—police, fire, streets, and schools. The research included extensive interviews, in-depth descriptions and statistical comparisons of service levels, and review of financing, demographics, state rules and local arrangements. Researchers also examined issues relating to economies of scale and equity.

The studies failed to confirm the reform, or consolidationist perspective of previous decades which associated a multiplicity of government units with inefficiency

and duplication of services. Rather, the studies found that significant cooperation existed among units of local government, and that extensive intergovernmental arrangements existed in the service areas examined. The case studies also found that special districts served useful purposes and tended to complement other units of government, rather than duplicate services as has often been argued. County government in the two areas studied served as a focal point for intergovernmental issue resolution.

These case studies indicate that the approaches to governance being employed in the two counties was essentially federationist (ACIR, 1988 and 1992).

### Summary

Neil Peirce in Citistates lists the necessity of making local governance work as one of the “guideposts” for improvement of metropolitan areas. After studying six urban areas, Peirce concludes there must be some overarching system of metro governance and structure. Peirce notes that such a structure can be provided by community partnerships involving business, foundations, universities and non-profit groups. These partnerships engaging in region-wide problem solving with local government can substitute for a more formal governance structure. However, Peirce regards such partnerships, as well as regional planning councils and even special districts, as “half-way steps to metropolitanism” (p. 318). While emphasizing

community partnerships and local leadership development, and the need for a strong citizen organization, Peirce concludes:

Again and again as we focused on the individual citistates (studied), we were driven to the conclusion that a region simply must have some form of umbrella regional governance structure. At a minimum, such organization needs the power to resolve disputes between individual governments of the region. At a maximum, it would assume direct control of, and coordinate, the major cross-regional functions (transit, air quality, etc.) now performed by independent special authorities (p. 319).

Despite Peirce's conclusions, and, as pointed out by the Ostroms, the ACIR, Gunlicks, Wright, and numerous other students of metropolitan intergovernmental activity, the public has repeatedly voted against large metropolitan government in favor of smaller, autonomous jurisdictions. That fact would seem to render the debate about approaches to metropolitan governance almost moot.

However, observers in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania provide evidence that the discussion about theoretical perspectives of metro governance continues. Their findings display persistent fiscal disparities among units of government in Allegheny County. The researchers challenge the policy implications of both the consolidationist and public choice approaches and conclude "competing theories of metropolitan governance proposed to date are inadequate at dealing with the problems facing distressed municipalities" (Miller, Miranda, Rogue & Wilf, 1995, pp. 19-35).

Therefore, it may be imprudent to try to develop any one model for governance, as scholars attempting to apply scientific principles to socioeconomic circumstances are inclined to do. Perhaps the best scholars can do is to continue case

study observations, telling the stories objectively for others to learn from, and developing ideas about what works under what conditions. Such a view appears consistent with the ACIR work which stakes out the position that while consolidation and combined government have long been regarded as a desired organizational pattern for metropolitan areas, there really is no ideal model that can be applied. Instead,

Metropolitan governance need not depend upon the creation of a metropolitan government. Citizens can govern local public economies by creating and maintaining multiple local governments within a framework of rules. It is this process of governance, and the structure that maintains it, that should be a major focus of research in state-local and interlocal relations (ACIR, 1987, p.3).

#### Factors Impacting Cooperation in Metro Areas

A principal purpose of this research is to ascertain the factors which impact local government relationships in metro areas, as depicted in Figure 1.

Examination of the literature on post-war consolidations identifies factors which can be applied to metropolitan circumstances in the mid-1990s. Studies of the Lexington, Kentucky experience (Lyons, 1977), the Nashville experience (Hawkins, 1966), and other reform efforts reveal a number of the factors which are evident when metropolitan reorganization or restructuring is considered. Additionally, similar factors are noted in the research relating to collaborative and cooperative activities among local units of government (Teaford, 1979; ACIR, 1993; Gunlicks, 1981; Wright, 1988). The most significant factors appear to be:

1. Political conditions, which can include a broad range of factors such as partisan preferences, voting behavior, citizen group activism, interest groups and dominant political philosophy.
2. Economic factors which include tax base, access to favorable zoning and public infrastructure for development, employment opportunity, capital cost avoidance, and operational costs for public services such as utilities and public safety.
3. Sociological factors such as poverty, educational levels, race and ethnic barriers, or religious identification.
4. Geographic factors related to natural boundaries, such as rivers and mountains, land uses, environmental concerns, soil conditions, and climate.
5. Historic rivalries or traditions, such as old land or political disputes or even business competitive history.
6. Legal constraints or inducements, such as laws promulgated by the state, local government personnel rules, or ordinances within the units of government.

#### Political Factors

Any discussion involving alteration in the structure or functions at any level of government is inherently political. This is particularly true at the local level where, as has already been established, feelings of local autonomy are strong. Political Scientist Glenn Barkan notes key political factors which he perceives as necessary to either restructure metro governance or to gain significant cooperation in order to

reduce the negative effects of fragmentation. The factors involve creation of a supporting group of local citizens and the support of local political leaders (Barkan, 1992).

Elected public officials' perception about what is politically important has an impact and must be considered a factor in interlocal cooperation. R.L. Smith found in a 1979 Tennessee survey that when municipal officials perceived an area-wide problem as serious, it was a primary factor in determining motives in interlocal cooperation. Logically enough, the topic must be high on the agenda of public officials to gain attention and be a candidate for cooperative action (Smith, 1979, pp. 89-100).

Political behavior in interlocal cooperation was described by Epling as "symbolic cooperation." He found some communities participate in cooperative arrangements just for the sake of being cooperative or to satisfy some broad strategic or political objective—not necessarily for a direct benefit (Epling, 1986, p. 317).

### Economic Factors

Urban affairs writer Neil Peirce has often emphasized the interdependence of local areas within metropolitan regions socially, economically and politically. Peirce has stressed the need for coordination, citing among the reasons, the economic requirement of effectively competing in the global economy. In his 1993 Citistates book, written with Curtis W. Johnson and John Stuart Hall, Peirce examines six urban

regions. The authors look at economics, land use, and governance and conclude cities and suburbs can function as a unit, much like the historic citistates of earlier times. The point being advanced is the idea that the citistate is already the “true city of our time, the closely interrelated geographic, economic, environmental entity that chiefly defines late 20th century civilization” (p. 291).

In 1992, Randall Neil Margo’s research dealt with interlocal governmental cooperation as a trend for maintaining services and reducing costs. Margo looked specifically at municipal governments in California. The research identified the services provided through interlocal cooperation and found that 81 percent of the responding cities and towns indicated they had interlocal agreements. This finding certainly confirms the premise that economic considerations are a factor which encourages interlocal cooperation. The possibility of reduction in costs of services is a significant motivating factor for communities to enter into cooperative arrangements (Margo, 1992, p. 3362).

In related research completed in 1992, Thomas Gardner found that fiscal pressures had contributed to the rapid growth of Joint Power Authorities in California. Gardner concluded that his research illustrates a growing need to resolve public, particularly fiscal problems through the use of cooperative, multi-jurisdictional methods (Gardner, 1992, p. 1268).

The ACIR cases in St. Louis and Allegheny Counties indicate that an economic consideration, reducing costs of local government by cooperative sharing

arrangements, was a factor in encouraging cooperation among units of local government (ACIR, 1988 and 1992).

Various economic factors serve to inhibit cooperation among units of government in metropolitan areas. Chief among these is jurisdictional control of the tax base. Because existing local governments rely heavily on property and sales taxes, there is competition among communities for industrial facilities and shopping centers because of the tax base such developments provide. Nancy Burns even concludes there is a strong correlation between the formation of new municipalities and the location of new manufacturing plants. Her examination of data for the period 1950-1987 indicates that "these results suggest that developers and manufacturers have systematically structured the creation of local governments (during this time period)" (Burns, 1994, pp. 106-108). Tax base sharing has been implemented rarely in metro areas as a means of gaining interlocal cooperation. Two notable examples are the 1971 Twin Cities Fiscal Disparities Plan in Minnesota, and the recent 1992 Montgomery County, Ohio Economic Development/Government Equity Plan (Rusk, 1995).

The question of sharing revenues among communities in a metro area belies the underlying issue. Suburbanites are reluctant to share responsibility or tax resources to solve inner-city issues. Center city taxpayers often pay the bulk of the costs for downtown cultural and recreational facilities (zoos, arenas, auditoriums, etc.), yet suburbanites make full use of such facilities. The multi-community fragmentation has



prevented the tax base of the metropolitan area from being equitably shared; indeed, the problems are not even seen from a metro-wide perspective (Barkan, 1994).

Methods of bond financing can be a major factor in encouraging interlocal cooperation, particularly for capital projects such as sewer and water treatment facilities. Communities can sometimes gain more favorable financing terms if the project is larger and involves the credit of more than one unit of government (Burns, 1994).

Paul Peterson, in his 1995 book, The Price of Federalism, theorizes that economic development is the main objective of state and local governments (pp. 16-49). If this is so, then all but economic factors could largely be ignored in the examination of interlocal cooperation.

### Sociological Factors

Burns argues that “white citizens have created local governments to provide services, to build exclusionary walls against lower classes and African Americans, and to insulate themselves from the taxes and the problems of existing and older cities” (Burns, 1994, pp. 109-117). Burns demonstrates through effective use of census data that the large number of special districts created since the 1950s were formed by citizens and entrepreneurs for self-serving reasons. Other urban observers, notably David Rusk, author and former Mayor of Albuquerque, would agree with such a

premise, especially the view of fragmentation of local units of government as perpetuating racism, blight, and the isolation of the urban poor (Rusk, 1993).

Similarly, Neil Peirce's studies of several metropolitan areas have identified the problems of ethnic and racial prejudice, unemployment and center city concentration of the poor as a "torn social fabric" (Peirce, 1993, pp. 17-27). The isolation of disadvantaged persons and families in the core cities of metropolitan regions is an obvious factor impacting interlocal cooperation.

Finally, Daniel Robert Mullins (1989) revisited the issue of metropolitan reform in a study which examined the effect of local government structure on the social and economic development of urban areas. Using 1980 Census data, his findings suggest that areas which have fragmented local governments seem to be better off economically than those which have been "reformed" from the consolidationist theoretical perspective. But his data also suggests less equity and more segregation in the fragmented areas (Mullins, 1989, p. 4096). These findings were supported by David Rusk's book (1993), in which he examined comparable 1990 Census data.

#### Geographic and Historic Factors

The geography of a city or township refers to a defined territory. Residents of the unit of government often identify with the boundaries of the community which can be major streets, rivers or railroads. There can be an historic reason for where those boundaries are located. The historic rationale can also have a legal basis; for example,

the establishment of townships by federal land survey or county boundaries by state statute or state constitution. Annexation practices can also have historic precedent, either by law or custom (Lyons, 1977; Hawkins, 1966; Teaford, 1979).

In Epling's 1986 study of Northern Virginia, he found geographic boundaries to be a significant factor in affecting a local government's decision to participate in interlocal programs (Epling, 1986, pp. 316-330). Burns has pointed out the historic development of communities was heavily influenced by commercial interests (Burns, 1994).

The core cities of what are now metropolitan areas were settled originally because of geographic factors such as adjacency to a river or lake, availability of forests or farm land, or a crossroads for travelers. These historic-geographic factors remain important as interlocal cooperation is considered in the 1990s.

### Legal Factors

Barkan identified state legislative action as a principal factor relating to metropolitan cooperation. He points out that since local units of government were chartered by states, legal factors are an essential component of metropolitan governance (Barkan, 1994). Rusk has called for legislative changes which would enhance core cities' annexation powers and control over suburban development. He points out significant variations and legal limitations by states regarding the authority granted to cities over local governance (Rusk, 1993).

The ACIR, in its 1993 examination of State Laws Governing Local Government Structure and Administration describes citizens' rights and restrictions relative to local self-government or autonomy (ACIR, 1993b). The study confirms the significance of legal factors relative to home rule.

Just as the body of state law impacts metropolitan governance, so too does federal law. Chapter 3 discusses the intergovernmental relationships which impact events at the local level. The federal government relies upon local government to implement national policy regarding transportation, the environment and social programs (Wright, 1988).

Finally, legal relationships between communities in a metropolitan region are impacting factors. Building codes, zoning and housing ordinances and other development-related policies differ among units of local government. The consistency (or lack) of such legal policies has an impact on patterns of development in metropolitan regions where communities are adjacent to one another (ACIR, 1988).

### Leadership

The growth and development of metropolitan areas is impacted by political, economic and social leadership. Burns contends that business and economic interests have been largely responsible for the formation of local governments. According to Burns, "developers and manufacturers...have created congenial regulatory and tax climates and mechanisms for increasing the value of land at slim cost to developers"

(Burns, 1994, p. 5). The literature indicates that interlocal cooperation in metropolitan areas is impacted by the influence of the business establishment on public policy and local government service delivery. Business persons often fill the elected and appointed positions on city councils, township, and county boards. They are usually leaders in community projects. Business persons have a need for good roads and streets, adequate utility service, public safety, parks and recreation, and other publicly-provided services and programs. Similarly, they have a strong interest in efficiency and low tax levels.

In 1993, the Grand Rapids area Frey Foundation issued Taking Care of Civic Business based on a nationwide study conducted to determine how CEO-level business leaders, and their ad-hoc groups, are influencing civic programs in American cities. The Foundation contends that business leaders have always taken a leadership role in local communities and such persons can be organized to influence collaborative solutions to complex urban problems (Frey Foundation, 1993).

Intergovernmental cooperation is also important to local political leadership. According to the Eleventh Annual Opinion Survey of municipal elected officials, 85 percent of local elected officials believe regional cooperation is important to units of local government; only one percent think it is not important (National League of Cities, 1995, p. 24).

Attention to metropolitan issues has provoked interest in community leadership. David Chrislip and Carl E. Larson's Collaborative Leadership (1994) is endorsed by

John Parr of the National Civic League. The premise of the book is that traditional styles of civic leadership have failed to address public problems in U.S. cities. The authors provide examples of citizens and public officials who are attempting to resolve complex issues in collaborative ways. Working together and developing shared systems of communication, cooperation and coordination have been effective in those business organizations where the ideas of W. Edwards Deming have been utilized. The authors contend that similar systems approaches can work in solving complex public problems. Parr calls collaboration a “critical concept as we begin to revitalize the civic infrastructure of America’s communities” (Chrislip and Larson, 1994, p. xiii). The basic point of the work is that civic leadership has been made extremely difficult due to the fragmentation of political power in the U.S. The growing complexity of issues must be addressed. More and more issues require boundary spanning.

Essentially all of the literature reviewed for this research identified local leadership as a basic preconditional factor for metropolitan cooperation.

### Conclusions and Focusing Questions

The review of previous work regarding cooperation among units of government in metro areas is both the basis of and the support for the focusing questions of this research. The literature review has also provided the basis for the Initial Conceptual Framework, as depicted on Figure 1. The literature has provided evidence of the

economic, demographic and political trends which have resulted in the substantive growth of U.S. metro areas. Further, the literature has identified and discerned the problems which have resulted from the fact that 79 percent of the population lives in metro regions and the number of local governments has more than doubled in those areas. The literature has described the debate about approaches to governance of these multi-community metro areas. And finally, the literature revealed categories of factors which impact cooperative activity among units of local government. Thus, the initial picture of metro America's governance is complete.

The Grand Rapids study is heir to the findings and ideas of the growing body of literature on metropolitan governance. The Grand Rapids case study begins with examples of cooperation, the "what" question, then proceeds to ask the "why" questions to determine the reasons for joint activity among local governments. The study focuses on four questions to connect the literature with the case study findings. Those questions are:

1. How much intergovernmental cooperation exists in the Grand Rapids Metropolitan area?
2. What factors have encouraged or inhibited intergovernmental cooperative efforts among units of local government in Grand Rapids?
3. How do the findings compare with the data from other case studies, especially those conducted by the ACIR?

4. What conclusions can be drawn from the Grand Rapids study regarding theoretical perspectives on governance in metropolitan areas?

To answer the first question it is necessary to understand the level of cooperation among governments in Grand Rapids. The basis in the literature is the examination of past efforts to consolidate local governments, the studies of other metropolitan areas, the work of the councils of government, and the recent reports on happenings in many metro areas. This literature provides information and context to the survey and interview findings in Grand Rapids.

Also, the question relates to the level of cooperation that exists in metropolitan areas regarding the delivery of public services. A 1988 ICMA Survey (Coalition to Improve, 1992) found that intergovernmental agreements existed for solid waste collection in 18 percent of local governments, 21 percent in water supply and waste water treatment, 28 percent in transit operations, 26 percent in jail operations, and 14 percent in emergency services. Some intergovernmental collaboration also appeared to be happening in police patrol, fire protection, and traffic control, although in varying degrees depending on the service. The National Civic League and the ACIR have also documented cooperatively delivered public services in their research. Examples include: Collaborative Leadership, a 1994 book by Chrislip and Larson, a working paper produced jointly by the League and the National Institute of Dispute Resolution (Potapchuk & Polk, 1994) and the earlier ACIR work on Intergovernmental Service Arrangements for Delivering Local Public Services (1985). These previous



works connect the Grand Rapids study in a common effort to identify the kinds of services which are being delivered cooperatively.

Question two seeks to add to the understanding of which factors either encourage or inhibit intergovernmental cooperation among units of government within metropolitan areas. The factors found in the literature are political, economic, sociological, geographic, historic and legal. The leadership factor was also noted and is basic to the other identified factors. These factors provide the basis for the search for information in Grand Rapids. The effort seeks to determine the existence of these factors in Grand Rapids, and also to identify any new factors.

Question three has to do with making direct comparisons between other similar case studies and Grand Rapids. By examining other case study findings, the information found in Grand Rapids can be compared. In this way, generalizable data can be discerned for use by practitioners and policy makers. This research is not intended to be a hollow academic exercise, but a practical attempt to determine what is happening and why for use in developing strategies for improvement in the delivery of public services.

The fourth and final question was perhaps the most interesting to study in the body of literature. Ongoing research of metropolitan governance demonstrates no strong evidence as to which theoretical approach offers the best model for governance within metropolitan areas. The earlier literature discussion in this chapter notes the traditional "centrist" reform approach is not supported by experience. Even though

studies such as the ACIR work provide some evidence that the public choice approach is useful in understanding urban problems, that concept continues to be questioned. A continuing disagreement exists between the two ends of the metropolitan governance theoretical continuum. The modern consolidationists argue that reform is essential to avoid urban crisis. Yet the polycentrists maintain that competitive market forces work best. It is likely that the best course for most metropolitan areas lies somewhere between the two. Perhaps, as Zimmerman concludes, "Power sharing is essential in today's complex society and many governmental decisions will continue to be made through the process of negotiation...Critical problems generally will be alleviated or solved by intergovernmental cooperation..." (Zimmerman, 1991, p. 311).

David Hamilton and David Miller suggest, in a paper presented to the 1994 American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) National Training Conference that cooperation should be regarded as reform in urban areas. Their approach is to see all such efforts of cooperation among units of local government in the context of "consolidation," the term that was most associated with the earlier reform attempts. The model includes both structural and functional efforts, as well as formal and informal activity as related to the nature and scope of "consolidation." In viewing the topic this way, the range of difference between the consolidationist and polycentrist theories of governance is minimized. It is an appealing idea, as much time and energy has certainly been expended by academics in debating theories of governance for metropolitan areas without any real resolution. Viewing all efforts at cooperation, be

they structural or functional, as “reform” does not settle the debate, but diminishes its practical significance (Hamilton and Miller, 1994).

In a 1992 article published in the National Civic Review, William R. Dodge describes a general process for developing an intergovernmental governance strategy. His suggested process involves several steps. The first is to identify past, present, and evolving intercommunity challenges; the second is to compile an inventory of mechanisms which might be utilized to solve problems. Armed with such information, he logically suggests the development of a strategy for intercommunity governance. The first two steps in Dodge’s process comprise the research strategy utilized here—the examination of metropolitan areas, how intergovernmental activity has come about among units of government, and the analysis of patterns which fit within the theories. Dodge’s process pertains to the primary focusing questions of the Grand Rapids research: The determination of factors which inhibit or encourage cooperation in local governments, and the connection to theory.

As Peter Drucker has written, “There is, in the society of organizations, no one integrating force that pulls individual organizations in society and community into coalition,” (Atlantic Monthly, p. 80). Thus, we shall have to find the combination of forces and organizations which will cooperate to resolve the complex issues that challenge our metropolitan regions. The design for research described in Chapter V is intended as a step in helping to find such combinations.

## CHAPTER V

### RESEARCH DESIGN

...our social science methodological armamentarium also needs a humanistic validity seeking case study methodology that, while making no use of quantification or tests of significance, would still work on the same questions and share the same goals of knowledge (Donald T. Campbell, in the Forward to Robert K. Yin's Case Study Research, 1991, p. 8).

In his classic methodology text, Robert K. Yin states, "in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1991, p. 13). These characteristics apply to this case study of Grand Rapids interlocal governmental cooperation. The research seeks to discover how and why cooperative efforts occur among units of local government and how they might be connected to theories regarding metropolitan governance. Certainly the focus is on a significant contemporary issue, the governing of the complex, fragmented urban metropolitan regions of the nation. Clearly, it is a real life situation over which the researcher has no control.

Case studies are particularly useful to those engaged daily in the profession. Case studies represent "real world" happenings and accordingly can advance the understanding of public administrators who seek answers, strategies, and methods to assist

them in their jobs. In short, a case study often suggests implementation strategy. It is action-oriented, relevant research that has applicability to practical problem solving. It is intended that this work have direct value, not only to citizens and leaders in Grand Rapids, but also to policy makers and leaders seeking to solve metropolitan problems.

### The Focusing Questions

1. How much interlocal government cooperation exists in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area?
2. What factors have influenced interlocal cooperative efforts among units of government in Grand Rapids?
3. How do the Grand Rapids findings compare with the data collected from other case studies, especially those conducted by the ACIR?
4. What conclusions can be drawn from the Grand Rapids study regarding theoretical perspectives on governance in metropolitan areas?

### Data Collection

Five methods of information gathering were utilized to collect information about interlocal cooperation in the Grand Rapids metro area: (1) records analysis of relevant metro organizations, (2) newspaper content analysis, (3) surveys of local public administrators, (4) key informant interviews, and (5) the participant-observation of the researcher.

Records Analysis

I examined several key sources of records. First, I reviewed the records of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. I have regularly attended Metro Council meetings since 1991, largely as an observer and occasionally as a participant, and was able to collect extensive files and notes from these meetings.

Second, I reviewed records of the Metropolitan Development Blueprint. The “Blueprint” was an 18-month planning effort completed in May, 1994 by the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), the Grand Rapids Environs Transportation systems (GRETS), the Michigan Department of Commerce (MDOC), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). I collected much of the reporting material, related reports and addenda as part of my role as a participant and observer in the Blueprint process.

Third, I examined the records of other organizations, notably those of AGRAG and GGREAT. AGRAG, or the Associated Group of Regional Area Governments, is now defunct. It was the predecessor organization to the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. Its function was to provide opportunities for local governmental officials and managers to meet informally and to share ideas which would be mutually beneficial. GGREAT, or the Greater Grand Rapids Economic Development Team was a regional economic development entity. It is also now defunct.

Fourth, I examined Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports for each unit of government in the Metro area for the 12-year period, 1983 through 1994.

### Newspaper Sources

Newspaper sources included two local newspapers which have extensively covered metropolitan intergovernmental activities. They were The Grand Rapids Press, a daily paper, and The Grand Rapids Business Journal, published weekly. I have collected news articles relevant to this research since August of 1991.

### Survey

I completed record and newspaper analyses before conducting the survey of intergovernmental activity or the key informant interviews. News articles and records yielded names of key informants and provided guidance in the choice of survey and interview questions. The process was one of information discovery and confirmation. For example, news articles and records yielded information about intergovernmental activities and factors of cooperation, and the surveys and interviews provided further information and validation.

Twenty-one local public managers were sent surveys. These city and township administrators were asked to list formal or informal intergovernmental agreements. They were asked to describe services consolidations, transfer of functions and multicomunity partnerships and to note functions where intersectoral cooperation has been utilized for service delivery to citizens. A written survey was utilized, with the researcher or a research assistant following up where necessary. Twenty responses were received which provided useful information. All respondents were forthcoming and cooperative. The

only community which did not respond was the City of Wyoming; however, information was obtained from that city at the time of the interview with the City Manager. In effect, a 100 percent response was obtained.

### Interviews

The interviews with key metro informants were an important element of the information-gathering process. These were face-to-face sessions, each lasting up to an hour. Twenty-one such interviews were conducted, recorded and analyzed.

### Participant Observation

My participation in and observation of metro activities allowed me access to a great deal of information. For four and one-half years (1991 - 1996) I participated in data gathering projects relating to the metropolitan economy and local governments. I did this work in connection with my university employment.

### The Research Process

The research strategy was a building process. It began with an examination of the literature concerning intergovernmental cooperation. I then constructed a conceptual framework summarizing the research literature. Detailed examination of Grand Rapid history, demographics, and government structure followed. Then records analysis and newspaper content analysis added more information and provided preparation for the



surveys and key informant interviews. I compared the accumulated information with the literature and the initial conceptual framework resulting in the findings, conclusions, analysis and the final conceptual framework. The research process is depicted in Figure 2.

Yin suggests that the quality of a research design can be judged by certain logical tests, regardless of whether the research is a case study or involves other methodologies. Construct validity can be accomplished by using multiple sources of information and following a logical chain of evidence. This research built a model drawn from the literature and the participant observation, then proceeded to add information cumulatively, and reconnected back to the literature and theory prior to final analysis. Internal validity was accomplished by building on and confirming the evidence through the various stages of information gathering.

#### The Analysis of Records and Newspaper Content

With the research questions in mind, I examined the following types of records from the organizations: (a) letters, memos, notes, newsletters; (b) minutes of meetings and related items; and (c) internal reports or documents.

After collecting data from these primary sources (organization records, newspaper and Blueprint materials) I entered the information into a data base and produced lists for matching purposes. I added data through the survey of local public

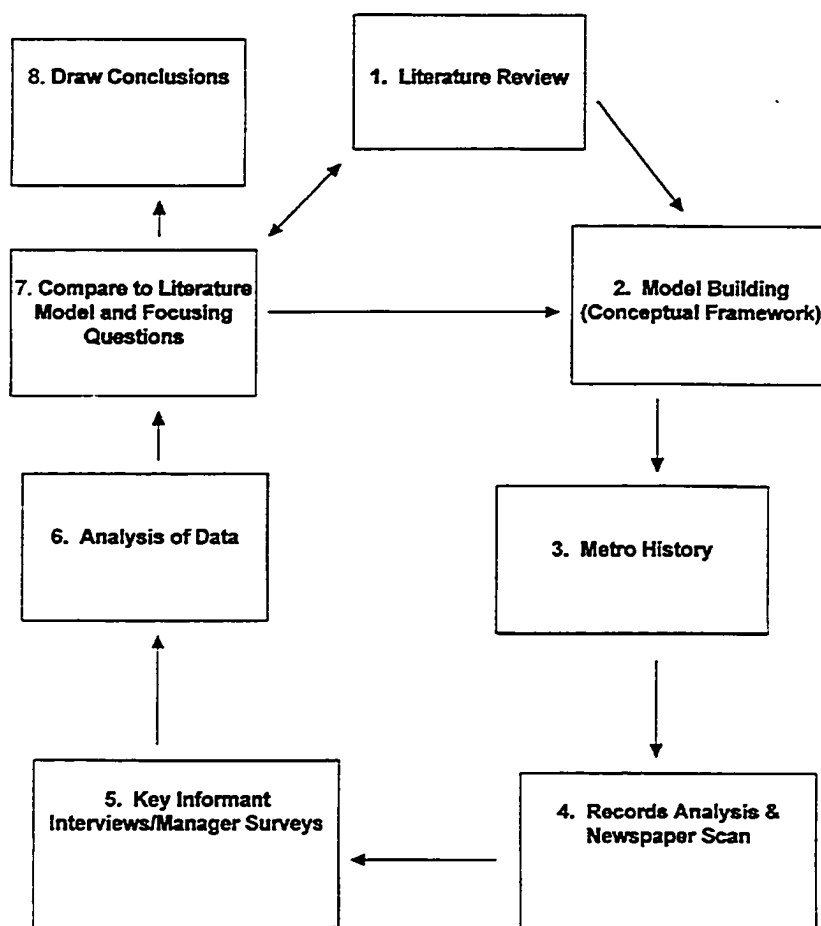


Figure 2. The Research Process.

administrators. The findings report the patterns of intergovernmental activity (IGA) observed.

The Survey of Local Public Administrators

My contact with many of the local public administrators through past research and service work had built a degree of credibility. This helped make possible the gathering of substantial information through a written survey. The survey instructions requested a response time of 10 days. A research assistant entered the data into the data base and prepared a matrix to organize the responses for comparison and analysis.

The units of government which responded, the city manager or township supervisor and the person completing the survey are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Survey of Local Public Administrators - Respondents

Governmental Unit	Manager/Supervisor	Person Completing Survey
Ada Township	George Haga	Same
Algoma Township	Mark H. Doren	Same
Alpine Charter Township	Sharon Steffens	Same
Byron Township	Larry Silvernail	Same
Caledonia Township	Tom Garbow	Same
City of Cedar Springs	Frank Walsh	Same
City of Coopersville	Tom O'Malley	Same
City of E. Grand Rapids	Bryan Donoven	Same
City of Grandville	W. David Boehm	Same
City of Grand Rapids	Kurt F. Kimball	Gregory Sundstrom Ass't. City Manager
City of Hudsonville	Leon Van Harn	Same
City of Kentwood	Bill Hardiman	Shawn VanDyke Administrative Ass't.

