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Building community capacity: how collaborative planning is changing the culture of governance in Seattle

Amber M. Kobler
Iowa State University

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Building community capacity: how collaborative planning is changing the culture of governance in Seattle

by

Amber M. Kobler

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Major: Community and Regional Planning

Program of Study Committee:
Gerardo Sandoval, Major Professor
Tara Lynne Clapp
Betty Wells

Iowa State University
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2009

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the theory on collaborative planning, capacity building and governance by examining a case study in Seattle, Washington. Throughout the 1980s, the City of Seattle experienced fits and starts with planning and growth management, as neighborhood groups often rose in opposition to City efforts. After the State of Washington passed its Growth Management Act in 1990 and neighborhood groups again opposed the new Comprehensive Plan developed to comply with the law, the City of Seattle tried a new tactic: collaborative neighborhood planning. Under this program, 38 neighborhoods created their own plans, designed to implement the Comprehensive Plan and tailor those goals to each community. The process was designed to be broadly inclusive and community-driven, educating both citizens and City staff and changing perceptions about how to work together. This initiative resulted in increased capacity at both the community and the government level, shifting the political culture towards one of governance, where City and citizens partner to enhance quality of place. However, it has not been without challenges. To sustain capacity, there must be strong leadership from decision-makers, an emphasis on accountability, and continuous resources to evaluate and improve the program. Even with these challenges, collaborative planning and capacity building processes offer the potential for cities to leverage community resources and better respond to complex contemporary issues.
CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW

Introduction

It is no secret that our country is in trouble. Our last president left office with the lowest approval rating in U.S. history. We have been at war for nearly six years. Our economy is on the verge of collapse, as ordinary citizens lose their homes and jobs, and major corporations ask for billions of dollars in bailouts from the federal government. It seems like every day we hear a new story of corruption in the political arena. Our current system is failing to meet the challenges of today’s globalized world. It’s enough to cause a huge rift in the trust between citizens and government.

And yet, the beauty of the United States is its capacity to change and evolve to meet new challenges. During the political campaign for the 2008 election, we have seen the grassroots mobilized like never before. With Barack Obama now in office, we are promised a new system of governance that will depend on the people of this country to help formulate solutions to the problems we face. While that remains to be seen, there is evidence that collaboration with the grassroots can result not only in a healthier relationship between citizens and government, but also in revitalized communities governed through a more sustainable system.

This research analyzes the debates about collaborative neighborhood planning by examining the long-term efforts of Seattle, Washington. Specifically, I explore how Seattle’s neighborhood planning program in the mid-1990s built citizen capacity, if doing so has led to an increase in capacity at the government level, and if so, how collaborative planning can change the nature of the relationship between citizens and government. Additionally, I argue that collaborative planning requires a shift of political culture from government to governance, which better enables the City to handle complex urban issues.
Background

Planning is “systematically thinking through a situation in order to come up with a better decision” (Jones 1990, 1). The field of planning has evolved through a number of paradigms that have guided planners in their efforts, always with the purpose of more efficiently solving urban problems. These planning paradigms are based on various theories of the forces that shape cities, including growth as a major driver of both political and economic interests (Logan and Molotch 2007). Additionally, each planning paradigm has a corresponding role for the planner that defines the respective roles of government and citizen and the relationship between them, and organizes the process of responding to urban problems.

In the early 20th century, planning was understood through the theory of comprehensive rationality where urban problems were approached scientifically. Under this theory, the planner is the expert who sets goals, and then considers alternatives and consequences as fully as possible given her time and resources before making a choice about which avenue to pursue (Brooks 2002). However, many have criticized this approach to planning, contending that it is infeasible and out of touch with the realities of politics and conflict among diverse public interests (Altschuler 1965; Innes 1996; Brooks 2002; Peterman 2004). This evolution has corresponded with an increasing complexity of urban issues as cities, as well as our knowledge and understanding of them, grow and change over time.

