

“The Best Laid Plans:” An Ecological Analysis of Community Participation, Power, and Urban
Neighborhood Planning in Practice

By

John W. Vick

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Approved:

Douglas D. Perkins, Ph.D.

Paul W. Speer, Ph.D.

James C. Fraser, Ph.D.

Lauren C. Heberle, Ph.D.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the most important social and political transitions in the United States in the past century has been the reordering of our built environment. The industrial revolution grew and increased the density of cities throughout the country, drawing people from rural and farming communities to urban centers in search of work. Post-World-War-II policy shifts, particularly in housing, land use, and transportation policies, facilitated “white flight” from inner cities to newly-developed suburban areas, leaving mostly minorities and the poor behind to populate urban areas. Disinvestment in these neighborhoods led to concentrated urban poverty, leaving poor and minority communities spatially isolated and politically disconnected. In recent decades, renewed interest in the redevelopment of urban environments and economies has led to sweeping change and new investment in previously disenfranchised neighborhoods. This reinvestment has been a double-edged sword, leading to a range of outcomes that have benefited urban neighborhoods through an increase in neighborhood resources, services, and property values, while others are excluded from benefiting from, or participating in, decision-making about the needs and future of their neighborhoods. City officials and developers often describe the change process as one of “urban revitalization” or “urban regeneration,” while critics have adopted the term “gentrification” to describe the influx of middle- and upper-class residents and the changes they bring to previously low-income neighborhoods (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2007). These differing terms highlight the tensions that exist between urban redevelopment and community interests, which have often resulted in power struggles to control the future development and makeup of urban neighborhoods (for examples, see Lees et al., 2007 and Smith, 1996). Urban neighborhoods have become contested space, as privatization, economic

growth, and the commoditization of cities are increasingly favored as strategies for local redevelopment (Low & Smith, 2006; Mitchell, 2003; Molotch, 1976).

Reflection on nearly a century of urban planning in the United States illuminates the importance of participation and community power in planning initiatives. The field itself was founded on the principles of social and economic justice, born out of the need to protect the health of residents in densely-crowded cities from the ill-effects of industry through the establishment of land use regulations (Hebbert, 1999). However, the inclusion of community members in decision-making on planning issues has varied widely since the profession was established. Today, community involvement in planning initiatives is common but has taken many forms, some of which are ultimately empowering and others subjugating or simply inadequate in their ability to address community needs. Failures in the inclusion of community voices, needs, and interests, particularly those of disenfranchised and minority groups, occur for a variety of reasons, including: 1) failure to bring representatives of these groups to the decision-making table; 2) intentional or accidental suppression of their interests in favor of other interests; and 3) the inability of planners or facilitators to effectively link these groups to decision-making power. Whatever the reason, these concerns must be addressed for the field of planning to fulfill the promise of its inception: to plan in the public interest. This may only be possible if planning occurs *with* the public, rather than *for* it. Many of those communities that were devastated during urban renewal by policies that promoted massive changes to the built environment are now experiencing an influx of new investment, both public and private, yet often do not have control over the changes impacting their neighborhoods. Still, other disenfranchised neighborhoods continue to struggle, seeing investment in other areas of the city but are unable to spur redevelopment in their own neighborhoods. While not a panacea, the process of

neighborhood planning holds some promise as a way to rally support, build relationships, access resources, and either begin or manage urban neighborhood revitalization. Thus, understanding the nature of participation and power in these processes is key if communities and planners alike are to utilize them as a tool for ensuring communities' decision-making power in the future of their neighborhoods.

In order to elucidate the process of participatory planning, this study examines the issues of power and participation within the context of an urban neighborhood revitalization planning process. The study offers an ecological analysis of the process and the resulting plan to determine the various ways in which power influences the process and plan. The theoretical framework includes theories of social power, including Foucault (1976; 1980), Gaventa (2004), and Stone (1980), community capacity theory (Chaskin et al., 2001), communicative action planning theory (Forester, 1999), and frameworks for evaluating power in participatory planning (Arnstein, 1969; Wandersman, 1979b). The study employs qualitative research methods to examine the experiences and perceptions of process participants, facilitators, and city officials as well as the larger socio-spatial and socio-political context in which the process occurred. The study seeks to inform participatory planning and community power theory by providing an in-depth account of participatory planning that identifies the ways that power is exercised on, and within, the planning process and the resulting plan's implementation. Additionally, the findings can be useful for planners who seek to effectively convey power to participants and ultimately produce an empowering and transformative process for poor and disenfranchised communities through participation in the revitalization of their neighborhoods.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Urban Planning in Practice

Urban change processes are complex and simultaneously reflect political, social, and economic interests, which, in turn, are actualized as the built environment. While the built environment is certainly shaped by social policy, economic forces, and cultural needs and preferences, it is the process of urban planning that determines how these are put into action. Planning historically has concerned itself with physical or spatial organization, specifically land-use, transportation, capital improvements, and infrastructure (Kaiser & Godschalk, 1995). This “physical planning” has now become only a part of what the field includes in its practice, which has more recently expanded its focus to explicitly include social, political, and economic concerns. Since most planners have little or no expertise in the myriad of issues now addressed by planning practice, it has become more interdisciplinary and collaborative out of necessity. Literature across multiple disciplines has drawn attention to the relationship between the built environment and issues related to health (e.g., Galea & Vlahov, 2005; Northridge, Sclar & Biswas, 2003; Frumkin, Frank & Jackson, 2004; Doyle, Kelly-Schwartz, Schlossberg, & Stockard, 2004), crime (e.g., Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2004; Perkins, Meeks & Taylor, 1992; Kuo, 2001), food access (e.g. Raja, Ma & Yadav, 2008; Short, Guthman & Raskin, 2007), and social and community life (e.g. Brown & Cropper, 2001; Nasar & Julian, 1995; Lund, 2002; Freeman, 2001), among other areas of study. Thus, the boundaries of what constitutes “urban planning” have become blurred, and defining the term (or the field, for that matter) is becoming increasingly difficult.

Planning discourse and practice has typically been defined by movements that focus on design as the guiding principle of social welfare. Some recent and influential planning movements, including New Urbanism and Smart Growth, in many ways parallel other urban planning movements of the early 20th century in that they often prioritize design (the outcome) over process (how the outcome is achieved). The *Garden City* movement promoted the spatial organization of cities based on use zoning, decentralization, and integration of parks and nature into urban space (Howard, 1902), and the *City Beautiful* movement sought to improve the public welfare with city beautification, classical architecture, and monuments that would inspire “civic virtue,” reducing social conflict and increasing economic output (Smith, 2006). While the social goals of planning were at least implicit in these early planning movements, none explicitly outlined the decision-making process, promoted broad community participation, or called for social equity as an explicit goal.

The latter half of the 20th Century saw the development of several new, less paternalistic approaches that reframed planning as a practice that should be as equally concerned with promoting social equity, inclusion, participation, and collaboration as it is with prescribing urban design. Generally speaking, these movements focused on the *process* of planning and the need for a planning practice that directly responded to the needs of communities. Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) is often cited as the most influential planning text of the 20th century. In it, she intricately describes the relationship between the built environment and community and social life, advocates for community participation in planning initiatives, and focuses her attention on small-scale neighborhood-level planning and change. A neighborhood activist, Jacobs publicly fought against the Corbusian planning regime of Robert Moses in New York in the 1950’s and 1960’s as he sought to reinvent the city as “towers in

parks” connected by massive highway systems. Moses’ proposed changes were highly controversial, rarely included community input, and were often realized at the expense of long-established neighborhoods and communities without their consent (Caro, 1974). It was Moses’ planning approach that led Jacobs to rail against large-scale planning and promote an approach that preserved the social networks already present in neighborhoods that provided safety, resources, and enhanced community life for neighborhood residents and businesses. Jacobs’s protests were a reflection of widespread backlash from communities against the razing of historic neighborhoods and buildings, as well as a catalyst for an increased focus on community interests by planners and policymakers.

During the same period, and also in response to increased government control over planning and the destruction of poor and minority neighborhoods, Davidoff’s (1965) *advocacy planning* sought to cast planners in the role of advocate for the poor and disenfranchised. Davidoff noted that citizen participation in planning activities was most often reactive and did not inform policies or actions from the bottom up. In his view, planners were in a unique position to facilitate inclusion, advocate on behalf of citizens’ interests, and educate communities about the state of things and their rights within that context. While recognizing the inherent difficulties of planners acting as social and political advocates, he based his assertions on the fact that “Appropriate planning action cannot be prescribed from a position of value neutrality, for prescriptions are based on desired objectives” (1965, p. 332). Thus, planners must choose a value position in their practice and be explicit about it rather than attempting (or pretending) to remain objective.

The latter decades of the 20th Century saw the development of another process-oriented approach to planning rooted in critical theory via Jurgen Habermas’s (1985) *communicative*

action theory. Led by primarily by John Forester, Patsy Healy, and Judith Innes it emphasizes both the relationships between actors in the planning process and the implications of planners' actions in promoting social equity and inclusion (see Teitz, 2007). Communicative action planning attempts to redefine planning as a course for how neighborhoods, cities, and regions should develop in multiple spheres: not limited to prescribing zoning and land use, but also addressing issues of social equity, health, environmental justice, and ecological sustainability (Forester, 1999). In the same vein, *transactive planning* (Friedmann, 1987) and *equity planning* (Krumholz and Forester, 1990) also emerged during this period, further calling for a planning approach that considered and addressed the needs of the poor and disenfranchised, both individually and institutionally, and encouraged broader public policy and social change through planning. While not fully embraced by the planning profession, a growing emphasis on the socio-political goals of planning, as well as the broadening of what constitutes "planning," has led to a greater number of planning initiatives that emphasize collaboration and community participation. Thus, the traditional role of planners as experts has begun to shift to a dynamic where planners often take on a facilitating or brokering role in the process (Kaliski, 2005). While community input may be welcome by some planners for both ethical and pragmatic reasons, tensions often exist between the goals of communities, planners, and policymakers, as well as embedded social, political, and economic interests.

Urban planning practice is now perhaps one of the most direct democratic processes in contemporary U.S. society. Community meetings, whether it's a zoning change for the property on the corner or a series of public meetings to develop a comprehensive city plan, allow citizens to frequently and directly influence change in their communities. Gathering in a room (or online) with others to exchange opinions, educate oneself, and participate in decision-making is a

powerful social and political exercise. Through participation, citizens can do more than assert or protect their own interests. They can learn about others, learn about common destiny, and engage in common action (Forester, 1999). However, this is often an ideal rather than the reality of planning. Decades of planning literature suggests that while many planning processes aspire to be inclusive and bottom-up, they are not always successful, and many processes are deliberately structured to exclude certain voices and interests. While participation is increasingly valued and included in planning efforts, the nature of this participation varies widely, including who participates, the interpersonal and structural relationships among actors, and what outcomes are ultimately realized.

Defining Community Participation

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. (pp. 611-612)

Horelli's definition emphasizes the social, ethical, and political interests present in participation, as well as the cyclical and iterative nature of participation in decision-making. He further states the importance of outcomes that serve the participants' needs and interests, which defines participation not just as "being at the table," but by involvement in implementation and outcomes. Sherry Arnstein's (1969) definition focuses on the potential of planning in facilitating social equality and change, proposing that citizen participation is citizen power that results from the redistribution of power from the "have" citizens to the "have-not" citizens. This

redistribution allows for the disadvantaged citizenry to induce social reform to share in the benefits of affluent society. Further, Henry Sanoff (2000) proposes the more general definition of “direct public involvement in decision-making processes whereby people share in social decisions that determine the quality and direction of their lives” (p. 10). Across these definitions are emphases on social change, shared-power balanced with self-determination, and direct involvement as definitive elements of participation, which are congruent with the goals of the advocacy planning and transactive planning paradigms promoted by Davidoff, Friedmann, Forester, and others.

Theoretical Bases for Community Participation

The theoretical bases for including community participation in planning include practical theories about how participants and facilitators engage with one another to create a participatory space, as well as broader social power theories that suggest participation in planning may lead to increased community control over their environment. Theories of planning practice focus primarily on the planning process itself, including how it is created, carried out, and implemented. More general theories of social power suggest those systems of power that create the context in which planning occurs, and determines what existing power relationships may be brought to bear on the process and its outcomes.

Theories of participatory planning practice

The reasons for including community participation in planning processes are both pragmatic and ethical. Some processes aim to promote democracy, empowerment, and social change. Democracy cannot be realized without citizen participation (Davidoff, 1965), and community members must be engaged in the process of planning in order to ensure that plans are implemented in a way that represents their interests (Friedmann, 1987). Further, participants

must be diverse and include the breadth of perspectives present within the community (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). Communities participate by both generating and sharing ideas, but also by holding decision-makers accountable for how their ideas are implemented. Without the ability to become well-informed and shape planning proposals and actions, citizens are at the mercy of planners and policymakers, which tend toward maintaining the status quo (Davidoff, 1965). The inclusion of participation may also be viewed simply as a pragmatic decision, seeking community involvement as a practical means to ensuring a better-maintained physical environment, greater user satisfaction, or even cost savings (Sanoff, 2000).

Community members become involved in planning processes in different ways. Some initiatives are born from a grassroots movement, although most are initiated by governments and other planners such as non-profit or private entities that typically partner or contract with government. Participatory planning processes are typically led by facilitators who invite and engage community stakeholders in a structured process to make decisions regarding future planning and development goals. Community input is obtained through a variety of methods, including surveys, focus groups, and design charrettes. The most common of these, charrettes, are intensive participatory workshops that seek to address specific community problems and provide a context for integrating design and social science inquiry with local community knowledge (Sutton & Kemp, 2006). Ideally, they provide an opportunity for planners and citizens work together to share, develop, and test ideas (Gindroz, 2003), and have their theoretical underpinnings rooted in communicative action planning (see Forester, 1999). These sessions enable a wide range of participants to come together, work out conflicts, and plan out new strategies for the target area. Most planning meetings, particularly those at the neighborhood-level, now use some variation of the charrette format that involves a needs

assessment or asset-based procedure (e.g. Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996) to gather input at community meetings. Other technology-based methods are also emerging as useful in participatory planning, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to visually display data (Talen, 2000; Dennis, 2006), the use of photography through Photovoice (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005; Redwood et al., 2010; Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano, 1998), and the use of social networking and Internet-based virtual worlds (Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010; Galef, 2009). These and other technology-based methods have allowed for increased access to information and platforms for communication, discussion, and feedback regarding planning initiatives, as well as provided tools for networking to increase community capacity to develop or participate in change processes (Kaliski, 2005; Devisch, 2008). However, the increasing use of technology in planning can be counterproductive, as it can potentially exclude poor or elderly individuals who do not have access to, or confidence in using, such technology. Thus, it is most effective as a participatory tool when used in conjunction with other methods of engagement that are complementary (Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010).

Theories of social structure and power

Planners often disagree on what role citizens should play in the planning process. In what is sometimes referred to as the *expert position*, design professionals use 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). Instances of top-down or unilateral planning processes that exclude community voices are not uncommon. The most notorious examples include Haussmann's sweeping reconstruction of Paris in the 1860's for

Napoleon III, Robert Moses' plans for postwar New York City, and the Roman reconstruction of conquered cities using an axial street-grid layout and classical architecture. These plans deliberately excluded participation in decision-making regarding sweeping changes to the built environment that aligned with powerful interests, often military-oriented, even when claiming improved social welfare as a desired outcome. Jane Jacobs (1961) described this planning approach as "the sacking of cities," specifically referring to Moses' plans for New York and other urban renewal processes in the United States. While the ultimate benefits of such sweeping changes are debated, these top-down approaches punctuate the history and importance of powerful interests in planning being favored over bottom-up, participatory approaches that might have better served the interests of the affected communities.

Urban theorists have long recognized the importance of power in understanding the role of participation in urban governance. Lukes (1974) conceptualized power as having three dimensions that define the ways in which governments control the citizenry. The first dimension, *decision-making power*, refers to the explicit ways that policy and other public decisions are made by government through visible negotiations between various interests. *Non decision-making power* refers to the ways in which government sets agendas and controls public discourse by setting parameters around what issues are acceptable to be discussed. While this dimension of power is more covert than decision-making power, the third dimension, *ideological power*, is particularly insidious in that government influences the thoughts and desires of the citizenry to support its own agenda, even when it is against the citizenry's own self-interest. Boulding's (1989) *three faces of power* conceptualize power as destructive, productive (obtaining something through an exchange), or integrative (obtaining something out of respect or care). This final dimension, integrative power, is particularly relevant for understanding how

communities function, but the first two dimensions are often more relevant when considering how community interests negotiate with government, business, or other powerful interests. Other conceptualizations of power favor a pluralistic model, such as Dahl's (1989) study of public governance in New Haven, Connecticut, where various interests compete with one another and government acts as a mediator between them. The implication of the pluralistic model for participatory planning suggests an important role for government as intermediary and power-broker in the participatory process. However, inclusion of government in the process alone is not sufficient. Those who are relatively powerless within the existing social structure have a limited ability to access and influence government or the negotiating process that determines what interests or agendas are prioritized (Castells, 1978).

