

PLANNING FOR CONFLICT: ANALYSIS OF A PARTICIPATORY
PLANNING PROCESS TO DEVELOP A UNIFIED NEIGHBORHOOD
VISION AMONG COMMUNITY GROUPS

By

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Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Community Research and Action

August, 2008

Nashville, Tennessee

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DISCLOSURE OF VALUES

When conducting or writing about research, the researcher or author cannot be separated from his or her values. Because values produce bias, even if the researcher is not aware of it, it is important for the reader to be aware of those values in order to better evaluate the research in a value-laden context. As a researcher, I advocate for community participation in environmental planning. I have been both a participant and a facilitator in neighborhood planning processes. I feel that my participation, as well as how my participation is ultimately utilized, is an important part of my roles as both an academic practitioner/researcher and a citizen. I feel that citizens should have the ability to work as members of collaborative partnerships with government, private entities, and community organizations to determine the future direction of their neighborhoods, cities, and regions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Community participation has become something of a catch phrase in contemporary planning practice. It is the primary mechanism by which community members can assert their needs, preferences, and interests in the planning and development of their environments. It also lends credibility to initiatives by painting them as democratic or egalitarian, a perception that is politically valuable to maintain. Policy makers, developers, urban planners, and others have often employed this term in their planning processes, although there is no uniform structure for how it is solicited, assessed, or utilized. Although there are numerous social and political arenas in which citizen participation plays out, the specific focus of this paper is on participatory environmental planning processes.

Defining Community Participation

Community participation, also referred to as *citizen* or *user participation*, provides community members with the opportunity to have control over the planning of particular aspects of their environment. Although the boundaries of what constitutes community participation are not solidly defined, Horelli (2002) proposes this definition:

Participatory planning is a social, ethical, and political practice in which individuals or groups, assisted by a set of tools, take part in varying degrees at the overlapping phases of the planning and decision-making cycle that may bring forth outcomes congruent with the participants' needs and interests (611-612).

Here participation is defined as a multi-dimensional process in which participants have the opportunity to represent their interests in a social, ethical, and political way. Typically those who participate in the process will be users of the environment of interest, hence their inclusion.

Citizens become involved in planning processes in different ways. Some involvement is initiated through a grassroots movement within the community, while other times developers or planners put out a “call for participation” from the community to gain input on a particular project. In both scenarios there are leaders who determine the extent to which the views of individual citizens are heard, recorded, and applied. In the latter scenario, individuals are only included to the extent allowed by those in control of the process or mandated by their contract or organizational procedures. This creates situations where community input may ultimately not be utilized if it does not support the agenda of those who are in control of the process, or may not be included at all if not explicitly included as a contingency in the contract (if a contract exists).

Citizens are becoming more involved in planning initiatives, often through self-mobilization. The increased accessibility of information made possible by the Internet has led to the birth of *citizen experts*, everyday people who now have the means to arm themselves with information to support or refute planning initiatives in their neighborhoods and cities. The role of planner as expert has

thus begun to shift to a dynamic where planners take on a facilitating or brokering role in the process (Kaliski, 2005).

These shifting dynamics within the field of planning, paired with increased participation in planning projects, necessitates a closer study of the process by which citizens are included. Without understanding the challenges associated with this practice both organizers and citizens may not get what they want out of the process. Organizers must understand the best way to structure the process to encourage citizens to both volunteer for participation and feel comfortable voicing their ideas. Likewise, citizens must understand how to effectively promote their ideas through the process as well as hold organizers and planners accountable for implementing those ideas.

The Structure of Participatory Planning

Participatory planning processes are most often conducted by planning departments, planning consultants or community organizations. It is becoming common practice for planning departments to include community input in neighborhood plans, regional plans, and in other master plan initiatives such as walkability and parks plans. This process varies drastically among planning departments, but is often highly structured and involves surveys, focus groups, and/or design charrettes. Some planning departments contract with planning consultants, who are typically hired by developers or government officials to conduct meetings in order to obtain community input on a project. They do not

have ultimate control over the process and outcomes, but rather act as facilitators and advisors. Consulting groups such as Urban Design Associates have structured planning sessions for numerous cities, housing authorities, tenant groups, and developers to include citizen input in their projects (Gindroz, 2003). Community input sessions can also be conducted by organizations within the community, such as neighborhood groups, non-profit planning groups, and city-sponsored design centers. The latter two are often drawn upon as a resource by city planning officials when they want input on a public planning project. Processes conducted by neighborhood groups are typically more grassroots in nature and are born out of needs within the area served by the group.

There is no single way to structure a participatory planning process, but input is often obtained through surveys, focus groups, and *charrettes*. While surveys and focus groups are more informal methods of participation, charrettes are intensive participatory workshops that address specific community problems and provide a context for integrating design and social science inquiry with local community knowledge (Sutton and Kemp, 2006). They provide an opportunity for planners and citizens work together to share, develop, and test ideas (Gindroz, 2003). These sessions enable a wide range of participants to come together, work out conflicts, and plan out new strategies for an area. A planning process can include any number of charrettes, which also may vary in purpose and format.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Community Participation in Environmental Planning

Theoretical basis for community input

In formulating a theoretical basis for evaluating neighborhoods, Churchman and Ginosar (1999) included citizen participation as an important part of the evaluation process. According to the authors, the evaluation process should be structured according to three theories: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecology of human development* approach, Altman and Rogoff's (1987) *transactional world view*, and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *naturalistic inquiry paradigm*. The first two theories assert the importance of measuring the interaction between individuals and their environment, which is reciprocal and ongoing. They also point to the need for the discovery of hypotheses through the process, rather than the hypothesis testing that is characteristic of positivist research. The third theory, the naturalistic inquiry paradigm, addresses this need and is put forth as the most appropriate theory to guide evaluative research in neighborhoods. This theory proposes that neighborhood evaluation must be inductive, whereby the grounding theory, study design, and focus must be discovered during the process. Outcomes must be examined by those who give the input in order to facilitate the inclusion of multiple realities of the citizens of the neighborhood in the final product.

These multiple realities within any neighborhood cannot be uncovered or assessed without the inclusion of the citizens, or users, of that neighborhood. They can contribute more than any expert to forming a comprehensive picture of the complex reality of their neighborhood. The authors caution that this theoretical approach is only a framework, and the process that occurs within it can impart varying degrees of power to the participants. Thus, participation is not always equal, and its usefulness often depends on how power is distributed within the process, which is often a direct result of how the process is initiated and structured.

Participatory Processes in Environmental Planning

Community participation in planning is not a strategy that is favored by all. Planners disagree on whether or not citizens should play a role in the planning of their environments. One side of the argument, called the *expert position*, refers to design professionals using their education and experience to plan environments to satisfy the needs of others. This approach views community input as unnecessary or even undesirable, complicating and lengthening the process and potentially resulting in a plan of inferior quality (Wandersman, 1979a). Counter to this argument is the position which advocates the need for people to participate in the planning of their own environments to be satisfied with the outcomes. They argue that participation leads to a sense of control over their environment, which is the only way their values can fully be taken into

account. Some proponents go a step further, and propose that the participatory process itself may be at least as important to the users' satisfaction with their environment as the end product itself (Wandersman, 1979a). Participatory planning processes are also useful in their ability to build social capital and sense of community (Manzo and Perkins, 2006).

How should the process be evaluated?

Innes and Booher (1999) propose a framework for evaluating collaborative planning, which defines a successful collaborative process as one involving inclusion, creativity, self-organization, the production of change, and the blurring of the distinction between process and outcomes. This is in direct response to a lack of such an evaluative framework for this type of process, as they note that planners and practitioners do not have a clear idea of how to structure the process or what to expect from it.

How is success defined?

There are numerous ways to define success in a participatory planning process. It can be defined simply by how many people show up (Churchman and Ginosar, 1999), or by the satisfaction of the users with the implementation of their ideas (Wandersman, 1979b). Success can also be defined as whether or not consensus is reached by the participants to formulate a final plan, since this process of consensus building can be thought of as the ultimate goal of any planning initiative (Horelli, 2002). Thus, one key question to consider in any participatory planning process is who defines success?

Technology in the planning process

The growing role of computer technology and the Internet in recent years have also led to research on how these tools can be utilized in successful participatory planning models. For example, Talen (2000) examined how GIS (Geographic Information System) technology was successfully used as a communicative tool for participants in a participatory downtown planning process in Dallas, Texas. GIS was useful as a tool for communication between participants in the process, as well as for defining spatial concepts and synthesizing ideas. However, Talen emphasizes that GIS must be used as a “bottom-up” tool by the participants for expression of their ideas, not as a tool simply for conveying information to them. Another potential tool to aid in participation is the Internet, which may be particularly useful for bringing in younger participants into the process. Horelli and Kaaja (2002) review three case studies in Europe in which youths ages 10 to 18 were involved in various types of planning processes via the Internet. The studies concluded that young people have clear sociological and ecological messages to add to the content of planning, with use of the Internet proving to be a particularly useful tool for obtaining their participation in the process.

Power Structure and Conflict within the Process

A primary determinate of the success of utilizing public participation in planning is the extent to which the public has control over the process and its outcomes. There are numerous ways in which citizens can be involved, ranging

from a process being initiated and controlled by the citizens themselves to a more assimilative form of inclusion. Sherry Arnstein (1969) attempted to capture this range of participation as a metaphorical “ladder of participation”. The ladder represents a hierarchy of eight specific types of citizen participation that are grouped into three main categories. The first category is labeled *citizen power*, and includes citizen control, delegated power, and partnership. These top three “rungs” represent processes that are primarily controlled by the citizens, who maintain the majority of the decision-making power as well as managerial responsibility. The next category, *tokenism*, includes placation, consultation, and informing. These categories describe processes where citizen input is heard and included through the process, but the citizens themselves have no real power to insure the plans will be adhered to. Without real power there is often no follow-through, and ultimately the decision making is left to the “experts”. The bottom two rungs form the *nonparticipation* category, which includes therapy and manipulation. Not only do these types of processes not involve true participation, but they seek to educate or “cure” the participants through the process. These types of processes are extremely deceptive and detrimental, since they operate under the guise of participation while seeking to alter the citizens’ viewpoints. Similarly, Wandersman (1979b) identifies five types of user participation in planning environments:

1. *Creation of Parameters and Objects* – The user designs the environment and the components without preconceived givens by others.

The user has the decision-making power and generates plans without pre-conceived parameters by experts.

2. *Self-Planning* - The user generates alternative plans within available parameters and has the responsibility for decision-making (the expert can play a consultant role).