Table 3—Continued

Governmental Unit	Manager/Supervisor	Person Completing Survey
City of Rockford	Daryl DeLabbio	Same
County of Kent	Melinda Carlton	Jack Nienhuis Grant Coordinator
Gaines Charter Township	Donald Hilton	Andrew Bowman Planning Director
Georgetown Township	Henry Hillbrand	Same
Grand Rapids Charter Township	Marsha Bouwkamp	Same
Plainfield Charter Township	Beverly R. Rekeny	Same
Village of Sparta	Daniel P. Chargo	Same

### The Key Informant Interviews

I tape-recorded interviews with the 21 individuals. I selected these individuals with a careful attempt to obtain balance as to city-suburban, political involvement, metro experience, occupation and public-private perspective. The primary criterion was that interviewees be well informed about the topic. Prior to selecting individuals to be interviewed I had conducted the bulk of the literature review, completed the records and newspaper analysis and received the managers' survey results. Through that process, I assembled a list of more than 50 names which I ranked based upon the above criteria. I then selected 21 persons to whom I sent letters requesting interviews, hoping to complete at least 15. Surprisingly, all 21 persons consented. All interviews took place in September and October, 1995. The 21 interviewees were:

1. Glenn Barkan, Professor PSCI at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids. Professor Barkan has presented papers on Grand Valley Metro Council and its formation and is currently a member of the Blueprint Commission.

2. Micki Benz, 1995 Chair of Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, community activist, employee of St. Mary's Hospital.

3. Steven Bernard, Executive Director of GRATTA, the Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority. Mr. Bernard is a former City Manager of Grand Rapids.

4. Jim Buck, Mayor of Grandville, current Chair of Metro Council, businessman, former member of AGRAG, former President of the Michigan Municipal League.

5. Nyal Deems, Metro Council organizer and former Chair, former Mayor of East Grand Rapids.

6. Jerry Felix, Executive Director of Grand Valley Metro Council, former Assistant Manager of Wyoming, and former City Manager of Greenville.

7. Joseph Fendt, former City Manager of Walker, former Planning Director for Kent County, former City of Grand Rapids planner.

8. Birgit Klohs, Executive Director of The Right Place (the Kent County area economic development program). The Right Place program is largely funded by the private sector.

9. Katherine Kuhn, Chair, Kent County Commission, member of Grand Valley Metro Council, political activist.

10. Jean Laug-Carroll, Executive Director of GVMC, 1992-1995, former Ottawa County Commissioner.
11. Mike Lloyd, Editor of The Grand Rapids Press. The Press has reported regularly on metropolitan activities.
12. John Logie, Mayor of Grand Rapids, member of Metro Council, local attorney, lifelong resident of Grand Rapids.
13. Harold Marks, CPA and organizer of GVMC, currently Co-chair of the Blueprint Commission, former Chair of Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce.
14. Don Mason, City Manager of Wyoming, former City Manager in both Cadillac and Ann Arbor.
15. Richard Posthumus, State Senator and sponsor of Metro Council legislation, Majority Leader of the Michigan State Senate.
16. Beverly Rekeny, Township Supervisor, Plainfield Township, member of Grand Valley Metro Council.
17. Milt Rohwer, President, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, organizer of Metro Council, Metro Blueprint Commission member.
18. Larry Silvernail, Township Supervisor of Byron Township, former Wyoming police officer, member of GRATA, GRETS and GVMC.
19. Doug Smith, former Director of Office for Economic Expansion and Metro Council organizer.

20. Carole Valade, Editor of Grand Rapids Business Journal. The Business Journal reports on metro activities from a business perspective.

21. Harold Voorhees, State Representative and former Mayor of Wyoming. Mr. Voorhees is an outspoken opponent of Metro Council.

The interview process required explanation-building and pattern-matching (Yin, 1991). By this time in the process, I had discovered “what” and “who” relative to IGA. Now, I sought the “how” and “why” explanation and confirmation through the interviews. The “Interview Guide” shown in Figure 3 was provided to the key informants with the letter requesting the interview and served as the protocol for the tape recorded discussions.

Following each interview, I listened to the tape recording, making notes of information relating to examples of cooperative activity, factors encouraging or inhibiting cooperation, and any other significant points. I prepared a matrix of responses to each question to organize the interview results.

#### Final Notes on Methodology

Because there are a number of specialized terms and phrases utilized in the literature, definitions are provided in Appendix A.

The findings are described and discussed in Chapters VII through XII. I offer conclusions and recommendations based on the findings in Chapter XIII.

### Interview Guide

For use in the interview of key persons for the doctoral research of James M. Kadlecek on the topic "Intergovernmental Cooperation in Metropolitan Grand Rapids, Michigan."

Interview duration is one hour. The interview will be tape recorded and may be quoted. The following format/questions will be utilized:

1. Please describe your positions and responsibilities relative to local government in the Grand Rapids Metro area.
2. What are the principal examples of cooperative activity of which you are personally aware? Please discuss each and provide reasons why this intergovernmental activity has occurred, and whether or not you regard it as successful.
3. What is your general view about the level of cooperative activity among units of government in Grand Rapids metro?
4. What factors do you believe have encouraged such intergovernmental activity?
5. What factors do you believe have inhibited such intergovernmental activity?
6. Do you believe the history, politics, or economic status of the communities have affected their willingness to cooperate? If so, how?
7. Are there any final comments you'd like to add?

I agree to be interviewed and give permission for comments made to be utilized in the doctoral research referred to above.

Figure 3. Interview Guide.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE GRAND RAPIDS METROPOLITAN AREA

#### History and Origins

The settlement history of the area as a gathering place along the Grand River dates back more than 10,000 years. The nomadic Paleo-Indians roamed the area as hunters and gatherers for some 3,000 years according to archeologists. For about another 5,000 years of the Archaic period, populations slowly settled, learning to grow plants and building wood shelters and canoes from tools made from native stone (Arlinsky, 1987).

According to Grand Rapids historian Gordon Olson, “about 2,500 years ago, there emerged on the banks of the Grand an elaborate and complex culture, characterized by the construction of large burial mounds, that flourished for nearly 500 years” (Olson, 1992, p. 1). No one knows why the mound builders met their demise, although Olson speculates that it may have been a combination of disease, cultural malaise and conquest.

Thereafter, the Ottawas, Chippewas and Pottawatomie tribes migrated to the area, partly as a consequence of having been driven west from New York. There is little history of conflict among these tribes, and they lived in relative peace in the area of Owashtanong (faraway waters), the Indian name for the Grand River (Lydens, 1967).

In the seventeenth century, the first white men (probably French) began exploring the area, and while relations with the Indians involved some conflict, there are no tales of raids or scalplings. These white men were chiefly hunters, exploiting the animal abundance and collecting furs for sale or trade. While there is evidence of missionaries and traders passing through, it was a fur trader named Louis Campau who is credited with the original settling of Grand Rapids. In 1831, he purchased from the federal land office a 72 acre tract of land which is now the heart of downtown Grand Rapids and established a trading post (Dunbar, 1971). Besides Campau, two other early settlers should be noted. They are Lucius Lyon, described as the developer, and John Ball, described as the promoter. These three entrepreneurs set the stage for the commercial and population growth that was to follow (Lydens, 1967).

Fur trading, and later lumber from the forests to the north, provided the original economic base for the Grand Rapids settlement. Campau built log huts and sold lots. Other settlers came, urged on by the government land office at White Pigeon. Many of the original settlers were farmers who cleared their land for crops. The new settlers needed furniture, and an abundant supply of wood was nearby (Etten, 1926). In 1836, when William "Deacon" Haldane set up a cabinet shop and produced crude furniture, the furniture industry was begun (Arlinsky, 1987). Due to growing populations in Grand Rapids and the Midwest which needed housing and furniture, and the proximity of an abundant supply of hardwood, the industry grew and prospered. The Grand River was the transportation arterial for access to the interior, and for movement of the logs to the

mills and furniture factories. For more than 100 years, Grand Rapids was the furniture capital of America. Later, many high quality wood furniture manufacturers who began in Grand Rapids adapted to changing technology and customer demand by switching to metal and office furniture.

The area attracted many ethnic groups. The principal ones were Dutch, German, Irish and Polish immigrants. They were initially attracted to the area because of available land and water, and, after 1880, because of available employment in the furniture industry. The Dutch began coming to the area in 1847 and would have a significant effect on the culture and development of the region. While Hollanders also settled in other areas of the Midwest, Western Michigan held a special attraction for them (Lydens, 1967). The thrifty, Dutch-speaking immigrants found plentiful work and business opportunity, and their craftsman skills were needed in the furniture industry. Many of their descendants became prominent citizens in banking, commerce and the professions (Etten, 1926). While the Grand Rapids area now has significant diversity, the traditional values and influence of individuals of Dutch heritage is still very evident today. A 1960's history book (Lydens, 1967) pointed out that the 1966 Grand Rapids telephone directory contained nearly 4,000 names beginning with Van. Today, 125,304 persons, or 24.98 percent, in Kent County are reported to have Dutch ancestry (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

## Growth and the Economy

By 1890, Grand Rapids boasted a generally prosperous economy. The manufacturing synergy provided initially by the furniture industry gave rise to other firms, notably foundries and tool and die companies. As the 20th century unfolded, Michigan's dominant auto industry expanded into Grand Rapids to take advantage of the skills and work ethic of workers. By the turn of the century, over 100,000 residents inhabited the areas which would later become metropolitan Grand Rapids. Growth proceeded steadily as noted on Table 4 below.

Table 4

## Grand Rapids Metro Area Population Growth, 1890 - 1950

	1890	1910	1930	1950
Ada Twp.	1,296	1,308	1,368	1,966
Alpine Twp.	1,382	1,968	2,231	2,841
Byron Twp.	1,745	2,043	2,940	4,088
Cascade Twp.	1,147	1,219	1,255	1,691
Nelson Twp. *	1,035	1,974	1,720	2,024
E. Grand Rapids City	—	—	4,024	6,403
Gaines Twp.	1,351	1,311	1,631	3,302
Georgetown Twp.	1,845	2,330	2,898	5,091
Grand Rapids	60,278	112,571	168,592	176,515
Grandville City **	—	—	1,346	2,022
Grand Rapids Twp.	8,325	4,598	5,460	9,241
Hudsonville City	—	—	643	1,101
Paris Twp. ***	3,171	2,572	5,527	9,578

Table 4—Continued

	1890	1910	1930	1950
Plainfield Twp.	1,571	1,893	3,391	6,021
Rockford City	—	—	1,613	1,937
Sparta Twp.	2,639	2,609	3,213	4,038
Walker Twp.	3,239	2,558	5,274	9,028
Wyoming Twp.	<u>3,234</u>	<u>5,964</u>	<u>18,277</u>	<u>28,977</u>
TOTALS	<u>92,258</u>	<u>144,918</u>	<u>231,404</u>	<u>275,864</u>

\*Later became Cedar Springs City

\*\*Part of Wyoming Township, 1890 and 1910

\*\*\*Later became Kentwood City

Source: Office for Economic Expansion, KOMA Databook, 1995.

The metropolitan area was forming during the first half of the twentieth century as neighboring settlements and communities grew toward the City of Grand Rapids. Of particular note is the WPA construction in 1938 of the water pipeline to Lake Michigan, allowing service to residents of the city, and eventually its suburbs. Of additional interest is the land area of the City of Grand Rapids. It was four square miles in 1850, and had grown to 44.07 square miles by 1965 (Lydens, 1967). Industrial growth continued steadily during the first half of the century. In 1970, the Chamber of Commerce identified 950 manufacturing firms. The firms were involved in a diverse range of manufacturing from heavy metal work to high-grade wood craftsmanship

(Greater Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, 1971). The dominant industry groups were furniture and transportation.

Making things, manufacturing, continues to dominate the metro economy. In the furniture industry, even today, Grand Rapids area companies produce or control the production of an estimated 40 percent of the world market in office furniture (GVMC, 1994). Employment in furniture making constitutes 18.2 percent of total manufacturing employment (Ernst and Young, 1992, p. IV-22). Currently, auto industry suppliers are also major employers (GVMC, 1993c). Data indicates that 28.5 percent of the employed labor force works in manufacturing related jobs. The national percentage is 16 percent, which emphasizes the continuing importance of manufacturing to the area economy (Office for Economic Expansion, KOMA Regional Data Book, 1995). In addition, “52 percent of the firms employing more than 500 people are involved in the manufacturing sector” (Ernst and Young, 1992, p. IV-22). There is diversification within the overall employment sector, with services, retail and government fully represented.

Recent employment trends by industry for Kent County are presented in Table 5. The table displays the steady growth of employment and the continued significance of manufacturing, with added growth in services.

### Demographics

For purposes of the research, the Grand Rapids metropolitan area is generally defined as shown on the map (Figure 4). The area has a combined 1990 population of

Table 5

## Kent Employment by Industry

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Employed persons over 16	186766	198443	211947	218901	226982	237723	247806	257525	250994	254614	261191
Agri., Forestry, & Fishing	1578	1728	2072	1843	2199	2164	2686	2774	3027	2839	3147
% of Total	0.84	0.87	0.98	0.84	0.97	0.91	1.08	1.08	1.21	1.12	1.20
Mining	339	329	323	292	316	193	181	135	114	128	128
% of Total	0.18	0.17	0.15	0.13	0.14	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Construction	8326	8288	9470	11159	11960	13058	13416	1344	12083	12003	12411
% of Total	4.46	4.18	4.47	5.10	5.27	5.49	5.41	0.52	4.81	4.71	4.75
Manufacturing	64170	68428	71792	71558	70795	73369	73741	74131	72324	71271	73606
% of Total	34.36	34.48	33.87	32.69	31.19	30.86	29.76	28.79	28.82	27.99	28.18
Trans. & Pub. Utilities	7477	8559	8484	7807	7831	8269	8844	9565	10659	10674	10866
% of Total	4.00	4.31	4.00	3.57	3.45	3.48	3.57	3.71	4.25	4.19	4.16
Wholesale Trade	14529	15623	17317	18673	20369	21425	22225	23502	22711	22635	22965
% of Total	7.78	7.87	8.17	8.53	8.97	9.01	8.97	9.13	9.05	8.89	8.79
Retail Trade	40446	43635	45441	47456	50085	53071	57085	58751	55312	54974	55655
% of Total	21.66	21.99	21.44	21.68	22.07	22.32	23.04	22.81	22.04	21.59	21.31
Fin., Insur., & Real Estate	9235	9591	10924	11826	11893	12311	12753	12765	12288	13192	13333
% of Total	4.94	4.83	5.15	5.40	5.24	5.18	5.15	4.96	4.90	5.18	5.10
Services	40666	42262	46124	48287	51534	53863	56875	62457	62477	66898	69080
% of Total	21.77	21.30	21.76	22.06	22.70	22.66	22.95	24.25	24.89	26.27	26.45

Source: Office for Economic Expansion, KOMA Databook, 1995.

477,497 and an estimated 1994 population of 494,378. Population growth of the units of government is displayed on Table 6.

As the tables demonstrate, the Grand Rapids metro area has grown significantly, even though Michigan state growth has been relative stagnant since 1970. Projections from the GVMC (1994) Metropolitan Development Blueprint Report suggest 30 percent more growth by the year 2015. Expansion of the metropolitan area

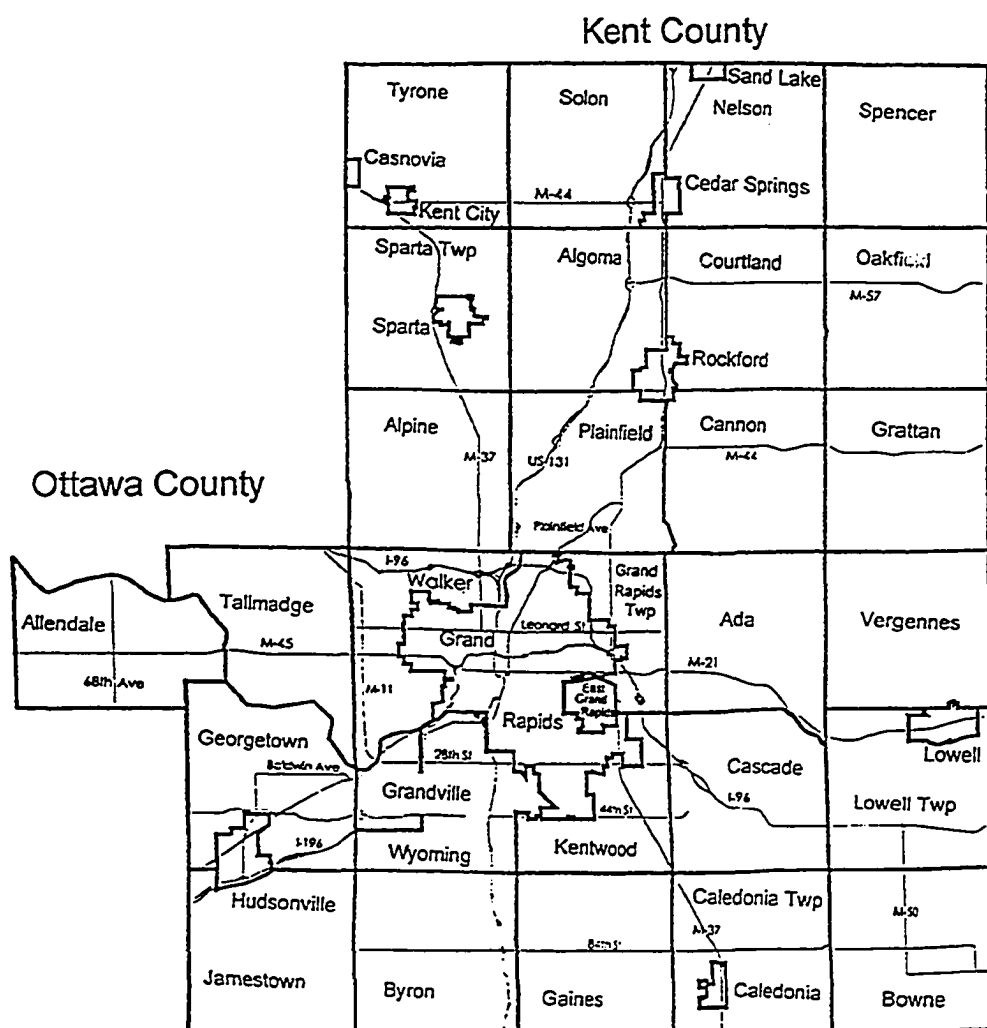


Figure 4. Grand Valley Metropolitan Area.



Table 6

## Population Growth of Grand Rapids Metro Communities

Cities	1960	1970	1980	1990	Est. 1994
Cedar Springs	1,768	1,807	2,615	2,600	2,933
E. Grand Rapids	10,924	12,565	10,914	10,807	10,243
Grand Rapids	177,313	197,649	181,843	189,126	190,395
Grandville	7,975	10,764	12,412	15,624	16,950
Hudsonville	2,649	3,523	4,844	6,170	6,829
Kentwood (Paris Twp.)	10,611	20,310	30,438	37,826	39,896
Rockford	2,074	2,428	3,324	3,750	3,836
Sparta	2,749	3,094	3,373	3,968	4,211
Walker (Walker Twp.)	8,271	11,492	15,088	17,279	18,835
Wyoming	45,829	56,560	59,616	63,891	63,688
Townships	1960	1970	1980	1990	Est. 1994
Ada	2,887	4,479	6,472	7,578	8,280
Alpine	4,764	8,163	8,934	9,863	10,271
Byron	6,036	7,493	10,104	13,235	14,904
Cascade	3,333	5,243	10,120	12,869	12,455
Gaines	6,120	8,794	10,364	14,533	16,619
Georgetown	7,989	17,615	26,104	32,672	35,507
Grand Rapids	16,738	6,823	9,294	10,760	10,731
Plainfield	<u>11,680</u>	<u>16,935</u>	<u>20,611</u>	<u>24,946</u>	<u>27,795</u>
TOTALS	<u>329,710</u>	<u>395,737</u>	<u>426,470</u>	<u>477,497</u>	<u>494,378</u>

Source: Office for Economic Expansion, KOMA Regional Data Book, 1995.

is in all four directions as shown on the Figure 5 map, which is extracted from the Blueprint Report.

The 1990 population and housing data of Kent County are displayed on Table 7, social characteristics on Table 8 and racial mix on Table 9. From these tables, several points are worth emphasizing:

1. German, Dutch, Irish, English and Polish are the dominant ancestries with German and Dutch by far the largest. It is commonly believed these two ethnic groups exercise significant control over the political and economic affairs of the area. While the number of Blacks and Hispanics in the area has increased, those two visible minorities comprise only 11 percent of the population.

2. Educational attainment is somewhat higher than the national level, with 80.3 percent high school graduates compared to 75.2 percent nationally, and 20.7 percent college graduates compared to 20.3 percent in the U.S.

3. The population born in Michigan is 81.5 percent compared to 61.6 percent nationally born in the state of residence. There is not a high level of in-migration to the state, and the population is highly indigenous and stable.

The population in the Grand Rapids area is largely white, reasonably well educated, likely to be native to the area, and has a history of employment with firms that “make things.” When the County’s economic development office completed a strategic plan in 1992, it hired Ernst and Young to do an analysis. The firm surveyed area individuals and firms and noted perceived strengths and weaknesses. Strengths

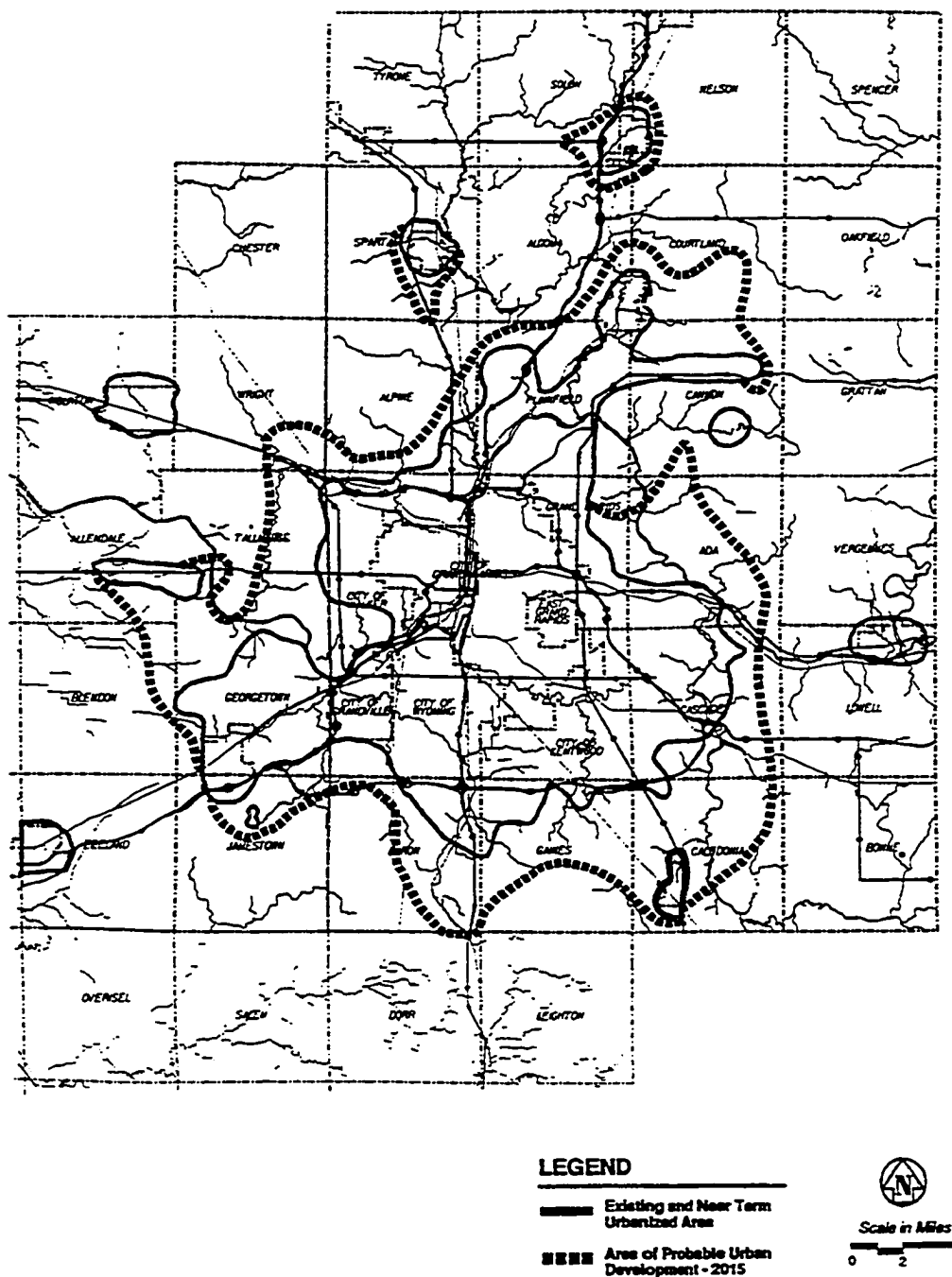


Figure 5. Generalized Existing and Potential Urban Growth Pattern.

Table 7

## Kent County 1990 Census of Population and Housing

<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b> . . . . .	500,631	<b>OCCUPANCY AND TENURE</b>	
<b>SEX</b>		Occupied housing units . . . . .	181,740
Male . . . . .	242,408	Owner occupied . . . . .	126,627
Female . . . . .	258,223	% owner occupied . . . . .	69.7
<b>AGE</b>		Renter occupied . . . . .	55,113
Under 5 years . . . . .	43,731	Vacant housing units . . . . .	10,958
5 to 17 years . . . . .	97,845	For seasonal, recreational or	
18 to 20 years . . . . .	22,773	occasional . . . . .	1,361
21 to 24 years . . . . .	31,581	Homeowner vacancy rate (%) . . . . .	1.2
25 to 44 years . . . . .	168,494	Rental vacancy rate (%) . . . . .	8.0
45 to 54 years . . . . .	45,112	Persons per owner-occupied unit . . . . .	2.87
55 to 59 years . . . . .	18,521	Persons per renter-occupied unit . . . . .	2.26
60 to 64 years . . . . .	18,567	Units with over 1 person per room . . . . .	4,084
65 to 74 years . . . . .	30,311	<b>UNITS IN STRUCTURE</b>	
75 to 84 years . . . . .	17,634	1-Unit, detached . . . . .	122,150
85 years and over . . . . .	6,062	1-Unit, attached . . . . .	6,883
Median age . . . . .	30.7	2 to 4 units . . . . .	21,548
Under 18 years . . . . .	141,576	5 to 9 units . . . . .	7,015
Percent of total population . . . . .	28.3	10 or more units . . . . .	23,216
65 years and over . . . . .	54,007	Mobile home, trailer, other . . . . .	11,886
Percent of total population . . . . .	10.8	<b>VALUE</b>	
<b>HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE</b>		Specified owner-occupied units . . . . .	101,313
Total households . . . . .	181,740	Less than \$50,000 . . . . .	24,462
Family households (families) . . . . .	129,053	\$50,000 to \$99,000 . . . . .	57,870
Married-couple families . . . . .	103,217	\$100,000 to \$149,000 . . . . .	12,470
% of total households . . . . .	56.8	\$150,000 to \$199,999 . . . . .	3,813
Other family, male householder . . . . .	6,023	\$200,000 to \$299,999 . . . . .	1,969
Other family, female householder . . . . .	20,813	\$300,000 or more . . . . .	729
Non-family households . . . . .	52,687	Median (dollars) . . . . .	68,200
% of total households . . . . .	29.0	<b>CONTRACT RENT</b>	
Householder living alone . . . . .	41,781	Specified renter-occupied units	
Householder 65 yrs and over . . . . .	14,758	paying cash rent . . . . .	52,848
Persons living in households . . . . .	488,596	Less than \$250 . . . . .	7,353
Persons per household . . . . .	2.69	\$250 to \$499 . . . . .	38,059
<b>GROUP QUARTERS</b>		\$500 to \$749 . . . . .	6,563
Persons living in group quarters . . . . .	12,035	\$750 to \$999 . . . . .	425
Institutionalized persons . . . . .	6,961	\$1,000 or more . . . . .	448
Other persons in group quarters . . . . .	5,074	Median (dollars) . . . . .	381
<b>RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN</b>		<b>RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN OF</b>	
White . . . . .	444,112	<b>HOUSEHOLDER</b>	
Black . . . . .	40,314	Occupied housing units . . . . .	181,740
Percent of total population . . . . .	8.1	White . . . . .	164,658
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut . . . . .	2,756	Black . . . . .	12,995
Percent of total population . . . . .	0.6	% of occupied units . . . . .	7.2
Asian or Pacific Islander . . . . .	5,380	American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut . . . . .	838
Percent of total population . . . . .	1.1	% of occupied units . . . . .	0.5
Other race . . . . .	8,069	Asian or Pacific Islander . . . . .	1,158
Hispanic origin (of any race) . . . . .	14,684	% of occupied units . . . . .	0.6
Percent of total population . . . . .	2.9	Other race . . . . .	2,091
Total housing units . . . . .	192,698	Hispanic origin (of any race) . . . . .	3,862
		% of occupied units . . . . .	2.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990