Frameworks for evaluating participation and power

The relative power of planning process participants is most often represented in the literature as a continuum. Sherry Arnstein (1969) attempted to capture this range of participation as a metaphorical "ladder of participation," where the ladder represents a hierarchy of eight specific types of citizen participation that are grouped into three broader 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 citizens, who retain 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 by facilitators or other decision-makers, but the citizens themselves have no real power to ensure the plans will be adhered to. Without real power there is often no follow-through, and ultimately decisions are made by others. 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 manipulate participants’ views. Similarly, Wandersman (1979b) identifies five ordered categories 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 consultative 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 Arnstein’s and Wandersman’s models somewhat simplify the reality and complexities of participatory planning, they do provide a useful starting point for evaluating community power, accountability, and the role of process structure in creating participatory space. Claiming a process is participatory not only does not ensure that citizens ultimately have control over the process or its outcomes, but the process may severely limit their ability to affect change by marginalizing them through an assimilative process. When community participants

do not have the power to hold governments or private interests accountable, collaborative planning has little hope of leading to social change or transformation for the affected community (Gaventa, 2004). Thus, while the creation of participatory structures and spaces does offer an opportunity for empowerment and change, their interactions with the larger power structures within which they are embedded must be examined to determine their potential for being transformative and serving participants' needs and interests. This perspective builds on Foucault (1980) and others who emphasize the importance of recognizing the influence of power relationships on, and in, participatory space. To this point, Gaventa (2004) states:

Power analysis is thus critical to understanding the extent to which new spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, or whether they are more likely to be instruments for reinforcing domination and control. (p. 34)

Using this understanding of power as a foundation, he proposes that three continuums of power be examined to assess the transformative power of a participatory space:

- 1) Spaces: These are moments or events where power occurs. They can be *closed* to public participation is not allowed, participants can be *invited* into them by authorities, or *claimed* by typically excluded groups.
- 2) Levels: The places and levels of engagement can include *local*, *national*, or *global* spaces, but is a continuum and can be somewhere between these.
- 3) Forms: These are the degrees of visibility of power. Power can be *visible*, as in open conflict. It can also be *hidden*, where powerful interests covertly create barriers and limit choices, or can be *invisible*, where powerlessness is internalized by certain groups and thus accept this as the status quo.

These three continuums are represented as a cube, where each is a side that continually interacts with the others. Gaventa's power cube is useful for examining how and where power occurs, including how power can be exercised or accessed. His perspective presents a more ecological approach than either Arnstein's or Wandersman's levels of participation. While the latter two focus primarily on issues of process structure and accountability, the former goes a step further and recognizes the importance of context and the situational nature of power and provides a more nuanced understanding of how it operates.

Planning with disenfranchised groups

Power within participatory processes both determines, and is determined by, who participates. Facilitators may purposefully limit the participant group to those individuals who share their views in order to appear participatory without having to include dissenting voices in the process. Others may 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. In some cases a process strives to be participatory but is implemented poorly and either devalues or altogether excludes key groups and individuals from the process (e.g. Baum, 1998; Lahiri-Dutt, 2004). Disenfranchised groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, women, the elderly, and the poor are often excluded from participating in planning processes (Horelli, 2002). During urban renewal in the U.S., minorities were often excluded from planning committees, and, without a voice, saw widespread demolition of their neighborhoods (O'Connor, 2008). McCann (2001) describes a more recent example in Lexington, Kentucky, where a process that claimed to be collaborative and inclusive but ultimately served only to reinforce the goals and interests of the city's elite. When input from middle- and upper-class residents is included to a greater degree in a final plan than that of

lower- or working-class individuals, existing class structures are reproduced, rather than equalized, by the processes. When processes are institutionalized, low-income and minority participants are often unfamiliar with how to navigate bureaucratic processes and are either marginalized (Tauxe, 1995) or the structure is simply not flexible enough to allow a broad base of community participation (Mitchell, 2004). In addition, while facilitators or organizers may feel they are accessing participants' views, there may be an underlying resentment or lack of confidence that prevents participants from truly voicing their ideas and objectives, particularly in situations where marginalized groups are involved. 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 (Tauxe, 1995; Mitchell, 2004).

Shared power and collaboration

While discussions of power in planning often focus on the competing interests of participants and planners, Forester (1999) proposes that power in planning practice is neither adversarial nor collaborative, but necessarily both at once. Forester proposes that collaborative planning can address issues of power in a synergistic way: rather than fighting to gain power over others through the process, communities can forge with planners to serve the interests of both. Similarly, Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) outline a vision for community participation that includes consensus-building and problem solving:

Creating a vision and a way of realizing that vision cannot be a top-down process.

The process must simultaneously educate and engage the public as the planners themselves learn from the community. Struggling with the problem is the best way to understand the issues and develop a consensus. The process needs to go well beyond opinion polls, wish lists, and gripe sessions. It needs to give people

the tools to create their own vision and challenge them to formulate their own answers. Community input is rarely enough—simply asking citizens about needs and hopes often feels good but doesn't engage them in creative problem solving. (pp. 244-245)

The authors draw an important distinction between processes that include community input and collaborative planning. While input can inform planning, they propose that collaboration is achieved through shared problem-solving and decision-making. Their vision outlines a collaborative and reciprocal relationship between planners and the community that promotes a goal of synergic, or shared, power among actors within the process (Craig & Craig, 1979), where community members and facilitators bring their respective tools and visions to engage in creative problem solving. This is akin to Boulding's (1989) notion of integrative power, where a desired outcome is achieved through respect or care, rather than through force or exchange.

Critics of the communicative action planning approach have suggested that it does not adequately consider the influence of existing power structures on the planning process (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002), and that it does not address the problem of an open process that produces unjust results (Fainstein, 2000). Specifically, they argue that the communicative action theorists focus on the *subject* (what should be done) rather than the *object* (what is done). Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) propose that a Foucauldian analysis of power is a more appropriate theoretical foundation for evaluating planning, as it “addresses exactly the weakness in the communicative paradigm, and makes effective understanding...and effective action possible” (p. 44). A Foucauldian analysis would recognize the importance of understanding and analyzing power as an integral part of planning practice and evaluating participation based on its ability to access, mitigate, or influence existing power structures. Thus, evaluating community power

within the parameters of the process and resulting plan does not provide an accurate assessment of whether or not the participants ultimately have control over the implementation of their ideas and goals, or whether the outcomes will be in the community's interests.

Systemic power

One of the most formidable barriers to participation in decision-making is the invisible structure of social, economic, and political power that communities must contend with. Clarence Stone (1980) terms this *systemic power*, and defines it as “the impact of the larger socioeconomic system on the predispositions of public officials” (979). Stone argues that the influence of power is often indirect and exercised by public officials within the larger context of a stratified system. This form of power is particularly difficult to address since it is not explicitly calculated by, or perhaps even known to, the individuals who exercise it. Since existing power structures are created and managed by those who hold economic and political power, decisions often reflect their interests and serve to reproduce the status quo. Community members whose ideas do not align with the interests of political decision-makers may find resistance as they attempt to collaborate with planning departments or other public institutions. Likewise, planners may attempt to work in the interests of communities but encounter resistance from those with greater economic or political influence. In addition, planners who are interested in advocating for community interests and are aware of their brokering role between community and political interests may face an ethical dilemma when these interests do not align (Howe, 1994). Since systemic power is *situational*, neither member is likely to be aware of the consequences of their respective power positions. Thus, systemic power presents a strong challenge to building consensus, particularly within communicative processes.

Community development and community capacity

The concept of *community* is complex, and requires that planners understand the nature of communities in order to successfully engage them in planning efforts. While community is, by definition, characterized by unity and commonalities, it also involves conflict, negotiation, and exclusion (Staeheli, 2008). Engaging communities, developing consensus, and moving toward action and change is therefore a complex and difficult task. Facilitating community development is an implicit (if not explicit) goal of participatory and community-based planning, which has the ability to build community capacity (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001), as well as social networks, social capital, and sense of community (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). When characterized by community control, planning can serve as an organizing tool for communities to define the issues, advocate for change, and exercise control over process outcomes. Planners often play the role of community organizer, whether they realize it or not, bringing together individuals around a common goal to facilitate action and change. However, Purcell (2012) questions whether community development practice can address fundamental and structural issues, suggesting practitioners take a Freirean perspective to determine whether the process takes a critical perspective or simply reflects agency-dominated agendas. He warns practitioners not to assume that community development initiatives have the ability to translate beyond the participatory space created by the process and produce the desired change.

Empowerment

As a construct, *empowerment* is difficult to define, as it is now referred to across a number of disciplines for a variety of purposes. Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as the ability of people, organizations, and communities to gain mastery over issues of importance to them. Perkins (2010) proposes that empowerment is “mainly about working together for our

shared interests, to improve our communities and institutions, and build a more just society” (p. 4). He identifies five elements that are common across various definitions of empowerment: 1) it is a *process*, 2) it occurs in *communities* and *organizations*, 3) involves *active participation*, 4) includes *critical awareness, reflection, and understanding*, and 5) provides *access to, and control over, decision-making and resources*.

If empowerment and social change are seen as goals in the process, particularly when marginalized populations are involved, communities may exercise power in a confrontational way in order to influence the outcomes. In other scenarios, communities take a collaborative approach, where relationships are developed with other actors to increase influence and community capacity for change. Neither approach is the correct strategy in all cases; each situation is unique and the ways in which community members engage in the process should take into account the context in which they are operating (Saegert, 2006).

Planning process outcomes include not only the plan and resulting built environment, but also how participants feel about their participation, perception of their role in the community, and involvement in decision-making. These psycho-social dimensions of participation are important outcomes; people must participate in the planning of their own environment in order to be satisfied with the outcome. Participation can lead to both a sense of control over the environment and a positive view of the outcome (e.g. Kindon, 2004; Ward, 1991). Consequently, the participatory process itself may be at least as important to the users’ satisfaction with their environment as the end product itself (Wandersman, 1979a). While literature on empowerment often distinguishes between individual (psychological) empowerment and group (collective) empowerment, Saegert (1996) suggests this distinction is not so clear in practice. Individuals who feel personally empowered and have a strong sense of community are

more likely to participate in community activities. Thus, the psycho-social dimensions of participation should not be underestimated, as they can be formative in developing social networks and building community capacity, and can be transformative for disenfranchised groups by ensuring that plans are conceived and implemented in ways that represent their interests (Friedmann, 1987; Gaventa, 2004).

Participatory action research

Participatory research strategies, which are characterized by a process of reflection and action, and where research is conducted *with* people rather than *on* them, can provide a methodology for planners who seek to empower communities. Within a *participatory action research* framework, local knowledge and perspectives form the basis for the research and define the goals and action (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Participatory research as an organizing strategy can promote the empowerment of individuals, organizations, and communities by using local knowledge to promote change and transformation (Williams, 1999; Speer & Hughey, 1995). Speer et al. (2003) provide an account of a participatory action research project that organized community members in Camden, New Jersey against crime in their neighborhood. Community members and researchers identified vacant housing as a haven for criminal activity, used the media to apply pressure to policymakers, and ultimately were successful in having the vacant homes razed. In successful projects such as this, organizing around neighborhood issues can lead to substantive and relevant changes to the built environment that address the community's needs, and serve as a model for future grassroots movements in planning and urban neighborhood improvement processes. Participatory research approaches may also be useful in providing a framework for developing participatory planning processes, offering a model

reflective and collaborative process that seeks to develop community capacity and allows for community control over the process and outcomes (McIntyre, 2008).

Successful Planning Approaches

Goals and defining success

Perhaps because planners and practitioners rarely receive formal training in community development or participatory methods of inquiry, they often do not have a clear idea of how to structure a participatory planning process or what to expect from it. This problem may also stem from the lack of a framework for defining success or evaluating these types of processes (Innes and Booher, 1999). Definitions of successful planning processes vary widely, including how many people participate in the process (Churchman & Ginosar, 1999), the satisfaction of the users with the implementation of their ideas (Wandersman, 1979b), and whether or not a consensus is reached by the participants to formulate a final plan (Horelli, 2002). Innes and Booher (1999) propose a more comprehensive evaluation framework 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.

Evaluating process outcomes

The planning profession has shown a surprising lack of interest in evaluating or being involved in the implementation of plans that it produces. While much attention is paid to the process and content of the final plan, planners and facilitators rarely remain involved beyond the completion of the plan to evaluate or aid in the plan's implementation (Talen, 1996).

Widespread failure in the implementation of plans is well-known among planners, so much so that the term "plan sitting on a shelf" is used by planners, policy makers, and community members alike. This raises important questions that must be addressed: if participatory processes

are community-driven or seek to empower communities and build their capacity for change, are communities ultimately responsible for ensuring a plan's implementation? And further, do increased community capacity and community action absolve government from responsibility in implementation?

In an attempt to understand why implementation is so difficult to achieve, Loh (2012) used case studies to identify four process stages where disconnects may occur: the visioning process (community input), plan writing (by planners), local government actions (failure of planning commission or other city departments to implement the plan), and ordinance enforcement (by local government). This suggests an important role for local government in the plan's implementation, but also the necessity of government being held accountable to the community to ensure it is a priority, and is implemented and enforced according to the community's need and goals stated in the plan.

Studies that have focused on how success is achieved in planning processes have mixed findings, and are context-dependent, but reveal community control and a broad base of community support to be the strongest predictors of success. In an attempt to identify research methods and process characteristics that contributed to a goal of community empowerment with marginalized populations, Juarez and Brown (2008) examined the efficacy of several participatory research methods in a collaborative community planning process in El Monte, California. They proposed four primary considerations when designing a participatory planning process: 1) access to participants, 2) data and scale, 3) power relations, and 4) translation to action. Access to participants involves ensuring that there is a broad representation of community interests (not simply a large number of participants), identifying the marginalized groups in the study area, and structuring the process activities to allow for participation of all

stakeholders (i.e. anyone who will be affected by the changes being planned). They also propose that process activities allow for multiple forms of data and data collection that reinforce one another and provide a diversity of perspectives. Power relations can be addressed through small, informal public meetings where community members can identify and build support around local issues free from influence from larger power interests. This allows for identification, documentation, and then communication of community needs and interests that can create an impetus for action. In order to empower community participants, the process must translate to action, moving beyond the appraisal process to affect change.

Mason and Beard (2008) sought a more nuanced understanding of community-based planning based on their study of processes in three cities in Mexico. Each process had, at its core, the goals of poverty amelioration and broader social change. The study found that collaborative planning did not inherently reduce poverty or lead to social or political change, but rather success was dependent on the community's access to political allies or its rejection of working within the regulations required by state-funded initiatives. The most successful of the three communities came from its collective capacity from social networks maintained over decades, which allowed them to mobilize for political action by partnering with other nearby communities. Unlike the other two communities in the study, they were in a position to reject public funding for their process and maintain independence from funding contingencies and requirements. These findings are interesting in that they highlight the importance of both collective action and community control, as well as reliance on existing social networks to implement change. In contrast to other study's findings, freedom from funding constraints and government red tape allowed the community to mobilize and take action at its own discretion. Further, Shandas and Messer (2008) examined a successful community-initiated environmental

planning program to determine what factors contributed to its success. They found that the early and frequent involvement of community stakeholders in the process, partnership with a local university, and promoting community control over program initiatives all contributed to its success. Similarly, O'Connell (2009) examined the adoption of Smart Growth planning policies in U.S. cities and found that they were more likely to be adopted as the number of local groups advocating for these policies increased.

Success may also be largely dependent on funding, as Staeheli (2008) notes that building community capacity may not be effective alone without money to pay for initiatives. Thus, recent shifts in planning practice toward economic development goals that spur business development and job growth to attract private investment may play an important role in building capacity for change over time. As urban governance now generally focuses on business and economic growth (Harvey, 1989), developing neighborhood plans that link with local governments' growth-oriented policies may be more likely to lead to implementation, although communities' needs may be rejected in favor of business interests under the assumption that business growth will equal community prosperity.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Further research is needed to examine participatory planning processes, particularly with regard to contextual influences that shape the process structure and outcomes. With planning's transition to a more collaborative, participatory, and interdisciplinary practice, it is important to understand how various organizations and individuals interact with one another, reflecting the communicative action theorist's focus on the creation of participatory, collaborative, and transformative space within the process. However, as Gaventa (2004), Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002), and Fainstein (2000) suggest, participatory planning research must directly address the

question of power and how it influences both process and outcomes. This requires systematic inquiry into how processes are developed, structured, and implemented to assess the socio-spatial and socio-political processes that may influence the process and its outcomes.

The study purpose and design were informed by multiple theories of ecological systems, power, and community development. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provides a framework for the study's methodology and approach to understand the planning process *in context*, specifically the interactions between process actors and multiple levels of contextual influence. Building on Kurt Lewin's (1935) theory that behavior is a function of the interplay between person and environment, ecological theory asserts the importance of measuring the interactions between individuals and their environment. The theory posits a model of four nested ecological systems that operate both within and between settings:

- The **Microsystem** is the individual's immediate setting and includes face-to-face interactions
- The **Mesosystem** includes interactions between two or more settings with which the participant is directly engaged
- The **Exosystem** includes settings which influence behavior but are not directly entered into by the participant: the participant is not directly active
- The **Macrosystem** is a generalized pattern of ideology or the organization of social institutions of a particular culture or subculture

Applied to participatory planning, the theory provides a contextualized approach to analyzing the process in order to understand the within- and between-systems workings of participatory structure and space. The study's approach is further informed by Altman and Rogoff's (1987) *transactional world view*, which proposes that hypotheses should be discovered during the

evaluation process, rather than the pre-determined hypothesis testing that is characteristic of the positivist research paradigm. This allows for research that is rooted in study participants' realities rather than "force-fitting" or "clipping" participants' responses into pre-determined categories or themes.