3. *Choice* – The user chooses between alternative plans generated by experts.

4. *Feedback* – The user is asked for her ideas and opinions about a plan. This information is evaluated by the expert and the expert has the responsibility for decision-making.

5. *No Participation* – The decisions are made by the expert for the user.

While both models are certainly oversimplifications of the realities of participatory planning, they do help to illustrate the fact that there are a number of gradations and definitions of citizen participation. Claiming a process is participatory not only doesn't insure that citizens actually have control over the process or its outcomes, but the process may actually severely limit their ability to affect change by marginalizing them through an assimilative process. In boomtowns in North Dakota in the 1980's, citizens were involved in planning through institutional procedures set up to encourage participation. While officials and developers touted the fact that citizens were involved in the process, those who were not used to participating within a bureaucratic structure were not given an equal voice and ultimately were marginalized by the process (Tauxe, 1995). Furthermore, Mitchell (2004) conducted an assessment of an environmental

planning process in Manitoba, Canada that was government-regulated. The process called for key informants from the business sector, government, the media, and private citizenry to participate in the process. The study concluded that institutional frameworks for participation needed to be more flexible to increase public involvement and include a wider range of perspectives. Examples such as these are common, and planning initiatives must be carefully constructed to ensure that the users' voices are included in the process.

Who decides who should participate?

One of the key elements in structuring a participatory process is who participates. Organizers could purposefully limit the group to those individuals who share their views in order to appear participatory without having to include dissenting voices in the process. Others could attempt to be inclusive but fail to do so because of inconvenient meeting times, failure to advertise meetings properly, or simply a lack of motivation by the citizens to participate. These situations can occur both when experts are in control of the process and when citizens are in control. In examining the performance of community leaders in creating a participatory planning process in Southeast Baltimore, Baum (1998) found that although planning leaders agreed on certain ethical planning principles to apply to the process, they were implemented poorly. The participants in the process were mostly white, middle-class, well-educated, and between 30 and 60 years of age, which was not a representative sample of the neighborhood. The input from those poor residents who did participate was also included in the final report to a lesser degree than input from middle and upper class residents. The

author recommends more initiative on the part of the planners to include low-income and minority residents in the process, with equal weight given to all participants. This example illustrates the fact that many disenfranchised individuals, such as minorities, women, the young and elderly, and individuals of low socio-economic status, are often excluded from participating in planning processes (Horelli, 2002). These are the individuals who arguably need to participate the most, since they may have the opportunity to improve their conditions through participation in planning the future development of their neighborhoods.

How is conflict resolved within the process?

Although some degree of conflict is expected in a participatory process, and may often be desirable to promote creativity and critical evaluation, there are times when it results in stalemate. What happens in these situations when conflict between two or more interests in the process cannot be resolved? In a case study of community participation in a transportation project in Sydney, Australia, participant's views were in direct opposition to those of experts (Lahiri-Dutt, 2004). In assessing the impact of the citizens' input on the final outcome, it was revealed that the expert opinion prevailed, held up as the most scientific, objective, and rational viewpoint. This elevation of expert or "superior" knowledge is not uncommon in participatory processes, and serves to discount the experiential or local knowledge of community participants. Hester (2006) calls this local knowledge *native wisdom*, a profound knowledge that can only come from being "of that place." In addition, Baum (1998) provides an account of the

opinions of middle and upper class residents being included to a greater degree in a final plan than those of lower class individuals, illustrating the phenomenon of class structure being mirrored within the participatory processes rather than subverting it.

Perceptions of the process

Although facilitators and citizens may participate in the same planning process, this does not necessarily imply that they experience the process in the same way. While facilitators or organizers may feel they are accessing the participants' views, there may be an underlying resentment or lack of confidence that prevents citizens from truly voicing their ideas and objectives, particularly in situations where marginalized groups are involved. Participants in these marginalized groups may also be so grateful for the opportunity to participate that they may not be appropriately critical of how their input is obtained or utilized. This places additional responsibility on the organizers who structure the participation to ensure that citizen's are truly given power within the process to include their ideas and hold the organizers accountable for their implementation. In a study examining user participation, Wandersman (1979b) assessed satisfaction following a participatory process in designing college dorm rooms. Students were assigned to three levels of participation in the design process: self-planning, choice, and no participation. Students in each group were then asked to rate their satisfaction with their redesigned dorm rooms. Students in the self-planning and choice groups, who had a voice in how their rooms were designed, rated satisfaction with their rooms significantly higher than students in the no

participation group. This demonstrates that the act of participating leads to the users being more satisfied with their environment.

Sanderson and Kindon (2004) examined a participatory planning process in New Zealand including Maori native stakeholders. Through interviews, group discussion, and observation they revealed the participants had a positive view of their contribution of knowledge in the process. Similarly, Ward (1991) evaluated a collaboration between design students and Maori natives in a town planning process. An account of the process by the author pointed to a positive perception of inclusion in the process by participants.

Crewe (2001) examined the perceptions of a participatory planning process on the Boston Southwest Corridor development project. The researchers surveyed architects, landscape architects, and urban planners who worked on the project with regard to the quality and value of citizen input in the process. The results indicated 73% of respondents felt the final design was of high quality and marketability, 97% rated the citizen input positively, and 97% felt it was important to include citizen's input to adhere to the community's wishes.

Who researches participation in environmental planning?

It is perhaps interesting to note the disciplines of those who conduct research on environmental participatory planning. Most research in this area has been conducted by individuals in the fields of urban planning, regional planning, urban studies, and geography. Although this may not seem surprising, it bears mentioning that these are all primarily technical disciplines when compared to disciplines within the social sciences, such as sociology, community psychology,

and environmental psychology. As social scientists are routinely trained in research methods and community studies, it is surprising to note their seeming underrepresentation in the literature of participatory planning. This may have implications for the methodological rigor of studies on participatory planning, potentially affecting characteristics of studies such as sampling procedures and the methods of analysis.

Research Questions

Through examination of the literature on participatory neighborhood planning, several questions emerge related to the experience of the participants in neighborhood planning processes and how their input is utilized. The research questions addressed by the present study are:

1. Were there differences between the homeless participants, service providers, and business owners in terms of their goals for the future of the neighborhood?
2. Did participants of each group feel their views and ideas were adequately represented in the final neighborhood plan?
3. Did the facilitators/experts feel the views and ideas of each group were adequately represented in the final neighborhood plan?
4. Was the input from the homeless participants and service providers weighted equally to that of the business owners in the final neighborhood plan?

5. How were the final decisions made regarding what community input should be included/recommended in the final neighborhood plan?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Overview of the Neighborhood Planning Process

Setting

This study examines a neighborhood planning process in a mid-sized city in the Southeastern United States. The area under study has historically not been thought of as a cohesive district or neighborhood. The topography of the area changes drastically from east to west and from north to south, and was once an area prone to frequent flooding. This is the likely reason for the area never becoming a major residential neighborhood. It became isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods when interstate construction was completed in the 1960's. The current character of the neighborhood is primarily light industrial, and includes a number of design-related retail and service businesses as well as adult-oriented businesses. The neighborhood has very few residents, limited to approximately 20 rental units located on a single site. A number of historic structures mixed with more recent buildings are located in the neighborhood, some of which are currently abandoned or in a state of disrepair. This neighborhood is unique in that it contains within it several service providers to the homeless, including a public health clinic, a rescue mission, and a shelter that includes various other homeless support services. New condo, retail, and

commercial developments in various stages of completion surround the neighborhood make it a likely target in the near future for major redevelopment.

Project background

The planning project for the neighborhood was initiated by the local public housing authority in response to frequent complaints from business owners in the neighborhood. The housing authority was awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) totaling approximately \$600,000 to be used for neighborhood improvements at the authority's discretion. The housing authority partnered with a local non-profit planning agency to conduct a series of community input sessions, or *charrettes*, to determine the best use of the funds and to create a future development plan for the neighborhood.

Participants

The participants in the planning process fall into four distinct groups: 1) process facilitators, 2) business and property owners, 3) homeless service providers, and 4) individuals who were homeless. The latter three groups represent citizens who were included in the process because they either spend a great deal of time in the neighborhood or have a personal or financial stake in the neighborhood. The first group includes those individuals who planned, organized, and facilitated the community meetings. This group includes employees of the local housing authority, employees and interns from the local non-profit planning agency, a graduate student at a local university (the author), and a member of the local planning department. The second group includes

individuals who either own businesses or own property in the neighborhood. One important point to note is that the few residents of the neighborhood are included in the business owner/property owner category since their units are located in one of the neighborhood's largest commercial buildings, and they chose to attend the meetings reserved for the business and property owners. The third group includes service providers who operate within the neighborhood and serve a large percentage of the city's homeless population. These are individuals who operate services within the neighborhood (i.e. directors, managers), direct providers (i.e. case workers, therapists), and city officials or employees who have some responsibility for, or jurisdiction over, the area (police, mayor's office, etc.). The fourth group is comprised of individuals who were homeless at the time of the planning process and were being served by the rescue mission and shelter in the neighborhood.

Tensions exist between the various groups within the neighborhood, particularly between business owners and the homeless individuals, which presented a unique challenge in obtaining input and organizing the community meetings. The tension stems from a perception held by the business owners that loitering individuals who are homeless may drive customers away from the area, resulting in declining business and revenue. Property values in the area have also dramatically decreased since the service providers to the homeless entered the area, also contributing to the tension. Before the start of the neighborhood planning process, an open meeting in the neighborhood was held to inform the community members that the process would take place, and to collect initial

thoughts on the scope of the study. According to one of the facilitators, the atmosphere at the initial meeting was tense and degenerated into a shouting match between participants. Thus, the decision was made by the facilitation team to structure the initial phase of the process so that input could be obtained from each group separately to avoid any serious conflict. Later stages of the process included all of the community groups together.

Charrettes

The charrettes were designed to allow intensive and voluntary participation at multiple stages of the neighborhood planning process. The initial call for participation of business owners and service providers was initiated by the local housing authority and planning group. Invitations were mailed to all business addresses in the neighborhood, including service providers, as well as to the addresses of the neighborhood property owners. Operators of the local rescue mission were also asked to extend an invitation of participation to individuals who were homeless through announcements in case management and therapy sessions, as well as through announcements in mandatory chapel services. Other relevant individuals such as police and councilpersons were contacted by phone.