In addition, the importance of citizen participation in the process has increased throughout the years. This is partly due to citizen backlash to top-down programs like urban renewal, highway building, and other major city development efforts (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003) as well as citizen action movements such as civil rights in the 1960s and 70s. Other reasons relate to the growing diversity and complexity of our cities, and an increasing value placed on issues of equity and broad representation of interests.
As time has passed, technology advanced, and the population grown and diversified, it has become increasingly apparent that urban problems are extremely complex, what some term “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber 1973). Some scholars claim that we live in a time when our institutions and practices lack the capacity to deal with globalization, rapid technology growth, advanced communications systems and community fragmentation (Innes and Booher 2002). Traditional models of governance depend on predictability, viewing the world like a machine. In reality, society is complex, dynamic, and evolving like an organic living system. In order to deal with these types of “wicked problems”, they propose a governance system that uses collaborative processes in order to build community capacity.

**Building Community Capacity through Collaborative Planning**

Collaborative frameworks are being explored in response to the recognition that urban problems have a “wicked” nature. In planning, the paradigm has shifted away from the notion of the planner as a technical expert and toward the planner as a facilitator (Peterman 2004). In addition, more and more localities are using citizen participation as an input to planning and other policy-making decisions (Chaskin and Garg 1997).

Parallel to this shift is the movement toward thinking of policy-making as a system of governance that creates partnerships between the public and private realm, rather than as a singular government. “Governance and government are not the same. Government is about “doing” things and delivering services, whereas governance is “leading” society, convincing its various interest groups to embrace common goals and strategies” (Osborne and Gaebler 1993 as cited by Roseland 2005, 190). In some respects, the question then becomes, what is the right balance between representative democracy and participatory democracy? Integral to creating a governance system are the notions of using collaboration and building community capacity. However, in order to do this, a city must first empower its citizens to take part in the process.
In her famous article *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969), Arnstein equates citizen participation with citizen power, stating that real participation involves a redistribution of power and the deliberative inclusion (particularly of the “have-nots”) of citizens in the decision/policy-making process. The critical factor is for government to be responsive to citizens, allowing them to meaningfully contribute and affect social reform.

Fischer (2006) states that for deliberative empowerment of citizens to occur, there must be both a participatory project at the bottom or grass roots level *and* strong political support at the top. In addition, he describes an empowered citizen as one that has the capacity to effectively participate in shaping public policies and programs. Thus an empowered citizenry is created when the government purposefully solicits citizen input and provides the resources and knowledge for citizens to participate in and influence public policies.

Ultimately, planning theorists argue that using collaborative processes and building community capacity will change the structure of governance (Healey 2003) to be more inclusive and self-organizing. Such processes depend on the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders to gather a variety of information about how things are working. The information is used both as an input to the process of creating plans, to evaluate what systems are effective, and then adapt the process to meet ever-evolving goals (Innes and Booher 2002).

A clear definition of capacity is difficult to find. In reviewing attempts to construct a definition, Chaskin (2001) identifies four factors that prior definitions seem to have in common: (1) the existence of resources (from individual skills to access to financial capital); (2) networks of relationships; (3) leadership; and (4) support for collective action and problem solving mechanisms or processes. Thus these factors are present when a community or government has capacity.

In addition, Innes and Booher (2002) suggest that the process of capacity *building* should include a diverse range of stakeholders, plus technical and other assistance to ensure equality. The
process has a continuous learning orientation, teaching participants to design, implement, and evaluate programs. A variety of information is gathered and used to inform policy decisions, but also to evaluate how current processes are working and adapt those processes to be better in the future. These are the mechanisms for building capacity.

Finally, capacity can be built at four levels in a community: “within members; within their relationships; within their organizational structure; and within the programs they sponsor” (Innes and Booher 2002, 9). Or, as Chaskin (2001) outlines it, capacity is built through individuals, relationships, organizations, and governance. The combination of mechanisms a city uses can be viewed as the process by which that city attempts to build capacity. These mechanisms include the tools, resources, and communication techniques that planners employ during the planning process.

The ideas of capacity building and collaboration are not new. Even in the context of neighborhood planning, cities have been applying these processes in recent years in order to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change (Chaskin 2001). However, while a number of case studies have outlined the process of capacity building, there is still a lack of understanding about what the long-term effects are (Innes and Booher 1999), particularly from the perspective of the local government (Chaskin and Garg 1997). In addition, there are a number of debates about the rationale for collaborative planning, particularly surrounding how collaborative neighborhood revitalization efforts are changing government.

