GRAND RAPIDS-LJUBLJANA COMPARATIVE STUDY

BACKGROUND STUDY ON GRAND RAPIDS:

THE PROVISION OF SELECTED URBAN SERVICES

Gregor Zore
International Fellow
January, 1972

International Urban Studies
Center for Urban Studies
Wayne State University

5229 Cass Avenue
Detroit, Michigan - 48202
Tel.: (313) 577-2120
Table of Contents

I. GRAND RAPIDS - GENERAL DESCRIPTION 1

II. THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING 6
   - Grand Rapids Organizational Chart 10

III. PUBLIC SERVICES 12
   - Cultural Facilities 13
   - Public Services Table 13a
   - Education 14
   - Youth Employment Program and Urban Corps 16
   - Welfare 16
   - Health Care 17
   - Social Services 17
   - Recreation, Parks, Cemeteries 18
   - Community Relations 19
   - Urban Renewal, Public Housing, Environmental Health 20
   - Model Cities Program 21
   - Planning 21
   - Parking 22
   - Streets and Highways 23
   - Public Transportation 24
   - Police Protection, Jails, Civil Defense 26
   - Fire Protection 27
   - Air Pollution Control 28
   - Refuse Collection and Disposal 29
   - Sewage and Wastewater Treatment 31
   - Drainage 32
   - Water Supply 32

IV. CONCLUSION 34
I. Grand Rapids - General Description

Grand Rapids is the second largest city in the State of Michigan, with its population of 197,000 smaller only than Detroit. It is situated in the southwestern part of the state between the two dominating major cities of this part of the United States - Chicago is about 170 miles to the southwest and Detroit is 150 miles to the east. Grand Rapids is located on the Grand River about 30 miles east of the river's outlet into Lake Michigan. Topographically the area is relatively flat with the elevation ranging from 180 to 300 meters (600 to 1000 feet) above sea level.

The Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area consists of two counties, Kent and Ottawa, and covers a total of 1429 square miles (3699 km²). The City of Grand Rapids covers 44.9 square miles (116 km²) since 1962.

With respect to population size, Kent County is ranked fourteenth in the State of Michigan (which has 83 counties). The following table shows the population growth of the United States, the State of Michigan, Kent County and the City of Grand Rapids since 1920 with percentage increases per decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>% Incr.</th>
<th>Mich.</th>
<th>% Incr.</th>
<th>Kent County</th>
<th>% Incr.</th>
<th>Grand Rapids</th>
<th>% Incr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>105,710,620</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,668,412</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>183,041</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>137,634</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>122,775,046</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>4,842,325</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>240,511</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>168,592</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>131,669,275</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5,256,106</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>246,338</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>164,292</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>150,697,361</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>6,371,766</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>288,292</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>176,515</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>178,464,236</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>7,823,194</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>363,187</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>201,487</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>411,044</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>197,649</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census of Population
Since the beginning of the century, the area has experienced a rapid population increase. The average rate of growth per decade has been 19% for Kent County, while the comparable figure for the United States has been only 15.3%. The population of the metropolitan area reached 540,000 in 1971. The population density is 377 people per square mile (146/km²) while that for the City of Grand Rapids is 4402 per square mile (1354/km²).

In the period after the Depression, the City of Grand Rapids, as might be expected, did not grow as fast as the rest of the area; in fact, it has lost population twice in this recent history. It happened first in the decade of the Depression, at a time in which Grand Rapids was much more affected by the economic crisis than the average city in the United States as its economy was heavily specialized in lumber and furniture manufacturing. After an ensuing period of slow but steady growth, Grand Rapids is now in its second population-losing period (the 1960's) and is not an exception among American Cities that face the exodus of their populations to the surrounding suburbs. In the last decade, Grand Rapids lost about 2% of its population and this trend is currently continuing.

Population projections (Research Division, Office of Economic Expansion, Michigan Department of Commerce) for Michigan, Grand Rapids SMSA and Kent County predict a steady growth, but do not mention the city itself. The growth is expected to be stable in absolute numbers, but decreasing proportionally. This is mainly due to a slow decrease in the crude birth rate during the 1960's.
The percentage of non-white population in Kent County amounted to 2.5 in 1950. By 1960 the non-white segment had more than doubled (112% increase) but still did not represent more than 4.2% of the population. In this last decade it was estimated to remain virtually the same. Most of non-whites of the area live in Grand Rapids (an estimated 12-13% of the city's population). The two largest nationality groups in the city are the Poles and the Dutch.

