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CRC

Streamlining Functions and Services of Kent County and Metropolitan Grand Rapids Cities

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CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN

CRC

STREAMLINING FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES OF KENT COUNTY AND METROPOLITAN GRAND RAPIDS CITIES

OCTOBER 2009

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CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN

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Streamlining Functions and Services among Kent County and Metropolitan Grand Rapids Cities

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Streamlining Functions and Services of Kent County and Metropolitan Grand Rapids Cities

Summary

The Citizens Research Council of Michigan was engaged to examine the activities and services provided jointly among Kent County and the cities of East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. Working with these local governments, CRC identified existing patterns of collaboration and opportunities to expand collaboration to new service areas or expand existing collaboration to include more local governments. Michigan laws and the city charters were examined to investigate potential legal impediments that would limit the ability of these communities to expand collaboration. Finally, the role of the county government was examined to identify functions and services the county could perform for the local governments more efficiently than the individual communities acting independently.

These communities have been progressive in meeting the needs of their communities as a region. Collaborative service provision has been the norm for these communities for many years, even before the difficult economic conditions that currently challenge Michigan led so many other local governments to re-examine the benefits of collaboration. These communities appear to be more involved in collaborative service provision than other groups of local governments throughout Michigan. The difficult economic conditions gripping Michigan and the declining support coming from state revenue sharing makes it necessary to investigate whether more can be done to achieve economies.

About Intergovernmental Collaboration

Difficult economic conditions are forcing local government officials to reconsider the standard methods of performing functions and providing services. Officials have three options to deal with the fiscal and operational pressures on local governments: 1) increase taxes to yield more revenues; 2) cut spending to meet available revenues; or 3) find alternative methods of providing services at current levels for less money. The first two options can negatively affect the attractiveness of any single municipality relative to its neighbors. They would either increase the cost of residing and operating a business in the municipality or diminish the menu and/or level of services provided. Intergovernmental collaboration provides local governments with alternative methods of performing functions and providing services.

Michigan local governments use intergovernmental collaboration to provide services more efficiently and to avoid duplication of effort; provide services or service levels that individual governments cannot afford to provide on their own; provide services or deal with problems that transcend the boundaries of individual units; and minimize externalities. Local governments cooperate in a multitude of forms: including consultation, voluntary regional commissions and councils, mutual aid pacts, joint service provision, joint purchasing, contracting to have functions performed and services provided to their residents, and special authorities.

Intergovernmental collaboration that occurs between two or more local governments of similar types can be thought of as *horizontal collaboration*. Intergovernmental collaboration also occurs when local governments collaborate with the State or county governments. Such collaboration may take the form of municipalities sharing the cost of functions performed by their counties; municipalities contracting with their counties or the State to have functions performed; or the county governments simply assuming responsibility for the performance of specific functions, thus relieving the municipalities of any function performance duties. These forms of relationships can be thought of as *vertical collaboration*. Joint purchasing offers another form of intergovernmental collaboration, but it is not driven by the same economic motives for economies of scale that drive horizontal and vertical collaboration. The benefit of joint purchasing is the leverage purchasers gain by buying in bulk. The relationship created when two or more governments use

the same private provider for governmental services or functions can be thought of as *indirect collaboration*. Many of the same services are provided by local governments contracting with other local governments (in horizontal and/or vertical collaboration) and through indirect collaboration.

Statutory Review

The 2007 CRC Report, *Authorization for Interlocal Agreements and Intergovernmental Cooperation in Michigan*, found 77 specific laws, or provisions of laws, that authorize intergovernmental collaboration. Some laws broadly authorize collaboration for any services that local governments are authorized to provide independently, other laws authorize collaboration for the provision of specific functions or services.

Laws that Impede Collaboration

Those laws were implemented to authorize collaboration among local governments, but provisions in some of these laws severely limit the ability of local governments to come together for joint service provision.

Employee Protection Provisions

Employee protection provisions contained in six separate laws prohibit local governments from using intergovernmental collaboration to displace employees currently engaged in providing the functions or services that are proposed for joint provision. The provisions state that employees affected by transfer because of collaboration should not be put in any worse position relative to worker's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance, or any other benefits that were provided as an employee of one of the merging government service providers. The result of these provisions is that intergovernmental collaboration cannot be used effectively to reduce the size of municipal staffs. In fact, because of these provisions, consolidated service provision may cause the cost of that service to increase rather than decline.

The Urban Cooperation Act, for instance, provides:

> "No employee who is transferred to a position with the political subdivision shall by reason of such transfer be placed in any worse position with respect to workmen's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance or any other benefits that he enjoyed as an employee of such acquired system."

Government tends to be a labor intensive enterprise for many services. It is especially labor intensive for the public safety services – police and fire protection – that consume the majority of the budgets for full service local governments. Laws that hinder the ability to achieve savings through collaboration put public officials in the difficult position of needing to reduce the service levels or eliminate those services completely to achieve savings.

Laws that Make Collaboration More Difficult

Certain other laws do not directly create impediments to collaboration, but either through their construction or their omission makes collaboration more difficult for the local policymakers that must make difficult decisions when initiating collaborative services.

- Public Act 336 of 1947, the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) requires employers and representatives of employees to "…confer in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and *other terms and conditions of employment*…" [emphasis added] This wording has been interpreted to mean that the duty to bargain extends to the public employers diversion of work to non-unionized employees or to outside contractors. Thus local governments currently engaged in the provision of a service must submit to collective bargaining potential actions to provide that service collaboratively with another governmental unit or through non-governmental contractors.

  Further, Public Act 312 of 1969 submits interest or contract formation disputes between public employers and public safety employees to binding arbitration, as well as issues arising during collective bargaining negotiation over the terms to be included in a new contract. Thus, local governments considering collaboration for the provision of police or fire protection must consider the possibility of those changes to the conditions of employment

being subjected Act 312 binding arbitration.

- Public Act 116 of 1954, the Election Law, permits intergovernmental collaboration agreements to be used as a cause for recall efforts against elected officials.
- Under Public Act 279 of 1909, the Home Rule Cities Act, several cities have amended their charters to create minimum staffing requirements for their police and/or fire departments. Such provisions preclude collaboration as a viable tool for seeking efficiencies in government operations.
- Finally, Public Act 206 of 1893, the General Property Tax Act could be amended to facilitate greater tax base sharing. As long as local government officials are driven by the need to expand the tax base, the goal of new development will outweigh the benefit of collaboration.

Reform of these laws would better enable local government officials to make structural changes to the methods of providing government services and create an atmosphere in which leaders think beyond the boundaries that define their local governments.

Charter Review

For the six cities involved in this study, the local laws that create their operating structures, as defined by city charters, are very permissive in authorizing the cities to jointly provide services. The charters specifically authorize the cities to engage in joint service provision with its neighbors.

For example, the Wyoming City Charter provides:

> **Section 2.5. Intergovernmental contracts.** The city shall have power to join with any governmental unit or agency, or with any number or combination thereof by contract or otherwise as may be permitted by law, to perform jointly, or by one or more of them, for or on behalf of the other or others any power or duty which is permitted to be so performed by law or which is possessed or imposed upon each such governmental unit or agency.

Impediments to Collaboration

Very few obvious impediments to collaboration appear in the city charters. The Grand Rapids City Charter vests responsibility and control of the Grand Rapids Public Library with the Board of Library Commissioners. Clearly this would impede the ability of Grand Rapids to divest itself of its library in favor of a library authority, but it would not seem to be such a strong impediment that the City would be precluded from participating in a resource sharing consortium or otherwise working with other libraries. Several of these cities have language in their city charters making the city assessors charter officers. The language in these charters would suggest that these cities must maintain a public officer in the office of city assessor. Otherwise, each of the cities should not be restricted from collaborating in the provision of services.

Analysis of Collaboration in Kent County

CRC received from each of the governments a list of the functions and services provided through some form of interlocal agreement. This information was used to analyze the services each unit provides and the methods employed to provide those services. That information was used to analyze each function and service to identify the following potential opportunities for enhanced collaboration. CRC did not have sufficient information to analyze the potential savings from reduced duplication or the potential service enhancement that may result from economies of scale.

Existing Collaboration

Intergovernmental collaboration has been extensively used as a tool for improving the operations of the seven governments. Collaboration exists among these cities and between the County and these cities for a broad range of functions and services. Examples arise in the list of functions and services that the County provides to local governments that are provided not only to these six cities, but also to the other cities, villages, and townships in Kent County. Several trends are worthy of recognition.

Collaborative Arrangements not Universal – Roughly two-thirds of the services that are jointly provided can be classified as horizontal collaboration. Only about a quarter of those uniformly include all six cities. Most are:

- Individual relationships between two or only a few

of these cities,

- Arrangements involving the City of Grand Rapids, as the seat of county government, and Kent County, or
- Interlocal agreements between individual cities and the school districts they overlap.

As a result, there are opportunities for those cities not party to those individual agreements to become party to existing interlocal agreements, or create similar interlocal agreements with other cities for the provision of those services. This works for both vertical collaboration, where the county is performing functions for something less than all of the cities, and horizontal collaboration, where something less than all of the cities are working together to provide services.

Joint Purchasing – These communities have established a strong network of joint purchasing that serves them well and can be expanded to other items in the future. Several of the joint purchasing agreements were between only a few communities. It is important that they be expanded to include all of the communities and any surrounding communities purchasing supplies similar to those utilized by these communities.

Police Teams – The Metro Oversight Board has united the police efforts of these cities and Kent County for a consolidated effort to provide the Children's Assessment Center and created teams to handle major crimes and vice, auto theft, fraud and identity theft, drug, and cold cases. This approach recognizes that perpetrators of crimes do not limit themselves to single jurisdictions. Additionally, the officers and detectives participating on these police teams possess specialized skills. Spreading their abilities over broader geographic areas allows participating units to invest the resources into training these individuals, thus capitalizing on economies of skill.

Opportunities for New Collaboration

Two areas are targeted as key opportunities to create savings in the municipal budgets and provide opportunities for future collaboration: public safety and the county performance of municipal functions.

Public Safety

Kent County and the six cities could build on the fire automatic aid agreements these cities have in place and the Metro Oversight Board, which plays such a vital role for specialized police functions, to identify additional public safety functions that could be jointly provided. Large percentages of the budgets of these communities are dedicated to the provision of police and fire protection. The ability to achieve savings and maintain service levels without raising taxes begins by addressing the cost of these services.

The public safety services that provide the greatest community identification, police street patrol and incident response by the police departments and fire and emergency responses by the fire departments, tend to be very labor intensive. Collaborative provision of street patrol or fire responses would provide only marginal opportunities for savings because collaboration would do nothing to change the aggregate land area, population, or number of residential and business properties in these cities. Nonetheless, collaboration would provide some opportunity for savings and would enable the region to better manage delivery of these public safety services. However, as long as the employee protection provisions remain in the Urban Cooperation Act and Emergency Service Authorities Act, a full consolidation of police and fire departments across these jurisdictions is not likely to be cost effective.

One need not move to a full consolidation of police and fire departments. These cities could pursue collaboration on specific parts of police and fire department operations for which economies of scale may result in savings. This approach would allow for a regional approach to facility placement, 9-1-1 dispatch services, fire fighter training, fire investigation, hazardous material handling and response, and a firing range.

Two alternatives are presented to provide these services across jurisdictions, (1) a special authority should be created or (2) the personnel could be housed within the county sheriff's department. A special authority would keep each individual police department intimately involved in the operations of the joint squad, but it is possible that jurisdictional and insurance issues could complicate the operations of such a squad across multiple governments. Those potential issues would be addressed by housing the joint squad in the county sheriff's department. The county has jurisdiction across all cities, villages, and townships.

County Performance of Municipal Functions

Kent County should position itself to perform more functions on behalf of the local governments – not just the six cities, but all other cities, villages, and townships in Kent County – by developing a closed intranet among the local governments and using that network to serve as a contracting body for functions and services for which county employees are already involved. By creating the computer capabilities to interact with each local government, the county can position itself to allow for financial transactions, perform accounting services, perform treasury functions, provide payroll and benefit services, conduct property assessing (notwithstanding the above mentioned charter provisions) and collect property taxes, elections, maintenance of records and archives, and to serve as a single platform and host for municipal websites.

