

# THE REFERRAL PROCESS

A DECISION-MAKING SYSTEM  
FOR LAND-USE MANAGEMENT -

PREPARED BY: ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONTROL DIVISION IN COOPERATION  
WITH THE DIVISIONS OF HOUSING &  
OPERATIONAL PLANNING

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF LAKEWOOD, COLORADO

DECEMBER, 1973

" THE WAY IN WHICH WE  
ALLOW OUR LAND TO BE  
USED IS THE MAJOR  
DETERMINANT OF THE  
QUALITY OF OUR TOTAL  
ENVIRONMENT. LAND USE  
IS THE CULMINATION OF  
ALL OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONCERNS & CONTROLS. "

DONALD Y. SHANFELT  
ENVIRONMENT

DAVID A. CHOATE  
HOUSING

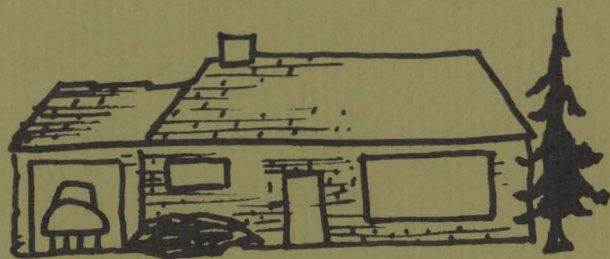
ALFRED D. YANDA II  
OPERATIONAL PLANNING

The City of Lakewood is faced almost daily with the necessity of making land use decisions. Ranging from small commercial establishments to large residential sub-divisions, such development and redevelopment proposals demand careful consideration of **all relevant concerns**. Many citizen groups and government agencies are justifiably concerned about such development with respect to its impact on neighborhoods, water and power supplies, air quality, tax revenues and service costs, and other items.

There is evident a growing awareness that current "impact control tools" (including "zoning" with its ability to allocate use and density, sub-division regulations, building codes, planned unit development and stipulations and performance standards) while somewhat effective in limiting the impact of a development on a site, cannot adequately assess and control the impact of a development on the community as a whole.

For most development, the impact reaches beyond the City of Lakewood's boundaries, and its effects are of concern to regional, state and Federal entities. A quick look at a "typical" housing unit in our City will show why.

# WHAT IS A HOUSE?



- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. WATER               | 120,000 GAL.*                  |
| 2. GAS                 | 186,300 CU FT.*                |
| 3. ELECTRICITY         | 5111 KILOWATT HRS.*            |
| 4. EMISSIONS           | 2200 LBS.*<br>(CARBON DIOXIDE) |
| 5. SOLID WASTE         | 5475 LBS.*                     |
| 6. SCHOOL POPULATION   | 1.9 PUPILS                     |
| 7. MEDICAL NEEDS, ETC. | ?                              |

\* PER YEAR

NOTE - ABOVE FIGURES ARE  
DENVER-METRO AREA AVERAGES

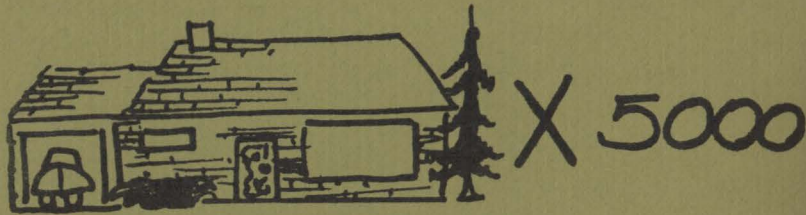
On the average, a house will be occupied by 3.3 people and be equipped with 2.8 automobiles. Such items as water, energy (fuel, gas, gasoline), food and goods are converted in our day-to-day activities. The products of such conversion are waste waters (effluents), waste gases (emissions), solid waste, heat, noise and others.

This is not to say that such conversion and use is undesirable. Quite to the contrary, through this activity each of us strives to create the quality of life we desire for ourselves and our families.

However, it is evident that the impact of this house affects many people, services, and supplies outside of our immediate community. Coal has to be mined, water diverted, waste treatment facilities constructed, job opportunities provided, transportation systems designed, and medical facilities built to accommodate it.