The first permanent settlers in the area came in the 1820's, setting up trading posts. Grand Rapids soon became a trading center, particularly after the first steamboat ran on Grand River in 1837. Soon a canal was built to bypass the rapids. Rich wood resources of the area played an important role in the city's development. First lumber mills appeared in the early 1850's to receive the logs floating down the river. At that time also the first roads were built. The final and greatest push for the development came with the railroads (the first one in 1858) that opened the area to the rest of the country. The incorporation of Grand Rapids as a city in 1850 also coincides with this vivid era.

With the use of its comparative advantages---good land, rich wood resources and the river (as a waterway and source of power and good water)---Grand Rapids developed into a center for furniture manufacturing, the ups and downs of which greatly influenced the development of the city. In the late 1920's, Grand Rapids was
referred to as the "furniture capital of the U.S." After the depression, however, with the declining power and importance of furniture manufacturing in Grand Rapids, a different pattern of development took place.

Grand Rapids has long been the center of western Michigan, mainly in the areas of manufacturing, marketing, services and convention business. Well over 9000 firms in the metropolitan area employed 172,000 workers in 1970, the majority (950 firms and 77,000 workers) being in manufacturing. The two most important sectors following manufacturing are retail trade with 30,000 and services with 27,000 workers.

The local economy is referred to as balanced and well diversified. The comparison between structures of the economy of the United States as a whole and that of Kent County indicates that the latter is very close to the nation's average, being slightly specialized in furniture manufacturing, lumber, and motor vehicle equipment. The primary sectors also score a bit higher than the United States average.

The 1967 Data Profile of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area underlined the five most important community assets of the area for attracting various industries: varied diversity and health of the present economy, labor force, relatively low tax burden, good transportation network (primarily freeways) and access to prosperous industrial parks.
For the conclusion of this introductory chapter, here is a short review of the community facilities.

Grand Rapids has nine school districts (Kent County---20) with an enrollment of over 50,000 pupils in public schools. The teacher/student ratio is one to 23. In addition to three major colleges and two junior colleges, three universities run various programs in the area. There are two major adult education programs and a number of technical and professional schools.

The whole area has 37 county and 86 municipal parks, 12 state game areas and boating sites, 32 golf courses and a zoo.

Two main libraries with several branches together with three museums (Grand Rapids Museum and Planetarium, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Baker Museum), the Grand Rapids Symphony orchestra and two theatres (Circle Theatre, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre) form the core of the city's cultural ambient. The most outstanding multipurpose institution is the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium, western Michigan's most used convention center as well as many shows, sports, exhibitions and cultural events.

There are six major shopping centers within city limits, including the Central Business District.

In four general and six specialized hospitals as well as in a number of nursing homes, there is sufficient capacity to meet a broader region's needs.
II. The Institutional Setting

The Grand Rapids SMSA consists of Kent and Ottawa counties. In 1967 the local government composition of the two counties was the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Townships</th>
<th>School Dists.</th>
<th>Special Dists.</th>
<th>County Govts.</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Governments, 1967

The SMSA as the unity of both counties exists so far, (mainly for statistical purposes; metropolitan government is non-existent. Only recently a step in this direction was made by creating the Kent-Ottawa Regional Planning Commission in 1966 by federal incentive. However, even this authority does not cover the whole SMSA---it includes only a part of Ottawa County. The Commission has a strong position, as every project within the area applying for a federal grant must be reviewed by a regional planning authority. Otherwise, being a non-taxing unit, the Commission has no power to enforce its recommendations---it serves mainly as a consultant. The Commission has 16 members and currently maintains a staff of two people.

For the purposes of this study, Kent County is more important than Ottawa or even the whole SMSA. The reasons are the following:

-Grand Rapids and many suburbs (i.e., the activity center of the area) are located in Kent County.

-Kent County is larger than Ottawa in area (862.564 square miles) and in population (411,044:128,181).
Kent County is the sole provider of some services on the regional level for Grand Rapids.

Therefore, whenever reference is made to the county level of provision of services, Kent County is in mind.

The Kent County Board of Commissioners is the highest legislative and administrative body in the county. It consists of 21 County Commissioners elected from the same number of individual districts for a two year term on a non-partisan basis. Major responsibilities of the Board are the following: adopting the county annual budget, securing funds for county government's operations, establishing policies for operation of various county departments, appointing officials to county boards and commissions, and adopting local ordinances.

For the fulfillment of its tasks, the county government has been organized into several departments and employs about 1350 people.