Initially, three separate charrettes were scheduled to collect input from the three groups of citizens. Business and property owners attended the first charrette, individuals who were homeless the second, and service providers the third. The decision was made by the project organizers to initially separate the groups to avoid conflict and intimidation in the meetings since it was recognized that tensions existed between the groups. This initial set of charrettes, referred to

as the *community assessment* stage, involved each group answering a series of questions designed to assess the existing conditions of the neighborhood from the perspectives of the different groups. The first charrette with the business and property owners took place in a neighborhood business space provided by one of the participants. Individuals self-selected into groups of approximately six to ten and were each seated around a table with a map of the neighborhood in the center. A facilitator at each table asked questions pertaining to the conditions of the neighborhood. A copy of the questions asked is included in Appendix A. Responses to each question were recorded by the facilitator or another member of the group on a flip-chart in written format, as well as visually on the map. The guidelines were: 1) each question had a time limit of approximately 3 to 5 minutes for discussion, 2) everyone's ideas were recorded, and 3) no one's ideas could be erased. Once the groups had answered the questions and recorded their answers, a member of each group presented their input to the entire group of business and property owners. The second charrette, which involved participation by individuals who were homeless, was conducted in the local rescue mission using exactly the same format. The third charrette took place in the local rescue mission and involved an open discussion among service providers and project facilitators, with the facilitators taking notes.

The next stage of the process involved what is referred to as a *community visioning* session, in which participants discussed how they would like to see the area change and develop over time. This stage of the process involved a single charrette with all three community groups together. At the start of this meeting a

map of the area was presented that visually displayed a composite of the input collected by the three groups at the previous community assessment charrettes. All input from the individual meetings was transferred to a single map by the staff of the planning group to visually display the existing conditions of the neighborhood as a single unified vision. Participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the map after it was presented. Mirroring the format of the community assessment stage, participants then self-selected into groups to answer questions related to the future of the area. Again, maps and flip-charts were used to collect input from each group. The visioning questions are included in Appendix A. As with the first set of charrettes, each group presented their ideas to the collective group at the end of the session.

After the visioning session was held, the staff of the local planning group compiled the information from the charrettes into a draft neighborhood plan, which was then presented at two subsequent meetings for any additional community input. The first of these meetings was held with the individuals who were homeless and their service providers, and the second was held with the business owners. At these meetings, the draft plan was presented to the entire group followed by a question and answer session where any additional input was recorded by the facilitators and discussed by the group. This additional input was later added to the final report, which is available to the public at the offices of the local planning agency or for download on their website.

Data Sources

Data for the study were obtained from 1) interviews with individuals who participated in the process and 2) records of citizen input from the charrettes.

Participant interviews

Participant interviews consisted of questions related to their perceptions of the planning process. Two separate interview protocols were used: one was given to the citizen participants and another to the process facilitators. Although conceptually similar, each of the two interview protocols contained questions specific to their respective groups. The citizen participant interview questions addressed how comfortable they felt expressing their ideas during the process, what they would change about the process, whether or not their goals for the area changed as a result of the process, and their opinions about what was included in the final neighborhood plan. Process facilitator questions addressed similar issues related to their perceptions of the process and outcomes. The interview protocols are attached as Appendix B.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who participated in the planning process meetings. Using a random number generator, seven individuals were selected from each of the four participant groups: 1) facilitators, 2) business and property owners, 3) homeless service providers, and 4) homeless individuals. The list of process participants was obtained from the process records stored at the office of the local planning agency, which included the name, physical address, and e-mail address of each participant. Because

demographic information such as age, race, income, and number of meetings attended were not available as part of the participant list, neither the overall demographic makeup nor individual demographics of the participants could be determined and thus there is no way to insure that the sample is representative of the participant population in terms of these characteristics. If these data had been available, a representative sample would have been purposefully selected.

Participation in the study was voluntary and all process participants were contacted to request their participation via e-mail. A total of 28 recruitment e-mails was sent, seven to each of the four community groups. Four responses were received from the facilitator group, three responses from the business/property owners, four responses from the service providers, and one from the homeless individuals. This resulted in an overall response rate of approximately 43%. All of those who responded from each group agreed to participate, resulting in a total sample size of twelve. It is unfortunate that more homeless participants could not be interviewed for the study. Every effort was made on the part of the researcher to locate and contact any homeless individuals who participated in the process. Most phone numbers and e-mail addresses provided on the list of process participants were no longer in service at the time of recruitment.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher/author either at the office of the interviewee or another convenient location such as a coffee shop. The interview with the representative from the homeless group was interviewed over the phone, as he was located in a different city than the researcher. Interviews lasted anywhere from ten to forty minutes, and consisted of questions related to

participants' perceptions of the process. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Immediately following each interview, detailed field notes were recorded by the researcher regarding non-verbal elements of the interview process, personal reflections, and theoretical and methodological points that emerged from the interaction. The methodological notes were used to improve the researcher's interview techniques. Because of the semi-structured nature of the protocol, the interview did not have to strictly adhere to the initial questions. Thus, additional follow up questions were asked when an interviewee brought up a point that was vague, surprising, or particularly relevant to the research questions.

Transcripts were coded and analyzed using NVivo qualitative analysis software and Microsoft Excel. As proposed by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry Paradigm, the coded themes in this study were emergent from the interview data and were not selected prior to the analysis. The paradigm asserts that participant realities are multiple and that research results are context-bound, thus the themes were allowed to "emerge" from the data rather than forced to fit into a previously constructed coding system. Twenty-seven concepts emerged from the interviews which were combined to create ten broader themes, or codes. The codes are:

1. Concerns with execution of the process
2. Conflict and differences between groups
3. Shared experience as comfortable
4. Users as experts

5. Exposure and education
6. Prioritization of ideas
7. How and if consensus was reached
8. Competing planning frameworks
9. Concerns with implementation of the plan
10. Plan not addressing the issues

Detailed descriptions of each code can be found in Appendix C.

Records of citizen input

Community input from the charrettes was recorded both in written form on a flip-chart and drawn on a map that was provided to each group of participants. The flip-charts and maps are filed at the office of the local non-profit planning group and are available for viewing by the public. Each flip-chart lists the answers to the questions from each group at the charrettes, and the maps include participants' notes and visual input to illustrate or add to the written comments.

The records of citizen input from the charrettes included statements written on neighborhood maps and charts during the process. Typically a scribe was assigned in each group of participants during the process to record information and ideas, but all participants were allowed to draw and write their ideas on the maps at will. All written statements recorded during the planning process were entered into a coding system developed by the researcher for this study. The coding system consisted of three variables: neighborhood group, session type (assessment or visioning), and comment type (type of perception or

change). The descriptors for comment type were emergent and “naturally” fell into three categories: physical changes, social changes, and real estate development. The records of citizen input are included in this study for the purpose of triangulation of results. Artifacts from the charrettes themselves can be compared to statements made by participants regarding differences between the community groups on both existing conditions and future goals for the neighborhood.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data for the study were obtained from 1) semi-structured interviews with individuals who participated in the process and 2) written records of citizen input from the charrettes.

Interviews

Ten themes, or codes, emerged from the participant interviews. The codes are: 1) concerns with execution of the process, 2) conflict and differences between groups, 3) shared experience as comfortable, 4) users as experts, 5) exposure and education, 6) prioritization of ideas, 7) how and if consensus was reached, 8) competing planning frameworks, 9) concerns with implementation of the plan, 10) plan not addressing the issues. Each of these themes will be presented and discussed in this section. It is important to note that these themes are not exclusive and many of the concepts that emerged from the interviews are interrelated and are relevant to multiple themes.

Concerns with execution of the process

Several community participants, as well as facilitators, noted concerns related to the structure and execution of the planning process. For process facilitators there were concerns both about the format and structure of the

meetings, as well as about their role as experts and power holders in the process.

A facilitator recalls his dilemma regarding how to present himself to the community members:

Well, when you're dealing with people that are homeless and low-income and people who don't have the means for their own shelter, there are a lot of sensitivities. You come in there, you know, well-dressed and as a professional, and that's important to convey that kind of, you know, legitimation [sic] that you're the facilitator and not just someone in off the sidewalk. But at the same time you don't want to have a, you really want to minimize the gap from one human being to another, your interaction. Mostly convey respect for their dignity and for them as individuals. – Process Facilitator

Being a facilitator allows one a powerful role in the process in terms of its structure, how to resolve concerns, and in determining the outcomes. This passage shows that facilitators are often aware of this and can make attempts to be sensitive to it. Every process participant interviewed for the study stated, in some cases emphatically, that they felt comfortable expressing their ideas during the meetings. One service provider commented on the lead process facilitator:

I think [lead facilitator's name] did a wonderful job. He was trying to be as fair as possible. I learned a lot from him. I think as we went through the process you could take the time to ask him questions, both publicly and privately, he would help you understand some things. He would help you understand that this community is changing. And it's going to definitely change. – Service Provider

Although participants may have felt comfortable with the facilitators, there were concerns conveyed by all groups involved about other aspects of the process. A facilitator notes his concern about the process structure including separate meetings for the different groups:

You know, I was a little reserved at first about doing separate visioning sessions. Um, and I'm still not sure quite how I feel

about that; separating that visioning process. But I think it was probably most comfortable for people because it was...they were there with “like” people. – Process Facilitator

Ultimately the facilitator feels it was a positive decision because it made the participants more comfortable. Other facilitators interviewed felt more confident about this approach to separate the groups, one stating that it was more efficient because the groups participating together would not likely be able to get past the point of whether or not the service providers should remain in the neighborhood.

One question that arises when comparing participants’ comments is whether a positively-viewed process leads participants to view the process outcomes favorably. A service provider makes this distinction:

I think they did a fairly decent job in research. I think they tried to shake all the bushes, they tried to get as many people involved as possible. I think they did a fairly good job of trying to be as non-intrusive as possible. I think they did a good job, it’s just their recommendations. I don’t think the recommendations were the greatest. – Service Provider

Another participant brought up the common problem of who participates, pointing out that not everyone is motivated or able to attend the meetings, and those same individuals often complain that their voice wasn’t heard.

Two of the business owners who were interviewed felt that the process as a participatory exercise was itself flawed. They viewed the process as not about citizen control or participation, but about control of the citizens by governmental agencies. One of the business owners describes his feelings:

It’s front end loaded and it’s about control. It’s about control, it’s not about responding to the neighbors. It’s not about...it’s a red herring, in a sense. It’s a way to say we’ve done this without actually doing it. Because what happens is when the community really gets heard it’s messy. – Business Owner

The perspective represented here is derived from a lack of community control over the process. The business owner notes that when the community “really gets heard it’s messy,” which implies that a structured process without open conflict is not fully addressing the community’s concerns.