Power is central to the study, and will use Gaventa's (2004) theory of power to examine the occurrence and visibility of power within the neighborhood planning process's participatory space. The study will use a Foucault's (1976) early definition of power as a guide for examining how and where power occurs within the process, which proposes power is a phenomenon that occurs rather than a tool to be wielded. Further, Arnstein's (1969) and Wandersman's (1979b) levels of participation will inform the analysis, which primarily focus on determining "true participation" through analysis of the process' explicit and internal participatory spaces. Communicative action planning theory also informs the study (Forester, 1999; Krumholz & Forester, 1990), as well as the critiques of this approach leveled by Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) and Fainstein (2000) with regards to its lack of attention to external influences of power.

The study is further informed by Chaskin's theoretical work on building community capacity (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). Chaskin and others provide a definitional framework for the concept of community capacity comprised of 6 dimensions: fundamental characteristics, levels of social agency, functions, strategies, conditioning influences, and community-level outcomes. The framework asserts that strategic interventions can be employed to build community capacity "by operating through individuals, organizations, and networks to perform particular functions" (p. 11). The framework also acknowledges the importance of accounting for broader contextual influences in the process of capacity building, as they can

either promote or constrain these efforts. The issues of community power and community capacity are interwoven, as the degree of one influences the degree of the other.

Research Questions

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems theory*, the study employed an ecological approach to examine the specific ways that power is brought to bear on the process at multiple levels to shape its structure and outcomes. To accomplish this, the study addressed five research questions:

R1. Did participation in the Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization process increase participants' access to decision-making power, including the ability to hold public officials and other decision-makers accountable?

R2. What degree of community power was achieved during, or as a result of, the process?

R3. How, and by whom, are decisions made about the process purpose, process structure, and implementation of the final plan?

R4. In what ways was the process influenced by decisions or factors outside of the official planning process and public meetings?

R5. Did the planning process participants include representation of all voices and interests within the community? Were those voices and interests reflected in the final plan?

Chapter III

METHODS

When conducting research at the community level, much of the literature ignores context by employing research methods that are more suited for individual-level analyses (Luke, 2005). This study employed qualitative methods that are suitable for examining neighborhood planning at multiple levels of analysis, including semi-structured interviews and ethnography. Together, these methods allowed for an ecological approach that provided data about the neighborhood planning process *in context*. The study's methodology was informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems theory* and Altman and Rogoff's (1987) *transactional world view*.

Table 1 shows each of the study's five research questions along with their supporting theories or literature, as well as the methods (and, for the semi-structured interviews, the specific questions) that address each.

Setting

This study analyzes a revitalization plan for the Centerville neighborhood (pseudonym) in the city of Springfield (pseudonym). Springfield has a population of 44,593 (2010 U.S. Census) and is located near a major mid-southern U.S. city with over half a million residents. Neighborhood demographics are estimated using two Census block groups that conform approximately to the boundaries of the neighborhood, while economic characteristics are estimated at the Census tract level (economic characteristics were not available at the block group level for the area). It is important to note that the geographic boundaries used for these estimates do not conform exactly to the neighborhood boundaries, and include some surrounding areas that are likely similar in terms of income and age but may include more white residents. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Centerville has approximately 1,784 residents. Of these,

58% are white, 36% are black, 2% are another race, and 4% are multi-racial. The age distribution of residents is as follows: 23% are under 18 years, 27% are between 18 and 39, 32% are between 40 and 59, and 19% are over 60 years. The median household income for the neighborhood is \$25,160, and 28% of residents live below the federal poverty level (2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, U.S. Census).

Like many urban communities, Centerville suffered economic decline following urban renewal during the 1960's. It is approximately one square mile in size and is located adjacent to areas that have seen recent public and private investments in business and infrastructure, including the county hospital and surrounding medical district, a major commercial corridor, and downtown Springfield. Centerville has a mix of land uses, including residential single-family and multi-family, light industrial, commercial, and institutional (government buildings, parks, schools, a community center, churches, and regional hospital). The neighborhood is also home to three subsidized housing developments, two of which are managed by the local housing authority and the third is a site-based Section 8 development. The residents of these three developments represent about 36% of the Centerville population.

Project Background

The planning process was conducted as a partnership between two centers at a nearby university: one a planning group that specializes in community-based planning and design projects, and the other an applied public policy research center with experience in community engagement initiatives. The university-based centers jointly applied for, and were awarded, funding from Springfield's Urban Enterprise Association to conduct a community-based planning process and provide a final report to include a detailed neighborhood revitalization plan and recommendations for the city and community. Per the funding agreement, the university-

based centers also facilitated the process in partnership with the local Economic Development Department and the Planning and Zoning Department.

Table 1: Research matrix

Research Question	Theory/Literature	Research Methods
R1. Did participation in the Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization process increase participants' access to, and influence over, public officials and other decision-makers?	Exercise of power, systemic and structural power: Gaventa (2004), Foucault (1976), Stone (1980) Building community capacity for collective action and neighborhood change: Chaskin et al. (2001)	Semi-Structured Interviews: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
R2. What degree of community power was achieved during, or as a result of, the process?	Levels of participation and evaluating power in participatory processes: Arnstein (1969), Wandersman (1979b) Communicative action theory: Habermas (1984), Forester (1999), Friedmann (1987), Krumholz & Forester (1990), etc.	Semi-Structured Interviews: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
R3. How, and by whom, are decisions made about the process's purpose, structure, and implementation of the final plan?	Levels of participation and evaluating power in participatory processes: Arnstein (1969), Wandersman (1979b)	Semi-Structured Interviews: 4, 5, 7 Ethnography
R4. In what ways was the process influenced by decisions or factors outside of the official planning process and public meetings?	Exercise of power, systemic and structural power: Gaventa (2004), Foucault (1976; 1980), Stone (1980)	Semi-Structured Interviews: 4, 5, 6, 7 Ethnography
R5. Did the planning process participants include representation of all voices and interests within the community? Were those voices and interests reflected in the final plan?	Communicative action theory: Habermas (1984), Forester (1999), Friedmann (1987), Krumholz & Forester (1990), etc. Levels of participation and evaluating power in participatory processes: Arnstein (1969), Wandersman (1979b)	Semi-Structured Interviews: 3 Ethnography

The process was participatory in nature, designed explicitly to include a broad base of participation from all stakeholders within the neighborhood. The process was conducted over a four-month period from September through December, 2011. The process included a series of four meetings: three public community meetings and an initial private stakeholder meeting. A brief description of each meeting is as follows:

Project Introduction Meeting for Major Stakeholders: The initial meeting included major neighborhood stakeholders identified and invited by the city and facilitation team. The meeting involved a discussion between the planning team, neighborhood stakeholders, and city officials to determine the most effective methods and strategies for inviting and including the broadest base, and greatest number, of neighborhood residents, business owners, workers, and other interested parties in the planning process.

Public Workshop 1: The first public workshop was a visioning process designed to collect information from participants about their needs and preferences for the future of the neighborhood.

Public Workshop 2: The second public workshop involved participants refining and further developing neighborhood priorities that emerged from the first workshop. Participants developed strategies and next steps for addressing the priority issues.

Final Public Meeting: An outline for the final revitalization plan was presented to the community participants for feedback and changes. Input from this meeting was used to finalize the plan's content before drafting and releasing the final report.

Each meeting had approximately 30 participants. All meetings were held on weekends at two locations within the neighborhood: a church and a senior community center. In addition to the community meetings, the process facilitation team conducted a land use and building inventory

for the neighborhood, including building conditions and documentation of vacant properties, and developed a list of resources for accomplishing the specific goals outlined by the community. The sole deliverable from the facilitation team to the City of Springfield was a final neighborhood revitalization plan document that synthesized and reflected the information gathered, along with recommendations developed by the facilitation team, throughout the process. The plan was intended to go beyond the typical neighborhood land use and transportation plan to recommend “improvements to its social, environmental, economic and physical infrastructure” (McCoy et al., 2012, p. 3). To achieve this, the facilitators sought to produce a community-based vision that was developed through input from, and discussions between, all participating stakeholders. The stakeholder groups that were recruited and participated in the process included neighborhood residents (current and former), business and non-profit leaders, representatives of local government agencies, and city councilpersons.

Population

The population for the study included those who participated in any part of the planning process, including those who facilitated the process or participated in the process meetings. The list of process participants was constructed using information from the sign-in sheets and meeting contact lists used by the Centerville planning process facilitation team, of which the study Principal Investigator (PI) was a member. The study PI and a dissertation committee member, both of whom were process facilitators, were removed from consideration for participation in the study. The final list included 66 participants who were divided into 5 non-exclusive constituency groups for the study. The constituency groups are defined in the following section.

The term “community” is often used interchangeably with “neighborhood,” which is problematic. Often multiple communities exist within a neighborhood, and sometimes it is assumed that certain groups within a neighborhood constitute a community when in fact they do not function as one. The Centerville planning process identified community members as those who lived, worked, and worshiped in the neighborhood, while also inviting those who provided services to the neighborhood (such as public officials) to participate in the process. This study recognizes that the process facilitators defined *community* as place-based and equated with *neighborhood*, but allows for participants’ multiple interpretations and explanations of what constitutes community during the interview process.

Procedure

The study employed two research methods for data collection addressing Bronfenbrenner’s four ecological levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Semi-structured interviews provided detailed information about interactions between process participants (microsystem), as well as the organizations or interests they represent (mesosystem). Both the interviews and ethnography were used to examine the broader cultural, social, and political influences on the process (exosystem and macrosystem). Some research questions were addressed by multiple research methods for the dual purposes of triangulation and providing a more in-depth understanding of the measured phenomena.

Semi-Structured Interviews

For the purpose of interview sampling, the study population (n=66) was divided into five non-exclusive constituency groups (i.e. individuals may represent more than one group):

1. *Process Facilitators (n=11)*: anyone involved in the facilitation of meetings, process design, or production of the final report/plan.

2. *City Officials (n=9)*: any public official involved with the process or process participants for the purpose of influencing the process.
3. *Neighborhood Residents (n=29)*: anyone who resided within the neighborhood boundaries at the time of the process.
4. *Business Owners and Non-profit Managers (n=9)*: anyone who owns a business, land, or is employed in the neighborhood, including service providers to the homeless.
5. *Other Neighborhood Stakeholders (n=9)*: any neighborhood stakeholder who was a process participant and does not fit into the previous categories; this category includes neighborhood volunteers, former residents, and members of neighborhood church congregations.

Sampling procedure

The study used a stratified purposive sampling procedure to select six individuals from each of the 5 constituency groups described above for a maximum of 30 potential interviewees. Although the categories are non-exclusive, no interview with an individual was counted more than once toward the total of six for each constituency group. The purposive sampling procedure allowed for the interviewees to be selected based on the researcher's judgment about which ones would be the most useful or representative given the purpose of the research (Babbie, 2005). Based on the PI's knowledge of the planning process as a facilitator, as well as previous experience working in Centerville and Springfield, individuals in each constituency group were selected to provide a range of perceived influence in the process and the community. For example, from the *residents* constituency group, key informants who participated in the process and held positions of power and influence within the community were selected, including the neighborhood association leader and the president of the local NAACP chapter. Once key

informants were identified in each constituency group, additional participants from each group were selected to represent the perspectives and experiences of those with average or little perceived power and influence.

A total of 30 process participants and facilitators were selected for inclusion in the sample with the goal of completing between 20 and 30 interviews. These 30 individuals were initially contacted by email or phone (if email was not available). Of these, 20 individuals responded and then agreed to participate in the study; only one individual declined (a councilperson). After the first 5 interviews were completed a thematic analysis of the data was conducted and a working codebook was developed. An additional 15 interviews were conducted for a total of 20, which were coded using the working codebook, and the coding themes were further developed and refined using the remaining interview data. After these 20 interviews were coded, the decision was made to end the interview data collection due to saturation. Saturation occurs when all relevant data is believed to be gathered and no new information is being reported during the interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data collection instruments

The semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix A) were developed specifically for this study. Two versions of the interview protocol were created: one for process participants and the other for facilitators or city officials who attended process meetings. The purpose and structure of each interview protocol were identical, but each had slightly modified wording to reflect participants' different roles in the process. The interview questions were designed to uncover the participants' views and experiences related to the process regarding power and influence, community development and capacity-building, and socio-spatial and socio-political influences on the process and its outcomes. The semi-structured nature of the protocol allowed

for additional follow up questions when an interviewee brought up a point that required further clarification, was surprising, or was particularly relevant to the research questions.

Although a signed informed consent was not required for this study by the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, verbal consent was received from all study participants prior to each interview. Participants were informed by the study PI that their participation in the study was voluntary, they could decline to answer any question for any reason, they could withdraw from the study at any time, and their names would not be used in the study. The interviews were conducted from September to November of 2013, two years after the planning process occurred (from September through December of 2011). Given the purpose of the study and the research questions, the two-year time span was beneficial in allowing for projects described in the plan to potentially develop, and possibly be implemented, as well as providing an opportunity for relationships and initiatives developed during the process to mature or dissolve. All interviews were conducted either in-person or over the phone by the study PI, were recorded on a digital voice recorder, and transcribed for analysis. No translation or language barriers were encountered during the interviews. Interviews ranged from seven to 73 minutes in length, with a mean length of 22 minutes. The seven-minute interview was an outlier and was very brief due to the interviewee's limited involvement in, and recollection of, the process. Interview length was consistent across constituency groups, and did not differ between those who were interviewed in-person versus those interviewed over the phone. Immediately following each interview, 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.

Sample characteristics

The resulting sample (n=20) included multiple representatives of each constituency group, including five current neighborhood residents, six city officials, three business owners and non-profit managers, three process facilitators, and three other stakeholders (see Table 2). Study participants were 55% (11) black, 45% (9) white, 55% (11) male, and 45% (9) female. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 80 with a mean age of 58 (Table 3). With regards to race within constituency groups, all neighborhood residents and business owners were black, while all process facilitators were white. Of the city officials, two were black and four were white. The other stakeholder group included one white participant and two black participants.

Table 2: Constituency group representation in the sample

Constituency Group	Sample Representatives
Process Facilitators (n=3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead process facilitator 2. Experienced process facilitator 3. Inexperienced process facilitator
City Officials (n=6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current Director of Planning and Zoning Department 2. Former Director of Economic Development 3. Housing Authority board member 4. Former school system administrator 5. Councilperson for neighborhood district 6. Councilperson at-large
Neighborhood Residents (n=5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Authority Resident Council member 2. Centerville Neighborhood Association president 3. Neighborhood resident 4. Neighborhood resident 5. Public housing resident
Business Owners and Non-Profit Managers (n=3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Owner of neighborhood business 2. Owner of neighborhood business 3. Director of non-profit homeless shelter in the neighborhood
Other Stakeholders (n=3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local media: monthly magazine publisher 2. NAACP local chapter president 3. Neighborhood church member/non-resident

Table 3: Sample demographic characteristics

Demographic Characteristics (n=20)	Type	Percentage (Frequency)
Sex	Male	45% (9)
	Female	55% (11)
Race	Black	55% (11)
	White	45% (9)
Age	26-39	10% (2)
	40-49	15% (3)
	50-59	20% (4)
	60-69	35% (7)
	70+	20% (4)
	<i>Mean Age</i>	58

Validity and reliability

The study design included measures to reduce bias in the research process. Validity (or accuracy) was addressed through member checking. The PI randomly selected four interviews (20% of the sample) for member checking after the interviews were coded; these four interviews were also used for the reliability coding (described in the following paragraph). Each of the four interviewees was contacted by the PI and asked if the themes identified in the coding of their respective interviews accurately represented their perspectives. All interviewees confirmed the accuracy of the coding for their respective interviews and no changes were made to the interview results or coding scheme. Member checking was also integrated into the interview process, where the PI would repeat back statements made by interviewees regarding points that were particularly surprising, were relevant, were somewhat unclear, or may have multiple interpretations to ensure the interpretation during analysis was accurate. Validity was further addressed through the triangulation of the interview data and ethnographic data. One purpose of the ethnography was to examine other accounts of, and perspectives on, the process and plan from media or other relevant documents. Congruence between the interview data and

ethnographic data would reinforce the validity of the study's findings. This is of particular importance since the PI/interviewer was a member of the process facilitation team, which could potentially cause interviewees to be uncomfortable critiquing the process, plan, or facilitation approach during the interviews.

Reliability coding was conducted to ensure the study's coding scheme would consistently produce the same results when applied by another researcher (reproducibility). Four interviews (20% of the sample) were randomly selected by the PI for reliability coding. The reliability coder has a Ph.D. in community research and prior experience coding interview data and conducting qualitative research. The reliability coder assigned study themes to interview data using the coding scheme developed by the primary investigator. Excerpts selected from the interviews could be coded for multiple themes. This yielded an interrater agreement of 84%, with 199 agreements and 28 disagreements between coders, exceeding the generally-accepted percent agreement threshold of 70% (Bordens & Abbott, 1999). While Cohen's Kappa is useful for taking chance agreement into account, it requires that coding categories are mutually-exclusive and thus was not calculated, as the interview excerpts could be coded for multiple themes. The disagreements were discussed and resolved between the coders, but were minor and resulted in only minimal changes to the scope of two themes. The discussion did not result in any substantial changes to the study themes or coding scheme.