Capital Intensive Services

Other opportunities to expand collaboration can focus on some of the capital intensive services for which collaboration would be expanded to new communities or into new functions. The Kent County Road Commission and the cities share responsibility for the roads. Roads under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission tend not to flow into these metropolitan cities, but the similarities in task and equipment needs provide opportunities for these jurisdictions to work together.

City/School District Collaboration

The ideas of collaboration need not be restricted to interaction among the cities or between the cities and the county. These cities share common taxpayers with school districts that perform non-instructional services similar to services performed by the cities. The cities and school districts could work together for maintenance of the buildings and grounds, maintenance and storage of the vehicle fleets, and joint parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Regional Assets

The Kent County assets that provide services beyond the county borders could be regionalized. Residents of many surrounding counties travel to the Grand Rapids area to visit both the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and the John Ball Zoological Gardens. Multi-county authorities could be created to support these regional assets; expanding the tax base and lowering the tax burden on any individual entities.

Conclusion

Kent County and the cities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming have been very progressive in developing regional strategies for meeting the service demands of their residents. Intergovernmental collaboration has been used extensively long before the current economic struggles plaguing led local governments throughout Michigan to reexamine this tool.

Now Michigan, and the local governments that derive tax revenue from the economic activity that occurs, is beset by a prolonged economic contraction. Business as usual will not be an option for the provision of local government services. Collaboration in the provision of governmental services is one tool local governments can use to capitalize on economies of scale and improve the provision of services while reducing costs.

It will be necessary for state laws to be amended to better enable these Grand Rapids communities, and local governments throughout Michigan, to benefit from collaboration to the fullest extent possible. Michigan's laws are relatively permissive, allowing local government collaboration for the provision of any service that the local governments are authorized to provide independently, but provisions in a few laws create circumstances wherein collaboration may increase the cost of service provision.

CRC's analysis of opportunities to expand collaboration focuses on the support functions for public safety and functions that the county can provide on behalf of the local governments. The capital and technically intensive services that are performed to help police officers on the streets and fire fighters better perform their duties can be consolidated among these local governments to achieve savings. Also, the county is well positioned to perform many of the functions needed for local governments to operate.

Streamlining Functions and Services of Kent County and Metropolitan Grand Rapids Cities

The Citizens Research Council of Michigan was engaged to examine the activities and services provided jointly among Kent County and the cities of East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. Working with these local governments, a matrix was created (see pages 13-21) to identify existing patterns of collaboration and to identify opportunities to expand collaboration to new service areas or expand existing collaboration to include more local governments. Michigan laws and the city charters were examined to investigate potential legal impediments that would limit the ability of these communities to expand collaboration. Finally, the role of the county government was examined to identify functions and services the county could perform for the local governments more efficiently than the individual communities acting independently.

Examination of the matrix of existing collaborative services (on page 13-21) shows that these communities have been progressive in meeting the needs of their communities as a region. Collaborative service provision has been the norm for these communities for many years, even before the difficult economic conditions that currently challenge Michigan led so many other local governments to re-examine the benefits of collaboration. These communities appear to be more involved in collaborative service provision than other groups of local governments throughout Michigan, but the difficult economic conditions gripping Michigan and the declining support coming from state revenue sharing makes it necessary to investigate whether more can be done to achieve economies.

CRC recently has engaged in numerous research projects related to intergovernmental collaboration, including a 2005 survey of service delivery methods[1], an outline of state laws that authorize local governments to collaborate for the provision of services[2], and a 2008 analysis of the survey results that suggests an approach to the consolidated provision of local government services.[3] This analysis indicates that patterns exist among the governmental units that collaborate for the provision of services and among the types of functions/services provided collaboratively. Whether those patterns exist by design or by chance, they show that local governments cooperate with each other heavily for the provision of some services and with the state and county governments for the provision of others.

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[1] Every city, village, township, and county government in 25 Michigan counties was surveyed about the methods of providing governmental functions and services. The 25 counties surveyed were primarily Michigan's urban counties, but included some rural counties including: Alpena, Bay, Calhoun, Cass, Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kalkaska, Kent, Livingston, Macomb, Marquette, Midland, Monroe, Muskegon, Oakland, Ottawa, Saginaw, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne. The survey listed 116 functions and services grouped into 26 functional categories. The survey was sent to 670 units of government, which represent 36 percent of the 1,859 general-purpose local governments in Michigan and contain 78 percent of the state's population. Responses were received from 464 of the 670 governments surveyed, for a response rate of 64 percent. Response rates for each type of government were: 67 percent for counties (16 of 25); 71 percent for cities (114 of 160); 65 percent for villages (54 of 83); and 69 percent for townships (280 of 403). For each function or service, the respondents were asked to indicate if their jurisdiction directly provides the service, provides to, has provided by, or jointly provides with another unit of government, provides through a special district, contracts with a private provider, or does not provide at all. For additional information, see *Catalog of Local Government Services*, CRC Memo #1079, September 2005, www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2000s/2005/catalog.html.

[2] *Authorization for Interlocal Agreements and Intergovernmental Cooperation in Michigan*, CRC Report #346, April 2007 www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2000s/2007/rpt346.pdf.

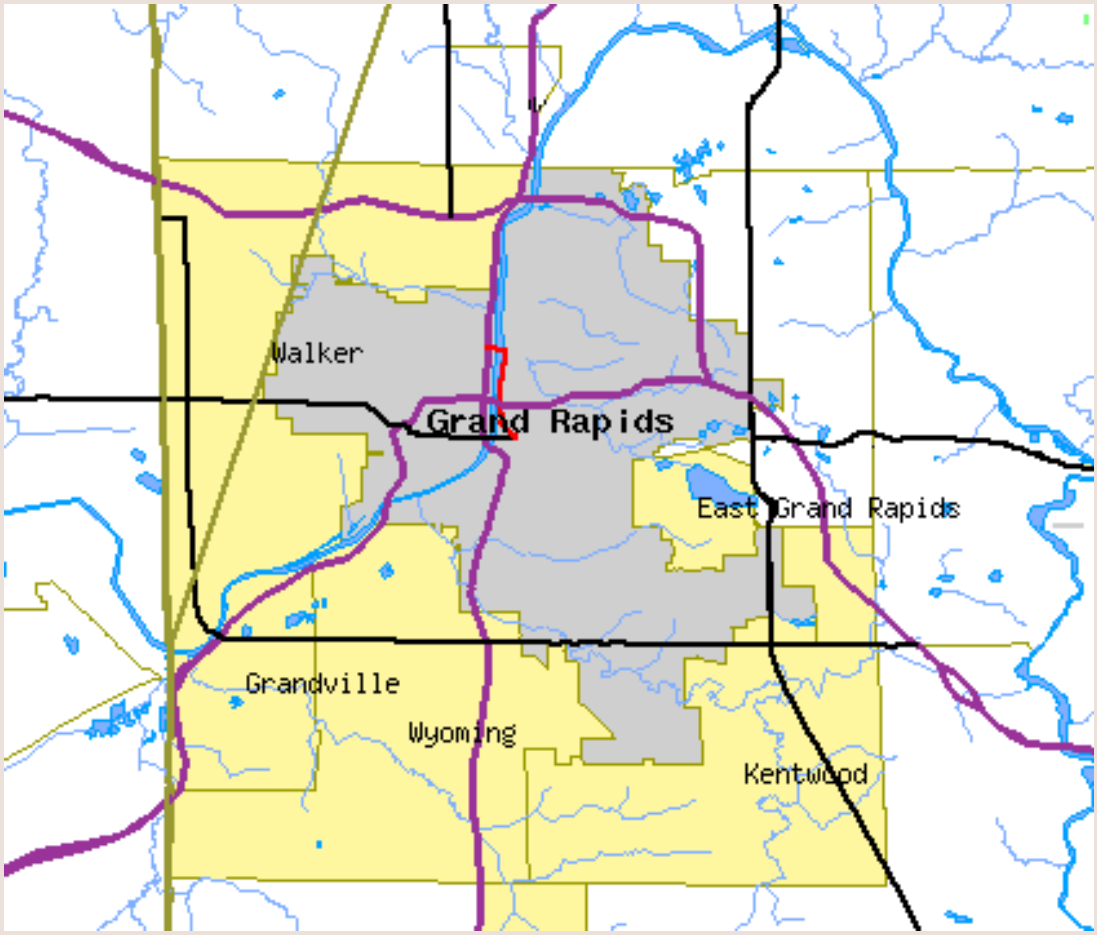
[3] *Approaches to Consolidating Governmental Services*, CRC Report #354, November 2008, www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2000s/2008/rpt354.pdf.

The Units Reviewed

The seven governments discussed in this paper include one county government and six cities.

Michigan's county governments were developed to serve as administrative arms of the state government to provide state services at the local level. In the days of horse and buggy, it would have been too difficult for a state the size of Michigan to perform on its own the tasks of tracking births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. Similarly, counties provided law enforcement, prosecuted those charged with crimes on behalf of the State, and performed tasks related to the administration of property taxes. Over time, counties have assumed responsibility for a broader range of services

Map 1
Grand Rapids and Surrounding Cities



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, tiger.census.gov/cgi-bin/mapsurfer?act=in&infact=2&map.x=211&map.y=180&lat=42.9573441&lon=-85.6568146&wid=0.720&ht=0.260&iht=359&iwd=422&&tlevel=-&tvar=-&tmeth=i&mlat=&mlon=&msym=bigdot&mlabel=&murl=&conf=mapnew.con

such as road construction and maintenance, health services, and parks.

Kent County is Michigan's fourth largest by population. It provides a range of services comparable to Michigan's other large county governments, including operation of an airport and zoo. Besides the six cities discussed in this paper, the county also provides services to residents of 21 townships, four villages, and three other cities.

Michigan affords its cities a great deal of home rule authority to determine the operating structures that best meet their needs, provide services that meet the demands of their residents, and levy taxes at levels their taxpayers are willing to support. This home rule tradition creates a strong inclination to self-provide services and leaves decisions to collaborate in the provision of services entirely at the discretion of local government officials. Most of Michigan's cities are small in size and population, with a median size in 2000 of three square miles and a population of 5,433.

The six cities discussed in this report include Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. Each is an independent city adjacent to one another. Grand Rapids, Michigan's second largest city, serves as the core city for the other five suburban cities. The five suburban communities combined have more land area than the City of Grand Rapids, but Grand Rapids had more people in 2000 than the total of the five suburbs. The six cities combine to cover less than 15 percent of the land area in Kent County, but their combined 2000 population was about 63 percent of the total county population.

Each of these cities provides a full range of municipal services. Although the level of services may vary to reflect the size of the city and the size of the population served, there is commonality among these cities in the functions performed and the services provided.

Table 1
Land Area and Population in Kent County and Subject Cities

	Land Area (Sq. miles)	Total 2000 Population
Kent County	856.4	574,335
City of East Grand Rapids	2.9	10,764
City of Grand Rapids	44.3	197,800
City of Grandville	7.5	16,263
City of Kentwood	21.0	45,255
City of Walker	25.2	21,842
City of Wyoming	24.3	69,368

Source: 2000 Census.

About Intergovernmental Collaboration

Difficult economic conditions are forcing local government officials to reconsider the standard methods of performing functions and providing services. Officials have three options to deal with the fiscal and operational pressures on local governments: 1) increase taxes to yield more revenues; 2) cut spending to meet available revenues; or 3) find alternative methods of providing services at current levels for less money. The first two options can negatively affect the attractiveness of any single municipality relative to its neighbors. They would either increase the cost of residing and operating a business in the municipality or diminish the menu and/or level of services provided. Intergovernmental collaboration provides local governments with alternative methods of performing functions and providing services.[4]

Michigan local governments use intergovernmental collaboration to provide services more efficiently and to avoid duplication of effort; provide services or service levels that individual governments cannot afford to provide on their own; provide services or deal with problems that transcend the boundaries of individual units; and minimize externalities. Collaboration is used to effectively deal with economic development, land use planning, quality of life assets, and to better manage the delivery of services provided by multiple jurisdictions. Local governments cooperate in a multitude of forms: including consultation, voluntary regional commissions and councils, mutual aid pacts, joint service provision, joint purchasing, contracting to have functions performed and services provided to their residents, and special authorities.