The 1971 County budget amounts to approximately $8 million (exact figures are not available yet). The three most important sources of revenue for the county are:

- the property tax 36.5%
- the state and federal aid 31.3%
- department revenue 21.2%

As evident from above, the county has its own taxing power. In 1971 a general property tax of 4.8 mills was collected.
The City of Grand Rapids adopted the City Charter in 1916 and thus established the Council-Manager type of government that has been used ever since. The "Council" in Grand Rapids was officially named "The City Commission."

The original idea of the Council-Manager plan was born in the first decade of this century as one of the proposals resulting from local government reforming efforts. Its rationale was to have the chief legislative body of the city be a rather small group of citizens elected on a non-partisan basis. This group of councilmen or commissioners would be the policy-making body of the city and usually the only elected officials. The administration of the government is headed by a professional city manager who is to be appointed and can be consequently removed by the Commission. Responsibilities of both the manager (administrative function) and the Commission (policy function) should be clearly defined so that any misunderstandings and interferences between the two functions can be avoided.

The present type of government in Grand Rapids is only a slightly modified version of the original plan since there is an elected mayor whose function is primarily the official representation of the city. Although he is the formal political head of the city, he has no administrative responsibilities. The mayor is a member of the City Commission and has the most influential position among the commissioners since he is elected at large. Mayoral elections are on a non-partisan basis with the term being four years.
The City Commission is the top policy-making and legislative body of the city. It consists of seven members---six commissioners and the mayor. The commissioners are elected by wards. There are three wards in Grand Rapids, and each elects two commissioners for a four year term. The most important functions of the Commission are appointing the top administrator, the manager, as well as a number of other city officials (clerk, attorney, treasurer) and boards, approving the annual city budget and passing city ordinances.

Perhaps the most appropriate way to understand quickly the organization of the city government in Grand Rapids is by looking at the organizational chart (See attached chart, page 10).

The Library Board, the State Supreme Court, the Board of Education and the City Comptroller are either elected or brought in by a higher level of government (State) and are therefore not responsible to the City Commission.

The second level in the chart represents some officials and a number of Board or Commissions appointed by the City Commission. The City Manager, in turn, appoints all department heads (presently 20) that can become members of the corresponding boards and commissions or have some other type of relations with them (indicated by dotted line in the chart). The number of city employees in 1971 exceeded 1900.
The 1971 City Budget amounts to $24,445,212. The most important sources of revenue for the City are:

- the taxes 55.8%
- charges, fines, licenses 14.8%
- various agencies 17.0%

The City tax rate for the last ten years ranged from 12.79 mills (1967) to 9.33 mills (1970). There is a slight increase up to 10.35 mills for 1971. In addition, there is a 1% City Income Tax on residents and businesses in the city (1½% on non-residents working in the city).
III. Public Services

It is time to concentrate on the main issue of this paper—the provision of public services to the residents of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. Public services (most of them, at least those that we are concentrating on, are typical urban services) in the mentioned area are provided by the City of Grand Rapids, other local government units, Kent County, the metropolitan region, the State of Michigan, the Federal Government, and private organizations. The main problems are connected with the breakdown of responsibilities between Grand Rapids and Kent County. On one hand, the City of Grand Rapids provides its citizens with most of the services but there are cases where the county government does it as well. On the other hand, Grand Rapids provides some important services to people living outside of the city limits. There is a mixture of responsibilities that result also in financial problems. Therefore, a table presenting the provision of services by different governmental units for the citizens of Grand Rapids and separately for the rest of the Kent County population should be most helpful. The list below may not be complete but it encompasses the most important services and certainly those that are important for the overall Grand Rapids-Ljubljana Study. A detailed description of each service will follow the table.
Parentheses in the table can indicate two things: first, that the government unit is providing the service indirectly, i.e. that the service is primarily meant for the residents of a particular unit (mostly the city) but is used or enjoyed also by others (e.g., parks); second, that a government unit is only financing (fully or partially) a certain service but the act of providing it is the responsibility of another unit (e.g., model cities or public housing programs are financed by the federal government, but carried out by the city). Each case is explained in the following:

**Cultural Facilities.** Cultural facilities play an important role in community life, as their function is to expand educational, social and entertainment horizons of the area's residents. It is very difficult to identify all the cultural activities as they can take place in facilities designed for other purposes such as schools, private clubs, churches, etc. Only institutions solely intended for the mentioned purpose can be covered here.