Ethnography

The study's ethnographic component was designed to provide a richer understanding of the interview data and allow it to be situated within its socio-spatial, socio-political, and historical contexts. Ethnographic data were analyzed after the interview data analysis was completed to allow interview themes to inform the ethnographic data analysis. The ethnographic

component of the study involved the collection of *texts* and *artifacts* related to the planning process, the history and characteristics of the Centerville neighborhood, and any information that appeared to be relevant to urban planning and neighborhood revitalization in Springfield. The targeted sources of data included the Centerville Revitalization Plan, planning process records from the facilitation team, local media (including print and electronic media), public records or documents related to planning in the Centerville neighborhood, and the personal experiences of the study PI while working on this and other studies in Springfield.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The study employed two qualitative methods of data collection to inform the analysis: 1) semi-structured interviews and 2) ethnography. The interviews were the primary source of data for the study, with the ethnographic data intended to triangulate findings from the interviews, provide additional supplemental data related to interview themes, and provide local political and social historical context in which to situate the interview data.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data revealed 9 themes and 38 subcategories (see Table 4). The results for each theme and its corresponding subcategories are described in detail in the following sections.

Neighborhood identity

Subcategories: Sense of community, neighborhood churches, neighborhood history, active and motivated community

Respondents emphasized the importance of neighborhood identity, describing a strong sense of pride, a sense of community, active participation in community life and the neighborhood association, and a connection to the history of the neighborhood. Several residents noted their multi-generational history in the neighborhood and the importance of any future neighborhood revitalization respecting that history. Descriptions of the sense of connection to the neighborhood's history were particularly detailed and emotional. One long-term resident described her decades-long project of writing a book about the history of Centerville, which she hopes to publish. She noted that many people in the city knew little about the neighborhoods

history, further noting that most people assumed it had always been a predominantly black neighborhood, but in fact has a long history of being racially diverse.

Table 4: Semi-structured interview data themes and corresponding subcategories

Theme	Subcategories
1. Neighborhood Identity	Sense of community Neighborhood churches Neighborhood history Active and motivated community
2. Divisions within the Community	Competing factions within the community Housing authority residents as separate community
3. Building Community Capacity	Developed social networks Organized community Built consensus Organization and structure of community ideas Neighborhood leadership development Inclusion of community in decision making
4. Neighborhood Disenfranchised	Race Negative perceptions of neighborhood Neighborhood neglected by city Concentration of undesirable uses Negative impacts of urban renewal
5. Contrast between the Process and Implementation	Positive view of plan, process, and facilitation Limitations of plan and process Began the discussion Plan as tool Process educational and informative Progress on neighborhood improvements
6. Loss of Momentum	Loss of momentum Lack of followup Lack of knowledge about plan Long term commitment Lack of organization within community
7. Responsibility for Implementation	Community power Responsibility for implementation Putting pressure on local government Limitations of local government and planning department
8. Importance of Local Government Support	Need for local government support Administration change Supportive administration and officials
9. Competition for Resources	Downtown redevelopment Business growth Funding and cost

Residents' connection to the neighborhood was often linked to race and Centerville being "Springfield's black neighborhood." A number of respondents described how black residents who moved out of the neighborhood maintained their connection by continuing to attend church in the neighborhood and in some cases becoming "associate" members of the neighborhood association, participating fully in neighborhood affairs and providing financial support despite living elsewhere in the city. One respondent noted how the history had been kept alive despite the devastating effects of urban renewal in the neighborhood, suggesting residents were able to maintain a sense of history and respect through resilience in previous iterations of city-led revitalization.

The idea of Centerville being an active and motivated community was described by numerous respondents, who further suggested that the neighborhood's future and revitalization was "in the community's hands" and it was up to them to "advocate for themselves." The community was described as having a strong identity and strong opinions with residents who were "passionate" and "motivated" in both preserving the neighborhood's history and improving it for future generations, which was seen as an important goal of any revitalization process. This connection to the neighborhood's history and identity was viewed by respondents as having both positive and negative consequences for the neighborhood's future: positive in that it provided a source of neighborhood pride that strengthened its sense of community and civic engagement, but negative in that it resulted in residents focusing on preserving a vision of the past rather than looking forward toward positive change. The large number and strong presence of neighborhood churches was mentioned by two neighborhood residents as a positive aspect of the neighborhood's identity. Conversely, some non-resident respondents noted infighting between

the churches and their inability to work together for the benefit of the neighborhood. Further, one respondent noted the ability of former residents to be “associate” members of the neighborhood association gave non-residents control over neighborhood affairs that ultimately led to the current residents’ priorities and needs being trumped by, or competing with, those of former residents.

Divisions within the community

Subcategories: competing factions within the community, housing authority residents as separate community

Multiple divisions within the community were noted frequently by respondents. Several noted that the idea of a unified “Centerville community” is “more conceptual than reality” and a single community does not exist. The various factions within the neighborhood mentioned by respondents included the local chapter of the NAACP, the churches, the neighborhood association, a neighborhood action group, the housing authority residents, and former residents who maintained some level of involvement in neighborhood decision-making. Respondents across constituency groups described the difficulty of aligning the priorities and interests of these groups, noting that they often worked independently of one another toward neighborhood issues rather than as a unified force.

The strongest and most-discussed division was between the residents of the public housing projects and the other neighborhood residents. The public housing residents were described by some as “a community within a community,” although respondents differed in their opinion of whether this was due to rejection by the other neighborhood residents or self-segregation (or both, as self-segregation may occur when rejected by other residents). Public housing residents described themselves, and were described by others, as having different

interests and concerns than the rest of the community, and saw their neighborhood as “the projects” instead of Centerville. The public housing residents were described as having either no voice or less of a voice than other neighborhood residents in decision-making within the community. Numerous respondents noted that the planning process “gave the housing authority residents a voice” but respondents were divided on whether this influence continued beyond the process. Attempts made during the process to facilitate more collaboration on neighborhood initiatives between housing authority residents and other residents were described by respondents across constituency groups as “getting better” and “moving forward,” but generally seemed more hopeful and did not provide concrete examples of this happening since the planning process ended.

Another division was described between the current residents and the former residents of the neighborhood. One respondent noted how the community’s “internal problems” are negatively impacting the community’s ability to move forward:

“And a lot of people, they were born and raised in Centerville, but then they left and maybe they live in other parts of the city. Well, they want to have an input, a direct input, a direct vote in the Centerville area and the people who live in Centerville don’t appreciate that. So there is a faction of the people that were born and raised, that live there today and there’s a faction of the people who were born and raised and don’t live there today, but they want as much input as the people who live there today and at some point that’s not a city issue, but at some point hopefully they can get that resolved to make one stronger voice instead two or three smaller voices.”

Respondents also described how former residents want to preserve the history of the neighborhood and want to keep it from changing because they are detached from the difficult realities of life in the neighborhood, have different interests, and “they don’t know the pain of living here” like the current residents, as one resident stated. The competing interests of current and former residents were described as a barrier to positive change in the neighborhood and specifically to implementing the neighborhood revitalization plan.

Several respondents acknowledged that the planning process successfully brought together the various factions within the community during the process meetings, noting the particular success of the plan in giving a voice to the public housing residents and allowing them to be heard both by the city officials and the other neighborhood residents. However, this did not appear to unite the voices of the various community factions beyond the planning process, with respondents noting that the community still “doesn’t know how to come together” and different groups “all have their own agendas and don’t work together.” Multiple respondents acknowledged that bringing the community together with a unified voice would give it more power and influence with the city and in local politics. Another respondent noted that the divisions were a barrier for the implementation of the revitalization plan and that without a unified effort by the community the plan’s goals would not likely be realized.

Building community capacity

Subcategories: Developed social networks, organized community, built consensus, organization and structure of community ideas, neighborhood leadership development, inclusion of community in decision making

Interview responses described numerous examples of how the process increased the community’s capacity to create change in the neighborhood. One process facilitator explained:

“It's, I think it, just opening those doors and having the community process even in that one parcel gave it, gave that community a voice perhaps that they may not have had before. It also gave them an opportunity or maybe a catalyst for themselves to group together and to pull all the different elements of their own community together to come up with one voice. And so, it, there was sort of a relationship that was built between them and the city. And it became more than just this one little parcel of land to start looking at this neighborhood as a whole. And so, it kind of, it was a good growth process.”

Respondents stated that the process was successful at developing social connections both within the neighborhood and between the community and city officials. A common response was that the plan introduced people who would otherwise not have met. Within the community, respondents noted connections were created between newer neighborhood residents and the established neighborhood leadership, and existing social networks were strengthened. The connections formed during the process most frequently noted, however, were those between neighborhood residents and city officials, including the mayor, department heads, and councilpersons who attended the process meetings. Respondents described the process as an opportunity to voice their concerns fact-to-face with local government representatives and opening a regular dialogue with the mayor and his administration. Some respondents noted the importance of learning “who to go to” when they needed things done and how to “cut through red tape.” Numerous respondents described city officials as “people who can get things done,” saw these connections “providing access” to the city’s decision-makers, and stated the importance of having these networks and lines of communication in place in order to facilitate change in the neighborhood. Comments were also made about the mayor and city officials

attending Centerville neighborhood events following the process when they had not done so before. Responses differed on the longevity of the connections developed during the process. Some respondents described the connections as continuing beyond the process, while others described the connections as waning or dissolving altogether once the process concluded. Additionally, some respondents described instances where connections created during the process led to a specific outcome (i.e. infrastructure improvements), while others spoke of the connections as being potentially beneficial but did not provide specific examples of how the connections had thus far benefitted the neighborhood.

The interview data also revealed a process of consensus building, where participants “brought forth their own ideas,” engaged in discussions and “got approval from other residents,” learned from each other, and found common ground on neighborhood issues. Respondents stated that participants felt empowered, included, and “like what they said made a difference.” One respondent noted, however, that while participants felt empowered they ultimately had no decision-making power beyond the process meetings. The interview responses also described how the process helped the community to organize its concerns and ideas by providing a framework for change (the revitalization plan). Further, several respondents also mentioned the planning process motivated them to enroll in a local neighborhood leadership training course to further develop their roles in neighborhood initiatives.

Neighborhood disenfranchised

Subcategories: Race, negative perceptions of neighborhood, neighborhood neglected by city, concentration of undesirable uses, negative impacts of urban renewal

The Centerville neighborhood was described by respondents as a disenfranchised neighborhood. Interview data revealed a neighborhood systematically neglected by the city that

needed attention and recognition as a part of the city. Respondents used the terms “forgotten,” “overlooked,” “neglected,” “written-off,” “left-out,” “short-changed,” and “disempowered” to describe the city’s neglect of the neighborhood. Some respondents noted a history of the city being dishonest and not following through with promises made to the neighborhood, with one resident suggesting that this also may be the perception with regards to the current revitalization plan, noting that some community members “thought the city was going to do more than the city was planning to do.” Two respondents specifically mentioned the legacy of urban renewal in the 1960s, with one resident noting that while most of the neighborhood’s housing was destroyed during that period, the community is keeping its history alive. One respondent noted that the city had “destroyed so much” of the neighborhood during urban renewal that it “couldn’t help themselves but to do some type of revitalization,” then noting further that “Centerville is always last” when it comes to public investment and redevelopment. Not all comments about the city’s relationship with the neighborhood were negative, as positive remarks were made regarding the city’s involvement in the current revitalization plan with regards to the former economic development director who initiated the idea for the revitalization planning process during his tenure. His efforts to initiate the planning process were universally praised by respondents, who noted his concern that the neighborhood had been “left out” of city investment plans in the past and his strong commitment to improving the neighborhood. Although the former economic development director is black, his race was interestingly not mentioned by respondents.

Numerous respondents noted the disproportionate concentration of undesirable uses (negatively perceived uses such as homeless shelters, soup kitchens, a sewage treatment plant, and public housing) in the neighborhood. One resident described the neighborhood as a “dumping ground” for these facilities so the city could revitalize the downtown, while another

suggested the city concentrated these facilities “in one place intentionally so they could control them.” Some respondents noted the importance of services for the poor and homeless but felt their high and disproportionate concentration within the neighborhood led to a negative perception among others because of the homeless individuals loitering and sleeping in the area. One resident felt that the negative perception of the neighborhood residents as “low-lives” did not match her experience of living there, a place she saw “nothing wrong with” and where she felt proud to live. Several respondents noted a difference between negative perceptions and the reality of the neighborhood in terms of crime, saying the neighborhood was perceived to be a high-crime area but this was in fact not the case.

Race was frequently mentioned as a factor in how the neighborhood was perceived and treated both by city government and residents in other parts of the city. Multiple respondents noted that the neighborhood’s black leadership had to be “on board” with the process and the plan in order for it to be successful. Interestingly, while a number of interviews revealed the Centerville is perceived as the city’s “black neighborhood,” one respondent who sits on the housing authority board noted that the neighborhood has always been racially-mixed and the current makeup of the neighborhood’s housing authority residents is only about half minority. A long-term resident described the perception of Centerville as a black neighborhood and its negative impacts on development:

“When people say Centerville, they think of a color and they think colored people. And it's not. Centerville has never been all black and it's never been all white. It's always been what it is this day, a mixture of people. The name, it comes from [namesake]. You're absolutely right, but people don't know that when they first come here. They don't know nothing about that. I have put a book

together about Centerville, but I haven't got the money to get it published the way I want to. And the city officials know I've done it, but they won't even offer any help to get it published. Yeah, that's what I'm talking, that's the reason why I believe it's always last because they have a color barrier there. Down the street. Because right down here to [major street], [major intersection], that stop with the light, why didn't they come all the way out [with the public infrastructure improvements]? That's what they're supposed to have done. That's what they said they were gonna do. They didn't come past the hospital. They came right there to end of [major street] and stopped with those lights. And we need 'em out here. They could've went all the way out to the graveyard with those lights, but they didn't. They could've went all the way down [major street], at least one side of the street with those lights, but they didn't. That's the reason why I say it's last. They started way out there on [major street] coming this way. Who lives out there? Nobody walking lives out there. Everybody lives out that way has a car. So, why the sidewalks? That's the reason why I say Centerville is last.”

Another resident recalled a meeting with the city’s current mayor in which the resident requested financial support to develop an African American history museum in the neighborhood, to which the mayor responded “as long as he’s mayor there won’t be an African American museum in the city.”

Contrast between the process and implementation

Subcategories: Positive view of plan, process, and facilitation, limitations of plan and process, began the discussion, plan as tool, process educational and informative, progress on neighborhood improvements

Respondents described a contrast between their views of the process and the implementation of the resulting plan. Respondents generally viewed the planning process and the resulting revitalization plan positively while noting limitations in its implementation. When asked about whether the process listened to the community's voice and developed a plan that reflected that voice, respondents overwhelmingly felt the plan was successful in this regard, suggesting that the process helped residents feel included, gave them a voice and made them "feel that someone was listening" to them. Respondents also felt the process was enjoyable, with participants being open and wanting to contribute to the discussion, and resulted in good ideas for improving the neighborhood. One respondent mentioned the positive energy created during the process has continued, but others did not mention this.

Numerous respondents described the process as both educational and informative for all stakeholders involved, including community members, city officials, and facilitators. Residents noted that the process educated them about the benefits available to them living in an Urban Enterprise Zone (economic and redevelopment incentives for local residents and businesses), as well as noting that city officials provided useful advice on what types of projects were "doable" and how they could be accomplished. Both city officials and process facilitators stated that the process helped them become better informed of neighborhood concerns and issues, and that the process allowed city officials to meet residents whom they otherwise would probably not have met. A councilperson described his experience learning about neighborhood issues during a process meeting:

"You know, if you live somewhere, there are things that bother you and there are things that you accept because you go by day to day and you, I guess you just don't see it. If you, if you're, which a lot of us do. So a lot of things that I would

look at as being an issue, to them was not an issue. Some of the issues they had, I would have never seen it or ever thought about it, so yeah, I think it, I think it really did very good.”

One facilitator noted that the process of education and information sharing was an explicit goal for the facilitation team, stating that “Our role was to provide information, and knowledge, and know-how in terms of contacts, resources, and how these things can happen.”

Respondents across constituency groups expressed positive views of the process facilitators, stating they did an “excellent job of listening” to the community’s ideas and concerns, that the residents appreciated the facilitators’ willingness to listen, and allowed the participants “the freedom to explore and think without telling them what to do.” One respondent felt that the community “trusted the facilitators right away” because they “came on neutral ground from [nearby major city], not Springfield” and because some of the facilitators had prior experience working in Springfield which brought “knowledge, comfort, and familiarity” to the process. Two respondents specifically mentioned the former economic development director, the city official who initiated the idea for the planning process and attended the meetings, as someone who had a “good rapport with the group,” “really worked to enhance it [the process],” and “wanted to see good things happen for the neighborhood” despite being a city official. One respondent noted that his role in the process “helped people see government positively,” suggesting that the neighborhood residents generally did not view city officials or government in this way.

With regards to the revitalization plan itself, respondents stated they were glad to have a plan and felt that it captured the voice of the community and included a broad range of

recommendations, some stating the plan was “outstanding” or “well done.” A city official stated:

“I think the plan did what the plan was supposed to. They really wanted to come in and see what the residents wanted. I think this really was a plan geared for the residents.”

When discussing the plan, several respondents recognized the plan as the beginning of the discussion or the beginning of a longer process. One respondent went further to say she felt that the process did not give the community the power to make decisions about the future of the neighborhood but “began a needed discussion.” Another resident felt that the plan was an important beginning to creating change in the neighborhood, even if not everything in the plan happens. Similarly, several respondents noted that the plan was a “tool” that is now in the hands of the community and that the responsibility for carrying it forward lay with the residents. Several respondents expressed uncertainty about the community’s ability to carry the plan forward and use it to leverage resources for the neighborhood, with one respondent noting that “if you don’t stay on top of things they get buried.” A process facilitator summed up the distinction between the development of the plan as a useful tool for the community and the community’s ability to utilize the plan to create change:

“I do think it gave them the tools and the power to be able to, certainly the tools to be able to make decisions or help work with others to make more decisions or refine decisions that were made during the process, if that makes sense. You know, the other question obviously is did, will there be, will it be easy for them, given this particular population and context, to follow up on that and push those issues forward I guess is probably the only reservation about it. That’s probably

more population and context specific than it is process specific. So, if the question is simply did the process give them that, then it would be, pretty much unequivocal, yes, it did.”