Sarah Elwood (2002) identifies one current debate regarding collaborative revitalization efforts. “Some scholars identify these purportedly collaborative neighborhood revitalization initiatives as part of a neoliberal policy program of downsizing the state, while others argue that the new roles assumed by civic institutions offer new opportunities for citizen involvement in urban policy making and priority setting for revitalization” (2002, 121-Abstract).
Still others argue that these collaborative initiatives are not only good democracy, but necessary in order to create sustainable communities that can effectively deal with the complex issues facing cities today (Innes and Booher 2002; Boyte 2005; Roseland 2005). These proponents contend that the result of collaboration is a shift from a singular government to a governance system with much greater capacity (Boyte 2005; Roseland 2005).

**Problem Statement & Research Questions**

Although there is quite a bit of research on the processes of collaborative planning and building community capacity, many of these studies examine regional initiatives or initiatives by non-profit organizations. Little study has been done examining a collaborative effort by a city government or the after-effects of doing so on the governance structure. Hence there is a need to examine the following questions, which I will do in this research:

1. How did Seattle’s neighborhood planning process build community capacity?
2. By building capacity at the citizen level, has the capacity of Seattle’s government subsequently increased? Why or why not?
3. How has collaborative planning changed the relationship between government and citizens?

I argue that by building capacity at the citizen/community level the capacity of the government increases as well, requiring a shift of organizational culture from government to governance. This shift enables the City to better engage with citizens in responding to complex contemporary issues.

**Case Study Selection: Why Seattle?**

The City of Seattle, Washington has been widely recognized for its innovative approach to neighborhood planning (Diers 2004; Sirianni 2007). The case provides a rich example of how the
obligatory citizen participation mechanisms in planning failed, and the city responded by designing a collaborative program that would ensure inclusion, empower citizens, and create a system that promoted innovation while maintaining accountability. Seattle is an exemplary case for this research because it has employed a collaborative planning process and worked to build community capacity, changing a formerly contentious and mistrustful relationship between government and citizens into one characterized by greater understanding and propensity for partnership.

Over the past twenty years, through the design of its neighborhood programs, Seattle has collaborated with a variety of stakeholders in planning processes and fundamentally changed the relationship between citizens and government. As such, it offers a case in which to study what the long-term impacts of a collaborative planning effort have been on a city government. The major issue of contention between the City and neighborhood groups has consistently been about how the City of Seattle manages growth, and whose interests are being served through planning processes, public policies, and participation mechanisms. The case also offers an example of how shifting the balance of power and intentionally building community capacity can change the results of government efforts. Finally, programs like the Neighborhood Matching Fund (which is part of this analysis) provide evidence of the return on investment the City of Seattle has gained by engaging citizens.

Seattle established its Office of Neighborhoods in 1988, in order to better respond to neighborhood issues. Prior to that date, there was a history of conflict between the City government and citizens, particularly with neighborhood groups (Diers 2004; Sirianni 2007). The creation of the Office of Neighborhoods was in response to recommendations by the Planning Commission to create a partnership between the City and its neighborhoods in order to provide citizens with the tools and resources they needed (Diers 2004, 29). In 1990, the Office of Neighborhoods and two other neighborhood service organizations were consolidated into the Department of Neighborhoods. Since
then, the Department has worked to build inclusive programs, ensuring broad participation and access
to resources.

In the same year, Washington passed its State Growth Management Act, which had certain
requirements for local comprehensive plans including growth boundaries and urban population
growth targets (Sirianni 2007). As Seattle formulated a new comprehensive plan to comply with the
Act’s standards, it used a civic panel and several workshops as its participation mechanisms.
However, the City did not solicit neighborhood input up front. This was due in large part to the
perception that NIMBYism and neighborhood conflict had prevented the implementation of Seattle’s
1985 downtown plan (Sirianni 2007). When Seattle moved to adopt their new comprehensive plan in
1994, “Towards a Sustainable Seattle”, the response from citizens was a neighborhood rights
campaign demanding greater participation. As a result, the city council established the Neighborhood
Planning Program in late 1994.

