

58



**what the  
metropolitan  
study  
commission  
means  
to you**

"The metropolitan problem has been called the major domestic problem of our times. But the nation as a whole has not awakened to its gravity."—Rockefeller Report, *The Challenge to America: Its Economic and Social Aspects*

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The Metropolitan Study Commission is an agency of Wisconsin's state government, created by the 1957 Legislature to study problems of local government that affect people living in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The Commission will make recommendations to the Legislature from time to time designed to improve local government and remove some of the problems of urban life in the Milwaukee area. The law says:

The Commission shall investigate the character, extent, adequacy, cost and efficiency of the principal services provided by governmental units for residents of the county, including. . . . property tax assessments, traffic, water supply, sewerage and storm water drainage, planning, civil defense, and other services relating to the life, property and general welfare of the residents of the county. (Chapter 421, 1957 Wisconsin Statutes).

Thus, the Legislature recognized that people in the Milwaukee area, in company with people in all rapidly growing urban regions, have a "metropolitan problem."

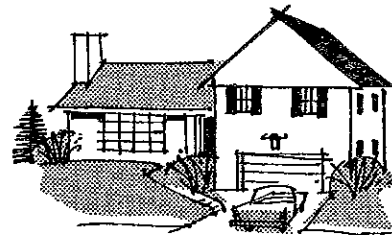


### did you know:

- The State Board of Health has described the southern third of Milwaukee County and the eastern portion of Waukesha County as a "potential epidemic area" because raw or partially treated sewage from septic tanks in subdivisions often stands in roadside ditches, on lawns, and flows into streams?
- For every increase in population of 1,000 persons in the Milwaukee area since 1945, about 420 acres of prime cropland have been converted to non-agricultural use?
- Underground water levels in the Milwaukee-Waukesha area are dropping at the rate of eight feet each year?
- Assessment administration in one Milwaukee County municipality is so careless that the assessments on two identical houses within the same block are \$1700 apart?



Assessed at \$3200.00



Assessed at \$4900.00

## are these problems familiar?

Milwaukee area citizens feel the metropolitan problem in the frustrations of daily life. These are the frustrations of traffic congestion, low water pressures, overflowing septic tanks, juvenile delinquency, slum housing, rising taxes, conflicting rules, and political conflict among the central city and 18 suburban communities inside Milwaukee County and 11 beyond the county line.

Although separate problems, these frustrations are related. They stem from the population explosion of the past twenty years. Public facilities, like roads and schools, are crowded. Land in older areas is crowded. The provision of new facilities has sent taxes upward each year. In newer areas, where people seek to escape from the problems of the central area, there are new and different problems. New facilities must be provided. Governments must be founded and equipped. Taxes must be raised.

Technological developments—the automobile, the modern highway, and telephones—have permitted dispersal of the Milwaukee population over a wide area. This has resulted in problems of conserving natural resources in the rural-urban fringe—the resources of land, water, air, and green spaces. The new areas have also created a transportation problem and a municipal service problem.

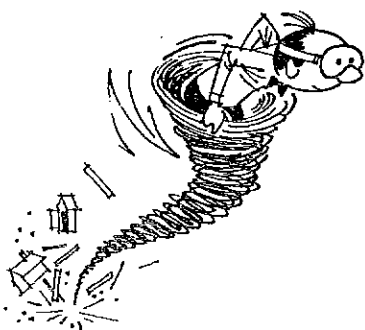
The problem to local government has become enormous. People living in one com-



munity but working in another are subject to different regulations and receive duplicated services. Equally important, separate compartments of local government levy their own taxes. Thus, tax needs are reckoned for each separate compartment rather than for the entire metropolitan community. Is it equitable for citizens of Wauwatosa to support highways and streets that are used by nonresidents driving through the city to work in neighboring municipalities?

Municipal governments are required to perform services for a 20th century population, but have the organization used in the 19th century. They have burdens that their structures were never intended to bear.

The high costs of allowing these defects to go unrepaired are paid in inefficient organization of the metropolitan area for the movement of people and goods, trade, manufacturing, and the conduct of government. The costs in terms of inefficient services and functions and conflicting local regulations are equally real. There are other costs, too, as in the depletion of resources, the economic losses through growth of blight in the central area and the spread of unplanned subdivisions in newer areas, the loss in human living values through traffic congestion, stream pollution and social conflict.



There is nothing unique about Milwaukee's metropolitan problem. Every major urban center in the United States faces it. The continued existence of cities as pleasant places in which to live and as profitable places in which to trade and work depends upon its solution.

Here is what the Commission seeks to learn through its studies:

*How can more efficient government be organized on a human scale so that people feel close to it and feel they have a major voice in its operations?*

The job of answering this question is akin to having a tornado by the tail, but it is a necessary job. The costs of failure are too great.

Can the upward rise of taxes be checked within the framework of our present government structure, or are changes required?

Can property taxpayers be expected to support the requirements for funds imposed by developing needs for expressways, better police services, sewerage systems, and other services—or is hard thinking about our tax structure required?

## your state's concern:

Why is the State of Wisconsin concerned with these problems of local government in the Milwaukee area? It has at least two legitimate reasons:

(1) Many of the reforms which will be proposed will require changes in state law. Although local study groups have worked in Milwaukee County, there is no authoritative agency other than the Commission that has a directive to recommend changes in state law. Since local governments are creatures of the state, the state has the responsibility to do what it can to provide adequate *modern* legal authority for the conduct of local government.