Conflict and differences between groups

One point that almost all participants agreed upon was that there were dramatic differences between the community groups in terms of what they wanted for the neighborhood. It was unanimously felt that the business owners were interested in removing the service providers, and thus the homeless, from the neighborhood, and that this would immediately result in economic improvement and a reduction in crime. A business owner describes his view on the service providers in the neighborhood:

Yea, um, I guess they don’t want to move. That’s their home too right now. You know, if there’s any kind of way to incorporate them into something like this...I just don’t see how it we can coexist, you know. The business owners and the people of interest here are going to differ from what they think. So, yeah, I’m sure we weren’t on the same page. – Business Owner

A process facilitator speaks more directly to the views of the business owners:

The, uh, business owners were just absolutists in their premise that the one and only solution was to get the providers out of the area along with the homeless. And so, in that sense, anything short of that was completely unsatisfactory to them. – Process Facilitator

According to this facilitator, no solution or recommendation for the neighborhood will be acceptable to a significant portion of the community without removing

another. This difference in how the community groups view the neighborhood could be a crippling one for the plan, as the facilitators did not consider this to be an option (this stance taken by the facilitators will be discussed further in the section on *Prioritization of ideas*). While the business owners saw removal of the service providers as essential, service providers and the homeless were focused primarily on social concerns. A facilitator explains:

I mean, the kind of universal answer for dealing with the issues of [the neighborhood] from the stakeholder and business owners' perspective was to move, um, the homeless agencies that were in the area. The shelter, you know, the shelter, and the rescue mission. That was the number one thing that would improve the community, whereas, if I remember correctly, one of the biggest things we heard from the homeless constituents was a need for affordable housing, or actually, low-income housing, as opposed to affordable; transitioning housing and things like that. Public restrooms and things that they need more on a daily basis for survival were their concerns. – Process Facilitator

While solutions such as restrooms, low-income housing, and traditional housing are physical changes that can be recommended in a design-oriented plan, they have a particular social nature to them; they are aimed at improving the daily living conditions and social mobility of the homeless. Thus, both groups have solutions for the neighborhood that are primarily focused on the homeless population, but approach the problem from different perspectives.

Although all of those interviewed agreed that there were differences between the groups' ideas, two noted the differences were not as dramatic as expected. One, a service provider, noted this when she was asked if there were differences in what each group wanted for the neighborhood:

There were some, but there were not as many as people would think. I was not privileged to be in any of the homeless people's

meetings. I was in the last meeting when they brought everybody together, and the majority of the people who showed up were business owners and the providers. And the business owners amazed me that they thought the biggest problem we had in this area were the strip joints and the mission wasn't a big problem, and per se, [local street] by itself. That was surprising. – Service Provider

In addition, one of the facilitators looked beyond the disagreement over the location of the service providers and felt that the groups ultimately wanted the same kind of neighborhood:

You know, what's surprising is that I initially would have thought that but...initially I did...but into the actual meetings there was not a significant difference in what they wanted at all. They all wanted pretty much the same thing. Which was surprising. Just a nice neighborhood, you know. A nice, clean neighborhood. Safety, they were all concerned about safety and the way things appear. And I think the core group of people who attended all the meetings, even if they were homeless or if they were business owners, um, they all wanted that. And I think there was acknowledgement by the homeless people that they receive a lot of negativity for the actions of very few people. You know, they're not the ones out there littering or peeing on the streets or, you know, doing all that. It's, it's a very small group of people that kind of cast a shadow over the larger group ...they could see these people that they had kind of, you know, a negative view of, getting up there and saying the same things that they were. So, I think, if it wasn't plainly obvious then they took something away from that. – Process Facilitator

This perspective was echoed by a homeless participant, who also felt that all community members ultimately wanted the same thing:

Well, everybody, they seemed like they wanted something different, but I say something different, they still wanted the same thing. That is, for that area to be an area of growth for everybody, for the merchants as well as the homeless population. You know, everybody sharing in on the whole area and the things that would make up the area, you know. Keeping it clean, keeping it safe...So, yes and no. I think everybody had their specific part they addressed, but it was for the same goal, the build up of the area,

safety, the cleanliness, the accessibility for a park. – Homeless Individual

Shared experience as comfortable

Both service providers and business owners stated that it was comfortable to meet and discuss neighborhood concerns with others that were “like” them, or “like-minded.” This shared experience was described by a service provider when asked if she felt comfortable expressing her ideas during the process:

Um, yes. Particularly when we met with the other service providers, who I already knew. So I felt comfortable doing that. And even in the one at the rescue mission where it was people from all over the neighborhood, that was okay too because it was broken down well into little groups. It wasn't really one against the other. It felt like there was a good working relationship. – Service Provider

For other participants, social networking and interaction with neighbors was a goal for the process itself, as a homeless individual stated:

One of the goals that I wanted to see happen was, that I think that I expressed, was communication between the merchants and the homeless population in the area. – Homeless Individual

This goal was echoed by a business owner:

One of my major goals was to come into contact with more of my neighbors. And I think that's probably the most enjoyable part of that process is to see and have been with some of those folks. – Business Owner

These experiences highlight not only the importance of exposure to different perspectives and groups through the process (which is discussed in the *Exposure and education* section below), but also the value of bringing together those with similarities to create stronger social networks and bonds within the community.

Users as experts

One rationale for including citizen input in planning is that they are the users, whether residents or workers, of the neighborhood which means they know more about their needs and the area than an outside “expert.” This theme of *users as experts* emerged from interviews with both facilitators and service providers. One facilitator noted specifically that the people in the neighborhood are the experts, not the facilitators. This was also recognized by one of the service providers:

The only thing that I think probably stands out the most, and if you were to do this down the road or wherever you end up, we did not include the homeless in the process until we brought it up. None of us thought about it. And really I thought they had a lot to tell us, the people who were in recovery who had lived in these streets had more to tell us about the neighborhood than we all had. Because, and it also changed, one it changed stereotypes....Well, among both sides, actually. Well, I think instead of asking for something I think that's how you move together, to include some of the people you have problems with. I mean, you can't do that with, say prostitutes. But you can do it with the residents, and in a way the homeless individuals are the only real residents in the neighborhood other than a few apartments here and there. And so, how do you include their input. It's very valuable. They know much more about it. – Service Provider

The decision to include homeless individuals in the planning process was a joint one between service providers and the facilitators, and was done because they felt the homeless individuals would have important knowledge and perspectives to lend to the final plan. The service provider recognized that the homeless individuals had a unique local knowledge of the neighborhood. The facilitators also recognized that all three of the community groups had local knowledge as well, knowledge that was

valuable in determining both the needs of the residents as well as how to plan the neighborhood to address those needs.

Exposure and education

Participants across groups noted that the process itself was helpful to varying degrees in facilitating exposure to other groups and viewpoints in the neighborhood. They had an opportunity to talk with neighbors they didn't often interact with, and most participants met new people in the neighborhood. A business owner responds to a question about meeting new people during the process:

I did meet some new people, mostly I was with...I did meet some new people. I'm not sure I got any long abiding relationships out of it, though I'd love to tell you that happened. Mostly what happened was that I got exposed to...I got to see what the process really was, and it gave me another level of exposure to the planning authority and also it gave me a chance to be with some folks that I had known a little bit or I had not known and I met them. I also got some phone calls from people after the fact that were sort of interested in talking some more.

– Business Owner

The business owner notes both the formation of new social relationships and meeting others he already knew. Although he says that he's not sure he got any "long abiding relationships" out of it, he does note that some of the other participants he met called him to talk more about their ideas. Also, he specifically mentions the word "exposure," although in this passage he is referring to the "planning authority," which is interpreted here as the group of facilitators and the agencies and organizations they represent. This form of exposure is distinct in that it is exposure not just to individuals or constituency groups but to a system,

the planning system. The form of exposure most commonly mentioned by participants was exposure to other viewpoints from within the community.

A process facilitator brings up this point:

There was a lot of contention between the groups, but I really feel like...and you just have to experiment and see, but if those two groups were combined and people broke out of one group dominating a table and they were required to be, you know, um, a business owner sitting at the same table with a homeless person describing, you know, their two visions to someone. I think as part of the process, that might be, um, a way to heal a community on a deeper level, of people sharing that otherwise would not be sharing. – Process Facilitator

Although exposure seemed to be a phenomenon experienced and recognized by members of all community groups, it may have been reluctant for some according to several facilitators. A process facilitator speaks about the reluctance of business owners to meet in the rescue mission:

The other issue...uh, I think there was discussion of holding a meeting, a common meeting, at the rescue mission with all the parties present and I have a vague recollection that there was some objection to even going into the rescue mission on the part of one or more of the business owners... and, upon further inquiry, it became clear to me that none of them had ever been in the rescue mission – Process Facilitator

Another process facilitator noted that he heard comments from some of the business owners who attended the meeting at the rescue mission stating that they were reluctant to attend at first but were glad they had the opportunity to go inside. These immediate responses to their exposure to the mission are important, but could potentially have even stronger implications for how they interact with homeless individuals and service providers in the future. Both business owners and facilitators noted how clean and well-kept the inside of the rescue mission

was, and how it was not at all what they had expected. One facilitator noted that he felt the mission would be a good place to hold a meeting since it would give others in the neighborhood a chance to see how it was run.

Two of the business owners who were interviewed mentioned that they heard homeless individuals speak during the meetings and were both surprised and impressed with what they had to contribute. A comment from one business owner:

Well, you remember that they had several tables of homeless people in there. Okay, um, and they had one individual, I can't remember a lot about him but I think he was wearing a [sports team] jersey or something, but he stood up and, um, he was very articulate, he had what were in my opinion some excellent points; police protection, you know, um, opportunities, a library, um, you know, a variety of things. And, um, they struck me as constructive proposals to address some of the issues. – Business Owner

Also mentioned was the exposure of the homeless individuals to the process and to other participants. One homeless participant was excited to be a part of improving the neighborhood:

I felt real honored in participating. I remember feeling real honored to be a part of something positive for that area. One of the things being a homeless person and coming off the street and going through recovery is being a part of something positive that you've had experience with in a negative way...Homelessness: see, I've had my experience with that in a negative way...all the things that go along with homelessness, the stereotypes, the sneers, and including your other stuff...and so I'm grateful for the opportunity to get off the streets and rebuild my life and still be in a position to give back to that area. And a way I could give back to the area was attending that meeting. – Homeless Individual

This phenomenon was also noticed by one of the service providers:

But I know, for our guys, it helped their self-esteem to feel like they could contribute to the neighborhood and still be homeless as well. So, that was important. – Service Provider

For a disenfranchised group such as the homeless, a participatory process such as this not only has the potential to include their voice in the planning process, but also can have psychological impacts as well. The homeless individual interviewed clearly felt a personal connection and responsibility to the neighborhood, even though it was not his permanent residence.