Intergovernmental collaboration that occurs between two or more local governments – cities, villages, townships, counties, school districts, special authorities, and special districts – to jointly provide any services that each is authorized to provide individually can be thought of as *horizontal collaboration*. Although one partner in a collaboration of this type may bring more to the partnership than the other(s), horizontal collaboration exists when two or more units at equal levels of local government agree to work together. (For purposes of this analysis, cities, villages, and townships are considered equal levels of local governments.)

Intergovernmental collaboration also occurs when local governments collaborate with the State or county governments. Such collaboration may take the form of municipalities sharing the cost of functions performed by their counties; municipalities contracting with their counties or the State to have functions performed; or the county governments simply assuming responsibility for the performance of specific functions, thus relieving the municipalities of any function performance duties. These forms of relationships can be thought of as *vertical collaboration*. Unlike horizontal collaboration in which two or more units at the same level of government work together for the provision of services, vertical collaboration exists when local governments have functions performed by different levels of government.

The relationship created when two or more governments use the same private provider for governmental services or functions can be thought of as *indirect collaboration*. Although the contracting governments may not interact, they each benefit from the economies of scale created by spreading capital or human assets over wider geographic areas than is the case for their single jurisdictions. The *Catalog of Local Government Services* shows that many of the same services are provided by local governments contracting with other local governments (in horizontal and/or vertical collaboration) and through indirect collaboration.

Joint purchasing offers another form of intergovernmental collaboration, but it is not driven by the same economic motives for economies of scale that drive horizontal and vertical collaboration. The benefit of joint purchasing is the leverage purchasers gain by buying in bulk. Wholesale and retail providers of governmental supplies often are willing to reduce the unit price as the quantity purchased increases. By collaborating with other governmental units to purchase commonly needed items, governments may be able to obtain the same quantity of those items at a reduced unit price.

[4] Here, and throughout this paper, the term "function" refers to activities performed to make governments work (support-type activities that generally occur out of the public eye). The term "service" refers to activities performed to provide public goods.

Patterns of Collaboration

Analysis of the *Catalog of Local Government Services* shows that the economic attributes of the functions and services are important determinants in identifying services well suited for intergovernmental collaboration and potential partners for each function or service.

Self Provision. Most functions/services are performed independently by individual governmental units. The services with the highest percentages of local governments opting for individual provision are those that are core to the operation of local governments and tend to be labor intensive, such as tax collection, accounting, elections, payroll, and record keeping, as well as zoning, planning, and building code enforcement/inspection/permits.

Horizontal Collaboration. Capital intensive services require major expenditures for land, buildings, vehicles, or equipment. The cost of providing capital intensive services is not directly related to the size of the population or geographic area served. Once a local government has invested in the land, buildings, vehicles, or equipment to provide capital intensive services, that government often is capable of serving populations and geographic areas broader than that single government. In economic terms, this is known as economies of scale. With the capital items in place, the marginal cost to the government of providing services to additional people or areas is relatively small.

Horizontal collaboration is used most often for the provision of capital intensive services, such as water provision and treatment, libraries, sanitary sewer treatment, fire prevention, and mass transit. Horizontal collaboration often carries integration costs for the participating governments. Feasibility studies, legal agreements, service design plans, and other integration costs for the first couple of years of integrated service provision can lead to higher costs than the aggregate cost of each government providing the service independently. Capital intensive services are geographically sensitive – meaning communities usually must be adjacent to one another and the capital intensive land, buildings, or vehicles must be centrally located for all participating units to feel that their residents are gaining benefit commensurate to the costs contributed.

Horizontal collaboration can be threatening to municipal workers and residents and can be the most difficult form of collaboration to achieve, but the opportunity for significant savings in the budgets of local governments emanates from achieving economies of scale in the most expensive municipal services – those that require capital assets. Fire protection, water and sewer, libraries, and public works, to name a few examples, are relatively costly municipal services, so if municipal officials seek to seek savings, these services provide the greatest opportunities.

Vertical Collaboration. Technically intensive functions and services require for their provision persons with advanced college degrees or professional certification. While most governmental functions and services require at least a basic level of training, functions that require persons with specialized academic training or that have been recognized in their fields through a professional certification program tend to cost more because of the higher compensation levels those persons can command in the public and private sectors. As with capital intensive services, once local governments have invested in the employment of people with specialized technical expertise, they may have assets capable of serving populations and geographic areas broader than their individual local government. In economic terms, this is known as economies of skill. With the professional staff member employed, the marginal cost to the governmental unit of providing services to additional people or areas is relatively small.

Vertical collaboration is reported most frequently for specialized police functions, criminal justice functions and the courts, crime labs, roads, animal control, environmental, and building regulation services. Some of these functions, especially criminal justice, the courts, and road maintenance, reflect legislative or constitutional provisions that require high degrees of county involvement and thus, institutionalize vertical collaboration.

Vertical collaboration tends to be easier to accomplish than horizontal collaboration. Because the person(s) with the technical skills provides the opportunity for economies of skill, and that person can be located

nearly anyplace near the participating units, location is not vital. In fact, local governments need not be contiguous to benefit from vertical collaboration. The local governments and the county share a mutual interest in the efficient performance of government functions through vertical collaboration, but horizontal collaboration requires local government officials to surrender some level of control and participation by one unit of government comes at the risk of helping to make the neighboring unit of government a more attractive place to live and to compete for business.

The potential to achieve savings through vertical collaboration is not as great as the potential savings obtainable by horizontally collaborating on capital intensive services. This simply stems from the fact that the cost of capital assets is usually greater than the cost of employing persons with specialized skills.

Contrasted with capital intensive and technically intensive services are labor intensive services, for which the economies are different from those of capital or technically intensive services. The amount of staff needed to provide labor intensive services is directly related to variables such as the geographic size of the governmental unit or the population to be served, and the consequence of consolidating is simply to combine the geographic areas and populations of the participating jurisdictions with little or no resulting savings.

Indirect Collaboration. The services commonly provided through indirect collaboration tend to require either significant capital investment – utilities, Internet access, and solid waste collection – or technical expertise – engineering, surveying, legal services, and information technology. Private providers also provide labor intensive services, such as janitorial or security services. The cost of providing these services can be greater for local governments because they do not have alternative work during down periods, but private firms can move staff across jurisdictions to meet demand. Michigan local governments heavily rely upon private providers for utility provision, Internet access, solid waste collection, engineering and surveying, and legal services.

Statutory Review

The 2007 report, *Authorization for Interlocal Agreements and Intergovernmental Cooperation in Michigan*,[5] found 77 specific laws, or provisions of laws, that authorize intergovernmental collaboration. Some laws broadly authorize collaboration for any services that local governments are authorized to provide independently, other laws authorize collaboration for the provision of specific functions or services.

Until the 1950s, each time two Michigan local governments wanted to formally cooperate to jointly provide services or to contract for services, they were required to go to the legislature for general legislation authorizing cooperative agreements for that particular service or function. That changed with enactment of Public Act 35 of 1951, which authorized any local government to cooperate with any other local government in the "ownership, operation or performance" of any "property, facility or service which each would have the power to own, operate or perform separately." Thus, under the provisions of Act 35 any local governments could do jointly anything which each could do individually and it was no longer necessary to obtain specific state enabling legislation in those cases where all of the units involved had individually the power to perform the function. This broad authorization to cooperate was embedded in the 1963 Michigan Constitution. Today, Public Acts 7, the Urban Cooperation Act, and 8, the Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act, of 1967 (Extra Session) provide the broad authority for any local governments to do jointly what each has the authority to do independently.

Specific enabling legislation is still necessary in those instances when one or more of the units involved do not have the power to perform a function. Since home rule cities, villages, and counties have broad home rule powers, they do not usually require such specific authorization. However, general law counties, townships, school districts and special districts have only those powers specifically provided by law (and in the case of counties and townships those fairly implied). It is necessary to point to statutory authorization to perform the functions before they can perform it on a cooperative basis. For this reason, many of the statutes authorizing cooperation in specific functions are still necessary. Also, many of these specific statutes are important because of their fiscal and structural provisions. The laws authorize the levy of dedicated taxes to fund the services to be provided jointly or a governance structure specifically designed to meet the needs of local governments providing joint services.

Laws that Impede Collaboration

Intergovernmental collaboration laws were implemented to authorize collaboration among local governments, but provisions in some of these laws severely limit the ability of local governments to come together for joint service provision.

Employee Protection Provisions

Employee protection provisions contained in six separate laws impede local governments from using intergovernmental collaboration to displace employees currently engaged in providing the functions or services that are proposed for joint provision. The provisions state that employees affected by transfer because of collaboration should not be put in any worse position relative to worker's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance, or any other benefits that were provided to employees of one of the merging government service providers. The result of these provisions is that local governments are restrained from using intergovernmental collaboration effectively to reduce the size of municipal staffs. In fact, because of these provisions, consolidated service provision may cause the cost of that service to increase rather than decline. The acts that include these provisions are as follows:

[5] Citizens Research Council of Michigan Report #346, April 2007 (www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2000s/2007/rpt346.pdf).

Public Act 7 of 1967 (Extra Session), Section 5(g)ii, as amended, the Urban Cooperation Act, provides: "An employee who is transferred to a position with the political subdivision shall not, by reason of the transfer, be placed in any worse position with respect to worker's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance, or any other benefits that the employee enjoyed as an employee of the acquired system."

Public Act 8 of 1967 (Extra Session), Section 4(d)ii, as amended, the Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act, provides: "No employee who is transferred to a position with the political subdivision shall by reason of such transfer be placed in any worse position with respect to workmen's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance or any other benefits that he enjoyed as an employee of such acquired system."

Public Act 204 of 1967, Section 13(2), as amended, the Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act, provides: "No employee of any acquired transportation system who is transferred to a position with the authority shall by reason of such transfer be placed in any worse position with respect to workmen's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance or any other benefits that he enjoyed as an employee of such acquired transportation system."

Public Act 425 of 1984, Section 6(b), as amended, the Conditional Land Transfer Act, provides: "An employee who is transferred by a local unit due to a contract under this act shall not by reason of the transfer be placed in any worse position with respect to worker's compensation, pension, seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation, health and welfare insurance, or any other benefits that he or she enjoyed before the transfer."

Public Act 57 of 1988, Section 10(l), as amended, the Emergency Service Authorities Act, provides: "…employees of a municipal emergency service whose duties are transferred to an authority formed under this act shall be given comparable positions of employment with the emergency service established by the authority, and shall maintain their seniority status and all benefit rights of the position held in the municipal emergency response service before the transfer."

Public Act 292 of 1989, Section 23, as amended, the Metropolitan Councils Act, provides: (1) A public employee whose duties are transferred to a council established under this act shall be given a position of a comparable description with the council, and shall retain the seniority status and benefit rights of the public employment position held before the transfer. …

(2) … When powers or duties of a local governmental unit are transferred to a council, the council shall immediately assume and be bound by an existing labor agreement applicable to those powers or duties for the remainder of the term of the labor agreement. The members and beneficiaries of a pension or retirement system or other benefits established by a local governmental unit, the powers or duties of which are transferred to a council, shall have the same rights, privileges, benefits, obligations, and status with respect to the council.

Government tends to be a labor intensive enterprise for many services. It is especially labor intensive for the public safety services – police and fire protection – that consume the majority of the budgets for full service local governments. Laws that hinder the ability to achieve savings through collaboration put public officials in the difficult position of needing to reduce the service levels or eliminate those services completely to achieve savings.

Laws that Make Collaboration More Difficult

Certain other laws[6] do not directly create impediments to collaboration, but either through their construction or their omission makes collaboration more difficult for the local policymakers that must make difficult decisions when initiating collaborative services.

Public Act 336 of 1947, the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) and Public Act 312 of 1969, providing for Compulsory Binding Arbitration for

[6] See Legal Barriers to Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreements in Michigan, by Michael P. McGee and Christopher M. Trebilcock from Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C. Prepared for Intergovernmental Cooperation in Michigan: A Policy Conference, May 17-18, 2007.

Public Safety. Section 15 of PERA requires employers and representatives of employees to "…confer in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and *other terms and conditions of employment*…" [emphasis added] This wording has been interpreted to mean that the duty to bargain extends to the public employers diversion of work to non-unionized employees or to outside contractors. Thus local governments currently engaged in the provision of a service must submit to collective bargaining potential actions to provide that service collaboratively with another governmental unit or through non-governmental contractors.

