

INTRODUCTION

The county's new circumstances call for greater intergovernmental cooperation, or at least for cooperation in new areas.

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One of the most significant public administration issues facing governments and agencies today is how to establish and maintain intergovernmental relations that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision, while minimizing duplication of effort. Even with this goal established, there are impediments to accomplishing it including parochialism, jurisdictional competition, and limited vision. Addressing those issues is the subject of this *Intergovernmental Coordination Component* of the updated *Countywide Plan for Pinellas County*.

As discussed in the *Established Development Pattern* theme of the *Land Use Component*, Pinellas County developed from a number of small settlements generally scattered along the rail lines that ran through the county. When the settlements were called upon to provide services, each jurisdiction tended to provide for its own population. Because of geographical separation, there was limited opportunity or need for a significant amount of intergovernmental relations.

Today, Pinellas County is highly urbanized and intergovernmental coordination has been institutionalized in state law, local comprehensive plans, and other types of formal and informal processes. The question is not whether there is intergovernmental coordination, but rather, to what extent it is being carried out and whether it is accomplishing its intended purpose to the greatest extent possible.

While acknowledging that a certain amount of interjurisdictional tension is normal and to be expected, there are key issues that must be confronted and successfully addressed or they will negatively affect the future of the county. A partial list of the most significant issues that will influence the intergovernmental relations landscape in the future includes:

- County/municipality friction/interaction
- Mainland cities/county/beach communities equity and influence
- Pinellas County and its relationship with other counties in the region
- Potential consolidation of services
- Reconciliation of annexation issues
- Revenue generation/distribution inequities
- Fragmented economic development efforts

COORDINATION, COOPERATION, AND OTHER TERMS DEFINED

Throughout this document the terms “region” and “regional” are used. While in certain cases the meaning clearly includes the Tampa Bay region, generally, they are used to refer to Pinellas County inclusive of all municipalities and unincorporated areas. The concept is that at the same time jurisdictions exhibit unique characteristics and circumstances, there are commonalities that transcend parochial concerns.

State law requires it, and we use the terms during normal speech, but what is really meant by coordination, cooperation, and other such words? Unfortunately, often the words are used interchangeably which makes their meaning quite murky and adds to any confusion that may exist. Various writers have provided their definitions, and some see a ranking of cooperation types. One says, for instance, that “partnerships” operate at a higher level of engagement than others and that with them, there is necessarily a sharing of significant power (Goldman and Deakin, 2000).

The federal government has provided several definitions [23 C.F.R. 450.104]:

- *Consultation*: one party confers with another identified party and, prior to taking action(s), considers that party’s views.
- *Coordination*: the comparison of the...plans, programs, and schedules of one agency with related plans, programs and schedules of other agencies or entities with legal standing, and adjustment of plans, programs and schedules to achieve general consistency.
- *Cooperation*: the parties involved in carrying out the planning, programming and management systems processes work together to achieve a common goal or objective.

There are other forms of cooperation that may be considered more advanced.

- *Consensus-building*: entrepreneurial network building among key players toward *agreement* and adoption of a common strategic policy agenda, often with a focus on institution building.
- *Collaboration*: a form of consensus-building with a strong emphasis on including the full range of stakeholders, and establishing forums in which all participants have rights, responsibilities and opportunities to express their ideas and values.

- *Partnership*: a working relationship between organizations in which the lead organization yields some degree of control over a planning or decision-making process in exchange for another's expertise and/or political support. This definition excludes activities that do not involve much interaction, such as the numerous federal requirements for interagency "coordination" and "consultation" (Goldman and Deakin, 2000).

As noted above, the terms "coordination," "collaboration," and "cooperation" are sometimes used interchangeably when paired with "intergovernmental." For purposes of this countywide plan component, they are viewed differently. Examination of the literature supports making a distinction.

The word "coordination" connotes a mandate or requirement. For example, Florida Statutes require local comprehensive plans to have an Intergovernmental Coordination Element (ICE). Coordination is a process by which two or more jurisdictions comply with mandated or contractual obligations.

On the other hand, "cooperation" and "collaboration" connote voluntary initiatives undertaken between parties. One writer has said that in a cooperative effort, "...groups pursue their own self-interest without the aid of a central authority to force them to cooperate with each other." With regard to regional cooperation, the same writer maintains that:

The level of cooperation possible in each region is a function of preceding events and local history, previous efforts to cooperate, and regional culture. Cooperation among sectors of the economy, individuals, and firms...is the outcome of individuals and organizations pursuing their own interests and establishing relationships to satisfy their own pecuniary or philanthropic objectives....

Cooperative tactics may be short-term and ad hoc, or designed for the long-term health of a region. Examples of cooperation include 1) formal and informal interlocal agreements to provide or produce services; 2) multi-jurisdictional agencies with cross-jurisdictional objectives; cross-boundary districts or service delivery organizations; and 3) projects administered or financed jointly by separate jurisdictions.

There are differences in what public leaders expect interjurisdictional cooperation to accomplish. Clearly the motivation for intergovernmental cooperation comes down to the fundamentals of will it 1) save tax dollars, 2) provide efficiencies of scale and 3) increase the level of available services....

Interlocal and regional cooperation and the ways in which such cooperation can be developed and sustained are critical components of any strategies to correct longstanding urban problems. The interest in metropolitan cooperation underscores

the logic of investigating how areas can develop institutions that will elicit and sustain interjurisdictional cooperation (Nunn and Rosentraub, 1997).

MEASURING COOPERATION

There are numerous problems with measuring the success or failure of cooperative efforts. For instance, what were the expectations when the effort was begun?

A region that utilizes interlocal contracting could be considered high in cooperation yet the cooperation could be designed simply to make municipal government operations more cost effective, rather than to enhance economic development, develop a 'citistate' perspective, improve the common environment, or improve the region's cultural or physical infrastructure.

Measuring the outcomes of interjurisdictional cooperation must be based on knowledge of the original objectives of each region's attempt at cooperation, and not be driven by a belief in cooperation as the panacea for the metropolitan area's problems, or by some set of preconceived notions about what is and is not good cooperation. What is possible in one area may be possible only in that area; there is no benchmark to denote satisfactory levels of interjurisdictional cooperation (Nunn and Rosentraub, 1997).

Even with these problems, one of the best ways to measure the success of cooperative partnerships is through systematic evaluation:

Clear and consistent communication between partners is common to good partnerships; when it does not exist there is less chance for effective joint arrangements....Communication and evaluation tend to take place only when there is a problem; in many cases the issue has reached a point of no return and finding solutions is extremely challenging. Regularly scheduled evaluations (on at least an annual basis) are proactive and can be instrumental in heading off these crises. Evaluations can determine if the goals of the partnership have been met. When desired results have not been realized modifications can be made to remedy the situation. Systematic evaluations can also help with most of the commonly cited negative aspects of partnerships—the loss of control (Yoder, 1996).

DIMENSIONS OF INTERJURISDICTIONAL COOPERATION

There are four “dimensions of interjurisdictional cooperation” including:

1. Objectives or issues that cooperation aims to resolve. Spontaneous cooperation is likely to arise when all jurisdictions expect mutual gain. At the other extreme, “redistribution of resources from more wealthy to less wealthy areas as an objective of cooperation is probably the most difficult.”
2. The tactical approaches to invoking interjurisdictional cooperation. “Less formal methods include free market approaches, networking, information sharing, or ad hoc initiatives; more formal methods include metropolitan governance or fiscal equalization (e.g., revenue sharing or tax-base sharing).
3. Institutional forms used to promote cooperation. This concerns what tactics are used to accomplish the objectives. “Cooperative organizations will vary in the amount of local autonomy left to jurisdictional cooperators. Autonomy is often a function of the institutional format chosen to promote cooperation.”
4. Expected outcomes from cooperation. Four types of outcomes are identified: economic development (e.g., improved business climate, more entrepreneurial activity); municipal service (e.g., economies of scale in providing or producing public services, improved cost efficiencies or effectiveness, better services); physical environmental outcomes (e.g., improved environmental quality); and socio-political (e.g., widespread citizen participation in public decision making, more inclusive representation).

BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES WITH COOPERATION

It may seem to be self-evident that intergovernmental cooperation is beneficial. The fact is, however, that it is not as easy to implement and maintain as it might seem. Even with comprehensive plan ICE statutes that say jurisdictions and agencies will implement intergovernmental coordination efforts, operationalizing the intent often is not successful on a consistent basis. Why is this the case?

No one answer to the question is sufficient. One may be simply that people do not naturally think about what is happening in the next jurisdiction or what effect something done in one jurisdiction will have on its neighbor. Interjurisdictional competition is another reason for minimal success in that there may be perceived advantages in not

coordinating or cooperating. There may also be a lack of knowledge that coordination should be implemented or there may be little appreciation for the fact that coordination and cooperation can be mutually beneficial.

Benefits

The benefits of cooperation have been identified by a variety of writers on the subject. A good summary of the benefits is found in a publication titled *Ten Reasons for Regional Cooperation* (Bi-State Regional Commission, 2001). The following is a listing of those reasons:

1. To save money. Take advantage of economics of scale, especially where fixed costs are high (e.g., infrastructure and equipment) or strong expertise is required.
2. To deliver quality services. Specialized areas often require professionals beyond the means of small units of government unless they join others to spread the cost (e.g., planners and 24-hour emergency dispatch) and assure high quality.
3. To achieve greater political clout. When several local governments are unified in an active effort vis-à-vis state and federal agencies, they have a better chance of success.
4. To achieve economic clout. Regional marketing for tourism and/or economic development permits better media buys and more comprehensive, sophisticated clout in the marketplace.
5. To solve a specific problem. Two heads are better than one, and sharing ideas and resources often permits better problem solving, often at a reduced cost.
6. To share scarce federal and state resources. Often state and federal agencies in an era of budget austerity can fund a joint facility or a joint staff position for a new program and thereby serve more people.
7. To plan more realistically. In a global economy any community is dependent upon other communities in its multi-county region for labor and other resources. Indeed, its economy and other aspects of its life are dependent on its state or multi-state region.
8. To work on environmental and other concerns. Among the ‘boundary-spillover’ effects of modern life are environmental impacts—on water, air, and other natural resources. Purely local approaches to most environmental problems do not work. An economic example might be that in an era of solid waste tipping fees; failure to coordinate fees can result in over or under-use of a community’s facilities by residents and/or non-residents.

9. To create a sense of local and regional harmony. Officials become acquainted through cooperative efforts, develop communication and trust, and reduce inter-jurisdictional conflict.
10. To complement strengths and weaknesses. By drawing on unique strengths and weaknesses of each community, nearby communities can develop a combined strategic package of positions which is more balanced; they may complement one another without duplicating.

A somewhat different perspective is provided by a regional framework plan for Baltimore County, Maryland (1999), which is equally applicable to Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region. It says:

Each jurisdiction located within the...region should understand how its individual decisions impact other jurisdictions. Decision-making that focuses on promoting regional as well as local interests provides the best strategy for ensuring the continued viability of each jurisdiction in the future. Regardless of its division by jurisdictional boundaries, the...region functions as a single economically and socially integrated territory. Many communities cross jurisdictional boundaries, and can benefit from coordinating community and economic development plans.

The Baltimore plan recognizes the fact that “Only through teamwork, in partnership with citizens, community associations, businesses, institutions, state and federal government agencies and surrounding jurisdictions, will success be achieved.... Communication and teamwork are essential.”

Difficulties

Intergovernmental coordination and cooperation is made more difficult in Pinellas County than in some other metropolitan jurisdictions because of the multiplicity and variety of governmental and quasi-governmental entities. The one county government co-exists with 24 municipalities, and a large number of other entities that provide public education, sewer, fire, lighting, recreation, and other services. This arrangement has developed over time and has resulted in a fragmented government structure.

One of the most vexing aspects of intergovernmental cooperation is the fact that public sector leaders are elected to serve the needs of their communities, not the larger needs of the region. Without great effort to maintain a broad perspective, parochialism is easily embraced (Altshuler, 1996).

There is a need for broad and ongoing political mobilization to support regional approaches to urban issues. One source produced a paper about the Sacramento, California area (Hammer, 2001), but the observations describe this county and region as

well. The report found that “...there is no regional corps of leaders who understand and articulate the need for the region to come together to address the challenges we face and to catalyze action to take advantage of our opportunities. We do not have as many political leaders as we need who rise above their parochial interests to address issues on a regional basis. Unfortunately, too many get into an ‘us vs. them’ mentality that gets in the way of true progress.... It is time we face the reality that this is one economy—one region.”

The report continues,

We know that local elected officials are elected to represent their constituencies. But they must recognize that they are part of one regional economy and develop the methods of communication and cooperation to assure we can implement whatever regional vision we develop. They can’t run on platforms that deny interest in regional issues. They must speak out, show leadership and use the force of their offices to bring people together.

Not only does the public sector receive a critical review in the Sacramento report, the private sector does as well. “We need a cadre of private sector corporate leaders to come together and serve as the catalyst to motivate elected officials to rise above their parochial interests to develop the policies and strategies necessary to move the region forward to pursue our vision” (Hammer, 2001).

QUALITIES OF COOPERATIVE PRACTICES

Cooperation is obviously beneficial, but in practice there are any number of problems that limit full implementation. With the recognized difficulties in making cooperation work, what qualities of cooperative partnerships are required in order to have the best chance of success? “Often, the basic problem is a lack of information flow. One governmental entity takes or approves actions that have immediate or long-range implications for another governmental or utility service provider without its knowledge. There may be legitimate concerns that need to be voiced and considered....Sharing information does not equate to sharing authority” (Boone County, Missouri, 1999).

Common barriers to good cooperative partnerships include lack of leadership and trust and incompatibility of missions, but others are as significant. “While trust and leadership were noted as important qualities, two very practical qualities were rated as contributing significantly more to effective partnerships: the realization of mutual benefits and ongoing communication” (Yoder, 1996). And, even though cooperative efforts may be recognized as beneficial, the loss of control, unrealistic expectations that go unfulfilled, poor quality of programs, failure to receive credit, and failure to provide services have been identified as negative influences.

COORDINATION AND STATE LAW

The State of Florida supports the concept and practice of intergovernmental coordination through mandates intended to accomplish declared goals. For example, coordination between water management districts and counties/municipalities is to be accomplished by implementing provisions contained in local comprehensive plans.

Furthermore, state law requires that each local government include as part of their comprehensive plan an Intergovernmental Coordination Element (ICE). Section 163.3161(4), Florida Statutes (F.S.) reads: “It is the intent of this act to encourage and assure cooperation between and among municipalities and counties and to encourage and assure coordination of planning and development activities of units of local government with the planning activities of regional agencies and state government in accord with applicable provisions of law.” Section 163.3177(4)(a), F.S., identifies “coordination of the local comprehensive plan with the comprehensive plans of adjacent municipalities, the county, adjacent counties, or the region...” as a state goal. That goal is supported in Section 163.3177(6)(h), F.S., when it states that the ICE is to illustrate relationships and principles and “guidelines to be used in the accomplishment of coordination of the adopted comprehensive plan with the plans of school boards and other units of local government.”

Section 9J-5.015, Florida Administrative Code supports state law when it says:

It is the purpose of the intergovernmental coordination element to identify and resolve incompatible goals, objectives, policies and development proposed in local government comprehensive plans and to determine and respond to the needs for coordination processes and procedures with adjacent local governments, and regional and state agencies.