The facilitator draws a clear distinction between process challenges and contextual challenges, noting “this particular population and context” being a barrier rather than the structure of the process or the content of the plan.

For many respondents, these generally positive views of the planning process, facilitators, and the final plan did not translate into positive views of the plan’s implementation. Across constituency groups the resounding sentiment was that the process allowed people to voice their concerns and that these concerns were heard by the facilitators, but the residents didn’t necessarily have the power to implement the plan’s recommendations. Two respondents attributed this issue to the plan itself, suggesting it wasn’t “loud enough” or “grandiose enough” (the latter specifically referencing the lack of public housing removal as a recommendation in the plan). Others respondents attributed the lack of implementation to a need for more local government support, with one respondent suggesting there was only an “appearance of collaboration on the part of the city” and another that the change in mayoral administration was unanticipated and residents were not prepared by the process for implementation following such a sweeping political change. One respondent stated that “it would probably end up on a shelf somewhere.”

When discussing progress on implementation of the plan, and neighborhood improvements in general, respondents were divided on whether progress was being made (the perspectives did not differ by constituency group, as might be expected). About half of respondents felt that progress was being made, and cited examples such as new sidewalks,

lighting, beautification, greenspace, public art, and the renaming of streets after neighborhood leaders. Other respondents felt that little had been accomplished so far as a result of the plan and that things were “business as usual” since the process ended. A neighborhood business owner described his frustration with minor improvements that will not do enough to create neighborhood change:

“For a business, I’m in a beautification zone. If you bring me flowers, that won’t help me much. I provide a service, I have room to grow. They should be concentrating on our little business zone here, it’s going to be a major part of the revitalization. As a businessman nothing really has been accomplished. Spending a lot of money on [major commercial street], wouldn’t take half the money to come this way. If you do nothing, nothing’s going to be done.”

A few respondents noted that the changes that have occurred so far are minor, but they are a start and can be built on, also acknowledging that even these minor changes would likely not have happened without the plan.

Loss of momentum

Subcategories: Loss of momentum, lack of followup, lack of knowledge about plan, lack of organization within community, long term commitment

Several respondents noted a loss of momentum following the conclusion of the process meetings. Specific reasons for why this may have occurred were described in detail and included a lack of followup by the city or facilitation team, a lack of knowledge among stakeholders about the plan and its contents, lack of organization within the community to move forward with goals stated in the plan, and the recognition that the plan is a long term commitment and accomplishments may be spread out over time. One of the most consistently-mentioned issues

that emerged from the interviews was a concern about the lack of followup on the part of the city or facilitation team. This was noted as a concern by members of all constituency groups and in nearly every interview. Some respondents simply noted that followup is important, with others stating the importance of tracking what's been done. Several residents stated that the community has good information and the facilitators listened but no one is doing anything with the plan. Some residents described being surprised and confused the planning group had not followed up with the community, while a process facilitator noted that followup was not included or funded as part of the contract but the team would likely have followed up if the mayoral administration had not changed and replaced most city officials near the conclusion of the planning process. Three respondents noted that a lack of followup is typical for these types of neighborhood-specific plans, where people come together but funding or leadership does not persist beyond the process. Four respondents used an often-cited phrase for this neighborhood-planning problem: "the plan will remain on a shelf."

Some respondents proposed solutions to the problem, suggesting a "targeted neighborhood leadership course" or clear instructions for execution, leadership, and responsibility for specific tasks. While the plan did attempt to address this issue by assigning community members as "coordinators" for goals and strategies included in the plan, one resident described a specific example of how the process was not successful in this regard:

"Someone put my name down for the community coordinator for the solution to the food security problem. I wasn't even at that meeting, they put my name down and my contact information, my email, and it looks lovely in the book. Oh, the book looks great. I mean, what are we going to do with, it's all of them and some on the bookshelf, and that's where it stays."

She further stated that no one had yet contacted her about working toward food security in the neighborhood and she doesn't know what is currently being done to address the issue, if anything. Other respondents noted a general lack of knowledge within local government about the plan, with city officials stating they had either not seen the final plan, were unfamiliar with its content, or had not heard anyone discussing it.

A general lack of organization on the part of the community was described by numerous respondents. Some suggested that the community doesn't know what to do next and needs to unify itself, develop strategies, and come up with a plan of action. Further, others noted that a lack of leadership within the community was holding it back. Two respondents noted that minority and disenfranchised neighborhoods such as Centerville have a particularly difficult task trying to work with the city toward revitalization goals, with one respondent stating:

“Probably not enough interest or leadership in the neighborhood to get things done on their own; hard enough for affluent neighborhoods to make change happen alone; how can a disenfranchised minority neighborhood begin to tackle it?”

Another respondent noted that the city, specifically the former economic development director, and facilitation team initially took a leadership role during the process but no one in the community or city has taken up that role since the process ended. Regarding the lack of leadership and organization in the community, one process facilitator stated:

“I also think that while there are residents in this neighborhood that certainly have the skill set and the ability to organize, lead, organize and/or lead the residents within the confines of the neighborhood, I'm not sure there's a strong skill set at figuring out how to partner with, or ask for, or demand changes, or more

attention, or more assertive policies toward upgrading their, the quality of life on the part of the city administration and their councilperson, and the person that has both the authority and the budget to make some of those things happen. That's where I see the, a slight, a disadvantage and a huge handicap toward implementing some of the initiatives that were identified and outlined in the final report.”

Additionally, a city official blamed the lack of an effective city-community partnership committee to develop a strategy for moving the plan forward:

“Here's what I think needs to be done with any plan, anything, you start with a hold option, and it needs a committee, not just, you know, ‘Let's grab whoever we can put together on this committee to say we have a committee put together.’ You need someone in the city, whether it be the City Planner, or the City Engineer, or the Economic Developer, whoever it is, you need at least one point person that's connected to the higher ups to be on that committee. And you need to actually have tasks, meaningful tasks, in the plan that are doable. You need low-hanging fruit that can be done in the short term to get some wins and get everybody on the same page and feel like you're doing meaningful work as well as long-range goals that people can work on, you know, simultaneously. If you don't have any short-term wins, then you lose people. At any rate, to the best of my knowledge, the committee, there has never been a committee put together to implement this plan.”

Another city official described a recent situation where he was invited to a meeting in the neighborhood and found the residents to be disorganized and not targeting the appropriate

government agencies to address their concerns. He noted that while neighborhood leadership was present, “they did not know how to effectively interact with the city in order to get things done.”

While most respondents suggested that a loss of momentum may have resulted from a lack of followup, knowledge of the plan, or community leadership and organization, others acknowledged that neighborhood plans require long term commitment and do not happen overnight. Many respondents, including residents, said the plan would “take time” and the residents need to “be patient.” Respondents suggested that the community needs to take ownership and keep the city focused and continue to meet about the plan as a neighborhood, with one respondent suggesting the creation of a board or committee that would outlast mayoral administrations to maintain the momentum to protect against a potential shift in the city’s priorities. Several other respondents noted the importance of being realistic in what can be accomplished in the short-term due to time and funding constraints.

Responsibility for implementation

Subcategories: Community power, responsibility for implementation, putting pressure on local government, limitations of local government and planning department

Respondents discussed who was ultimately responsible for implementing the plan, with many stating that a long-term partnership was needed between the community and the city. Interview data indicated that the community was largely responsible for ensuring the plan’s implementation and success by putting pressure on the city, and that support and resources from the city were essential to the plan’s success. Nearly all respondents felt that the community had to play an important role in implementing the plan, with many saying it would not happen otherwise. A process facilitator discussed the community’s responsibilities:

Interviewer: “Do you feel, you said you think a lot of it will rest on their shoulders. Do you feel like that's a good thing or a bad thing?”

Respondent: “I think in a sense it's good. I think it's part of what makes every community strong that the community members themselves speak up and are very vocal and work with their city officials or city, county, whatever municipal officials. And I think that to adopt, to go through the exercise, if you're going to have a plan, and if you think that just because something is there in a plan. And it's gonna automatically come together. I think that's very naïve. And if this is a neighborhood plan, then I think it would be the neighborhood that would be pushing for the plan. And without them then it will not happen.”

While respondents generally agreed that the responsibility for moving the plan forward toward implementation rests with the community, many (primarily non-residents) remarked that the community would have more power were it not divided in its interests, and these divisions (discussed in more detail in the *Divisions Within the Community* section) reduced the community's cohesion and thus its power and influence in local governance. While participants overwhelmingly felt they had decision-making power within the planning process, they felt equally strong about the lack of decision-making power beyond the process. Several residents suggested Centerville was a “strong” community, but this was typically mentioned in the abstract and not in relation to specific accomplishments. While seemingly a contradiction, community residents felt that they had a strong desire for change but lacked the power and influence to enact it given contextual factors such as a lack of government support for the plan and the neighborhood, in general.

Respondents described the city's role as one where the mayor must be supportive and provide a directive to the appropriate department(s) to make the plan a priority (Planning and Zoning and the Housing Authority were mentioned by name), while noting that the neighborhood and its revitalization plan were not a priority for the current mayor. Some respondents felt the community ultimately had the power to move elements of the plan forward even if it was not a priority for the city, with a few suggesting the planning process was empowering in that it helped the residents feel they could lead the implementation efforts. A number of respondents stated that the community needs to put pressure on local government to make things happen. A councilperson noted that "If you are quiet and complacent the city will come in and cut things out [of the plan]. When city officials see you want change they'll get behind you." Several respondents noted that the community put pressure on the previous mayor, which helped bring attention to the neighborhood and helped spark the idea of the revitalization plan. However, numerous respondents expressed some hopelessness stemming from the continued lack of interest and commitment from the current mayor to improve the neighborhood, with one resident suggesting that the community needs to focus on the next mayoral election and get candidates to commit to improving the neighborhood. Another respondent suggested working with the city council rather than the mayor to work toward funding of neighborhood improvement, which was generally described as more stable and receptive to community concerns.

Despite the stated importance of the city's role in implementation, respondents also noted the limitations of what resources can be provided by local government in neighborhood improvement efforts. The director of the planning department noted that the lack of a directive from the current mayor was inhibiting the department's ability to direct resources toward the

plan's implementation. Additionally, the planning department lacks the capacity to initiate and manage all of the projects outlined in the revitalization plan even if funding were available.

Multiple city officials noted the importance, and current lack, of neighborhood plans for each neighborhood in Springfield in order to effectively prioritize resources. Multiple city officials also felt that the city was well-intentioned but departments were preoccupied with day-to-day operations and resources are always stretched in time and funding, with a councilperson noting that three-quarters of the city's budget is dedicated to basic services and there is little left that can be allocated to special projects. Another city official acknowledged the same issue but suggested that Centerville deserved "special attention."

Importance of local government support

Subcategories: Need for local government support, administration change, supportive administration and officials

Respondents repeatedly discussed the importance of support from local government, stating that it was both instrumental in the creation of the revitalization plan for the neighborhood, as well as a potential barrier to future neighborhood improvement projects. This seeming contradiction stems from the planning process being initiated under one mayoral administration but concluding immediately following the election of a new mayor. The support of the mayor was viewed as pivotal in whether or not the plan's recommendations would be implemented. The importance of this administration change was mentioned by every respondent and was one of the most discussed topics during the interviews, with nearly all respondents across constituency groups describing the change as a significant barrier to the plan. Some felt that few if any of the ideas in the Centerville plan would move forward before the next election.

Respondents generally had positive, though somewhat mixed, views of the previous mayor with regard to his commitment to improving Centerville. Members of all constituency groups expressed appreciation for his initiation of, and involvement in, the planning process and felt he genuinely wanted to see the neighborhood improved. Some negative perspectives on the previous mayor were relayed as well, particularly from neighborhood residents. One respondent suggested that the previous mayor's commitment to the neighborhood was a direct result of community members putting political pressure on the administration. A long-term resident stated that the city is dishonest and "has a history of saying one thing and doing another," while a process facilitator suggested that the city and the mayor "said the right things or made the right political statement even though they don't fully intend to follow through with it" with regards to neighborhood improvement projects.

In describing the new mayor, respondents overwhelmingly felt he was not supportive of the plan or improving the neighborhood. When asked directly if there were barriers to the plan's implementation, the answer with the highest frequency was the current mayor. The numerous statements included "the plan is the previous mayor's child," "the new mayor killed it [the plan]," "no political will after the election," and "the new mayor has not adopted the previous administration's ideas." Respondents noted that the plan and the neighborhood were not a high priority for the new mayor and he was instead focused on a nearby commercial area and a new downtown bridge. During the interviews, multiple residents described attempts to contact him to discuss neighborhood improvement projects but he either did not respond to them or rejected their proposals. Interestingly, one respondent, the president of the neighborhood association, stated that she had a regular and productive dialogue with the current administration, although she did not offer details of these conversations; other neighborhood residents and

business owners stated that this was not the case for them. There was also frustration that the community now had to “start over” with the new mayor and his administration, noting how the heads of every local department who participated in the planning process had been replaced, including the economic development director who initiated the idea for the plan. The former economic development director confirmed this, stating that he was “the only one internally who was making things happen [in the neighborhood]” and the new administration was unlikely to carry that work forward. In describing the administration change, respondents used negative phrases to describe the new mayor’s approach, including “cleaned house,” “kicked out the person in charge of the planning process,” and “all the people who were listening are gone now.” A councilperson felt that the neighborhood’s relationships with the city “broke when the administration changed.” Another respondent felt that political favoritism motivated the new mayor’s decision to replace the department heads with “people he knows and likes who are out for their own interests,” and that this ultimately hurt the neighborhood.

While many of the respondents described specific ways in which the administration change has negatively impacted the plan’s implementation, a number of comments generalized the relationship between neighborhood planning and local politics. These statements were typically portrayed as political truths and went beyond the Centerville planning process. One respondent stated that “the problem with long-term plans is they are connected to a politician.” Residents stated “It’s a lot of change when you change leadership” and “I guess in the political arena when one thing changes everything changes.”

Despite the negative perspective on the mayoral administration change, respondents proposed some potential solutions to the problem. Several respondents felt that only another administration change would allow the plan to move forward, with one respondent stating “it

will take a new mayor to bring the plan out of the dust.” A process facilitator felt that there needed to be a part of the plan that “addressed how to proceed when the political atmosphere changes.” Another respondent suggested the need for a board or committee that will outlast administration changes to implement the plan over the long-term, while another suggested working with the city council, which is “more stable and committed, and participated in the planning process.”

Competition for resources

Subcategories: Downtown redevelopment, business growth, funding and cost

Competition for resources was discussed by numerous respondents, but expressed and understood differently by constituency groups. City officials and process facilitators described the importance of attracting private investment to justify public spending, given the limited financial resources of local government. Neighborhood residents and business owners bemoaned the lack of public investment in the neighborhood while surrounding areas received substantial (and disproportionate) attention and investment. Limited public financial resources to implement recommendations in the revitalization plan were acknowledged by respondents across constituency groups. Residents and business owners described being told by city representatives, as well as hearing from others, that the city “didn’t have the funds,” was “waiting on money,” “waiting on a grant,” or “had run out of money.” These comments were paired with feelings of uncertainty and doubt on the part of residents and business owners about whether funding would finally come through. A councilperson noted that 75 percent of the city’s financial resources were spent on fire and safety services, with only 25 percent left for other projects and services. Further, he noted strong competition within the city for the remaining 25 percent of funds, resulting in mostly small projects, and that long-term planning was required to implement the

larger projects. Additionally, a process facilitator noted that “a consistent problem with these types of plans is that you get people together but there never seems to be the budget or leadership to move things forward after that.”

City officials and process facilitators described a process of attracting private investment to justify or supplant public investment in the neighborhood as a strategy for revitalization. One city official noted that, in a “very competitive market,” public tax dollars follow private growth. A councilperson noted that “growth brings attention where there wasn’t before,” which makes it easier for him to request funding to invest in the neighborhood. He elaborated:

“So it has to have growth. It has to have growth and it has to have growth which is jobs, but I mean, it has to have growth to get new blood in there to really make something stand out and get your attention. So it’s competitive with the tax dollars because you have to realize every tax dollar we receive for these kind of projects, they’re being stretched throughout the whole city. And you know yourself, everybody likes shiny new. They want new, they want shiny, they want streets that are just you know and so forth. So when you take an area of a community, it’s going to be tough to compete against them dollars.”

Further, he also noted that private development often pays for public infrastructure such as sidewalks, which in turn frees up public money for other area projects.

In describing his revitalization strategy, the former economic development director felt that in order to attract new businesses the city had to demonstrate that it is a “caring community” by investing in the most depressed areas to show that Springfield is a progressive city, stating that “If you don’t invest in the rough spots businesses won’t locate there.” He felt this was a “win-win” situation where initial public investment would improve the community, which in

turn would attract businesses and promote growth. However, business owners were troubled by a lack of concern on the part of the city, neighborhood residents, and the plan itself in promoting business development. One business owner described being invited to, and attending, a neighborhood association meeting and felt that “the team of Centerville,” a term he used to describe the neighborhood’s most active and influential residents (roughly ten in number, by his count), were not focused on business development, effectively limiting it as a neighborhood priority. Business owners revealed in the interviews that they felt the plan was useful as a tool for marketing the neighborhood to businesses but this lack of commitment on the part of the neighborhood residents was a significant barrier.