Table 8

## Kent County Social Characteristics-1990 Census

<b>URBAN AND RURAL RESIDENCE</b>		<b>VETERAN STATUS</b>	
Total population . . . . .	500,631	Civilian veterans 16 years and over . .	47,755
Urban population . . . . .	416,231	65 years and over . . . . .	12,001
Percent of total population . . . . .	83.1	<b>NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	
Rural Population . . . . .	84,400	Native population . . . . .	484,833
Percent of total population . . . . .	16.9	Percent born in state of residence . . . .	81.5
Farm population . . . . .	3,018	Foreign-born population . . . . .	15,798
<b>SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</b>		Entered the U.S. 1980 to 1990 . . . .	4,936
Persons 3 yrs. and over . . . . .	138,741	<b>LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME</b>	
Preprimary school . . . . .	13,339	Persons 5 years and over . . . . .	457,039
Elementary or high school . . . . .	91,047	Speak a language other than English . .	26,319
Percent in private school . . . . .	18.4	Do not speak English 'very well' . .	9,759
College . . . . .	34,355	Speak Spanish . . . . .	10,725
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>		Do not speak English 'very well' . .	4,539
Persons 25 years and over . . . . .	305,356	Speak Asian or Pacific Island language	3,067
Less than 9th grade . . . . .	19,733	Do not speak English 'very well' . .	1,658
9th to 12th grade, no diploma . . . . .	40,458	<b>ANCESTRY</b>	
High school graduate . . . . .	95,419	Total ancestries reported . . . . .	658,126
Some college, no degree . . . . .	62,297	Arab . . . . .	1,969
Associates degree . . . . .	24,207	Austrian . . . . .	892
Bachelor's degree . . . . .	43,512	Belgian . . . . .	867
Graduate or professional degree . . . .	19,730	Canadian . . . . .	850
Percent high school graduate or higher .	80.3	Czech . . . . .	1,097
Percent bachelor's degree or higher . .	20.7	Danish . . . . .	5,027
<b>RESIDENCE IN 1985</b>		Dutch . . . . .	125,304
Persons 5 years and over . . . . .	457,039	English . . . . .	71,821
Lived in same house . . . . .	238,585	Finnish . . . . .	2,274
Lived in different house in U.S. . . .	214,313	French (except Basque) . . . . .	26,484
Same State . . . . .	187,241	French Canadian . . . . .	6,162
Same county . . . . .	144,949	German . . . . .	140,349
Different county . . . . .	42,292	Greek . . . . .	1,457
Different State . . . . .	27,072	Hungarian . . . . .	2,510
Lived abroad . . . . .	4,141	Irish . . . . .	72,019
<b>DISABILITY OF CIVILIAN NON- INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS</b>		Italian . . . . .	13,770
Persons 16 to 64 years . . . . .	315,517	Lithuanian . . . . .	4,683
With a mobility or self-care limitation .	10,836	Norwegian . . . . .	3,996
With a mobility limitation . . . . .	5,585	Polish . . . . .	45,040
With a self-care limitation . . . . .	7,901	Portuguese . . . . .	266
With a work disability . . . . .	23,660	Romanian . . . . .	466
In labor force . . . . .	11,353	Russian . . . . .	1,828
Prevented from working . . . . .	10,118	Scotch-Irish . . . . .	7,131
Persons 65 years and over . . . . .	49,226	Scottish . . . . .	10,263
With a mobility or self-care limitation .	8,938	Slovak . . . . .	1,965
With a mobility limitation . . . . .	6,833	sub-Saharan African . . . . .	446
With a self-care limitation . . . . .	5,252	Swedish . . . . .	14,904
<b>CHILDREN EVER BORN PER 1,000</b>		Swiss . . . . .	1,686
<b>WOMEN</b>		Ukrainian . . . . .	1,175
Women 15 to 24 years . . . . .	331	United States or American . . . . .	13,852
Women 25 to 34 years . . . . .	1,390	Welsh . . . . .	2,512
Women 35 to 44 years . . . . .	2,103	West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups)	378
		Yugoslavian . . . . .	395
		Other ancestries . . . . .	73,488

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990

Table 9  
Racial Mix (in Percent)

1990	KOMA REGION	KENT	OTTAWA	MUSKEGON	ALLEGAN	MI	U.S.
White	9.1	88.7	95.7	84.2	95.6	83.4	80.3
Black	6.0	8.1	.5	13.6	1.6	13.9	12.1
Am. Indian	.5	.6	.3	.8	.1	.6	.8
Asian/Pacific*	.7	1.1	1.3	.3	.1	1.1	2.9
Other	1.6	1.6	2.1	1.0	1.5	.9	3.9
TOTAL	100						
Hispanic Origin**	3.2	2.9	4.2	2.3	3.2	2.2	9.0
1980							
White	92.3	90.9	97.3	85.9	96.1	85.2	83.4
Black	5.4	7.1	.3	12.3	1.8	12.9	11.7
Am. Indian	.4	.5	.3	.8	.1	.5	.7
Asian/Pacific*	.4	.7	.8	.2	.002	.7	1.6
Other	1.1	.9	1.3	.7	1.4	.7	2.5
TOTAL	100						
Hispanic Origin**	2.3	1.9	3.1	1.7	2.5	1.7	6.4
1970							
White	94.9	93.9	99.3	89.9	97.4	88.3	87.6
Black	4.5	5.6	.3	10.6	1.6	11.2	11.1
Am. Indian	.3	.3	.1	.3	.3	.2	.4
Asian/Pacific	.1	.1	.1	.1	.0003	.2	.8
Other	.2	.1	.2	.2	.1	.1	.1
TOTAL	100						
Hispanic Origin**	2.3	1.8	2.6	2.7	2.2	1.4	4.6

\* 1990 and 1980 Asian/Pacific Islanders category includes "Other Asian/Pacific Islander groups"

\*\* Hispanic origin may be of any race

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990

listed were: (a) quality of college students and skilled labor, (b) composition of the workforce, and (c) the area's "quality of life."

Area housing scored especially high in the survey, as did recreational facilities and cultural activities in the community. Health care services and facilities were also listed as a strength.

Among the perceived weaknesses discovered by Ernst and Young were: (a) dependency on the area's manufacturing base; (b) need for additional work force training; (c) poor quality of unskilled labor; and (d) need to build a partnership between business and education, implying some criticism of the schools (Ernst and Young, 1992, Section V).

The report also noted the entrepreneurial emphasis within the community, and the number of family owned businesses. Several Fortune 500 companies, still controlled or wholly owned by the original founding families, maintain their offices in Grand Rapids. Major examples are: (a) The Steelcase Company (Pew family), (b) The Amway Company (Van Andel and DeVos families), (c) Meijer, Inc. (Meijer family), and (d) Monarch Hydraulics (Jacoboice family). The area appears to have strong entrepreneurial synergy, and has produced a number of successful firms with international scope.

#### Political Culture of the Area

Jay M. Shafritz defines political culture as "a community's attitudes toward the quality and vigor of its governmental operations" (Shafritz, 1986, p. 413). Political

culture has to do with the set of values which are predominant in a community and relates to the priorities established and the sanctions enforced on individual citizens. Political culture is what the community believes in, and how such beliefs are expressed in public policy decisions and government operations. Elazar describes three aspects of political culture which impact the operations of government in communities: (1) perceptions about politics and expectations from government, (2) the sorts of people who get involved in politics and public affairs, and (3) the way government is practiced (Elazar, 1972, pp. 90-120).

Aspects of the political culture of Grand Rapids can be understood through its history. The influence of the early Dutch settlers was clearly a factor, with their traditional values of thrift, conservatism and hard work, and their dedication to home, family and church. Olson believes that while the Dutch dominance remains a popular stereotype today, it overlooks "the City's increasing racial, cultural and economic diversity" (Olson, 1992, p. 174). Perhaps so, but the Dutch connection in politics and business in the region remains strong, and the stereotype has realism evidenced by the names of many public officials and in the memberships of corporate, public and non-profit boards of directors. The street phrase in social circles around Grand Rapids, "if you ain't Dutch, you ain't much," is said in a humorous context, but with a knowledge that it contains an element of truth.

Perhaps having as important an impact on political culture as Dutch values is the entrepreneurial drive of many citizens. Grand Rapids has always been a good business



town. It was blessed with tremendous natural resources: (a) rich, fertile soils; (b) a sizeable animal population; (c) abundant waters; (d) thick forests; and (e) retrievable deposits of salt and gypsum. Early settlers were entrepreneurs attracted to Grand Rapids because of these resources which they exploited from the land. From these natural riches, farming, mining and lumber industries developed; and from those industries, more sophisticated labor and technology combined to produce the diverse industrial base we see today in Grand Rapids (Arlinsky, 1987). Hence, the manufacturing ethic became a part of the political culture. Business values, the work ethic, the entrepreneurial spirit, and producing a product are all driving forces in Grand Rapids. By and large, the persons who run for local public office and serve on its boards and commissions are imbued with business values. As former Chamber of Commerce President Micki Benz said, "In Grand Rapids, business drives everything and government is a second-tier change agent....not very powerful without business behind it" (Benz, 1995).

Another and, perhaps related aspect of the metropolitan political culture is local control. The history of the area is replete with expressions of local community autonomy. From the original dispute between founders Campau and Lyon over the layout of the Grand River settlement to the 1950's controversies over water and annexation, the principle of local control has been strongly evident (Lydens, 1967). The 1990's evidence that feelings of local autonomy are as strong as ever is the report of the study committee of the Metropolitan Development Blueprint (MDB) in 1994, which says, in part:

The MDB process has taken place and will continue to function within the background and constraints of the West Michigan cultural, economic and political framework. While some may argue that the benefits of metropolitan cooperation and even consolidation are self-evident and that the region should move quickly in that direction, others will point out the history of the region which values local autonomy and control, even at the expense of the most economical service arrangements. The value placed on local autonomy and control is a recognized 'fact of life' and the MDB process has been structured to take it into account at every turn (GVMC, Metropolitan Development Blueprint Grand Valley Metropolitan Region: 2015, 1994, p. 5).

Elazar describes three major political subcultures which exist in the nation as individualistic, moralistic and traditionalistic. In Elazar's 1975 contribution to a book of readings wherein he discusses the "American Cultural Matrix," West Michigan is described as a synthesis of moralistic-individualistic (Elazar & Zikmund, 1975, pp. 13-42). Elazar cautions that culture is not static and must be viewed as constantly changing. Nevertheless, his descriptions of the combined moralistic-individualistic Michigan cultural tendencies do seem generally consistent with what I have found about West Michigan. According to Elazar's concepts, West Michigan synthesis would view government activity both as a market place (a means to deal with public service demands efficiently) and as a means to accomplish good things in a community. The moralistic aspect sees government as involved in social regulation, and the individualistic as favoring economic development which encourages personal initiative. Interestingly, Elazar's moralistic perspective sees politics as every citizen's responsibility, while the individualistic concept of politics is that it is a questionable pursuit. However, in West Michigan, particularly at the local office holder level, I believe the culture still sees

political involvement as valued public service. Evidence of this is the number of candidates who compete for most locally elected positions. The moralistic aspect of West Michigan culture sees politics as everyone's duty, not just the province of professionals or the elite. Consistent with West Michigan culture is the moralistic dedication to principles and issues and strong party cohesiveness. The dominant Republican party sees itself as being principled, and its success at the polls (all but one local legislator and a dominant majority of Kent County Commissioners are Republican) demonstrates a strong party organization. Also of interest is Elazar's description of the positive moralistic view of the bureaucracy. That seems contrary at first thought, since business interests often are critical of the public bureaucracy. Yet, West Michigan organizational culture clearly shows an inclination toward hierarchical, top-down structure in its private, educational and public institutions. The perceived control which such structure gives is an aspect of the political culture and consistent with the notion of local autonomy in West Michigan earlier described.

To return to Shafritz' definition of political culture and apply it to Grand Rapids metro, the values and the politics indicate conservatism, frugality, entrepreneurialism and local control. Public policy decisions in Grand Rapids are heavily influenced by these values.

## Local Government in Grand Rapids Metro

### History

The Northwest Ordinance, passed by the Continental Congress in 1787, provided for the creation of government in the territory which would become Michigan. Two years prior the Congress had established procedures for the survey and sale of land in the Northwest Territory. However, in 1787 Michigan was still under British control, and it was 1805 before it became a separate territory. In 1819 the first delegate from the Territory was sent to the U.S. Congress and, on January 16, 1837, Michigan was granted statehood (Hanley and Rozycki, 1990).

Kent County, named for James Kent, a New York judge during the 1830s, was established by federal survey in 1831. By 1836 act of the State Legislature, Kent County government was officially organized. Within the next few years, the Townships of Kent and Walker were established. From them, the village of Grand Rapids was formed in 1838 (Etten, 1926).

Meanwhile, county government was established and the first courthouse was erected in 1838. Other townships and villages in the area which would eventually be described as Grand Raids metro were formed. They were the Townships of Ada, Algoma, Alpine, Byron, Caledonia, Cannon, Cascade, Courtland, Gaines, Georgetown, Grand Rapids, Jamestown, Plainfield, Tallmadge and Wyoming. Cities gradually developed and organized into local governments. They were Cedar Springs, East Grand

Rapids, Grandville, Hudsonville, Kentwood, Rockford, Sparta, Walker and Wyoming. Each of these communities has a unique history. However, the population growth and development during the early period was clearly driven by the City of Grand Rapids and by proximity to the Grand River.

Government services provided during this period were minimal. Oversight was carried out by township and village boards. Then, in 1850, Grand Rapids became a city and adopted a charter. City government played an expanding role as the population doubled every decade. In 1890, population was recorded at 60,000. Public services relating to police and fire, water, streets and public health were established for Grand Rapids residents. In 1916, a new city charter was adopted by referendum and a commission-manager form of government was established in Grand Rapids (Arlinsky, 1987).

#### Units of Local Government in Grand Rapids Metro: A Description

Ninety percent of the 1994 estimated metropolitan area population is in Kent County. However, metro growth does extend westward into adjoining Ottawa County. The remaining 10 percent of the metro area population is in Ottawa County. All or parts of 24 units of local government can be considered to be a part of the metro area. Of those 24 units, two are the counties, thirteen are townships and nine are cities.

Table 10 displays comparative data for the counties, cities and townships included in the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. A delineation of the state-granted

powers of counties, townships and cities follows. A brief description of the characteristics of the units of government within the Grand Rapids metro area is provided.

### County Governments

The primary motive for states to form counties is to provide smaller administrative units to carry out the state government's activities.

The most descriptive words for Michigan county government are "complex" and "weak." This result is not accidental; Michigan "constitutional and statutory actions created four major features in county government: (1) many independent officials, some elected and some appointed; (2) the lack of a central executive; (3) a strong state role in defining county powers; and (4) the lack of most local government powers" (Hanley and Rozycki, 1990, p. 155).

While all Michigan counties have an elected Board of Commissioners, the Board's authority and control is diminished by the mandatory election of many department heads. These positions are constitutional and include: (a) County Clerk, (b) Register of Deeds, (c) County Treasurer, (d) County Sheriff, and (e) Prosecuting Attorney. The nature of an authority for these positions, combined with the often strong political bases of the office holders, precludes accountability to the Commissioners. Other areas of county government can be controlled to a greater degree by the Board of Commissioners, who, under state law, can appoint and set compensation levels for (a)

Table 10

## Grand Rapids Metro Community Characteristics

Community	Land Sq. Miles	Persons Per Sq. Mi.	1994 Pop.	White Race%	Black Race %	Median Family Income
Kent County	856.20	607.49	520,129	86.74%	7.87%	\$ 37,783
Ottawa County	565.70	362.98	205,338	91.07%	0.51%	\$ 40,377
Ada Twp.	36.10	229.36	8,280	93.70%	0.50%	\$ 54,628
Algoma	35.00	182.29	6,380	85.06%	0.06%	\$ 40,810
Alpine Twp.	35.90	286.10	10,271	96.79%	0.63%	\$ 37,211
Byron Twp.	36.60	407.21	14,904	92.40%	0.44%	\$ 38,401
Caledonia	35.20	174.52	6,143	99.04%	0.32%	\$ 45,274
Cannon	35.90	252.90	9,079	98.27%	0.69%	\$ 52,915
Cascade Twp.	33.90	367.40	12,455	96.94%	0.89%	\$ 68,546
Cedar Springs	1.70	1725.29	2,933	90.91%	0.14%	\$ 26,480
E. Grand Rapids	2.90	3532.07	10,243	97.88%	0.93%	\$ 67,061
Gaines Twp.	35.90	462.92	16,619	95.15%	1.37%	\$ 39,578
Georgetown Twp.	33.50	1059.91	35,507	94.47%	0.27%	\$ 45,467
Grand Rapids	44.30	4297.86	190,395	75.54%	18.34%	\$ 38,317
Grand Rapids Twp.	15.90	674.91	10,731	97.40%	0.52%	\$ 50,816
Hudsonville	3.90	1751.03	6,829	91.95%	0.18%	\$ 35,644
Jamestown	35.80	130.75	4,681	99.53%	0.02%	\$ 41,150
Kentwood	21.00	1899.81	39,896	87.44%	5.35%	\$ 40,946
Plainfield Twp.	35.10	791.88	27,795	91.33%	0.87%	\$ 43,679
Rockford	2.90	1322.76	3,836	96.96%	0.16%	\$ 37,400
Sparta	36.50	115.37	4,211	97.38%	0.20%	\$ 35,390
Tallmadge	32.40	205.49	6,658	98.92%	0.22%	\$ 42,421
Walker	25.20	747.42	18,835	94.09%	1.02%	\$ 38,732
Wyoming	24.30	2620.91	63,688	93.18%	2.71%	\$ 35,161

Source: Office For Economic Expansion, KOMA Data Book, 1995.

The County Road Commission, (b) The Department of Public Works, (c) The County Planning Commission, (d) The Tax Allocation Board, (e) The County board of Health, (f) Community Mental Health Board, (g) The Cooperative Extension Service, (h)

Controller, (i) Purchasing Agent, (j) Equalization Director, (k) Counsel, (l) Medical Examiner, and (m) Board of Auditors.

The predecessor to Boards of Commissioners was the "Board of Supervisors". Cities and Townships were guaranteed representation on the Board regardless of size. In 1969, this guarantee was adjudged unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Under current law, the county is divided into commissioner districts based on population. A county can have as few as five districts for populations 5,000 or under, or as many as many as 35 for populations over 600,000. Terms are for two years and elections are partisan. Vacancies can be filled by appointment of the other members or by special election.

#### Kent County

The County of Kent, encompassing an area of approximately 856 square miles and having a 1994 population estimated at 520,123, is located in the southwest portion of Michigan's lower peninsula and is approximately 64 miles west of Lansing, the Michigan State Capitol. The County is composed of 21 townships, five villages and nine cities. The County seat is located in the City of Grand Rapids which is the second largest city in the state of Michigan. The County of Kent was organized as a county by the territorial legislature on March 24, 1836. The County is governed by a Board of Commissioners whose numbers ranged from three in 1836 up to 77 as late as 1969. As a result of a United States Supreme Court decision in 1969, the number of commissioners



was reduced to 21. The County Board of Commissioners took action in 1992 to further reduce the number of members on the board to 19, effective January, 1993.

The County provides a full range of services which are either mandated by state statute or authorized by the Board of Commissioners. These services include legislative, judicial and court services, public safety, health, public works, welfare, cultural, recreational, transportation, public improvements and general administrative services.

### Ottawa County

The County of Ottawa encompasses an area of 565 square miles, having an estimated 1994 population of 205,338. Located adjacent to Kent County on the west, the County's westerly boundary is Lake Michigan. The City of Grand Haven is county seat. Ottawa contains 17 units of township government, six cities, and one village.

Ottawa government was incorporated in 1837, and is currently governed by a 13 member Board of County Commissioners. The Board is elected from single member districts determined by population.

The County provides the usual array of public services. It enjoys a healthy economic mix of tourism, industry, commercial, and agriculture. Ottawa is the most rapidly growing county in the four-county MSA of Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan Counties.

## Townships

Townships are both Michigan's oldest and most numerous form of local government. Townships originated from the land survey meaning of the word, i.e., a parcel of land six miles wide and six miles long, or a parcel containing 36 land sections. The townships were made units of government by the territorial legislature in 1827. The original boundaries have been modified either because of a local need or peculiarity, or because cities were formed within the township boundaries. Because Michigan law does not permit a city to exist within the boundaries of a township, the formation of a city causes the township government to retract and readjust its borders. If all the township land becomes part of a city or village, then the civil township ceases to exist even though the survey township remains intact. As a result of the development of the various local forms of government, all residents live within either a city/village or a township, and also within a county.

Most of the rules governing townships have evolved through statute. The Michigan Constitution says only that "In each organized township there shall be elected for terms of not less than two nor more than four years as prescribed by law a supervisor, a clerk, a treasurer and not to exceed four trustees, whose legislative and administrative powers and duties shall be provided by law," (Article 7, section 18). Unlike the laws concerning county government, the township laws are relatively simple. The township may be organized in one of two ways:

1. Regular or General Law Townships - administrative and legislative duties are combined within the Board of Trustees which may have either five or seven members. Members are elected to a particular office and become members of the Board by virtue of that election. Terms are for four years. If the township has fewer than 3,000 registered voters or 5,000 residents, then two trustees are elected. Larger townships elect four trustees.

The township holds an annual meeting for all residents. This meeting must be held on the last Saturday prior to the end of the township's fiscal year.

2. Charter Townships - Authorized by the Charter Township Act of 1947, this form increased powers of townships in urbanized areas. While the same state laws applicable to general townships apply, charter townships have some additional minor powers. Charter townships must have four trustees. If an existing township has more than 5,000 residents, the Board may effect a change to a charter township by passing an unchallenged resolution. For townships with fewer than 5,000 but more than 2,000 residents, change to charter status must be by public vote.

Criticisms of the township form of government abound. The general position of critics is that this layer of government is not needed and its duties could be easily assigned to and provided by counties. Townships have successfully resisted changes which would abolish their existence or lessen their powers (Hanley and Rozcyki, 1990).

### Ada Township (General Law)

The Township is located on the northeast side of the metro area. It was organized under the general laws of the state and is governed by a board of trustees consisting of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and four trustees, each of whom is elected for a four year term. The township provides these services: public safety (police, fire, inspections), highways, and streets, sanitation and water, parks and recreation, planning and zoning, cultural activities and general administration. The 1994 estimated population was 8,280. Ada is the home of the Amway Corporation and is considered a growth area with middle to upper- middle income residents.

### Alpine Township (Charter)

Alpine Township is located on the northwest side of the metro area. A charter township governed by a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and board of trustees, it offers the usual array of public services to residents. Heavily commercialized Alpine Avenue is the primary north/south thoroughfare from I-96 through the Township. Alpine is regarded as a middle-income community and has a heavy retail concentration. The 1994 estimated population was 10,271.

### Cascade Township (Charter)

Cascade Township is located on the southeast side of the metro area. A charter township governed by a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and board of trustees, it offers the

usual array of public services to its residents. The Township is administered by a manager. Cascade is regarded as a middle to upper middle-income community, with many large homes and acreages. Significant commercial development exists in the south part of the Township along 28th Street. The 1994 estimated population was 12,455.

#### Byron Township (General Law)

Byron Township is located on the south side of the metro area. Governed by a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and board of trustees, it lies largely between Highway 131 and Interstate 196 and is characterized by many homes with large acreage and a semi-rural lifestyle. Byron can be classified as a middle-income area. Industrial development near the two major highways is occurring. The Township provides the usual array of services to its residents, which number 14,904 in 1994. The southbelt freeway is planned across Byron Township, and the area is considered a major growth area.

#### Gaines Township (Charter)

Gaines Township is a charter township, governed by a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and four trustees. Located on the south side of the metro area, the Township provides public safety, highways and streets, and parks and recreation, cultural activities, planning and zoning and general administrative services. Gaines is regarded as a middle-income area, with many acreages and large lots. The southbelt freeway is planned across Gaines. The 1994 population was estimated at 16,619. Gaines is considered a major growth area.

Grand Rapids Township (Charter)

Grand Rapids Township is a charter township governed by a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and four trustees. It provides public safety, highways and streets, parks and recreation, cultural activities, planning and zoning and general administrative services. Grand Rapids Township is a small, but well developed area just east of the City of Grand Rapids. It represents the remainder of the Township that did not become a part of the City of Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids Township is regarded as an upper middle-income suburb, with some commercial area along the East Beltline highway. The population declined slightly in 1994 to 10,731.

Georgetown Township (Charter)

Georgetown Township is a charter Township in Ottawa County, on the southwest side of the metro area. The Jenison community is a major part of the population of Georgetown. Georgetown is bounded by I-96. Governed by a seven member board, the Township provides the usual array of services to its residents. While part of Ottawa County, this area is clearly regarded as an economic and development extension of Grand Rapids metro. Georgetown is regarded as a middle-income suburb. Its 1994 estimated population was 35,507 and is growing significantly.

### Plainfield Township (Charter)

Plainfield Township was organized as a charter township in 1979 and is governed by a board of trustees which consists of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and four trustees. It provides the usual array of public services. Plainfield is located just north of Grand Rapids, and is one of the older suburban areas. The Grand River runs through the middle of the Township, and the south side is more heavily developed than the north. Plainfield is regarded as a middle-income suburb with many large lots. I-96 north runs through the Township, and some commercial and industrial development exists in the south portion. The new Old Kent White Caps baseball park is located there. The 1994 population was estimated at 27,795 and it is growing moderately.

### Other Townships

Several outlying rural townships (and one village) are considered to be in the growth pattern of Grand Rapids metro area (see Figure 4), but were not examined in detail in this research. They are Caledonia and Caledonia Village, Cannon and Algoma Townships, all in Kent County. Jamestown and Tallmadge Townships are in Ottawa County.

### Municipal Governments (Cities)

The State of Michigan requires certain city responsibilities: (a) property assessment upon which to base some school and county taxes; (b) collection of taxes for schools and counties; and (c) conduct of national, state and county elections.

Cities are permitted to provide many additional services, and here they have a great deal of flexibility. Permissible services include, but are not limited to: (a) fire protection, (b) police protection, (c) water supply, (d) sewage disposal and treatment, (e) streets and other infrastructure, (f) public transportation, (g) planning and zoning, (h) recreational facilities, (i) libraries and museums, (j) parks and zoos, and (k) public utilities.

Michigan statutes and the Constitution allow the establishment of cities in any of four different ways:

1. Home Rule - For areas having a population of at least 2,000 and a population density of at least 500 persons per square mile, the electorate may vote for a charter establishing the city and its basic laws within the limits of state laws and the constitution.

2. Special Charter - A special act of the legislature is required for this status; only one city, Mackinac Island, was formed in this manner prior to enactment of the home rule option.

3. Fourth Class Cities - Cities organizing under the general state law of 1898 (prior to adoption of home rule authority in 1909) are called Fourth class Cities. Fewer than 25 such cities exist in Michigan. This law permits only weak mayor-council type



governments with partisan elections to elect the mayor, council members, city clerk, treasurer and assessor. Slightly more than half the cities in this general category are called “special fourth class cities” because they have modified the fourth class city act in some way.

4. Fifth Class Home Rule Cities - some smaller cities which do not have the population of 2,000 to qualify for home rule are organized under this authority. To qualify, the population must be at least 600 but fewer than 2,000 residents. These cities have only one voting precinct and choose their officials with at-large elections. Approximately 40 Michigan cities are so organized.

Because the vast majority of Michigan’s cities are organized under the home rule method, they have flexibility in choosing their form of government.

#### East Grand Rapids (Home Rule)

East Grand Rapids is the first suburb of Grand Rapids, located just east of the core city. Completely surrounded by other jurisdictions, East Grand Rapids had a stable population of 10,243 in 1994, as a fully developed city. Reeds Lake is a centerpiece and the community is regarded as an upper and upper middle-income area. East Grand Rapids is governed by a mayor and six council members, two from each of three wards. A city manager and other staff handle day-to-day delivery of a wide array of public services. East Grand Rapids is regarded as a very safe, clean community and provides extra services to its residents, such as sidewalk snow removal and yard waste collection.

Rockford (Home Rule), Sparta (Village), Cedar Springs (Home Rule)

Rockford, Sparta, and Cedar Springs are located north of Grand Rapids, but are generally considered to be a part of the metro area. All three communities deliver the usual array of public services to their residents, and all are in the growth patterns of the metro area. They are, though, somewhat self contained currently, and have a rural character. All are growing, with Cedar Springs at 2,933, Sparta at 4,211 and Rockford at 3,836. All have city managers, and all are governed by an elected council (though Sparta is a village).

Walker (Home Rule)

Walker is just west of the Grand Rapids core, and is the remainder of the former Walker Township. Governed by a six member council, mayor and an appointed city manager, it provides the usual array of services to its residents. Walker is regarded as a working class community, with largely middle-income families. The population in 1994 was estimated at 18,835 and is experiencing strong growth. I-96 runs through Walker, and industrial development is occurring along that highway.

Grand Rapids City (Home Rule)

Grand Rapids is the largest city in the metro area, both geographically and in terms of population. As the second largest city in the state its 1994 population was estimated at 190,395, and it covers 44.3 square miles. Grand Rapids is surrounded by

suburban units of government. Population is stable. Grand Rapids was incorporated as a village in 1838, with city status beginning in 1850 under a mayor-council form of government. In 1916 Grand Rapids adopted home rule status and the commission-manager system under which it still operates. The City provides the following charter-authorized services: (a) public safety, (b) highways and streets, (c) sanitation, (d) health and social services, (e) cultural and recreational activities, (f) public improvements, (g) planning and zoning, and (h) general administration.

The city has eight elected officials, a mayor, six commissioners and a comptroller. Appointed officials include the City's Manager, Clerk, Attorney, and Treasurer (City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994, June 30).

Downtown Grand Rapids is the original settlement area, and has been undergoing considerable re-development in recent years. As this report is being prepared, a new \$60 million arena is being constructed, a hotel and apartment complex is receiving a \$30 million facelift, and Grand Valley State University has announced plans for a \$50 million expansion to the school's downtown campus. Two major hospitals are located in the downtown area and Grand Rapids Community College's campus is also located there (DMBI, 1995).

The City of Grand Rapids is also characterized by its minority population. Of the black population of the metro area, 87.1 percent lives within the City of Grand Rapids. A majority of the residents of the metro area who are described as living in

poverty are housed in the City of Grand Rapids, primarily in census tracts south of downtown.