Act 312 submits interest or contract formation disputes between public employers and public safety employees to binding arbitration, as well as issues arising during collective bargaining negotiation over the terms to be included in a new contract. Thus, local governments considering collaboration for the provision of police or fire protection must consider the possibility of those changes to the conditions of employment being subjected Act 312 binding arbitration.

Public Act 116 of 1954, the Election Law. Intergovernmental collaboration agreements have led to recall efforts against elected officials that voted to approve participation by their local government. The law could be amended to prohibit such actions as a valid basis for recall.

Public Act 279 of 1909, the Home Rule Cities Act. Several cities have amended their charters to create minimum staffing requirements for their police and/or fire departments. Such provisions preclude collaboration as a viable tool for seeking efficiencies in government operations. The law could be amended to prohibit minimum staffing provisions as a responsibility that properly rests with management and an impediment to collaboration.

Public Act 206 of 1893, the General Property Tax Act. The law could be amended to facilitate greater tax base sharing. As long as local government officials are driven by the need to expand the tax base, the goal of new development will outweigh the benefit of collaboration. A system of tax base sharing would make development (ideally commercial and industrial) in the mutual interest of all local governments in a region, allowing them to concentrate on achieving the economies of scale that characterize the capital-intensive and technically intensive governmental services.

Reform of these laws would better enable local government officials to make structural changes to the methods of providing government services and create an atmosphere in which leaders think beyond the boundaries that define their local governments.

City Charter Review

A city charter is a basic law formulating the government for a city that, within the limitations of the state constitution and legislative enactments, establishes the framework of government, defines powers and duties, and identifies the rights and responsibilities of a city in fulfilling the needs of its citizens. As a strong home rule state, Michigan authorizes each city to draft its own charter.

For the six cities involved in this study, the local laws that create their operating structures, as defined by city charters, are very permissive in authorizing the cities to jointly provide services.

Authorization to Collaborate

The Wyoming City Charter specifically authorizes the City to engage in joint service provision with its neighbors. Section 2.5 states

> Section 2.5. Intergovernmental contracts. The city shall have power to join with any governmental unit or agency, or with any number or combination thereof by contract or otherwise as may be permitted by law, to perform jointly, or by one or more of them, for or on behalf of the other or others any power or duty which is permitted to be so performed by law or which is possessed or imposed upon each such governmental unit or agency.

The Kentwood City Charter also provides authorization for the City to engage in joint service provision:

> Section 3.3. Intergovernmental relations. The city may join with any governmental entity, or with any number or combination thereof, to perform, jointly or separately for the others, any lawful power or duty which is permitted to be performed.

The East Grand Rapids City Charter has similar language:

> Section 2.4. Intergovernmental Relations. The city may exercise any of its powers and perform any of its functions jointly or in cooperation with, by contract or otherwise, the United States, Canada, one or more states, and political subdivisions or public agencies thereof.

In Grandville, the Charter reads:

> Section 3.4. Inter-Governmental Contracts: The city shall have power to join with any governmental unit or agency, or with any number or combination thereof by contract or otherwise as may be permitted by law, to perform jointly, or by one or more of them, for or on behalf of the other or others any power or duty which is permitted to be so performed by law or which is possessed or imposed upon each such governmental unit or agency.

In Walker, the Charter reads:

> Section 3.3. Intergovernmental Contracts. The City shall have power to join any municipal corporation, school district, or State agency, or with any number or combination thereof, by contract or otherwise as may be permitted by law, for the ownership, operation or performance, jointly or by any one or more on behalf of all, of any property, facility, service, or recreational program which each would have the power to own, operate, perform, or conduct separately.
>
> The City shall have the right to contract with any person or with any other municipal corporation to furnish to property, outside the corporate limits of the City, for an adequate consideration and within limitations imposed by law, any lawful municipal service which it is furnishing to property within its corporate limits.

Likewise, the Grand Rapids City Charter authorizes the City Commission to take actions to promote intergovernmental collaboration.

> 53. Municipal Co-operation. Section 3. The City Commission and City Manager shall seek to bring about co-operation among and between the Cities of Michigan in whatever way may seem best for the purposes:
>
> (a). Of securing a uniform system of accounting among said cities so that intelligent comparison may be made, and so that each city may profit by the experience of all.
>
> (b). Of enabling said cities to work out plans for co-operative buying at wholesale rates.
>
> (c). Of promoting the prosperity, welfare and happiness of the citizens and taxpayers.

Impediments to Collaboration

Impediments created at the local level are contained in the city charters for these cities. Ordinances that create impediments are created by the cities' elected officials, and can be undone by those officials. Kent County operates as a general law county, and thus the operating structure and laws are contained in state law.

Very few obvious impediments to collaboration appear in the city charters.

Some impediments are found where the charters create commissions to oversee the provision of city services. For instance, the Grand Rapids City Charter provides:

> 230. Section 2. The Board of Library Commissioners of the City of Grand Rapids shall be composed of seven elected members. The Board shall have the entire management and control of the Public Library of the City and of all property and assets belonging thereto devoted to or intended for library purposes.

This provision vests responsibility and control of the Grand Rapids Public Library with the Board of Library Commissioners. Clearly this would impede the ability of Grand Rapids to divest itself of its library in favor of a library authority, but it would not seem to be such a strong impediment that the City would be precluded from participating in a resource sharing consortium or otherwise working with other libraries.

Other impediments arise from provisions for the election or appointment of city officers in the city charters. For example, the Walker City Charter states:

> Section 7.2. Officers to be Appointed. The appointive officers of the City shall be one Supervisor to be appointed by the Commission from among the Commissioners or elective or administrative officers of the City to serve for a term of two years, a City Assessor and three members of the Board of Review to be appointed by the City Commission for a tem of one year, a City Attorney, a Fire Chief,

> and a Health Officer, to be appointed for indefinite terms and to be responsible to and to serve at the pleasure of the Commission, and a Police Chief to be likewise appointed for an indefinite term, provided that the City Commission and to the extent permitted by law, request the sheriff of Kent County under contract to furnish police protection to the City and to enforce all legal ordinances. One or more assistants to the Assessor may be appointed by the Commission when deemed necessary. The Commission may create additional appointive officers of the City of may combine any appointive offices in any manner not inconsistent with State law and prescribe the duties thereof.

Collaboration for functions or services included in the responsibilities of elected or appointed city officers do not threaten those offices, but collaboration may be more difficult when the functions or services considered for collaboration encompass the entire duty of the elected or appointed officers. For instance, collaboration for public safety dispatch or training would not threaten the offices of fire chief or police chief in each city, but collaboration on property assessing may be more difficult because the charters require appointment of assessors to serve as city officers. In addition to the provision for an appointed assessor in Walker noted above, each city charter includes similar language for assessors.

The East Grand Rapids City Charter provides:

> Section 5.2. Duties of Clerk, Treasurer and Assessor. The clerk, treasurer and assessor shall report to the manager and perform those duties as required by law, ordinance, resolution, Charter or by the manager, as well as the duties set forth below: …
>
> (c) Assessor. The assessor shall prepare and certify the regular and special assessment rolls and shall perform those duties imposed upon assessing officers by state law.

In Grandville, the City Charter provides:

> Section 6.13. Assessor: Functions and Duties: The Assessor shall possess all the powers vested in, and shall be charged with all the duties imposed upon, assessing officers by statute. He shall prepare all regular and special assessment rolls in the manner prescribed by law or by ordinance. He shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed for him in this charter or by the council.

The Kentwood City Charter has similar language:

> Section 6.9. Assessor: Functions and duties. The assessor shall possess all powers vested in, and shall be charged with all duties imposed upon, assessing officers by law. The assessor shall prepare tax, special assessment and other rolls, and shall perform such other duties as prescribed by law.

And in Wyoming:

> Section 4.13. Assessor: functions and duties. The Assessor shall possess all the powers vested in, and shall be charged with all the duties imposed upon, assessing officers by statute. He shall prepare all regular and special assignment rolls in the manner prescribed by this charter, by the Commission or by the City Manager.

The language in each of these city charters provides that the function of assessing property is to be performed by the city assessor, who is an appointee of the city managers or mayors.

These cities should perform legal analysis to assess whether the inclusion of this appointed office in their city charters would prohibit collaborative performance of this function through which responsibility is shifted to outside parties. As detailed below, it appears Grandville was able to engage in some level of private contracting despite its charter language.

Also, a case can be made that the charter language in these cities is not unlike Section 61 of the General Law Township Act[7] that makes the supervisor the chief assessing officer of each township. Notwithstanding this law, townships often contract with their county equalization departments or private providers to perform assessing. Failing the ability to find any latitude in the wording, each city would have to amend its charter to enable assessing to be performed by an outside party.

Otherwise, each of the cities should not be restricted from collaborating in the provision of services.

[7] General Law Township Act, Revised Statute of 1846, MCL 41.61, http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-41-61.

Analysis of Collaboration in Kent County

CRC received from each of the governments a list of the functions and services provided through some form of interlocal agreement. With the assistance of staff from those governments, that information has been prepared in a matrix that can be found on pages 13-21.

CRC used this information to analyze the services each unit provides and the methods employed to provide those services. Each function and service was analyzed in multiple ways to identify the following potential opportunities for enhanced collaboration:

- Each function and service was analyzed based on the economic attributes to identify possible economies of scale or skill.
- Best practices were identified from CRC research to offer potential opportunities that were not otherwise evident from the survey data.
- The methods of performing functions and delivering services in these communities are compared to the most commonly employed methods in the 2005 survey of governments in 25 Michigan counties.

CRC did not have sufficient information to analyze the potential savings from reduced duplication or the potential service enhancement that may result from economies of scale.

Existing Collaboration

It is clear from the matrix that intergovernmental collaboration has been extensively used as a tool for improving the operations of the seven governments. Collaboration exists among these cities and between the County and these cities for a broad range of functions and services. Examples arise in the list of functions and services that the County provides to local governments that are provided not only to these six cities, but also to the other cities, villages, and townships in Kent County. Several trends are worthy of recognition in this matrix.

Collaborative Arrangements not Universal – Roughly two-thirds of the services that are jointly provided can be classified as horizontal collaboration. Only about a quarter of those uniformly include all six cities. Most are:

- Individual relationships between two or only a few of these cities,
- Arrangements involving the City of Grand Rapids, as the seat of county government, and Kent County, or
- Interlocal agreements between individual cities and the school districts they overlap.

As a result, there are opportunities for those cities not party to those individual agreements to become party to existing interlocal agreements, or create similar interlocal agreements with other cities for the provision of those services. This works for both vertical collaboration, where the county is performing functions for something less than all of the cities, and horizontal collaboration, where something less than all of the cities are working together to provide services.

Seat of County Government – The City of Grand Rapids has benefited from cooperation with Kent County, and vice versa, in ways that the other five cities have not. As the seat of county government, Grand Rapids plays host to the county offices, the courthouses, and other county facilities. The City of Grand Rapids and Kent County share facilities, jointly store municipal records, provide information technology across departments, and jointly provide other services. This puts Grand Rapids in a unique position among the cities of this study.

Joint Purchasing – These communities have established a strong network of joint purchasing that serves them well and can be expanded to other items in the future. The communities reported joint purchasing for items such as supplies for elections, motor vehicle fuel, fire department vehicles and equipment, road salt, and other items. Several of these joint purchasing agreements were between only a few communities. It is important that they be expanded to include all of the communities and any surrounding commu-

Figure 1
Shared Programs and Services in Kent County, Michigan

Key:

Provided to: The municipality provides the program or service to other governments, agencies or partners.

Provided by: The municipality utilizes a program or service provided by others.

Provided with: The municipality works with others to provide better services, improve efficiency or lower costs.

Provided with: The municipality utilizes a program or service provided by a non-governmental entity.