Not only was there exposure of the business owners to the homeless and service providers, but also exposure of the service providers to the business owners. A service provider speaks about seeing the neighborhood from another perspective:

Certainly what I picked up was that the business owners did have, very much had, legitimate gripes about trash in the neighborhood, people hanging out front of, making an unsightly presentation to people who were visitors or anybody else coming through this major corridor here. And to realize that they do have to run a business, whereas we may rely on grants and fees and all sorts of stuff, money from, from sources that aren't really invested in this area. But the people across the street or around the corner have to make their money off of folks that come to them. And when we stand in the way of that, um, that's not good for anybody. – Service Provider

While certainly not unaware of their effect on the neighborhood, service providers may not often have the opportunity to listen and reflect on the perspective of the business owners. This exposure may help them to be more sensitive to the other's concerns and could result in a partnership to solve the neighborhood's problems. One service provider relayed a story of exactly that, where he met with the property owners across the street about homeless individuals loitering in front of the public health clinic. The two sides agreed that it was a problem and came up with a strategy that both could agree on; moving the entrance of the clinic to the

back of the building. While noting that it isn't really a "solution" to the problem, it does represent a collaborative effort that resulted from the meetings where multiple community groups were present.

Prioritization of ideas

During the process the facilitation team assumed a value advocacy position, where a specific value-orientation was firmly held. This is in opposition to a value-neutral position where the facilitator attempts to remain objective or value-neutral by adopting the values of the community collaborators. In this process the position was taken that removing the homeless service providers from the neighborhood was not an option, regardless of what members of the community wanted. A process facilitator discusses this:

I think that our rule...we did not go into this situation addressing that as an option. So, a lot of people probably thought that was a good idea but we were pretty adamant about saying that we weren't here to propose that as a solution. And I think that most people would probably agree that you can get beyond...you can do stuff to make the neighborhood better without kicking out the homeless people, or at least I think so. In the end, you know, there's always going to be, there's always I'm sure a couple of people that I could name that, you know, are never going to be happy with it but I didn't really see that was the overall issue there. – Process Facilitator

This approach seemed to help process participants move past the discussion of relocation as an option and toward other types of solutions. This was recognized by all groups involved, and most of those interviewed noted that the facilitators had taken this position, stated it clearly at the outset of the process, and participants moved toward discussion of other options. In addition, one of the process facilitators admitted that facilitators may have been more sensitive to the

homeless concerns and consequently may have spent more time thinking about the process from that angle. One service provider felt the business owners needs would be prioritized based on her experience working in government that the “squeaky wheel gets the oil,” but this was the minority opinion. The dominant view among participants, particularly the business owners, was that the process was biased in favor of the homeless and service providers. This perspective is outlined by a business owner:

Well, you get back to the bias, the undertone of bias and I think that, uh, there wasn't an accurate assessment of what's going on down here. And, uh, you know...there seemed to me to be a bias in favor of the rescue mission, and that was, obviously the meeting they had over there and then the report, which they indicated that moving the mission or shutting the mission down would be too costly for the city to do and so instead the recommendation was for low-income housing in this neighborhood. And that infuriates me.
– Business Owner

Two of the business owners interviewed felt that their interests should be prioritized over those of the service providers and homeless because they are in the neighborhood for “the long haul,” as opposed to the transient homeless population. They also see their economic investment and stake in the neighborhood as a reason to prioritize their interests over others without such an investment. Some business owners and service providers felt that the process prioritized the needs of the city, or facilitators, over those of process participants.

A service provider states this:

I think the city was probably better represented than anybody. I think... I think...no, I think the city by itself. Because they were trying to fix their problem. They weren't trying to...that's just my opinion, but if you look at what they fixed, they fixed their problem.
– Service Provider

The stated concern is that the city, represented by the planning agency and the housing authority, already knew what they wanted to do and attempted to use the process to address their concerns instead of the concerns of the community.

When process facilitators were asked how they decided which ideas should be prioritized in the final neighborhood plan, they responded that the number of times a point was brought up by multiple groups indicated how high of a priority it was. Also, funding constraints played a central role in the decision. A process facilitator explained:

As we went through the visioning maps that were generated that asked those basic questions like “what would you like to see improved?”, the ones that were repeated most often, that were repeated over and over and over again and across groups, that’s kind of the way those were prioritized. You know, a lot of this was also driven by the [housing authority’s] block grant, so there was actual funding to do this, so a lot of immediate scope of prioritizing was done in conjunction with the amount of available money that there was to do these things. And that’s something that generally doesn’t come into play from my perspective. We don’t usually plan or hold a planning exercise and actually have funds to implement some of it. I’m sure that played a pretty substantial role. – Process Facilitator

All participants interviewed for the study felt that the process or final plan prioritized the interests of one group or groups over another. However, there is broad disagreement over which group’s ideas were favored over the other(s). In general, however, most of those interviewed did not feel that their ideas, or the ideas of their respective groups, were of the highest priority in the process.

How and if consensus was reached

Since participatory planning can ultimately be thought of as a consensus-building process, it is not surprising that the theme of

consensus and working together was brought up by the participants. Both service providers and business owners felt collaboration and working together for the good of the neighborhood was a key goal for the process.

A service provider responds to a question about her goals for the neighborhood:

Um, I guess for us to move forward together. For it to stop being us versus them. For them to recognize that we didn't choose this spot, the city zoned it what it is. And to make some concessions to those who were already here and to those who moved in after the fact to make sure they realize that there's part of the business plan that may not have happened on their part but we weren't the problem so if we could just put all of that behind us and move forward together. Because then we'd be a much stronger force. – Service Provider

In general, the facilitators and service providers seemed to employ a strategy of collaboration and consensus-building, while the business owners seemed more reluctant.

One important issue that emerged is that of the homeless service providers, and thus homeless individuals, being located in the neighborhood. It seemed difficult for the business owners to focus on strategies for the neighborhood that did not somehow include discussion of the homeless issue. The facilitators felt that sensitivity to the homeless was important to attend to throughout the process and in the final plan. As this is an immediate concern, it was difficult for the participants to look beyond this to broader goals for the future of the neighborhood. This was brought up by all process facilitators who were interviewed. An example:

I mean, the kind of universal answer for dealing with the issues of [the neighborhood] are, from the stakeholder and business

owners' perspective was to move, um, the homeless agencies that were in the area. The shelter, you know, and the rescue mission. That was the number one thing that would improve the community
– Process Facilitator

Not being able to look beyond the homeless issue may have led to what the process facilitators called “absolutism”, where business owners were not able to envision a neighborhood where they could coexist with the service providers and homeless. A business owner states just that:

The, uh, business owners were just absolutists in their premise that the one and only solution was to get the providers out of the area along with the homeless. And so, in that sense, anything short of that was completely unsatisfactory to them. – Process Facilitator

This raises the concern about whether or not a neighborhood plan can truly exist that serves the needs of all groups involved. One business owner felt that the differences between groups may prevent consensus from being reached.

You know, if there's any kind of way to incorporate them into something like this...I just don't see how it we can coexist, you know. The business owners and the people of interest here are going to differ from what they think. – Business Owner

In contrast with the view of the business owners, a service provider, when asked if a unified neighborhood vision was possible, provided this response:

I think it's something that should be pursued. I don't think it would actually come to fruition. You have three polarized groups. The people who own the property in the community that surround the [shelter] and us think, if you ask them point blank, we are what is suppressing the property values. – Service Provider

When asked whether or not a consensus could be reached, a business owner seemed conflicted:

You know, I don't think so. I think that the service providers were willing to change some, but I think overwhelmingly that the attitude of the people in the room was to relocate the service providers. They've got to go somewhere. And they don't want to move, so I understand where they're coming from, so maybe there's a little bit of room there that we were able to come up with

*something that, you know, was somewhat livable with everybody. –
Business Owner*

This theme did not have a clear answer, and most participants seemed conflicted on whether or not a consensus could be reached.

When asked about consensus, process facilitators felt that one had been reached, even though it involved some give and take by the different constituency groups. Two of the facilitators felt that a consensus was reached and that it was reflected in the final plan. One facilitator felt that the final plan was a bit more in favor of the needs of the service providers and the homeless, but he believed that the business owners were still happy with the recommendations. He describes his views on a particular recommendation in the plan:

I think what we ultimately came up with addressed both of those...again, once we got past the idea that the homeless are going to be there to stay, probably. Once we got past that idea I think we were able to address some of the things that both groups wanted because even with what we ultimately ended up recommending that was more on the homeless side of things and that's kind of the plaza and the improvements in back of the [shelter] and that was something that the business community looked favorably upon too, because it kind of moved it into a more private realm, where it wasn't quite so visible and it didn't have quite the impact on their properties. – Process Facilitator

While it seems that consensus could be achieved to some degree, the point of contention is that of the service providers being located in the neighborhood. It seems that consensus could only be reached when participants accepted that the service providers would remain in the neighborhood.

Competing planning frameworks

Two different concepts of planning emerged from the interviews with participants and facilitators. The first was generally held by the facilitators, most

of whom are professional planners or architects, and involved a complex view of how neighborhoods are linked together to form cities and regions, as well as a particular focus on urban design as a solution to social problems. The second view was held generally by the business owners and one of the service providers. It included feelings that planning was a bureaucratic means for control and should be minimal. One of the business owners states his views of the planning process:

To me the sort of overarching thing that isn't really spoken is there is a certain bias in the idea that one can plan the way I believe our city is trying to plan. There's arbitrariness, though they don't want to believe there's arbitrariness. What they want to believe is that the people have spoken and that the people had a chance to speak, and that was a one-time opportunity and it becomes then a touchstone for the planning commission or the zoning boards or the other entrenched bureaucracy down there. And what they get to do is they get to say to everybody we gave everybody a chance to talk in 2005 and here's what they said and here's what they decided. So it's got the impetuous of authority when what it has, which is to me ridiculous, on its face. There's a...the underlying impetus in what the process is is to control, and to control in a way that I think is incredibly dishonest. It's as though they decided that what we'll do is...other smart people have put together these processes and we've seen these things, and what you can do is run a little pony show, let people come and say, and we'll have a way to then talk to the community as a whole and say we had this inclusive process and we've made these decisions as a community, and that, you know, those were healthy decisions and everybody was consulted and now we're going forward like this. – Business Owner

There is clearly a tone of frustration in the statement, perhaps built up over years of being in a neighborhood he feels has been left behind by local planning.