State government has come to rely heavily on the use of interlocal agreements as implementation mechanisms to accomplish intergovernmental coordination goals. For example, the relationship between school boards and local governments is to be enhanced through interlocal agreements addressing education facility siting and plan coordination as well as school board representation on local planning agencies.

ISSUES ADDRESSED IN LOCAL ICE

This section presents intergovernmental issues identified by multiple county jurisdictions in their ICE. It identifies the needs and policies intended to meet them and then it summarizes the existing local policies and suggested ICE strategies for improving intergovernmental coordination.

Improved Public Facilities Coordination

There is a general desire to ensure continued coordination in level-of-service standards and concurrency management. Jurisdictions wish to avoid disruption of service and ensure availability through improved coordination of timing, location, and capacity of public facilities. One component of this is coordination among various local jurisdictions to ensure that standards are consistent and mutually agreeable. Another is coordination between local jurisdictions and agencies providing public services to those jurisdictions (Pinellas County and independent special districts including the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority [PSTA], the Southwest Florida Water Management District [SWFWMD], and Tampa Bay Water [TBW]). While there are existing mechanisms for both of these types of coordination, there is nonetheless explicit interest in continuing to use those mechanisms and in expanding and improving them.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Review the plans and independent special district facility reports of PSTA, SWFWMD, and TBW and identify and resolve conflicts with the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, particularly concurrency-related items. [Impediments to achieving this are not identified—it may be a matter of local governments taking a more active stance in the review of these reports and plans. Current law requires coordination of local plans with those of water management districts.]
- Consider amending local comprehensive plan based upon review of independent special district documents and discussions with those agencies.
- Notify independent special districts and/or Pinellas County of proposed comprehensive plan amendments with potential impacts on the services they provide. Agencies should review proposed amendments to ensure coordination with their plans and programs.
- Ensure that development orders or permits are only issued for projects consistent with the policies and objectives of agencies providing services to the jurisdiction.

- Through the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC), work with Pinellas County to ensure that local future needs are considered during the acquisition and design of public service facilities.
- For jurisdictions which are retail customers of Pinellas County Utilities, regularly meet with county staff to determine future incorporated area needs for potable water, based upon development anticipated in the *Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan* and local comprehensive plans.
- Local governments providing services to other jurisdictions should regularly advise those jurisdictions of available utility capacities and reserves.
- If different level-of-service standards are enforced by a local government and by the county or independent service provider, work to achieve consistent standards.
- Require proposed development to avoid and/or mitigate potential negative impacts on adopted levels of service of adjacent jurisdictions.
- Involve PSTA in a local site plan review process to jointly determine opportunities for enhancing transit service to new developments and redevelopments.

Improved Coordination of Transportation Facilities

While the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) already provides a means for intergovernmental coordination in countywide transportation planning, most jurisdictions identified a need to improve coordination with respect to transportation-related decisions. A common concern is ensuring consistent level-of-service standards along multijurisdictional roadways. Coordination in implementation of concurrency management and land use policies by local governments, the county, and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is crucial to long-term improvement in roadway operating conditions. This must include a greater emphasis on regional impacts of transportation decisions and on land use decisions that will affect transportation systems.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Require proposed development to avoid and/or mitigate potential negative impacts on the adopted levels of service of adjacent jurisdictions.
- A local government should review transportation concurrency management levels of service with the FDOT for state roads and Pinellas County for county roads in the jurisdiction to ensure consistency between local and county/state standards.

- Do not issue permits or development orders for projects affecting access to county or state roads until the MPO or FDOT completes a review of the development site access plan. Consider MPO/FDOT review comments in the review of these projects.
- Develop a method for increasing the beach communities' coordination with the MPO since these jurisdictions have no direct representation.

Improved Integration of Local Government and Pinellas County School Board Planning Activities

A common need identified in the ICEs of many jurisdictions is to improve coordination with the School Board in locating facilities and efficiently using community resources. Local governments are required to provide for school facility siting in their comprehensive plans, and the School Board is required to integrate facility planning with local comprehensive plans. Jurisdictions with schools have entered into interlocal agreements with the Board to implement this requirement.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Local governments without interlocal agreements with the School Board for public educational facilities siting should establish them, if appropriate.
- Regularly monitor the effectiveness of interlocal agreements with the School Board and make amendments as required.
- Utilize the countywide planning process for reviewing established school siting processes and recommending necessary modifications elicited by intergovernmental conflicts or new statutory requirements.
- Coordinate capital improvements planning and neighborhood and corridor planning with the School Board's annually updated 5-year School Plant Survey (5-year facility work program), and 10- and 20-year facility work plans.
- Monitor changes in school districting policy (e.g., controlled choice plan) to anticipate impacts on land values, neighborhood planning, and infrastructure support.
- Establish agreements with the School Board for joint use of facilities and collocation of public facilities.

Improved Recreation Facilities Coordination

It would be mutually beneficial for local governments without interlocal joint use agreements to approve them with the Pinellas County School Board and other recreation facility providers. Furthermore, some jurisdictions expressed a desire to address recreation needs of enclave residents through interlocal agreements.

Avoiding Incompatible Land Uses Along Common Borders

To avoid the negative impacts of incompatible adjacent land uses, there is a need for better coordination between neighboring jurisdictions when considering zoning and land use changes and approving development along common borders.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Establish procedures for reviewing proposed development and land use changes along common borders for consistency with the comprehensive plans of adjacent jurisdictions.
- During an application or permit review period, notify adjacent local governments of proposed development and land use/zoning changes along common borders. Allow those governments to review and comment on such proposals.
- Establish a specified distance requirement for notification of adjacent jurisdictions concerning proposed development and land use/zoning changes.
- When reviewing development proposals and land use/zoning changes, address the potential impacts and concerns identified by adjacent jurisdictions.
- Implement mitigation strategies for identified multi-jurisdictional impacts during the site plan approval process.
- Institutionalize a review and comment process for proposed development and land use/zoning changes in adjacent jurisdictions near common borders.

Location of Problematic Land Uses

Choosing locations for problematic land uses, such as landfills, is typically a contentious process. Many jurisdictions identified a lack of formal and informal coordinating mechanisms for locating mutually agreeable sites for these land uses.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Develop, through the PPC, guidelines for the location of problematic land uses.
- Local governments should conduct reviews of their use and locational standards to identify potential sites for problematic land uses and to delineate the requirements for location on these sites. The reviews can be shared with neighboring jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts and/or inconsistencies with the standards of those jurisdictions.
- Coordinate the location of problematic land uses through the review of future land use plan amendments by the PPC and the CPA.

Improved Stormwater Management

Many jurisdictions recognize a need to improve stormwater management. Because stormwater runoff impacts flooding and surface water quality at the watershed/regional level, rather than the jurisdictional level, there is a need for better coordination between the jurisdictions in a watershed to mitigate those impacts.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Jurisdictions without master stormwater plans should develop them in cooperation with Pinellas County and SWFWMD.
- During development of a stormwater management plan, review it against the county's stormwater management plan and against the SWFWMD *Water Management Plan*.
- Review existing stormwater management levels of service and methodologies to ensure consistency with SWFWMD standards.
- Jurisdictions within a watershed should develop areawide drainage plans.
- Coordinate and consult with Pinellas County to minimize potential water quality impacts of effluent discharge from county wastewater treatment plants. [While specific strategies are not identified, some possibilities might include: sharing of information regarding current conditions and impacts or working together to develop goals for reduction in effluent discharge and/or reduction in BOD attributable to effluent discharge.]

Coordinated Efforts To Protect Natural Resources

Many communities express a desire to work with each other and with the county to protect area natural resources, particularly water quality and wildlife habitats. Jurisdictions recognize the need to look beyond local boundaries when planning for natural resources. There is a need for a “systems” approach to environmental management, with effective coordination between all stakeholders in area ecosystems.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Seek opportunities to coordinate land acquisition activities with other jurisdictions and agencies in order to promote connectivity in protected natural areas and to achieve comprehensive watershed management.
- Establish interlocal agreements with other jurisdictions to integrate resource and habitat management efforts.
- If not already doing so, jurisdictions along Tampa Bay should participate in the Tampa Bay National Estuary Program’s comprehensive coastal management planning process.

Improved Natural Hazard Mitigation in Coastal Areas

Coastal jurisdictions acknowledge a serious deficit in emergency shelter spaces and identify a need for better coordination of shelter and evacuation planning, both between local governments and with emergency management agencies. Jurisdictions also recognize the inherent conflicts between coastal development and hazard mitigation.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Notify the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) and the Pinellas County Environmental Management Department of proposed future land use plan policies that will impact hurricane shelters and evacuation routes, and of proposed map amendments that increase residential densities in coastal high hazard areas. These agencies can assess potential impacts on hurricane shelter space and on evacuation clearance times and routes, which should be considered when making land use decisions.
- Use the TBRPC *Hurricane Evacuation Study* for guidance when considering changes in residential densities in coastal high hazard areas.

- If necessary, amend comprehensive plan and land development regulations for consistency with the *Pinellas County Unified Local Mitigation Strategy*.
- Coastal jurisdictions should coordinate on transportation planning, location of public facilities, and construction standards to mitigate coastal hurricane and flooding hazards, however, no specific methods are identified.

Resolving Conflicts Between Jurisdictions

Virtually all jurisdictions expressed a need to begin to or better utilize existing dispute resolution processes to resolve interjurisdictional development conflicts, land use plan disputes, and other intergovernmental disputes.

Identified Policies/Strategies:

- Utilize the PPC and the existing countywide planning process to resolve future land use disputes and related intergovernmental disputes.
- Utilize the TBRPC informal mediation process, outlined in Rule 29H-13, F.A.C., to reconcile development issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- As an alternative to annexation, jurisdictions should consider establishing mutually acceptable agreements with the county to provide selected municipal services to unincorporated portions of planning areas when such agreements would be more cost-effective.

THEME: THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Initiatives that cross government boundaries cause new complexity and reduced control. They require that the different needs, priorities, and legal frameworks be balanced against the needs of the shared vision.

U.S. General Services Administration publication

INTRODUCTION

To establish a foundation for analyzing intergovernmental cooperation, it is necessary to review the existing issues and problems hindering effective relations between jurisdictions. While focusing on the problems that need to be resolved, it would be unfair to conclude that cooperative intergovernmental efforts do not now exist or that they have been uniformly unsuccessful. The Pinellas Assembly, held in May 2002, identified past and current successes in intergovernmental cooperation, asserting in its final report that “When the full spectrum of intergovernmental relations in Pinellas County is considered, many examples of successful cooperation stand out. When Pinellas governments choose to cooperate, as they often do, they achieve excellent results” (Pinellas Assembly Steering Committee, 2002). Some of the past and current successes include:

- The formation of Tampa Bay Water
- Sheriff’s contract with municipalities
- Fire and EMS services
- Establishment of the Library Cooperative
- Solid waste disposal at the resource recovery facility
- U.S. 19 Task Force
- Manufactured Home Task Force
- Pinellas Trail
- 911 system

The discussion that follows highlights the need for enhanced countywide intergovernmental coordination, and it emphasizes the importance of cooperation and collaboration in minimizing parochialism. The latter is essential in order to foster intergovernmental relationships supportive of finding solutions to identified countywide problems.

THE FACTS

Role of the PPC and CPA

In addition to the above examples, the reconstitution of the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) in 1988 is a notable example of successful intergovernmental action in Pinellas County. The “Special Act” (Ch. 88-464, Laws of Florida) recognizes the intergovernmental relations role of the Council through a “coordinating” function. Since that time, the PPC has fulfilled that function by implementing future land use plan map consistency, promoting consistent countywide regulations, e.g., signs and school siting, and working toward rational approaches to countywide issues, e.g., voluntary annexation.

The PPC serves in an advisory role to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) with regard to countywide land use issues and maintenance of the *Countywide Plan*. When the PPC acts in its advisory capacity, the Board receives the advice in its role as the Countywide Planning Authority (CPA). The formal and working relationships of the PPC and the CPA are outlined in the provisions of a 1990 BCC resolution [90-205] along with a document entitled *Rules Concerning the Administration of the Countywide Future Land Use Plan* (the Rules).

The role of the CPA is identified in the Special Act and BCC Resolution 90-205 as well as the Rules. The CPA has the responsibility to adopt or amend the *Countywide Plan* as well as the authority to enforce it. Following PPC consideration and recommendation, the CPA has the responsibility to make a determination of appropriateness for *Countywide Plan* amendments. Upon a finding of appropriateness, the amendment becomes effective. However, if the amendment is denied, there is an established appeal process.

PPC Strategic Plan

In July 1999, the PPC, after a comprehensive review of its functions in collaboration with the BCC, developed *A Strategic Plan for the Pinellas Planning Council*. The plan outlines numerous tasks and functions to be undertaken by the PPC during the ensuing years, with intergovernmental issues being the predominant focus. Functions include serving as an advocate for intergovernmental coordination/cooperation, i.e., as a problem solver for intergovernmental issues. Examples of such issues include problematic land uses, school/local government relations, and other issues of countywide significance for which a unified approach can be developed, e.g., parking standards, or development review processes timing and approach.

The role statement of the PPC encompasses several functions including serving as a representative forum, providing overall policy direction, ensuring *Countywide Plan* consistency, facilitating interagency coordination, and providing technical assistance. Two of those roles are significant in the context of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation. The role statement addresses serving as a representative forum by saying that the PPC,

shall function as the vehicle and forum for the coordination of countywide planning and growth management issues through the participation of the twenty-five member local governments and school board in Pinellas County. This role serves to establish and maintain an objective forum for the consideration of such inter-municipal matters of mutual interest to the member governments as may be determined appropriate by the members.

With regard to facilitating interagency coordination, the PPC is to play that role,

by serving as a source to coordinate and facilitate planning and development in Pinellas County with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and the Florida Department of Community affairs relative to regional and state plans and procedures. This role serves to focus, clarify and streamline the separate but interrelated functions of the countywide, regional and state planning programs and agencies so as to avoid duplication and encourage efficiency.

The role of the Council is multi-faceted, with the paramount goal of providing for the meaningful coordination of inter-jurisdictional interests in a manner that helps to both define and achieve the County's long-term planning objectives.

Accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and action plan items from the PPC Strategic Plan cover both short- and long-term time frames with the most significant intergovernmental ones including:

Goal 1. Enhance the value of the Council as a representative forum.

Objective 1.1. Develop and strengthen a mutually beneficial relationship with the Board of County Commissioners in their role as the Countywide Planning Authority.

Action Plan Items

- Clearly define the respective roles of the PPC and CPA vis-à-vis their countywide functions.
- Conduct an annual joint workshop on goals, work program, and budget to assist in strengthening the relationship.

Goal 4. Clarify, streamline, and enhance intergovernmental coordination.

Objective 4.1. Describe and evaluate existing relationships between local, countywide, regional, and state functions relative to the plan and regulatory process.

Action Plan Items

- Enumerate existing internal (within Pinellas County) and external (regional and state) requirements and procedures.
- Identify both immediate and long-term opportunities to clarify, merge, or eliminate overlap or duplication.
- Act on opportunities for immediate improvement.

Objective 4.2. Identify and implement proposed solutions and means of achieving recommended changes to improve intergovernmental coordination.