#### Grandville City (Home Rule)

Grandville was incorporated under the State's Home rule law under a Council-Manager form of government. It is contiguous with the City of Walker on the north and with the City of Wyoming on the east. The 1994 estimated population was 16,950. Charter authorized services provided are: (a) public safety, (b) highways and streets, (c) sanitation, (d) health and social services, (e) cultural and recreational activities, (f) public improvements, (g) planning and zoning, and (h) general administration.

Grandville's elected officials include a mayor and six council members. Appointed officials include the City Manager, Treasurer and Clerk (City of Grandville, Michigan, 1994, June 30).

#### Hudsonville City (Home Rule)

Hudsonville is in Ottawa County, yet is considered a part of the metropolitan area. Located southwest of the core city along I-196, it was incorporated in 1957 and is governed by a council-manager form of government. Hudsonville provides the usual array of public services and is regarded as a growing middle-income community. The estimated 1994 population was 6,829.

Kentwood City (Home Rule)

Kentwood abuts the southeast of the City of Grand Rapids, and had a 1994 estimated population of 39,896. Kentwood was incorporated in 1967 under the state home rule law and utilizes the Mayor-Commission form of government. Charter-authorized services include: (a) public safety, (b) highways and streets, (c) sanitation, (d) health and social services, (e) cultural and recreational activities, (f) public improvements, (g) planning and zoning, and (h) general administration.

Elected officials include a mayor, six commissioners, City Clerk, City Treasurer, and District Court Judge. Appointed officials include the Assessor, Chief of Police, Community Development Director, Court Clerk, Economic Development Coordinator, Engineer and Highway Administrator, Finance Officer, Fire Chief, Public Works Director, Purchasing Director and Recreation Director (City of Kentwood, Michigan, 1994, June 30). Kentwood's elected mayor is also chief administrative manager. Kentwood contains the Kent County Airport, related industrial development and is a major commercial growth area.

Wyoming City (Home Rule)

Wyoming lies west of Kentwood, east of Grandville and southwest of Grand Rapids. Estimated 1994 population was 63,688. The City was incorporated in 1959 under the State's home rule provisions and has chosen the Council-Manager form of government. Charter-approved services are (a) public safety, (b) highways and streets,

(c) sanitation, (d) cultural and recreational activities, (e) public improvements, (f) planning and zoning, and (g) general administration. Elected officials are the mayor and six council persons; the city manager is appointed (City of Wyoming, Michigan, 1994, June 30). Wyoming, with a stable population, is largely surrounded by other communities. The City is heavily industrialized and is home for manufacturing facilities such as General Motors and Smiths Industries.

### Summary

The Grand Rapids metro area has experienced steady growth, both in population and economic development. It enjoys a strong economic position thanks to its diverse manufacturing base. Public services and infrastructure have been provided by the County, cities and townships. All units of local government appear financially strong, a reflection of the area's economic stability. Growth trends indicate a likelihood of continued increases in metro population, with the rate of increase estimated at one and a half percent per year (Office for Economic Expansion, 1996 Annual Report of the Regional Economy). Grand Rapids metro is part of a four-county MSA (Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon and Allegan Counties) which is growing at an even faster rate.

The growth and development of the region has occurred in a manner similar to many U.S. metropolitan areas. The existence of multiple units of local government, the development of expanding suburbs, and the land-locked central City of Grand Rapids have all generated interest in metropolitan governance issues and questions.

## CHAPTER VII

### METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA

As a first step in reporting findings from the research, I have identified a number of organized entities which have metro-wide functions or have declared an interest in metropolitan issues or projects. The identification of these entities and the extensiveness of activities indicates a significant level of interlocal cooperation in Grand Rapids metro. Figure 6 summarizes these organizations.

#### Discussion of Significant Organizations

It is significant that the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce is the oldest organization in Figure 6. Formed in 1887 as The Board of Trade, the Chamber has consistently been involved in activities which have impacted the metropolitan areas. Activities related to transportation, commerce, philanthropy, education and economic development over the years have been led by the GRACC (Arlinsky, 1987, pp. 63-71). It is evident from the history of the area, that the Chamber was the first organization to recognize the significance of metropolitan growth and the governance issues related thereto. The business establishment of Grand Rapids has consistently proposed metropolitan solutions to public issues.

#### PRIOR TO 1990

GRACC, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. Promoter of metro and regional perspectives. Represents business interests. Formed in 1887 as The Board of Trade, perhaps the first entity to recognize metro relationships. It has consistently supported efforts for service and local government consolidations, and endorsed the formation of Metro Council.

GRETS, Grand Rapids Environs Transportation Study. Does transportation planning for metro area as a part of GVMC. Originally formed as a committee in 1965.

AGRAG, Association of Grand Rapids Area Governments. Now defunct. Formed before 1974, ceased meeting 1991. A predecessor organization of GVMC. Mayors and managers met informally.

WMRPC, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, also known as Region 8. Comprised of eight counties, including Kent and Ottawa. Originally formed in 1973, ceased operations in 1991, reorganized in 1992. Does regional economic development and infrastructure planning.

GRATA, Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority. Operates bus service in metro area. Formed in 1974 under state authorizing legislation.

GGREAT, Greater Grand Rapids Economic Area Team. Now defunct. Formed 1984, ceased 1991. Public and private participants planned infrastructure and coordinated economic development.

GVSU-OEE, Office for Economic Expansion at Grand Valley State University. Provides metro information services for GVMC and WMRPC. Conducts metro studies. Established in 1984.

RIGHT PLACE. The county-wide economic development entity with some regional service. Established by the GRACC in 1985, and now operates as an independent non-profit entity.

WATER-SEWER AGENCY. Utility planning sub-group of GVMC. Originally an ad-hoc study committee formed in 1988.

#### 1990 AND LATER

GVMC, Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. Established 1990 under P.A. 292. Membership consists of units of local government in the Grand Rapids area.

MPO, Metropolitan Planning Organization. GVMC is designated as the MPO as regards transportation planning for purposes of federal and state highway and transit funding. GVMC utilizes GRETS to carry out this task. Established in 1992.

MAPP, Metropolitan Alliance for Public Purchasing. Cooperative purchasing among units of government in Grand Rapids metro. Sub-group of GVMC, established 1993.

MET-NET, a metropolitan electronic network connecting GVMC member units for purchasing, planning and Internet purposes. Established 1994.

KENT LIBRARY DISTRICT. Special district to support county-wide library service via property tax levy. Established by vote in 1994.

BLUEPRINT COMMISSION, private-public group appointed by GVMC to "implement" the Metropolitan Development Blueprint Plan. Established 1994.

Figure 6. Chart of Metro Organizations.



For example, Susan Higgins' 1987 study identified Chamber of Commerce leadership in a failed 1970's effort to form a single county-wide unit of government by changing state law to increase county home rule powers (pp. 57-60). During the 1980s a county-appointed study committee under business leadership (The Citizens' Committee on Consolidation of Government Services) researched consolidation efforts of other cities. It then recommended service consolidations within libraries, courts and emergency medical services as well as the sharing of tax revenues (pp. 61-63).

Organizations demonstrated interest in metropolitan issues in Grand Rapids which precedes the 1970s and 1980s. In 1955, the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area Study was launched by a citizens' group of more than 100 members called the Grand Rapids Community Council. Assisted by several consultants, most notably Charles Press and Michigan State University's Institute for Community Development, the study took two years and issued a dozen fact finding reports on various aspects of the metro area (taxation, schools, population, libraries, streets, etc.). The Council concluded the report by recommending consolidation of the Cities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids and Grandville, and the then Townships of Wyoming (now Wyoming City), Paris (now Kentwood City), Grand Rapids, Walker (now Walker City), and Plainfield (Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area Study, 1958). Consolidation did not occur; rather the Cities of Wyoming and Walker were incorporated in 1959 and 1962, respectively.

Press later published an article in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, entitled "Efficiency and Economy: Arguments for Metropolitan Reorganization" (1964), which discussed

the results of a 1959 citizen survey of the Grand Rapids area. While this survey was apparently not directly related to the consolidation proposal, it is of interest because it occurred at a very significant time in Grand Rapids. The Community Council had issued its call for consolidation in 1958, the same year according to Press, that the central city stopped extending water and sewer service to new customers in the suburbs. Press' survey was taken six months before a proposal on consolidation was "voted down simultaneously by all five suburbs bordering the City" (Press, 1964, p. 587). Press' key finding, borne out by the subsequent incorporation of the two new suburban Cities of Wyoming and Walker was:

Proposals involving loss of identity, which are generally recommended for their efficiency and economy by civic reformers, were very much less popular than others. The desire to maintain local autonomy persuades suburbanites to tolerate more inefficiency and waste than many civic reformers considering only efficiency and economy, might deem desirable (Press, 1964, p. 593).

Press' survey discovered, and the subsequent election verified, the strength of the desire for local autonomy among metro residents. That 1950's finding is still perceived to be a factor which influences intergovernmental cooperation in the 1990s, according to the survey and interviews conducted for this research.

In 1967, the Kent County Planning Commission published A Data Profile: Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area, financed the Section 701 of the Federal Housing Act. The completion of the plan was supervised by Joseph A. Fendt, the Director of the Kent County Planning Department. Fendt later became City Manager of the City of Walker and was interviewed for this research (he is now retired, living in Grandville). Fendt

indicates that the 1967 Data Profile publication was a comprehensive examination of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area (Fendt, 1995). I mention this report because it was a major planning effort for bringing together units of government to plan growth. According to Fendt, the plan resulted in improved community and staff level communication, particularly for utility and street planning.

The Association of Grand Rapids Area Governments (AGRAG) was an informal group of metropolitan government mayors and managers formed sometime before 1974, according to Jerry Felix, current Executive Director of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (1995). The group held informal, largely social meetings at which topics relating to metro transportation, utilities, and economic development were discussed. There are conflicting reports about the reason AGRAG was initiated and by whom; however, mayors and managers were involved and utility service was one motivation for getting together. Examination of the minutes of AGRAG meetings from 1986-1990 indicates that much of the discussion concerned issues with state government and how legislative proposals or budgets would impact the metro area local government. In the late 1980s, the group increasingly discussed the formation of a metropolitan council. When the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council was established in the Fall of 1990, AGRAG terminated itself (GVMC, 1993a, and AGRAG minutes, 1990).

The Greater Grand Rapids Economic Area Team (GGREAT) was formed in 1984 as a means of coordinating economic growth in the metro area. GGREAT's formation was encouraged by the availability of state community growth alliance funds.

GGREAT's Board and committees were composed of public and private representatives. The organization busied itself with economic development planning and land use issues, particularly as related to the area's infrastructure. The organization was instrumental in the formation of the Metropolitan Water and Sewer Planning Agency. A grant of \$140,000 for a master metropolitan water-sewer plan was obtained in 1990. The GGREAT "provided a forum for discussion among local government leaders" and an opportunity to understand "issues and needs that transcend the boundaries of their own communities" (Hubling, 1987, p. 12). As an operating entity, GGREAT disbanded in late 1991 when state and local grants were lost. GGREAT's assets were transferred to the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC, 1993a, pp. 6-7).

Other organizational examples of metro cooperation were found in the form of functional services provided for the entire metropolitan area. Included are public transit, transportation planning, water-sewer planning, economic development, library services and information services.

The Grand Rapids and Environs Transportation Study (GRETTS) has responsibility for transportation planning in the metro area. GRETTS was originally formed as a committee in 1965 under a multi-county regional planning organization. GRETTS became affiliated with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council soon after GVMC was formed in late 1990. The GVMC is now designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning by the Federal and State governments, and utilizes GRETTS staff to carry out this responsibility.

The public transit service is GRATA, the Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority. It operates bus and transport services in the metro area and is funded by a combination of user fees and local, state and federal funds. It is governed by a board with representation from governmental units throughout its service area. Fiscal Year 1994-95 expenditures totaled \$10,461,000 and total ridership was 3,347,000 persons (GRATA, 1995). Federal assistance is being phased out and GRATA is preparing a plan to be submitted to the voters which would provide tax support from the County. Contributions from local governments are currently voluntary.

The Right Place is a county-wide economic development program organized as a 501(c)(3) corporation in 1985. It serves all the units of government in the metro area as well as other Kent County jurisdictions. Funding for its operations is primarily private sector "investments," with some support from the County and certain other units of government. The Right Place conducts traditional attraction and retention marketing programs and reports to its non-profit Board of Directors. It is the only county-wide economic development program.

A metro area special district is the 1994 voter-approved Kent Library District. Twenty six government units are affected by the district, which provides services to 17 branch libraries. Its 1995 budget is \$4,526,023, and it was formed for the purpose of establishing a stable funding basis for library services through a property tax assessment.

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) is an eight-county organization formed in 1973 as a state and federal planning region. Kent and

Ottawa Counties are members, as are several cities including Wyoming. While the focus of planning activities appears to be the more rural counties, it nevertheless serves as a forum for regional issues. WMRPC's stated purpose is economic development and infrastructure planning.

### The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and Related Activities

The principal metro organization currently is the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council was not mandated by state or federal government, but was established pursuant to Public Act No. 292 of 1990 sponsored by State Senator Richard Posthumus (R) of Alto. It held the first meeting October 1, 1990. The purpose of Public Act No. 292 is "To authorize local government units to create metropolitan councils; to prescribe the powers and duties of metropolitan councils; and to authorize metropolitan councils to levy a property tax." A local coalition of public officials, Chamber of Commerce business leaders and education administrators supported the formation of GVMC. According to Nyal Deems, a founder and chairman of GVMC and former Mayor of East Grand Rapids, GVMC's formation can be attributed directly to a public and local media controversy over the construction of an additional water pipeline to West Michigan. The Cities of Grand Rapids and Wyoming were involved, and the public perception was that the two should have cooperated in developing water service, rather than constructing an additional, costly water line. Deems believes that the willingness of most local communities to participate in formation of GVMC was an

attempt to avoid further controversy by having an organization which could deal with such issues (Deems, 1995).

The first executive director of GVMC was Jean Laug-Carroll. She believes "Metro Council was born out of a sense of frustration that there was no public forum for the ideas expressed in groups like AGRAG or GGREAT, no ability to move forward on policy issues" (Laug-Carroll, 1995).

Formation of GVMC was not without controversy. Dr. Glenn Barkan, Professor of Political Science at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, cites several reasons:

1. The latent opposition in any community to business interests and developers, who were among the principal proponents of GVMC.
2. The undefined or vaguely defined authority of GVMC.
3. The concern about centralized authority, and strong preference for decentralized power and grass roots decision making.
4. The perception of Metro Council as yet another layer of government, and the depiction of government as inefficient and inept.
5. The fear of additional and/or increased taxes.
6. Opposition to the process of Council membership and to the fact that citizens were not provided an opportunity to vote on its formation.
7. Objections to the appointment rather than election of council members, or the option of local units to appoint their representatives (Barkan, 1992, pp. 8-20).

Former Wyoming Mayor Harold Voorhees has been the most outspoken critic of the formation of GVMC. While his City participated in AGRAG and GGREAT and initially joined GVMC, it soon withdrew as a result of a City of Wyoming referendum opposing membership. "In a September, 1991 advisory vote, 88 percent of the voters in Wyoming opposed the City's participation. The City Council then voted unanimously to quit the Council, ending months of debate over the risks and benefits of belonging to the planning group" (Grand Rapids Press, November 22, 1991, p. C3).

Voorhees led the citizen opposition to membership on the basis of his publicly-stated belief that Metro Council officials should be elected and his fear of more taxation and an additional layer of government. Wyoming's non-participation has been a source of frustration and concern to Metro Council organizers, particularly because the City's population of 63,688 is the second largest in the metro area. While the controversy and the stormy relationship between Metro Council and Wyoming has subsided since 1990, the City remains unaffiliated with GVMC. Former Mayor Voorhees, now a State Representative, continues to oppose Metro Council. In an interview conducted with him in October, 1995, he restated his opinion that the Council represents another layer of government which is not necessary; that cooperation among metro communities does and will occur without GVMC's involvement; and that groups such as AGRAG, GGREAT, and GRETS were fully capable of handling the planning needs of the metro area (Voorhees, 1995). Representative Voorhees has introduced legislation, which would



alter and presumably weaken the authorizing statute for metropolitan councils, but had not succeeded in obtaining passage as of November, 1995.

While it is the largest, most visible and most troublesome, Wyoming is not the only eligible non-member of Metro Council. Others in Kent County are the City of Walker (population 18,835), Ada Township (population 8,280), Cascade Township (population 12,455), Caledonia Township (population 6,143), Cannon Township (population 9,079) and Courtland Township (population 4,426). Ottawa County non-members are Jamestown (population 4,681) and Tallmadge (population 6,658). All these communities are acknowledged to be a part of the metropolitan growth pattern; yet they have resisted membership in the GVMC.

The Council currently consists of 17 members. Those added during 1995 are the communities of Coopersville (Ottawa County), Greenville (Montcalm County) and Algoma Township (Kent County). As this research is being finalized, GVMC is conducting discussions with the City of Walker and with Courtland Township regarding membership. GVMC's executive director is optimistic about their joining the council (Felix, 1995).

There are several committees and activities which are attached to GVMC. These are (a) the Metro Water and Sewer Planning Agency; (b) GRETS, or the Grand Rapids and Environs Transportation Study; (c) MAPP, or the Metropolitan Alliance for Public Purchasing; (d) MET-NET, the metro-wide bulletin board system; and (e) The GVSU Office for Economic Expansion's regional economic information center. Interestingly,

they all enjoy participation from not only the member governments of GVMC, but also some of the non-members. For example, both the Cities of Wyoming and Walker participate cooperatively in Water and Sewer Planning and in GRETS. The GRETS entity pre-dates GVMC and has long been accepted as the official metro area entity whose blessing must be obtained in order to receive state or federal highway funds. With its formal attachment to GVMC and its MPO, or Metro Planning Organization, GRETS maintains credibility among units of government. During the course of the research including records analysis, survey and interviews, I found full acceptance of GRETS as the transportation planning entity for the metro area. It also has “clout” because its recommendations are necessary to obtain state and federal dollars for transportation. All units of local government seem to feel they are legitimate players in GRETS planning.

Similarly, the Water and Sewer Agency, which is governed by a 12-member board, enjoys a degree of credibility. Apparently this is because the agency slightly pre-dates GVMC and enjoys broad participation from metro area units of governments. Even though Water and Sewer Planning recommendations are not mandatory and have no funding clout, both public managers and key informants ascribed significance to the agency’s work. That work has consisted primarily of a master plan for area water and sewer services through the year 2020. The plan was prepared by the engineering firm of Metcalf and Eddy of Detroit and submitted March 30, 1992. The master plan for metro water and sewer is a technical document prepared by utility engineers. It appears to have current acceptance as a guide for utility planning.

In 1991, the GVMC asked Grand Valley State University's Office for Economic Expansion to organize a regional information service. It was believed that if such information were organized as metropolitan data, it would assist in getting people in comprehending the economic interrelationships among the communities within the metro area. By agreement, the data center operated by GVSU collects metropolitan and regional data, summarizes it, and makes it available to area businesses, libraries, schools, non-profits and the media. Many governmental agencies, business and professional associations and schools use the center as a source for data about the KOMA (Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon and Allegan Counties) region. The center provides call-in service, on-line data and reference books. It also provides service for special data requests and projects. It is supported financially by its users, the University, the Economic Club of Grand Rapids and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. It is generally accepted as the principal information source for metropolitan Grand Rapids and an example of metro cooperation.

MAPP and MET-NET are also information related, non-controversial services. They are new activities sponsored by GVMC which are not widely utilized as of late 1995. Everyone seems supportive of cooperative purchasing because it may save tax money. Similarly, a communications system linking units of government seems non-threatening and may have promise in terms of exchanging useful information and engendering further cooperative activity. Both these efforts have received positive

publicity from the local newspapers and both are touted by GVMC as programs to be expanded.

GVMC's most recent budget totaled \$896,000. Primary programs are: (a) transportation planning (GRETS), (b) Blueprint related activities, (c) a cooperative purchasing program, (d) MetNet (a metropolitan bulletin board system), (e) a capital improvement priorities program, and (f) a legislative scorecard program.

The GVMC operates under the mission statement which appears as Appendix B.

### The Metropolitan Development Blueprint

In the fall of 1992, work commenced on an 18-month study project called the Metropolitan Development Blueprint (MDB). The Blueprint's overall purpose was to "develop a shared vision of future growth and development for this area" (GVMC, 1992, Fall, p. 1). The project was a joint effort of the Metro Council, GRETS, and the Michigan Departments of Commerce and Transportation. Commerce and transportation agencies provided the bulk of the funding for the \$300,000 planning project and also participated in the conduct of the research.

The MDB Study was conducted in four phases as outlined in the Metropolitan Development Blueprint report dated October 8, 1993:

I. A First Impressions Report. All previous plans and studies of the metro area and each unit of government were examined. Demographic and economic data were analyzed and impressions about the metro area were reported.

II. General Futuring. Citizen meetings were held and ideas solicited about the possible futures of the metro area. Task forces were organized.

III. Common Visions. The task forces continued work to frame common visions about the metro area.

IV. Strategies and Recommendations. From the gathered data the study team developed the series of recommendations which became the final report. In particular, four general vision statements were presented, all of which had to do with the physical development of the Metropolitan Area. (GVMC, 1994).

The vision may be summarized as consisting of: (a) self-sufficient residential centers, or compact, livable communities; (b) regional employment centers; (c) a network of green space; and (d) user-friendly, efficient transportation (GVMC, 1993b, pp. 1-3).

The plan was backed up by a number of detailed plans and recommendations designed to accomplish these visions. Upon presenting its findings to the Metro Council, the study team and its consultants recommended the formation of a Blueprint Commission which would be responsible for implementation of the Blueprint visions. The Commission is composed of a number of prominent metro area persons, and is chaired by two local businessmen, Harold Marks and Hank Meijer. It began meeting in early 1995. No results can be cited so far, according to co-chair Harold Marks (Marks, 1995). As a first step, the Commission is developing community measurements to track changes in the metro area (Felix, 1995).

After the Blueprint was completed, it received editorial endorsement from the local media. The Grand Rapids Press, in an April 15, 1994 editorial, pointed out the need for the plan to succeed. The editorial noted that the area has suffered from a lack of regional planning, conflicting land use policies, and a “chronic unwillingness to cooperate.” Listed were several perceived shortcomings that have resulted from such lack of cooperation: (a) a substandard bus system, (b) businesses’ flight from the inner-city, (c) an inadequate library system, and (d) duplicative water lines. The editors summed up the potential importance of the MDB in these words:

Without cooperation, Kent, Ottawa and the greater area are doomed to repeat the sprawl that has turned metropolitan areas all over the country into featureless suburbs with clogged major streets and jammed highways emptying out dying urban cores. If the Metropolitan Development Blueprint can get community leaders talking and caring about one another, that’s progress (The Grand Rapids Press, “Blueprint for Success,” April 15, 1994, p. A-10).

#### Observations About Leadership in the Grand Rapids Metro Area

Based upon my nearly five years of participation and observation, I do not believe there is a single acknowledged leader of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The closest is the position of Chair of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. But GVMC is a recently formed organization, and experienced a shaky and controversial beginning. Neither the organization nor its chair has yet earned the credibility necessary for strong leadership. Until late 1995, the GVMC had one Chair, Mayor Nyal Deems of East Grand Rapids. Deems was an untiring and dedicated worker on behalf of GVMC and

metropolitan problem solving, and he certainly served as a spokesperson for that organization. However, his energies were expended in keeping the fledgling GVMC alive and nurturing its development since its 1990 birth. The current Chair is Mayor Jim Buck of Grandville. It is too soon to tell if he will be able to establish a stronger position of leadership on metro issues.

Other political positions which have potential in terms of leadership are the Chair of the Kent County Commission and the Mayor of the core City of Grand Rapids. The County Commission, as a matter of policy, has opted not to take strong metro positions. While the County supported the formation of GVMC, and is represented on its Board with three seats, it has not assumed leadership. The Mayor of Grand Rapids is by definition almost precluded from metro leadership because of the history of conflict over water and annexation between Grand Rapids and certain suburban communities. Also, the strong autonomy of cities and townships makes it unlikely that the Grand Rapids Mayor would be accepted as the metro leader. However, the current Mayor of Grand Rapids, John Logie, has certainly demonstrated interest in metro issues.

No individuals from the educational or business community have stepped forth to assume metro leadership. The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce has a Metro Issues Committee. The Chamber was supportive of the formation of GVMC, assisted with the Blueprint, and as an organization continues to provide input and support. However, no single leader has emerged from the private sector.

This question of metro leadership was explored further in the interviews with key informants, the findings from which are discussed in Chapters IX through XII.



## CHAPTER VIII

### SURVEY RESULTS: INTERLOCAL COOPERATION IN THE GRAND RAPIDS METROPOLITAN AREA

#### Formal Intergovernmental Agreements

In addition to the library district, GRATA, GVMC and the other multi-community organizations and activities previously enumerated, there are other formal agreements among local units in Grand Rapids metro. For the most part, these are multi-community agreements for the joint delivery of a specific public service. In a survey conducted in Summer 1995, 21 local government managers were asked, "Is your unit of government a party to any formal intergovernmental agreement with another jurisdiction? If so, please list." All but two of the managers responded. Although the managers of Ada Township and Wyoming did not, information regarding Wyoming's formal agreements for cooperation was obtained through an interview with City Manager, Don Mason, in October, 1995. The responses to this question follow, and Table 11 provides a matrix which reveals patterns of cooperative activity due to formal intergovernmental agreements.

Table 11

Grand Rapids Metro Formal Intergovernmental Agreements  
for Local Government Services

Units of Government	Formal Cooperative Agreements	Sewer Service	Water Service	Fire Related/Mutual Aid	Library	Police Related	County Services	GRATA Bus Service	Purchasing or Mapp	Medical Ambulance	Streets	Planning	Building Inspection	Land Transfers	Community T.V.	Recreation/Parks	Courts	Hazardous Materials	Collection
Grand Rapids	21	8	5	4	X	X	X				X								
Grandville	10	X	2	X	X	X	X		X								X	X	
Rockford	10	X		3	X	X	X		X		X								X
Kentwood	9	2	X	X	X		X		X		X				X				
Wyoming	8	2	2		X	X								X	X				
Grand Rapids Twmsp	7	X	X		X		X	X	X				X						
Byron	6		X	X	X			X						X		X			
East Grand Rapids	6	X	X	X	X		X		X										
Alpine	5	X	X	X	X			X											
Caledonia	5	X	X	X	X	X													
Cedar Springs	5	X	X	X					X	X									
Coopersville	5		X	2	X					X									
Gaines	5	X	X		X			X				X							
Hudsonville	5	X	2	X		X													
Walker	5	X	X		X	X		X											
Cascade	4			X	X							X	X						
Algoma	3	X	X		X														
Plainfield	3	X	X		X														
Georgetown	2	X	X																
Sparta	1	X																	
Totals	125	26	24	18	16	7	6	5	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1

X=1; N=125 (86 Cities, 39 Townships)

Source: Data drawn from a 1995 Survey of City Managers and Township Supervisors.

Algoma Township

The survey response listed two agreements: (1) an agreement with the Village of Sparta for Camp Lake sewer service; and (2) an agreement with Cedar Springs to allow treated wastewater into Algoma Township.

Alpine Township

This entity reported seven agreements: (1) a Fire Commission agreement; (2) various mutual aid agreements (fire); (3) a water agreement with Plainfield Township; (4) an agreement with Kent District Library; (5) an agreement with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council; (6) an agreement with North Kent systems (sewer); and (7) an agreement with GRATA.

Byron Township

This township listed five agreements: (1) a water agreements with Gaines, Wyoming and Kent County; (2) a fire dispatch agreement with the City of Grand Rapids; (3) an interlocal agreement with Grand Rapids, Grandville, Walker and Wyoming for maintenance of a non-motorized trail; (4) an agreement with East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker and Wyoming to become GRATA members; and (5) a conditional land transfer contract with the City of Wyoming.

Caledonia Township

This township reported three agreements: (1) a water and sewer agreement with the Village of Caledonia; (2) mutual aid agreements regarding public safety and general assistance; and (3) state grants with the Village of Caledonia (joint applications).

Cascade Township

This township responded with three agreements: (1) an agreement with the Four Corners Planning Advisory Committee with Kentwood, Caledonia Township and Gaines Township; (2) various contractual agreements with neighboring townships to provide building code inspection services; and (3) fire service interlocal agreements with other metro units for fire response assistance when requested.

Cedar Springs

This entity responded with two agreements: (1) fire and medical coverage with Nelson Township; and (2) water and sewer agreements with Solon township.

Coopersville

The survey response listed seven agreements: (1) an agreement with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council; (2) a joint fire department agreement with Polktown Township; (3) an agreement for emergency medical services provided to Polktown Township; (4) mutual aid agreements with Ottawa County and fire agencies; (5) an

agreement for water provided by the City of Grand Rapids; (6) an agreement for provision of ambulance services with three surrounding Ottawa County townships; and (7) a district library agreement with Polktown, Wright and Chester Townships.

#### East Grand Rapids

This entity listed five agreements: (1) an agreement to receive water from Grand Rapids; (2) an agreement to receive sewage treatment from Grand Rapids; (3) an agreement with Grand Rapids to supply parts during water and sewer construction, if not readily available by East Grand Rapids; (4) a contract for dispatch services and animal control with Kent County; and (5) a mutual aid agreement with metro area fire departments.

#### Gaines Township

The survey response reported three agreements: (1) an agreement with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council; (2) an agreement with the Four Corners Planning Alliance; and (3) sewer and water service agreements.

Georgetown Township

This township listed two agreements: (1) a water and sewer agreement with Grandville via Ottawa County; and (2) water and sewer services to Jamestown Township.