Over the next five years, staff from the City of Seattle and representatives from a variety of
neighborhood groups partnered together to write 38 neighborhood plans. In order to ensure an
inclusive process, the City made funding contingent on each neighborhood bringing all stakeholders
to the table (Sirianni 2007). By the end of 1999, the plans had all been completed, thoroughly
reviewed, and adopted by the City. Since then, the City has worked toward implementing the plans’
proposals, and is currently working on an approach to review and update the neighborhood plans.

Methodology

This is a single, in-depth case study designed to do two things: 1) test the theory about the
process of collaborative planning and capacity building, and 2) explore how using a collaborative
approach to neighborhood planning has affected the City of Seattle’s government after twenty years,
including how it has changed the relationship between government and citizens.
A single case study may be used to examine how certain conditions have changed over time (Yin 2003). I argue that by using a collaborative approach to neighborhood planning and deliberately building capacity at the citizen level, the City has shifted from a singular government to a system of governance with much greater capacity. In addition, theorists say that such an approach will lead to increased capacity at the governance level, enabling the City to better deal with complex contemporary issues. Thus, this case is also a critical test of existing theory, another rationale for using a single case study (Yin 2003).

This study is rooted in pragmatism, where “knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (Creswell 2003, 11). Because of this, a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis will be used although a heavy emphasis is given to qualitative data, while quantitative data is used in a supplementary fashion. This will strengthen the validity of the case study by examining multiple sources of evidence in order to draw conclusions (Yin 2003; Creswell 2003).

By using a strong theoretical lens in this research, I take a deductive approach. Thus, theorists’ debates and conclusions about collaborative planning, citizen participation, and capacity building become the framework that guides the investigation. The definitions and potential implications of capacity, governance, citizen participation, and empowerment further focus the line of inquiry and define the anticipated outcomes driving the hypothesis. In addition, I use the theory and conceptual definitions to create the themes outlining the data collection and analysis.

By using qualitative interviews as the main method of data collection, I add an inductive layer to the research inquiry. Through analysis of eleven formal interviews, I discover other themes and unanticipated patterns that become part of the results reported in Chapters 5 (Ripple Effects) and 6 (Lessons and Challenges). Finally, by adding other sources of data including City reports and publications, archival records, news articles, and quantitative data about the Neighborhood Matching
Fund, I provide both context and evidence of the changes that have occurred in Seattle. These data also establish the longitudinal segment of the case study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

As the major method of data collection, I use open-ended, semi-structured interviews with key people to understand their perceptions of how the process and outcomes of neighborhood planning have changed the nature of governance in Seattle. Interviewees fall into three categories: 1) City staff and public officials closely involved in the neighborhood planning process; 2) citizen leaders involved in the neighborhood planning process; and 3) City staff and public officials not directly involved in the process of neighborhood planning, but who have been affected by it indirectly. In order to choose interview participants, I use a snowball sample, starting with a few key informants based on previous research that has been conducted about this program. After contacting them, I asked if they could direct me to others who are familiar with the process and who may have a different point of view. Sirianni (2007) used a similar method when examining how Seattle created and structured their neighborhood planning program. Eleven formal interviews were conducted.

In addition to the interviews, there are two other parts to this case study. The first is intended to provide the historical context, or story, of how Seattle got to the point of creating first the Office of Neighborhoods and then the neighborhood planning program. The idea of neighborhood planning arose out of the reaction of citizens and community groups to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, which called for targeting growth in urban village areas based on the requirements of the 1990 State Growth Management Act. Carmen Sirianni (2007), who researched Seattle’s neighborhood planning program, alludes to the fact that neighborhood groups were not originally included in formulating the 1994 Comprehensive Plan because of the perception that they had blocked implementation of the 1985 Downtown Plan with the Citizens’ Action Plan, known as the CAP Initiative. Therefore, I use documentation from the Seattle Municipal Archives to piece together the story of what happened
from the beginnings of the 1985 Downtown Plan to the start of neighborhood planning, and establish a baseline for the City-citizen relationship before neighborhood planning took place. This baseline will make it easier to see what changes have occurred and answer the third research question, of how the relationship has evolved.

As an embedded unit of analysis I selected one program to analyze – the Neighborhood Matching Fund – which is one of the primary mechanisms the City of Seattle uses to support community initiatives. I use this analysis both to gain a sense of how government priorities have changed as well as to see if it points towards increased capacity. Thus, data sources for this research include interviews, archival records, news articles, City of Seattle publications, and quantitative data for the Neighborhood Matching Fund.

