

Chapter II

PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENTS IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

The metropolitan areas of the United States, taken as a whole, present a picture of unparalleled affluence and surging growth. A closer look reveals great diversity within these areas: poverty as well as affluence, decline as well as growth. The mixture of people and activities in metropolitan areas can be invigorating, making available a range of cultural, educational, and employment opportunities; it can also be a divisive factor giving rise to interest groups that compete for influence and public resources.

Diversity also characterizes the structure of local government in these areas. More than 18,000 units of government—counties, townships, municipalities, school districts, and special districts—are responsible for public policies and services in the 212 metropolitan areas counted in the 1960 census.

The sheer growth of population and jobs in metropolitan areas has generated vast demands for public services and other governmental action. But the uneven distribution of different population groups and employment centers has produced significant social and economic disparities within metropolitan areas. At the same time, a highly fragmented system of local government has emerged. Together, these trends severely limit the ability of local governments to meet the needs of current metropolitan growth. Metropolitan problems result not only from the broad patterns of urban change but also from the complexities of social and economic disparities and governmental structure. Three subjects—people, economic resources, and government organization—are thus basic determinants of government performance in metropolitan areas, and will be surveyed in this chapter.

WHO LIVES IN METROPOLITAN AREAS?

The magnetic power of metropolitan areas to attract population can be seen in the fact that most Americans now choose to live in these areas, and that virtually all new population growth has been concentrated there. The 1960 Census of Population found nearly two-thirds of the entire population of the United States living in metropolitan areas—112.9 million persons of the nationwide total of 179.3 million.¹ The 212 areas recognized as metropolitan in 1960 accounted for 84 percent of all the increase in the Nation's population during the 1950–60 decade. For these areas, the growth was 23.6 million persons, or 26 percent, while the population of the remainder of the country rose only from 62 to 66.4 million, an increase of 7 percent. Similarly, during the previous decade, 1940–50, these 212 areas

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Report PC(S1)–1 of the *1960 Census of Population*, p. 7. Except as otherwise cited, the other population figures reported below are also from this source.