Action Plan Items

- Prepare alternate means of streamlining, merging, delegating or eliminating functions for the long-term improvement of the plan and regulatory process, both internal and external to Pinellas County.
- Identify and initiate specific administrative, agreement, or statutory steps needed to carry out such alternatives as are determined desirable.

Objective 4.3. Identify additional opportunities to enhance intergovernmental coordination and collaboration.

Action Plan Items

- Establish uniform provisions to meet public school siting and public facility collocation requirements.
- Identify and develop opportunities for collaboration and coordination in the interest of a more uniform and efficient planning function.

The Countywide Planning Process in an Intergovernmental Context

The purposes of *Countywide Plan* implementation rules are identified as:

1) to establish the definitions, standards, criteria, and procedures required to implement and administer the Countywide Future Land Use Plan (FLUP); 2) to establish parameters and procedures that will be used to determine whether or not the local governments' future land use plans and land development regulations are consistent with the Countywide FLUP and these Rules; 3) to maintain consistency between local government plans and regulations and the Countywide FLUP and these Rules; and 4) to establish compatibility with and further the implementation of the Countywide Comprehensive Plan and the policies set forth therein (Rules Div. 1.1., Purpose).

Purposes 1) and 2) above have been accomplished through promulgation of the Rules and implementation of the consistency process. Therefore, the tasks to be carried out by the PPC and its staff (Articles 3 and 4 of the Rules) involve a maintenance function with regard to the Rules and the FLUP, as well as implementation of the textual portion of the *Countywide Plan* and its position statements and strategies.

While use of the “consistency” concept is rare elsewhere in the country, it plays a major role in the Pinellas countywide planning process and is directly related to intergovernmental relations. Consistency is maintained through the FLUP and Rules amendment process, which is exemplary of the intergovernmental coordination effort in Pinellas County. Consistency is defined as the determination made as a result of a comparison “whether or not a local government future land use plan or land development regulation...is in accordance with and is within the parameters specified for the item by the criterion to which it is compared.” (Rules Div. 3.2, Consistency Requirement) The comparison is made between a proposed amendment and criteria contained in Rules Article 4, where it says, “The parameters for the criteria and standards have been established by plan category and shall be the basis for the administration of the FLUP.”

Continued local comprehensive plan and development regulation consistency with the *Countywide Plan* is required after the initial consistency determination. In order to maintain that consistency, as local plans are proposed to be amended over time, map amendments are submitted to the PPC for review prior to being considered by the Countywide Planning Authority. Amendments that are either more detailed or more restrictive than the standards contained in the Rules are considered to be consistent. It is important to keep in mind that any FLUP amendments are made with regard to the appropriateness of the requested change, not the proposed development which is regulated by each local jurisdiction.

The Rules require that on a five-year basis, they are to be reviewed and a report prepared detailing their status. And, while the Rules fulfill their purpose of providing the implementation mechanism for the *Countywide Plan*, occasionally there is a need to update them or the FLUP through an amendment process. The need to update the Rules can be caused by unanticipated events or changes in the law, e.g., state school siting legislation. Rule amendments can also be initiated in an effort to streamline the FLUP or Rule amendment processes. These amendments can occur outside of the five-year report requirement, with the last streamlining effort having concluded in September 2001. It is reasonable to assume that as part of the countywide infill/redevelopment effort that is now under way, the Rules will again require amendment in order to accommodate new approaches to dealing with a different type of development.

The Planners Advisory Committee

One of the most significant innovations of the countywide planning process is the Planners Advisory Committee (PAC). The Special Act which reformulated the PPC defines the role and membership of the PAC:

Directors of individual local government planning departments shall automatically become members of the Planners Advisory Committee. Said committee may, at the direction of the council, perform a professional planning review of the council planning staff recommendations of plans that are to be acted upon by the council....The term "individual local government planning departments" means the planning departments now maintained by the local governments. In the performance of local planning, each unit of local government shall either establish a professional planning department, retain a professional planning consulting firm, or contract with the Pinellas County Planning Council for professional services (Pinellas County, 1988).

The PAC fulfills its mandate as provided in the Special Act by advising PPC staff on the work products and policy positions that are presented to the PPC. The PAC is unique in that it is the only established forum in the county where professional planners have the opportunity to review and comment on proposed amendments to the FLUP, Rules, and *Countywide Plan*.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

NEED FOR A BETTER SENSE OF COMMUNITY

During their March 2001 visioning workshop, the BCC identified county fragmentation and division along geographical, jurisdictional, and racial lines as major governance issues. At the same time, they agreed that there is a need for “an enhanced sense of community and caring in Pinellas County.” That “enhanced sense of community” should consist of:

- Celebrating the diversity of the inclusive Pinellas community;
- Civic engagement that features successful and effective communication among the diverse elements of the Pinellas communities; and
- Bringing Pinellas communities together to produce and continue to maintain consensus on a vision of Pinellas’ successful future.

Asked to envision an undesirable county future, the BCC speculated that the Board itself would become “the site of parochial battles,” each city would generate and sell power, and toll booths would be set up at their borders. While extreme and unlikely, this vision is of a county hopelessly split on a variety of issues.

On the other hand, the positive BCC vision included “vastly improved coordination among the separate governmental jurisdictions in the county while achieving more efficient and more responsive local government.” Additionally, the BCC recognized “that communities and neighborhoods are part of the governance structure” and they should be included “in major policy development in some way” (Pinellas Co., 2001).

But visions are only valuable when measures are taken to put them into effect. And while numerous intergovernmental successes can be identified, there is evidence of a drift toward more, not less, parochialism within the county. That drift can be seen in county and municipal responses to annexation activities (see discussion below), countywide planning efforts, and infrastructure improvements.

Pinellas County local governments are by no means alone in exhibiting parochialism. It exists in virtually every jurisdiction in the state, nation, and world. Its existence, however, seldom has positive effects when cooperative efforts are called for. Rather, parochialism puts up barriers to those efforts, and it must be overcome or minimized before the problem that requires cooperation can be solved.

Multiplicity of Agencies and Duplication of Effort

Within Pinellas County there are 25 local governments, dozens of municipal service providers, numerous independent special districts, and over fifty taxing authorities, all operating within a relatively small geographical area. The number of existing governmental and quasi-governmental entities results in a high degree of fragmentation that not only leads to confusion among the citizenry, but among government officials as well. For example, a person may live in unincorporated Pinellas County, but have a city address and ZIP code, receive fire service from one city, but sewer service from another. Such a situation justifies questioning whether this is the optimal way to govern and provide services.

Another problem created by the multiplicity of jurisdictions and agencies is parochialism and the potential for duplication of effort which leads to higher costs and lessens the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision. An example of this can be found in the telecommunication regulations adopted by jurisdictions within the county. Shortly after the 1996 Telecommunications Act became law, a series of meetings were held at the staff level with the objective of coming up with a countywide model ordinance. Unfortunately, those cooperative efforts broke down. The result is that there are now 22 telecommunications ordinances within the county, each slightly different from the others. An opportunity to have a united, countywide approach to a problem that equally affects all jurisdictions was lost.

As the number of governmental and quasi-governmental entities increases, the effort necessary to maintain intergovernmental coordination also increases resulting in coordination breakdowns becoming more likely. The fact that more breakdowns do not occur illustrates the considerable efforts being made to sustain coordination in such a chaotic and fragmented governmental environment.

Complicating the situation described above is the existence of state and regional entities whose functions affect the county. Included in this group are all state departments and agencies, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, and Tampa Bay Water to name a few. The existence of these entities only adds to the complicated environment making intergovernmental coordination even more difficult.

Coordinating with these entities can be a daunting task, especially since they are beyond local control and they have their own agendas and directives. All too often it seems that an agency has made a determination to take a certain action, and local governments are put in the position of attempting to reverse a decision that appears to already have been made. An example of this is the traffic control support monotubes installed by the Florida

Department of Transportation without sufficient consultation with local governments even though the tubes are aesthetically unpleasing and conflict with redevelopment goals.

Annexation Issues

Of the 179,000 acres of land in Pinellas County, approximately 94 percent are developed, with 55 percent of the land and two-thirds of the population lying within municipalities (PPC, 2002a; Pinellas County Property Appraisers Office, 2002). Over time, various municipalities have started to encroach upon one another's planned service areas. Within the last several years, there has been an increase in efforts to expand municipal corporate limits through annexation in order to increase local tax bases and provide needed and desirable services as well as delimit municipal boundaries in a logical manner.

The ongoing and ambitious annexations create an environment of uncertainty and instability, resulting in a breakdown in intergovernmental coordination and cooperation between adjacent municipalities and the unincorporated county. Recognizing the negative results of such an environment, work was initiated to develop a comprehensive approach to voluntary annexation that would replace the existing annexation regulations found in state statutes. On November 7, 2000, the *Pinellas County Home Rule Charter* was amended by a general referendum to enable the implementation of this comprehensive voluntary annexation program for Pinellas County. The new process implements a limited regulatory review process to ensure that municipal annexation is accomplished in a more rational, deliberate, and equitable manner, in order to facilitate quality planning, provide efficient and effective service delivery, increase intergovernmental coordination, and retain the confidence of the citizenry in their government.

The implementation of exclusive planning areas delineating areas for municipal annexation, coupled with a limited regulatory review process, and a subsequent right of appeal for affected parties, has been tailored to afford the annexing municipalities optimum certainty and flexibility with regard to annexation, while preserving and enhancing due process for affected parties, such as the annexed property owner, the county, and other governmental service providers with jurisdiction.

While state law allows charter counties to develop a customized voluntary annexation process, no such flexibility exists for referendum or involuntary annexations. As a result, points of friction remain between municipalities and the county.

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THEME: THE REDEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY CHALLENGE

Communities are not simply built forms. They are social arrangements, either continually attracting investment in both human and financial terms, or falling into disrepair and decay.

New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan

INTRODUCTION

It has become a cliché to say that Pinellas County is virtually built-out and is moving from vacant land development into a sustained redevelopment mode. Nonetheless, those observations are true. As Pinellas County moves more and more into that redevelopment mode, some may question why the move is necessary in the first place. Why can't Pinellas County just stay the way it is? Why must we always be changing the landscape?

It is taken as fact by many in government and the development community that redevelopment and infill activities are beneficial. Not all members of a community, however, may see it that way. How does a region benefit from redevelopment? The answer is that redevelopment and infill help to sustain the economic vitality and physical infrastructure of an area.

Like a homeowner who neglects to perform maintenance on a house, resulting in disrepair and eventual dilapidation, a region must perform its own maintenance—redevelopment and infill activities, whether public or private, are the mechanisms that perform the maintenance. As the *New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan* says, “Communities are not simply built forms. They are social arrangements, either continually attracting investment in both human and financial terms, or falling into disrepair and decay” (New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs [NJDCA], 2001).

This is not to say that every redevelopment or infill project is beneficial or desirable. It is common to hear people comment negatively about the proliferation of certain types of redevelopment. Even with that occasionally being the case, the general activity of redevelopment is regionally beneficial and vital for economic sustainability even if each redevelopment project is not viewed as such.

How do intergovernmental coordination (the subject of this countywide plan component) and redevelopment relate to each other? While some may view the relationship as tenuous, in fact, the two issues affect not only each other, but land use concerns as well. Given that the redevelopment process is going to impact the entire county (although not all parts at the same time, or in the same way), there is intergovernmental interest in seeing that those efforts fulfill local as well as countywide goals. Fulfillment of those goals will require intergovernmental coordination and cooperation over the long term.

THE FACTS

Countywide Redevelopment Efforts

There is broad-based consensus in both the public and private sectors that high-quality redevelopment is essential for the county's economic future. It is also recognized that market forces are generating redevelopment, but that without an overarching countywide plan, the results are likely to be haphazard and driven by short-term profits, rather than the long-term good of the county. There is a need for local government to identify a long-range vision, and to create guidelines that will channel redevelopment toward that vision.

Complicating matters is that Pinellas County has a myriad of different local governments and countywide agencies, each with its own agenda and mandate. A number of these entities have initiated long-range planning efforts, many of which have similar objectives, but typically they have been developed in isolation. The most prominent efforts are discussed below.

The Redevelopment Initiative

For a county dependent on the in-migration of new residents, visitors, and businesses, the health of the economy and the quality of the built environment are inextricably linked. Recognition of this fact led the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) and Pinellas County, through its Economic Development Department, to cooperate on a joint project examining redevelopment issues. The effort has included assistance from a consultant group, as well as a steering committee, with members from the public and private sectors providing input and guidance.

The first phase of the study, completed in February 2002, produced a document entitled *Redevelopment Issues and Strategies for Pinellas County*, identifying needs, opportunities, and regulatory issues. A second phase, currently underway, is intended to assist local governments plan for and guide redevelopment. The first part of this phase, the *Redevelopment Opportunities Summit for the Pinellas Community*, took place in December 2002; it brought together representatives of the county's twenty-five local

governments, private developers, members of the business community, homeowner and neighborhood association members, and interested citizens for a frank, in-depth discussion of the county's economic future. The second part of this phase will culminate in the approval of an economic development and redevelopment plan for all of Pinellas County.

The Pinellas Mobility Initiative

The Pinellas Mobility Initiative is a transit study initiated by the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The study began by examining various strategies for enhancing transportation mobility throughout Pinellas County, other than by widening roadways. With the assistance of outside consultants, and after conducting workshops to gather public input, it was decided that the focus of the effort should be an elevated monorail system. The study is currently examining the costs, projected ridership, and the environmental, land use, and regulatory implications of pursuing this alternative (MPO, 2000).

In order to facilitate the acquisition of federal funding, as well as to encourage operational efficiency, the study is also exploring the creation of a single, countywide transportation authority that would consolidate several existing agencies. The MPO is continuing its outreach efforts to citizens and local government representatives, with the goal of obtaining support for the project.

The Gulf Boulevard Improvements Project

In 1999, the county Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) retained a consultant to study the status of the local tourism industry. The consultant found that, while the industry remains relatively strong, its long-term health is being threatened by aging accommodations and the increasingly blighted appearance of Gulf Boulevard (St. Petersburg/Clearwater CVB, 1999). To address these concerns, Pinellas County partnered with eleven beach municipalities to create the Gulf Boulevard Improvements Project, a master plan to improve public amenities along the major roadway running through the communities. The plan calls for a multi-million dollar investment in buried utility lines, streetscaping, signage, lighting, improved transit, and other enhancements.

The first phase of the project was launched in December 2000, in conjunction with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, inaugurating a new trolley route linking all of the beach communities. The second phase, completed in October 2001, finalized the design of the landscaping and improvements. The third phase, currently underway, is examining financing options and determining the responsibilities of each local government.

The Vision 2010 Task Force

The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Vision 2010 Task Force was a second, more comprehensive follow-up to the previously-mentioned 1999 tourism study. The effort created several subcommittees, covering topics such as transportation, communication, culture/heritage, the environment, finance, and development/ redevelopment. Each subcommittee, led by a different county commissioner, was charged with studying its topic in-depth, identifying a desired vision for the future, and forming a list of recommendations designed to help the BCC work toward the vision. Because the project coincided with the first phase of the Redevelopment Initiative, it was decided that the development/redevelopment subcommittee would be incorporated into that effort. The remainder of the study has concluded.

The Pinellas Assembly

The Pinellas Assembly, held in May 2002, was a mediation process that brought together representatives from virtually all segments of the private and public sectors in Pinellas County, to open a dialog about issues causing intergovernmental friction. The effort was based on the American Assembly, an exercise in public administration conceived by Dwight Eisenhower more than 50 years ago.