The most important supplier in the area is the City of Grand Rapids. The Civic Auditorium, the Grand Rapids Public Museum, the Circle Theatre and the Grand Rapids Library (with seven branches) are all organized and administered by the City. They are financed through special funds held by the City and in some cases from other sources as well. These facilities, of course, do not serve only the
### Public Services Provided for the Citizens of Grand Rapids and the Rest of Kent County Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Grand Rapids</th>
<th>Rest of Kent County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Facilities</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>State (City)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>State (City)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Employment Program &amp; Urban Corps</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>State (Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>State (Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>County (State)</td>
<td>City (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, Parks, Cemeteries</td>
<td>City (County)</td>
<td>City County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Renewal, Public Housing, Environmental Health</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Cities</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Region (City) County (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streets &amp; Highways</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(State) (Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(State) (Fed.G.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police, Jails, Civil Defense</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>County State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Protection</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(City) County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Pollution</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>(State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse Collection and Disposal</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>City (State) County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewage and Wastewater Treatment</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Supply</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
city residents but the entire area and are, from this point of view, inadequately financed.

The County only maintains its library (with 17 branches) through its Library Department. The City also has a Library Department but the work is supervised by an elected Library Board.

Another important provider is the private sector, supporting the Grand Rapids symphony orchestra, the Art Museum, Baker Museum, and the Civic Theatre, to mention only the most important.

Education. The greatest part of public education is provided by school districts. But an important portion, particularly higher education, is provided by the State of Michigan and private organizations.

There are 20 school districts (headed by elected school boards), nine of which are in Grand Rapids. Financial sources are mainly property taxes, with the millage ranging between 24 and 38 throughout the county. There is a high correlation between the tax levy and quality of schools.

The State supports some of the districts as well as directly financing part of higher education in the area, mainly through supporting three major universities (University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Western Michigan University) in running their Grand Rapids extensions.
There is a significant number of private and parochial schools in the area; in higher education these represent more than half of the total. Of the three main colleges, two are private and one is a state college. Two junior colleges are public (Grand Rapids Board of Education), and there are about a half dozen smaller private and religious colleges.

An interesting educational institution---The Cooperative Extension Service---is organized by the County. It offers latest research findings as well as courses in five major areas: agriculture, marketing, home economics, youth development, and community resource development. All these are available to the general public.

Two adult educational programs with a total enrollment of 2500 are offered; one by the Grand Rapids Board of Education and one by a joint project of ten school districts in southern Kent County.

There are four special technical and professional schools (data processing, nursing, modeling, etc.) attached to hospitals or colleges or independent (State or private).

Total yearly enrollment in the county is about 120,000 pupils and students (residents and non-residents). A major reorganization of districts is underway, primarily with the intent to consolidate into larger units such as the Grand Rapids School District.
Youth Employment Program and Urban Corps. These two programs are organized by the City but financially supported by the Federal Government. The first provides a number of local underprivileged youths with job opportunities in two ways: by offering jobs in the summer and education during the school year. The second program offers local students opportunities to work in their field of interest in this program. Much of the work, that may otherwise not be done, in the City is undertaken by students. The City also attracts talents of young people for eventual future employment with the City government.

Welfare. Welfare is a very complex social and organizational question in itself and only some brief remarks about it can be made here. There are four main providers of welfare services----the County, State, Federal Government and private organizations----but all of their organizational and financial inter-relationships would require an analysis which exceeds the scope of this paper. Perhaps later in the development of the Grand Rapids-Ljubljana Study the need for such an analysis will emerge. The most appropriate starting point would be to cooperate with some of the County's departments (e.g., Child Care, Social Services, Budget) as well as private organizations like the United Fund.

According to the 1971 County Budget, a little more than half of the welfare money administered by the County (a total of about $5 million) is allocated from the County's own funds and the rest are State and Federal subsidies.
Health Care. Health care is another important service not provided by the City. Kent County has its own Health Department which carries out programs of disease prevention and control, maternal and child health services, public health nursing, control of environmental health protection, etc. The County also runs three hospitals that are subsidized by the State which also has a few of its own institutions in the area. About one quarter of the total sum for health (in the 1971 County Budget) is allocated by the County, with the rest coming from the State.

Again, private organizations play an important role with either financial contributions or their own institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.).

Social Services. The Kent County Department of Social Services, the State Department of Social Services and a variety of private organizations provide social services in the Grand Rapids region.

The role of the State is again mostly indirect. It requires minimum standards in, for example, food allowance---that the County has to meet and that are equal to those granted by the State under its own Old Age Assistance, Aid to Dependent Children, Aid to the Blind and Aid to the Disabled programs. These programs are the only ones that the State directly runs in the area. Finally, the State picks up 40% of the costs of Direct Relief.
Social Services Administration, under the direction of the County Social Service Board, administers all the programs and investigates the applicants' eligibility for help.