KC—Kent County; GR—Grand Rapids; East Grand Rapids; East Grand Rapids; GV—Grandville; KW—Kentwood; WK—Walker; WY—Wyoming; MI—MIchigan; KCRC—Kent County Road Commission; GVMC—Grand Valley Metro Council; MOB—Metro Oversight Board

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Human Resources	ACSET Council (job training funds)		Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
Fiscal Services (Assessing, Treasurer & Purchasing)	Assessor	Share Appraisal Duties for Commercial/ Industrial Properties	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
		Share Appraisal Fee for MTT appeal defense				Provided with WY			Provided with GV
	Treasurer	Treasurer/Assessor Coordination	Provided with ALL	Provided with KC	Provided with KC	Provided with KC	Provided with KC	Provided with KC	Provided with KC
	Purchasing	Fire Commission	Provided to 21 local units	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
		Joint Purchases - multiple examples	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All	Provided with MI and All
		Towing Services				Provided with WY			Provided with GV
Information Technology	Management Information Systems	Kent Co. Dispatch Authority	Provided with GR, GV, WK, WY	Provided with KC, GV, WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR, WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR, GV, WY	Provided with KC, GR, GV, WK
		Court IT	Provided to GR	Provided by KC					
	GIS	REGIS	Provided with All	Provided w/ All	Provided w/ All	Provided w/ All	Provided w/ All	Provided w/ All	Provided w/ All
Elections		Purchasing, programming, reporting	Provided to All KC cities, Townships and school districts	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
Corrections	Community Service & Work Crews		Available to All		Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC		Provided by KC
	Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Accountability Block Grants & Monitoring of juvenile probation	Provided to All	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Animal Services	Animal Control		Provided to All	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
	Animal Shelter		Provided to All	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
Police	911 Dispatch		Provided to EGR, KW	Provided to KW, Byron, Caledonia, Dorr Twps	Provided by KC	Provided by WY	Provided by KC	Provided to Lowell, KCRC	Provided to GV Fire and Police
	KC Dispatch Authority	Kent County Dispatch Authority	Provided with GR, GV, WK, WY	Provided with KC, GV, WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR, GV, WY	Provided with KC, GR, GV, WK
	Metro HS Police Academy		Provided with GR, GV, KW, WK, and WY	Provided with KC, GV, KW, WK and WY		Provided with KC, GR, KW, WK, WY	Provided with KC, GR, GV WK,WY,	Provided with KC, GR, GV KW,WY	Provided with KC, GR, GV, KW, WK
	Radio IP					Provided with KW, WK	Provided with GV, WK	Provided with GV, KW	
	Training	Computer Tracking System	Provided to All	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
		Specialized Items and Procedure Development	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All
	Firing Range		Provided to GR, EGR, KW	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by WY	Provided by KC and WY	Provided by Private Company	Provided to GV
	Patrol	Mutual Aid	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All
	Metro Oversight Board (MOB)	Children's Assessment Center - child sexual abuse	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
	Police Leaders	Vice Unit	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
	Oversight Board oversees multiple	Combined Auto Theft Tea m	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
	examples of joint service provision	Metro Fraud and Identify Theft Team	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
		Major Case Team	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
		Cold Case Team	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
		Drug Teams - Metro, Enforcement Team, GR Police Vice Unit, Kent Area Narcotics Enforcement Team and KW Special Investigations Unit	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB	Provided with MOB
	Forensics		Provided with EGR		Provided with MOB				

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Police	Canine Units		Provided to EGR	Provided to GV	Provided by KC, KW	Provided by GR, WY, OCSD	Provided to EGR	Provided by KC, GR, MI State Police,	Provided to GV
	Emergency & Disaster Response	Medical/Hospital response planning (MMRS)	Provided with GR, KW, WY, & Spectrum, St. Mary's, Metropolitan Hospitals	Provided with KC, KW, WY, & Spectrum, St. Mary's, Metropolitan Hospitals	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided with KC, GR, WY, & Spectrum, St. Mary's, Metropolitan Hospitals	Provided with KC	Provided with KC, GR, KW, & Spectrum, St. Mary's, Metro Hospitals
		Emergency Preparedness	Provided to EGR, GV, WK, WY		Provided by KC	Provided by KC		Provided by KC	Provided by KC
Fire	Training	Training Calendar	Provided to ALL	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
		Training Facilities		Provided by WY Provided to EGR	Provided by GR, WY	Provided by WY	Provided with other local FDs		Provided to EGR
	Fire Dispatch		Provided to Several twps & cities	Provided to KW	Provided by KC		Provided by GR		Provided to GV
	Firefighting & Rescue	Joint Vehicle/ Equipment Purchasing	Provided to 21 local units						
		Air bottles			Provided by KW		Provided to EGR		
		Mutual Aid		Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL
		Automatic Aid agreement		Provided with KW, WK and Plainfield Twp		Provided with WY	Provided with GR	Provided with GR, Alpine &Wright, Tallmadge FDs,	Provided with GV
	Ambulance & EMS	Dispatch	Provided to EGR	Provided to Several FDs in region	Provided by KC		Provided by GR	Provided to Lowell, KCRC	
		Grant sharing, , planning support	Provided with GR, KW	Provided with KC			Provided with KC, neighboring cities		
	HazMat	Hazard Mitigation Pla n	Provided with GR, Ottawa County	Provided with KC, Ottawa County	Provided by GR and Private Companies	Provided by WY	Provided with Cascade, Gaines & Caledonia	Provided by WY	Provided to GV, WK, Byron Center, Cutlerville, Caledonia, Caledonia Twp

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Fire	Purchase & training agreements			Provided with KW, WY			Provided with GR, WY		Provided with GR, KW
	Technical Rescue Team						Provided with Cascade, Gaines & Caledonia		Provided to GV, W. MI Tech Rescue Group
Legal & Judicial	Attorney & Legal Services	Legal Assistance Center	Provided by GR, Bar Assn, Law Firms	Provided by KC, Bar Assn, Law Firms					
		Sheriff Transports inmates from correctional facility to district courts	Provided to ALL	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
	District Court	Joint financing of new courthouse	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
		59th District - probation & court security coordination				Provided with WK, WY		Provided with GV	Provided with GV
		Shared Judges During Vacation Times				Provided with KW, WK, WY	Provided with GV, WK, WY	Provided with KW, GV WY	Provided with KW, GV, WK
Refuse & Waste	Waste Disposal	WTE Incinerator	Provided to ALL	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
		Profit-sharing (city collection, county facility)	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
	Recycling	Drop-off location	Provided with KW				Provided with KC		
		Curbside Service		Provided by Private Haulers	Provided by Private Haulers	Provided by Private Haulers	Provided by Private Haulers	Provided by Private Haulers	Provided by Private Haulers
Parking Services	City-County Building Authority		Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
Transit	Interurban Transit Partnership			Provided with ALL except KC	Provided with ALL except KC	Provided with ALL except KC	Provided with ALL except KC	Provided with ALL except KC	Provided with ALL except KC
Community & Econ Development	Regional Metropolitan Planning	Grand Valley Metro Council	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL
		425 Agreements		Provided with WK, WY			Provided with WY	Provided with GR, WY	Provided with GR, KW and WK

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Community & Economic Development	Planning & Development	Gateway Project to land-scape Division Ave & 28th St		Provided with WY					Provided with GR
		Plan to upgrade land use for Grandwalk area		Provided with WK				Provided with GR	
		Development of Division between 36th and 60th					Provided with WY		Provided with KW
	Coordinate annual CDBG program		Provided to EGR, GV, KW, WK, WY		Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
	Business Retention & Expansion	The Right Place (business attraction)	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place	Provided by The Right Place
		West Michigan Strategic / Alliance (regional competitiveness strategy)	Provided with GR, KW, WY Muskegon, Holland	Provided with KC, KW, WY, Muskegon, Holland			Provided with KC, GR Muskegon, Holland		Provided w/ KC, GR, Muskegon, Holland
	Food Regulation	Food inspection coordination	Provided to ALL	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
	Convention Center	Convention|Arena Authority	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
	Tourism Promotion	Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
Building Grounds		Facility & Grounds Maintenance	Provided with GR	Provided with KC, GR Public Schools	Provided to EGR Schools				Provided to Godfrey Lee, Godwin Heights and WY SDs
Fleet Services		Joint Fueling				Provided to GV Public Schools			
Cultural Services	Museums	Community Archives and Research Center	Provided with GR	Provided with KC					
	Libraries	Kent District Library (not a part of KC)	Provided with All in KC except GR, Cedar Springs, Solon Twp, Sparta Village & Sparta Twp		Provided by Kent District Library	Provided by Kent District Library	Provided by Kent District Library	Provided by Kent District Library	Provided by Kent Dist Library
	Stadiums & Arenas	DeVos Place Convention Center	Provided with GR, Grand Rapids-KC Convention/ Arena Authority	Provided with KC, Grand Rapids-KC Convention/ Arena Authority					

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Cultural Services		VanAndel Arena	Provided with GR, Grand Rapids-KC Convention/ Arena Authority	Provided with KC, Grand Rapids-KC Convention/ Arena Authority					
Roads & Bridges	Construction	GVMC Transportation Planning (MPO)	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL	Provided with ALL
	Maintenance	Trunkline Maintenance		Provided by MDOT	Boundary street maintenance provided by GR & KCRC	Boundary Street Maintenance Provided with Other Rd Agencies	Boundary Street Maintenance Provided with Other Rd Agencies	Boundary Street Maintenance Provided with Other Rd Agencies	Boundary Street Maintenance Provided with Other Rd Agcs
		ITS Management		Provided by MDOT					
	Signs & Signals			Signal maintenance provided to EGR, GV, KW, WK	Provided by GR	Provided by GR	Provided by GR	Provided by GR & KCRC	Materials, installation and maintenance provided by Multiple Entities
				Street Lighting Maintenance Agmt with MDOT	Provided by Consumers Energy		Sign mfg & Installation provided by WY		Sign mfg & installation provided to KW
Investment Pool	Kent County Investment Pool		Provided to 20 local units	Available to KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC		Provided by KC	Provided by KC
Utilities	Water	Water Treatment		Provided to EGR, KW, and WK	Provided by GR	Provided to WY	Provided by GR and WY	Provided by GR	Provided to GV and KW
		Utility Advisory Board		Provided to 9 communities	Provided by Utility Advisory Board		Provided by Utility Advisory Board	Provided by Utility Advisory Board	
		Joint Purchase of treatment plant chemicals		Provided to Holland, Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Grand Haven, WY					Provided by GR
		Distribution		Provided to WK, and KW			Provided by GR	Provided by GR	
		Interconnection Agreements		Provided with WY, Ottawa County, Plainfield Twp, North Ottawa Water System					Provided with GR, Ottawa County, Plainfield Twp, North Ottawa Water System

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Utilities	Sewer Collection		Provided to Various communities	Provided to KW, WK		Provided by WY	Provided by GR	Provided by GR	Provided with GV
	Sewer Treatment			Provided to EGR, KW, WK	Provided by GR	Provided by WY	Provided by GR and WY	Provided by GR	Provided to GV and KW
Public Works	Salt Purchasing		Provided to WK	Provided to GRPS, GV	Provided by MI		Provided by KCRC	Provided by KC	
	Equipment Sharing		Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All	Provided with All
	Road Striping		Provided to WK					Provided by KC	
Inspection	Building Inspection				Provided by Cascade Township				
	Electrical Inspection			Provided to WK	Provided by Cascade Township			Provided by GR	
	Plumbing Inspection				Provided by Cascade Township			Assistance provided by Plainfield, GR	Assistance during vacations provided by Pvt Plumbing Inspector
Environmental Services	Watershed Mgmt	NPDES - Phase II Permits	----------	Provided by Grand Valley Metropolitan Council / Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds					----------
		Exhaust hood, suppression system	Provided with WY						Provided by KC
Health Services	Metropolitan Medical Response Team	inspection	Provided with All All	Provided with All All	Provided with All All	Provided with All All	Provided with All All	Provided with All All	Provided with All All
	Human Services Complex		Provided with GR, MI	Provided with KC, MI					
	West Nile Virus Control Plan		Provided to ALL	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC
Parks & Recreation	Parks	Millennium Park land acquisition	Provided with GR, GV, WK, WY	Provided with KC, GV, WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR, WK, WY		Provided with KC, GR, GV, WY	Provided with KC, GR, GV, WK
		Shared Park Agreements		Provided with	Provided with Local schools	Provided with GV Public Schools	Provided with Local schools	Provided with Kenowa Hill SD	Provided with Local schools
	Playgrounds				Provided with local schools				Frog Hollow playground provided to Metro Health

Figure 1 (continued)