The Assembly, facilitated by Professor Lance deHaven-Smith of the Florida Institute of Government at Florida Atlantic University, convened for two and a half days of discussion sessions. Prior to the Assembly, a steering committee selected more than 130 participants, including elected officials and community representatives. Discussion topics covered goals and principles for local government, urban service delivery and financing, economic development, annexation, intergovernmental relations, targets of opportunity, and future actions. Few solutions were finalized, but consensus was reached on some approaches to the solutions, and new concepts were introduced. These have been identified in a document titled the *Pinellas Assembly Policy Statement*.

It was agreed that the Assembly will be an ongoing process, with future actions to include continued participation of the original steering committee, and the creation of several task forces to address specific issues.

Planning to Stay

In December 2002, the BCC authorized the Pinellas County Planning Department to create a new element for the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, entitled *Planning to Stay*. Taking an approach similar to the *Updated Countywide Plan for Pinellas County*, the document is designed to address the arrival of buildout by guiding policies and decision-making in the areas of urban design, economic development, housing, and

transportation. The central focus is on improving quality of life, in order to create “the kind of place where families and businesses will want to stay...because they desire to live and work nowhere else” (Pinellas County Planning Department, 2003).

Although it is part of the comprehensive plan for the unincorporated county, *Planning to Stay* takes a countywide perspective, and contains “working principles” intended to guide planning decisions for the county as a whole. Three public workshops were held to promote the project, which was formally adopted in May 2003.

Summary

Unfortunately, there has been little formal coordination among the various local redevelopment efforts, and a number have overlapping or duplicative areas of study. This is not to suggest that any of the projects is superfluous, because each represents a different group of stakeholders and brings unique planning perspectives and strengths to the table. However, to the extent that areas of concern overlap, sponsoring agencies should share information and ensure that findings and recommendations are complementary. The various studies should also be linked together in some meaningful way, under a single organizational framework.

THE NEED FOR PUBLIC OUTREACH

Creating an organizational framework is only the first step in the process. Another important need is for promotion of countywide redevelopment among the general public. Thus far, public relations for the individual efforts have been piecemeal and varied. Of those that have dedicated web pages, all but one are buried within large, complex sites, that may be difficult to locate for a user who does not have some familiarity with the projects. Only two studies have produced brochures for general circulation. A few projects, particularly the Pinellas Assembly, have been profiled in local newspapers; but there appears to be only limited interest from the press, and articles often focus as much on the conflicts between local governments as on the issues being addressed.

If the plans generated by the various efforts are to be implemented, they will be much more likely to succeed if residents are aware of them, have been educated about the issues, and are supportive of proposed solutions. However, presenting each project in an uncoordinated, piecemeal fashion, using only the limited resources of individual agencies, is not the best way to make a lasting, positive impression on the public. Such an approach may instead encourage a belief that local government is duplicative and inefficient, or that identified problems are not really important, since so few resources are being committed to them.

What would a successful countywide redevelopment campaign look like? One useful model is the Eastward Ho! initiative, a regional effort encompassing more than 50 local governments, five counties, and two regional planning councils in southeast Florida. Initiated in 1996, Eastward Ho! is a broad-based redevelopment strategy, designed to channel new development away from the sensitive Everglades by revitalizing the developed Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-West Palm Beach corridor, which lies to the east.

Overseen by the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the effort has been accompanied by an extensive public relations campaign; among the initial promotional materials was a slick, full-color booklet containing digitally-enhanced photographs of proposed revitalization projects, which was distributed statewide. The initiative is credited with stimulating a range of redevelopment projects, including Mizner Park in Boca Raton, the Arts & Sciences District in downtown Ft. Lauderdale, and many Main Street, affordable housing, and brownfield projects throughout the region (Porter, 2001).

The success of the Eastward Ho! public relations campaign can be attributed to the following elements:

- Oversight from a designated lead agency
- Buy-in from local governments
- A well-defined issue
- A clear, concise message
- Tangible benefits for residents
- Well-budgeted promotion in print and other media
- A memorable project name/slogan
- Use of the effort as an “umbrella” for diverse smaller projects.

Any countywide redevelopment effort pursued by Pinellas County governments should include these elements. Additional techniques for raising awareness include press conferences, media contacts, brochures, promotional materials, surveys, public meetings, and a dedicated web site with an identifiable domain name (American Planning Association, 2002). Above all, it must be seen as a truly countywide effort, with the support and active participation of all twenty-five local governments.

REDEVELOPMENT IMPEDIMENTS AND INCENTIVES

IMPEDIMENTS

If redevelopment and infill are beneficial activities, why are projects often so difficult to construct? What stands in the way of success? If there were only one reason for difficulties, finding a solution would be much easier. Unfortunately, there is not just one impediment, but several. These can include, among others, financial, regulatory, legislative, and attitudinal issues as well as those associated with structures and land.

Financial impediments include the fact that redevelopment projects are generally more expensive to build than greenfield developments. It can also be difficult to obtain financing because the projects are oftentimes characterized as mixed-use, and financial institutions are generally more comfortable with single-use projects.

Regulatory and legislative impediments cover a myriad of issues. Review, permitting, and inspection processes can have a negative impact on redevelopment by being overly strict, taking an extraordinarily long period of time to be completed, and requiring compliance with varying regulations from multiple agencies. In urban brownfield and grayfield areas, cleanup requirements and liability fears can make a project financially unfeasible. The application of development impact fees in already developed areas is an additional impediment to redevelopment, although for some fees, credits are provided for existing facilities. Furthermore, within a small geographical area such as Pinellas County, inconsistencies between local comprehensive and redevelopment plans and land development regulations can exacerbate the difficulties associated with a countywide approach to redevelopment.

Attitudinal issues often involve various fears people on the periphery of a redevelopment project may have. While conceptually supporting the idea of redevelopment, people can often oppose the characteristics necessary for the redevelopment to be successful. One of those characteristics is density—“...psychological resistance to higher densities stems from the attitude cultivated in recent decades by popular culture and public policy that high densities contribute to crime, environmental degradation, and general declines in quality of life” (Mofson, 1997). The irony is that many of the most desirable urban locations in this and other countries are found in densely populated cities.

INCENTIVES

As stated at the beginning of this theme, “Communities are not simply built forms. They are social arrangements, either continually attracting investment in both human and financial terms, or falling into disrepair and decay” (NJDCA, 2001). The *Redevelopment Issues and Strategies for Pinellas County* document recognizes that incentives are required “that will assist in overcoming additional complexities and costs of certain types of redevelopment.”

At the Redevelopment Opportunities Summit in December 2002, one of the presenters, economist William Fruth, said, “by 2006, the county will effectively run out of ‘greenfield’ industrial land. Existing companies cannot expand and new companies cannot locate. Existing facilities, over time, will become unusable, and more companies will leave the area. The economy will stop growing and will begin to decline.” One of the means to forestall such a decline is to provide certain incentives to construct desirable industrial facilities.

Some question why communities should offer business incentives. Several reasons why incentives are necessary were provided at this summit. They can:

- Reduce initial setup costs
- Reduce long-term operating costs
- Project business friendly image
- Encourage development in blighted areas
- Generate positive return on investment
- Overcome geographic disincentives
- Overcome self-inflicted disincentives

A survey was done of incentives provided by counties. Approximately 10 percent of counties from 46 states participated in the survey. Below are listed some of the types of incentives provided by counties and the percentage of their use:

- *Tax abatement*
 - 80.7% provide industrial development revenue bonds.
 - 73.3% offer abatement for real property taxes. Of these, 89% offer it to both new and existing companies.
 - 60% offer abatement for personal property taxes. Of these, 89% offer it to both new and existing companies.

- *Low interest loans*
 - 73.7% offer low interest loans for the purchase of land or buildings.
 - 72.2% offer low interest loans for equipment.
 - 64.9% offer low interest loans for onsite infrastructure.

- *Grants or cash gifts*
 - 45% offer outright grants and gifts for the purchase of land or buildings.

- *Discounts on land or buildings*
 - 71% have one or more government-owned (or non-profit) industrial parks.
 - 89% of these discount the land as an incentive (highest ranked incentive).
 - 76% discount the sale or lease price as an incentive.
 - 38% have constructed speculative buildings.

- *Regulatory relief* (no percentage provided)
 - Redevelopment planning strategies need to protect incentives so that they are received by targeted industries. It is the lack of clear planning objectives at which to direct sufficient incentives to cause change in current development philosophies and density and intensities that sustain current development patterns.

While many redevelopment supporters agree that incentives are important for the success of the effort, the practice of providing them is not without its detractors. Most commonly, questions are raised about fairness and equal treatment, i.e., a developer receives special benefits that others in the community do not. This perspective sometimes stems from a generally negative characterization of “developers” as a group. Why should developers receive benefits and thus increase their profits, when those benefits are not available to everyone? Without question, projects have been constructed that should not have been, and some developers have walked away with substantial profits from projects that were poorly conceived and constructed. This truth, however, should not be applied as a generalization to the entire development community. It is, after all, that community which provides jobs and economic growth that have beneficial community-wide impacts. If a community is to maintain a viable economic environment, incentives, though they may produce inequities, are probably necessary in order to attract and retain the type of development the county wants.

REGULATORY MECHANISMS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Issues affecting redevelopment include the need for improved coordination between local governments and various state and regional agencies. Traditionally, interaction between those entities and local governments has been limited to the minimum necessary to fulfill state law or meet other short-term objectives. Local land development regulations can also hinder or be supportive of redevelopment success. The following examples demonstrate issue areas where greater coordination could help to decrease conflicts and facilitate redevelopment.

THE STATEWIDE BUILDING CODE

In March 2002, a new statewide building code took effect in Florida. Consolidating and replacing more than 400 local documents, the *Florida Building Code* incorporates building, electric, plumbing, and mechanical codes, as well as administrative standards for accessibility, energy, coastal construction, and manufactured housing. It was developed by the state-appointed Florida Building Commission, made up of twenty-three representatives of the construction industry, its suppliers and consumers.

The new code (DCA, 2001) is especially significant for Pinellas and other counties that are either built-out or are approaching that condition, largely due to Chapter 34, which covers the rehabilitation of existing buildings. Prior to March 2002, all jurisdictions in the county were governed by a countywide rehabilitation code. The 216-page document took into account the structural limitations of buildings constructed before the adoption of modern codes, and provided more flexible standards than those imposed on new construction. In contrast, the *Florida Building Code* devotes only four pages to rehabilitation, and requires older buildings to be brought up to many of the same specifications as new buildings. While many states and local jurisdictions use such standards, studies have shown that they do not tend to encourage rehabilitation, and may actively discourage it (NJDCA, 1998; U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, 2001). The cost of retrofitting an older structure becomes so prohibitive that for many property owners, it is more cost-effective to maintain it in an unimproved condition, or to tear it down and build a new one.

After protests from Pinellas County and other local governments, the Florida Building Commission acknowledged, in its report to the 2002 Legislature, that the existing standards for building rehabilitation were insufficient. The report identified the need for a separate rehabilitation code with more flexible standards, adding that “numerous other states and local jurisdictions have realized the benefits of developing and adopting a

rehabilitation code. It was discovered that rehabilitation codes encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings...promote community redevelopment and promote the rehabilitation of affordable housing” (DCA, 2002).

During its 2002 session, the Legislature directed the Commission to develop amendments to the statewide code that would facilitate the rehabilitation and use of existing structures. After extensive review by a variety of affected individuals and organizations, proposed code amendments will be submitted as part of a larger code update during the 2004 legislative session. Local governments should carefully follow the progress of the proposed amendments, and seek opportunities for participation in the revision process.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

All municipalities and counties are required to participate in the comprehensive planning process, in accordance with the 1985 *Growth Management Act*. The resulting plan is designed to provide a framework for all other planning activities within a jurisdiction. According to Section 163.3161(5), Florida Statutes (F.S.):

It is the intent of this act that...no public or private development shall be permitted except in conformity with comprehensive plans, or elements or portions thereof, prepared and adopted in conformity with this act.

During each comprehensive planning cycle, an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) must be prepared; this document provides a framework for each community to reexamine the goals, objectives, and policies it has previously established, and to determine how well they have been working. The resulting document then serves as a basis for a plan update.

The contents of the plan and EAR are strictly regimented by Rule 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and overseen by DCA. This has led local governments to complain that the documents are little more than “checklists,” reflecting neither community identity nor the realities of day-to-day planning. However, DCA representatives acknowledge that the department has been criticized for this approach in the past. Local governments are now encouraged to be more creative when preparing plans and EARs, incorporating content that is important to the community, and relating the document to real-world planning. In order to ensure a smooth approval process, communities are encouraged to contact their reviewers early, participate in “scoping meetings,” and obtain a “letter of understanding” clarifying any unusual issues up front.

The *Growth Management Act* has already gone through one major revision (the original version was adopted in 1975) and numerous minor ones; it has been studied extensively by state task forces and legislative committees in the intervening years, and may be

revised again in the next few years. As part of this ongoing effort, a number of new requirements have been added since the last cycle. Plans and EARs must now contain an inventory of any interlocal service delivery agreements maintained by the community, assess whether land use planning has been successfully coordinated with school siting, evaluate the financial feasibility of maintaining existing level-of-service standards, and account for any projected increase in potable water consumption. Perhaps most significantly, while certain small communities were exempt from preparing an EAR during the last cycle, all local governments are now required to do so. For Pinellas County, this means communities that have never updated their plan or prepared an EAR since adoption in 1989 will have to do so.

For many jurisdictions—particularly smaller ones with few or no planning personnel—the lengthy comprehensive planning preparation and adoption process requires a considerable investment in both staff time and fiscal resources. In August of 2005 the Pinellas County EAR is due to DCA. Municipal EARs are due between August 2006 and June 2007. This fact supports consideration of increased cooperative efforts among local jurisdictions during the EAR preparation and comprehensive plan update processes.

THE COASTAL HIGH HAZARD AREA

The coastal high hazard area (CHHA) designation was established to address concerns about the loss of human life and property damage during hurricanes and other strong storms. Rule 9J-5, F.A.C., currently defines the CHHA as the evacuation zone for a category 1 hurricane, as established in the regional hurricane evacuation study applicable to the local government. In Pinellas County, this includes all of the barrier islands and portions of the mainland. As historically interpreted, both 9J-5 and Chapter 163, F.S., prohibit any comprehensive plan amendment that has the potential to increase land use densities and intensities in the CHHA.

At the same time, the development of the barrier islands several decades ago enabled the growth of the local tourism industry, which remains an important contributor to the Pinellas County economy. (See the *Economic Sustainability* theme.) Now completely built-out, with a building stock that in certain areas is aging and approaching obsolescence, the barrier island communities are in need of large-scale redevelopment if they are to remain competitive in the tourism market. But because the land is extremely costly, and fragmented into small parcels with many different owners, some developers are unwilling to initiate projects at current density and intensity limits. The CHHA regulations have, therefore, frustrated redevelopment efforts, as even modest increases of one or two units per acre have been denied by DCA.