Grand Rapids

This survey response listed 17 agreements: (1) an agreement for provision of wholesale water and sewer services to Algoma Township; (2) an agreement for provision of wholesale water services to Allendale Township; (3) a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services to Byron Township; (4) a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services to Caledonia Township; (5) an agreement for provision of water and sewer services to Cascade Township; (6) an agreement for provision of wholesale water services to Coopersville; (7) an agreement for provision of wholesale sewer services and a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services to Gaines Township; (8) an agreement for provision of wholesale water and sewer services to East Grand Rapids; (9) an agreement for provision of water and sewer services to Grand Rapids Township; (10) agreements with Kent County for study, design and implementation of Geographic Information System; study, design and implementation of a Consolidated Justice Information System; implementation of Gypsy Moth aerial spraying; disposal of refuse at the Waste-to-Energy facility; and an agreement for provision of wholesale sewer services; (11) an agreement for provision of water and

sewer services and a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services to Kentwood; (12) an agreement for maintenance of State Trunklines within the city of Grand Rapids and an agreement for maintenance of street lighting on expressways with the State of Michigan; (13) an agreement for provision of wholesale water services to Ottawa County; (14) an agreement for provision of water and sewer services to Tallmadge Township; (15) a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services and an agreement for provision of water and sewer services to Walker; (16) a five-year agreement for provision of fire dispatch services to Wyoming; and (17) various construction, capital improvement, and maintenance agreements for bridges, streets, traffic signals, water lines and sanitary sewers with area jurisdictions.

#### Grand Rapids Township

The township responded with four agreements: (1) agreements for building, mechanical and electrical inspections with Cascade Township; (2) an agreement with GRATA for GO BUS; (3) sewer and water agreements with the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County and Plainfield Township; and (4) an agreement with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council.

#### Grandville

This entity listed eight agreements: (1) a water agreement with the City of Wyoming; (2) a wastewater agreement with Ottawa County; (3) mutual aid agreements

for police and fire with Kent County communities; (4) an agreement for police and fire dispatch with Kent County; (5) an agreement for E-Unit operational oversight with Kent County; (6) an agreement for hazardous materials with Kent County; (7) an agreement with the 59<sup>th</sup> District Court and the City of Walker; and (8) several agreements with Kent County for such things as data processing and the district library.

#### Hudsonville

This entity reported six agreements: (1) an agreement to purchase of water from the City of Wyoming; (2) an agreement for treatment of sanitary waste by the City of Grandville; (3) agreements for water and sanitary sewer on border streets with Georgetown Township; (4) an agreement for limited sanitary sewer service to Jamestown Charter Township; (5) a mutual aid fire agreement with a number of Ottawa County cities and townships; and (6) a mutual aid law enforcement agreement with a number of Ottawa County cities and townships.

#### Kent County

This respondent listed two agreements: (1) water, sewer and refuse disposal agreements; and (2) fire prevention and law enforcement agreements.



Kentwood

This entity listed five agreements: (1) an agreement for water and sewer services with Grand Rapids and Wyoming; (2) a purchasing agreement with the State of Michigan; (3) an street maintenance agreement with the Kent County Road Commission; (4) a sewer maintenance agreement with Kent County Public Works; and (5) fire and emergency mutual aid agreements.

Plainfield Township

This township reported one agreement: (1) agreements for water and sewer service.

Rockford

This entity responded with 11 agreements: (1) and agreement with North Kent County Sewage Disposal System and Kent County, the City of Grand Rapid, Plainfield Township and Alpine Township; (2) an agreement with the Kent County Fire Commission—a cooperative arrangement for joint purchasing of fire equipment, vehicles and insurance; (3) an agreement with the Kent County Road Commission for the maintenance and improvement of 10 Mile Road; (4) an agreement with Kent County for the maintenance of a shared parking lot; (5) a fire service mutual aid protection agreement; (6) an agreement with Kent District Library; (7) a police dispatch agreement with the Village of Sparta; (8) a Kent County Mutual Police Assistance Agreement; (9)

an agreement with the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium; (10) water and sanitary sewer agreements for collection of delinquent accounts with Cannon and Courtland Townships; and (11) an agreement with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council.

#### Sparta

The survey response listed one agreement with Algoma Township to treat and maintain the Camp Lake sewer system.

#### Walker

This entity reported three agreements: (1) a water and sewer agreement with the City of Grand Rapids; (2) a water and sewer agreement with Alpine and Plainfield Townships; and (3) a police dispatch contract with Lowell.

#### Wyoming

This survey response contained four agreements: (1) an agreement for sewer services by contract for the western portion of Kentwood, Byron Township and Gaines Township; (2) an agreement for water services by contract for Grandville, Kentwood, Hudsonville and Caledonia, Byron and Gaines Townships as well as several other units in Ottawa County along the water line; (3) an agreement for community TV cooperative

with Kentwood; and (4) a Criminal Justice Information System agreement with Kent County.

### Summary

It can be seen from Table 11 that general patterns emerge regarding cooperative activity. Significant cooperative activity exists in the functional services of water and sewer, fire protection, and library service. (Membership in Grand Valley Metro Council is not displayed in the table because the Table was intended to display agreements related to functional service delivery.) Limited cooperation is occurring in purchasing, planning, and building inspection, police services, bus transportation, and ambulance service. Other miscellaneous services handled jointly as identified by the respondents were community TV, collections, hazardous materials, courts, parks and recreation and land transfer. The respondents also identified six situations where they had entered into agreements with County government for services such as animal control, data processing, and dispatch.

### Informal Interlocal Cooperation

In the same survey, respondent city managers or township supervisors were asked to identify informal cooperative intergovernmental arrangements. Fourteen units of government reported 26 informal agreements (see Table 12). Informal arrangements are to be distinguished from formal ones, according to the definitions in Appendix A. A

Table 12

Grand Rapids Metro Survey of Informal Interlocal Arrangements  
for Local Government Services

Units of Government	Total Informal Agreement	Fire Related	Water Service Related	Borderline Streets	Purchasing	Mutual Aid	Parks and Recreation	Planning	Engineering	Tax Assessment	Police Related	Equipment Sharing	Sewer Related	Cable T.V.
Alpine	3	X	X						X					
Hudsonville	3		X	X								X		
Kentwood	3				X		X	X						
Rockford	3				X			X						X
Algoma	2	X				X								
Gaines	2	X									X			
Georgetown	2	X				X								
Grand Rapids	2	X		X										
Byron	1		X											
Cedar Springs	1									X				
Grand Rapids Twmsp	1				X									
Grandville	1						X							
Plainfield	1												X	
Walker	1			X										
Totals	26	5	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

X=1; N=26 (14 cities, 12 townships)

Source: Data drawn from a 1995 Survey of City Managers and Township Supervisors.

formal agreement would probably require a municipal ordinance, and involve a mutual plan between the cooperating communities to deliver a public service. An informal agreement implies an understanding or arrangement for cooperation, or perhaps a joint pledge to make a common improvement or deliver a service. Informal agreements are often staff to staff; formal ones are usually acted upon by the legislative body of the local government.

Though all respondents did not indicate it on the survey, there does exist an understanding to provide mutual aid in the cases of fire and other emergencies. While this was also noted as a set of formal agreements, it was clear that neighboring communities would respond and assist as needed, regardless of whether or not a formal agreement has been executed. This spirit of cooperation in emergency and fire situations was also evident from the interviews with key informants. There is also a perception that fire dispatch was well coordinated. It is evident from the surveys that the City of Grand Rapids provides dispatch services under formal agreement to the cities of Kentwood, Wyoming, Walker, and East Grand Rapids and to Byron, Caledonia and Gaines Townships. Other units can obtain assistance through informal mutual aid understandings. They initially would notify the Grand Rapids Fire Department for help. Informal agreements also exist to participate in fire training exercises among the departments in the metro area.

In the case of police services, only one unit of government noted informal arrangements for cooperation, although again, there is an understanding regarding mutual

aid in emergencies. Formal arrangements do exist regarding training, information dissemination and dispatch. But, there is a clear indication from this research that the level of cooperation among police departments is not as significant as among fire departments. One city manager expressed his view, “dealing with metro-wide fire would be easier than police. Police chiefs have a tendency to be empire builders, and there is less competition among fire chiefs than police...” (Mason, 1995).

Several communities indicated that informal agreements existed for the following services: (a) sharing the use of an assessor; (b) borderline street and sewer maintenance; (c) cooperative purchasing (outside of the MAPP organization); (d) sharing the use of specialized or heavy equipment such as portable power generating units, chipper machines, etc.; and (e) planning and utility information sharing.

Also noted were items such as park and recreation facility sharing with school districts, emergency water connections and informal information exchanges on a variety of public service topics. The strong impression gleaned from the interviews, the surveys, and my observations over the 1991-95 time period is that there is much informal staff-to-staff cooperation. This is sporadic, informal, rarely documented, and sometimes done by staff without the knowledge of city managers or local elected officials. Quantifying or even inventorying it would be problematic.

An example of informal cooperation worth noting specifically was the 1992-93 consortium of communities assembled to re-negotiate cable system franchise agreements with C-TEC Cable Systems of Michigan. The initiative for this effort appears to have

come from the then local city manager, Daryl Delabio of Rockford with legal help from the law firm of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett. Eventually, 55 Michigan communities which had franchise agreements were able to improve their negotiating position (and presumably their fee income) with C-TEC. Legal fees were also presumably reduced.

#### Functional Service Cooperation in Grand Rapids: An Assessment

When both formal and informal agreements are totaled, the survey of managers and supervisors identified 151 separate arrangements for provision of public services. As each is obviously at least a two-party agreement, that means the survey respondents cited a maximum of 75 formal or informal agreements for joint service delivery in Grand Rapids metro. Subsequent conversations with managers indicate that other informal staff-to-staff agreements also exist. They often cover such items as one-time equipment sharing, information exchange or occasional emergency mutual assistance. The 151 formal and informal service delivery agreements identified by the 20 respondents represent an average of 7.5 agreements per unit of government, and a median of 6. Figure 7 displays the level of participation in cooperative agreements by community.

The average of 7.5 agreements can be compared with a 1992 study of Minnesota communities. In that state, a League of Cities' survey concluded that each unit of government had 8.5 agreements (Honadel & Trueblood, 1993).

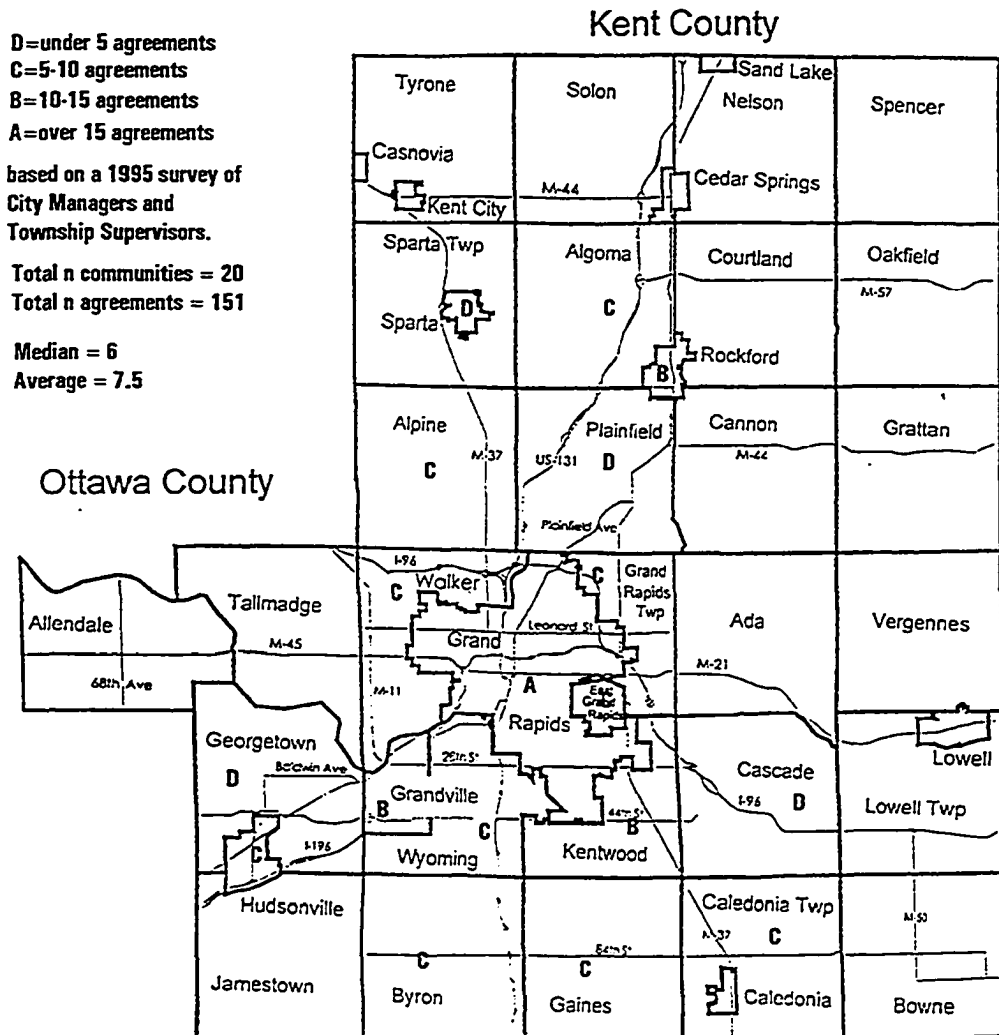


Figure 7. Level of Participation in Cooperative Agreements, by Community.

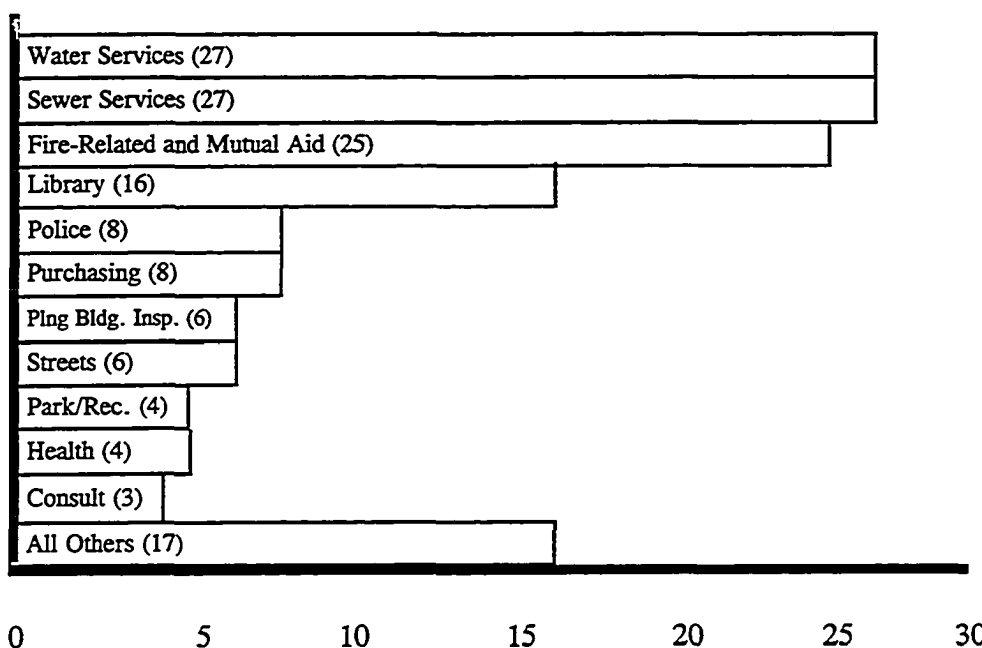


Perhaps a better measure would be internal, gauging existing reported cooperative activity against potential activity. The survey respondents identified 20 functional service areas where cooperation is occurring. Thus, the potential number of agreements could be 420 for the 21 surveyed units of local government if each government had one cooperative agreement per service. By that measure, Grand Rapids metro has taken advantage of only one third of the potential cooperative opportunities. The real potential is significantly greater because additional services might be identified. The possibility for multiple agreements for each service also exists.

Following the above logic it would be reasonable to expect as many as 20 agreements per unit of government, and the actual number, based on the survey result is an average of 7.5, median of 6. As Figure 8 indicates, cities are more likely to enter into cooperative agreements than are townships in Grand Rapids metro. The cities reported 100 formal and informal agreements or an average of 10 per city. The townships reported 51 agreements, or 5.5 per unit of government. The largest city, Grand Rapids, was the most active in cooperative activity, reporting 23 agreements. The cities of Kentwood, Grandville, and Rockford reported 12, 11 and 13 respectively.

The categories of service in which cooperative activity is occurring are revealing. Figure 8 displays the number of joint agreements by functional service category. Water, sewer, fire and mutual aid are the dominant functions where cooperation has occurred most frequently. Library cooperation is next, due to the existence of a library district

Interlocal Cooperative Functional Services  
*Grand Rapids Metropolitan*  
 (formal and informal agreements) (total n=151)



Source: 1995 survey of 21 local governments in Grand Rapids. Twenty communities responded.

Figure 8. Interlocal Cooperative Functional Services.

with limited taxing authority. The graph would seem to indicate the considerable potential for additional cooperative arrangements in numerous functional areas.

#### Other Examples of Cooperation and Plans for Further Cooperative Activity

There are several sub-metro planning and discussion groups which meet because of their common interest in a particular service or function of local government.

Consistent with Ciglar's definitions, there appear to be networks, utilized mostly for exchange of information.

In the key informant interview with State Senator Richard Posthumus (1995), he identified three such groups which he deemed as significant examples of cooperation. They are the North Kent Group, which does utility planning cooperatively; the BAR-KEN-ALL group which consists of representatives from Barry, Kent and Allegan Counties and meets to discuss issues of common interest; and the Four-Corners Group (consisting of Cascade, Caledonia and Gaines Townships with the City of Kentwood) which is interested in growth related issues southeast of the Grand Rapids Metro area.

Another example of cooperation involving the metro Grand Rapids area is the newly formed KOMAC (Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon and Allegan Consortium). After several years of informal ad-hoc meetings among a mix of local government administrators, elected officials, and chamber of commerce - economic development directors, the group has now formalized its structure under the KOMAC rubric. Its primary intent is to influence state legislative policy and funding to KOMA communities by speaking with one voice. KOMAC also is interested in regional planning issues. The four-county area has become a Metropolitan Statistical Area, and it is believed there are growth and economic commonalities which are increasing in importance (Felix, 1995).

A related example of regional cooperative activity is the West Michigan College Consortium. This consortium of 11 public and private KOMA region colleges and universities has recently endorsed a West Michigan Town Hall project. Institutions

involved in the consortium are: (a) Aquinas College, (b) Calvin College, (c) Central Michigan University, (d) Davenport College, (e) Ferris State University, (f) Grand Valley State University, (g) Grand Rapids Community College, (h) Hope College, (I) Michigan State University, (j) Muskegon Community College, and (k) Western Michigan University. The Town Hall will be modeled after the Arizona Town Hall. The focus will be on research and consensus-building issues of regional significance to the KOMA counties. Examples of such issues might be: (a) transportation, (b) water resources, (c) green space, (d) state funding equity, (e) growth management, (f) economic development, (g) poverty, and (h) housing. The model involves strong participation from the educational institutions in researching an issue, followed by a consensus-building conference with selected local participants and adoption of an implementation plan. This model offers promise for dealing with cross-jurisdictional issues in the metropolitan area as well as the broader region.

When city managers and township supervisors were asked in the Summer, 1995 survey to identify plans to enter into intergovernmental arrangements in the foreseeable future, they identified a number of possibilities. Several were considering agreements on tax sharing for specific projects under Section 425 of the Urban Cooperation Act. Alpine Township and the City of Walker are considering a borderline agreement which covers utilities and would eliminate annexation controversy. Several expressed a hope to expand joint purchasing activity through MAPP. East Grand Rapids was looking at joint inspection services with Cascade Township, and at doing further service

consolidation with the school district regarding recreation, ground and building maintenance. The City of Hudsonville and Georgetown and Jamestown Townships were looking at forming the East Ottawa Sewer Authority. Plainfield Township and the City of Walker were working on a cooperative water service agreement for a specific area. Many expressed the view they were ready and willing to enter into cooperative arrangements wherever doing so was in the interest of their communities.

Other cooperative activity was identified from the key informant interviews. Formation of the KOM Foreign Trade Zone was a joint venture by the three counties of Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon. The Foreign Trade Zone offers certain federal tax incentives to manufacturers and suppliers involved in international trade. The zone encompasses Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon Counties and is perceived to have economic development benefits.

A major example of past cooperative activity was identified by key informants as the Kent County-operated trash incinerator. In earlier years, 22 landfills existed in the metro area, which constituted an obvious health hazard. The County constructed a state of the art mass-burn incinerator on the condition that units of government would close land fills and send trash to this facility. The incinerator has been operating successfully since 1985 (Kuhn, 1995; Logie, 1995; and Lloyd, 1995).

Another highly visible example of past cooperation is the existence of a city-county office facility in downtown Grand Rapids. This impressive complex has a shared

underground parking garage which serves separate city and county office structures. It was built in 1969.

In January 1993, GVMC organized a West Michigan Air Quality Task Force, as a response to EPA's report that the area was not in compliance with air quality standards. The threat was that highway funding to the area, as well as other federal grant dollars could be withheld if a plan for reduction of air pollution were not implemented. GVMC was instrumental in organizing a multi-county task force, which had a series of hearings for the purposes of understanding and trying to come to consensus about solutions for the problem (GVMC minutes, January 11, 1993). Eventually, the Task Force submitted a report recommending a series of measures, the most significant of which was automobile emissions testing. The report was approved by GVMC, but Muskegon County disagreed, filed suit against the EPA, and proceeded with a lobbying effort to delay enforcement of emissions testing. The issue became moot when, after the Republican-controlled Congress was elected in November 1994, Governor John Engler issued an executive order canceling the emissions program. The EPA did not pursue enforcement. The significance of the episode for this research is that the communities were able to come together to deal with a perceived threat, and GVMC was able to utilize its position as a representative of multiple communities to organize a response.

The 1994 and 1995 GVMC minutes make frequent reference to the MAPP purchasing alliance, the MET-NET bulletin board system and the Blueprint Planning project. All three projects are on-going activities sponsored by the GVMC. Purchasing

representatives from several of the units of government continue to meet regularly and to exchange information, both directly and through the MET-NET bulletin board. They have established a bid calendar and exchanged purchasing documents. There is some evidence of cost savings as a result of cooperative purchasing. No report has yet been issued which would quantify savings. The MET-NET bulletin board now contains economic and demographic data and planning and purchasing information. Usage appears to be increasing and there is interest in tying MET-NET to the proposed GRANDNET which would provide access to the Internet system.

GVMC recently commissioned a consultant survey designed to assess the computer needs of local governments. Among other things, the consultant found intergovernmental communications and transactions to be a high priority. In addition, the units of government had an interest in developing ways of better serving their "customers," by using computer technology (Marston, 1995). Since the Marston survey was completed, members of GVMC have been connected to the Internet, a GVMC Home Page has been created, and metro data bases are being added.

### Summary

The results from the survey identified current cooperative activity. Cooperation exists principally in the functional areas of utilities, fire protection and mutual aid in case of emergencies. Some cooperative activity has been fostered by GVMC and other metropolitan organizations. However, much of what is happening has apparently

evolved from and been initiated by the units of local government themselves. The potential appears to exist for a much greater level of intergovernmental cooperation.



## CHAPTER IX

### KEY-INFORMANT PERCEPTIONS ABOUT METRO COOPERATION

Key informants represent a mix of public and private perspectives. All are well-informed observers and participants in metro activities. The perceptions about interlocal cooperation as expressed by the key informants are consistent with the factors discussed in Chapter X.

#### Perceptions Involving Economic Factors

Birgit Klohs, Director of the Right Place Program, warned that “if we don’t cooperate better, our economic development will suffer (in the global market place)” (Klohs, 1995). Harold Marks pointed to the Right Place economic development program as a model of cooperative activity which “has been able to cross borders effectively” (Marks, 1995). Doug Smith noted that the area’s ability to focus on economic development as a metro-wide matter has improved overall perceptions of cooperation (Smith, 1995). Editor Carol Velade of the Grand Rapids Business Journal, also stressed the importance of metro cooperation to business and economic development.

### Perceptions Related to Historic Rivalries and Traditions

Professor Barkan observed that “...to move from making the case (for cooperation) and actually cooperating or implementing...we’re far from that” (Barkan, 1995). Barkan made that comment in the context of land use issues and the Blueprint Commissions’s inability to implement study recommendations. Former East Grand Rapids Mayor and GVMC Chair Nyal Deems agrees that cooperation among communities is “often grudging, at best” (Deems, 1995).

Mike Lloyd, editor of the Grand Rapids Press, made a distinction between cooperative activity and unified activity. He observed that over the years a fair amount of cooperative activity in fire, police, streets and utilities has occurred, but the amount of unified metro-wide cooperation has been limited (Lloyd, 1995). Joe Fendt, retired city planner and city manager, provided an historical perspective on cooperation in Grand Rapids metro. Fendt perceives that cooperative activity has grown gradually since the 1960s, but that before that time there was no interchange or planning between communities. Fendt believes the Federal 701 planning process of 1967-68 was the first real community interchange, and that cooperative activity has grown slowly and steadily since then (Fendt, 1995).

### Perceptions Related to Leadership

Harold Marks, a local C.P.A., civic leader and co-chair of the Blueprint Commission made comments related to the currently stalled implementation of the

Blueprint recommendations: “there are several layers of leadership in this community. We have not been able to get the real movers and shakers interested in the cause of regional governance. They are great at building baseball stadiums and arenas and businesses. There are a handful of folks who could provide the necessary leadership, but they have not come forward. Leaders of the largest corporations have not embraced Metro issues” (Marks, 1995). Jerry Felix, Executive Director of the Metro Council and principal staff person to the Blueprint Commission, also noted the lack of progress on the Blueprint initiatives (Felix, 1995).

Micki Benz, Chairperson of the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Board, noted that she does not see a lot of effective risk-taking collaboration, but rather “a lot of talk, a lot of coalitions formed, but if it isn’t blessed (by business leaders), it isn’t going to happen” (Benz, 1995). Benz did not see metro concerns as a high level issue with the Chamber membership. She did observe it was important at the Chamber staff level but is not an item of much interest to the Chamber Board or business membership. Benz did express strong personal interest in the importance of metro interlocal cooperation.

As this research is being completed, the new Chair of the Chamber Board, Dana Sommers, has announced that “Regional Cooperation” is a high priority item for the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce on its 1996 agenda (Sommers, 1996, p. 1). The GRACC has a membership of 4,000 and is acknowledged to be a leading business

organization in the metro area. It has sponsored two appearances and presentations by author David Rusk on the topic of metropolitan concerns.

### Overall Perceptions

Because there is no metropolitan government in Grand Rapids, cooperation to accomplish metro or multi-community actions is voluntary. What, then, do key people feel about the necessary level of cooperation and willingness to cooperate? To measure perceptions regarding overall cooperative interlocal activity, 18 of the 21 key informants were asked about their general view of the level of intergovernmental activity in Grand Rapids metro. They were asked to rate cooperation on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 denoting no communication or cooperation and 10 indicating cooperating to the fullest degree. Responses are displayed in Figure 9. The range of cooperative activity was rated from 3 to 8.5, with the majority between 3 and 5.

Birgit Klohs (1995) observed “there is a lull right now regarding cooperative activity.” Jerry Felix (1995) perceives that cooperative activity is “generally low...we could do much more...the cooperative arrangements have been voluntary and very sporadic...it’s who can offer what service.” Former Grand Rapids City Manager and current GRATA Manager Steve Bernard agrees that there is much room for improvement in cooperative activity (Bernard, 1995).

Former Executive Director of GVMC Jean Laug-Carroll observed “Regarding the level of cooperation, I’d rate elected officials at an 8, and the citizens at a 2. Citizens

*Key Informants in Grand Rapids Metropolitan*

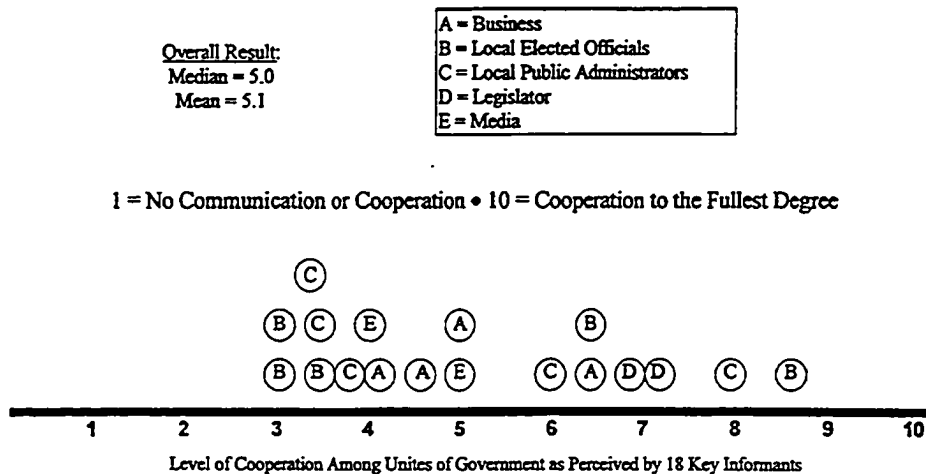


Figure 9. Cooperation Measurement.

are not ready for cooperation, they can't see the bigger picture...and must be sold on the benefits of cooperation" (1995). Laug-Carroll does believe that public administrators and the business community are supportive of greater levels of cooperative activity.

Several other key informants emphasized the amount of staff-to-staff cooperation occurring among local government administrators and departments for service functions. Kent County Commission Chair Kathy Kuhn, Wyoming Manager Don Mason and Grand Rapids Mayor John Logie all perceive positive levels of staff-related cooperation. Milt Rohwer, President of the Grand Rapids Chamber, made the observation that what is more important than the number of areas where cooperation is occurring is how strategic those areas are. Rohwer also observed "metro areas around the country are at about a three,

we're at a four" (1995). Rohwer's expertise includes duties as a former city planner and as a student of other metro areas.