Further, if the assessment of the impact of one dwelling unit begins to seem somewhat difficult, let us examine the impact of a "typical" subdivision.

# WHAT IS A SUBDIVISION?



1. WATER	600,000,000 GAL. *
2. GAS	931,500,000 CUFT. *
3. ELECTRICITY	25,555,000 KILOWATT HRS.
4. EMISSIONS	11,000,000 LBS.
5. SOLID WASTE	13,688 TONS
6. SCHOOL POPULATION	9500 PUPILS
7. MEDICAL NEEDS, ETC.	?

\* PER YEAR

In a very simplistic approach, all impacts are multiplied by 5,000. To properly assess and control the total effect on the community appears overwhelming. How much more complex, even, is the impact of 5,000 individual houses at various locations that occur over a period of time and cannot be planned for as a group?

Use of conventional approaches to control impact have failed. Heavy reliance is placed on our present "zoning" regulations to this end. Although they do provide for the screening of development proposals by virtue of establishing minimum standards, such as open space ratios, height limitations, and others, they fall short, in that they cannot evaluate and control the impact of the development with respect to the concerns of the City as a whole.

Among the reasons for this inadequacy are such items as assuming a given impact with a given use, (e.g. a junkyard **must** be unsightly and noisy), equating the number of units to be built with impact, setting of minimal standards instead of those appropriate, utilization of vague and non-committal requirements, and failure to recognize that many problems (such as noise) can be designed out.

At this point the necessity of those responsible to make a complete, thoroughly informed decision on all land development proposals becomes paramount. Needed is an additional evaluation step by which a complete decision, involving community concerns can be made.

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OUTLINE

- I. PROJECT PURPOSE
- II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION
- III. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT
- IV. IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTION
- V. FAVORABLE EFFECTS
- VI. ADVERSE EFFECTS WHICH  
CANNOT BE AVOIDED.
- VII. ALTERNATIVES TO PROPOSED  
ACTION
- VIII. SHORT-TERM LOCAL VS. LONG TERM  
PRODUCTIVITY.
- IX. IRRIVERSIBLE/IRRETRIEVABLE  
COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES.

How should one assess impact?

Since the passage of the Environmental Policy Act in 1969 (NEPA), Federal agencies have been required to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for all Federal projects or those utilizing Federal land. These record in written form the documentation of a given decision, such as the consideration for construction of a coal fired power plant. Contained in this law is a decision checklist in the form of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) outline. Although each of us daily uses such a mental procedure (for such decisions as evaluating the benefits of driving ourselves to work versus car pooling) the NEPA mandate was unique in several respects. It required that:

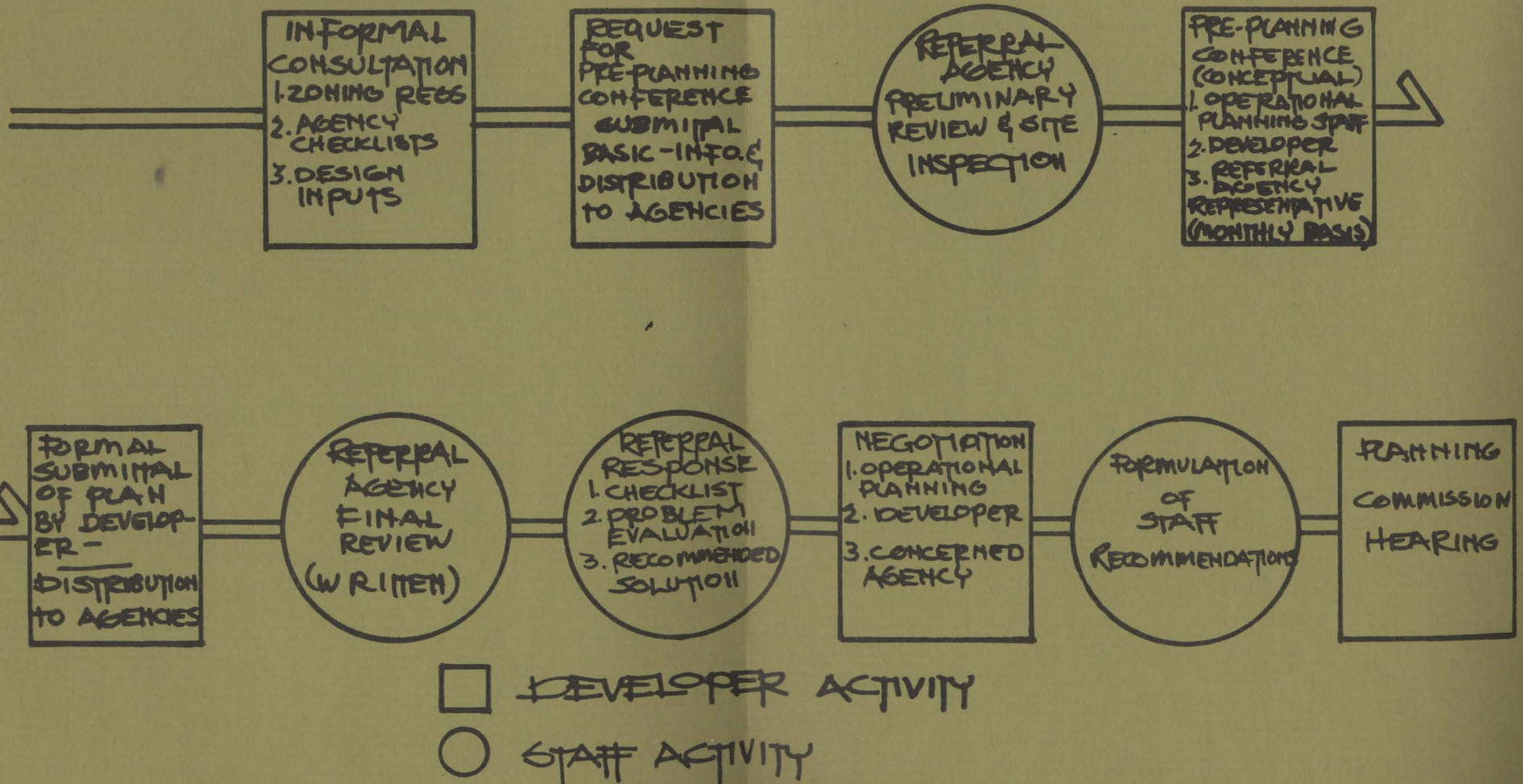
1. Assumptions and conclusions be **substantiated** and verified.
2. Those **people** or groups to be affected be made part of the decision-making process.
3. The total decision-making process be put down in **writing** and made available to the public.

This process has now evolved into a "total decision making process". Although in the beginning, "traditional" environmental concerns such as air quality, and ecology were addressed, contemporary statements inevitably must also address social, legal, economic and cultural aspects. The sudden awareness, then, is the fact that our "total environment" must be evaluated to arrive at an informed, complete decision.

The effectiveness of this process has spurred many people to ask that such an environmental impact statement be prepared by developers or city planners to aid in evaluation of local land use decisions. This need has been met with the development of the Referral Process.