Parks & Recreation

		Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Recreation Centers		Phillips Recreati o n Center budget sharing with GR	Phillips Recreati o n Center budget sharing with KC	Community Center shared with school district				Rec facility use agmt provided to Aquinas Cllg
Senior Center					Provided with Senior Neighbors	Provided with Senior Neighbors	FS#2 Senior Center provided to Senior Meals/ Senior Neighbors	Provided with Senior Meals
Community Pool				Joint Facilities Agmt with EGR Schools				Contract with YMCA
	Kent Trail System Maintenance & Development	Provided with GR, GV, WK, WY, Byron Township	Kent Trail System maintenance and development with KC, GV, WK, WY, Byron Twp		Provided with KC, GR, WK, WY Byron Twp		Provided with KC, GR, GV, WY, Byron Twp	Provided with KC, GR, GV, WK Byron Twp
	West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition	Provided with GR, WK, MDOT, GVMC, Ottawa County, Alpine Twp, Friends of Musketawa	Provided with KC, WK, MDOT, GVMC, , Ottawa County Alpine Twp, Friends of Musketawa,				Provided with KC, GR, MDOT, GVMC, Ottawa County, Alpine Twp, Friends of Musketawa	
Trails		Trail, Friends of the White Pine Trail	Trail Friends of the White Pine Trail				Trail, Friends of the White Pine Trail	
	Other Trail Partnerships			Reeds Bike Trail joint funding and maintenance provided with GR Twp				
	Bike Lanes		Provided with EGR	Provided with GR				
Other				Collaborative Prgms Provided with Private Health Clubs		Jazz &Tap classes collaboration with WY		Jazz & Tap classes collaboration with KW
				Special Needs Prgms Provided with KW		Special Needs Prgms Provided with EGR		At-Risk after sch prgms provided w/ Wesley Park United Methodist Church
								Collaborative Programs Provided with Area School Districts

Figure 1 (continued)

			Kent County	Grand Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Grandville	Kentwood	Walker	Wyoming
Urban Metro Parks & Rec					Shared Middle School Athletic Director with EGR Schools				
Urban Metro Mayors & Mgrs	Ongoing Efficiency Gains and Partnership Discussions			Provided with EGR, GV, KW, WK, WY	Provided with GR, GV, KW, WK, WY	Provided with GR, EGR, KW, WK, WY	Provided with GR, EGR, GV, WK, WY	Provided with GR, EGR, GV, KW, WY	Provided with GR, EGR, GV, KW, WK
Housing	Grievances	Officer Responsibility		Provided with WY					Provided with GR
Housing	Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinating Committee			Provided with WY					Provided with GR
Housing	Coordination		Provided to EGR, GV, KW, WK		Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	
Housing	Section 8 program		Provided to EGR, GV, KW, WK		Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	Provided by KC	
Social Services	Emergency Needs Task Force on Basic Needs		Provided with GR, United Way	Provided with KC, United Way					
Social Services	Vision to End Homelessness		Provided with GR, Salvation Army	Provided with KC, Salvation Army					
Education &Schools			Kent School Services Network provided with 8 school in 3 districts, non-profits	Office of Children, Youth & Families to expand learning opportunities with school districts Liaison cmte to improve communication provided with School Districts					
Education &Schools	Crossing Guards				Provided to EGR and St. Stephens Schools	Provided to GV, Calvin and Christian Schools	Provided to School Districts		Provided to School Districts
Education &Schools	Police School Liaison Program				Provided to EGR and St. Stephens Schools	Provided to School Districts	Provided to School Districts	Provided to School Districts	Provided to School Districts

nities purchasing supplies similar to those utilized by these communities.

Police Teams – The Metro Oversight Board has united the police efforts of these cities and Kent County for a consolidated effort to provide the Children's Assessment Center and created teams to handle major crimes and vice, auto theft, fraud and identity theft, drug, and cold cases. This approach recognizes that perpetrators of crimes do not limit themselves to single jurisdictions. Additionally, the officers and detectives participating on these police teams possess specialized skills. Spreading their abilities over broader geographic areas allows participating units to invest the resources into training these individuals, thus capitalizing on economies of skill.

Opportunities for New Collaboration

With so many functions and services jointly provided by these communities, either collectively by all seven governmental units or by subsets of these governments, CRC employed two methods to identify opportunities to expand collaboration: we identified opportunities to build on existing collaboration and we analyzed collaboration in other parts of Michigan to identify opportunities to initiate collaboration new to these communities.

Public Safety

Kent County and the six cities could build on the automatic aid agreements these cities have in place and the Metro Oversight Board, which plays such a vital role for specialized police functions, to identify additional public safety functions that could be jointly provided. Large percentages of the budgets of these communities are dedicated to the provision of police and fire protection. The ability to achieve savings and maintain service levels without raising taxes begins by addressing the cost of these services.

The public safety services that provide the greatest community identification, police street patrol and incident response by the police departments and fire and emergency responses by the fire departments, tend to be very labor intensive. Staffing levels are determined by factors such as population, the number of housing units, the number and character of commercial and industrial properties. This would suggest that collaborative provision of street patrol or fire responses would provide only marginal opportunities for savings because collaboration would do nothing to change the aggregate land area, population, or number of residential and business properties in these cities. Nonetheless, collaboration would provide some opportunity for savings and would enable the region to better manage delivery of these public safety services. However, as long as the employee protection provisions remain in the Urban Cooperation Act and Emergency Service Authorities Act, a full consolidation of police and fire departments across these jurisdictions is not likely to result in cost savings in the near term.

One need not move to a full consolidation of police and fire departments. These cities could pursue collaboration on specific parts of police and fire department operations for which economies of scale may result in savings. Identification of these opportunities should begin with the less visible capital and technically intensive functions that are critically important to providing public safety in the urban settings that these departments operate. Police detectives, crime scene investigators, and fire inspectors could be provided regionally, with responsibility and authority to cross boundaries to investigate crimes. Dispatch, training, vehicle and equipment maintenance, record keeping, and other support functions could all be performed regionally.

To provide these services across jurisdictions, a special authority should be created or the personnel could be housed within the county sheriff's department. A special authority would keep each individual police department intimately involved in the operations of the joint squad, but it is possible that jurisdictional and insurance issues could complicate the operations of such a squad across multiple governments. Those potential issues would be addressed by housing the joint squad in the county sheriff's department. The county has jurisdiction across all cities, villages, and townships.

Facilities – The future relocation or redevelopment of any police precincts, firehouses, or other facilities should be preceded by an analysis of how that facility

fits into the regional provision of these services. The location of these facilities should be driven by their ability to serve the whole region, not just residents of their own community.

9-1-1 Dispatch – The Kent County Dispatch Authority provides 9-1-1 dispatch for several communities, and Wyoming provides dispatch for Grandville. Consolidating all communities into the Kent County Dispatch Authority would capitalize on the skills possessed by the dispatchers. When Oakland County consolidated the many community operated 9-1-1 dispatch services into a single countywide center, it was able to offer a higher level of services than any of the communities could provide individually. The county dispatchers received additional training to be certified to provide enhanced 9-1-1 which allows dispatchers to relay methods of performing medical instruction until the proper medical personnel arrived at a scene.

Fire Fighter Training — While most communities perform this function independently, a large number of governments throughout Michigan rely on interlocal agreements with surrounding governments to provide this service.

The City of Wyoming contracts its training center for use by the Grand Rapids Fire Department 100 days a year. Grand Rapids and Wyoming jointly provide training to East Grand Rapids firefighters. Kentwood reports numerous joint training events with other local fire departments. And the City of Walker reports receiving training to operate personnel accountability system from the Kent County Fire Chiefs Association response team.

Fire fighter training requires people with high levels of skill capable of training others. Once one set of people have those skills, they are capable of providing training to multiple municipalities. A consolidation of firefighter training into a single effort would make better use of the officials and facilities engaged in this exercise. In some parts of Michigan, community colleges are central to fire fighter training.

Fire Investigation — Most communities throughout Michigan rely on vertical collaboration for fire investigations. Persons capable of serving as fire investigators must have higher levels of training and experience. Most local governments do not have the volume of fires to warrant having staff dedicated to this task employed full time. Collaboration allows the people with requisite skills for this task to be shared across a number of jurisdictions and a wider geographic area. Of the six cities, only Grandville reported partnering with other cities and the State for fire investigations. These cities should share a single fire inspection unit authorized to investigate all suspicious fires in any of these cities.

Hazardous Material Handling and Response — Most municipalities in Michigan rely on vertical collaboration for hazmat handling and response. Another large numbers of communities provide this service through direct provision or horizontal collaboration. The information provided by the communities indicates that the City of Wyoming plays a lead role for this service. The Wyoming hazmat team works closely with Grand Rapids and Kentwood on equipment purchases and training and responds to events in Grandville, Walker, Byron Center, Cutlerville, Caledonia, and Caledonia Township. Also, Kentwood works with Cascade, Gaines, and Caledonia to respond to hazardous materials incidents.

Hazmat provides opportunities for efficiencies both with the economies of scale, due to the equipment needed, and with economies of skill, due to the training needed. Efforts to build on the efforts in Wyoming to the mutual benefit of all communities, including those not directly targeted in this service review, should be pursued.

CLEMIS – Oakland County's Court Law Enforcement Management Information System (CLEMIS) is a multifaceted, regional law enforcement management information system. CLEMIS facilitates the sharing of data between law enforcement agencies in a regional database. Oakland County and participating municipalities have used CLEMIS to provide and/or automate the following funcitons:

- Enhanced 911 (E-911 Call-Taking)
- Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD)
- Records Management System (RMS)
- Mobile Data Computers (MDC)
- Field-Based Reporting (FBR)

- Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) access via WebLEIN
- Reporting Tool (InfoView)
- Crime Mapping
- Electronic Facial Images (Mugshot)
- Electronic Fingerprints (Livescan)
- Video Arraignments (OakVideo)
- Jail Management System (JMS)
- Radio (voice) Communication System
- Community Policing Websites (CrimeWatch)
- Fire Records Management System (FRMS).[8]

The integration of these functions does not establish any new responsibilities or introduce collaboration to a new set of criminal justice activities. CLEMIS ties these functions together and enables law enforcement agencies to capitalize on technical and communication advances to more efficiently perform the functions. Kent County should play a lead role in contracting with Oakland County to extend CLEMIS to Kent County and integrate all city, village, and township police agencies into that system.

Firing Range – The Kent County Sheriff and each individual police department do not need separate firing ranges. Like the arrangement Grandville and Kentwood have with Wyoming, a single facility could be made available to all police personnel in the six cities and the county sheriff's department.

County Sheriff Provision of Police Services – The practice in most Michigan counties is for cities to provide their own police departments and for the county sheriff to provide police services to unincorporated areas of the counties. Many county sheriffs contract with willing townships to provide enhanced levels of police service.

Recently this practice has been extending to cities. The City of Mt. Clemens, the seat of government for Macomb County eliminated its police department and now contracts with the sheriff for police protection. Positions were offered to former Mt. Clemens police officers as Macomb County sheriff's deputies. The courts ruled that this arrangement did not violate the employee protection provisions of the Urban Cooperation Act. Likewise, the Oakland County Sheriff provides police protection for the cities of Clarkston, Rochester, and Rochester Hills in addition to the many townships that contract for enhanced protection.

If the finances of Michigan local governments do not improve soon, more cities will be driven to investigate the financial and operational feasibility of contracting for police protection from the county sheriffs. A move such as this may not happen in the immediate future, but if the housing market continues to slump, resulting in further declines in property tax revenues, any number of these cities may be forced to consider this option. The Kent County Sheriff should study the possibility of extending county sheriff services into any or all of these core cities in place of their police departments to prepare for any future inquiries.

County Performance of Municipal Functions

Kent County should position itself to perform more functions on behalf of the local governments – not just the six cities, but all other cities, villages and townships in the county – by developing a closed intranet[9] among the local governments and using that network to serve as a contracting body for functions and services for which county employees are already involved.

Intergovernmental Intranet – Establishment of a high speed intranet connecting all county, city, village,

[8] www.oakgov.com/clemis/assets/docs/FACT_MASTER.pdf (accessed April 16, 2009).