How can a compromise be found between hazard mitigation and the need for redevelopment? One approach, initiated by the PPC, has been to examine the maximum allowable densities and intensities under the *Countywide Future Land Use Plan* (FLUP) and the *Rules Concerning the Administration of the Countywide Future Land Use Plan*. At present there are some barrier island governments that maintain lower densities and intensities than allowed by the FLUP. For example, while the FLUP allows eighteen dwelling units per acre in the Residential/Office/Retail category, a local comprehensive plan might limit the same category to fifteen units per acre. The PPC has proposed that DCA permit these local governments to increase densities and intensities up to the limits of the countywide FLUP. This approach represents a short-term compromise, which would provide some regulatory relief to communities in the CHHA while a more permanent solution is sought.

During the 2003 legislative session, amendments to Chapter 163, F.S., were proposed that would have allowed certain coastal jurisdictions to increase densities and intensities on a demonstration basis. These increases would have been required to: be part of a larger redevelopment plan, meet defined criteria for urban infill, avoid impacting the most vulnerable areas, and provide for improvement in shelter space and other hazard mitigation efforts, among other requirements. While the proposed legislation did not pass during the regular 2003 session, similar measures may be considered again in the future; and if approved, Pinellas County communities would be in an ideal position to take advantage of the opportunity. Local governments should follow the progress of future legislation as they participate in countywide redevelopment planning efforts.

REDEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES

The document titled *Redevelopment Issues and Strategies for Pinellas County* (PPC, 2002b) identified a number of intergovernmental coordination redevelopment objectives and approaches. Among these are:

- *Designated Redevelopment Areas.* Preparation of local land development codes that anticipate and provide for defined redevelopment areas on a coordinated basis.
- *External Agencies/Rules.* An important component of dealing with redevelopment issues is the interface with the requirements and procedures of those agencies outside the purview of local government. In order to facilitate redevelopment and address the issues facing local government, it will be critical to work with and find common ground in a redevelopment context with the following agencies: FDOT, SWFWMD, DCA, DEP, and FEMA.

- *Interagency Dialogue.* Improve interagency communication, in particular between regulatory and economic development staff, including those resources needed to address redevelopment projects.
- *Consistent Code Enforcement.* Develop more consistent code enforcement procedures and methods between separate local jurisdictions.
- *Special Policy Provisions.* Include special planning policy provisions, such as historic preservation, traditional neighborhood development and economic development plans on a coordinated basis.
- *Code Organization.* Improve the clarity and understandability in code organization and format including a common guide to the use of local codes that would be of assistance to both the development industry and agency officials.

LOCAL REGULATORY ISSUES

As part of the production of the *Redevelopment Issues and Strategies for Pinellas County* document, local codes were examined in order to identify regulations which were supportive of redevelopment as well as those which were not. Support was also demonstrated not only by code provisions, but also by the way proposals for redevelopment projects were handled by local jurisdictions and the attitudes of staff personnel.

In order to determine the level of support, community orientation, and local attitudes, a survey was conducted concentrating on members of the local development community. Jurisdictions were found to be favorably disposed if developers were able to receive timely answers to their questions and if local staff demonstrated helpfulness and a willingness to work cooperatively in solving problems. With regard to codes themselves, in order to be more supportive, the development community indicated that they should be revised to more specifically address redevelopment; contain clear and consistent rules; and someone knowledgeable about them and the special needs of redevelopment should be assigned to projects.

The *Issues and Strategies* document identifies a number of issues relevant to the regulatory challenges presented by redevelopment. Among the issues are those involving people, standards, procedures, and organization/format. People issues include the need for staff to adopt a public service attitude when interfacing with clients and they should be trained in order to have a redevelopment orientation. It is generally recognized that if a community finds itself regularly considering variance requests for the same problem, the code is not adequately addressing the issue. The need for the variance indicates a problem

with code standards. Procedural issues primarily concern time and certainty. Development and redevelopment projects have costs even when no construction has yet occurred. Therefore, review and approval procedures should be expectable and time certain. With few exceptions, codes in Pinellas County were not written with redevelopment in mind. What results is an attempt on the part of local jurisdictions and developers to make “greenfield” codes fit redevelopment needs often with only limited success.

Issues in this category emphasize the need and benefit of retrofitting local land development regulations to address opportunities and issues unique to the redevelopment process. In particular, the following specific issues should be priorities for local governments:

- *Specific Redevelopment Provision.* Establish separate, identifiable provisions in the local land development regulations to deal with redevelopment.
- *Drainage Requirements.* Adopt provisions to meet unique drainage requirements of a redevelopment site, including an area-wide approach to storm water mitigation that considers both water quantity and quality.
- *Time Lines.* Reduce the time required by regulatory agencies to review redevelopment projects and foster an improved understanding of private sector carrying costs attendant to redevelopment.
- *Administrative Discretion.* Provide for expanded administrative discretion that will assist with both the complexity and time of the review process, including special procedures that will enhance the ability to make adjustments and provide flexibility for infill and special area projects.
- *Mixed-Use.* Promote increased effort and opportunity to create true mixed-use projects.
- *Nonconformities.* Consider provisions dealing with existing nonconformities that better address redevelopment, in particular to provide for a distinction between significant (unacceptable) and nonsignificant (acceptable) nonconformities.
- *Integrated Procedures.* Consider the more efficient integration of separate review procedures, such as conditional uses, variances and site plan review.
- *Site Requirements.* Revise local zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the transition to a redevelopment focus, including individual standards for lot area, parking, landscaping, and open space (PPC, 2002b).

WHAT THE FACTS MEAN

This theme has discussed significant issues associated with providing development services in an environment which is changing from greenfield development to one of redevelopment and infill. A variety of governmental as well as public-private cooperative efforts are taking place simultaneously. Their effective coordination is vitally important for the successful planning and implementation of redevelopment activities in the county.

However beneficial those redevelopment activities may be, they will not come about by themselves. Both the government and private sectors will have to invest in order to have a successful result. The private sector will be required to take on risk that it does not have to assume in a greenfield environment. And in order to get the type of redevelopment it wants, local governments will have to provide the incentives the private sector needs to balance their risk. At the same time, the public needs to be educated about redevelopment and what it means for the future of the county. Without that education, there is the potential for those who do not understand or appreciate the importance of redevelopment to thwart worthwhile activities.

THEME: THE GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGE

Today, governments face enormous challenges...many elected officials will be faced with choosing between harmful reductions in services and significant tax increases.

The National Council For Public-Private Partnerships

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century, Pinellas County local governments face a number of new challenges as they provide services to their communities. While population growth has slowed in the past few decades, the population itself is growing younger and more affluent, and demand for services and amenities is growing. At the same time, existing infrastructure—much of it constructed during the “boom” years of the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s—is aging and in need of replacement. The approach of buildout is placing physical constraints on expansion of infrastructure, as well as limiting opportunities for new tax revenues. Finally, the recent nationwide economic downturn has placed further stress on local governments’ ability to deliver services.

Another important factor is that historically, the twenty-five local governments have provided many services in isolation from one another. This arrangement has led to greater autonomy, and perhaps an enhanced sense of identity, for each community; but it has also fostered a certain amount of duplication and inefficiency within the larger system. There is increasing recognition among local governments that reducing this inefficiency may be fundamental to meeting financial challenges and improving service provision.

This theme discusses some of the major issues relating to service provision in Pinellas County, and discusses some of the cooperative arrangements that local governments are using to meet those challenges. It also addresses further options available to communities wishing to share some service provision responsibilities and improve both service and efficiency.

THE FACTS

Local Government Roles and Responsibilities

In Pinellas County, services are made available to residents through a variety of agreements with public and private providers. It is possible, for example, to live in the unincorporated county, receive potable water from one neighboring city, sewer service from another, solid waste pickup from a private company, and fire service from an independent district. Each local government is responsible for providing services to its residents, either directly or indirectly; the myriad options allow for a great amount of flexibility and choice, which in theory should maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

In practice, however, this system does not work perfectly. The complex relationship between so many different service providers has, in some cases, led to overlapping districts, gaps in service provision, funding inequities, competition for customers, and other intergovernmental concerns. These issues have become significant enough that they were a major focus of the Pinellas Assembly in May 2002. The *Pinellas Assembly Policy Statement* describes the current environment as follows:

Governments in Pinellas County cooperate in many ways to deliver a wide range of urban services, and service levels and quality are well regarded. In some instances (e.g., water supply and recreation), cities deliver services to the unincorporated areas. In other cases (notably, law enforcement services from the Sheriff's Office), the county delivers urban services to one or more municipalities under a contract with each city.... However, it may be possible to lower costs, enhance effectiveness, and increase the equity of charges to consumers for certain services through consolidation or greater coordination. The difficulty is finding arrangements that achieve these benefits while still reflecting the service preferences of different communities and taking into account each community's prior investments in facilities and equipment (Pinellas Assembly Steering Committee [PASC], 2002).

The following sections examine the current issues in greater depth, and discuss best practices for shared service agreements and public-private partnerships.

Service Provision Issues

The Pinellas County government acts as a default "city" to residents of unincorporated areas, providing municipal services such as police protection, construction permitting and inspection, and maintenance of local roads. A special ad valorem property tax, known as the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU), is collected from unincorporated property owners to fund these services. Property owners in incorporated cities and towns,

meanwhile, pay similar taxes levied by their own local governments. The county also collects a separate tax from all property owners, which funds countywide services such as emergency communications, transportation planning, economic development, and environmental management. There are real or perceived inequities in this system, however. Some have charged that countywide tax revenues are being used inappropriately to pay for services to unincorporated residents; others claim that the MSTU, a large portion of which is remitted to the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, is being used to subsidize favorable law enforcement contracts for some municipalities.

At the same time, several municipalities that provide services (such as potable water, sanitary sewer service, and recreation) outside of their borders have been criticized for charging county residents significantly higher fees than their own residents are required to pay. These local governments have argued that these services are not funded through user fees alone, but are subsidized through general taxes collected from incorporated residents, and that county residents must therefore pay higher fees to contribute their fair share. Additionally, Section 180.191, Florida Statutes (F.S.), permits jurisdictions to charge up to twenty-five percent higher fees to nonresidents for potable water and sewer services. And as both county and municipal representatives are quick to point out, lower service fees can act as an incentive for county residents to annex, a fact that creates additional contention (PASC, 2002; Sandler, 2002).

The complex array of service arrangements in the county has resulted in a large number of *special districts*. Established by Chapter 189, F.S., each is a defined geographic area in which a particular service is provided to residents, in return for a special property tax or assessment fee. There are two categories. A *dependent special district* is established by a specific local government, which retains some oversight. Examples in Pinellas County include municipal housing authorities, downtown and neighborhood improvement districts, and community redevelopment agencies (see below), as well as countywide health and education agencies overseen by the county government. In contrast, an *independent special district* is not attached to any local government, but is created by the Legislature, and has its own governing body whose members are elected by residents of the district. Local examples include independent fire districts, the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), the Pinellas Park Water Management District, and the Pinellas County Housing Authority, among others (Pinellas County, 2002; Florida Dept. of Community Affairs, 2003). Many intergovernmental disagreements over service provision center on special districts and the redistribution of property tax revenues they entail. In addition, while the creation of each new district may be individually practical, the process has resulted in a complicated patchwork of taxing districts that is confusing to many residents.

In addition to the general issues discussed above, a number of specific services have been sources of friction among local governments. These are discussed below.

Community Redevelopment Agencies

One of the most contentious forms of dependent special district is the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Administered under Chapter 163, F.S., they are designed to encourage the renewal of blighted downtowns, neighborhoods, and commercial corridors. Section 163.387, F.S., provides for a method of funding known as tax increment financing (TIF), in which most property tax revenues within a CRA are “frozen” at the assessed value for a particular base year, and any subsequent increase in those revenues is deposited into a redevelopment trust fund that can only be used within that district. As money from the trust fund is used to finance public investment, private redevelopment typically increases, raising property values and providing revenues for further public investment.

As with other issues that involve a redistribution of tax dollars, CRAs can generate discord when the interests of different local governments are perceived as being in competition. This is particularly true when a CRA is located entirely within the boundaries of a city or town, since state law provides that both municipal and county taxes may be redirected into the trust fund. At present, several such districts exist in Pinellas County. As land values have increased over time, some county representatives have protested that potential countywide tax dollars are being “lost” to municipalities that have these districts. Municipal officials, however, describe a “win-win” situation in which the CRAs have added property value that would otherwise not exist, and cite increased values in adjacent areas that do generate countywide tax revenues.

Under the Pinellas County Charter, the Board of County Commissioners retains the authority to approve or deny the creation or expansion of any CRAs, and in 2001 its members directed a study of the existing evaluation criteria to determine if changes were warranted. After a number of municipalities vocally supported the existing system, the matter was postponed for further study. In May 2002, the issue was discussed at the Pinellas Assembly, and the resulting objectives were included in the *Pinellas Assembly Policy Statement*:

[Future planning] should include criteria for creating, evaluating the effectiveness of, and dissolving Community Redevelopment Agencies to assure that plan implementation furthers the improvement of the area and makes efficient use of resources. Consideration should be given to the cumulative impact of tax increment financing on the county’s budget as well as the municipal need to fund redevelopment. However, continuing support for tax increment financing is important (PASC, 2002).

Transportation

Along with most other metropolitan regions in the nation, Pinellas County is facing the problem of growing traffic congestion, a situation that has been aggravated by the lack of available land for roadway expansion. (See the *Land Use/Transportation Relationship* theme.) Two strategies that would help to improve mobility, traffic signal coordination and provision of transit services, are being hampered by a lack of cooperation between local governments.

Three major local governments are responsible for administering traffic signals. St. Petersburg and Clearwater each have jurisdiction within their corporate limits, while Pinellas County maintains signals in the unincorporated areas and in the remaining twenty-two municipalities. A number of the major east-west and north-south corridors run through two of these three jurisdictions, and a few of the north-south corridors travel through all three. Signals are poorly coordinated with one another, both between jurisdictions and internally along the same roadways, causing delays at intersections and adding to congestion.

Pinellas County has proposed a program of enhancements to correct these issues, using an approach known as *intelligent transportation systems* (ITS). The multi-million-dollar investment would include traffic lights that are synchronized to maximize the flow of traffic, sensors that would detect accidents and other delays, and electronic message boards that would transmit this information to motorists. However, county representatives state that in order to implement such a system efficiently and economically, their own jurisdiction needs to control the entire system. The two municipalities have been reluctant to cede this control, maintaining that they are better attuned to local traffic patterns, particularly in response to special events such as concerts and sporting events. In addition, both cities state that their repair and maintenance records are superior to that of the county. Proposed compromises include phasing in county control gradually, and allowing the cities to continue repairing and maintaining equipment within their own jurisdictions; but negotiations among the three parties are still ongoing (*St. Petersburg Times*, 2002a; Greene, 2003).

Transit presents a more complicated set of issues. At the current time, the PSTA special district does not include all communities, only those that voluntarily joined during the 1980s. Accordingly, its services are funded through a special property tax paid by residents within the district. Those communities that have opted out of the system (Belleair Beach, Belleair Shore, Kenneth City, Treasure Island, St. Pete Beach, and portions of the unincorporated county) have historically received no PSTA service within their boundaries.