The Department runs its own medical care facility designed to care for persons generally 65 years old or more. In addition, the Department is responsible for providing hospital services, medical and surgical treatment for persons (including children), who are otherwise unable to secure such treatment.

Private organizations mainly provide direct relief and medical care. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to separate these activities under Health, Welfare and Social Services. They all come together and in many forms.

Recreation, Parks, Cemeteries. Recreational facilities, parks and cemeteries are provided by the City, the County and some private organizations.

The Kent County Road and Park Commission is responsible for maintenance and equipment in the 26 Kent County parks. The 1971 Budget net requirements amount to $381,000. The County is not directly engaged in recreational programs or cemeteries maintenance and operation. Both are left to the municipalities. Recently a comprehensive plan for parks, recreation and open space was prepared by the Commission, and included projected future needs and a complete record of plans for ultimate development of parks and recreational areas.
The City of Grand Rapids, through its Department of Parks (divided into Administration and Engineering Division), supervises the construction, operation and maintenance of all city parks, cemeteries, golf courses, the zoo, public markets, all city forested areas, athletic fields, flower planting and Christmas decoration.

The City Recreation Department organizes and leads city-wide recreational and athletic programs in addition to maintaining playgrounds and all City outdoor and indoor swimming pools. Many programs are organized with various schools.

Private organizations organize some recreational activities, many of them are connected to health and welfare programs.

The distinction between who provides what services for whom is not clear. County parks serve City population as well, while the City's zoo, parks and various programs are enjoyed by the population of the whole county. This may indicate the appropriateness of an area-wide authority that would be responsible for all above mentioned activities.

Community Relations. The City Department for Community Relations provides a rather non-typical public service—improvement of community relations to citizens of Grand Rapids. No other governmental unit provides anything comparable. The department's primary
task is to improve relations between races in the City and make the government more responsive to the community as a whole. The staff uses the mass media, speaks at meetings, sends out a bimonthly newsletter on community affairs, and directly follows up on citizens' complaints.

**Urban Renewal, Public Housing, Environmental Health.** The main reason for grouping these three activities together is that they are, among other things, the responsibility of the City's Department of Community Improvement and Inspection Service, which is the sole provider of this type of service in the area and almost exclusively for the citizens of Grand Rapids. In short, the department covers all the City's activities in the elimination of blight and promotion of redevelopment.

All public housing in the City is administered and carried out by the department, but financed almost entirely by the federal government. At the moment, the Housing Commission operates 328 units. Construction of an additional 200 is expected to start soon—if federal funding becomes available.

The Urban Renewal Division works on projects in cooperation with other City departments (planning, for instance) and submits applications for federal funds available under various programs.

The Environmental Health Division is responsible for the inspection of food handling and serving establishments.
Model Cities Program. The Model Cities Program with a budget of about $3,000,000 is one of the 150 that were started throughout the country by HUD. The aims of the program are to learn, through experimentation, how the problems associated with a city ghetto should be approached. In Grand Rapids, in particular, the payoffs of the program are expected to be the gaining of experience in planning on the lowest level—the neighborhood and the conducting of various projects and the analysis of the impact of various programs on the community.

The program is now entering its second year and is expected to be more successful after first year's experience. The City is the administrator of the program but practically does not spend any of its own funds on it.

The Model Cities Program is a typical example of an intangible urban public service provided by the federal government.

Planning. Planning is another intangible public service and is frequently viewed as secondary or even unimportant. It is provided on the city, county and regional level.

The City Planning Department provides staff (currently 8) for assistance to the City Planning Commission, the Manager and other City departments in mutually carrying out special projects. After
the Grand Rapids Master Plan was completed in 1963, a number of studies and projects were undertaken for further development and changes in the Plan. The Department is also involved in zoning, urban renewal, providing information for general public, cooperating with other planning agencies, etc.

The Kent County Planning Commission also maintains its own staff (currently 3) for the following tasks: developing the Kent County Master Plan (which should be coordinated with existing plans of various governmental units in the county), administering the County Building Program and conducting special studies.

The Kent-Ottawa Regional Planning Commission (with only a symbolic staff) is a relatively new institution in the area and has not yet established the position it deserves. As viewed by many, however, it has the greatest potential for developing into perhaps the sole, centralized planning body in the region.