Another business owner states that bureaucracy is not the answer to the neighborhood's problems:

I don't think that bureaucrats generally can design an answer. I think that neighborhoods might be able to design an answer,

working with one another, but I doubt the bureaucrats can be the designers. – Business Owner

In contrast, the process facilitators felt the community members failed to look beyond the neighborhood and how connections to surrounding neighborhoods would benefit the area. They also saw planning and urban design as a solution to social problems in the neighborhood. A facilitator describes this view:

If we believe, you know, that the built environment is what impacts people's behavior, then there's a way you can incorporate these types of uses in a way that's a little more sensitive than maybe the way that it is now. – Process Facilitator

This framework of planners solving the neighborhood's problems through design was not an approach most community members felt would truly address their concerns, although all felt it would lead to at least some improvement. Given the constraints of the process as strictly design-oriented, community members may not have been fully invested in the process as a way to meet their needs.

Concerns with implementation of the plan

Most of the business owners and service providers commented on problems related to implementation of the plan's recommendations. Business owners were particularly concerned and noted that they had not heard from the planning agency or seen any improvements in the neighborhood. Some participants, both business owners and service providers, had not even seen the final plan before the interview. Although they did not attribute this responsibility to the planning agency or other facilitators, some noted it would have been helpful to have either a follow up meeting to present the final plan or some degree of

continued involvement of the planning agency or the housing authority to keep the neighborhood updated on implementation as it progressed. One facilitator makes this point, while also noting that the planning agency may not have the capacity to do so:

There wasn't that final cohesive meeting, and that's always something that the [planning agency] had trouble doing is how do you stay in charge of this project when you're finished with it. It's not necessarily that organization's responsibility to do that but I think that's because they don't have the capacity. – Process Facilitator

One of the homeless participants noted that, although the process was enjoyable, the process itself was not enough and real changes needed to result:

I believe that the meeting, I remember, was very fantastic because the people that were there and everything was participating, they were having fun, the atmosphere was conducive to, you know, brainstorming. And I think something positive came out of it. But you just can't stop there, you've got to, you know, keep progressing. – Homeless Individual

There was also evidence of participants taking the implementation into their own hands. One service provider at a homeless shelter talks about a project that was initiated as a result of the process:

It made us start thinking, in all honesty you know we've been in a lot of meetings when things, you know, great plans go into a book and on a shelf. We said what of this...we're going to have to live here, so what of this can we do and move forward if nobody ever does anything else. And so the immediate thing was to buy a piece of property and the next thing was...well, we created storage first, we bought the piece of property, then we started talking about what would we expand to and how can we better, um, better the neighborhood. – Service Provider

The homeless participant interviewed for the study noted this particular development as a sign that the area is now “on the move.”

One point that seems to emerge from this is when does involvement from the facilitation team end? Most participants felt there should have been at least one more meeting or some form of ongoing communication and/or collaboration between the community and the facilitators. As to the lack of progress seen in the neighborhood, one facilitator addressed this by noting that the funding was not available until a year after the process was completed, which caused a delay in construction. However, if ongoing communication or collaboration had existed this fact could have been relayed to the community members.

Plan not addressing the issues

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the concern about whether or not physical improvements to the neighborhood recommended by the plan would address the community's real issues. The process facilitators believe that physical space, particularly the built environment, can have important effects on people's behavior and socialization. This is a guiding theoretical concept behind the process. However, not all participants agreed that the physical improvements outlined in the plan can address the most important issues in the neighborhood. Business owners, as well as one of the service providers, believed that the design-oriented focus of the plan was too narrow and could not solve the neighborhood's most severe problems. A service provider states this:

They had an agenda. And their agenda was to tie that into the boulevard coming across there. They're actually, if I'm not mistaken, going to do some nice things along [neighborhood street]. Useless. There's nothing along [neighborhood street]. The problem is on [other neighborhood street], [other neighborhood street], the alley, and [other neighborhood street]. They're not doing hardly anything on [other neighborhood street]. And they're doing some stuff from the corner of the mission to

[neighborhood street]. What for, I don't know. They didn't solve the problem. They basically said we've got \$600,000, let's use some of this money to do some things we think we wanted to do all along in the first place. That's my opinion; it may be wrong but that's my opinion...See, all of that stuff didn't answer the problems. The alley, what are they going to do with the alley, here? See, there's the problem. That alley is one of the problems. And over there is one of the problems. But you don't see any plan other than streetscapes. – Service Provider

The process facilitators acknowledged that many participants held this view, and that it may have created some ambivalence toward the process:

For some people they see streetscape improvements as being window dressing, you know. As the Polish say, smelling roses while forests are burning. – Process Facilitator

Service providers and business owners both commented on the plan not addressing primary concerns of the neighborhood such as crime and economic development. However, one business owner commented on the physical improvements as a positive step, recognizing that the process was limited but could also be of some value to the neighborhood:

Well, really it seemed like [the housing authority] was starting it up and so they're looking for input on street beautification, lighting, things of that nature. So that's really what my focus was. Figuring out what was going to happen, having a little input on what I think should happen as far as the train overpass, you know, being painted, illuminated, and things like that. And to make it a little bit more pedestrian friendly and maybe some trash cans and things of that nature. They said they had some money to spend and they were looking for ways to spend it, so I thought well, any help we get down here is fine. So, we're all about it. – Business Owner

Records of Citizen Input

Community input from the charrettes was recorded both in written form on a flip-chart and drawn on a map that was provided to each group of participants. A total of eight maps and charts were coded from the community assessment meetings, where participants, broken out by community group, assessed the existing conditions of the neighborhood. Four maps and charts were coded from the visioning session meeting, where all groups met together to determine future plans for the neighborhood.

Community assessment meetings

The community assessment phase of the process included three separate meetings: one with business owners, one with homeless individuals, and one with service providers. The service provider assessment meeting was not a charrette format but rather a roundtable discussion. At that meeting maps and charts were not used and thus there were no artifacts to analyze for the study. However, some service providers did attend the homeless assessment meeting and their ideas were included on those maps and charts. The assessment data is thus broken out into two groups: business owners and homeless/service providers. The results from the meetings show that the perception and assessment of the neighborhood was similar between groups. Detailed responses from both groups are listed in Table 1. In terms of negative perception, both groups noted concerns with safety, no green space, drug dealing, prostitution, lack of upkeep, avoiding the railroad

tracks, and both recognized the presence of service providers as having a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Table 1 – Community Assessment Responses by Group

Community Group	Positive Responses	Negative Responses
Business Owners	Skyline view, historic church (3), proximity to nearby park, local businesses (3), business diversity, holiday parades, marathon, nearby university, mission/shelter success stories, good elementary school, after school programs, low rent for businesses, gateway to city	Dumping ground, seen a negative by outsiders, dangerous/lack of police presence (2), railroad tracks (2), drug deals, prostitution, alley, lack of green space (2), under the bridge, mission/shelter (3), equity issues, increasing number of homeless and transitional housing, entertainment mixed with residential, under-utilization of property, neighborhood character, adult businesses
Homeless and Service Providers	Local businesses (2), historic church (4), mission/shelter for neighborhood communion, historic markers, railroad yard, mission/campus/c linic	Neighborhood character (2), mission entering and closing businesses, dangerous (6), dirty (3), no green space, prostitution, robbery, drug dealing (2), railroad tracks, no public/meeting space

When describing positive aspects of the neighborhood, both groups noted the historic structures in the neighborhood, neighborhood businesses, and positive aspects of the work going on at the mission and shelter. Business owners went further to note the skyline view, proximity to nearby attractions, and diversity of and affordability for businesses. When asked what should be retained in the neighborhood, both groups agreed emphatically on the preservation of a historic church, which participants saw as an architectural landmark for the area. The groups differed, however, in that the homeless and service providers suggested retention of the mission, clinic, and shelter, which were not mentioned by business owners.

Community visioning meetings

The community visioning phase of the process included one meeting attended by all of the community groups. Results from the meeting are broken out into three categories, one for each of the community groups: business owners, service providers, and homeless individuals. Charrette responses were coded into three broad categories: *physical changes*, *social changes*, and *real estate development*. These categories were not selected prior to data collection but rather were chosen after examining the responses to reflect natural patterns in the data. *Physical changes* included input on more parks, streetscape, lighting, closing alleyways, general maintenance and improvement, and connectivity to surrounding areas. *Social changes* included police protection, removal or retention of service providers, social programs, affordable housing, public restrooms, or any other type of change that provided a social or daily service to

community members. A number of responses fell into the *real estate development* category, and included new residential (not specifically described as affordable), retail, convention center, focus on the area as a design district, and redevelopment zoning. Community group responses are listed in Table 2.

There was a difference between community groups in the types of changes they wanted to see in the neighborhood. Business owners were primarily focused on physical changes (46.9%), while nearly equally favoring social changes and real estate development (24.5% and 28.6%, respectively).

Table 2 – Type of Community Change Responses by Group

Community Group	Type of Change	Percent (Frequency)
Business Owners (n=49 responses)	Physical change	46.9% (23)
	Social change	24.5% (12)
	Real estate development	28.6% (14)
Homeless (n=9 responses)	Physical change	22.2% (2)
	Social change	66.7% (6)
	Real estate development	1.1% (1)
Service Providers (n=28 responses)	Physical change	35.7% (10)
	Social change	53.6% (15)
	Real estate development	10.7% (3)

The homeless participants proposed more socially-oriented changes to the neighborhood (66.7%), while favoring some physical change (22.2%) and little real estate development (1.1%). The social changes promoted by the homeless participants specifically included increased capacity and improved conditions at the service facilities, job creation, reuse of vacant buildings for truly affordable housing in the neighborhood, public lockers for personal belongings, public restrooms, a library, and a location for day-labor worker pick-up, Social programs were also mentioned by homeless participants such as parenting programs, and partnerships with business owners such as a “neighborhood ambassador” program and job training. Increased police presence and, in particular, more policing of neighborhood alleys were also put forth by the homeless participants, ideas that were mentioned by all groups that participated in the process. As far as physical changes to the neighborhood, homeless participants advocated for more public green space, better lighting, and cleaner alleyways, as well as one comment about general real estate development including new housing and businesses for the area. The majority of service providers recommendations also fell into the social changes category (53.5%), but they also favored physical changes (35.7%) and some real estate development (10.7%).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine a participatory neighborhood planning process to determine if there were differences between neighborhood constituency groups in terms of their goals for the neighborhood, if participants felt their ideas were represented in the neighborhood plan, if facilitators felt they had represented the participants' ideas equally in the plan, and how this was accomplished. Each of these questions will be examined in relation to the data collected from participant interviews and from process meetings.