An exception to that rule was made beginning in 2000, however, with the debut of the Suncoast Beach Trolley. In order to create a transit amenity that would be most beneficial to the tourism industry—an unbroken route through the 11 communities on the barrier islands, with a connection to downtown St. Petersburg—Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach were permitted to receive trolley service at a lower contract rate for three years. This favorable arrangement has created dissent among other beach communities, at least one of which has publicly considered withdrawing from PSTA in protest. At the same time, a federal grant that initially funded the two cities' subsidized rates ran out in December 2003, and the jurisdictions are being encouraged to become full PSTA members to avoid losing their trolley access. A break in the continuity of the current route would disrupt the service, decreasing its value to the other beach communities and to countywide tourism; thus far, however, neither city has agreed to meet PSTA's terms. Talks are continuing, and PSTA is keeping the current route intact for the time being, but the long-term future of the beach trolley remains uncertain (Wimmer, 2001d & 2002).

Intergovernmental disputes over transit will almost certainly take on a larger and more critical role in the near future, as local governments begin to debate the feasibility of a proposed countywide monorail system. (See the *Land Use/Transportation Relationship* theme.) Successful implementation of this system, perhaps the most ambitious transportation effort ever proposed for the county, would require both new funding sources and a new system of transit governance. The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the agency leading the monorail effort, is recommending the creation of a new independent transit authority, either by reorganizing and expanding PSTA, or by forming a separate agency that would absorb PSTA responsibilities. The new authority would need to be truly countywide, with all local governments participating, and would require flexibility in acquiring new funding sources.

Fire Districts

A number of fire districts, both independent and dependent, are located in unincorporated areas. Special issues can arise when properties within these districts are annexed into municipalities. In some cases, such as the Lealman and East Lake Tarpon special fire control districts, when a portion of the fire district is annexed into a municipality, its boundaries contract, and the boundaries of the municipal fire district are expanded to correspond to the new city limits. However, because of countywide mutual aid agreements, in which firefighters are required to respond to nearby emergencies without regard for district boundaries, some annexed properties may continue to be served by a closer fire station in the original district. To address the issue of lost revenue, the Lealman district sought and achieved a special state law requiring annexing municipalities to refund fire taxes to the district until 2008. The success of that effort has led to proposal of a similar measure for the East Lake Tarpon district (Lindberg, 2002 & 2003).

In other cases, such as the Palm Harbor and Pinellas Suncoast fire districts, the boundaries are not self-amending; properties that are annexed into a municipality remain part of the original district, if there is no interlocal agreement or legislation to provide for their adjustment. Given these complexities, in rare cases, the potential for double taxation may exist for properties located in overlapping districts. In such a case, the municipality may choose to return a portion of the ad valorem tax to the affected residents, based on the percentage of those taxes that are devoted to providing fire service. For example, in 2001, Largo elected to return twenty-two percent of taxes to households that had been annexed, but remained part of the Pinellas Suncoast district (City of Largo, 2001).

While the examples above were successfully resolved, they illustrate the difficulties that arise when independent special districts are created without self-amending boundaries. A consistent, countywide policy for addressing such situations, which would be acceptable to both annexing municipalities and the affected districts, would help to ease this process.

Law Enforcement

The larger municipalities (St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Largo) maintain their own police departments. Many of the smaller municipalities contract with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office; a few contract with adjacent municipalities; and several maintain their own departments. For a small community, the expense of running an independent police department can consume a large portion of the operating budget. However, many residents value knowing their hometown officers by name, and consider them important for community identity. For example, both Kenneth City and Belleair Beach recently opted to retain their municipal police departments, with overwhelming support from residents, despite the fact that contracting with the Sheriff would have resulted in considerable tax savings (Ahern, 2002b).

As with many public services, the multiplicity of small police jurisdictions may enhance a sense of community identity, but can also lead to duplication and inefficiencies within the larger system. The agencies maintain mutual aid agreements that authorize officers to respond to any felonies or serious crimes they witness, regardless of jurisdiction. However, the municipal departments cannot investigate traffic accidents, issue citations, or make arrests for lesser crimes outside of their own borders, except where special interlocal agreements have been executed. For example, after months of negotiation, Largo and Clearwater were able to establish an agreement allowing their officers to enforce laws in each other's cities (Tisch, 2003; *St. Petersburg Times*, 2002b).

Another issue that has frustrated some law enforcement professionals is the lack of a single database that can be shared by all local jurisdictions. Certain data, such as warrants and arrest records, are already centralized in state and local databases. But detailed information about local cases under investigation, including physical descriptions of suspects, names of witnesses, partial tag numbers, and other data that could be useful to

neighboring jurisdictions, are typically shared on an ad-hoc basis only. The Sheriff's Office stores information from its own cases in a database known as the Augmented Criminal Investigative Support System (ACISS), and would like to see this technology shared by all law enforcement agencies countywide. The City of Belleair Beach has already begun to participate, and negotiations are under way for the City of Largo to join.

Other functions that local jurisdictions could consider sharing or centralizing include forensics, storage of property and evidence, and K-9 services. A number of departments already contract with the Sheriff's Office for these services, while others obtain assistance on an ad-hoc basis (Coats, 2002).

Recreation

Historically, the county has had a policy of providing only passive regional parks, which are available to all county residents. The responsibility for active programs, such as sports teams and recreational classes, has been left to municipalities, which typically offer the services for free or at low cost to their residents while charging higher fees to nonresidents. While this arrangement has worked adequately for several decades, as more families with children have moved into Pinellas, unincorporated residents have become more vocal in their desire for active recreational options.

Meanwhile, some municipalities have complained that county residents who live adjacent to their borders are using recreational facilities without paying the proper fees. In at least some cases, this may occur without any deliberate intention to deceive; the U.S. Post Office typically assigns the name of the nearest city or town to the mailing addresses of unincorporated residents, and many erroneously believe that they live within the municipality's boundaries. Jagged and uncoordinated borders, and the presence of unincorporated enclaves in the midst of incorporated areas, exacerbate the problem. Whatever the reason, however, there is a perception among some municipal officials and residents that facilities are being overburdened by nonpaying users.

In order to help address these issues, the county has recently changed its policy toward active recreation, and has begun to seek agreements with municipal governments to provide some services. For example, it has agreed to assist the City of Dunedin with purchasing a golf course; in return, county residents would be permitted to use some Dunedin recreation facilities for the same fees that city residents pay. The county has also initiated a program to assist unincorporated residents who purchase municipal recreation passes, by refunding the difference between their fees and the lower fees that municipal residents pay. However, some local governments approached by the county have rejected proposals for recreational partnerships, stating that the compensation offered has been insufficient (Sandler, 2002; Tucker, 2003).

Another opportunity is for local governments to partner with educational institutions. Schools typically have many recreational facilities, such as playgrounds, sports fields, pools, libraries, auditoriums, and meeting rooms, that are accessible only to students, and only during school hours. With most adult leisure activities taking place after business hours and on weekends, it would seem logical to open these facilities to community recreation programs. In practice, however, fears of vandalism and legal liability have made schools reluctant to enter such partnerships.

Nonetheless, as land for new recreational amenities becomes scarce, the economic incentives for sharing facilities have begun to override these concerns. An additional impetus for facility sharing is state growth management legislation (Section 163.31776, F.S.) that promotes making schools “focal points for neighborhoods.” St. Petersburg already shares a number of ball fields with the Pinellas County School District, and is pursuing a similar agreement for playgrounds. In addition, Seminole and St. Petersburg are each constructing a 50,000-square-foot library in partnership with St. Petersburg College (Ahern, 2002a; Gilmer, 2002; Wilson, 2003). This approach holds promise for meeting the recreational needs of communities, while maximizing available public resources.

Potable Water/Sanitary Sewer

In contrast to the services discussed above, which are provided in districts whose boundaries can be changed, potable water and sanitary sewer services require the installation of permanent infrastructure. Therefore, when municipalities annex land, the water and sewer providers serving the properties usually remain the same. Such an arrangement can leave a single municipality beholden to multiple providers for the same service. For example, Kenneth City receives potable water from both St. Petersburg and Pinellas County.

The permanence of the infrastructure also means that these services allow for less choice than others. A smaller municipality may be able to purchase police protection from either the county or an adjacent city, and therefore has a certain amount of negotiating power. But if it is permanently attached to the city’s water or sewer system, and has no other option for these services, the terms of the agreement may be less flexible. As an example, Gulfport purchases both water and sewer service from St. Petersburg, and friction over pricing has sometimes occurred between the two governments (Headrick, 1998; Yakes, 2002).

In addition, disputes can develop between municipalities that provide different services to the same unincorporated residents, since each may feel it has a legitimate claim to annex these properties. This phenomenon became such an issue in Pinellas County that, in November 2000, voters authorized the passage of a charter amendment that enabled the establishment of formal boundaries for voluntary annexations (Pinellas County, 2000b).

CONCLUSION

Intergovernmental disputes surrounding service provision are not new, nor are they unique to Pinellas County. However, if local governments are to overcome the fiscal challenges presented by buildout—and successfully meet the needs of a population that is growing larger, younger, and more urban—they will need to find ways to put aside their differences and work together. At the same time, creative and cost-effective solutions must be found to minimize the cost of services, and provide residents with the maximum value for their tax dollars. The following sections offer a summary of best practices for two approaches that can be used to achieve these goals: shared service agreements and public-private partnerships.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Shared service agreements may be defined as an arrangement between two or more governments, for the purpose of providing a public service or meeting some other common goal. They are used where one or more of the participating communities is too small to provide a service economically, or where pooling of resources leads to greater efficiency or effectiveness. An advantage to such agreements is the phenomenon known as *economy of scale*, in which the cost of serving an individual customer decreases as the size of the customer base increases. This occurs with capital-intensive services, where the majority of funds are expended during the initial purchase or construction of infrastructure (New York Dept. of State, 1999).

These arrangements may be structured in a variety of ways, giving local governments substantial flexibility. Following are the most common types of agreements:

- *Verbal agreements* are based on historic or customary arrangements between neighboring governments, and are not written into any contract. In the modern era of heightened accountability and potential litigation, unwritten agreements are rarely relied upon for essential public services, but are still used occasionally for other purposes. For example, in Pinellas County, most municipalities allow residents of surrounding communities to use their recreational facilities (usually for a higher fee), even though the local governments have executed no formal contract.
- *Shared facilities agreements* occur when local governments share buildings, equipment, or other infrastructure while continuing to administer separate services. For example, Belleair Beach allows adjacent Belleair Shore to use its town hall for

elections and occasional meetings, although the two communities continue to function as distinct entities.

- *Service contracts*, in which one community purchases a public service from another, are common in Pinellas County. For example, St. Petersburg provides potable water to Gulfport and Kenneth City, and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office provides police protection for several municipalities, to name only two such agreements. Independent special districts can also contract to provide services to areas outside of their defined boundaries; for example, Kenneth City purchases services from the Lealman Special Fire Control District.
- *Joint agreements* are formed when multiple communities pool their resources to provide a service for a combined area. Perhaps the best-known local examples are mutual aid agreements between fire districts and law enforcement agencies. In another example, nearly all the municipal libraries in the county have joined together under an umbrella agency, the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative. While each library is still owned and controlled by its own local government, the cooperative performs many administrative functions, and a unified membership plan allows residents of any participating community to use all affiliated libraries.
- *Service consolidation* takes the concept of joint agreements a step further, and combines providers from two or more communities into a single entity. For example, in 1984, PSTA was created from the merger of two smaller bus transit systems serving St. Petersburg and Clearwater.
- *Countywide services* are administered by a single provider, and are available to all residents of Pinellas County in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas. Some are provided by a department of the county government; examples include economic development, tourism marketing, and disaster planning, among others. Some countywide agencies exist due to state constitutional mandate, such as the Property Appraiser's Office, Supervisor of Elections, and Sheriff's Office; these are administered by elected officers. Still others are purchased from an independent provider under contract with the county (see the following section).

Despite the potential economic benefits, these arrangements can also contain pitfalls. If one community is large and powerful, it may be able to pressure smaller governments to accept unfair terms. Small communities who are dependent on a powerful neighbor to supply essential services may face a crisis if the agreement should break down, while the provider community may have little to lose. Even with joint agreements among relatively equal partners, disagreements may arise if communities desire a shared service to be administered differently. For example, two cities may disagree on how rigorously they want their shared police department to enforce traffic laws, and how much residents

should be charged to support this service (Municipal Research and Services Center [MRSC], 1993; Honadle & Love, 1995; New York Dept. of State, 1999).

In order to limit the potential problems associated with shared service agreements, the following “best practices” are recommended, beginning in the earliest planning stages:

- Define clear boundaries for the area to be covered by the agreement.
- Do not assume that there will be an economy of scale; carefully analyze potential benefits.
- Account for all foreseeable costs, including legal and administrative expenses.
- Ensure that there is broad support from officials in all participating jurisdictions.
- Educate the public and solicit their input, as early in the process as possible.
- Maintain an honest and open discussion of pros and cons.
- Clearly delineate the responsibilities, risks, and liability of each participating government.
- If there will be integration of staff, facilities, and equipment from multiple jurisdictions, identify in advance the party with the responsibility for directing this process.
- If one community is acting as a service provider, require that any increase in service fees for nonresidents is tied to proportionate increases for residents.
- Establish a method of arbitration or mediation to settle disputes between jurisdictions.
- Include an “opt out” clause for each participant, and provide for the disposition of any facilities or equipment should the agreement be dissolved.
- Identify, in advance, the entity that will be answerable to consumers, and include this information in public outreach efforts (MRSC, 1993; N.Y. Dept. of State, 1999; Colorado Dept. of Local Affairs, 1999).

Naturally, consolidation and coordination may not be deemed desirable in all cases. This issue has been a contentious one in Pinellas County, where many residents consider preservation of “small-town character” to be an overriding value. Some communities may be unwilling to give up local control of services such as police protection or recreation; they may be distrustful of other governments’ competence or motives; or they may

simply take pride in the level of independence they have historically enjoyed. Many residents will even accept higher taxes and fees in order to defend their interests from these real or perceived threats.

A serious attempt at consolidating public services occurred in 1991, when, in response to a consultant study (MGT of America, 1992), the county government proposed that police, fire, street maintenance, drainage, construction permitting, and zoning be centralized under countywide agencies. The consultant projected that taxpayers would save \$30 million per year. A poll indicated that more than half of respondents supported the change. Despite support from the local press and some business leaders, the recommendations were opposed by many municipal officials, who argued that consolidation would actually increase costs, and that the polling questions used were deliberately biased and misleading. The plan would have required voter-approved changes to the *Pinellas County Home Rule Charter*, but the Charter Review Commission ultimately rejected it and it was never put to a vote (Marbin, 1991; Garcia, 1992).

While that effort failed, it should be noted that it proposed a radical reorganization of nearly all public services at one time, without obtaining a sufficient base of support from either residents or officials. In contrast, during the 1980s voters approved two other referenda, consolidating emergency medical services (EMS) and bus transit services into countywide agencies, and authorizing new taxes to finance them (*St. Petersburg Times*, 1991). On a smaller scale, many local governments have also made the choice to consolidate or abolish small public service departments and forge agreements with neighbors. These campaigns were successful because proponents concentrated on a single issue, were able to demonstrate clear benefits, and did not threaten communities' perceptions of identity and self-determination.