Rohwer's views about the level of cooperation in Grand Rapids metro were shared by other key informants. Senator Richard Posthumus (1995) observed that compared to other areas of Michigan, Grand Rapids is doing better on cooperation. Nyal Deems agreed, but observed "the highest level of cooperation attainable is a seven. We're never going to get much more than that because of ingrained turf protection and concepts of local governments. The good part about being at 3.5 to 4, even though it is low, is that most areas are at 1.5 to 2. Most just cooperate at a minimal level" (Deems, 1995). Editor Carole Velade stated "it will take 10 years of citizen effort and desire for metro cooperation" (1995).

A different perspective on cooperation was provided by Representative Harold Voorhees (1995) who defined cooperation as something that is done when there is a need to do it or a benefit from doing so. On such a basis, he rated cooperation in Grand Rapids metro at between 7 and 8. Wyoming City Manager Don Mason points out the "level of cooperation depends on the issue, on the who and what." He also perceived that cooperation in Grand Rapids metro is moving in a positive direction. "It just takes time" (Mason, 1995).

The cooperation measurement ratings in Figure 9 indicate a median response of 5 and a mean of 5.1. As a participant-observer of the metro area since 1991, I would also rate it in that range. Even though this is an unsophisticated tool, it does provide an

indication of what key leaders and observers perceive, and is reflective of their thinking.

It tends to verify other findings which demonstrate that some cooperative activity is occurring, there is support for further cooperation, and there is opportunity for much more activity to occur.

Finally, during each of the 21 key informant interviews, GVMC was discussed in the context of the broader topic of metropolitan intergovernmental cooperation. All key informants, with the exception of Representative Voorhees, acknowledged that GVMC was contributing to cooperative efforts. Some of the persons interviewed saw phrases such as “metropolitan cooperation” and “intergovernmental relations” as synonymous with Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. In the open-ended conversations conducted with key informants, such phrases were often used interchangeably. The perception of most key informants indicates that GVMC has established itself as the principal entity identified with metropolitan governance in Grand Rapids metro.

## CHAPTER X

### FACTORS INHIBITING OR ENCOURAGING COOPERATION

#### Factors Identified From the Survey of Public Managers

The 20 public managers surveyed in Summer 1995 were asked to identify the formal and informal arrangements in which their unit of local government was involved. They were also asked to list the reasons such arrangements were initiated. The most frequently mentioned reasons had to do with cost. Cost savings and capital cost avoidance were mentioned or implied by nearly all the respondents. Avoidance of duplication of services or effort, which obviously has cost implications, was frequently identified as a reason for past intergovernmental cooperation.

The managers were also asked if their governing council had a policy regarding intergovernmental cooperation. Six managers said yes. Fourteen said no, but several hastened to add that they were encouraged to work cooperatively. Apparently, while cooperative efforts are not actively pursued, local elected officials are willing to consider such arrangements.

The managers surveyed are on the front lines of public service delivery. They are well informed regarding the benefits of cooperation, and are the persons most likely to comprehend the factors which encourage or inhibit cooperation. For that reason, and in



the interest of completeness in reporting, their responses are paraphrased and delineated below by unit of government.

#### Algoma Township

Lack of funding to implement agreements was noted by the township supervisor as an inhibiting factor.

#### Alpine Township

Difficulty with a developer-owner over utility arrangements was a key factor in determining a cooperative agreement.

#### Byron Township

Cost savings, political aspects, and legal obstacles were listed by the township supervisor as factors which impact cooperative agreements.

#### Caledonia Township

Cost savings was a key consideration in encouraging cooperation in this township.

Cascade Township

To coordinate resources, protect public safety, reduce costs, and develop a new revenue source were all reasons this township entered into cooperative agreements.

Cedar Springs

Cost savings, to provide better/additional service, economic development, political reasons, safety, cost, proximity, political obstacles, short-sighted planning were factors which affected cooperation in this city.

Coopersville

Prohibitive costs, lawyers as obstacles, historical baggage, past failures, threatened personnel, charging for previously free services, lack of interest from other governmental units were factors listed by the city manager.

East Grand Rapids

Cost savings, efficiency, quality of service, turf battles, overstatement of legal obstacles were the reasons listed in this suburban city.

Gaines Township

Cost savings, economies of scale, reducing duplication, transcending political boundaries, legal issues, resistance to "new levels of bureaucracy," parochial attitudes,

fear of additional taxes, short-sighted thinking, were all listed by this township as impacting factors.

#### Georgetown Township

Cost savings, personnel effort, and political factors were noted by the supervisor of this township as important considerations.

#### Grand Rapids

Cost savings, efficiencies, capital cost avoidance, elimination of duplication, and State incentives were the dominant factors in the core city of the metropolitan area.

#### Grand Rapids Township

The supervisor in this township listed cost savings, personnel efforts, capital cost avoidance, and fear of autonomy loss as key considerations.

#### Grandville

The city manager of this suburban city noted cost savings, cooperation, capital cost sharing, turf protection, politics, cost allocation, too many attorneys, results too slow, and too many complications and obstacles as factors.

Hudsonville

The city manager of this Ottawa County city listed these factors: regional problem solving approach, enhancement of expertise and revenue sources, reduction or elimination of liability, cost savings, shared personnel and equipment, political aspects, historic rivalries, uneducated policymakers or administrators, legal obstacles, and lack of political consensus among legislators.

Kent County

Cost savings, capital cost avoidance, legal and political obstacles were significant factors, according to the county controller.

Kentwood

Cost savings, public protection, avoidance of duplication, competition and quality of life, pooling of resources, problem charter or ordinance provisions, and political rivalries were the responses from the Kentwood mayor - manager's office.

Plainfield Township

The township supervisor of this suburban community listed these factors: cost savings, capital cost avoidance, lack of alternatives to service, annexation avoidance.

Rockford

Economics, augment/enhance services, and political and legislative obstacles were key considerations noted by the city manager.

Sparta

Sparta's city manager listed capital cost avoidance and federal incentives as factors.

Walker

Cost savings, capital cost avoidance, political factors, politics and historical rivalries were the factors listed by the city manager.

The above responses are summarized below and placed in the factor categories identified from the literature and depicted on Figure 1 in Chapter II, The Initial Conceptual Framework: (a) Economic factors, 19; (b) Political conditions, 11; (c) Legal obstacles, 8; (d) Historic factors, 4; (e) Geographic factors, 2; and (f) Sociological factors, 0.

As earlier noted, economic factors were seen as most significant by the managers with political factors noted 11 times, 10 as inhibiting and 1 as encouraging.

Legal obstacles were mentioned eight times by managers, all as inhibiting factors. Specifically noted were obstacles related to state law and city ordinance. However,

simply the involvement of attorneys in the negotiations over intergovernmental agreements was a source of frustration for several.

Interestingly, none of the managers saw sociological issues such as race and poverty as significant in encouraging or inhibiting cooperation.

#### Factors Identified from the Key Informant Interviews

During the course of the 21 key informant interviews, each was asked to identify the factors which, in their opinion, had encouraged or inhibited intergovernmental cooperative activity in Grand Rapids metro. Because these interviews were open-ended and the interview guide used was purposely general, I did not offer the key informants a choice of listed factors. They responded with factors derived from their own thinking and experience. There were 31 factors elicited from the interviews, 13 of which can be described primarily as encouraging cooperation, and 18 of which can be primarily described as inhibiting cooperation. Nine were mentioned both as encouraging and inhibiting factors.

To discern which of the factors identified in the interviews were most important in encouraging or inhibiting cooperation among Grand Rapids metro units of government, I constructed two Pareto charts. The Pareto Chart is a special form of bar graph. It is often utilized in total quality analysis to help determine which problems to solve in what order, based on collected data. In this instance, constructing such a chart focuses attention on the factors perceived by the key informants as most significant.

Seven principally encouraging factors and nine principally inhibiting factors were distilled from the total. Re-examination of the material from the interviews was necessary to construct categories because key informants often used different words as descriptions. Further consolidation of the 31 factors would be possible, but in the interest of comprehensiveness, I was reluctant to further summarize. I did not want to supplant my perspective for that of the key informants by interpreting their meaning too liberally. Therefore, the results from the interviews are thoroughly discussed before attempting to incorporate them into the conceptual framework of this research.

Parochialism, community autonomy and turf protection were noted most often as inhibiting factors (Figure 10). At nearly the same level were factors relating to politics, personalities and power. It would be tempting to rename all of these factors under the heading of “political conditions” as described in Chapter IV from the review of the literature. However, I believe that the resulting definition of politics would be too broad. What I heard from the informants was that in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the desire to protect one’s community turf and the autonomy and independence which led to the establishment of many of these communities is a very strong feeling. When this is combined with strong, independent, and, yes, stubborn personalities as well as a long-standing conservative political ethic, it presents a political environment which is a major inhibiting factor for interlocal cooperation. It is perhaps more accurate to describe this factor as derived from the political culture of the Grand Rapids area. The following comments from the key informant interviews serve to demonstrate the point:

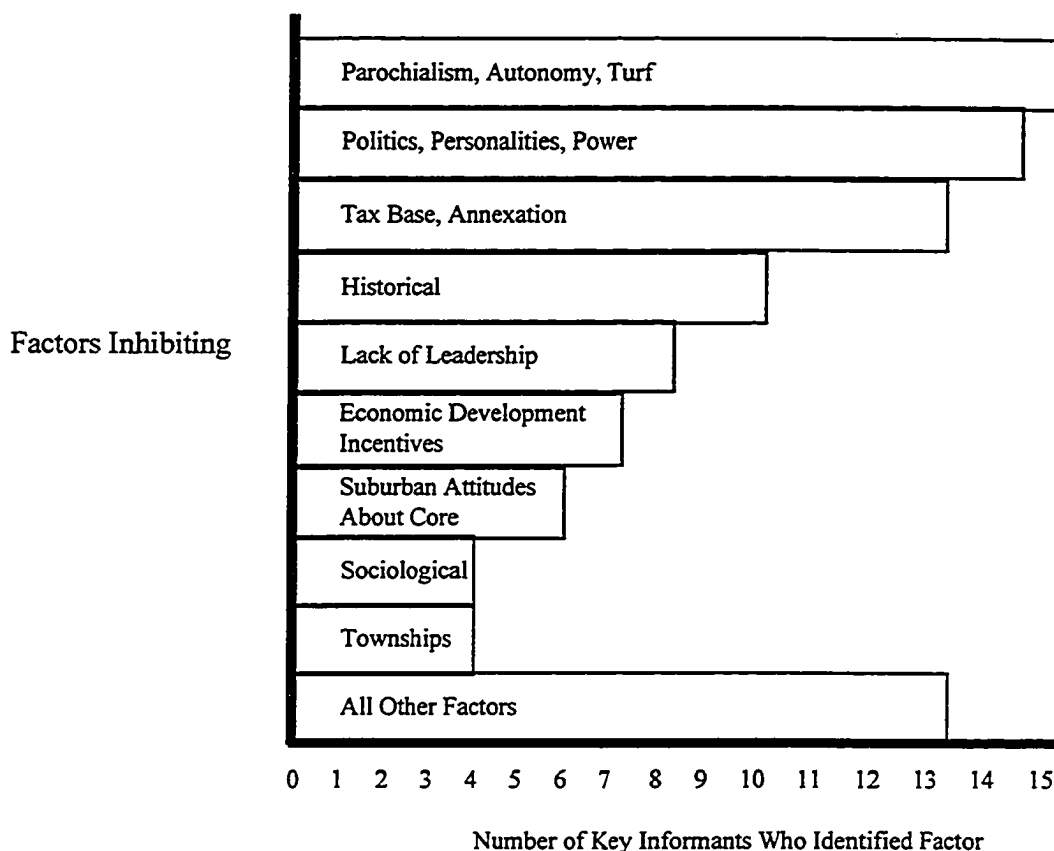
*Grand Rapids Metropolitan Key Informants, 1995 (N=21)*

Figure 10. Major Factors Inhibiting Interlocal Government Cooperation.

Mayor John Logie of Grand Rapids quoted Disraeli, "People prefer a familiar problem to an unfamiliar solution." Disraeli was right and we are deeply cut into our grooves here...it will need something pretty dramatic for us to voluntarily change (Logie, 1995).

...nobody likes to oppose cooperation, but they have personal agendas and want to protect their turf (Marks, 1995).

I see turfism and argument, and don't see Grand Rapids as a cutting edge community that makes bold moves (Benz, 1995).



Cooperation was set back 20-30 years by annexation battles...(suburban communities) wanted to maintain their own identity and independence from the City of Grand Rapids (Felix, 1995).

...the American psyche, which is so individualistic, has gotten us into some of these problems...that we are all an entity of one and figure our rights come before everybody else. That translates to me into my unit of government over everything, and when I live in Cascade, I care about IT. There's not enough of a sense of overall unifying, and I think some of the sentiment is going the other direction (away from cooperation) (Klohs, 1995).

It's not total warfare between all communities, but it certainly is between Wyoming and Grand Rapids, and...there are very prescribed limits in most of these functions (public services) on how close they will get together, despite the overwhelming logic of it (Lloyd, 1995).

...(there is)...a natural tendency for people to want to control their own fate...the closer they can keep it, the more control they feel they have over it; obviously, when you move toward governmental cooperation, you give up some of that control for the overall gains that (might accrue) (Posthumus, 1995).

There's a strong ethic of independence in Grand Rapids which works against collaborative uni-gov type organization (Smith, 1995).

The majority of governments aren't interested in losing autonomy, but they are interested in cooperation if it saves money and improves services (Silvernail, 1995).

People are proud of what they've built and they don't want to give it up (Velade, 1995).

### Leadership

Looking at Figures 10 and 11, one notes that when the two leadership factors are added together, all but one key informant cited leadership, or lack of it, as a major factor.

As Commissioner Kathy Kuhn said, "People identify with what they have. They are

*Grand Rapids Metropolitan Key Informants, 1995 (N=21)*

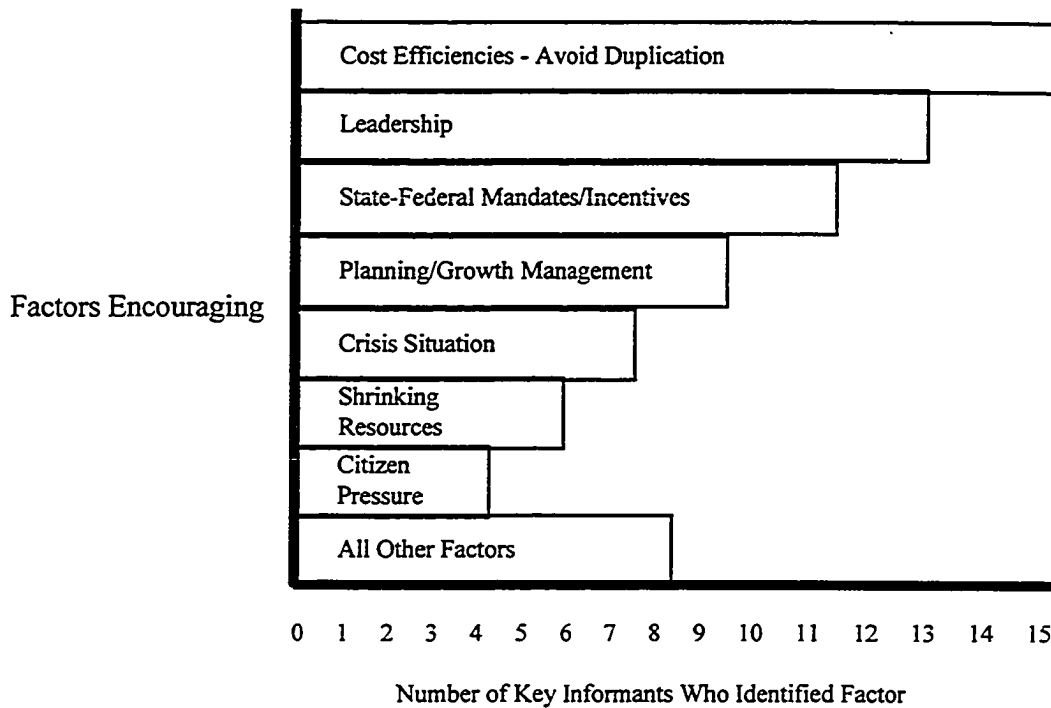


Figure 11. Major Factors Encouraging Interlocal Government Cooperation.

comfortable with what they have. It takes tremendous leadership to get past that” (Kuhm, 1995). To capsulize the difficulty of leadership on metro-wide issues, Editor Lloyd puts it well, “It would take a Solomon, Dag Hammarskjold and U.Thant combination to have someone say ‘Fine, we’ll give this up (in the best interests of the region)’ ” (Lloyd, 1995). Clearly, leadership, or the lack of metro leaders, is a factor identified in the Grand Rapids research, quite apart from “politics.”

## History

A principal cause of consternation between major communities stems from a history of disputes over annexations. In the 1950s the City of Grand Rapids aggressively annexed adjacent developing lands in an attempt to enlarge the tax base and control development. Reactions proved strong. Former Wyoming Mayor Harold Voorhees said, “Wyoming was established as a city out of defiance to Grand Rapids because of Grand Rapids’ policies” (Voorhees, 1995). All key informants acknowledged that Grand Rapids’ past annexation and water service policies related to annexation were responsible for much of the current turf protection and politics on the part of suburban communities and townships. They acknowledged that because those actions were still within the memory of some citizens and elected local officials, they are still an inhibiting factor which deters cooperative effort. Presumably, that factor will dissipate with time. Several key informants believe it already has.

## Cost of Local Government

Given the data in Figure 11, it is not surprising that factors relating to cost efficiencies and avoidance of duplication were rated as the strongest factors encouraging cooperation by the key informants. City Managers and Township Supervisors also saw saving money as a key motivating factor in past interlocal agreements, a factor consistent with the conservative ethic of Grand Rapids metro communities. A 10-year examination of expenditure patterns of metro communities in Grand Rapids revealed the combined

average 1994 per capita spending was \$616 (Office for Economic Expansion, 1996a). The most comparable statistic for U.S. average per capita municipal spending was \$999 (adjusted), according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (City Government Finances, 1992). In other words, Grand Rapids metro government expenditures are less than two thirds the national average. Table 13 displays total expenditures for most metro communities. The range in per capita expenditures in 1994 is from \$85 in Algoma Township to \$920 in the City of Hudsonville. The City of Grand Rapids' per capita expenditure is \$916, much closer to the national average, yet still nearly 10 percent below. The per capita expenditure in townships are lower than in the cities, partially reflecting the lower level of services offered as desired by many township residents. Several of the larger suburban cities also display low per capita 1994 expenditures: (a) Grandville, \$529; (b) Wyoming, \$681; (c) Walker, \$557; (d) East Grand Rapids, \$765; and (e) Kentwood, \$411. As is the case in other metro areas, the cost of local government is greater in the core city. Either the core city bears a greater proportion of the overall costs of local government in Grand Rapids metro, is less efficient than the suburbs, or it provides more services. Further analysis would be necessary to make determinations.

My examination of Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports for metro area townships and cities reveals most have accumulated substantial "rainy day" reserves. The existence of these reserves may explain why neither the interviews, nor the survey, nor the review of records indicated that shrinking resources was as important as I had

Table 13

## Total Expenditures, Townships and Cities

Municipality	Population		Expenditures		Per Capita Spending	
	*1985	**1994	1985	1994	1985	1994
Ada Township	6,472	8,280	\$1,289,831	\$3,420,439	\$199	\$413
Algoma Township	4,411	6,380	\$1,273,401	\$545,236	\$289	\$85
Alpine Township	8,934	10,271	\$661,115	\$1,943,564	\$74	\$189
Byron Township	10,104	14,904	\$1,067,243	\$3,589,452	\$106	\$241
Caledonia Township	4,927	6,143	\$326,,302	\$3,090,016	\$66	\$503
Cascade Township	10,120	12,455	\$691,490	\$5,624,088	\$68	\$452
Gaines Township	10,364	16,619	\$820,749	\$3,315,429	\$79	\$199
Georgetown Township	26,104	35,507	\$2,270,384	\$5,529,437	\$87	\$156
Grand Rapids Township	9,294	10,731	\$380,958	\$1,991,672	\$41	\$186
Plainfield Township	20,611	27,795	\$2,497,201	\$6,436,554	\$121	\$232
City of Cedar Springs	2,615	2,933	\$516,790	\$1,236,551	\$198	\$422
City of Coopersville	2,889	3,663	\$1,159,053	\$2,772,106	\$401	\$757
City of East Grand Rapids	10,914	10,243	\$4,806,197	\$7,837,675	\$440	\$765
City of Grand Rapids	181,843	190,395	\$103,191,378	\$174,335,655	\$567	\$916
City of Grandville	12,412	16,950	\$4,793,325	\$8,966,921	\$386	\$529
City of Greenville	8,019	8,414	\$5,400,906	\$6,467,020	\$674	\$769
City of Hudsonville	4,844	6,829	\$961,494	\$6,285,594	\$198	\$920
City of Kentwood	30,483	39,896	\$7,541,093	\$16,404,005	\$247	\$411
City of Rockford	3,324	3,836	\$1,429,309	\$3,159,544	\$430	\$824
City of Walker	15,088	18,835	\$2,908,048	\$10,497,650	\$193	\$557
City of Wyoming	59,616	63,688	\$24,851,031	\$43,347,488	\$417	\$681
Village of Caledonia	722	884	\$213,559	\$301,641	\$296	\$341
***Village of Sparta	3,373	4,211	\$1,225,293	\$3,090,247	\$363	\$734
<b>Metro Area</b>	<b>447,483</b>	<b>519,862</b>	<b>\$170,276,150</b>	<b>\$320,187,984</b>	<b>\$381</b>	<b>\$616</b>

\* Population figures taken from 1980 U.S. Census

\*\* Population figures are 1994 Estimates

\*\*\* Village of Sparta Total Expenditures is for 1993, 1994 figures unavailable

Note: Includes water/sewer Expenditures

Source: 1985-1994 Audit Reports

anticipated. These communities are growing, the tax base is expanding and they have reserves. So, while shrinking resources are a matter of some concern,, it does not seem to be paramount.

### Growth Management

Key informants regarded environmental concerns related to growth management, land use, greenspace, and pollution as a significant factor. Quality of life, meaning environmental quality...lakes, trees, parks, recreation...are perceived as important to the culture of the Grand Rapids region. The Metropolitan Development Blueprint was largely about land use and environmental concerns, and the threat which projected growth in the area implies. Senator Richard Posthumus indicated that the State needs to “provide the tools that...allow local communities to come together in some cooperative fashion for the primary purpose of (land use) planning because I happen to think that it is environmental problems that is the biggest problem we face” (1995).

### Race and Poverty

Such sociological factors as race, poverty and concern for the increasing isolation of the core city did not emerge as a major concern, even though author David Rusk has appeared twice in the community preaching his gospel that governmental fragmentation perpetuates social ills. The view of key informants who mentioned the issue was that

such problems are either not considered a crisis or are easily ignored. Birgit Klohs described it this way,

There is this cozy comfort that happens when you live 20 - 30 minutes from the core city. This is us. This is them. Out of sight, out of mind. I'll come work downtown and leave the city behind. The majority of suburbanites don't give (core city problems) any thought, and therefore, their elected officials don't either (Klohs, 1995).

Editor Mike Lloyd said, "...is there a racial component to all this? Yeah...big time, but it would be unfair to limit it to race. A big portion has to do with socio-economic levels, education—and those don't know color" (Lloyd, 1995).

### Mandates

Another important factor has to do with the mandates or incentives of state or federal government. Several key informants who had observed metro area governments for many years acknowledged that Section 701 planning funds, federal and state transportation funding, sewage treatment funding, federal subsidies for mass transit and regulatory requirements pursuant to clean air and clean water had significant impact on forcing interlocal cooperation. Such funding incentives and regulatory requirements have provided strong impetus for cooperative action. The two legislators interviewed had views which were somewhat at odds. Senator Posthumus expressed the view that the state "should play a role as it hands out financial resources for local development...give some preference to those communities that have come together and developed a consensus...over what they want in terms of roads, water-sewer, etc."

(Posthumus, 1995). Representative Voorhees opposes any “coercive activity, and incentives can be coercive. If you force it, you bypass or abandon democratic choice (by the people).” He believes that the State should encourage core cities, and that funding should be equitable, but believes the key is strong city leadership, not “coercive inducements” (Voorhees, 1995)

The latter view runs directly opposite to a proposal currently being researched by Mayor John Logie of Grand Rapids. Logie, with the help of Michigan State University researchers, is trying to develop a model for service consolidation to eliminate what he describes as “dysfunctional duplication.” He hopes his research will demonstrate cost savings can be substantial if service delivery systems are merged. If this can be shown, and Logie strongly believes it can, he would propose to legislators a bill to be introduced providing an incentive to communities for entering into such service consolidations. Logie calls his idea “Metropolitan Rebate.” As currently conceived, a rebate of 15 to 20 percent of a metro area state income tax would go back to participating units of local government in return for their voluntary agreement to consolidate government services. At the writing of this report, a specific proposal had not been completed for legislative consideration. However, the fact that the Mayor of the State’s second largest city is promoting the concept demonstrates the concern he has over metropolitan service delivery duplication and cost (Logie, 1995).

Related to this discussion is a factor which Mayor Jim Buck of Grandville describes as “speaking with one voice.” Buck, as the new GVMC Chair, believes that



the most significant reason for cooperation is lobbying the legislature as a group of communities. He is even trying to organize an effort to convince all units of local government in the KOMA region to speak with one voice to the state legislative delegation. While consensus on some issues may be difficult to obtain, there are probably many topics related to state funding and regulation where his effort could succeed. He believes that the one voice approach could set the stage for further cooperative efforts (Buck, 1995).

Other factors noted by key informants as encouraging cooperation were citizen pressures and the influence of technology. Other inhibiting factors receiving mention were legal obstacles (also considered important by city managers), geographic factors, concepts of local government, the township form of government and fears of centralized power and of the unknown.

#### Analysis of Factors Identified and Comparisons to the Initial Conceptual Framework

The literature review in Chapter IV indicated that political conditions, economic, sociological, geographic, historic rivalries or traditions and legal constraints or inducements were the major factors influencing cooperation. From the literature, the Initial Conceptual Framework was constructed which displayed these six factors. For analysis and understanding, let us take each of these factors identified in the literature and compare those findings with what has happened in Grand Rapids.

### Political Factors

Political conditions are present in every human or organizational relationship regardless of the definition of the word “politics.” Political conditions certainly impact the degree of cooperation attainable among governments in Grand Rapids. Public managers often referred to politics as getting in the way of cooperation. That usually meant interference from elected officials or an influential citizen to impact a local decision or project. Grand Rapids metro interest groups exist, as they do everywhere, and have potential to impact cooperative decisions. Neighborhood groups, particularly in the City of Grand Rapids, have political influence. In all the communities of the metro area, the Republican Party and philosophy dominate local political decision making. In the City of Grand Rapids, where partisan affiliation is somewhat more balanced, issues which tend to be identified with the Democratic Party are more frequently raised (e.g. minority and gay rights, low-income housing, pollution, and mass transit). Having observed a number of local meetings and followed news reports of the various communities, there is clearly a different “feel” to the politics in the City of Grand Rapids compared to most of the other cities and townships. Suffice it to say that each community in Grand Rapids metro has its own political synergy as created by the make-up of its elected governing body, the income and social status of the majority of its residents, and its ethnic and racial make-up.

### Economic Factors

In Grand Rapids metro, the research indicates that economic conditions tend to be a major factor influencing cooperative efforts. If a cooperative effort does not achieve cost savings or cost avoidance, it will be difficult to accomplish. However, if it adds to the tax base, as in the case of a cooperative economic development project, then it may be looked upon favorably. In Grand Rapids metro, there is but one metro-wide economic development program, The Right Place, shared by all the communities. This works cooperatively because: (a) dominant business interests actively support the program financially and politically, and (b) having one program avoids the cost of each community developing and financing its own economic development activity. Only the City of Grand Rapids has full-time staff devoted to economic development, and that City recently contracted much of its program implementation to The Right Place. A few of the other communities devote a portion of one employee's time to activities described as economic development, usually in the form of tax abatements.

Cooperation frequently occurs in water and sewer cost sharing and contracting. Despite the fact that no metro water-sewer authority exists, only a GVMC-sponsored planning committee, there are only three sanitary sewer and water systems (Wyoming, Grand Rapids and Plainfield). Table 11 in Chapter VIII demonstrates that by far the greatest voluntary cooperative activity has occurred in water-sewer service. The reason is economic. Communities realize that it makes economic sense to share the large capital costs involved in building sewer and water treatment facilities. However, most

communities in the metro area own and maintain water and sewer distribution systems. They contract for sewage treatment and water supply with either the Cities of Grand Rapids or Wyoming, both of which own water supply pipelines to Lake Michigan and operate large waste treatment plants.

Economic factors related to zoning and tax base are often divisive in Grand Rapids metro, particularly between cities and adjacent townships. Developers or owners of commercial property located near the boundary of the township or city often play political-economic games with the two competing units of government. This certainly does not foster cooperation.

#### Sociological Factors

Factors related to race, poverty and low educational levels seem mostly isolated to the City of Grand Rapids. I did not find much indication of a willingness to share in the burden of improving socio-economic conditions in the core City. There was acknowledgment by key informants that such concerns are a metro problem; but no hope was expressed that it would be so addressed. The Metropolitan Development Blueprint Project started its planning process by attempting to integrate these “human” problems and connect them with growth policies for the future. But, the final written report glossed over socio-economic and human issues related to poverty, housing and health care and became solely a land-use plan.