Research Questions

1. Were there differences between the homeless participants, service providers, and business owners in terms of their goals for the future of the neighborhood?

It appears that there was one key difference between groups in terms of their goals for the neighborhood. Business owners overwhelmingly and strongly felt that no real positive change could happen in the neighborhood as long as the homeless service providers remained. This perspective of the business owners was acknowledged by service providers and facilitators as well. While it is reasonable to expect that they would advocate for at least a less visible homeless population as a solution, it is important to note that the consensus was this would

only be a temporary or minor solution and would not result in the kind of neighborhood change they desired. Business owners directly linked the service providers' presence with depressed property values, lack of new development, and the overall decline in the physical condition of the neighborhood. However, there was some indication by business owners that collaboration between groups could result in some positive changes for the neighborhood. This dovetails with comments made by service providers and facilitators who said that once the business owners recognized that the plan would not recommend the providers to leave the neighborhood, they moved on to other strategies for improvement, such as redevelopment zoning, streetscaping, parks, and other measures to improve the business climate and overall livability of the neighborhood.

Results from the charrettes corroborated statements made in the interviews that business owners' goals were focused primarily on physical appearance and bringing new development to the neighborhood, and that homeless individuals and service providers favored more socially-oriented services and changes. However, these ideas were not exclusive to their respective groups. Service providers also favored physical changes to the neighborhood such as parks, streetscaping, and general upkeep. The homeless participants, as indicated by both interviews and charrette data, seemed to focus primarily on changes that would improve their daily lives, such as public meeting spaces, social services, restrooms, and low-income housing. Both homeless and service providers also favored some new private development, but to a lesser degree. Some business

owners were also in favor of socially-focused improvements, but others were upset about recommendations for low-income housing for the neighborhood.

Overall, there was a great deal of overlap between the community groups' goals for the neighborhood, with the noted exception of the service providers remaining in the neighborhood. However, each group seemed to prioritize those goals differently. Both a facilitator and a homeless participant noted that the groups really all wanted the same thing; a clean, safe, and vibrant neighborhood. This does appear to be accurate, but the remaining questions are 1) can a design-oriented plan create the desired neighborhood, and 2) can this happen with the service providers remaining in the neighborhood?

2. Did participants of each group feel their views and ideas were adequately represented in the final neighborhood plan?

Generally, the business owners did not feel their ideas were represented in the final plan. This seems partly due to the exclusion of a recommendation to remove the service providers from the neighborhood, but other points were brought up such as a lack of focus on non-design solutions such as increased police presence to address crime. Interview data suggested that because the plan did not recommend removal of the providers that all other recommendations were secondary and insufficient. Service providers generally felt their ideas were represented well in the final plan, but some noted that the plan was written in "design language" and was difficult to understand. Some felt that this made the community input "unrecognizable." This is an important point, and reflects the

difficulties in the process of translating citizen input into a design-oriented neighborhood vision.

During the interviews, some business owners and service providers raised a concern about the city or planning agency's ideas being primarily represented in the plan. Some participant felt that the process was arbitrary and that the plan would reflect what the city and planners had planned to do all along. This references Arnstein's and Wandersman's levels of participation, where the community either plays a consulting role or is simply involved in a tokenistic process. Some participants, including business owners and service providers, felt that they had no real power or influence in the process.

One interesting point that emerged from the study was that about half of those interviewed had not looked at the final plan. Participants in each of the groups felt that it would have been helpful to have some type of ongoing communication with the design agency or housing authority, or at least a follow up meeting to view the final plan, although they also noted that they didn't necessarily see this as the responsibility of the facilitation team. One process facilitator noted this shortcoming and regretted not having one more meeting with the community once the plan was completed. Although the planning agency may not have the resources to conduct an ongoing process with the neighborhood to reevaluate their needs and goals as the neighborhood changes, some degree of collaboration beyond the planning process seems to be preferred by community members.

3. Did the facilitators/experts feel the views and ideas of each group were adequately represented in the final neighborhood plan?

The facilitators overwhelmingly felt that the views and ideas of each group were represented in the plan. So, there is at least some disagreement between participants and facilitators on how the community's ideas were represented and translated into recommendations for the neighborhood. Facilitators noted that the process of "crystallizing" the community input into a final plan is something of an art and, thus, specific ideas may have been combined, modified, or incorporated in ways that may not be immediately recognizable to the participants, which may be the source of differing opinions.

4. Was the input from the homeless participants and service providers weighted equally to that of the business owners in the final neighborhood plan?

Again, there were differing opinions on whose ideas were truly represented in the final plan. Business owners who were interviewed all pointed out that the plan did not include what they felt to be the most effective and important recommendation, removing the service providers from the neighborhood. Beyond that issue, both business owners and service providers felt the ideas in the plan were weighed fairly equally. One process facilitator felt the recommendations might have slightly favored the homeless and service provider point of view simply because it was a primary focus of the neighborhood and the process attempted to address it in numerous ways. Also, some business owners and one of the service providers felt that the plan primarily represented the city's goals, not those of the community.

When reviewing the neighborhood plan it appears that each group had almost all of their recommendations included in the final report. Most of the recommendations made by the homeless individuals were included in the plan. The only specific ideas not included from the homeless recommendations were additional storage spaces for personal belongings, a library, a parenting program, and improved conditions at the shelters. Most of these recommendations were likely omitted because they were beyond the scope of the plan (i.e. social programs or conditions). Most recommendations from the service providers were included in the final plan, the exceptions being specific types of businesses such as coffee shops and art galleries, although these could be considered part of the overall retail development that was recommended in the plan. As with the first two groups, most business owner recommendations were also included in the plan, with a few notable exceptions. Recommendations to remove homeless service providers and adult businesses were omitted, as well as proposals to create a tax-incentive redevelopment district, create connections to surrounding neighborhoods, light rail, a convention center, a community center, and the purchasing of neighborhood property by the city for redevelopment. Overall, the business owners had a slightly lower percentage of their ideas included in the final plan than the other two groups, and their emphatic recommendation to remove the homeless service providers was omitted, which suggests the plan was in fact somewhat biased in favor of the homeless and service providers, as several of the participants noted in the interviews. However, it is worth noting that the final report does list every specific recommendation verbatim from all groups at

all meetings. Thus, even if a recommendation was not reflected in the narrative sections or neighborhood development timelines of the report they are at least listed in the body of the document for the reader to review.

5. How were the final decisions made regarding what community input should be included/recommended in the final neighborhood plan?

There seem to be three strategies employed by the facilitators in deciding how to create a final plan from the community groups' input. The first strategy was giving weight to an idea based on how often it was brought up. One of the process facilitators, when asked how ideas were prioritized for the final plan, said this:

All ideas are not equal. There could be ten ideas on a sheet of paper; one idea might be subscribed to by one person where the next idea might be subscribed to by ten people. We need to gauge that. I can't think of any significant...any kind of idea that even began to get a consensus that was not reflected in the final presentation. But, you know, one of the keys to the whole thing is there's a kind of crystallization of the conceptualization of the ideas from open process. For instance, you tend to get a lot of responses to symptoms or hear a lot of tactical ideas from the various parties, but to put that into a whole, kind of vision of that is what we added in value, I think, above and beyond the kind of democratic give and take of this whole process. – Process Facilitator

Thus, a more utilitarian view of ideas was favored by the facilitators in consensus-building and formulating final recommendations. The second strategy was to include ideas that benefited all groups involved. Thus, if an idea directly favored one group but disadvantaged the other (such as removing service providers from the neighborhood), it was not included. Ideas that were beneficial to all groups, such as reducing crime, general upkeep of the neighborhood, and the creation of

parks and public space tended to be the primary focus. The third strategy was directly related to funding. The Community Development Block Grant funding that would be used to implement parts of the plan could only be used for certain types of improvements. Services and other non-physical improvements could not be funded and therefore the plan had to work within those funding constraints. This also points to what may be a larger issue, which is the scope of the final plan. As a design-oriented neighborhood plan, the solutions proposed included physical improvements for the neighborhood rather than other types of service or non-tangible improvements to address concerns raised by participants. Some participants recognized that the scope of the plan was limited and attempted to work within its framework, while others dismissed the final recommendations as limited and unsatisfactory. This is a particular challenge when constructing a neighborhood plan, as there must be boundaries to its scope and what it can accomplish.

Additional Findings

In addition to findings related to the research questions, some other interesting points emerged from the interviews. The planning process did result in exposure of the groups to one another. Each group, facilitators included, mentioned feelings of respect, admiration, understanding, and surprise when interacting with individuals from the other groups during the process. These interactions would not likely have otherwise happened in such a mediated way,

and on “neutral ground,” as they did during the process meetings. Both facilitators and participants recognized this phenomenon as a strength of the process and hoped that it would lead to the formation of social networks, collaboration, and perhaps even a neighborhood organization. Participants also noted that they had an opportunity to meet other members of the same constituency group, and some relationships and discussions have ensued as a result.

One specific collaboration between groups did result from the meetings, which was the reorientation of two of the service provider properties to an off-street courtyard. A business owner across the street from the service buildings entered into a discussion with the providers to come up with a solution to loitering that both saw as a problem. The solution was reached and agreed upon by both parties, independent of the facilitators, and then brought to the table as a recommendation for the final plan. As noted by Manzo and Perkins (2006), participatory planning processes are useful in their ability to build social capital and sense of community. Collaborative interactions such as these are promising, and show that the process can have lasting social effects beyond the immediate process.

Strengths and Limitations

One strength in the study design was the use of an audit group. A group of both graduate students and faculty provided feedback on methods, research

questions, and the interview protocol. The audit was particularly useful for the interview protocol, helping to reduce the number of interview questions, some of which were redundant or not directly relevant to the research questions. Another strength is that all interviews were conducted by a single researcher. This is beneficial in that whatever researcher bias exists will be consistent throughout the study, making it easier to identify for the reader.

Triangulation of methods also strengthens the interpretation of study results. The comparison between artifacts from the planning meetings and data from the interviews strengthens the validity of the results and provides a more in-depth account of certain aspects of the process. Use of a semi-structured interview for collecting data could also be considered a strength, as it allows for emergent issues to be followed up during the interview process.