In order to analyze the interviews, I use the theoretical framework and key concepts of capacity, governance, citizen participation and empowerment to identify themes to look for in the data. These themes include evidence of outreach, partnerships, learning, and characteristics of governance as indicators of capacity. I also use sub-themes to narrow each theme. During the process of analysis, other themes emerge that were not anticipated. These are reflected in my conclusions regarding the analysis and lessons learned. When analyzing the other sources of data (the archival records, news articles, City of Seattle publications, and Neighborhood Matching Fund) I looked for evidence of a change in relationship between the city government and community groups as well as evidence of increased capacity at both the community and government levels. The analysis methods are further explained in Chapter 3.

**Research Organization**

The remainder of this research study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature regarding three main topics. First, I review the historical shift in the planning paradigm, from comprehensive rationality to collaboration and community capacity building. As part
of this section I look at the change in the planner role and the evolution of citizen participation in the process. In addition, I explore the difference between government and governance and the arguments for participatory democracy. Finally, I use existing theory to define capacity and create an argument for building community capacity, including its resulting impact on the governance system.

Chapter 3 further defines the case study methodology, discusses the benefits of a mixed methods approach, defines important concepts and variables, and describes in detail the methods of data collection. I detail the reasoning for choosing each unit of analysis, and describe how it contributes to a better understanding of the research questions. Finally, I describe how the data is analyzed.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the context of the case study and discuss the results of the analysis. In Chapter 4 I begin by examining the historical conditions surrounding the development of the neighborhood-planning program, and the nature of the relationship between citizens and government at that time. I then use other researchers’ accounts and information from the interviews to describe the collaborative process of neighborhood planning that occurred in Seattle throughout the 1990s, and analyze how that process built community capacity. In chapter 5, I take the analysis further by examining whether or not the governance capacity has increased, as related to specific indicators. I also analyze the Neighborhood Matching Fund as evidence of whether or not building capacity at the citizen level has increased the capacity of the Seattle government and changed government priorities. The analysis shows that capacity at both levels has indeed been increased, with greater value placed on involving diverse stakeholders, citizens as resources, and partnerships.

Chapter 6 describes the lessons and challenges that Seattle has learned and faced throughout this process. I discuss how these lessons and challenges fit with what theorists have said about collaborative planning, capacity building, and governance. In addition, I discuss policy and other
implications that may result from using this type of strategy, based on the Seattle case. Finally, I identify the limitations of this research and possible directions for future study.

Conclusion

At a time when our nation is facing great challenges, we need to find a new way to structure the relationship between government and citizens. This research is highly relevant, exploring the case of a city where old methods of governing failed due to conflict and mistrust. Out of an era of confrontation with neighborhood groups and citizen activists, Seattle found a way to partner with its citizens through collaborative planning, resulting in an organizational and political culture change as well as revitalized neighborhoods. The process is imperfect and ongoing, and has certainly experienced modifications along the way. But because Seattle has deliberately built citizen capacity, the system is flexible enough to adapt and face the complex issues ahead. While this story focuses on forces at the local level, it has lessons for revising our nation’s approach to governance, and implementing a new form of participatory democracy.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter explores the historical and theoretical underpinnings for the movement towards collaborative planning and increased citizen participation in planning and policy-making processes. I also review the differences scholars have proposed for understanding government vs. governance, and why this is so important for understanding governance capacity. Finally, I review the attempts to construct a definition of “capacity”, as well as how theorists have described what it means to build capacity, and how that affects the notion of governance. Integral to these themes are the concepts of equity, empowerment, and citizenship, as our society tries to find the appropriate balance between representative and participatory democracy.

Shifting the planning paradigm: from scientific rationality to collaboration

In the United States, the field of City Planning arose out of the social reform movements of the early 1900’s, which called increasing attention to the problems of over-congestion and sought to remedy them through changes in the physical environment (Webber 1963; Hall 2002). At the time, it was generally believed that a well-constructed physical environment would rid the industrial city of the physical and social ills plaguing it: overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, crime, and prostitution, among others (Hall 2002). Thus constructing the physical environment of the city became the means through which planners attempted to improve the health, safety, and welfare (including the social well-being) of urban residents (Webber 1963; Hall 2002).