When discussing the current and potential growth in Centerville, respondents often mentioned the county hospital, which is located on the edge of the neighborhood near a thriving commercial corridor and downtown, both of which have seen substantial and concentrated public investment in recent years. Respondents felt the future growth of the hospital would play a substantial role in the neighborhood’s future, although both positive and negative impacts were described during the interviews. City officials and process facilitators were generally positive about the potential for the hospital to grow and continue to attract additional medical businesses and create jobs and additional services for existing neighborhood residents. A councilperson noted that the hospital is the largest employer in the city and its recent purchase by a larger hospital will enable it to grow in the near future, which he felt would provide the hospital with more resources to dedicate to neighborhood improvement. He further noted that new medical businesses that had begun to open in the neighborhood near the hospital were “premium people” with “new eyes that can see what needs to be changed.” This statement was in reference to the city learning what public infrastructure improvement projects might need to be undertaken

through “fresh eyes,” as long-term residents may not notice problems because they have become used to them. However, the description of medical businesses as “premium people” implied the prioritization of the interests of new neighborhood medical business owners over those of long-term business owners and residents.

Respondents across constituency groups noted that the hospital has a presence in the social life of the neighborhood, attending community events and holding health screenings for residents, and felt it could potentially partner with the neighborhood on improvement projects. Of note, representatives of the hospital did not attend the revitalization planning process meetings, despite being invited by the city and process facilitators. Some residents felt the hospital was an asset to the neighborhood, while others thought it had the potential to be an asset but felt the hospital currently sees the neighborhood as a liability. Residents and business owners expressed feelings of uncertainty about the new development the hospital might bring, and some doubted the impact on the neighborhood would be a positive one. Many did not know if the hospital has a plan for expansion. Several felt that there was such a plan but it had intentionally not been shared with the community, reflecting a lack of communication between the hospital administration and the neighborhood. This lack of communication led some residents to speculate about the hospital’s plans, with one proposing the hospital intends to take over the neighborhood and convert it to a medical campus, and another acknowledging rumors about an impending influx of medical businesses in the area but “no one in the neighborhood knows what’s happening.” A business owner noted that some neighborhood businesses had already been “run out” by new doctor’s offices, and described his view of how the hospital may ultimately shape the neighborhood:

“You know, the hospital, those people will be coming this way. They got, they got money. They got money, but the community is going, will, will be wiped out. I can see the future of that and so and people are, people are frightful that well the hospital is coming through; they’re moving fast, they’re moving fast. I predict probably in the next fifteen years most of these places out here on the, on the south side of the street will be gone, southwest, they be gone.”

He further noted that this new influx of medical businesses as not having a positive impact on his business near the hospital, stating “I’m surrounded by rich people. I’m in a rich area but I’m struggling.”

The competition for public resources and investment was highlighted by a number of respondents by describing the contrast between Centerville and Springfield’s nearby downtown area. Respondents noted the substantial investment in the downtown, including the adjacent waterfront, nearby major commercial corridor, and bridge. A city official suggested that public resources were invested in the downtown because “as the downtown goes, so does the city; it’s a reflection of the city.” He further noted that Centerville was now an area of the city that “deserved attention.” Other respondents from various constituency groups described Centerville in relation to the downtown as “a gateway,” “a stepping stone,” “highly-visible,” and “you have to drive through it to get to the city.” These phrases all suggested that Centerville’s revitalization was part of a broader plan to extend the downtown revitalization to the adjacent areas to sustain its growth, and that this strategy would inform the neighborhood’s future development trajectory. The planning and zoning director described his perspective on how Centerville’s revitalization plan was linked to the previous administration’s broader plan for the city:

“[The former mayor] had a great vision. You know, rarely planners get to go in and redesign a whole city. He really, he's transformed Springfield. Not single-handedly, but he did some stuff that was, you know, arguably pretty shady, but in the grand scheme of the vision that he wanted to take the city in, he really did some transformational things. And all of that was downtown. And Centerville was sort of on the bookend of downtown, just on the north side, which, the downtown was plagued with the homeless, panhandlers, a lot of crime, trash, and you know, he probably saw the plan as bringing Centerville into the fold. Moving Centerville in the direction, which, you know, his vision for downtown, and the canal, and all those things together, all these moving parts. You know, it [downtown] is a vibrant, mixed use, high-end community right on the edge of the river connecting to [nearby major city] with a ghetto right beside it. And my guess is he was trying to figure out how to improve Centerville to bring Centerville into that vision.”

Residents acknowledged that the downtown area's revitalization has been positive for the city, but also felt they had been left out and not benefited from it. Several residents and business owners described both the public and private investments and improvements in the downtown area as examples of what could be done in their neighborhood, but none expressed confidence that the same investment would be made in Centerville. One resident noted that “progress is going on all around us but we're on a slow run here.”

Ethnography

The ethnographic portion of the study serves three purposes: 1) to provide additional context in which to situate the interview data, 2) to triangulate the findings from the interviews, and 3) provide supplemental information to provide greater detail about the planning process,

including its purpose and outcomes. Thus, the analysis of the ethnographic data focused on further developing the themes that emerged from the interview data rather than the discovery of new themes.

Ethnographic data collected for the study included texts related to the Centerville planning process, Centerville neighborhood history, and additional information relevant to planning in the Centerville neighborhood. Data sources include the Centerville Revitalization Plan, planning process notes recorded by process facilitators, local media coverage of the process, and public records referring to the Centerville neighborhood. The revitalization plan, local media articles, and public records were publicly available and accessed from the internet, while the planning process notes were acquired from the records of a university-based research center that co-facilitated the planning process.

Centerville Revitalization Plan

The Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was obtained electronically from the website of a university-based research center that co-facilitated the planning process. The plan is publicly-available and free of charge. The plan explicitly states its strategy for community participation and inclusion:

“The multi-step process included community participation from the outset.

Community leaders from both the residential and business sectors were initially gathered to assist in clarifying the historic and current context of Centerville and to share their recommendations for the project’s goals and objectives as well as enumerating key Centerville residents, businesses and City of Springfield agency members whose participation in the project was considered crucial. The project’s process insured the essential community input and feedback necessary for the

development of a thoughtful, reasoned, and inclusive set of strategic recommendations aimed at improving Centerville's quality of life as prioritized by its local stakeholders.”

The report begins with a brief history, description of the neighborhood's social and physical characteristics, and detailed description of the planning process. The majority of the report focused on 26 initiatives that were developed by process participants during the community meetings to address neighborhood issues and concerns. The initiatives were organized in six general categories: Land Use, Transportation and Mobility, Streetscape Improvements, Economic Development, Community Identity and Services, and Housing (see Table 5). Each of the 26 initiatives is listed in the report along with a description of the issue, specific action steps, potential organizational partnerships, the name and contact info of a community coordinator to provide leadership for the initiative, and organizational resources. The report appendices provided data from a windshield survey on the physical condition and use of each property in the neighborhood, as well as a substantial list of both local and national resources for technical assistance and grants to aid in the plan's implementation.

The plan reveals that the process facilitators hoped to develop and conduct a community-based process that included a broad range of stakeholders, connected community members to city officials, and provided a structure for moving the plan forward via community coordinators. Developing strategies based on the community's self-identified issues, including the community in every stage of the process, and fostering the development of relationships between the neighborhood and local government were explicit goals of the process. The initiatives outlined in the plan included a broad range of projects that varied widely in terms of cost and time commitment.

Table 5: Centerville Revitalization Plan initiatives

Category	Initiatives
1. Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Appropriateness of Current Zoning
2. Transportation and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Streets throughout Centerville where Needed • Install Speed Bumps on [major street] • Increase Public Transportation Access and Routes • Improve Connectivity to the Rest of Springfield
3. Streetscape Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Downtown Street Lighting into Centerville • Install Missing Sidewalks in Centerville • [major street] and [major street] Beautification, “Old Gas Station” Redevelopment
4. Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Resources for Building Facade Improvements • Increase Resident Employment • Find Solutions for Vacant Lot at [intersection] • Renovate Old Theater • Remove Empty Shed at [hotel] • Increase Access to Capital for Business Ventures • Improve Awareness of Urban Enterprise Zone Opportunities • Find Solutions to the Food Desert Problem • Find Ways to Bring Tax Dollars Back to Centerville • Use Vacant Properties for Economic Development
5. Community Identity and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install Swimming Pool • Improve the Public’s Perception of Centerville • Increase City of Springfield Police Presence and Responsiveness • Support [neighborhood] Elementary School • Coordinate/Create Additional Resources for Homeless on a City-Wide Level • Connect with Youth in the Neighborhood
6. Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide More Affordable Housing (Use Vacant Land and Existing Properties) • Increase Number of Young Families within Centerville

Planning process facilitator notes

Three process facilitators took notes during the second and third community meetings (during which participants identified neighborhood issues and proposed solutions, respectively).

These were the two primary needs assessment and data collection meetings that were used to develop the strategies and recommendations contained in the revitalization plan. One process facilitator took notes during the second community meeting to ensure all of the participant's ideas were included in the needs assessment. Two other process facilitators wrote personal reflections following the third meeting which described their experiences observing participants while serving as breakout group facilitators. It is important to note that one of these reflections was written by the dissertation author. These notes and reflections are useful for providing more detail about the group dynamics of participants and statements made by participants that, although used to inform the plan's focus topics and recommendations, are not included in the plan itself. The notes from the first meeting provided detailed information from residents about defining neighborhood boundaries, identification of landmarks and assets, and neighborhood issues and concerns. With regard to issues and concerns, participants described several ways in which the city was not currently addressing neighborhood concerns, including poor police response to emergency calls related to safety, homeless individuals living in a neighborhood park, a lack of public investment in beautification in the neighborhood while surrounding areas received investment, lack of neighborhood amenities, concerns about crime and speeding, and the persistently negative portrayal of Centerville in the local media. Residents were described in the notes as feeling like Centerville is the city's dump, is becoming more isolated from the rest of the city, and that their tax dollars are not reinvested in the neighborhood. City officials in attendance acknowledged that this had been the case in the past but that the city had recently begun efforts to address this. Also noted was the participants' appreciation of two council members staying for the entire meeting.

The personal reflections by process facilitators that focused on the breakout group interactions during the third community meeting described mild interpersonal conflicts between participants that are typical for community-based planning meetings. One of the facilitators described participants as feeling overwhelmed by both the amount of work and the complexity of the tasks at the meeting, noting that participants did not feel they had enough knowledge or information to provide recommendations for addressing some of the issues identified during the needs assessment at the previous community meeting.

Together, the process facilitator notes provided support for several themes from the interviews, including *neighborhood disenfranchised*, *competition for resources*, and *importance of local government support*. Specific statements from respondents during the interviews regarding the negative portrayal of the neighborhood in local media, lack of investment in the neighborhood compared to surrounding areas, and the neighborhood as the city's "dumping ground" were all reinforced by content in the process facilitator notes.

Media articles

The search for media articles included any online media coverage mentioning the Centerville neighborhood. While media coverage of the planning process was important, all available media coverage of the neighborhood was gathered to create a picture of how Centerville is portrayed in the media, which both reflects and influences people's perception of the neighborhood. Understanding how the neighborhood is portrayed through media coverage is useful in understanding the social and political context for both the planning process and plan's implementation.

Two point-in-time searches, conducted six months apart, revealed only three media articles from major newspapers, and five articles from a local news magazine. One of the major

newspaper articles focused on alleged issues of mismanagement of public housing developments in Centerville and reinforces the *neighborhood disenfranchised* theme revealed by the interview data. The article describes in detail a number of police calls to the area regarding excessive littering and public drunkenness, which was attributed to the subsidized housing residents. Poor housing conditions, including mold and a meth lab discovered in one unit, were also described in detail. The housing authority director was quoted as saying that these types of issues are typical of all public housing developments and did not believe mismanagement was the issue. Members of a neighborhood church who provided a dinner for the subsidized housing residents noted they did not hear complaints from residents about these issues, and a homeless shelter operator in the neighborhood felt mismanagement was not the issue but rather a problem of limited staffing (Suddeath, 2011). An online response to the article was posted by a resident of the subsidized housing development described in the article, which challenges the negative portrayal of the development's residents. The full response reads:

“As a resident of Centerville Towers [public housing], I have to respond to you recent article. The problems stated in your article are not, unfortunately, unique to Centerville Towers. Most of the social ills attributed to the apt. building, (drugs, crime, pollution, etc.) are just as predominate in the general local population. Therefore, to single out one building that houses low-income citizens is highly unjustified. I hope that the problems of Centerville Towers, accurately reported as they were, do not reflect on all of the residents of our building. An overwhelming majority of the people who live here are decent, clean, law-abiding folks who want nothing more than to live their lives in peace. As for Mr. Bosley's assertion that Centerville 'stinks to high heaven', I can only say that, having walked past

[neighborhood business] hundreds of times over the years, the only foul odor comes from a few blocks up [street name]. But, god forbid we hold certain businesses in Springfield to task for their stench output. I never once smelled a bad odor emanating from Centerville from [neighborhood business's] vantage point. The social and legal problems that have infiltrated Centerville (some legit, some imagined) are mostly the fault of the devastating, slashing and burning of all social programs, particularly in this case HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), here in the city of Springfield, [county name], and, last but not least the notoriously conservative State of [state name]. It is fact that for residents to have pride in their homes, be it Centerville or homes that are privately rented, the OWNERS and MANAGEMENT of said property must care, not just for collecting rent checks, but for maintenance and repairs the property needs in a reasonably timely manner. In other words, if the entities responsible for Centerville's security and upkeep, that being the [city of residence] owners and HUD, don't give a damn, why should we the people who must live here day after day?"

The media article portrays Centerville as a neighborhood with high crime that is physically unattractive. While the article primarily blames the management company, the residents are portrayed as people who litter and do not care about their neighborhood. The resident's response acknowledges that problems exist, but also states that the subsidized housing residents are being unfairly singled-out for problems that are widespread throughout the community and who are victims of cuts to social programs and lack of maintenance by the development's property management company.

The second major newspaper article described a procession through the city to a church in the Centerville neighborhood to celebrate the mission of Martin Luther King, Jr. The article described the procession as eight people marching with the current mayor and a motorcade that included city officials. The third article was a photo slideshow depicting the Centerville Heritage Days festival and picnic, which showed images of dozens of current and former neighborhood residents socializing. A banner in one of the photographs proclaimed “Centerville Heritage Days: Celebrating our Rich Heritage.” Both the second and third articles portrayed race prominently, as the second was a public celebration in the neighborhood of a black civil rights leader, and the third exclusively depicting black residents socializing at the neighborhood event. The third article also reinforced the *neighborhood identity* theme, particularly *neighborhood history* and an *active and motivated community*, which emerged from the interviews by depicting a well-attended neighborhood event that included both past and current residents honoring the neighborhood’s history.

The additional five media articles were published in a local news magazine and provided a general description of the Centerville planning process and the meetings that took place. The articles were neutral in tone and primarily informative. The content of these articles reinforced many of the themes from the interviews and corroborated descriptions from respondents of the process meetings. The first article, describing the initial process meeting, quoted the former mayor as saying that the city wanted to link the city’s downtown improvements with Centerville, and the former economic development director as stating that the city planned to invest in the neighborhood but a plan was needed first. Additional articles described the subsequent process meetings, with participants being quoted as feeling the atmosphere during the process meetings was a positive and productive one, but also reflecting a sense of caution and skepticism. In one

article the president of the local NAACP chapter was quoted as saying “Often times projects are planned and carried out without the Centerville neighborhood being involved. Centerville needs to be at the table when plans are being made.” Another article quoted the the president of the neighborhood association as saying “Redevelopment can include attracting doctors and lawyers, but it should also make sure housing and things of value are accessible to everyone.” The most recent of the articles highlighted several initiatives in the plan that were currently being implemented, primarily beautification, and noted a number of additional initiatives the community planned to partner with the city on implementing. Together, the content and quotes in these five articles provided further support for several of the interview data themes, including *building community capacity*, *neighborhood disenfranchised*, and *contrast between process and implementation*.

Public documents

A public documents search was performed on the City of Springfield’s website for any documents mentioning Centerville. The search returned 103 unique documents dated from 1969 to 2013. The vast majority of the documents were either meeting minutes for various city departments (i.e. public works, city parks), or documents regarding basic city functions and development including stormwater maintenance, public housing development and maintenance ordinances, and construction of a community center and pool. Analysis of the meeting minutes revealed a number of comments and submitted letters from Centerville neighborhood residents on neighborhood issues. These concerns were consistent with themes from the interviews and provided some historical context to support resident’s comments about distrust of local government and a lack of including the community in decision-making on issues that affect the

neighborhood. Below is a list of comments made by neighborhood residents and advocates that were recorded in the public meeting minutes:

- 2013 - Resident requested monetary support for neighborhood children for basic school supplies, reopening of neighborhood pool, and sponsoring a roadblock for fundraising. Unclear whether request was granted or denied.
- 2013, 2012 - Resident requested a 4-way stop at neighborhood intersection and request was denied.
- 2010 - City approved a street closure for a neighborhood reunion event.
- 2010 – A request to use a neighborhood park for events to provide drug and alcohol education for neighborhood residents, an Easter egg hunt, and a fish fry.
- 2006 - Resident requested city funding to support National Race Equality Week. Resident stated that this is a “Jeff thing” not a “Centerville” thing. Request was approved.
- 2006 - Announcement that the city will sponsor a group to do landscaping in neighborhood.
- 2003 - Concerns from residents about the impending closing of the neighborhood pool in Centerville. Residents stated that “they [the city] are always taking something from us”. A resident stated that the pool was not taken care of, which is not neighborhood’s fault. An attached resident survey about the potential closing of pool found that most people used it, found it beneficial, and were opposed to it closing: 90% used it and wanted it to stay. [The pool was eventually closed and has not been reopened or replaced.]