An important limitation to note is that the researcher was only able to conduct one interview with a homeless participant. Also, because only three to four interviews were completed for each of the community groups, there is no way to know if those participants interviewed for the study are outliers or truly representative of the majority view of their respective groups (if such a majority views exists). The random selection of participants is intended to address this concern. In addition, because of the complexity of opinions and ideas that emerged from the interviews, there may be other voices that could have provided more depth to the themes discussed.

As in any study with voluntary participation, the characteristics of those individuals who choose to participate may differ from those who choose not to.

Individuals who volunteer are generally more motivated (Babbie, 2005), and in the case of this study, may be those who have stronger views on the process or are looking for an opportunity to vent about neighborhood issues. Also, individuals who were not accessible by phone or e-mail, particularly the homeless participants, did not have the opportunity to participate.

Another concern is that data collection took place approximately one year after the final process meetings. It may be difficult for some participants to recall certain aspects of the process, leading to inaccurate or incomplete data. However, this can also be a strength in that tensions and emotions raised by participation in the process have calmed and participants may be able to provide more thoughtful assessments of their experience. Ideally, it would have been helpful to conduct observations, particularly for the purpose of data triangulation, during the process meetings and charrettes, but this research study was not initiated until the final plan was already completed.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

It would be simple to propose that a participatory planning process always serve the interests and goals of the community participants, and that all actions of the planners or facilitators should be to that end. But this proposal is flawed in two important ways. First, as illustrated by this study, the interests and goals of community participants are rarely a cohesive set of ideas. Conflict between different individuals and interests within communities is commonplace, and often the facilitator's primary role is that of consensus-builder. If consensus cannot be reached within the community, the facilitators are often in a position to favor or reject certain positions as they see fit. Thus, they may not be weighing the interests of all community participants equally.

Second, the proposal also assumes that community participants will actually know what is in their best interests, both individually and collectively. Planners, social scientists, and other "experts" have extensive training in how city design and planning are related to health, crime, social and environmental justice, and other concerns related to the well-being of individuals and communities. For planners to dismiss or withhold this knowledge when it comes in conflict with ideas posed by citizens could be both unethical and harmful. While the *expert position* can certainly be paternalistic in practice, it is important to remember that planners do have knowledge and skills that may be beneficial to the community;

the challenge for both sides is to recognize and use the knowledge and skills of all involved parties. If existing social class and power structures are simply mirrored or reinforced by the process, there is little hope for participatory planning as a tool for empowerment or democracy.

One point that emerged from this study is whether planning is serving the interests of citizens or is simply another institution that imposes its bureaucracy onto communities. McKnight (1995) proposes that our society relies unnecessarily on institutions and services that attempt to replace responsibilities that are best left to individual communities. This would suggest that the profession of planning should essentially be abolished. Zoning, land use, and development could be determined by communities as they are needed or desired without imposition from planning departments or consultants to lead (or mandate) the way. While none of the participants interviewed for this study proposed such a radical solution, some noted that planning can be a means of control and its power and influence should be dramatically reduced. Is the existence of planning departments a form of environmental control? It seems to be exactly that, but if planning did not exist would the way in which our environment is planned, preserved, and constructed be carried out in a way that truly serves the needs of communities? In the absence of a free market, one could make such an argument. However, in our capitalist society developers would have free reign to build in ways that expand their profits, most likely at the expense of both communities and the natural environment. They could certainly not be relied upon to create democratic spaces that promote human and community development. Thus,

planning can be seen as a useful institution to protect the rights of citizens and communities.

However, as this study illustrates, current planning methodologies may be severely flawed in both their assumptions and in their execution of the process. At its core, the neighborhood planning process examined in this study is one of expert control, despite its efforts to include the voices of community members. Neighborhood participants had no real control over what the final plan contained, but rather served as consultants to the facilitation team and provided local knowledge to guide their recommendations. This must also be considered in the larger context of planning, which most often is conducted by planning departments or a planning authority that is far less participatory in its methods than the facilitation team here. Thus, a process that was conducted primarily by an organization that promotes public participation in neighborhood planning and development was only able to accomplish this to a moderate degree at best, based on feedback from participants. Given this seeming lack of success, what hope could a planning authority have at producing better results?

Perhaps the key point here is what was lacking in this particular process; no community control or influence. The process itself was not initiated or structured by the community members, or no “creation of parameters and objects” as Wandersman would say. This neighborhood planning process was structured by the facilitators and ended when the final plan was published. One process participant noted that the plan should not stop when the document is finished, but should continue to motivate change in the neighborhood. Otherwise it becomes

just another piece of paper on a shelf. One facilitator mentioned that he hoped a neighborhood organization would result from the process, but this has not happened as of yet. Most participants interviewed for the study wanted more ongoing communication with the facilitating organizations about the plan. If the formation of a community organization had been a strong goal for the planning process and such a group had been created, it could build on the momentum and recommendations of the plan to keep community members engaged and facilitate an ongoing dialogue about neighborhood development and change. Without such a group, and given that the facilitating organizations have limited resources, little citizen control and organization would likely result from such an isolated planning process such as this. Producing a highly-structured, point-in-time plan for a neighborhood may not be the ultimate solution to the community's needs. Such isolated neighborhood planning processes are becoming more common, and processes such as the one analyzed in this study need to be carefully examined to determine what effects they are having on the communities they seek to empower. Participation as a means to development and democracy may be its primary ethical justification. Through participation, citizens can do more than protect their own interests. They can learn about others, about common destiny and engage in common action (Forester, 1999). Sen (1999) proposes that freedom can be an end goal as well as a means to human and community development. If we view authentic participation as an expression of freedom, then the distinction between participation as a means and an end blurs. It becomes more a question of

what is true participation, whether it is truly an expression of freedom and democracy.

Ultimately, planning as a profession will be judged based on how it is practiced. If environmental planning becomes increasingly focused on technical issues and bureaucratic methods, people and their communities will suffer and the profession will have failed. Planning will simply become just another tokenistic step in a bureaucratic process that maintains the status quo. Fainstein (2005) states that the purpose of planning is to create the just city. Participation is the key to a new planning, the planning of a just city, one that considers the interests, values, and needs of citizens in a collaborative process that promotes the development of all involved. It must be true participation, where information and power are shared freely in the process, in order to construct a true ecological democracy.

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

Community Assessment Workshop Questions

1. Quickly discuss the boundary of the area and determine whether it is correctly defined.
2. Identify significant or defining events in the neighborhood in the past few years / decades.
3. Describe the neighborhood (physical, social, communal) as though talking to a stranger.
4. List and locate on the map three places you would avoid, and at what times of the day. Please be as specific as possible.
5. Name three or more sites in the neighborhood that you consider public places. That is a place where people can meet to freely discuss community issues.
6. Name at least three features that make the neighborhood special and unique. These might be either natural or manmade features. (Natural features include hills, streams, and vegetation. Examples of manmade features include the community's streetscape, architecture, and parks.)
7. Share any other ideas / reflections on the past or lessons learned.

Community Visioning Workshop Questions

1. If you could have three or more attractions to take out-of-town visitors in your neighborhood, what would they be? (Examples: great restaurants, parks, museums, stores, churches, public art, or a great street(s).)
2. Name three or more sites you want to be public places in the future. That is places where people can meet and freely discuss community issues or gather.
3. Name three or more natural and manmade features that could make your community special and unique in the future.
4. Name three or more streets, paths (i.e., greenway or trail), and edges (i.e., river) that could make your community better in the future.

5. What areas of your neighborhood do you want to change (and what kind of change do you want to see) and what areas do you want to keep the same?

6. What 10 things would bring the biggest improvements to your neighborhood and the city in the future?

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

For Business Owners, Service Providers, Homeless Individuals

Meeting format:

- How many meetings did you attend? If not all, which ones were attended?
- Did you feel comfortable expressing your ideas during the meetings?
- Were there any questions you think should have been asked that were not?

Perceptions of the process:

- What were your goals for the neighborhood at the start of the process?
- Did your goals change during the process? If so, did they change a lot, in your opinion?
- Do you feel that your ideas were a part of the final neighborhood plan?
- Do you feel there were differences between the community groups in what they wanted for the future of the neighborhood? If so, what were they?
- Do you feel that any community group or groups had more input included in the final neighborhood plan? If so, which one(s)?

Is there anything else about your experience of the process that you would like to share that I did not cover?

For Organizers, Facilitators

Meeting format:

- How many meetings did you attend? If not all, which ones were attended?
- Do you feel confident that you provided a comfortable atmosphere for participants to express their ideas during the meetings?
- In retrospect, is there anything about the structure of the process that you wish had been different?

Perceptions of the process:

- Do you feel that there were initial differences in what the groups wanted for the future of the neighborhood? If so, what were they?
- Do you feel that everyone's ideas were a part of the final neighborhood plan?
- Do you feel that any one of the community group's ideas were represented more than the others in the final plan? If so, which one(s)?
- How were the final decisions made regarding what community input should be included or recommended in the final plan?

Is there anything else about your experience of the process that you would like to share that I did not cover?

APPENDIX C

EMERGENT THEMES

- 1. Concerns with execution of the process:** dealing with participants, separating out the meetings by community group, balancing professionalism and being friendly, keeping meetings “civil”, facilitators remaining objective, meeting locations, combining the participant’s ideas into a practical vision
- 2. Conflict and differences between groups:** conflict between groups on perception of, and vision/goals for the neighborhood, long-standing contention between groups (conflict existing prior to process), venting and ranting during the process, absolutism
- 3. Shared experience as comfortable:** participating with “like” or “like-minded” people as comfortable, within-group consensus and validation
- 4. Users as experts:** people in the neighborhood are the experts on the neighborhood (as opposed to planners or other design professionals)
- 5. Exposure and education:** exposure to other perspectives and ideas during the process, exposure as educational or providing a “deeper understanding” of other group’s situation or concerns, lack of exposure and unwillingness to be exposed to others
- 6. Prioritization of ideas:** how decisions were made regarding what ideas should be prioritized in the final plan
- 7. How and if consensus was reached:** was there consensus as a result of the process, is a consensus between groups possible
- 8. Competing planning frameworks:** the role of planning and planners, looking beyond the neighborhood
- 9. Concerns with implementation of the plan:** when will plan be implemented, ideas not being implemented
- 10. Plan not addressing the issues:** plan not addressing the real issues, facilitators had an agenda

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