# REFERRAL

# PROCESS

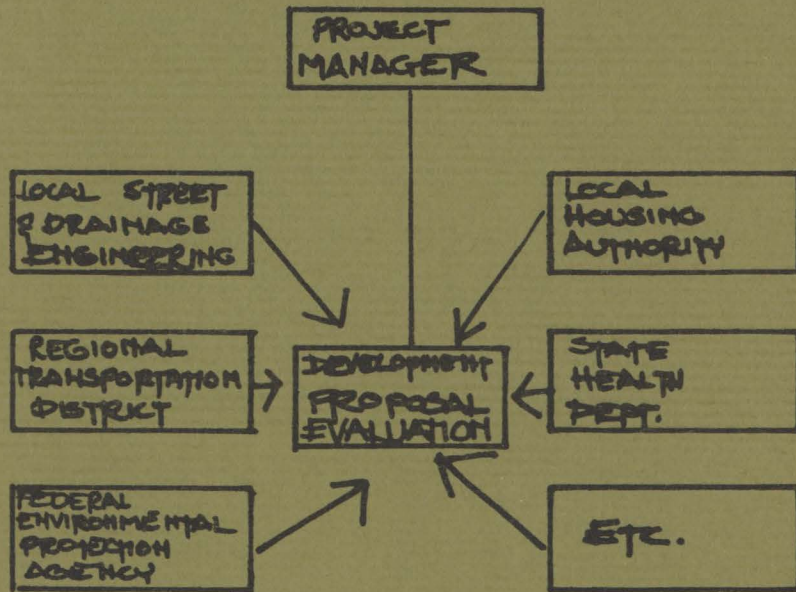


# REFERRAL PROCESS

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

AGENCY-EXPERTISE  
CONTROL  
- AUTONOMY

PROJECT-BEST EVALUATION  
- BEST PROBLEM SOLUTIONS  
- BEST DECISIONS AT ANY GIVEN POINT IN TIME



## The Referral Process

Now in daily use by the City of Lakewood, this process produces a **procedural Environmental Impact Statement** for many land use decisions on a development-by-development basis. Currently, applicable to all rezonings (including planned unit developments) and public works projects (where the City is the developer) it will be expanded to selected areas of building permits in the future.

Based on the concept of Project Management (a process extensively utilized in industry) responsibility for evaluating a development is assigned to a project manager. This individual then brings to bear the knowledge of all other necessary experts to arrive at the most knowledgeable solution in a coordinated fashion.

The referral process is not new. In fact, most communities will "refer" development proposals to other agencies for comment on all rezoning (change in land use) applications. However, the present systems suffers from lack of standardized objective **criteria** and from the absence of meaningful responses from most referral agencies.

By incorporating the concepts of the EIS outline and project management, the process has been easily upgraded to the level that Federal Agencies use it to prepare and review Environmental impact statements.

The upgraded referral process has two phases. First, conceptual design problems are reviewed and preliminary plans formulated. Second, detailed plans are submitted and written plan review by agencies is required. The following pages detail the individual steps of the City of Lakewood Referral Process.

## STEP I

INFORMAL  
CONSULTATION  
1. ZONING REGS.

2. AGENCY  
CHECKLISTS

3. DESIGN  
INPUTS

A developer approaches the Operational Planning Division of the City of Lakewood with a rezoning in mind. It involves changing the use of a portion of a given piece of land presently zoned Agricultural to Residential. He advises the planning staff of the location and approximate intensity of use (e.g. 100 units of multi-family apartments with recreational facilities).

In addition to being supplied with the applicable "zoning" regulations, he is handed Agency Criteria Checklist, prepared by each agency. These checklists reflect the goals and objectives of the City of Lakewood that each is responsible for achieving, and the particular criteria to be used for development proposal evaluation.

## STEP II

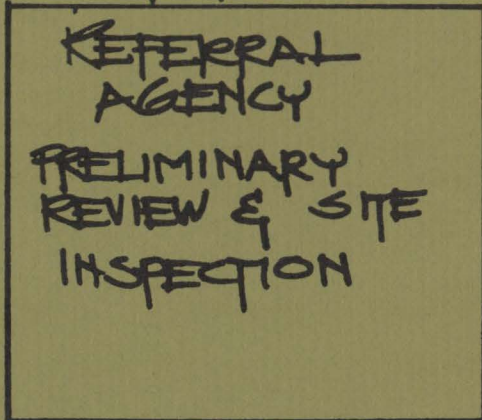
REQUEST FOR  
PRE - PLANNING  
CONFERENCE  
SUBMITTAL

BASIC INFO.  
DISTRIBUTION  
TO AGENCIES

At some later date, the developer again approaches the Operational Planning Staff and arranges for a pre-planning conference. He submits a preliminary pencil sketch of his development intentions. Such preliminary information includes the number of buildings, the height and orientation of them on site, and other pertinent concepts.