[9] *An intranet is a network within and only for an organization. Businesses establish intranets for communication among employees and governments operate intranets for staff interaction. This is in contrast to the Internet, which is a worldwide network with content available to everyone (not withstanding the need for passwords to access some sites). Computer users on an intranet have access to the Internet but not vice-versa; and intranets are designed to be more task-orientated and less promotional than is the Internet. See* www.associatedcontent.com/article/348517/intranet_vs_internet.html *for more detail.*

township facilities within Kent County would better enable these governments to operate in the 21st Century and would create an infrastructure for improvements in many of the areas for which the county and local governments interact. Establishment of such an intranet would involve dedicated computer file servers hosted by Kent County and high speed, broadband connections to all computers in each local government. This effort should extend beyond the municipal offices in which most staff are housed: court houses, recreation, health, transportation facilities, and other buildings in which governmental functions are carried out should be included.

If feasible, this effort could be done in cooperation with the Kent County ISD to connect school facilities at the same time. While school activities are mostly external to municipal affairs, security matters would be facilitated by this interconnectivity and the intranet could facilitate collaboration between municipalities and individual school districts.

Creation of a secure intranet among the local governments would improve opportunities for file sharing and development of resources to capitalize on advances in communication. The cost of this network can be shared among all participating governments. While the initial cost may be high, the improvements in productivity relative to the interactions between these governments can justify the investment.

Building off of the interconnectedness offered by a local government intranet, the County should develop sufficient computer infrastructure to host websites, email service, databases, and other services for the benefit of the local governments. The County should focus on technically intensive services, which its personnel can perform in county offices at least as efficiently as municipal staff located in municipal offices. It should begin by focusing on functions that the county performs as part of the business operations of running the county.

Data Repository – File servers hosted by the County computers could act as a central repository for all databases that local governments maintain, at least parts of which get reported to the County or State, including: the functions of the clerks, property assessment, police and fire records, jail management system, and building inspection. Consolidation of these databases would give County officials more immediate access to the data and would create a uniform design for comparability across jurisdictions. High speed Internet access and a secure intranet would allow local officials to continue to access information as if it were housed on the municipality's own computers.

For county officials, the ability to manage data in a uniform system across the whole county, instead of integrating the data from more than 30 unique databases, would increase their productivity and enable them to perform functions that require a common database. For instance, because Oakland County houses a database of property values for all parcels in the county, local officials performing property assessments enter data directly into the county database, which saves time for them, and the county officials have data to equalize assessments across jurisdictions. This database enabled the County to run models to foresee the likely effects that economic changes and the housing crisis would have on municipal and county property tax revenues. Budget makers at the county and local levels were better prepared to make needed changes because of this arrangement.

Financial Transactions – The County could develop and extend to all local governments the ability to process credit card transactions online. As a service to residents, this capability would allow for online payment of property taxes, income taxes in the cities of Grand Rapids and Walker, fees, fines, and other charges. This capability would free county and municipal clerical staffs, that normally have to process payments, to perform other tasks.

Accounting – Most local governments in Michigan perform their accounting functions independently, but technological advances and the proximity of these units make this function a candidate for intergovernmental collaboration. Consolidation of this function at the county level would capitalize on the employment of skilled accountants necessary to maintain financial records. Instead of working solely on the financial records of a single unit of local governments with intermittent down times, their time could be spread over the needs of several communities. These accountants could be housed in county offices or travel between municipal offices. The cities may opt to employ bookkeepers for the every day data entry.

Treasury Functions — Most local governments perform treasury functions independently. Individual functions may be suitable for collaboration either with the county or among the cities. For instance, each government has a lock box arrangement with a bank. Approaching banks as a collaborative group may bring benefits not afforded to each unit operating independently. The Intergovernmental Collaboration Committee of the Michigan Government Finance Officers Association is looking at the possibilities of collaboration in the finance functions of local government. The results of their work may offer ideas for the Kent County cities to adopt.

Payroll/Benefits — In the private sector, companies have grown around the concept of providing human resource services for other businesses. This allows the contracting businesses to concentrate on their core missions – producing a good or service to sell. The ability to outsource these functions allows individual companies to capitalize on the skills of a few individuals rather than having each business employ professionals with requisite skills to manage payroll, file taxes, oversee benefits, and perform other personnel matters.

Although businesses have contracted to have this function performed for them in the private sector, most local governments continue to perform payroll and benefit functions independently. Kent County and the six cities may wish to look at privatizing payroll and benefits. Alternatively, the County and the City of Grand Rapids are each well suited to extend the work of their payroll and benefits staff to the service of other communities, both the smaller cities that surround Grand Rapids and the other communities in the county.

Property Assessing – Assessing is currently performed by each city and township in Michigan; almost 1,300 in total. This system leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in how similar properties are appraised. Additionally, the market seems slow to respond in drawing qualified appraisers to become municipal assessors, leading to a dwindling number of Level IV assessors.

The majority of respondents to the 2005 CRC survey reported the independent performance of property assessing, but another large number of local governments reported that they contract with their counties or private appraisers for property assessing. The City of Grandville responded to the 2005 survey indicating they work with a private company for assessing. Currently Kent County and the City of Grand Rapids share appraisal duties for commercial and industrial properties. Grandville and Wyoming report collaborating for Michigan Tax Tribunal appeal defense of assessment.

It was noted earlier that although property assessing should be a strong candidate for intergovernmental collaboration, charter provisions in several of these cities may restrict the ability of these communities to fully benefit from collaboration for this function. A radical change in the method of performing this function may require a charter amendment in these cities.

Property assessment is a function that Michigan counties are well suited to perform on behalf of its cities and townships. Appraisers are required to obtain certification to appraise properties for purposes of taxation. Certified appraisers are employed both by cities and townships and by counties to equalize city and township assessments. In fact, several counties contract to perform assessing for some of their cities and townships.

Collaboration for the performance of property assessing could take several forms. The least threatening to local governments would be for the County to provide a centralized database for all property records. Each city and township could continue to perform their own assessments individually, but the database would be centrally housed and available to all eligible local government officials. Because Oakland County has such a database, it was able to model economic scenarios and was able to foresee the consequences of the housing crisis on property tax revenues before most others.

A higher level of collaboration would follow the example of the City of Grand Rapids to work with Kent County for assessment of commercial and industrial properties. Cities and townships would continue to assess residential property. Such an arrangement would be consistent with the charter language in the cities that make the assessor a charter officer. That

office would still be filled by a certified appraiser, but responsibility for the appraisal of some properties could be farmed off to the County.

Tax Collection. Whether or not the County gets involved in property assessing, it would provide efficiencies if local governments consolidated the collection of property taxes with the county treasurer. Currently Michigan cities and townships collect property taxes and transfer the proper amounts to the State, counties, school districts, and other overlapping jurisdictions that levy a tax. Consolidation to the counties would simplify collection from more than 1,500 agencies to 83.

An investment in technology and resources to allow online credit card payments would accentuate the efficiencies by allowing property owners to pay their taxes from their own homes or businesses. By handling this through the county, administrative costs associated with credit card transactions would be defrayed among the several participants.

Elections – Most communities throughout Michigan administer elections independently. Michigan cities and townships are responsible for the provision of election services to the overlapping school districts, the counties, the State, and any other governmental units with elected officials or the ability to place questions on the ballot.

America learned from the experience of the 2000 Florida election that fewer elections administrators brings the states closer to ensuring compliance with the due process and equal protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution, which states that "No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Consolidating the administration of elections as well as the maintenance of records and reporting of results with the county would bring uniformity to this task, at least in Kent County and ease the burden on municipal clerks.

Counties are already involved in the administration of elections, primarily through the canvass of election results. To transfer responsibility over more election administration tasks to the county level would not diminish the local nature of the voting process. Each city would still be subdivided into precincts, with a polling place convenient to most households. Such a transfer would consolidate the duplicative tasks that occur in each city and township into a single bureaucracy and bring more uniformity to the process.

Records/Archives – Most communities report independent maintenance of records and archives. Record keeping is a core function of county government. It is performed independently by most local governments because of the need to have such records close at hand. Private sector businesses have developed that store records for companies and that invest in sufficient computer memory to store electronic records.

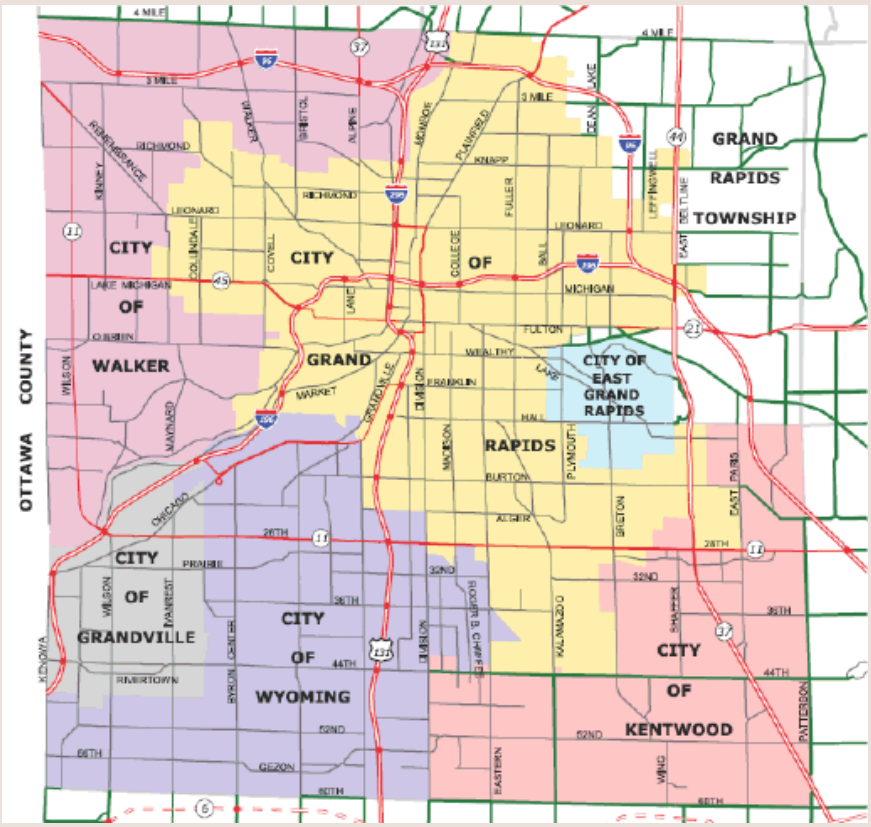
Records and archives from the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County are housed in Community Archives and Research Center on grounds of old public museum in Grand Rapids. East Grand Rapids and Kentwood both reported working with a private company for records storage and document imaging.

Oakland County has improved the efficiency at all levels of government by standardizing record keeping with the County. The ability to perform this function at the county level required installation of high speed Internet access linking all government buildings throughout the county and adequate computer capabilities at the county level. Immediate access to local government information makes the county better able to perform many of its functions, while each local government has access to digital records.

Alternatively, Kent County and the other cities may wish to learn more about the relationship East Grand Rapids and Kentwood have with private provides for records maintenance and, to the extent possible, enable the others to also contract and receive the same benefits provided by these companies.

Websites – In a very low cost effort, county computers could serve as a host for all municipal websites and email services. Rather than requiring each community to invest in individual computers with the sufficient firewalls and software to house their own websites, or paying private website hosts to provide this function, the County can provide this service. This could be done on a contractual basis, with the fees calculated at a rate sufficient for the county to pro-

Map 2
Jurisdiction of Roads in Metropolitan Grand Rapids



Legend: Red lines – State highways / Green line – County roads / Gray lines – City streets

Source: Kent County Road Commission, www.kentcountyroads.net/Maps/Road_Jurisdiction_Map.pdf.

vide technicians with ability to write code and maintain the sites.

Each of the six cities that are the subject of this report has developed its own website, but for other communities in Kent County, the County could create a template for use in creating their own sites. Additionally, the county should assist in getting any forms that residents or businesses are required to complete online.

Capital Intensive Services

Other opportunities to expand collaboration can focus on some of the capital intensive services for which collaboration would be expanded to new communities or into new functions.

Road Maintenance — Michigan is not unlike other states wherein responsibility for highway construction and maintenance is assigned to a number of different levels of government. In the case of Michigan, State government, county road commissions, and municipal governments (cities and villages) provide highway services. While the roads under state jurisdiction are fairly uniform throughout the state, there is little consistency from county to county on jurisdiction over the primary arterial and collector roads. In some urban counties, the county road commissions (the Depart-

ment of Public Works in Wayne County) have jurisdiction over these roads whether they are physically located in cities and villages or in townships.