As a government, the State of Wisconsin is charged with responsibilities for the welfare of its citizens. The welfare of the people in the Milwaukee area is as important to the state as that of people in other parts of Wisconsin. In discharging this responsibility, the state must look carefully for solutions to problems that threaten the economic and social well-being of its citizens.

(2) There is no county in the state as important to the economy of Wisconsin as Milwaukee. Milwaukee County has more than \$5 billion in equalized property valuations, nearly half of the state's total. Without tax revenues from the Milwaukee area, the level of state services in all other parts of Wisconsin would be substantially lower, since Milwaukee area residents contribute far more in taxes than they receive in state services. The County has more than a million residents, and the urbanized area of which it is the core contains at least 1½ million, or 40 per cent of the state's population. The total dollar volume of goods manu-

factured in Milwaukee County in 1957 is estimated at 3.3 billion dollars. Clearly, Milwaukee County is more than the state's industrial base—it is the processor of Wisconsin's raw materials and the industrial market for small manufacturers throughout the state.

The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway and development of the export capital goods market will give Milwaukee County and Wisconsin new opportunities for wealth and employment. In some measure, the use of land, good government, efficiency of transportation systems, and tax base and economic vitality of the Milwaukee area and its municipalities will determine Wisconsin's success in these new fields of opportunity.

### **the commission's approach:**

The Metropolitan Study Commission is currently divided into three working committees. Committee assignments may be changed as new problems are studied.

The *Land Use and Zoning Committee* has the responsibility for the Commission's land use, zoning, subdivision control, planning, urban renewal and official map studies.

The *Metropolitan Functions Committee* is concerned with services of local government—water supply, sewerage, health, parks and recreation, police, fire defense, civil defense, and transportation.

The *Revenue Sources and Distribution Committee* is looking into property assessments, the distribution of shared taxes and state aids, taxes on motor vehicles, the revenue requirements of area local governments and municipal debt.

The Commission also has two citizen advisory committees: an eleven member Public

Information and Education Committee and a thirteen member Research Advisory Committee.

The Commission also has a full-time staff of six persons who are responsible for the research program.

For an example of reports from its working committees, one 101-page document found that "a grave threat to health" exists because substantial portions of the metropolitan area are served by septic tanks which discharge raw or partially treated sewage to roadside ditches, streams and fields. The study concluded that this threat can best be removed by extension of the boundaries of the Metropolitan Sewerage District to embrace all settled parts of the metropolitan area.

A report on property assessments found that gross inequalities burden property owners because the levels of assessments vary from community to community and from neighborhood to neighborhood. The report showed that there are as many methods of assessing property as there are municipalities in the metropolitan area.

The Commission's studies of the distribution of state highway aids reveal that Milwaukee area residents receive only one-tenth as much per capita in state aids as rural areas in northern Wisconsin, despite the fact that the Milwaukee area requires roads and expressways that cost literally hundreds of times as much per mile to build and maintain as rural roads.

A report on regional planning showed that the natural resources of the Milwaukee area are being used up at an alarming rate, particularly land and water, and that there is no regional agency which can correctly plan for the intelligent use of those resources.

### Research Advisory Committee

- DR. GEORGE A. PARKINSON, chairman, *Commission member, director, Milwaukee Vocational and Adult School*
- WALTER B. GERKEN, *investment research officer, Northwestern Mutual Life Ins. Company*
- CLIFFORD LARSON, *manager, Business Research Division, The Milwaukee Journal*
- MRS. PAULA LYNAGH, *research analyst, Citizens' Governmental Research Bureau, Inc.*
- ELAM E. MCELROY, *manager, Business Research Division, Milwaukee Association of Commerce*
- ORVILLE PALMER, *assistant dean, College of Business Administration, Marquette University*
- PROFESSOR PHILIP H. PERSON, *University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee*
- CARL QUAST, *planning staff, Board of Public Land Commissioners, City of Milwaukee*
- E. H. SCHMIDTMAN, *assistant vice president, Wisconsin Electric Power Company*
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- NORMAN GILL, *director, Citizens' Governmental Research Bureau, Inc.*
- KENNETH HAAGENSEN, *director of public relations, Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company*
- PERRY C. HILL, *The Milwaukee Journal*
- IRVIN KNOEBEL, *Commission member*
- WILLIAM A. NORRIS, *The Milwaukee Sentinel*
- RUDOLPH A. SCHOENECKER, *executive secretary, Greater Milwaukee Committee*

- ROLAND D. BERGER, *citizen member of Land Use and Zoning Committee, industrial coordinator, City of Milwaukee*

### Members of The Metropolitan Study Commission

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- DR. GEORGE A. PARKINSON, vice chairman, *director, Milwaukee Vocational and Adult School*
- IRVIN KNOEBEL, treasurer, *comptroller, City of West Allis*
- MRS. SAM COOK, secretary, *active in civic affairs*
- HAROLD E. BECK, *business representative, Office Employees Union #9, AFL-CIO*
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- EBNER F. LUETZOW, *president, South Side Laundry Company*
- CLIFFORD A. RANDALL, *attorney, Zimmers, Randall and Zimmers*
- WILLIS G. SCHOLL, chairman—*Metropolitan Functions Committee, executive vice president, Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company*

CHARLES BALL, technical director