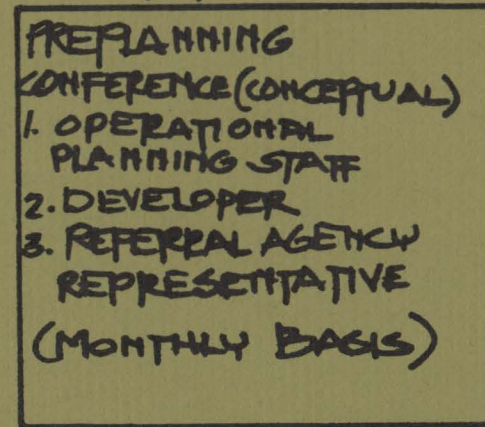
### STEP III



Operational Planning, acting as project manager responsible for collecting evaluation inputs from all concerned agencies, distributes the preliminary information to those agencies and requires their representatives to visit the proposed development site. Such items as inspection of drainage systems, ambient noise backgrounds, street access problems and neighborhood concerns will be checked during this activity.

This procedure enhances the relevance and quality of comments made by the agencies. Additionally, it encourages inter-agency cooperation and understanding.

### STEP IV



Held monthly, a round table discussion of potential problems and solutions is held between the developer and the agency representatives. Such agencies include the Department of Community Services (traffic, drainage, street and services engineering), Department of Public Safety (law enforcement), Department of Community Development (housing, environment, long range planning), Jefferson County R-1 School District, the appropriate water and sanitation district, and others.

Operational Planning acts as the project manager of the referral process and conducts the meeting. Problems and solutions discussed at the pre-planning conference are summarized by the Operational Planning Staff and formalized in a letter to the developer. In this letter he is asked to incorporate the proposed solutions to concerns into his development design.

## STEP V

FORMAL  
SUBMITTAL  
OF PLAN  
BY  
DEVELOPER  
DISTRIBUTION  
TO AGENCIES

At some later date, the developer **formally** submits his development plans for consideration for rezoning. However, his submittal is far more detailed than in other review processes because the risk of denial is much lower. With the aid of the referral checklist and pre-planning conference, his development was continually guided to achieve the goals projected by the City and the agencies involved. Although detailed changes may be requested, the developer should not be required to make major, conceptual changes. For the developer this significantly reduces the time and money that he must invest in such development effort. At the same time, staff review effort is reduced in that their concerns are already reflected in the design proposal.

## STEP VI

REFERRAL  
AGENCIES  
FINAL  
REVIEW  
(WRITTEN)

Serving again as project manager, Operational Planning now distributes the detailed proposal plan. The agencies now, however, are required to fill out their **criteria checklists in written form**. Only criteria put in written form can be evaluated.

## STEP VII

### REFERRAL RESPONSE

1. CHECKLIST
2. PROBLEM  
EVALUATION
3. RECOMMENDED  
SOLUTION

In addition to evaluating the development on the basis of the checklist, the referral agency is under mandate to specifically **list problem areas** and **suggest reasonable solutions** if possible.

## STEP VIII

### NEGOTIATION

1. OPERATIONAL  
PLANNING
2. DEVELOPER
3. CONCERNED  
AGENCY

All referral agencies then forward their completed criteria checklists to Operational Planning for compilation. These are checked to determine problem areas pin-pointed by the referral agencies. If a problem area is found, Operational Planning arranges for a meeting with developer and the particular agency involved, encouraging problem resolution between the two parties. This procedure overcomes the necessity of requiring Operational Planning to be expert in all areas.