Parking. Parking is provided by the City which operates a few large parking lots and garages in downtown Grand Rapids and quite extensively by the private sector throughout the City. For the rest of the county population, parking is provided by municipalities and townships as well as by private sector.
Streets and Highways. The responsibilities for road construction and maintenance is broken down between the City, County, State and Federal Government.

The City's Street Fund with its several divisions is responsible for street, bridge and intersection construction, street repairing and cleaning, snow removal, installation of traffic signs and signals, storm drain maintenance, etc. throughout the whole territory of the city. Exceptions, of course, are the state and federal highways that run through the city as they are financed by the two mentioned governments.

The position of the County Road Commission is similar---it is responsible for all county roads, intersections and bridges except those under state and federal jurisdiction.

A fairly complex scheme of financing and carrying out responsibilities emerges out of relationships among all four units of government. Federal government participates with 90% of construction costs in building the Federal Interstate System. In the case of Kent County Plan for replacing worn-out bridges on secondary roads, federal government participates by covering 50% of the costs. There are probably several other examples of different financial arrangements. Analyzing these would be beyond the present task.
Public Transportation. The only provider of public transportation in the area is the City of Grand Rapids through its City Transit Authority. The service can hardly be qualified better than poor. As public transportation is one of the main issues in the overall study, a more detailed description is presented here.

In the 1930's, when the streetcar was forced out of business, buses were introduced operating on virtually the same routes as the trains had previously. After World War II, at the time during which business was best, use started declining mostly due to growing mass use of the private automobile. But there were still several companies in business prior to 1963 when only one was left.

At that time the City Transit Authority was founded for one sole purpose---of providing the City's public transportation. The Authority has five members, all of them from the City (City Manager and four members appointed by the Mayor). Until 1971, they operated without a staff. They now employ a part-time transportation planner from the City Planning Office.

With different means, like tax reductions etc., they managed to keep the bus company operating relatively successfully to 1968. In 1969, there was a loss of $300,000; in 1970, $375,000, and for 1971 the expected loss was estimated to be $480,000. The City, which covered the total losses in 1969 and 1970 could not afford to do so
anymore. The resources available for covering the loss were cut to $260,000. Facing this, the Authority had two alternatives: either to abolish some of the existing lines or to keep all the lines and limit the number of buses in operation, which meant decreasing bus frequency on all lines. This latter alternative was accepted on September 7, 1971, and has resulted in the following situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of buses in use</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating hours</td>
<td>5:30 A.M.-10:10 P.M.</td>
<td>6 A.M.-6 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average frequency of service:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular</td>
<td>39 mins.</td>
<td>42 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peak</td>
<td>27 mins.</td>
<td>38 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundays and Holidays service</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average daily number of trips is about 6000, which is about ½% of all trips in the region. The present daily average number of passengers is about 3500. In recent years, the number has decreased steadily—about 15% a year. After the changes in September-1971, it decreased by 28%, which was unexpectedly high since 87% of all passengers do not have any other means of transportation.

Seventy-eight percent of the riders are women; 52% of the riders use the bus for getting to work; 21% to get to school. Thirty percent of the riders are below 20 years of age; 21% above 60 years. Income of 83% of the riders is below regional average; 36% are even below the $4000 limit, which is the official poverty limit. In short, public transportation in Grand Rapids serves the school children, the poor, the aged and those that have no alternative means of transportation (all data from above is for May, 1971).
The City now faces the problem of what to do. The service is very much needed, but more and more expensive (the bus fleet is getting old, too). One of the existing proposals is to get some money from the suburbs. In order to do this an expansion of the City Transit Authority from five to seven members is proposed. The two new members would be from the suburban local governments.

Since the planners feel that the existing routes do not need to be changed, an improvement in the quality of service is viewed mainly as enlarging and renewing the fleet. Since one of the federal programs provides matching money for purchasing new equipment, this proposal may not seem so unrealistic.

**Police Protection, Jails, Civil Defense.** Civil defense offices exist both on the County and City level and are responsible for developing programs to deal with disasters and to coordinate emergency action. Both cooperate closely with State authorities.

Police protection is provided by the City, the County and the State. Roughly speaking, the type of law violation determines which of the three levels is responsible. The City's Police Department is large and operates through the following divisions: Communications, Services, Uniform, Criminal Investigation, Traffic, Mobile Crime Laboratory and Narcotics School (personnel: 383).
The sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer, responsible to preserve peace within Kent County. His personnel of 110 handles everything from enforcing traffic laws, transporting criminals, to witnessing the drawing of jurors. The Michigan State Police, which has its office in Grand Rapids as well, is responsible for handling specified cases of law violations.