With the county approaching buildout, and its twenty-five jurisdictions converging into a virtually continuous metropolitan area, communities have begun to turn their attention to the benefits of increased cooperation. During the Pinellas Assembly in May 2002, a gathering of local officials, business leaders, and citizen representatives openly examined the service consolidation issue for the first time in a decade. While no conclusions were reached, the subject was determined to be important enough to warrant further study. The Assembly participants agreed that task forces should be created to inventory the current system of service provision, explore various consolidation scenarios for each service, and recommend those most likely to result in greater efficiency and effectiveness (PASC, 2002). Because these task forces will be comprised of representatives of both city and county governments, rather than a single agency, the effort will likely receive more countywide support than the previous attempt.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

As the provision of public services becomes increasingly expensive, a variety of options are being investigated that potentially could be used to alleviate financially stressed local governments. One of those options is the mechanism of public-private partnerships, commonly referred to as “PPPs.” These agreements are made between local governments and commercial service providers, which may serve multiple communities. As one source (Nelson/Nygaard, 2001) says, “As demand for public... funds increase, governments increasingly look to the private sector to help pay for...infrastructure and services.” Another source (National Council for Public-Private Partnerships [NCPPT], 1999) defines such partnerships as covering “a full range of projects and services involving private-sector resources in the delivery of services or facilities for public use.”

As an example, in Pinellas County, while some municipalities administer solid waste pick-up through their own sanitation departments, many others contract with either Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI) or Waste Management, Inc. Certain countywide services are also administered by private contractors. For example, countywide solid waste disposal is administered by Wheelabrator Pinellas, Inc., at a refuse-to-energy plant that is completely self-financing. In addition, countywide ambulance services are supplied through a public-private entity called SunStar, and are funded entirely through user fees. While a countywide EMS millage is collected from all property owners, this funding source is used only for paramedic services, which are provided through local fire districts.

The partnerships can take many forms, from transportation services to large, complex public works projects. The types of PPPs cover more than a dozen organizational forms, some of which are:

- *Build/Operate/Transfer* in which the private partner builds a facility, operates it, and then transfers it to the public partner after a specified period of time.
- *Build/Own/Operate* in which the private partner builds, owns, and operates a facility without transferring it to the public partner.
- *Buy/Build/Operate* involves the sale of a public asset to the private sector partner who then builds and operates a profitable facility.
- *Contract Services* involves a private sector entity providing and/or maintaining a public service under contract.

- *Design/Build* involves a private sector entity designing and then constructing a public project.
- *Developer Finance* in which the private party finances the construction or expansion of a public facility, in exchange for the right to develop other uses on the site.

Conceptually, partnerships appear to have few disadvantages. A public need is met by the private sector, which realizes a profit by meeting the need. According to one advocacy group, advantages “include cost-reducing solutions that maintain the same or better levels of quality, and successfully leveraging of the increasing limited resources of government agencies to complete high-cost, high-need projects. In many cases, a partnership can save as much as 40 percent of the original cost of the program, while maintaining or even improving the quality when compared to pre-partnership performance benchmarks” (NCPPP, 1999).

The most significant factor supporting PPPs is the financial constraints on local government to answer the ever-increasing calls from interest groups for more and better public services, but without concomitant increases in taxation or fees to pay for them. By establishing public-private partnerships, government authorities can, in some cases, achieve goals that might otherwise go unmet because of resource constraints.

Although there are many positive reasons to support use of PPPs, they are not without their critics. Some opposition is ideological, i.e., people question how a private sector, profit-motivated company can operate for the public good. It is argued that the companies will work to enhance profits at the expense of quality public service. And, it is true that not all PPPs are successful enterprises. Finally, as with shared service agreements, choice may be an issue. Where multiple providers operate, competition helps maximize cost-effectiveness and quality of service; however, for commercial services that require extensive infrastructure, such as electricity and natural gas, communities may have to negotiate with a single provider.

However, proponents of PPPs argue that concerns can and should be addressed through stringent oversight of contract provisions and performance measures. “The challenge for public entities is to create a process and an environment by which quality results can be guaranteed or, in the absence of such quality, quickly rectified.” “With thousands of public-private partnerships in place throughout the country, providing a myriad of services to citizenries, there is an ample body of hard evidence with which to evaluate the value and effectiveness of these partnerships, and to assess the wisdom of governments in establishing them” (NCPPP, 1999).

WHAT THE FACTS MEAN

This section has discussed issues associated with governance and the provision of services. Major issues have been identified and potential approaches outlined. Special attention has been given to shared service agreements and the different types that can be employed depending on participant needs. In order to maintain reasonable costs in an environment where those costs are constantly rising, this section also examined the advantages and disadvantages of public-private partnerships.

Providing services to over a million Pinellas County residents and visitors is a daunting and complex undertaking. Add to that fact that the services are provided by a variety of governmental and quasi-governmental entities, and the complexity of the task becomes even greater.

This discussion points out that local governments will continue to be challenged to provide services effectively and economically, and must continue to evaluate the options available to them through consolidation, intergovernmental agreements, and public-private partnerships, to the advantage of all participating entities.

THEME: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCED INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Interlocal and regional cooperation and the ways in which such cooperation can be developed and sustained are critical components of any strategies to correct longstanding urban problems. The interest in metropolitan cooperation underscores the logic of investigating how areas can develop institutions that will elicit and sustain interjurisdictional cooperation.

Samuel Nunn and Mark S. Rosentraub

INTRODUCTION

Implementing a countywide intergovernmental coordination plan presents challenges unlike any faced by individual jurisdictions. Given the discussions in previous themes, the text below examines various techniques and methodologies that may provide the means to further enhance governmental relations and at the same time, promote service provision, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Some readers may find certain subjects discussed in this theme to be without merit, or at the very least, inappropriate for Pinellas County. While that conclusion may, after an honest examination, prove to be true, until such an examination is conducted, rejection of the concepts should be avoided. All of the techniques and methodologies have been implemented somewhere in this country. They have value, and if determined appropriate, they can be successfully implemented in Pinellas County provided that they are well thought out and customized for the local environment.

THE FACTS

Options for Change: Do Nothing, Incremental, and Fundamental

This Intergovernmental Coordination Component of the *Updated Countywide Plan for Pinellas County* presents a variety of new ideas, options, and approaches for addressing intergovernmental issues. But, what makes this final theme different from the others is its focus. This theme concentrates on major initiatives that, if implemented, would have a good chance of enhancing intergovernmental relations, but at the price of substantially changing the way things have historically been done. What is needed to implement them

is the willingness to attempt, and the long-term commitment to sustain, their implementation in order to realize their benefits. But, leadership decision-making should take place only after scrutinizing them for their applicability and appropriateness, often the most difficult aspect of making changes to the status quo. By way of introduction to the concepts, a short discussion of change making follows.

When faced with the need to make decisions to change, the available options are often limited to three: 1) do nothing, 2) make incremental changes, or 3) decide to fundamentally change the way things have normally been done by trying an entirely new course of action.

Even when we know that a decision for change should be made, it is common for us to delay making it. The uncertain outcome resulting from making the decision can outweigh the desire to make it. Or, we may be reluctant to make a decision because we believe we do not have all the necessary information or data. We over study the problem or wait for it to solve itself. We hesitate and do nothing.

There may, however, be opportunities for step-by-step decision making, referred to as incrementalism. Most organizational and governmental changes are made this way. Incrementalism can be applied on both a local and regional basis. Jurisdictions take action a step at a time as conditions warrant or as opportunities for change present themselves. An obvious problem with incrementalism is that a single decision to change may not go far enough toward solving the problem.

The third type of change involves a relatively quick and broadbrush modification in the way things have traditionally been done. This fundamental change often comes about as a result of some type of organizational crisis that compels a change, causing the organization to emerge from the process materially different than it was previously.

This short discussion introduces the different methods of decision-making available to county and municipal leadership. The “do nothing” choice leaves us with the status quo, whereas more decisive action will improve our governance structure and intergovernmental relations.

The text that follows presents some concepts that, if implemented, have the potential to result in fundamental change in county governance. Included is an examination of the benefits and difficulties associated with municipal consolidation, revenue sharing, formation of a council of governments, and institutionalization of face-to-face meetings between decision makers from related organizations.

CONCEPTS TO CONSIDER

Jurisdictional Consolidation

No discussion of intergovernmental issues would be complete without addressing consolidation, a process by which two or more local governments, entities, and/or unincorporated areas merge to form one larger jurisdiction. Communities choose this option to share the cost of services, increase collective political clout, and improve economic development. A bold and usually controversial action, consolidation can bring important benefits to communities, especially those that are small and offer few services to their residents. However, it also carries risks and disadvantages that may be unacceptable to many.

Benefits

Perhaps the most compelling argument in favor of consolidation is the potential for greater service provision efficiency. For example, every municipality, no matter how small, employs a city or town clerk to manage legally-mandated tasks such as filing public records, advertising public hearings, etc. Three towns, each with 1,000 residents, would together require three clerks. However, if the towns consolidated, the new municipality of 3,000 could easily be served by a single clerk. A similar argument can be made for other staff and elected officials. The resulting cost savings could be used to upgrade equipment, buildings, or infrastructure, or to hire specialized staff—such as a city administrator, grantwriter, or planner—that would not have been affordable to the individual communities (Ulbrich, 1998a & b).

Mergers also allow physical and organizational assets to be shared. Vacated city halls can be converted into community centers or other amenities. Small libraries or historic museums can be combined under a single roof, creating larger and more useful facilities. Scattered parks and recreational services, combined into a single program, can offer residents a wider variety of activities from which to choose. Communities can also benefit from one another's expertise. One municipality may have an excellent fire department, while another may have high-quality sanitation service. Each community can benefit from the strengths of the other, while minimizing its own weaknesses.

Finally, the larger size and population derived from such mergers bring greater economic and political bargaining power. Marketing as a unified population can increase visibility to potential businesses, and adjacent municipalities will no longer need to use scarce economic resources to compete with one another. For areas where tourism is a major industry, a single destination wields more attractive power than a myriad of small towns, which may confuse potential visitors. Consolidated communities may also gain greater political influence when dealing with state, county, and other governmental entities.

Finally, for a built-out city unable to expand through greenfield construction or annexation, consolidation can provide the only means to continue growing, especially when joining communities that are more favorably positioned for expansion (Bollier, 1998).

Difficulties

If consolidation is so beneficial, why is it often so passionately opposed? Many stakeholders fear the impacts, both real and perceived, of larger local government. Studies of past mergers show that projected cost savings sometimes fail to materialize. Municipal staff, facing the prospect of job loss or reassignment, may resist mergers and even organize opposition to them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, residents may fear the potential loss of their community identity and influence over local politics.

Money saved by consolidating public services can be offset by other expenses. For example, integrating diverse computer systems into a single network, as well as training employees on the new system, can be difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. Combining older paper or microfilm records into a single filing system, streamlining comprehensive plans and codes, rewriting municipal charters, creating a new organizational structure for employees, and other administrative issues can require a greater investment of time and resources than projected. These costs may be increased when there is a lack of clear leadership or organization for the process (Dann & Poel, 2000a & b).

The need to integrate local government staff can cause additional complications. Understandably, many employees will be apprehensive about the potential loss of their jobs to the cause of administrative efficiency. To enlist support from this sector, some communities set a goal of retaining all employees, but relocating or retraining those in redundant positions. Salaries and benefits may also be adjusted—usually upward—to create parity among employees with similar positions. In some cases, incentives may be offered to those who choose early retirement. While these measures can help ease staff concerns, they increase the short-term cost of consolidation (New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs [NJDCA], 1995).

In addition, residents of each community may receive a different package of public services and pay a different set of property taxes, user fees, utility taxes, and franchise fees. As property taxes are standardized across the new municipality, some residents may find themselves paying less, but some will likely pay more. If unique services provided by one municipality are extended to the larger population, the taxes and fees that support those activities must also be extended. And utility taxes, franchise fees, and rates for services such as cable television, which are negotiated between individual communities and utility providers, must be renegotiated and adjustments made in the fee structure.

Residents may be concerned about financial impacts, but the greater concern with consolidation is often that of community identity. This issue should not be taken lightly. It does not simply involve taking pride in one's existing city or town, although this is an important value to many residents. Municipalities commonly have populations that differ from those of their neighbors, and have different needs and preferences. One town, consisting mainly of retirees, may place a priority on low taxes and traffic control; a second, with a majority of younger families, may charge higher taxes to fund more parks and libraries; a third, with a large population of singles and seasonal residents, may encourage both heavy traffic and late-night entertainment. If the towns were to merge, any one of these populations might find its preferences for taxes, services, and permitted activities opposed by the other groups. Life in a larger community means that residents may find themselves being asked to compromise more often (Ulbrich, 1998a & b).

While the issue of local government accessibility may cause some residents to oppose consolidation, it should be noted that others prefer a local government that is larger, more distant, and less intrusive over aspects of everyday life (Wimmer, 2001a). Accessible officials may be more responsive to the concerns of vocal citizens, but such citizens frequently represent a minority voice in the community. Small local governments may find themselves under constant pressure to regulate traffic, parking, signage, alcohol consumption, and noise, even though over-regulation of these issues may harm businesses and tourism districts. With a larger and more varied constituency, consolidated governments may have greater success at balancing the preferences of influential residents with the needs of the community as a whole.

On the other hand, shared service districts, unified economic development and tourism promotion, and joint lobbying of county and state government officials can accomplish many of the goals that drive consolidation (Staley, 1992). However, to make these agreements work, communities must put aside parochial rivalries and genuinely cooperate with one another.

Acceptability criteria

Overall, studies show, consolidation tends to be most acceptable to residents when there are few, if any differences between the communities and when the following criteria are met:

- The communities are small and provide relatively few public services.
- The communities are contiguous, encompass a relatively compact area, and have similar development patterns.
- The populations are similar in size, population makeup, and preference for services.

- Residents commonly cross jurisdictional boundaries for work, shopping, recreation, and visiting family and friends, and thus share a larger sense of community.

Consolidation can also be accomplished in a way that respects the historic identity of the individual communities. Efforts that help accomplish this goal include:

- Giving the new jurisdiction a name that is distinct from those of the consolidating communities.
- Establishing a single-member governing board that follows the former boundaries.
- Encouraging the formation of strong neighborhood associations in place of the original jurisdictions.
- Retaining original names of community centers and schools.
- Maintaining museum displays that reflect each community's history (Ulbrich, 1998a & b).

Serious studies of consolidation emphasize a common point: ultimately, the decision must be made not by local governments, but by voters. Only residents can decide whether the prospect of more public services, greater economic growth, and more collective political power outweigh potentially negative impacts that may result from consolidation.

Consolidation efforts are not without precedent in Pinellas County. The cities of Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach, as they exist today, were each created by the merger of four smaller towns during the 1950s. The former towns live on as distinct neighborhoods, with unique differences in their land use patterns and character, and strong community associations that retain a voice in municipal decision-making. More recently, a merger was proposed between Kenneth City and the unincorporated area of Lealman, but the two communities could not reach an agreement and the effort was abandoned (Lindberg, 2001). Today, many Pinellas County residents find value in the independence and accessibility of their small local governments. However, as build-out continues to increase interdependence and cooperation between local communities, future residents may more actively explore the option of consolidation.

Revenue Sharing

One of the most controversial methodologies for enhancing cooperation is local revenue sharing. Some people view it not as sharing, but rather as redistributing funds from a well-off jurisdiction and giving it to another, possibly less deserving, one. This is true even though there are a variety of revenue sources (although diminishing) which are

collected locally, sent to the state or federal governments, and then returned to local governments. Viewed from a more local perspective, “tax revenue sharing arrangements allow for regional governance without a truly regional government. It allows an urban area to pool resources as a region, but provide services at an individual level” (Sierra Club, 2001).