## STEP IX

FORMULATION  
OF  
STAFF  
RECOMMENDATIONS

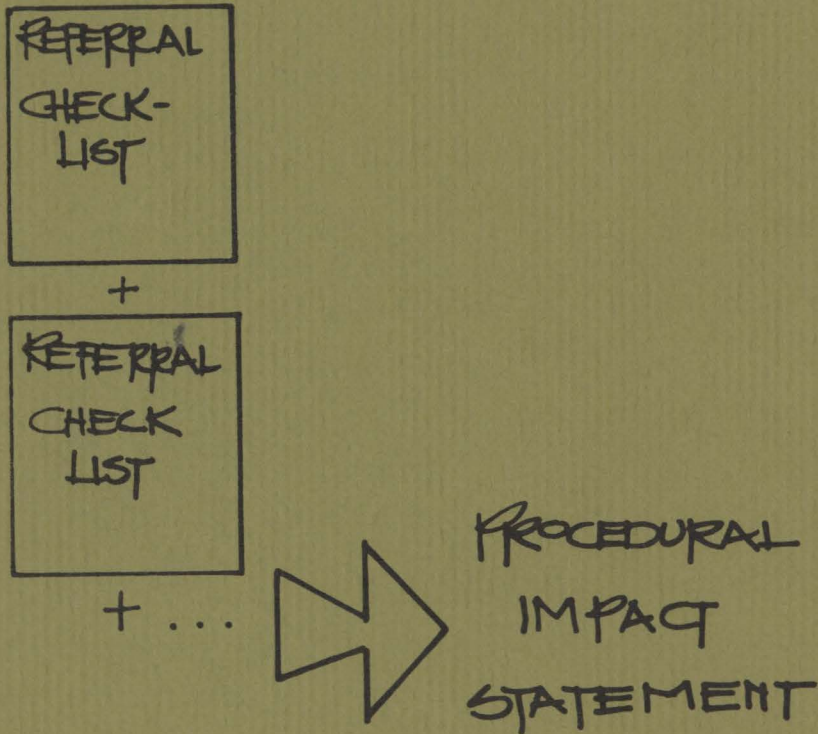
If all problems are satisfactorily resolved between the developer and the agency involved, Operational Planning recommends approval to the Planning Commission. If agreement is not reached, their mandate is to recommend denial.

## STEP X

PLANNING  
COMMISSION  
HEARING

However, the Planning Commission reserves for itself final review and recommendation. If the final development plan is unacceptable, it can be denied by the Planning Commission. However, the referral process will make denial less likely.

# How it works



## Referral Process in Perspective

The local **Impact** (land use) control package consists of three parts. These are:

1. Authority to **allocate** use.
2. Present "Zoning" regulations.
3. Referral Process review procedure.

The Referral Process, subject of this booklet, has evolved into a device by which one can **evaluate all relevant concerns on an incremental basis**.

It produces for each land use proposal a **PROCEDURAL IMPACT STATEMENT**. The benefits stemming from this process are many.