- 1990 - Resident asks city council if compensation could be considered for neighborhood residents regarding new wastewater treatment facility in neighborhood. Council did not support this proposal.
- 1993 - Resident voiced concerns about gangs and gun violence in neighborhood.
- 1995 - Resident voiced concerns about the lack of police response to drug problem calls.
- 1999 - Request for street closure for a youth walk-a-thon. Request was approved.
- 1995 - Resident voiced concerns about safety.
- 1999 - Resident asked for crosswalk and signal safety improvements. The resident stated that the general consensus in Centerville is that the city doesn't care. The mayor denies that this is true. A resident references a recent shooting incident at a city park (not in Centerville) that is being looked into, and says that if the shooting had been in Centerville no one would care. The resident further stated that the children in Centerville are just as important as children in the rest of the city.
- 1998 – Discussion about the relocation of a homeless shelter in the Centerville neighborhood. A community member states that the relocation was a “done deal” before the residents knew about it. The councilperson who drafted the ordinance didn't want to be unjust and felt these types of facilities need to be spread out and is willing to amend the ordinance. [Homeless shelter was ultimately relocated to the Centerville neighborhood.]
- 1998 – Residents and the president of the local chapter of the NAACP spoke out against the relocation of a homeless shelter to the Centerville neighborhood. A resident stated that the neighborhood is not against what the homeless shelter provides but doesn't think it should be located in a neighborhood that is already troubled and near housing projects.

The mayor said the opportunity arose when a neighborhood church moved and the building became available. He further states that the community has real lack of self-esteem and this needs to be changed.

- 1998 – Resident speaks out against the relocation of a homeless shelter into the Centerville neighborhood, stating that “there is enough in the community for Centerville to suffer.” A resident presented a signed petition to keep the shelter out of neighborhood. Community members felt that the neighborhood should have been notified sooner. One resident felt “tired of being used as a dumping ground,” felt disrespected, and that a “backdoor” method was being used to put the shelter in the neighborhood.
- 1971 - Residents requested assistance from the city council for neighborhood improvements, including improved street surfacing, street lighting, signage, police protection, fire protection, and upgrading staff, especially black personnel for both fire and police.

The meeting minutes reveal a pattern of simple and temporary requests being routinely granted (e.g. street closures, public park usage for events), while more substantial requests related to preventing the relocation of a homeless shelter into the neighborhood and the closing of a widely-used neighborhood pool were rejected. Resident’s comments about Centerville as a dumping ground for the city, a lack of response on the part of the city to neighborhood issues (e.g. crime), and the community not being engaged by the city in decision-making about the neighborhood are consistent with data from the interviews and other ethnographic texts.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine issues of power and participation in an urban neighborhood planning process using an ecological approach that examines the interactions between participants' experiences and the socio-spatial and socio-political contexts in which the process occurred. Here, socio-political is defined as the intersection of social and political factors as they relate to the process and plan's implementation, and socio-spatial defined as the intersection of social and spatial factors. The study's examination of both the socio-spatial and socio-political was achieved through the use of multiple methods to understand their influence in the development of the process and success (or lack thereof) in implementing the plan, as well as determining whether historic patterns of such intersections within the neighborhood exist. Here, spatial refers to notions of community, identity, and power as they relate to place (neighborhood, housing, land use, location and types of services, etc.).

Qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and ethnography, were used to gather data on participants' experiences, perceptions, and contextual factors related to power and participation. The interview and ethnographic findings are discussed to address each of the study's five research questions.

Research Question 1: Did participation in the Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization process increase participants' access to decision-making power, including the ability to hold public officials and other decision-makers accountable?

The interviews revealed a general consensus that the process increased participants' access to decision-makers, although they did not have the ability to hold them accountable beyond the planning process. The process was successful at connecting community members to

councilpersons and heads of city departments, who were widely identified during the interviews as the “decision-makers.” While these connections were made and relationships were built during the process meetings, the longevity of these relationships was mixed at the time of the interviews, two years after the process concluded. For the most part the connections and relationships developed did not last beyond the meetings, although a few residents noted the formation of a regular dialogue with the city. Certainly, the level of engagement experienced during the intensive community meetings was not achieved once the process ended. The process served as an introduction of community members to city officials, which participants felt would not have happened otherwise, and educated each about the other. City officials learned about the community’s needs, priorities, and interests in detail, while community members learned about the structure of local government, who to contact about specific issues, the best way to approach the city when something needed to be done, and how realistic it was to implement some of the ideas generated during the process based on funding and city priorities. In creating a dialogue and space for learning about one another, the process appears to have been successful.

Ultimately, community members had a positive view of the process, including the interactions that took place during meetings and their ability to be heard by decision-makers. Thus, it appears that the type of communicative dialogue and space advocated by the communicative planning theorists (including Forester, Innes, and Healy) was created during the process meetings. However, while participants felt they could make decisions during process meetings, the interviews also revealed that the community had no real access to decision-making power beyond the process itself. The process facilitators acknowledged this problem, as well.

Of further concern is the question of whether the process was successful in building community capacity. The process did indeed create and strengthen connections between those in

the neighborhood and local officials, and broadened community members' knowledge of local government processes and provided strategies for neighborhood improvement. While developing these networks and knowledge is key in building community capacity (Chaskin et al., 2001), the community actors must have social agency and be able to successfully use individuals and organizations as tools for influence. The community's ability to use these networks for change appears to be extremely limited, and thus the process seems to have been unsuccessful at building capacity that is sufficient to facilitate social agency and community power. Thus, connecting community members to decision-makers during the process was not enough to ensure decision-making power. This finding supports the critique of the communicative action planning approach that it does not sufficiently address external power structures that can influence the process outcomes (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). In this case, the change in mayoral administration that occurred just before the process was concluded seemed to be a fatal blow to the plan for two reasons: 1) the planning process was seen as a project favored by the previous administration (a Democrat) and the new mayor (a Republican) was uninterested in prioritizing projects favored the previous mayor, and 2) the new mayor removed and replaced the heads of all city departments, severing all connections and relationships developed between city government and community members during the process with the exception of councilpersons. Particularly detrimental was the loss of the economic development director, who initiated the idea for the planning process and was described by participants as a "champion" within local government for neighborhood interests. The mayoral administration change led to his removal and this change alone likely resulted in a substantial loss of momentum and a change in economic development priorities. However, a resident and a process facilitator both noted that the city may have been saying one thing and doing another, or simply telling people what they

want to hear, typical concerns with these types of planning processes. Records of public meetings revealed similar statements from residents regarding the city's lack of commitment to prioritizing the community's wishes, specifically in regards to the closure of a neighborhood swimming pool, locating a homeless shelter in the neighborhood, and lack of attention to crime. This suggests that support from the city and implementation of the plan's recommendations may have been unlikely regardless of the administration change, although this remains uncertain. Interviewees widely acknowledged the importance of government support, particularly that of the mayor. Since many of the plan's recommendations require at least city approval, if not funding, a lack of support from the local government would be devastating to implementation. This is a common problem with planning initiatives, since many process recommendations include regulatory changes (e.g. zoning) or changes to the public realm (e.g. streetscapes, public housing). Further, in most cases public funding is required to implement changes: funding is scarce and resources must be dedicated to apply for and manage state, federal, or grant funding. The commitment of funding is critical to the success of plans, and building relationships and community capacity may have little effect without funding for project, which may to explain why much of neighborhood planning now focuses on economic development initiatives rather than traditional foci such land use and transportation (Staehele, 2008). Thus, without either local government support or the ability to apply political pressure, the community would have little chance of seeing the plan implemented.

Research Question 2: What degree of community power was achieved during, or as a result of, the process?

Some degree of community power and control was achieved during the process, but it did not translate into power beyond the meetings. The plan did help to organize the community to

some extent, resulting in a larger and more active neighborhood association, developing a unified vision for neighborhood change, and helping housing authority residents and other residents discuss their needs and interests and find common ground. However, the community remained largely dependent on the support of local government for implementation of the plan's recommendations. The community has been unable to organize itself to put pressure on local government to fund or provide resources and support for neighborhood projects.

Using Arnstein's *ladder of participation* (1969) to evaluate the degree of power achieved, the process would likely fall into the "delegated power" or "partnership" subcategories within the "community power" category. However, this assumes that power within the process translates to influence and access to decision-making in taking action after the process ends. It also assumes that a partnership between process facilitators and community members, even if truly collaborative and involving shared or delegated power, is not operating within larger structures that deny power beyond the process boundaries. Since this process was funded by, but not primarily facilitated by, local government, the facilitation team may have developed a process that allowed for community power to develop a plan that was ultimately not actionable without the approval of local government. Wandersman's *levels of participation* (1979b) reveal a similar concern. This process would fall into the "self-planning" category, the second-highest degree of power out of five categories, although it takes into account only power within the process, and does not provide more contextualized way to evaluate the community's ability to enact neighborhood change on its own terms. Thus, both Arnstein's and Wandersman's categorical systems are appropriate for determining the degree of power within process meetings and on the content of the final plan, which is essential to ensuring the community's needs and interests are addressed, but insufficient alone to determine the community's power to create

actual neighborhood change. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that a disenfranchised minority neighborhood has limited power in public decision-making, and without a process that guarantees community control it will likely meet resistance when in conflict with the status quo or powerful competing interests. Further, the plan was not institutionalized (adopted as a formal neighborhood plan or part of a comprehensive plan) and carries no official weight. Thus, it is a plan but not a policy.

Research Question 3: How, and by whom, are decisions made about the process purpose, process structure, and implementation of the final plan?

Decisions regarding the purpose and structure of the process were made by city officials and the facilitation team. The process was initiated by the city and facilitated by a planning team working in partnership with the city, primarily the Director of Economic Development. The participatory spaces that were created allowed for open dialogue in identifying neighborhood issues during process meetings, but the places of engagement were limited to these meetings and generally limited to question-response and structured-discussion methods of input gathering. Participants generated ideas in a visioning process that was designed to allow for community control over outcomes, but meetings were highly structured and allowed limited time for discussion and feedback. Once community input was recorded, the facilitators consolidated the input and developed categories which were then used as a framework for the following community meeting to generate strategies to address identified issues. The final strategies were presented to the community for input before the final plan was completed. These points of engagement do reflect an iterative process, but the points of engagement, and therefore community control, are limited. The content was developed and approved by community participants, but the structure and parameters of the planning process were created by the

facilitation team. Both process participants and facilitators felt positively about the way the process was conducted, and it appears that the motivation of the process and facilitation team was genuine in its desire to develop a community-driven plan.

Community control over implementation of the plan was severely limited for several reasons. The plan was not officially adopted or institutionalized, and thus carried no official weight as policy. The plan was described as a tool, and the process as a starting point, but ultimately the city had control over what recommendations to implement. Additionally, the administration change dissolved relationships built during the process between community members and city officials, including the loss of the economic development director who initiated and championed the planning process. With a loss of local government support and community momentum, who was responsible for implementation became unclear. While most interviewees agreed a partnership was needed, a lack of leadership and organization within the community further limited its ability to rally behind the plan and put pressure on the new administration to access public funds and resources for implementation. It is important to note that implementation has not been a complete failure, thus far. Interviewees noted progress had been made on three recommendations, including new street lighting, a new park on the brownfield site that was the impetus for the planning process, and the renaming of several streets after prominent black neighborhood leaders. While these may seem to be minor changes, they were described by interviewees as important changes that would not have happened without the planning process, particularly so given the long history of public disinvestment in the neighborhood. Thus, these small wins should not be dismissed, as they were widely viewed, even by community members, a positive sign of change.

Research Question 4: In what ways was the process influenced by decisions or factors outside of the official planning process and public meetings?

Although the process was successful at bringing together a broad representation of neighborhood stakeholders and government representatives and developing a unified vision for the neighborhood, contextual factors inhibited the implementation of this vision. The two primary issues were the change in administration near the conclusion of the planning process, which represented a shift from a local government that was supportive of the process to one that had no interest in implementing its recommendations. The city officials who participated in the process and helped to identify issues and craft recommendations in partnership with community members were removed by the new mayor and replaced with officials who were described as having little or no knowledge of the plan's existence or content. The current planning director was aware of the plan and its recommendations but noted that the new mayor had not made the plan a priority. Given the planning department's limited resources (staff, time, and funding), he was unable to contribute resources to implementing projects outlined in the plan, although he noted during the interview that simply discussing the plan with the PI for this study had sparked his interest in finding projects that could be implemented with minimal time and money to provide momentum for neighborhood change.

In addition to a lack of local government support, a history of division within the community also served as a barrier to implementation. The Centerville community was described as being more of an idea than a reality, and long-standing divisions existed between neighborhood and housing authority residents, as well as between existing residents and former residents. Housing authority residents felt that generally their voice was not heard by city officials as strongly as that of other neighborhood residents, and that their priorities were

different (focused more on basic needs, housing conditions, and crime vs. business development and broader economic development goals). This led them to define themselves as “a community within a community,” and while many participants acknowledged that the process aided in bringing the community together to find common ground in developing the plan, these two groups of neighborhood residents continued to operate separately from one another rather than organizing together to advocate for neighborhood change together. While the process provided an opportunity for neighborhood factions to come together, it appears to have had a minor impact on how these groups work together on neighborhood issues. Another division noted was between former residents and current residents, which has led to a struggle over leadership within the neighborhood. Centerville’s strong neighborhood identity as “Springfield’s black neighborhood” has led the black community at large, most of whom grew up in Centerville and still go to church or have family there, to input their voice in neighborhood discussions, with some even joining the neighborhood association while not currently living there. The strong stated desire to preserve the neighborhood’s history was described as a potential barrier to positive neighborhood change. Further, divisions and infighting between the numerous neighborhood churches were also described as a barrier to organizing the neighborhood for action. These divisions have led to a broader issue that emerged from the interviews; community members did not know how to effectively engage local government to advocate for neighborhood change. While the process was successful at bringing the various factions together and delivering a tool that can be used to advocate for change, beyond the process these groups still operate largely in silos. This lack of organization has resulted in conflicts over neighborhood leadership and led to a loss of momentum following the conclusion of the process.

While being the city's black neighborhood may be a source of pride for the black community, race may also have a detrimental impact on how the neighborhood is perceived by others. Thus far the neighborhood has been described as "always last" and "the city's dumping ground," powerful perceptions that will be difficult for any revitalization plan to overcome, particularly in terms of economic development and attracting businesses to the area. These comments suggest a systematic and subtle racism that permeates policy decisions at the local level, where the black neighborhood is inherently less desirable or inferior and therefore the most appropriate location for those "undesirable uses" such as social service and homeless providers. The comments further suggest that the Centerville neighborhood as a space delegated by the city as either unworthy of improvement or simply unable to effectively fight the disinvestment and relocation of these services into the neighborhood. While no respondents used the term "racism," the implication was that Centerville had experienced disinvestment and maltreatment from the city because of the neighborhood's history as a black community. Interview data and excerpts from public records both provide evidence of the community's belief that racism has led to a lack of public investment in the neighborhood. The comment from one resident during an interview about an interaction with the current mayor, in which he states there will never be an African American museum in Centerville as long as he's mayor, provides striking support for the likelihood of racism as a factor in the neighborhood's relationship with the city.

A further contextual barrier to the plan's success has been a lack of time, funding, or willpower to implement the plan's recommendations. With limited funding available for non-essential government services, neighborhoods are in competition with one another for resources. As most cities have in recent decades, Springfield has invested heavily in revitalizing its downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods as an economic development strategy. In

general, private business growth brings attention to a neighborhood and this is used to justify public investment for neighborhood improvements. While this holds some promise for future investment in the area, as the hospital, medical district, and thriving commercial corridor are adjacent to the neighborhood, the question remains as to what types of investments will be made and for who's benefit. While the revitalization plan can help set public investment priorities, history has shown that these investments are more likely to favor powerful business interests or seek strategies for increasing the tax base over community needs (if they are in conflict).

Research Question 5: Did the planning process participants include representation of all voices and interests within the community? Were those voices and interests reflected in the final plan?

Participants felt strongly that the facilitation team was successful at listening to the voice of participants and developing a plan that reflected the needs and interests of the community as a whole. Interviewees noted that the process and plan was an accurate representation of the community's needs and interests, and felt it was a useful tool for outlining and implementing change that would benefit the neighborhood as a whole. However, there were some exceptions. Both neighborhood business owners who were interviewed for the study expressed disappointment that the plan did not focus more on local business development directly, and felt that the plan focused more on beautification and social concerns rather than encouraging job growth or investing in existing neighborhood businesses. Considering the plan is a revitalization plan funded by the Urban Enterprise Association and initiated by the Economic Development department, this critique is important and may highlight the concern of planners facilitating planning processes that are essentially focused on economic development initiatives which planners are not explicitly trained to address. While community development and changes to policies that impact the built environment can certainly be a part of economic development, they

may have been overrepresented in the plan based on the lack of expertise of the facilitation team and the community participants in this area.