### Geographic Factors

The Grand River flows through the metro area and is a major factor regarding physical development. Over my nearly five years as a participant-observer, interest has grown in cleaning up the river, developing bicycle and hiking trails along it, and generally improving its beauty and recreational utility. Renewed interest in the River could become an important factor in bringing communities together. The Blueprint emphasizes greenspace development and preservation and specifically lays out a plan utilizing the natural watershed system of the area, which all flows into the Grand River. A coordinated metro-wide system of trails, parks and open spaces connected to the River is visualized. A part of the culture of the area is rooted in environmental concerns. Environmental organizations in Grand Rapids are strong interest groups and tend to be bipartisan. Business groups, interested in economic growth, see the River and the environment as part of the quality of life component of future development.

A significant geographic factor relates to contaminated sites in the metro area. Past industrial development left the area with many abandoned or under utilized sites. This problem was identified in the Blueprint as being of a scope which demands metro-wide attention. It is seen as both an environmental and economic issue. It is a factor which will require cooperative effort by the communities for resolution, largely because of the need to generate significant capital for clean-up. Recent state legislation eases clean-up requirements and should encourage inter-community collaboration.

Finally, there appears to be growing concern about land use and increasing urban sprawl. The Blueprint called attention to the need for metro coordination of land use and for the adoption of policies to encourage “compact, livable communities,” and “compact centers of regional economic activity.” Interest groups are concerned about preservation of farmlands and greenspace. However, aligned against such cooperative action is the considerable economic power of real estate companies, construction firms, lenders who finance housing and development, and most important, the residents who want traditional large-lot, single-family homes in the suburbs. When economic and political factors are pitted against environmental-geographic factors, the economic forces usually win.

#### Historic Rivalries and Traditions

As described in Chapter VI, old animosities created by annexation and water battles of the 1940s and 1950s are still remembered by some, but the memory is fading and becoming less of a factor inhibiting cooperative activity among communities. Of course, these old rivalries and disputes can be revived by an astute politician seeking an issue on which to base a political campaign. Some observers and key informants believe that former Mayor and now State Representative Voorhees of Wyoming did just that in opposing membership in GVMC. Many older Wyoming residents still recall past disputes with Grand Rapids and saw GVMC as dominated by core city interests. So, the history and old rivalries cannot be ignored as factors even 45 years after the battle.

### Legal Constraints or Inducements

According to the Blueprint study the lack of consistency in land use regulation and policy among the units of government in Grand Rapids metro is an important issue. For coordination of land use policies to occur, a degree of regulatory consistency and policy regarding zoning, streets and highways, utilities and building codes is needed.

State policies regarding transportation funding and highway development are generally seen as a factor encouraging inter-community cooperation. Much of the financial support for the Blueprint study came from the Michigan Department of Transportation (M-DOT) because it has a strong interest in coordinated metro land use planning and development. Coordination makes the State's job easier and allows for lower cost and more timely development of transportation corridors. A prime example in Grand Rapids has been the proposed Southbelt Highway, a major transportation corridor connecting I-196 with I-96. Southbelt is the principal reason M-DOT funded part of the Blueprint. M-DOT hoped that from the Blueprint planning process would emerge a cooperative inter-community plan for development, interchanges and greenspace along Southbelt. The Blueprint did propose such a plan, but there is ongoing jockeying for position among the communities regarding the specifics of development. Political and economic factors have again combined to influence events and affect the actions of local and state government.

Managers of local governments believe that legal factors have hindered cooperative efforts, although my survey did not yield details as to the exact nature of the legal obstacles. Some key informants see the township form of government as a legal obstacle to greater coordination of metro development; yet, such an observation seems more philosophical than practical because townships are not likely to be legally eliminated from the State Constitution.

On the other side of the coin, the State can offer certain funding inducements or legally mandate cooperative activity. It generally does so, as in the Southbelt Highway case, when State interests are involved. Similarly, business interests could exercise influence on units of government, should they choose to do so, for passage of ordinances which enhance cooperation. There has been little evidence of this occurring in Grand Rapids metro because business interests are not generally cohesive, and are often competing for favor from government rather than encouraging intergovernmental cooperation.

### Leadership

Metropolitan leadership, as noted in Chapter VII, is not easy to identify in Grand Rapids metro. There is no one person who is elected, appointed or acknowledged to be the metro "leader." And no one has stepped forth to assume that role. Yet, key informants identified leadership (or the lack of it) as a major factor in furthering goals for metropolitan cooperation. It is possible that the Chair of the GVMC will, at some



point, be acknowledged as the metro leader. However, at this stage in 1996, that has not occurred even though the position of GVMC as a metro organization appears to be gradually strengthening.

It seems evident that cooperative activity will continue to occur gradually, and incrementally even without forceful leadership. There is enough economic factor motivation to cause a modicum of cooperative activity. The activity will be along the lines identified in the survey results described in Chapter VIII. It will involve non-controversial areas of cooperation such as utilities, purchasing and mutual aid related to fire. However, unless more aggressive leadership emerges, the controversial metro issues relating to land use, public safety, tax base sharing and poverty concentrations are unlikely to be addressed with a metro-wide perspective.

Because metro leadership is so significant and because it is seen as separate from the typical political office positions, it is added to the conceptual framework of this research as an important factor influencing cooperation in metro governance.

### Political Culture

Connected to the leadership factor (all these factors are in some sense connected), is the political culture of the area. I described in Chapter VI the history and cultural characteristics of the area: (a) ethnicity, (b) entrepreneurialism, (c) conservatism, and (d) autonomy. These traits make up the culture of the area and are strongly imbedded. They

are part of the political culture, to be sure, yet seem to both precede and supersede typical political considerations.

Because of this significance, as verified by the key informant interviews, I have also added political culture to the conceptual framework as a factor influencing metro cooperation.

### Summary

From the literature and the case studies, the factors which either encourage or inhibit cooperative activity among local governments are similar in many metro areas. What varies is the combination of factors. Also, as in all things political, the timing for cooperative effort is important. A factor may have more significance now than five years ago, or vice-versa.

The literature reveals most problem solving in the arena of public management as requiring intergovernmental solutions (Gage, 1990). This Grand Rapids research has pointed out the growing interest in improving the problem solving capability of metropolitan regions. In many metro areas, attempts to adopt a formal regional approach to metro problems have met with limited success (Mahtesian, 1995). In his article, Mahtesian analyzed recent efforts by Neal Peirce to suggest a regional response to the problems of several metro areas. A metro consultant, William Dodge, was quoted as saying in the Mahtesian article, "I used to think distress would create the climate for regionalization. Now I don't think anything creates it" (Mahtesian, 1995, p. 32).

Given that the consolidation of fragmented units is unlikely, functional cooperation becomes an important alternative. The ACIR case studies in St. Louis and Allegheny Counties revealed the existence of local public economies in which the role of government is to provide services in the best possible way, without the necessity of each unit of government producing all those services (ACIR, 1987). Obtaining a measure of efficiency and equity in service delivery can be accomplished in a metro area through horizontal cooperative means utilized to provide public services. But to do so, the mix of factors described in this chapter must be understood by metro area decision makers. Similar factors affect every metro area, but vary in importance. Thus, each community must be analyzed separately if a strategy for furthering horizontal cooperation is to be successfully developed.

Dwight Waldo argues that technology has given us the means as well as the logic for greater intralevel cooperation:

Sciences and technology...demands, or at least makes possible, new forms of human interaction: forms that are unbureaucratic...related to the way we organize our societies. In general, the more knowledge that is necessary to run a contemporary society, and the more specialization that is a consequence, then the more need of and potential for horizontal rather than vertical cooperative arrangements. ...the factors involved here are those viewed as involved in the transition to post-industrialism (Waldo, 1992, p. 166).

## CHAPTER XI

### COMPARISONS WITH OTHER CASE STUDY RESEARCH

#### The ACIR Results

As described in Chapter IV, the ACIR conducted two extensive case studies of St. Louis, MO and Allegheny, PA Counties in 1988 and 1992. These two metro areas were examined because they were regarded by the ACIR as “hard cases” with regard to metro governance and structure. Both are highly fragmented metropolitan areas. While these areas are considerably larger than Grand Rapids metro, comparison is of value because it adds to the overall understanding of how governance is occurring in metro areas.

The Grand Rapids metro area is not as fragmented as the two ACIR case study areas. The Allegheny County fragmentation score was 2.23 governments per 10,000 residents, St. Louis County had 1.55 and Grand Rapids metro has 1.07. Yet, the Metropolitan Development Blueprint emphasized that land use and fiscal decisions in the Grand Rapids area, even when excluding predominantly rural areas, are impacted by 27 units of local government and 8 state departments. Mayor John Logie has used the following analogy to emphasize the difficulty of governing and coordinating in the Grand Rapids metro area:

In 1992, we elected 537 people to run the whole United States: 435 Congress Persons, 100 Senators, a President and a Vice-President. In our regular elections in Kent County, we elect 637 people to run local government in the County. They make up 47 local units of government (not counting school boards) (Logie, 1995).

The Mayor's point is that in every metro area where multiple units of government exist, many elected persons have a "say" in what goes on. The situation is magnified as growth and fragmentation increases.

The ACIR Case Study conclusions are listed below. Each is followed by comments comparing those conclusions with the findings of this Grand Rapids metro area case study.

ACIR concluded: "The large number of local governments that co-exist in these two metropolitan counties have used extensive intergovernmental arrangements to produce certain components of the delivery of police, fire, streets and/or roads...when such arrangements would benefit from large-scale production of services. They reserved to themselves those components of the production of services that benefited from their individual attention" (ACIR, 1993a, p. 22). The "benefit" was considered to be decreased overall cost, increased service quality or both.

Grand Rapids Metro's comparison: The research identified 151 formal and informal arrangements for delivery of water, sewer, fire, purchasing, planning and other services. Many of these involve adjacent units of governments, or those where the

cooperation results in improved service delivery or a cost benefit to the parties. A strong perception exists that much more of this kind of cooperative activity is possible.

ACIR concluded: "Special districts served distinct and useful purposes. They complemented the other units of government by integrating the provision and/or production of selected services on a countywide or subcounty basis. They were seen as one response to area-wide issues" (ACIR, 1993a, p. 23).

Grand Rapids Metro's comparison: In Grand Rapids the use of special districts has occurred infrequently. Only two pertinent area-wide special districts and authorities exist: the GRATA transit authority established in 1974 and the recently approved county-wide library district established in 1994. Grand Valley Metro Council is not a special district; though organized under state authorizing legislation, it has adopted by-laws which preclude use of taxing powers granted by the state law. Having discovered the infrequent use of special districts early in my research, I asked key informants why this was so. There were several plausible reasons given:

1. Until Statewide Proposition A was passed in 1993 lowering local property tax levies for public schools, there was simply no "room" for additional property taxation.
2. It is not a method that has been traditionally used in Grand Rapids because of the area's conservatism and unwillingness to share control over service delivery.
3. Elected officials did not want to create more units of government because they take on a life of their own.

4. There is a preference for informal or contractual arrangements for shared services.

5. There is no need for many such districts, because other means (such as contractual services) have been developed to handle metro problems.

The general perception among key informants was that it is very difficult to “sell” special districts or authorities to the public in an election, for the reasons noted above.

ACIR concluded: “County governments, like the special districts, were used for county-wide purposes to complement the needs or abilities of municipal governments. The counties served as the focal point for local government in the resolution of intergovernmental issues. They helped define and address common problems; they acted to resolve conflicts among local governments; they served as the locus for proposing state legislation; they assisted in the development of intergovernmental cooperation and innovation” (ACIR, 1993a, p. 23).

Grand Rapids Metro’s comparison: The County is perceived as a limited player in metro issues. Kent County has involved itself in some service delivery functions when necessary. The County constructed a mass burn incinerator and urged the closing of landfills. It also participated with the City of Grand Rapids in a joint office complex. The Kent County Airport is a self-maintaining function. Under state law, a number of county-wide functional services are delivered including jails, roads, social services and health. The County is represented on the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. Notwithstanding such involvement, the County is not regarded as a leader in resolving problems

related to Grand Rapids metro. Commission Chair Kathy Kuhn said, "I don't think (all these urban problems) are the County's (to resolve). I also think state government is, right now, not particularly interested in local government" (Kuhn, 1995). Representative Voorhees indicated his view that the "County hasn't stepped up to the responsibility (of metro leadership)" (Voorhees, 1995). Mayor Logie explained the County's apparent lack of proactive metro leadership by noting that much of the County and many of the 19 commissioners are still district-oriented, and do not feel directly responsible for metro public issues. He described this as a "mythological barrier" to County involvement and greater levels of cooperation between the County and cities.

There is little to indicate that county leaders have taken, or are likely to take a leadership role in resolving local disputes or actively promoting intergovernmental cooperation. County leaders seem willing to help when asked, but have been relatively passive. As noted by Harold Marks, "We do not have strong county government...they have trouble making decisions that are regional...if they did so, we wouldn't need a metro council. They (should) be an active force, but don't do a lot of things they might do" (1995).

The ACIR studies focused on four service areas: (1) police, (2) fire, (3) streets and roads, and (4) schools. In Grand Rapids, the focus was on interlocal cooperation generally among units of government, excluding schools. Despite the differences in the research, both the ACIR Cases and Grand Rapids discovered a pattern of activity in cooperation across jurisdictional lines.



Both the ACIR Cases and Grand Rapids research find little support for consolidation, and confirm the strong preference for local autonomy.

Finally, the metro areas studied (St. Louis, Pittsburgh and Grand Rapids) all demonstrate impressive economic growth despite fragmentation of local governments.

### The Epling Northern Virginia Research

In 1986, John Wilson Epling researched interlocal cooperation in Northern Virginia. This is an area of 1.2 million population which includes four counties, five cities and three towns. A portion of this area, Fairfax County, is adjacent to the District of Columbia. Epling's findings suggested five major propositions. It is useful to compare his findings with those in Grand Rapids.

1. Proposition 1 - "A locality's participation in a joint arrangement, or interlocal program, is contingent upon its perceiving a net benefit in the fulfillment of local goals through its participation" (Epling, 1986, p. 316).

Grand Rapids Metro' comparison: This was definitely confirmed in the Grand Rapids research. Frequently local public managers and key informants stated that mutual benefit was the key factor in any cooperative venture. The general reaction in Grand Rapids is that community self-interest is paramount and a significant benefit must result in order for cooperative activity to be justified.

2. Proposition 2 - “The geographic boundaries of a regional council are not usually the appropriate boundaries for the delivery of a public service” (Epling, 1986, p. 320).

Grand Rapids Metro’s comparison: This is especially true in Grand Rapids. GVMC “boundaries” technically include only the units of government which are members of the Council. This raises a troublesome question about providing service to non-members. So far, GVMC been able to avoid the issue, as most of GVMC’s current services are planning or information related. However, the boundary or authority issue will become problematic if future services expand into other areas.

3. Proposition 3 - “Excluding symbolic participation, localities participate in a joint arrangement to achieve economies of scale, to overcome interdependency, or to conform to a mandate or incentive” (Epling, 1986, p. 322).

Grand Rapids Metro’s comparison: The survey results noted in Chapter VIII confirm that localities in Grand Rapids metro have entered into cooperative arrangements to achieve economies of scale, to conform to mandated rules and regulations or to overcome a dependency. A dramatic example of the latter reason was Wyoming’s development of its own water system to avoid dependence on Grand Rapids.

4. Proposition 4 - “The behavioral dimensions of local interaction are created by the unique mix of characteristics of the localities involved in each joint arrangement” (Epling, 1986, p. 326).

Grand Rapids Metro's comparison: This was confirmed in Grand Rapids. My observation is that each cooperative arrangement represents differing political dynamics, economics and personalities. It is not possible to generalize any formula except by using very broad parameters such as the test of mutual benefit. Discussions with Grand Rapids area administrators confirm that each agreement must be analyzed on its own merits by the public administrators and elected officials involved.

5. Proposition 5 - "Because perceptions drive action, favorable local decisions regarding participation in joint arrangements can result from a regional council's manipulation of factors affecting perception" (Epling, 1986, p. 330).

Grand Rapids Metro's comparison: This sounds logical, and certainly a council could gain enough status to be able to affect perceptions. This has not yet happened in Grand Rapids with GVMC. At five years of age, it is still regarded as a fledgling entity. As Chamber Chair Micki Benz said, "Metro Council isn't even close to being a first tier change agent" (Benz, 1995). GRATA Director Steve Bernard expressed his concern that because GVMC has no power, no clout, it is unlikely to succeed (Bernard, 1995). Birgit Klohs indicated GVMC is not visible enough (Klohs, 1995). Most key informants and managers took the position that GVMC is evolving...it is still trying to find its niche. At this point, GVMC has a limited ability to manipulate perceptions about metro issues where cooperation is needed. The Council can identify area issues, provide information, and can bring people to a common table for discussion.

Finally, the Epling research discussed the concept of “symbolic participation” in cooperative efforts, particularly regional councils. Some communities nominally become members because they either do not want to be negatively perceived as uncooperative, or they are concerned they might miss out or be left out of something that might impact them. I found indications of this phenomenon in my observations over nearly five years in Grand Rapids. For example, examination of GVMC agendas and attendance at monthly meetings rarely yields much in the way of substantive discussion of issues or metro decision making. The agendas consist mostly of reports from staff or others. The meetings are informational, very polite and cooperative in tone, but usually lacking in definitive action. Further, in the survey and in my interviews, there was unanimity of support for the idea of cooperation among communities. However, as Chapter 8 demonstrates, the level of cooperative activity, outside of water, sewer and mutual aid, is not impressive given the potential. Everyone symbolically wants to be perceived as being cooperative; yet, the reality is much more difficult to achieve. The devil is often in the details.

#### The Rusk Research

David Rusk has researched for the Michigan City Management Association (1995) and for the Michigan Municipal League (1994). He has also appeared and presented information twice in Grand Rapids, in 1994 and 1995, and his work is

referenced in the Metropolitan Development Blueprint. For these reasons, it is relevant to compare his research findings to those in the Grand Rapids study.

Rusk's work for the city managers and the Municipal League centers on the concept of developing regional approaches to resolving problems related to poverty and racial concentrations. Rusk suggests "only regional strategies to promote economic and racial diversity, balance, and stability can bring about enduring solutions" (Rusk, 1995, p. 61). Relative to land use, Rusk does not see much prospect of the State passing a strong growth management act such as the Oregon law. Further, he suggests that in order for local units of government to voluntarily join together in a regional growth management compact, they need to "simultaneously adopt a significant regional revenue sharing program as well" (p. 65). Rusk suggests that incentives would be necessary to accomplish this, thereby implying State action.

In the Grand Rapids research, several key informants echoed similar sentiments. Mayor Logie of Grand Rapids, as earlier noted, is working on an incentive proposal for local service sharing. State Senator Posthumus indicated interest in regional growth management. The Metropolitan Blueprint plan is constructed on the premise that localities can agree on regional land use policies. Certainly, Rusk's emphasis on regionalism, state legislative action and stronger metropolitan authority was reflected in the Grand Rapids research. The fact that Rusk was brought to Grand Rapids twice under the sponsorship of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce certainly indicates

some sympathy by business and community leaders with his views and proposed solutions for metropolitan and urban problems.

In Rusk's initial examination of Michigan's local governance structure and metro areas in 1994, he suggested sweeping changes to the States' Constitution: (a) abolish township government, (b) consolidate and reduce the number of counties, (c) strengthen annexation laws, (d) establish regional government for Detroit, and (e) enact state land use laws (Rusk, 1994). In his subsequent study in 1995, he seems to have taken a more in-depth look and modified his recommendations, perhaps to acknowledge the political realities. His research in 1995 explores the question, "if a region cannot be organized with one dominant government, how can the many local governments be brought to act as one on issues crucial to the region's economic competitiveness?" (Rusk, 1995, pp. 5-6). His analysis concludes that what is necessary is regional action on growth management, revenue sharing, mixed income housing, policies which would need to be supported by significant changes in State law (Rusk, 1995).

The findings in this study suggest that Rusk's recommendations would enjoy limited support currently in Grand Rapids. However, there is some support for change which was identified in previous chapters of this study: (a) instances of cooperation, (b) the existence of metro organizations, and (c) concern about sprawl and fragmentation as noted in the Blueprint. The factors which encourage cooperation would need to be in strategic balance for the sorts of dramatic change suggested by Rusk to occur in Grand Rapids.

## CHAPTER XII

### GRAND RAPIDS AND THE THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO METRO GOVERNANCE

The patterns of governance in Grand Rapids are determined by the factors, the ingredients described previously in Chapter VIII. The factors examined in the context of whether they encouraged or inhibited cooperation, determine, or certainly influence, the resulting governance structure.

The literature has revealed that the consolidation approach, which has frequently been advanced by reformers of metro governance, has enjoyed limited acceptance in this nation. Though some continue to promote the idea, consolidation has not been widely accepted. Polycentrism or market-oriented public choice, has not enjoyed wide acceptance either. The evolved practice, according to Walker, has been cooperation in an “ad-hoc, generally issue by issue, incremental pattern of evolution” (Walker, 1995, p. 281). A variety of cooperative, coordinative and collaborative service delivery and planning mechanisms spans the theoretical continuum between consolidation and polycentrist theoretical approaches, as displayed on the Conceptual Framework (Figure 1).

In Grand Rapids metro consolidation has not occurred, and the metro area is currently composed of the various autonomous units of local government described in

Chapter VI. To determine where Grand Rapids fits on the approaches to governance continuum, I went to persons who are active participants or observers of local government in the community.

### Key Informants Perceptions

During the interviews with key informants in Grand Rapids metro, I engaged each of them in a discussion of approaches to metropolitan governance.

I explained to each that my research found no universally accepted theoretical approach to governance which one could apply to the metropolitan areas of the nation.

I described the different perspectives to each key informant in the following manner:

One of the fascinating reasons for studying this topic is that there does not appear to be an agreement on a theory of metropolitan governance ...something that we have all bought off on...there is no nationally agreed upon system or theory that backs up a system of governance for metro areas, even though 80 percent of our population now lives in metro areas. As I researched this, there were three general areas of theory. There are people over here who are consolidationists. They believe in unified metro government. They believe that all this fragmentation makes no sense. On the other end of the spectrum, there are people who believe in what they call polycentrism, where they basically say it's good to have all these units of government, gives people a choice. Besides, it's analogous to the market system, where individual units of government compete one against the other to be the best place. In the middle are this range of views called federationism, which is basically saying we need some overarching control for those things that are truly metro wide, and yet you can leave to the neighborhoods and individual units certain localized functions. Given that explanation, where do you think Grand Rapids metro is on that continuum in terms of its practice?" (Lloyd, 1995).



Twenty of the twenty-one were willing to place Grand Rapids on such a continuum. The results are summarized in Figure 12. None of the key informants perceive Grand Rapids to have any interest in consolidation. Eighteen of the twenty believe Grand Rapids is on the polycentrist side of the theoretical continuum, while only two placed it squarely in the middle. Many expressed the view that governance is

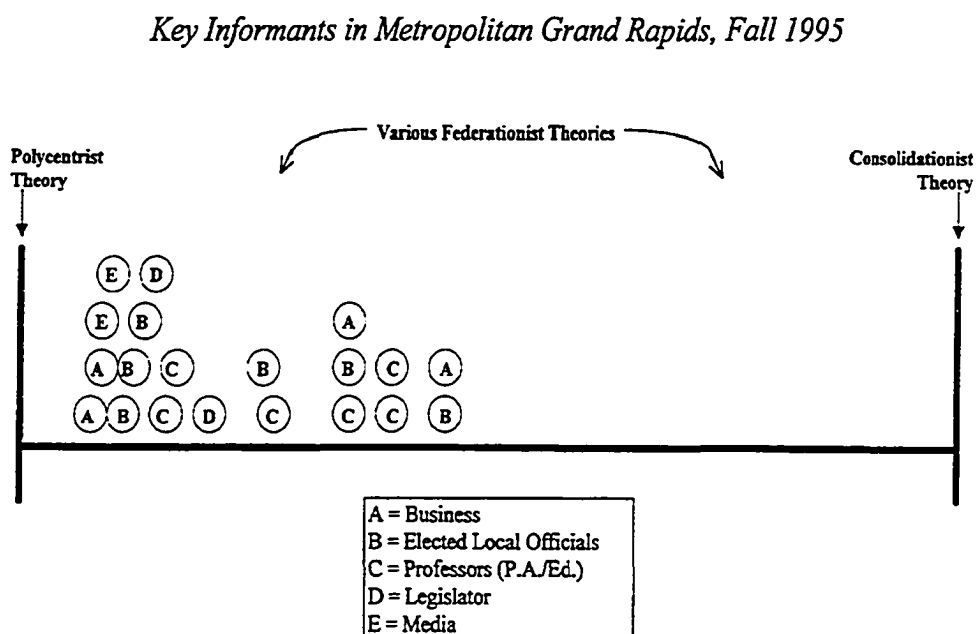


Figure 12. Theoretical Perceptions of Metropolitan Governance.

moving more toward the federationist (cooperation, coordination, collaboration) view and offered Metro Council as evidence. A few expressed the hope that the community would move more toward unigov, but those same persons doubted that would occur.

Most seemed generally comfortable with the recent governance system and with the trend toward more cooperation. For example, Jim Buck, Chair of GVMC, said, "I'm not too unhappy with where we are. I'm a federationist, but I believe in minimal central control" (Buck, 1995). Nyal Deems, former Chair and organizer of GVMC stated, "(I'm) not concerned about metro government...but others were, so we created a structure that precluded going to an overall metro government." Deems expressed his view that a pure polycentrist approach would not work because government simply does not function as a market place. He believes that the metro area and GVMC is evolving slowly toward the federationist theory: "Now, it's more like the Articles of Confederation, but it is building slowly...the development curve may be as much as 10 years, as it was in Portland" (Deems, 1995). It was evident that Mr. Deems, an attorney, had studied and visited communities such as Indianapolis, Portland and others where experiments with metro governance have occurred. He offered this insightful view that a "blend of theories is needed," because of the differences between metro areas.

Jean Laug-Carroll offered this criticism of polycentrism, "(It) suggests that everybody is free to move (to the community they prefer), but that leaves out a whole lot of folks who don't have such an option, can't afford to move" (Laug-Carroll, 1995). This is the same point made by David Rusk in his criticism of fragmented, un-elastic cities (Rusk, 1993).

Several, including Mayor John Logie and newspaper editor Carole Velade, observed that any movement toward the consolidationist position would have to happen

from the ground up, and would stem either from a crisis or from strong evidence of public support. They did not see consolidation succeeding if it was proposed from the top down.

Milt Rohwer of the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce made this observation, “(I) don’t see consolidation as a way to be more efficient. It may be a way to be more strategic, to have a better distribution of resources, but it isn’t a way to be more efficient” (1995). Jerry Felix, current Executive Director of GVMC and former city manager, drew a distinction between consolidation of local governments and functional mergers.

(There) probably should be one police department, certainly a central dispatch, one emergency response point, one broad fire department. It would make sense if there were one water-sewer authority...not that those things have their own elected boards, because then you’ve got fragmentation on different levels. It makes sense to do more things on a comprehensive basis. But I don’t think we will see the time when we will become one unit of government (1995).

Mayor John Logie of Grand Rapids also expressed his support for functional consolidations,

I would hope that we consolidate along functional lines, I believe once done and if positive benefits are there, then we can look from that vantage point at structural consolidation....but I’m not proposing that here and I disclaim that idea now because it would divert us and because it raises questions we aren’t ready to answer (1995).

Logie is attempting to develop a model for service consolidations demonstrating current costs versus consolidated costs.

Not surprisingly, the view that consolidated metro government would be bureaucratic and inefficient was shared by most key informants who are affiliated with

townships or suburban communities. The strongest statements against the consolidationist approach were from Representative Voorhees, who identified himself with the polycentrist perspective, and offered, "My concern is that there is this plan to force regionalism on the people. I've tried to fight that as strongly as I can...it (derives) from the notion that elected people are transient and the bureaucracy stays on as a life calling (with growing authority)." Referring to the managers and planners, Voorhees added, "this group says they know what's best and should be given more power, where we believe the power is with the electorate, even though that may be inefficient, it's the best protection for the rights of the people...it's a real concern about where some are going in trying to force this regionalism" (1995). Representative Voorhees' perspective may seem extreme to some; however when earlier public votes about joining GVMC were held in Wyoming, Walker and Cascade, the voters rejected membership.

#### Local Public Administrators

The survey of Grand Rapids local city managers and township supervisors was described in Chapter VIII. While this group of respondents was not asked their opinion about approaches to metropolitan governance, the data they provided identified a variety of cooperative agreements. Many of those agreements, using Ciglar's definitions, are loosely organized networking arrangements. Informal agreements relating to information exchange or mutual aid fit in the networking category. Of the agreements identified, 50 of 151 were formal contracts for water or sewer services. Again using Ciglar's

definitions, these would be categorized as coordinative or collaborative in nature. Such agreements involve significant financial commitment, usually over extended periods of time.

The analysis from the survey indicates the probability that only one-third of the apparent potential has been realized. It was also noted that a good deal of non-quantifiable staff-to-staff cooperation also occurs.

### Citizen Perception

In recent years in Grand Rapids, there have been some attempts to discover how citizens feel about consolidation and cooperation. In October, 1992 a "City in the Region" forum was held at which over 200 invited persons participated. While the conclusions were not cohesive, a close reading of the report from that session yields many positive references to thinking and acting regionally, particularly with regard to mass transit, infrastructure, open space and cultural activities. The report contained no references to consolidation of units of government, but cooperation, coordination and avoidance of duplication were often mentioned (City in the Region, 1992). The Metropolitan Development Blueprint study team held a series of public meetings during its 18 month process, and it involved in excess of 200 persons on various task forces dealing with utilities, land use, transportation and the environment. Many specific suggestions were made by these citizen groups. Some suggestions involved functional consolidation, e.g., a single, region-wide water, wastewater and stormwater authority

(GVMC, 1994). However, as one who attended many of these meetings and was part of the team that assembled the report, I observed that the thrust of the opinion was toward coordination and non-duplication. Little attention was paid to consolidation. The summary letter presenting the Blueprint to the GVMC by the study team is revealing of the cooperative perspective:

We believe our best hope in the Grand Valley Region to avoid the ugly and inefficient sprawl that has plagued most growing regions is through metropolitan cooperation. But we are aware of the realities of competing interests that may prevent cooperation. Therefore the approaches outlined in the Blueprint are incremental and intended to be implemented over a time frame that is realistic and manageable. (GVMC, 1994).