# BENEFITS

## CITIZEN

1. GAINS CONTROL OF HIS ENVIRONMENT & QUALITY OF LIFE
2. INCLUDED IN DECISION
3. KNOWS EVALUATION CRITERIA & PROCEDURE

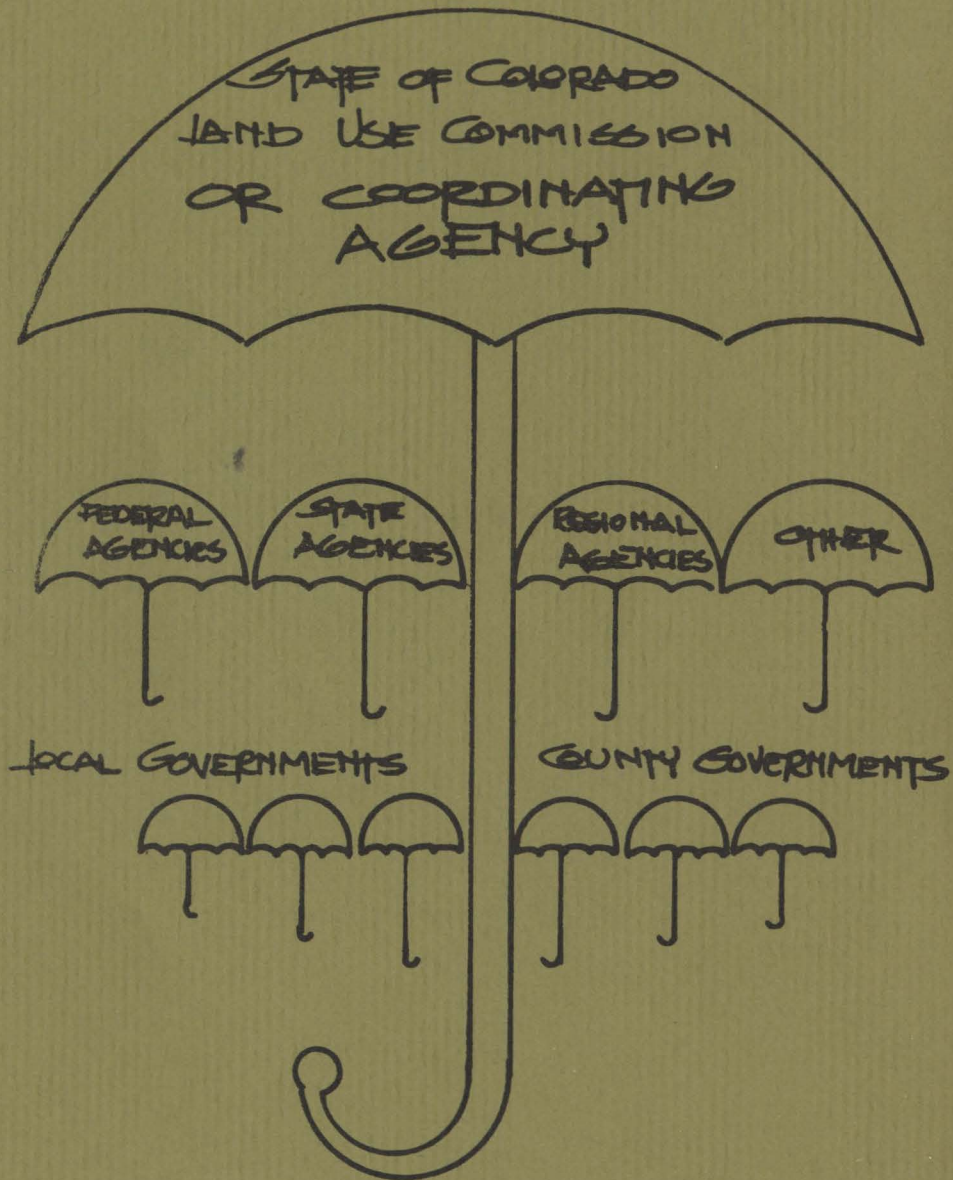
## DEVELOPER

1. KNOWS CRITERIA BEFOREHAND
2. SAVES MONEY
3. ENCOURAGES FLEXIBILITY & DESIGN CREATIVITY
4. PRODUCT BETTER SUITED TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

## AGENCY

1. UTILIZES EXISTING STRUCTURE
2. STREAMLINES EVALUATION
3. PRODUCES OBJECTIVE EVALUATION
4. SYSTEMATIZES DECISION MAKING
5. AUTONOMY & RIGHT TO SET CRITERIA - AVOIDS "LEAD AGENCY" PROBLEM
6. ENCOURAGES AGENCY DEFINITION OF GOALS
7. ALLOWS CRITERIA UPDATE FOR VIABILITY
8. PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROCESS FACILITATES DEVELOPER UNDERSTANDING
9. DEFINES IDEAS IN WRITTEN FORM
10. ENCOURAGES DEVELOPMENT BY RESPONSIBLE FIRMS

# APPLICATION



In conclusion, the advantages of the Referral Process are five-fold:

1. The developer receives, in advance, the review criteria under which his project will be judged. This greatly enhances the attainment of the goals and objectives of the City or agency involved, and reduces development costs.
2. The process utilizes existing man-power and agencies more efficiently. Better evaluations and developments result.
3. Local and county planning agencies have the benefit of a systematic environmental review service.
4. The process is adaptable for use by all agencies and governmental entities, regardless of their level, goals, objectives, criteria, or control regulations.
5. The system contains the capability, if involved agencies properly define goals, objectives, and criteria, of properly assessing the impact of a proposed development without concern as to the administrative level at which the proposal is received. A proposal submitted at the State level affecting Lakewood would be referred to the City for evaluation. Conversely, a local proposal, affecting State concerns, if referred to the appropriate State agency.

Properly functioning, the referral process can produce an **Environmental Impact Statement** (total assessment) for all land use decisions, in far less time and with far more validity than any other process yet devised.