One interviewee, a housing authority resident, noted that the voices of those who live in public housing are not heard by the city to the same extent as those of other neighborhood residents. The process did include a number of housing authority residents, as well as the housing authority president, although there were no initiatives in the plan that specifically addressed the improvement of living conditions for public housing residents. However, improvements to police responsiveness, access to public transportation, and street lighting would all have a positive impact on housing authority residents, as well as other more general neighborhood improvements.

Another concern was revealed in the process facilitator notes in the ethnographic data. Process facilitators noted that community participants felt overwhelmed at times during the visioning and strategizing stages of the process, and that certain group members tended to dominate the conversation. While this is not an unusual dynamic in small group problem-solving, it does impact the content and outcomes of the process. Those who are more confident, educated, or used to participating in public processes may have been more vocal and thus had their ideas prioritized during group discussions.

Power and Participation in the Centerville Planning Process

Using Gaventa's three continuums of power (2004) as a framework for understanding power reveals several interesting characteristics of the Centerville planning process. The process included multiple spaces where power occurred, including the process meetings which would be characterized as an *invited* space. Other closed spaces exist, as well, including those discussions among city officials where the neighborhood is excluded from determining priorities for the city,

including strategies and funding that would impact the neighborhood and the implementation of the plan's recommendations. While Centerville community members were invited into some decision-making spaces, and provided the opportunity to exercise power within those spaces, it would be difficult to argue that the community *claimed* those spaces, and thus had little decision-making power beyond them. This inability to shift from invited space to claimed space appears to be an indication that the community could not use this to its long-term advantage. While the level of engagement was certainly *local*, some national-level interests had an impact on the process outcomes. Urban change processes are happening at a national level (and to some degree globally, as well), impacting local government and business strategies for how to improve urban neighborhoods. The familiar story of the movement of capital for infrastructure projects and recruitment of businesses to economically-depressed areas, often at the expense of current residents and business owners, seems to be playing out in Centerville and the surrounding areas, impacting the role that the community plays in the change process and leaving them relatively powerless. Competition for resources between neighborhoods is a power dynamic that plays out constantly, and support from local government appears to be key in determining who that competition favors. Further, race has played a role historically in Centerville neighborhood investment and the ability of residents to attract public infrastructure improvements and business development, leaving a concentration of social service providers, public housing, and other "undesirable" uses that have disproportionately impacted the neighborhood. Power took multiple forms in the planning process, primarily *hidden* and *invisible*. Decisions regarding priorities and funding for the plan's recommendations limited participants' choices and ability to guide change on their terms to serve their interests. Invisible power was at work, as well, as the study revealed a community who had systematically been disenfranchised and neglected, with

residents conveying both frustration and defeat with comments like “Centerville is always last.” While the degree of internalization of powerlessness is difficult to gauge, it does appear to be present.

The study findings suggest that Gaventa’s framework for assessing power is useful for assessing participatory planning in that it illuminates specific ways in which power occurred in the planning process and implementation, and who exercised power for what purpose. However, it must be used in conjunction with other theories of social power, empowerment, and planning theory to determine whether the specific instances and exercises of power are congruent with the goals of the process, participants, and community as a whole. According to the report on the final plan, the process was designed to facilitate community empowerment and produce neighborhood change that is congruent with the community’s stated needs and interests, goals of the advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), transactive planning (Friedmann, 1987), and equity planning (Krumholz & Forester, 1990). Participants felt the process was successful in bringing together a broad range of perspectives from within the community, as Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) suggest it must, although some participants felt the housing authority residents’ perspectives were not included to the same extent as other participants. This supports Taux’s (1995) assertion that low-income participants may have less of a voice in the process than other participants.

The Centerville planning process was consistent with the definitions of community participation proposed by Horelli (2002), Sanoff (2000), and Arnstein (1969), which emphasized that the process must aim for social change, shared-power balanced with self-determination, and direct involvement in the process. However, the question of whether the planning process was empowering is complex. The process met Perkins’ (2010) definition of empowerment, although

it did not necessarily include access to decision-making power and resources beyond the process meetings. Saegert's (1996) assertion that individual empowerment may lead to increased participation in community seems to be partially supported by the study. Participants did note increased membership and activity within the neighborhood organization, as well as increased development of social networks as a result of the process, although these have only thus far translated to minor neighborhood changes. While the psycho-social dimensions of participatory planning can be formative in building community capacity and transformative for disenfranchised groups by ensuring that plans represent their interests (see Friedmann, 1987 and Gaventa, 2004), the study findings suggest that contextual factors, can be barriers to the translation of individual empowerment into collective empowerment. In addition, the process built and strengthened relationships between participants, including residents, facilitators, business owners, service providers, and city officials, a critical stage in building community capacity for change as outlined by Chaskin et al. (2001), but fell short in the translation of these relationships into effective tools for action.

The study supports Talen's (1996) observation that planners and facilitators of participatory planning processes rarely remain involved beyond the completion of the plan to aid in the plan's implementation. While the facilitation team was praised by participants for its efforts to develop a community-based plan, there was little to no followup or assistance regarding implementation of the plan's recommendations. The university-based facilitators ended their involvement due to the scope of their work and funding, and the city effectively ended its involvement in facilitation when the mayoral administration changed and replaced nearly every city representative who supported or was involved with the plan. The failure of city departments to implement the plan is one of the four planning process stages identified by Loh

(2012) where implementation may fail. In the case of Centerville, power was exercised directly by the new city administration to ignore the plan and not provide departmental resources or funding to assist the community with implementation.

Success of neighborhood plans, particularly revitalization plans that go beyond land use and transportation to address economic and social concerns, such as the one for Centerville, are heavily dependent on funding (Staeheli, 2008), and building community support and capacity alone without funding for the proposed projects may be ineffective. Participants made comments during the interviews about the lack of public funding available for implementation, while also recognizing the long-term nature of neighborhood change. Centerville's councilperson provided insight into the amount of local funding available for improvement projects (about 25% of the annual budget) and the intense competition between neighborhoods for those funds. He further described the process by which the city council favors projects for funding, suggesting that public money follows private investment. This highlights a strategy of focusing city efforts where private growth is occurring, rather than investment to stimulate growth. Additionally, the fact that Centerville's revitalization plan was funded by the Urban Enterprise Association, and initiated and co-facilitated by the Economic Development Department, is a strong indicator of a pro-business growth orientation in local governance, and, as Harvey (1989) states, an assumption that business growth will equal community prosperity. In Centerville, the desired business growth is new businesses locating in the neighborhood rather than investment in existing neighborhood businesses, as described by two neighborhood business owners who he stated that there were no effective strategies for helping them expand their businesses or for workforce development. Interestingly, the only current business growth in the neighborhood is that of the county hospital and medical businesses, which were not represented at the process meetings

(although hospital representatives were invited). The hospital's decision not to participate in the meetings effectively discredited the plan as an economic development strategy, or at least a collaborative one, for the neighborhood. While choosing not to legitimize the planning process through non-participation, the hospital freed itself from any compromise or commitment it may have made in a collaborative environment with other neighborhood stakeholders. This raises the concern that when powerful neighborhood interests choose not to enter a participatory space, this can delegitimize the process and its outcomes, even when facilitators are working on the community's interests.

Findings from this study support the critiques of the communicative action planning approach levelled by Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) that it does not adequately consider the influence of existing power structures on the planning process, and that it does not address the problem of an open process that produces unjust results (Fainstein, 2000), which seems to be the case with the Centerville process. In this case the process itself was not used as a means of control but rather control was exercised by the new city administration in failing to support its implementation. As Gaventa (2004) warns, the community must be able to hold government accountable for implementation; in this case it cannot. Systemic power (Stone, 1980), while difficult to measure as it operates covertly, may also have an influence on the plan's implementation, as city officials may perceive the mayor's disinterest in the plan and fail to direct their efforts and resources toward its implementation. Purcell's (2012) concern regarding whether community development practice, in this case participatory planning with a focus on community-building, can address fundamental and structural issues, seems relevant here. He warns that community development initiatives may not have the ability to translate beyond the participatory space created by the process and produce the desired change. While the study findings suggest

he may be correct, a stronger focus on community development and extended involvement from facilitators in implementation may lead to greater change. Much depends on how explicitly the contextual factors are anticipated and considered in the conceptualization of participatory planning processes such as this.

Study Strengths and Limitations

One of the primary strengths of the study is its ecological approach. It provides an analysis of participatory planning that considers not only interactions and power within the process, but also external factors that impact the development of the plan and its implementation. The study also used a qualitative approach, which allowed for a more in-depth analysis of participants' experiences and perspectives. The use of a semi-structured interview technique also allowed the PI to ask follow questions and pursue interesting or unexpected topics that arose during the interviews. Using multiple methods was an additional advantage, particularly the use of ethnographic data to triangulate data from the interviews and provide historical context.

The study design also addressed the potential for bias in the research process. Validity (or accuracy) was addressed through member checking with a random sample of interviewees, who confirmed the accuracy of the coding for their respective interviews. Further, member checking was integrated into the interview process, where the PI would repeat back statements made by interviewees regarding points that were particularly surprising, relevant, were somewhat unclear, or may have multiple interpretations to ensure the interpretation during analysis was accurate. Validity was further addressed through the triangulation of the interview data and ethnographic data. Reliability coding was conducted to ensure the study's coding scheme would consistently produce the same results when applied by another researcher

(reproducibility) and yielded an interrater agreement of 84%, exceeding the generally-accepted percent agreement threshold of 70% (Bordens & Abbott, 1999).

An additional strength of the study was the PI's experience working in the Centerville and Springfield. The PI was a facilitator of the Centerville planning process, and also worked on other projects in Springfield, including a housing study and neighborhood leadership initiatives that included members of the Centerville community. As a member of the facilitation team, the PI was able to obtain process records and sign-in sheets with participant contact information. The PI's prior experience also helped to establish a reputation of trustworthiness within the community that likely contributed to participants' willingness to be interviewed and provide candid answers to questions on sensitive topics such as power, race, and trust. However, the PI's role in facilitating the process could also be a weakness of the study, as interviewees may have felt uncomfortable criticizing the process. However, while the process was generally described positively by interviewees, aspects of the process, plan, and implementation were criticized during the interviews, and participants' comments in local media articles about the process provided additional support for the interview findings that participants generally saw the process as positive but were somewhat skeptical about the city's plan for implementation.

While the study provides an in-depth and contextualized view of a planning process, the analysis is only of a single process and does not provide a comparison to other planning processes. The findings from the study are not necessarily generalizable to neighborhood planning as a whole. In addition, there is wide variation in neighborhood planning processes. This study focuses on a process that is being conducted by a university-based research team that seeks to be participatory, community-based, and inclusive, which is atypical in the field of planning. However, studying a process designed with these goals as central to its purpose may

be the most useful way to evaluate how participation occurs in planning by revealing what happens in a “best case scenario,” rather than reinforcing what the literature has already revealed about the shortcomings often found in planning processes where government or facilitators seek to subjugate community participants from the outset.

The study was conducted two years after the conclusion of the planning process, which is both a strength and a limitation. The two-year span allowed time for initiatives recommended in the plan to be initiated or completed, which allows for a more practical evaluation of implementation and momentum. This also allowed time for relationships developed during the process to either strengthen or dissolve in order to evaluate the process’s ability to build community capacity for change that lasted well beyond the process itself. However, during the two year span it is possible that participants may have forgotten some details about their experience of participating in the process or caused them to misremember and miscommunicate information about the process.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Most studies of participatory planning have limited discussions of power to the process itself without adequately accounting for external forces that shape the development of the plan and how it is implemented. This study's ecological approach is particularly useful for recognizing and measuring these contextual influences, and can serve as a model for future studies of participatory planning processes. The study findings contribute to planning theory by demonstrating the inadequacy of traditional measures of participatory planning that use "levels of participation" which examine the process itself but do not account for socio-spatial and socio-political influences such as neighborhood demographics, local development patterns, leadership and organizational capacity for community action, local government funding priorities, and local political climate, among others. Studies that have examined the characteristics of successful planning approaches have noted the importance of these external factors (e.g. Juarez & Brown, 2008; Mason & Beard, 2008; Shandas & Messer, 2008), but few studies provide an in-depth examination of a process accounting for these factors and how they impact the process and outcomes.

The study findings are also useful for informing planning practice, particularly in identifying ways to structure the process to ensure the plan's implementation. A lack of local government support can be devastating to a plan. In this case, support from the city abruptly ended with the election of a new mayor, and the subsequent removal of city officials who backed the plan. As the political sphere is volatile and can be unpredictable, protecting against administration changes and shifts in political priorities should be a goal for these types of planning processes. Developing consensus and building community capacity through the

development of new networks can help but may not be enough to ensure successful implementation. Adoption or institutionalization of plans can help to address this concern, turning a plan into policy. While adoption or institutionalization is not a failsafe method, as variances can be granted and certain aspects of plans can effectively be ignored by not funding them, it does provide some degree of accountability to the community and makes it more likely that the plan's recommendations will be supported or implemented. This strategy should be considered from the outset of the process. If a non-public entity is developing the plan, as was the case in Centerville, project funding should allow time and resources for the facilitation team to assist in having the plan adopted once completed.

Planners should also account for existing divisions and factions within the community when developing and facilitating participatory processes, assessing the community's leadership, organization, and past record of leading change efforts or taking action steps to implement projects in partnership with local government. Determining the community's capacity for action early on should also inform the planning process structure, timeframe, and content. If community cohesion or capacity for change is lacking, sustained community development efforts may be dramatically improve the plan's chances of being successfully implemented. The Centerville process did incorporate community development efforts by including representatives from city departments to educate participants about the most effective ways to engage with local government, as well as who to engage with. However, the process could have also gone a step further in providing neighborhood leadership training to assist the community in leading revitalization efforts and organizing projects in partnership with local government. A sustained and focused effort following the conclusion of the planning process to focus on implementation would address one of the persistent problems with neighborhood planning: the plan sitting on a

shelf. A long-term, sustained effort would also help protect against administration changes and shifting political priorities by providing facilitators who could advise the community on how to respond to the changes and help mediate the community-government relationship.

Perhaps the most important consideration is whether community-based neighborhood planning initiatives such as these are a useful way for engaging communities in the process of neighborhood change. Participatory planning is complex, can be time-consuming, and must develop consensus within a community. Neighborhood plans represent a point-in-time evaluation of what participants want to see their neighborhood become, but may be outdated as changes begin to occur. The planning process and neighborhood plan may realize their greatest value as a catalyst for change, rather than a prescription. Planners typically focus much of their attention on the creation of a plan rather than on the ongoing process of planning and building relationships to facilitate community engagement in the implementation process and in the decision-making process. While planners' training, expertise, and influence may be limited, they can garner and organize support from a wide range of actors to evaluate community needs, facilitate community and leadership development, and assist with the initiation and implementation of specific projects. This will require a different scope of planning practice, one that carefully addresses the unique context in which each planning occurs and recognizes the value of planning in empowering communities and fostering social change.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Centerville Planning Process Study: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Participant Version

Interview ID#: _____ Participant's name: _____ Gender: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Interview Location: _____

Interviewer: "Hello. I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience of the Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization planning process."

- 1.) Do you feel that participation the planning process gave you the power to make decisions about the future of the neighborhood?
- 2.) Do you feel that the plan did a good job of connecting you to the people who can make change happen in the neighborhood?
- 3.) Do you feel that city officials and the facilitation team did a good job of listening to the voice of the community and coming up with a plan that reflects that voice?
[If so] *Proceed to next question*
[If not] Why not?
- 4.) What needs to happen now so that the ideas and goals developed during the process will be put into practice?
 - 4a.) Do you think that will happen?
[If so] *Proceed to next question*
[If not] Why not? [Query: What or who will get in the way?]
- 5.) Do you think the Centerville community needs to play an important role to make the plan happen?
[If so] Do you think it will?
[If not] Why not? [Query: What will get in the way?]
- 6.) Have you met with other members of the community (residents, city officials, etc.) outside of the public meetings to discuss the plan or the planning process since it began?
[If so] What did you talk about?
[If not] *Proceed to next question*
- 7.) Why do you think the city decided to do a revitalization plan for Centerville?
- 8.) If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself.
 - 7a.) What is your age?
 - 7b.) What is your race or ethnicity?

"Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the process?"
[If not] "Thank you for your time."

Centerville Planning Process Study: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Facilitator/Officials Version

Interview ID#: _____ Participant's name: _____ Gender: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Interview Location: _____

Interviewer: "Hello. I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience of the Centerville Neighborhood Revitalization planning process."

- 1.) Do you feel that the planning process gave the Centerville community the power to make decisions about the future of the neighborhood?
- 2.) Do you feel that the plan did a good job of connecting community members to people who can make change happen in the neighborhood?
- 3.) Do you feel that city officials and the facilitation team did a good job of listening to the voice of the community and coming up with a plan that reflects that voice?
[If so] *Proceed to next question*
[If not] Why not?
- 4.) What needs to happen now so that the ideas and goals developed during the process will be put into practice?
 - 4a.) Do you think that will happen?
[If so] *Proceed to next question*
[If not] Why not? [Query: What or who will get in the way?]
- 5.) Do you think the Centerville community needs to play an important role in order to make the plan happen?
[If so] Do you think it will?
[If not] Why not? [Query: What will get in the way?]
- 6.) Have you met with any members of the Centerville community outside of the public meetings to discuss the plan or the planning process since it began?
[If so] What did you talk about?
[If not] *Proceed to next question*
- 7.) Why did the city decided to do a revitalization plan for Centerville?
- 8.) If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself.
 - 7a.) What is your age?
 - 7b.) What is your race or ethnicity?

"Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the process?"
[If not] "Thank you for your time."

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