In the six cities, for the most part, county jurisdiction of roads (green lines in Map 2) ends where the cities begin. Other than some border roads in Kentwood, the county road commission does not have jurisdiction over any of the roads in these six cities. Collaboration will not change the number of road miles, lane miles, or other indicators of need for these road agencies. With little overlap in geographic jurisdiction (such as would occur if county roads intersected these cities), joint road construction or maintenance efforts would cause the road agencies to travel into areas they otherwise would not travel. Therefore, the recommendations focus on primary opportunities to collaborate on functions that occur behind the scenes.

Winter Maintenance – The economics of winter maintenance, and the assignment of road responsibilities in Kent County, suggest that collaboration can have only a limited affect on cost savings. The mere act of collaboration will not reduce the number of miles of roads or the number of lane miles, so the cost per mile/lane mile will remain the same. Officials should investigate whether collaboration would allow trucks to continue in straight lines to plow snow, apply salt, or patch potholes where otherwise these county road commission trucks would travel around these cities or lift their plows on the city streets.

A number of jurisdictions use GIS technology to track the roads that have been plowed or treated with salt. Collaboration would allow Kent County and these cities to jointly purchase and operate such a system to reduce duplicative runs, more effectively care for boundary streets, and more effectively perform the tasks of winter maintenance.

Highway Signs and Signals – In the 2005 CRC survey, statewide respondents and these Kent County cities reported vertical collaboration for the provision and maintenance of traffic signs and signals. In data provided by these cities, Kentwood and Walker reported contracts with Grand Rapids for traffic sign manufacturing, installation, and maintenance. The other cities may benefit from similarly contracting with Grand Rapids for traffic signs.

Public Works – The equipment needed to provide public works services is relatively expensive. As a major item in municipal budgets, collaboration on this service provides an opportunity for savings. These cities have an agreement for equipment sharing. Spreading the cost and use of this equipment goes far toward achieving the economies of scale. Further investigation may reveal more savings by developing more collaborative agreements for the provision of this service.

City/School District Collaboration

The ideas of collaboration need not be restricted to interaction among the cities or between the cities and the county. These cities share common taxpayers with school districts that perform non-instructional services similar to services performed by the cities.

Building and Grounds – The City of East Grand Rapids and the East Grand Rapids School District report collaboration on maintenance of the buildings and grounds. This is a model that the other cities should follow with their respective school districts.

Municipal Fleet Garage/Storage – The land and facilities used for vehicle storage make this function capital intensive. As such, the possibility of capitalizing on economies of scale should be explored. The best opportunities for savings on this function may lie with working with overlapping school districts. Consolidation to a single facility/lot would still leave participating units with the land currently used for these facilities/lots unless those governments used the lots for other purposes or sold the land to enhance their tax bases.

Parks and Recreation – These cities tend to do more with their overlapping school districts than with each other for parks and recreation facilities and programs. Grand Rapids reports a school parks agreement with Grand Rapids Public Schools. The City of Grandville jointly provides park facilities on land leased from Grandville Public Schools. The City of Walker collaboratively works with the Kenowa Hills School District through the City Central Park agreement. Walker also utilizes school ball fields for community sports league programs. The City of Wyoming has shared use agreements with Wyoming Public Schools for the use of Lamar Park and Jackson Park, Godwin

Heights Public Schools for use of Hillcroft Park, and Grandville Public Schools and Grandville AYSO for use of soccer fields at Century Learning Center.

The needs of a municipal recreation program and the facilities in and around school buildings are often identical. The facilities required to provide programming tends to be capital intensive. Each can be expected to have ball fields and athletic facilities; swings, slides, and playscapes for smaller children; extensive grass expanses, etc. These cities along with the school districts should seek opportunities for the joint purchasing of equipment to use the parks and playgrounds and equipment to care for the facilities, such as tractors for cutting grass. Additionally, the cities and school districts can contract with one another to have the staff from one maintain the facilities for the other. It would not seem to matter whether the cities contract with school districts or school districts contract with cities.

Kent County is working with Grand Rapids, Grandville, Walker, and Wyoming to acquire land for Millennium Park. The County also works with other various other townships and cities in bilateral collaborations for park and trail services.

The City of Wyoming serves as distribution point for ball field marking powder for communities to reduce delivery costs.

Regional Assets

The Kent County assets that provide services beyond the county borders could be regionalized. Residents of many surrounding counties travel to the Grand Rapids area to visit both the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and the John Ball Zoological Gardens. They should share in the tax burden needed to maintain these assets.

Airport — The Grand Rapids area is served by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. The airport is managed and operated by the Kent County Department of Aeronautics. As capital-intensive services that serve residents and businesses in very wide geographic areas, airports are very well suited to collaboration. Kent County accomplishes this by providing for the airport at the county level. An analysis of the origin of passengers flying in to or out of GFIA may reveal the airport's benefits flowing to Ottawa, Muskegon, Allegan, Barry, or Ionia county residents. This would suggest that a multi-county special authority, that is supported financially by each of the member counties, could defray the cost to Kent County for airport operations and represent the needs of residents from each county.

Zoo — Kent County provides the John Ball Zoological Gardens for the benefit of all Kent County residents. Like the airport, the suggestion for improvement would be to consider the extent to which residents from other counties are visiting the zoo and whether taxpayer support for the zoo would be better spread over multiple counties.

Other Technically Intensive Functions

In addition to the technically intensive services that could be more easily provided by the county if a computer intranet is put in place to facilitate communication between offices, other services could be pushed to the county level.

Building Inspection — At one time, building codes were determined locally. Building inspection was conducted locally because only local inspectors would be familiar with each city's building code. Now all building construction has to comply with the state building code. As such, building inspection has become a strong candidate for regional collaboration.

Indeed, Grand Rapids provides electrical inspection services to City of Walker; the City of East Grand Rapids is contracting with Cascade Township for building inspection; and the City of Wyoming is working at various tasks with Park Township, the Godfrey Lee Public Schools, and the City of Walker.

Building inspection is a function that requires a high level of technical training and as such collaborating communities stand to benefit from economies of skill. Any of these cities could serve as employer of building inspectors to serve the other five, but if the county were to hire/put on contract building inspectors, those officials would be capable of serving any community in the county. Unless any community is going through the type of construction boom that many Michigan communities experienced in the 1990s, they are not likely to have sufficient work to keep inspectors employed full time.

Municipal Vehicle Maintenance — Many governments throughout Michigan handle the responsibility for vehicle maintenance independently and others contract with a private company for vehicle maintenance. Kent County, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming all reported working with private garages in the 2005 CRC survey but did not reflect that in the lists of joint services submitted for this project.

Vehicle maintenance is a governmental function that carries both capital intensive and technologically intensive attributes. The garages, lifts, and tools all require capital investment. This function also requires technical expertise, as the mechanics must receive training and state certification to validate their ability to work on different aspects of vehicle systems.

The opportunities for collaboration on vehicle maintenance are plentiful. Because these jurisdictions already have facilities for maintaining their fleets, it may be possible to consolidate the workforce into a single group of mechanics that travel among these cities to fix and maintain the vehicles in each jurisdiction. The cities and the county have similar fleets of vehicles, so shared mechanics would not require special training to service any type of vehicle particular to a single governmental unit.

Additionally, the school districts overlapping these cities have vehicles with similar characteristics. The school districts school buses and maintenance vehicles are not unlike the equipment used by the county road commissions or the city public works departments. The county and cities could investigate contracting with the overlapping school districts for vehicle maintenance.

Indirect Collaboration

Indirect collaboration occurs when two or more local governments contract with a private provider to perform a function or provide a service. Private providers enter these markets because they feel they can capitalize on economies of scale to efficiently provide services. When local governments contract with private providers, they are gaining those economies of scale through third parties.

The six municipalities have independently employed private contracting for individual functions and services. Now they might want to investigate the benefits of jointly contracting for private contractors to provide functions or services to multiple jurisdictions. As with joint purchasing, wherein suppliers are willing to reduce the unit price for a good because of the larger volume of purchase, jointly contracting with private providers to provide functions or services to multiple jurisdictions would give that contractor certainty of service that could result in a lower unit price than if the individual units approached that contractor independently. Because little information was provided by the cities regarding their current practices with indirect collaboration, CRC used responses from the 2005 survey of service delivery methods to identify potential functions and services where this approach might succeed.

Functions or services for which private providers were reportedly used in the 2005 survey include:

- **Printing municipal documents** (Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming);
- **Maintenance of records/archives** (East Grand Rapids and Kentwood);
- **Document destruction** (Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming);
- **Computer technical support** (Walker and Wyoming);
- **Website development and management** (East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming);
- **Garbage and recycling curbside collection** (Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Walker – Wyoming reported contracting for collection of recycling).
- **Ambulance/EMS** (East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Kentwood)
- **Surveying and engineering** (East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Wyoming – Kentwood and Walker reported contracting with a private provider for surveying only)

Cities not using private providers for these functions and services should consider doing so, and all cities

should consider a joint approach to contracting for these functions and services in a united effort to reduce the unit price. There should not be efforts to abandon contracts with private providers to pursue interlocal agreements in their place, but communities should pursue collaborative opportunities when contracts expire and must be renegotiated.

Training/Professional Development – Most communities train their employees and provide professional development independently. A change in practice could have these communities contracting to have training provided in conjunction with the community college, working with the county, or by contracting with private companies.

North Carolina attempts to have all state and local government services provided in a professional manner. The North Carolina School of Local Government provides training and professional development for local government employees to ensure that all functions are properly performed and performed to comply with state requirements. Training is for all functions – from dog catcher to accountants to elected officials. The local governments then provide a degree of training to convey their own operating procedures and idiosyncrasies.

Ideally, training and professional development for local governments should be provided at the state level in Michigan, through state departments, state universities, or local government associations. Michigan State University's State and Local Government Program offers some education programs and others are offered through individual associations. Kent County could help to fill any voids by working with its local governments to develop programs at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College, or another entity. Not only could this extend beyond the six cities to those local governments that make up the balance of Kent County, but over time it might be extended to local governments in neighboring counties.

Printing of Municipal Documents – Most communities in Michigan handle their printing needs independently. The City of East Grand Rapids reported collaboration with East Grand Rapids School District in the 2005 CRC survey (does not appear in list provided by city for this project). Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming all reported a relationship with a private provider in the survey (does not appear in list provided by cities for this project).

Although it is necessary for local governments to maintain printers in today's age of desktop computers, the production of large quantities of documents is best performed through contracts with private printing companies. The bulk of some governmental documents, such as a typical budget document or a financial report, dictates that mass production of these documents cannot be handled by a typical printer attached to a desktop computer. The county and cities may wish to explore whether any benefits exist by contracting with a common company.

Conclusion

Kent County and the cities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming have been very progressive in developing regional strategies for meeting the service demands of their residents. As the matrix on pages 13-21 illustrates, intergovernmental collaboration has been used extensively long before the current economic struggles plaguing Michigan led local governments throughout Michigan to reexamine this tool.

Now Michigan, and the local governments that derive tax revenue from the economic activity that occurs, is beset by a prolonged economic contraction. Business as usual will not be an option for the provision of local government services. Collaboration in the provision of governmental services is one tool local governments can use to capitalize on economies of scale and improve the provision of services while reducing costs.

It will be necessary for state laws to be amended to better enable these Grand Rapids communities, and local governments throughout Michigan, to benefit from collaboration to the fullest extent possible. Michigan's laws are relatively permissive, allowing local government collaboration for the provision of any service that the local governments are authorized to provide independently, but provisions in a few laws create circumstances wherein collaboration may increase the cost of service provision.

CRC's analysis of opportunities to expand collaboration focuses on the support functions for public safety and functions that the county can provide on behalf of the local governments. The capital and technically intensive services that are performed to help police officers on the streets and fire fighters better perform their duties can be consolidated among these local governments to achieve savings. Also, the county is well positioned to perform many of the functions needed for local governments to operate.

The time to take action is now. Even with the level of existing collaboration among these communities, it will take some time to develop and implement new collaborative efforts. Savings will not be reflected in current fiscal years, but in future years, and only if action is initiated presently to consolidate service provision.