Formerly, the towns and villages of Pinellas County were more spread out than they are today; they were more independent—out of necessity. Today, however, there are virtually no areas that are not coterminous with one or more other jurisdictions. Additionally, existing and anticipated interlocal agreements formalize county provision of utility service to cities; cities provide fire service to county residents; the Pinellas County Sheriff protects some city folk; and we all drive on the same roads—built and maintained by a variety of governmental agencies.

So, the concept that we are all a part of a whole which is greater than any of the separate parts is central to this discussion. If that concept is true, it can be argued that countywide benefits accrued to any one jurisdiction, should rightly be shared with others. “The base theory of tax-revenue sharing is that there are many ‘one of a kind’ developments in a region, an airport, super regional mall, university, etc., and the municipality that is fortunate to house such an economic generator should not be the only place to reap its tax revenue” (Sierra Club, 2001).

Benefits

The benefits of revenue sharing have been defined as:

- Helping to balance available revenues
- Allowing for a greater balance in local tax rates which can remove some of the competitive disadvantage certain communities face
- Helping to diminish the degree of local inter-jurisdictional competition
- Minimizing fiscal disparity

Why is the last goal important? A study conducted in Richmond, Virginia (Richmond-First Club, 1997) states that “fiscal disparity means that there are pronounced differences in revenue raising capacity between local governments in the same metropolitan area. And fiscal disparity also means that it is hard for similarly situated local governments to offer the same bundle of services and to maintain their infrastructure.” Regional tax base sharing is a mechanism that “redistributes part of the future or prospective property-

related wealth of a region and in doing so it creates an incentive for local governments to work together.”

One of the most successful and long-lasting revenue sharing programs is that of 187 communities and seven counties including the “Twin Cities” of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota which participate in a tax base sharing law implemented in 1975. The general purpose of the scheme is to “reduce the disparities in commercial/industrial (C/I) tax base between” the participating counties and communities (Jenni, 2002).

The Minnesota law was originally passed in 1971, but had to withstand several court challenges before its implementation in 1975. The *Minnesota Journal* Citizens League explains the program as follows:

The law requires cities in the metro area to contribute 40 percent of the growth in their C/I tax base since 1971 to a region-wide fiscal disparities pool. This tax base is then redistributed based on a formula that takes into account a city’s population and the market value of all property in the jurisdiction.

If a community’s market value per capita, otherwise known as “fiscal capacity,” is greater than the metro average, it receives less from the pool. If a community’s market value per capita is less than the metro average, it receives more from the pool. A community with half the fiscal capacity of another community will receive twice the amount of tax base from the pool than the other community, regardless of how much either community contributed to the pool.

In addition to reducing the fiscal disparities between neighboring communities, tax base sharing is intended to promote regional planning by ensuring that all metro communities benefit from valuable commercial industrial tax base. Proponents argue it discourages communities from competing against one another for development and encourages acceptance of development that generates less tax base but serve regional purposes, such as parks and nature preserves or affordable housing.

It is important to remember that the fiscal disparities program shares tax base—not tax revenue. Sharing tax base increases individual communities’ capacity to generate revenue. Without tax base sharing, communities with lower value tax bases are forced to impose a high tax rate on their property owners in order to deliver a basic level of public services. Meanwhile, communities with higher value tax bases, which came to them, in part, as the result of regional decisions about infrastructure, can impose a lower tax rate and still raise the amount needed to provide those basic services. Furthermore, the communities with smaller tax bases and higher tax rates become less attractive to businesses looking to relocate or expand, making it difficult for these communities to attract the commercial/industrial property they need to grow their own tax base, and the cycle continues (Wilson, 2001).

Difficulties

The Minnesota program has been in existence for 30 years, but it is not without its critics, primarily because some communities see themselves as net “winners” and others as net “losers” as far as revenue distribution is concerned. However, tax-base or revenue sharing “is not per se a government redistribution scheme....the basic rationale for some form of revenue sharing or tax based sharing has to do with economic development and its location by the private sector in conjunction with the public sector and the recognition that we live in a metropolitan world” (Richmond-First Club, 1997).

Council of Governments

During the Pinellas Assembly, when discussions centered on multijurisdictional issues, several participants proposed that a new or existing entity variously referred to as a “league of cities” or “council of governments” (COG) should be formed. While Pinellas County has entities that address intergovernmental issues, e.g., the MPO and the PPC, those organizations tend to focus their efforts on somewhat narrow concerns, i.e., transportation and land use. No single entity has the responsibility or resources to address the big picture issues.

Numerous jurisdictions throughout the United States have found themselves in a similar situation as Pinellas County finds itself. One way that has been found to facilitate working on big picture issues is through a COG. (COG is used throughout this discussion and the term includes other entities named “league of cities,” “associations,” and others having the same general meaning.) Examples of COGs include the Denver Mile High Compact, the multi-county/city Envision Utah, the Puget Sound Council of Governments in Seattle, the Metropolitan Service District (METRO) in Portland, the twin cities Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota Metropolitan Council, and the Cape Cod Commission (Peirce, 1989; Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program, 2001). More important than the name of the entity is the function of such associations and partnerships: organizing and cooperating to solve common problems for the benefit of the larger community.

While referring to Everglades restoration efforts in South Florida, the Governor’s Commission for a Sustainable South Florida (1995) made a conclusion that is applicable to Pinellas County when it said that, “Management of the region must transcend political boundaries and narrow agency jurisdictions. A framework must be created to ensure that plans are coordinated, implemented, and provide long-term protection of public investments and natural values.... The ultimate success...will hinge on the ability of...governments to work together with an unprecedented level of partnership.”

The call for regionalism and collaborative efforts is supported in Florida law, specifically, Chapter 163, Section 163.01 in the *Florida Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1969* which states,

(2) It is the purpose of this section to permit local governmental units to make the most efficient use of their powers by enabling them to cooperate with other localities on a basis of mutual advantage and thereby to provide services and facilities in a manner and pursuant to forms of governmental organization that will accord best with geographic, economic, population, and other factors influencing the needs and development of local communities.

Section 163.02 of the same statute provides the legal foundation for the organization of “councils of local public officials.”

(1) The governing bodies of any two or more counties, municipalities, special districts, or other governmental subdivisions of this state, or any of them, herein referred to as member local governments, may, by resolution, enter into an agreement with each other for the establishment of a council of local public officials.

Sometimes entities that might serve as quasi- or full COGs, do not do so because the regulations under which they operate do not provide for such an expanded function. For example, MPOs are charged under federal law with transportation funding, planning, and programming decision-making. And traditionally, MPOs have been reluctant to play a lead role in land use, housing, and economic development even though each of those issue areas influence or are influenced by transportation. As one writer says:

MPOs have significant budgets for transportation planning and they have been granted decision-making authority over vast pools of funds for infrastructure investments. They also have responsibility for evaluating and helping to manage certain impacts of regional transportation systems, including congestion and air quality. Yet their mandate is incomplete: most do not have any authority over land use (except to help forecast it) and their role in economic development is mostly an indirect one resulting from their infrastructure and services investments. Further, MPOs have been left to their own devices to build organizations capable of working effectively with state and local governments, other regional agencies, the private sector, and other non-governmental organizations, all of which have a stake in the outcome of the MPOs’ activities (Goldman and Deakin, 2000).

A common concern of metropolitan areas that have formed COGs is how to benefit from the institutionalized cooperative effort, but at the same time maintain local decision-making authority. Research indicates that the structure of the COG determines the extent and level of maintained countywide/municipal uniqueness. Assisting in the effort to, at the same time, be one, but separate, is the need to clearly define the tasks assigned to the

COG and those to be implemented by local government. With that clear separation in place, COGs have been organized and experienced success.

Benefits

The benefits to be derived from a COG center on partnership and cooperation between jurisdictions facing the same or similar problems. Several of the best justifications for establishing a COG is found in the following mission statement:

The COG's primary objective is to keep informed and take action on issues that are of mutual interest, working together in partnership to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the subregion.

The COG works as a clearinghouse sharing information on items such as grants, regulations, legislation and rule making. The COG works with member cities to respond to funding opportunities from regional, state, and federal sources to maximize limited public funds through a multi-city approach. The COG also undertakes training and research to develop policy positions through established committees and working groups (Westside Cities Council of Governments, California, 2002).

A COG can serve to formalize communication among members by providing an opportunity for members to discuss issues that no other structure provides them. Such opportunities give policy makers a venue at which to forge consensus on policies and programs of significance. And, it can prove to be more responsive in meeting the demands and opportunities facing a county than individual initiatives.

COGs provide a united front when dealing with outside federal and state agencies by increasing local political clout. "Although municipalities don't face exactly the same problems, and opinions on how to act on situations can vary greatly, there are enough shared concerns to warrant the local governments to come together and share their ideas" (Bishow, 2003).

Difficulties

While there are recognized benefits to COGs, they are not without their difficulties—not so much from the COGs themselves, but from organizational and perception perspectives. One problem is that some view COGs as regional governments, which they are not. They are a voluntary cooperative effort among the cities to forge consensus on policies, programs and projects of regional significance that would not represent another level of government. But because COGs are voluntary, their longevity depends on continued relevance and mutual benefit of members.

There are also issues of representation fairness. Normally, one member who holds elective office represents each participating jurisdiction. Issues can be raised between larger and smaller jurisdictions about the fairness of having one member each from both the most and least populous jurisdictions rather than a weighted system of representation.

If the county as well as municipalities form the COG, the different perspectives and needs of the two types of jurisdiction have the potential to cause friction. It has also been noted that in areas such as Pinellas County with many fragmented jurisdictions, “fragmentation of local government in a metropolitan area is inversely related to the formation of regional partnerships for economic development. In other words, the greater the degree of fragmentation and competition, the less the degree of regional coordination and cooperation, and the less likely regional partnerships for economic development are formed” (Olberding, 2002). This observation is especially relevant to Pinellas County as we move forward with a wide variety of initiatives focused on continued economic vitality.

Institutionalization of Face-to-Face Contacts

While discussing issues in another area of the county, one source identified a situation that exists in Pinellas County also. He says that there is a “lack of interaction among the elected officials in the region. Outside of serving on various quasi-governmental boards, elected officials have no regular meeting or program that brings them together to discuss issues and develop relationships” (Hammer, 2001).

It has been mentioned previously that there are many committees, agencies, and authorities in Pinellas County, each with a relatively narrow functional focus. Each organization meets to discuss issues and make decisions affecting their area of responsibility. What does not happen, except in rare instances, is face-to-face contact between these entities to discuss issues of mutual interest. The result is that they can appear to the citizenry not to be on the same page as far as countywide affairs are concerned. Agency agendas focus on transportation or land use planning or environmental issues with infrequent decision-maker formal contact. While one of the justifications for forming COGs is to provide a venue for different agencies to meet and discuss issues, there are difficulties associated with them. Institutionalization of face-to-face contacts is a step in the direction of establishing a COG without the formalization.

In the rare circumstance where formal face-to-face contacts are made through joint meetings, they are viewed as special occasions and a “big deal” is made of them. Of course, Pinellas County is not alone with regard to the separateness of such agencies. One writer says that,

Although regions have more responsibility today, their capacity to respond is fragmented and weak. As metropolitan regions have grown in geography, more regions now encompass many local governments. Mayors and local elected officials do not have the authority to make regional decisions, and the failure to coordinate key functions results in inadequate regional outcomes in key areas such as transportation and housing. Most regions are experimenting with new forms of distributed and networked governance, but the success stories are few (Alliance for Regional Leadership, May 2000).

There is a need in Pinellas County and the greater Tampa Bay region to make meaningful progress toward cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated regional actions to address issues that affect all of us. Significant progress toward meeting such goals is being made in various regions of the nation. Several notable examples identified by the Alliance for Regional Leadership include:

- *Chicago Metropolis 2020: Connecting the Dots.* This plan was commissioned by the Commercial Club of Chicago which had at the turn of the century commissioned the Burnham Plan “which became the guiding plan for the development of downtown Chicago.” The vision of this plan “outlined goals for the economic, social, and physical development of the region in an integrated way.” The “Chicago Metropolis 2020 is an example of a new type of regional civic organization that connects business support to broader sources of leadership to build strong coalitions for change on critical regional issues.”
- *The Austin Network: New Sources of Regional Leadership.* This network is composed of high-level executives who meeting with the purpose of building “collaboration among and beyond individual interest to preserve a positive lifestyle for the entire community” with a focus on transportation, education, and efforts to create “a long-term vision of connecting the technology and cultural assets of the region to promote Austin as a leading creative community.”
- *Silicon Valley 2010SV-CAN: Creating New Coalitions for Change.* This is a plan resulting from a public-private partnership “which provided a strategic vision and specific goals to address the region’s critical quality-of-life challenges that have become critical to the future of the center of innovation.” The coalition was composed of members of the business, government, education, and the community with the purpose of “promoting the goal of a livable community and shared prosperity through active civic engagement.”
- *Central Carolina Choices: Organizing Civic Leadership.* “Although different groups take the lead on different issues, CCC is increasingly connecting regional leaders through the purposeful sharing of people in specific initiatives. CCC has become a leadership development mechanism that has drawn leaders from both the grassroots

and traditional sources. Involving grassroots groups in visioning, developing common goals, and creating action teams, CCC has been able to broaden the base of civic engagement and increase commitment to implementation....Central Carolina Choices is an example of a collaborative that is connecting its leadership with grassroots citizens to address regional challenges in more effective ways.”

The Alliance identified what is new about some of these innovative regional approaches:

- Civic engagement around choosing regional goals and strategic directions
- Strong private-sector leadership
- Collaboration between private and public sector leaders
- A more integrated approach to regional development around the economy, the environment, and social inclusion
- Use of regional civic forums and organizations to influence the direction of public policy
- Accountability for measurable results

At this phase in the maturation of Pinellas County, such major collaborative and partnership initiatives as those illustrated above, would be difficult to organize and if they were, they are not likely to have long-term success for the reasons discussed throughout this *Countywide Plan* component. What is possible, however, are institutionalized, closer, and more collaborative contacts between decision makers in the county so that they at least have the opportunity to talk to one another and learn about each other’s concerns and priorities.

Benefits

In a recent joint meeting between the Board of County Commissioners, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, it was mentioned several times that the three bodies had never met before. This was true even though the activities of the organizations are closely related, have similar public service goals, and the decisions of one can affect the others.

Face-to-face contacts have many of the same benefits as COGs, but without the formality. But, such contacts provide beneficial opportunities for policy makers. Among them are the opportunity to meet with and discuss issues of mutual concern and thus learn about those concerns from different perspectives. Such meetings can reduce policy-maker

isolation. “In some communities an ‘anonymity of leadership’ exists: Regional leaders simply don’t know each other because of the growing scale of metropolitan regions...The challenge that many regions are grappling with is how to build a new coalition for change to address regional issues in a more effective way” (Alliance for Regional Leadership, 2000).

Difficulties

There are no easily identified difficulties with face-to-face contacts other than the difficulty of arranging them and the time investment of the participants needed to have them. Given disparate schedules, arranging such meetings can be a frustrating endeavor. Additionally, policy makers are already very busy and adding a number of new meetings to already busy schedules can be virtually impossible. With the exception of these problems, few, if any, difficulties with enhancing communication between related agencies have been identified.

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