

Free essay on limitations and other considerations pertaining to city management

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Answering the question of whether or not American cities are manageable is difficult and demands a complex answer. It is possible to manage a city, although it has to be stated that a perfect city cannot be expected to exist and a well-managed city will not be without problems. Good management means that a city can capably address the needs of its citizens and anticipate and plan for the citizens and overall well-being of the urban area of the future.

The way cities need to be managed in order to survive as a noteworthy, successful city recognizable on a regional, national or global level has changed and continues to evolve. Historically, a strong and wealthy central city government with ample resources could create a functioning city. However, tyrants ruling cities or individual business tycoons or industries building cities are no longer prevalent and American cities are effectively managed by balancing many competing interests, retaining and attracting citizens and business, growing intelligently and encouraging effective community involvement in the city management process and government decision-making.

Urban government administrations, however, face many potential limitations that can make it more difficult to effectively and efficiently manage a city. Comparing private sector businesses and public sector administration highlights some of these limitations. In the private sector, the goals for a business are relatively well-defined, straightforward and are focused, first and foremost, on the bottom line, or profit. The goals of public management are significantly different than those of private business and are typically more difficult to measure and work towards. Rather than sell a line of

products or services, a city government has to work towards ensuring that all citizens and businesses are thriving, which involves significant decision-making about how resources ought to be distributed, and government has no profit-related goal.

Unlike with the private sector, where decisions can be made relatively quickly and usually require the support of only a few individuals, like a board, public decision-making has to take into account many and often competing interests and sometimes hold series of meetings that may take months.

In addition to limited financial resources and competing political interests that can slow government action, the built environment in a city, for example, can also pose challenges to management. Existing infrastructure that is outdated or hindering citizen well-being, such as extensive roads and sprawl but little or no effective public transportation, limited housing and other remnants of poor planning or building that have not aged well forces government to direct resources to improving infrastructure while neglecting other aspects of management or neglect infrastructure.

Constituent complaints and customer complaints are important in both government and private business. A business that wishes to be successful, or make a profit and continue to grow and make a profit in future years will listen to or read customer complaints carefully, respond respectfully, learn from any complaints, take steps to correct the issue and attempt to retain the customer's business. While public government does not worry about profit, a municipality does need to take into consideration that property taxes and a healthy local economy are crucial for functional government and in an increasingly mobile society, people may decide to leave a city. Elected

officials and their appointees need to respectfully respond to and learn from constituent complains or risk losing their position during the next election. Additionally, addressing constituent concerns can encourage greater civic participation, ensuring the government will be better prepared to meet its citizens' needs and adapt. Finally, both constituent complaints and customer feedback have the power to bring new ideas or highlight important problems that could improve a business or city.