The City has its jail which is inadequate in size and intended only for specific purposes (few days imprisonment, overnight holding of drunks, etc.). The County operates a larger jail where most of the prisoners are held (except heavy criminals sent to state institutions) and an honor camp for the rehabilitation of first offenders.

Fire Protection. Fire protection is provided by Grand Rapids, Kent County and a few municipalities.

Grand Rapids has a fully professionalized fire department with 300 employees. Two others---Wyoming and East Grand Rapids fire departments---are partly professional. All other fire departments in the county operate with volunteers.

Although the City Fire Department concentrates its efforts almost exclusively within City limits---it provides a central communication and dispatching service for all fire departments in the county.

Kent County Fire Department operates 12 fire stations in the County's rural areas, largely by volunteer help. They also assist
many local fire departments in several ways (help acquire equipment, train firemen, etc.).

**Air Pollution Control.** Air pollution control is another one of the services where the organization does not fit in any of the theoretical schemes. In theory it should be provided by a large territorial unit (county or metropolitan region); in Grand Rapids, however, one of the City departments assumes responsibility. It does serve the whole county, though.

In 1971 a partial reorganization of City government took place when a new Department of Environmental Protection was founded, taking over some of the responsibilities of the previous Department of Public Services and leaving out those that are not directly connected with the environment. It has four divisions: Air Pollution Control, Refuse Collection and Disposal, Sewer Maintenance, Wastewater Treatment. The main idea behind the new department was to bring together all pollution control operations. There are 133 employees in the department.

The Air Pollution Control Division is in charge of creating and enforcing an Air Pollution Control Program for the whole metropolitan area. It currently employs two Air Pollution Inspectors, but is expanding to four. Major activities of the Division include: measuring the pollution level, strictly enforcing city ordinances (banning
garden trash, burning leaves), registering complaints and follow-ups (inspections, hearings, legal actions), and constant site inspection at major industrial locations, etc.

The Division cooperates closely with the State Department of Public Health (Air Pollution Control Section) in enforcing air pollution laws on local industry. It has achieved significant results in the way in which several millions of dollars were spent for anti-pollution devices in recent years. The Division is also involved in community education through mass media, presentations, speeches, etc.

Federal Environmental Protection Agency grants made it possible for the Division to start a major expansion and improvement of its monitoring equipment.

Refuse Collection and Disposal. The main provider in the region is the City of Grand Rapids, though most of the municipalities have their own programs and Kent County also provides the service—based mainly on contractual arrangements with municipalities.

The Refuse Collection and Disposal Division of the Department of Environmental Protection organizes a combined city-private refuse collection operation which is currently being reformed. Under the existing arrangement the Division is responsible for collecting garbage (with 30 men) once a week from every household in the city (as well as all refuse from City buildings and parks) while the
private collectors are collecting rubbish. A few years ago after the appearance of plastic refuse bags, separation of garbage and trash became more and more difficult. The proposal for a new arrangement should be ready by early 1972; however, the public-private combination is expected to remain. A new disposal fee of $28 per household will be introduced to cover the costs.

The real problem is on the disposal side. The Division (staff of 15) operates a sanitary landfill for all the City's and some of the surrounding communities' refuse. The landfill does not have an adequate location and is nearing capacity and should soon be closed. So, the Division joined the Kent County Solid Waste Disposal System proposal which should secure an area-wide system of landfills sufficient for the next three decades. In the Fall of 1971, the proposal failed for political reasons. The Division is, therefore, in a difficult position and is currently trying to provide landfills in bilateral talks with surrounding communities.

There are, of course, proposals for alternative ways of refuse disposal, but landfills are the cheapest. Incineration is about three times more expensive. Burning refuse in a thermo-electric plant is another proposal and a feasibility study is under way, but it is clear that this is only a short-term solution. Another possibility is recycling, and recent studies indicate that up to 70% of refuse could be recycled.
Sewage and Wastewater Treatment. The Sewage and Wastewater Treatment Division with 56 employees operates the City's 600 mile sewer system and serves also an extensive area beyond City limits.

The Grand Rapids City Ordinance is very strict with respect to the quality of sewage pumped into the sewer system. Control is particularly strict on metals, organic materials, greases and industrial waste. The strict enforcement of standards resulted in investments of about $6 million into internal industrial pretreatment by local industry.

The Grand Rapids Wastewater Treatment Plant provides complete primary and secondary treatment but its capacity is insufficient due to the growth of the area. An enlargement and improvement of the treatment plant was worked out. An investment of $20 million, 75% of which was from the Federal Government, should add tertiary treatment processes in addition to substantially increasing the capacity. The quality of water (percentage of oxygen demanding waste removed) pumped into the river is estimated to reach 90% in comparison to present 72%.