In December 1995 the City of Grand Rapids conducted a survey of its citizens. The following questions were asked: "Currently, local governments, i.e., cities, townships, villages and counties, in the greater Grand Rapids area provide many similar if not identical services, i.e., police and fire services. Should we work to consolidate on a metropolitan basis...local services? governmental units?" The responses were 52 percent yes for consolidating services and 35 percent no. When asked about consolidating governmental units, 46 percent voted yes and 39 percent responded no. The question is somewhat leading and the respondents are only from the City of Grand Rapids, not the rest of the metro area. However, the survey did confirm support for functional consolidation while identifying some surprising support for governmental consolidation.

In summary, the evidence indicates key informants generally believe the community leans toward the polycentrist theory of metro governance, but is moving

toward an embrace of the federationist view of networking, cooperation, coordination and collaboration on a voluntary, selective function-by-function basis. Federationist views are evident in the existence of organizations such as GVMC and its related entities, and these views are supported by local officials, editors, and the business community...in short, the “establishment.” In addition, the survey results of formal and informal interlocal service delivery cooperation described in Chapter VIII verify this finding. Public managers were able to list a number of specific cooperative projects. And they readily identified their affiliation with organizations such as GVMC, GRETS, GRATA, or the Library, which clearly serve an interlocal metro-wide cooperative purpose. The sparse evidence available to measure general public perceptions indicates support for functional cooperation.

Referencing the Initial Conceptual Framework (Figure 1), one can conclude that Grand Rapids metro is currently on the continuum at the networking-cooperation location. This is also where the key informants placed it (Figure 12). Findings show that metro-wide networking is occurring through the various organizations identified in Chapter VII. The level of cooperative activity is described in Chapter VIII. However, there is no significant overall support for consolidation, and relatively little current activity which would lead to formal coordination-collaboration.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I directed this case study research toward discovering information about intergovernmental cooperation in metropolitan Grand Rapids, Michigan. I now summarize what was found in answer to the four focusing questions of the study.

1. How much intergovernmental cooperation exists in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area?

Several organizations exist which have planning or functional responsibilities directed toward Grand Rapids metro. The functions carried out by these organizations include transit, library services and economic development. While county functions were not researched for this study, it is acknowledged that both Kent and Ottawa Counties deliver state-mandated services to the metro area. Metropolitan planning for transportation, utilities and land use are the responsibility of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC), its committees and associated entities. GVMC produced a Metropolitan Development Blueprint for future growth in 1994, a plan being monitored by the Blueprint Commission, a group of interested citizens. The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce is influential in metro matters and was a force behind the formation of GVMC and the conduct of the Blueprint study. Regional development is a priority item on the Chamber's current agenda.



Special districts have been infrequently utilized in Grand Rapids metro. Transit and library services are the two examples of such districts. A survey of local public managers discovered that local governments have entered into formal and informal cooperative agreements in at least 151 instances. Contractual agreements for water and sewer services were the most frequently identified, followed in frequency by agreements related to fire and police protection.

The level of cooperative activity among units of government is not as impressive as it might be. Analysis of possible cooperative activity indicates that perhaps only as much as one-third of the potential is being realized. A logical conclusion is that metro communities should pursue those cooperative opportunities which would provide benefit through lowering costs or improving service quality. A willingness to engage in cooperation appears to exist on the part of local managers. More would be accomplished if greater attention were given to methodically examining all the possible service areas and functions which might be improved or made more efficient through cooperation.

Joe Fendt, former City Manager of Walker, offered some good advice in pursuing cooperative opportunities, "coop-ops," and his ideas provide a fine starting point in identifying the possibilities. He suggests listing and concentrating on the low profile services (garbage collection, sewer, water, recycling, etc.). Stay away, at least initially, from high profile services (parks, zoning, cemeteries, and schools) where community pride might generate controversy if services were merged (Fendt, 1995). Mr. Fendt's advice could be taken a step further by having each city's departments examine each of

its subfunctions. For example, the police department might identify sub-functions such as training, vehicle purchasing, information services, and crime lab services. Then a determination could be made about whether merged services would provide a benefit in cost or quality.

GVMC should take the lead here and assemble the appropriate staff people in “user groups” much as it has done with the MAPP purchasing group. GVMC could assist the communities in identifying and exploiting every possible cooperative activity among low profile functions and sub-functions. Not only would this provide material benefit, but would build credibility for GVMC. As credibility increases, communities and citizens are more likely to accept GVMC’s role as a facilitator and broker for improvement in local government. Further possibilities may then emerge to explore cooperation in some of the more volatile, turf-protected service areas such as land use, police, parks and greenspace, and tax abatements. Proceeding this way is a logical extension of the Data Center, MAPP, MET-NET, Blueprint, and HAZ-MAT (hazardous materials) cooperative efforts which GVMC has initiated in the past several years. GVMC will likely need additional staff to accomplish such a goal, but the documented savings to communities from such efforts should provide justification.

Evidence of networking was found in the research. Examples of information exchange and opportunities for communication among the local governments do exist. And, as noted on the Conceptual Framework describing the research, networking is a first step toward cooperation, coordination and formal collaboration among units of local

government. Much of the networking has been initiated by metro organizations such as GVMC, GRACC, and GRETS. However, my participant observation of the area reveals that much staff-to-staff discussion and networking occurs. While probably not quantifiable, such informal communication has value and should be encouraged. Metro organizations can provide more opportunities for introductions and communication through seminars, awards functions and formation of user groups such as MAPP. City commissions and township boards can pass resolutions endorsing intergovernmental cooperation and provide rewards for staff members whose networking has improved service to citizens.

2. What factors have encouraged or inhibited intergovernmental cooperative efforts among units of government in Grand Rapids metro?

A review of the literature identifies political, economic, geographic, sociologic, historic and legal factors as impacting cooperation. I found all these, to some degree, in the Grand Rapids research. However, I have several conclusions specific to Grand Rapids metro.

First, I find a metropolitan community which possesses a definite and identifiable political culture. That culture is a significant factor impacting cooperation. The culture is linked to the strongly entrepreneurial as well as the progressive and efficient economic characteristics of the West Michigan region. Elazar says "In the United States, efficiency is measured in predominantly commercial terms as befits a society which The Federalist correctly described as a commercial republic. Commerce is particularly valued because

it is an efficient means of organizing, harnessing, and diffusing power in light of American values” (Elazar & Zikmund, 1975, p. 15). Those words aptly describe the Grand Rapids culture and its values. It is a region based upon commerce, on the making of products for regional, national and global markets. Business provides the engine for the regional economy and the leadership for its institutions and its governments. Little of community significance happens without the leadership and political or financial support of commercial interests. The values of the citizenry can be characterized thus: a strong work ethic, productive, conservative, independent, family-oriented and indigenous to the region.

The local governments which result from these cultural and citizen characteristics, not surprisingly, are conservative, efficient, strongly autonomous and oriented toward commercial development. Applying these same traits to metropolitan growth and development, one sees cooperation provided it is clearly consistent with values of efficiency or economic development, and provided it is subject to local control. This research demonstrates that the dominant factors identified positively with cooperative actions in Grand Rapids had to do with efficiency and economy, the negative factors with local autonomy.

Second, leadership, or the lack of leadership, for metro-wide problem solving was identified as a crucial factor. Leadership must reflect Grand Rapids values and culture. The community has had a propensity to look to the business community for leadership, specifically to a few highly successful and wealthy entrepreneurs. On metro governance,

or the rather dull-sounding issue of intergovernmental cooperation, business leadership has not come forth. Both Micki Benz and Harold Marks pointed out in their key informant interviews a concern about business leadership regarding metro-wide issues. Former East Grand Rapids Mayor and GVMC Chair, Nyal Deems, explains, "Local private sector leaders rarely want to get involved in local government. They almost run from it like the plague...they will work to treat one symptom, but they won't get caught up in the overall activity...the reason is that they then would subject themselves to the news media and all the political attention that our system provides for" (Deems, 1995).

Deems is right, but it should be possible to find leaders on metro issues who will be supported by the business community; and that support is essential for accomplishing anything substantial in Grand Rapids. My observation is there are a number of talented and capable leaders in the private, public and non-profit sectors who can provide the qualities necessary to lead on important metro issues such as greenspace, land use, transportation, inner-city poverty and others.

Some of them are already actively at work on metro issues, and on processes to solve community problems. The best example is an ad-hoc, emerging entity called CQI (Community Quality Initiative), led by two local business executives, Fred Keller of Cascade Engineering and Dick Kelly of Clipper Belt Lacer Co. CQI participation also includes a number of progressive leaders representing public, non-profit and business perspectives. They are working to develop a community problem-solving process utilizing the TQM philosophy and continuous improvement techniques and

measurements. CQI has the potential to develop into a major player in resolution of metro-wide governance issues. CQI's approach is non-threatening and process-oriented and very conducive to cooperative problem solving.

Metro Council could also play a strong role here by initiating (perhaps in league with the Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program and local colleges and universities) an ongoing and comprehensive local government leadership educational program. In addition, the West Michigan College Consortium (WMCC) has recently come forth offering to provide research assistance on regional inter-community issues. Further, WMCC has examined a consensus-building model currently utilized in Arizona and suggests its applicability for West Michigan. The political neutrality of the WMCC should enable it to assist in solving regional issues involving cooperation among communities.

Third, sociological factors relating to poverty, racial discrimination and crime did not emerge from the research as being significant to cooperation. This is a puzzling finding considering there has been much attention given to the David Rusk appearances and the apparent general public interest in these factors. Nevertheless, such issues have apparently not taken on metropolitan identity as yet. My perception as a participant observer is that such issues are seen as City of Grand Rapids problems and are not accepted by suburban governments or residents as matters of general metro responsibility or resolution. Perhaps a conclusion can be drawn that sociological issues inhibit cooperation because suburban cities and townships are not anxious to assume

responsibility for what are perceived to be core city problems. It is a topic which merits further inquiry.

Finally, related to the factors discussed above, the research indicates that significant dependence on top-down hierarchical decision making exists in Grand Rapids. There is minimal attention given to citizen participation or "grass roots" consensus building. This is one of the weaknesses of the highly individualistic, business-driven culture which characterizes Grand Rapids.

If metro cooperation among governments is to significantly increase, the lack of inclusion of the general public must change. A stronger metro identity is necessary so the majority of citizens fully understand that their township or city is part of a whole, the Grand Rapids metro area. Citizens need to understand that their personal self-interest is impacted by the workability of the metro area, and they have a stake in the whole. Citizens must feel they are part of the metro area.

Metro identity is apparent. Some of the public sector efforts, such as MAPP, the Data Center, GRATA, and the library district, are contributing. Perhaps of more significance are private or non-profit sector activities causing people to "think metro." Professional athletic teams build metro identity. Television and radio media presentations tend to identify themselves broadly, as do many retail stores. The functioning of the metropolitan economy is perhaps the best tool to break down barriers to metro thinking with people traveling across jurisdictional boundaries to shop, go to work or school or to seek recreation. The existence of the metro-wide Right Place

economic development program has helped to focus attention on jobs and the economy as metro concerns. In addition, non-profit organizations usually have cross-boundary identification and are often examples of multi-community cooperation to benefit worthy causes or to serve public needs. For example, the United Way, American Cancer Society and the American Red Cross are all area-wide activities spanning community boundaries.

Consensus building for projects such as the Blueprint's greenspace plan, for bike trails between communities (now being planned), and for other identity building activities are important to building a sense of a metro community. Public officials need to seek out citizen opinion in every forum, be it public opinion polls, town hall meetings or media call-in programs. The GVMC has a role in educating local officials in consensus building methods, and adopting strategic plans for the dissemination of public information to the citizenry. The GRAND-NET, utilizing computer technology, is now being planned to provide free access to much public data and to enable citizens to do business with the government electronically. Such efforts will enable citizens and communities to relate to each other and build the metro identity necessary for addressing mutual problems.

3. How do the findings compare with data drawn from other case studies, especially those conducted by the ACIR?

I find that the fragmentation of governance is not as extensive in Grand Rapids metro as it is in the St. Louis, Missouri and Allegheny, Pennsylvania ACIR cases. Grand Rapids has 1.07 units of local government per 10,000 residents while St. Louis has 1.55



and Allegheny as 2.23. Further, Grand Rapids has not created many special districts for delivery of metro-wide services while the other two (and most U.S. metro areas) have frequently done so. Grand Rapids communities utilize formal and informal agreements and staff-to-staff arrangements on a cooperative basis. A similar situation was found in the ACIR cases although ACIR looked at four specific service areas in depth, while the Grand Rapids survey asked for all cooperative agreements. County governments in the two ACIR studies appeared to serve as a focal point for intergovernmental matters. This is not so in Grand Rapids metro, where the County is an occasional, but often reluctant participant in metro issues.

The result of all three case studies indicate that local governments in these growing, fragmented areas have found ways to make public service delivery work. There may not be any overall metro government controlling public policy or service delivery, but essential functions such as utilities, streets and public safety are delivered effectively. Competition among communities exists and usually displays itself in controversies relating to tax base, economic development and annexation. The desire for local autonomy is strongly in evidence.

In sum, the governance situation in Grand Rapids metro has many similarities to the St. Louis and Allegheny cases.

In the examination of other cases, again, findings tend to be more similar than different. Metropolitan growth and development in the U.S. is characterized by suburban

sprawl, the decline of core cities and fragmentation of governance. Grand Rapids metro displays these same general characteristics.

4. What conclusions can be drawn from the Grand Rapids study regarding theoretical perspectives about governance in metropolitan areas?

There is a relationship between the history and culture of a metro area and its attitude about metro governance. Such a connection has been demonstrated in the Grand Rapids study. The findings indicate Grand Rapids would be unlikely to accept consolidation or even substantive cooperation unless there is significant benefit to be accrued. If cooperation between units of government saves money, improves service, or shows some significant benefit, then, perhaps a functional consolidation would be approved by citizens. However, the power of autonomy, of the defense of one's turf, of the threat to one's property or of individual rights should not be underestimated. Metro government, as acknowledged by key informants, would not be accepted in Grand Rapids metro. Some voluntary cooperation, where mutual benefit can be demonstrated, is happening. The position of Grand Rapids on the consolidationist - polycentrist theoretical continuum clearly leans toward public choice. Grand Rapids is for cooperation, but not for consolidation.

To push for consolidation would conflict with the dominant culture and characteristics of the area. Therefore, I suggest moving methodically into the examination of cooperative activities among local units of government. I do not suggest dramatic changes which would be considered radical or threatening to the strong feelings

of community autonomy. However, I do suggest more than just symbolic cooperation. There is considerable room for improvement. Much work needs to be done by all of the beneficiaries of metropolitan cooperation.

While it makes sense to press the State Legislature to take actions recognizing the needs of metro areas, it is unwise to wait for the State to provide incentives or mandates to encourage cooperation. Grand Rapids should proceed to capture all possible economic, social and environmental benefits from joint action. It should do so through means of consensus building and voluntary cooperation.

#### Summing Up the Grand Rapids Case Study

The findings of this research can best be summed up by the following graphic (Figure 13). It depicts three continuum lines, (1) cooperation, (2) survey results and cooperation potential, and (3) governance perception.

These three continuum lines verify the status of interlocal government cooperation in Grand Rapids metro. Line (1) indicates that key informants perceive cooperative activity to be about a 5 on a scale of 1 to 10. The few who perceive it greater than 5 tend to be comparing it with other metro areas or have a differing perspective on what amount of cooperation is possible or necessary. Most key informants perceive that cooperative activity is happening, but see possibilities for more to occur.

Line (2) from the survey of managers indicates only about one-third of potential cooperative activity is occurring.

**Line (1) Cooperation Measurement (Perceptions)**

1 = No Cooperation

10 = Maximum Cooperation

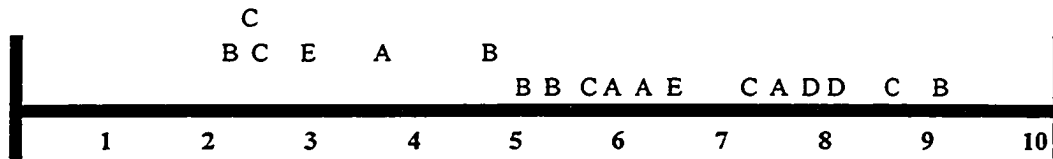
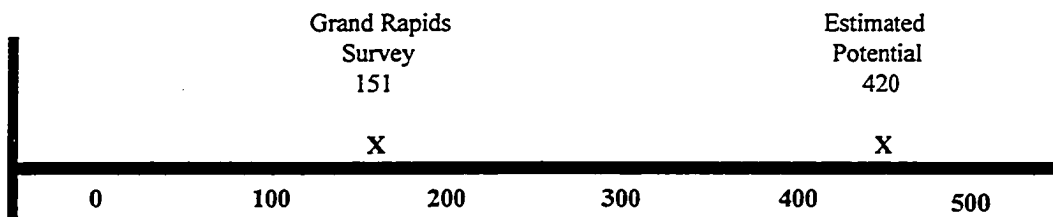
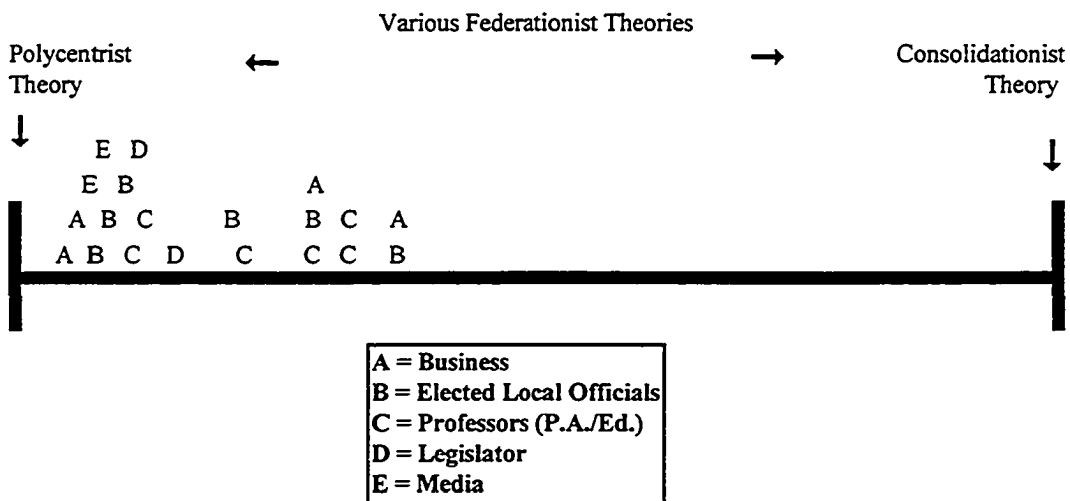
**Line (2) Grand Rapids Survey Results & Cooperation Potential**  
(# of cooperative agreements reported)**Line (3) Perceptions of Metro Governance**

Figure 13. Three Ways of Assessing Interlocal Cooperation in Grand Rapids Metro.

Line (3) depicts key informants perception of Grand Rapids as approaching metro governance through networking and limited cooperation, and not by consolidation.

The lines represent three ways of assessing interlocal cooperation in Grand Rapids metro. Figure 13 confirms that Grand Rapids metro is a community where limited intergovernmental cooperation occurs, where local governments do not subscribe to consolidationist ideas, and where potential for cooperative activity is significant.

### Final Conceptual Framework

The research began with a “picture,” an Initial Conceptual Framework (Figure 1, Chapter II) of metro governance as discerned from the literature. It is appropriate to end with a Final Conceptual Framework (Figure 14) indicating what has been learned from the study.

As noted earlier, I conclude that neither the polycentrist approach nor consolidation are theoretical perspectives regarding metropolitan governance which will work in the 1990s. The primary defect of the polycentrist model is that it does not acknowledge the legitimate concerns about fragmentation of authority and structure. The much vaunted market approach leaves behind the poverty and dilapidation of the decaying core city. Further, the market approach seems to exacerbate suburban sprawl and the attendant land use, pollution and commuter problems. Equally unworkable is the consolidationist approach. Not only is it politically at odds with our U.S. zeal for local autonomy, but we know that bigger concentration of government creates the bureaucracy

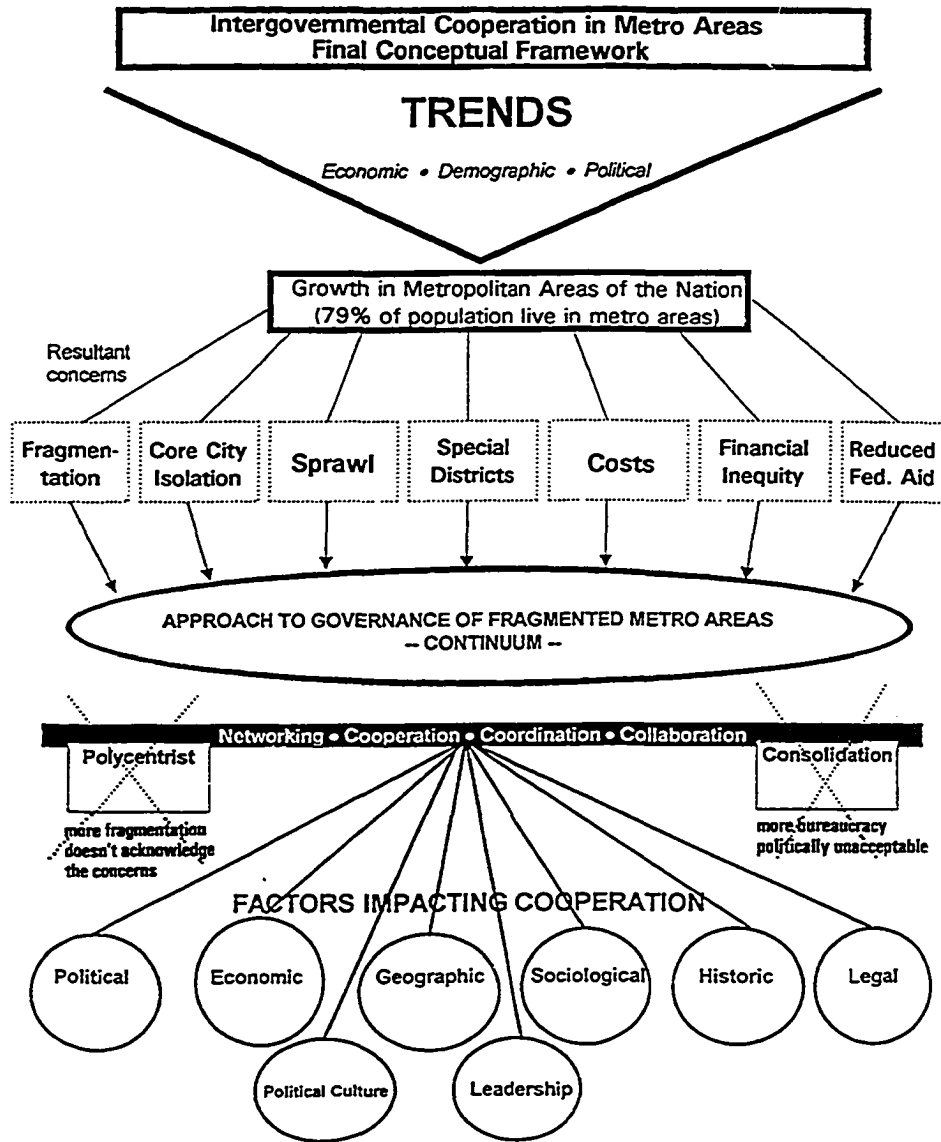


Figure 14. Final Conceptual Framework.

and central control which citizens apparently wish to avoid. No evidence has been presented to prove that bigger government is better or more efficient.

Thus the Final Conceptual Framework draws an "X" through those two ends of the continuum. This leaves a range of interlocal cooperative arrangements from networking through collaboration and suggests that our energies would be best expended by making the variety of federationist approaches work.

Further, the research in Grand Rapids suggests that two additional factors which impact cooperation among local communities are significant enough to be singled out. The factors are political culture and leadership. These are in addition to the other six generally accepted categories of influencing factors: (1) political, (2) economic, (3) geographic, (4) sociological, (5) historic, and (6) legal. Elazar's work emphasizes the significance of political culture. This qualitative Grand Rapids study bears out its importance as a factor impacting cooperative efforts. Propensity to cooperate or not to cooperate is affected by the kind of cultural setting which predominates in a metro area. And finally, there is the problem and challenge of finding metro leaders. Only limited, incremental progress in addressing the concerns of our fragmented metro areas will occur without committed and effective leadership.

The sum of this research is depicted in Figure 14, The Final Conceptual Framework.

### Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this research are apparent. It is a case study of one metropolitan area. I examined cooperative activity among cities and townships in Grand Rapids metro, without considering school districts or the myriad of non-profit organizations which provide public services. I did not fully explore state-local relationships, nor the connections with county government. I did not attempt to generalize the findings in Grand Rapids to other metro areas, although this case study should be useful in conducting other studies. And finally, I did not examine specific functional services in depth.

All of these limitations represent opportunities for further research, in addition to continued examination of the approaches to metropolitan governance and strategies for implementing cooperative activities among local governments. I am convinced that the topic of metropolitan governance is important and is growing in significance. Further conversation among academics and public administrators is essential for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services to the citizens of metropolitan communities.



## **Appendix A**

### **Definitions**

DEFINITIONS<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of terms and phrases utilized in the literature on local government, intergovernmental cooperation, and regional councils. Sometimes, the definitions differ. For that reason, it was important in the conduct of this study to establish definitions to avoid confusion in the research.

Annexation: The simple legal device of expanding municipal boundaries to incorporate additional territory.

Authority: A type of public administrative agency with quasi-governmental powers. This type of adaptation is not unlike the special district. The major difference is the normally larger geographic area of the authority and its power to issue revenue bonds.

City-county separation: The division or separation of the city from the county. The basic purpose of this device is to divide urban and rural populations so that each may have the kind and level of service it desires and is willing to pay for.

Collaborative: A strong linkage among partners for a specific purpose and one which is long-term and often complex.

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<sup>1</sup>Sources: Atkins & Haynes, (1994, p. 30); Ciglar, Beverly, (1993); and Glendenning & Reeves, (1984, pp. 317-318).

Cooperative: Simple in purpose and ranging from informal to formal agreements to cooperate.

Coordinative: Closely linked connections that are seen as coordinating partnerships.

Formal Agreement: A legal agreement permitting two or more jurisdictions to mutually plan, finance, and deliver a service to their constituencies.

Functional consolidation: The consolidating or merging of functions in a particular metropolitan area without necessarily consolidating or abolishing any existing units of governments.

Geographical consolidation: The merger or consolidation of two or more units of governments into one government.

Incorporation: A process by which a given geographic area is transformed into a legal corporation which is recognized by law and an entity having particular functions, rights, duties, and liabilities.

Informal Agreement: An agreement, not backed by law, between two or more units of local government that pledges them to common improvement in a targeted service.

Intersectoral Cooperation: Creation of mutually-beneficial alliances between government, the nonprofit public sector, and the business sector to best provide and finance services.

Metropolitan government: A general government with jurisdiction over the whole of a particular metropolitan area.

Multicommunity Partnerships: An intergovernmental entity that ranges from loosely-connected and informal to formal complex long-term networks, including joint public-private citizen associations, private business-industry alliances with governments, and others.

Networks: Organizations working together with very loose linkages, primarily for information exchange.

Nonprofit Public Corporation: A legal entity used by local governments to own a company jointly and manage it through a board of directors representing the local governments.

Privatization: The provision of public services for local government and their constituents by the private sector.

Regional Special Authority: As the regional special district, but with stronger, more extensive powers surrounding its specified service.

Regional Special Purpose Services District, Regional Joint District: As the local special district, but geographically larger, created to provide a single service to many jurisdictions.

Service contract: A legal undertaking on the part of one government to supply and on the part of another to receive (and usually to pay for) the service or services named.

Special district: A unit of government established to administer one or more designated functions. The new unit does not necessarily need to coincide with previous political boundaries.

Transfers of Functions: The legal transfer of one or more services from one government to a second, deemed more able in resources or area to provide the service.

Volunteerism: The provision of all or part of a public service through the use of trained and supervised volunteer personnel, employed without pay for a local government.

## **Appendix B**

### **Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Mission Statement**

## GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council is to advance the current and future well-being of the Grand Rapids metropolitan community by bringing together area local governments to cooperatively advocate, plan for, and coordinate the provision of cost-effective services and infrastructure investments that have areawide impact.

### Concept of Community Well-Being

In pursuit of this mission, it is understood that the “well-being” of the metropolitan community relies on good government and springs from a shared vision that encompasses many elements, including, but not limited to, the following:

- preparing now for the challenges of the future
- planning for orderly growth and development
- minimizing urban sprawl
- preserving and enhancing the natural, social, and physical environments
- promoting economic vitality and employment opportunities
- equitably sharing responsibility for community needs
- recognizing the strength and benefits of diversity
- promoting quality lifelong educational opportunities
- promoting quality cultural and recreational institutions and facilities
- serving all population groups
- vigilantly preserving the health and safety of the general public
- effectively utilizing and enhancing existing infrastructure
- eliminating unnecessary duplication of services
- effectively advocating for financial equity and other assistance with the State and Federal governments
- conserving and enhancing healthy neighborhoods, business districts and employment centers
- promoting a high quality of life now and for future generations

To these ends, the members of the Metro Council will cooperatively advocate, plan for, and coordinate services and investments.

September 1992

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