The Sewer Maintenance Division of the Department is responsible for maintenance and repairs of the system. It is in the process of introducing a modern hydraulic sewer cleaning method, which is about five times quicker than the traditional mechanical method.
The Kent County Department of Public Works works out contractual arrangements with municipalities throughout the county for construction and maintenance of sewage and storm water collection and treatment.

**Drainage.** Drainage is provided exclusively by Kent County Drain Commission throughout the whole county territory. The County Drain Commissioner administers County Drain Laws. Among other duties he processes petitions for construction or repairs of existing drains and after the need has been determined, lays out drainage districts and apportions costs of construction among property holders corresponding to the benefits they receive.

The Commissioner's responsibility is also to award contracts for drain construction and to supervise them. A special task is to prepare the annual special County Drain Tax Roll.

**Water Supply.** The City of Grand Rapids provides water supply to the greatest part of the County territory, with more remote parts provided by the County.

The City Water Department is responsible for collecting and distributing clean and potable water to business, domestic and industrial customers. Five of the surrounding communities are direct customers of Grand Rapids, but also distribute water themselves.
The Department operates two pumping stations and the whole purifying chemical and biological operation is mainly concentrated in two filtration plants. Maintenance of the whole transmission and distribution system is another operation performed by the Department. It is the most manpower-consuming activity.

The Kent County Department of Public Works enters into contractual arrangements with municipalities in the county for construction and sometimes the operation and maintenance of water supply systems. It is primarily involved in water treatment. Since the Department enters into similar contracts for sewage treatment and industrial waste disposal, an extensive scale of operation cannot be expected as it has only 14 employees.
IV. Conclusion

After this brief explanation of the processes of public services provision, any meaningful and reliable conclusions about the whole area could not be given. There are, however, some remarks that a not fully informed outsider can give.

In a majority of cases described it seems that the most rational system of provision has been worked out. It must be noted that, according to several research studies, Grand Rapids is about the right size to permit a nearly optimal operation in the provision of many public services. There may still be some cases, however, where a more rational and efficient way of providing services could be achieved through the reorganization of the existing pattern.

The City of Grand Rapids, for instance, provides some services that are either provided at least partially by another government or could be more effectively be provided by another government. Parks and recreation are an example of the former. It seems appropriate to expect a geographically larger governmental unit to provide such a service. Police protection and planning could be put in the same category. Larger units with a centralized administration and decision-making power should be more efficient.

On the other hand, the City does not provide some services in areas in which its role can clearly be seen. Social services are one example. This does not mean that the City should be responsible for
providing the financial resources, as funds should come from sources at a higher level. Administering programs and organizing new approaches with a wider citizen participation, however, should perhaps be conducted by the City if not even broken down into smaller operational units.

Coupled with this, a diminishing role of County government can be seen. Some form of metropolitan area government or authority could play an important role. Planning, public transportation, pollution control, and drainage are examples of area-wide activities that should be treated by an area-wide authority.

A new idea of neighborhood services is emerging in Grand Rapids. In essence, it means that there might be a possibility for a diversified quality of service in the area. In other words, neighborhoods that could afford to pay more should also get better service. This can, of course, only be used with some services (e.g., refuse collection, police protection, social services). Nevertheless, a socially oriented mind cannot be for such a solution, since it carries dangers of greater discrimination and parcelization of the whole community with all its potentially harmful impacts. It can easily be brought down to racial and age discrimination.

The opposite, in fact, should be preferred—equalized service throughout the area, particularly in the field of education where
equality is far from being reached. This may also pose the question
of adequacy of school districts and the private sector as providers of
this important service.

Perhaps the main issue at the present time is the financial
aspect of the system. It is clear that the City of Grand Rapids is
in an unfavorable position. While it provides some rather important
services to the whole area, its taxing power remains within the City
limits. That is, there are recipients of City services outside the
City that do not pay for them. There are, however, arrangements worked
out with the County or other local governments (subsidies, co-financing,
etc.) but the City still remains "underpaid."

On the other hand, the County collects its taxes in the same
way as the City throughout the County, but does not serve Grand
Rapids citizens the same as the other communities.

The well-known case of the City's indirect subsidizing of its
surrounding suburbs is as acute here as anywhere else. Perhaps the
most important task in solving the problem can be undertaken in the
reorganization of the area's taxing system.