Out of the Progressive Era rose the City Beautiful movement, which took the idea of physical determinism, attached an emphasis on aesthetics and efficiency, and argued that a rationally planned city would bring order to chaos (Le Corbusier 2002). However, it was planning without a social purpose (Hall 2002). Out of this movement came such influential people as Ebenezer Howard
(1850-1928) with his garden city ideas; Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and his plans for Washington D.C. and Central Park; Daniel Burnham (1846-1912) and his work in Chicago for the World’s Columbian Exhibition; and Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) with his plans for decentralized rural communities like Broadacre City, who each attempted to define the ideal form of the city (Bridge and Watson 2002; Fishman 2003).

Along with the idea that the physical environment of the city could determine the behavior of its citizens, the role of early planners was to approach urban problems scientifically, using a theory of comprehensive rationality. Under this theory, the planner sets goals, and then considers alternatives and consequences as fully as possible given her time and resources before making a choice about which avenue to pursue (Brooks 2002). However, many have criticized this approach to planning. These critics contend that rational comprehensive planning is impossible to do given mans’ limited knowledge and capabilities (Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Lindblom 1959; Altshuler 1965). Despite this criticism, a number of planners continue to rely on the rational comprehensive model even today (Dalton 1986; Brooks 2002).

Although the rational comprehensive model has not entirely disappeared, a number of other planning models appeared as alternatives. Lindblom (1959) proposed incrementalism, whereby the planner uses a number of “successive limited comparisons” between alternatives, adjusting strategies as new information is obtained. However, this model has also been widely criticized as a conservative approach that is insufficient for tackling large problems and forward-thinking action (Brooks 2002).

These two models dominated the planning paradigm through much of the first half of the twentieth century, until the social movements of the 1960s and 70s emerged and drastically changed the relationship between local governments and citizens (Brooks 2002). Reactions to large top-down federal development programs such as urban renewal coupled with the civil rights and then anti-
Vietnam War movements flipped the balance of power as formerly powerless citizens began to organize and assert their voice. Out of this era came the notion of planning as advocacy (Brooks 2002).

The concept of advocacy was first introduced to planning by Paul Davidoff in 1965 who argued that contrary to the value-free mantra of rationality, planning must involve value judgments. Along with the promotion of justice and equity, Davidoff claimed that planners needed to prepare “plural plans” with each responsible for expressing the values and objectives of a specific interest group (Davidoff 1965; Brooks 2002). Thus the role of the planner was to advocate on behalf of a particular population or community.

The advocacy planning movement lost its momentum in the 1980s, when the Reagan Administration cut federal funding for social programs. In addition, the idea of creating plural plans never really caught on with local governments (Brooks 2002). Questions arose about how to even identify or define a relationship with a client (Peattie 1963). However, despite the problems with the model itself, neither the emphasis on values of justice and equity nor the idea of pluralistic interests faded from the profession (Peattie 1963; Brooks 2002).

As ethics of equity in planning grew stronger, the issue of power surfaced. One spinoff model was equity planning, whose major proponent was Norman Krumholz, Planning Director in Cleveland from 1969 to 1979. Krumholz describes equity planners as those who deliberately attempted to “redistribute power, resources, or participation away from local elites and toward poor and working-class city residents” (1994, 150). Planners were no longer concerned with just the technical efficiency of the city, but began to see their position as a mechanism to balance power, knowledge and resources among those at all levels of society, enabling citizens to act on their own behalf (Peattie 1963; Forester 1982).
Conversations about power and the critical role of information in creating power led to yet another shift in the planning model, to communicative action. Planning theorists turned to communication as a means of distributing knowledge, and therefore power. John Forester (1982), who argued that information was an important source of power in the planning process, noted that “despite the fact that planners have little influence upon the structure of ownership and power in this society, they can influence the conditions which make citizens able (or unable) to participate, act, and organize effectively regarding issues affecting their collective lives” (67).

Planners were to do this by managing the understanding, trust, informed consent, and knowledge of ordinary participants, while at the same time anticipating the agendas of well-entrenched interests and preparing participants to organize for their own sake (Forester 1982; Brooks 2002). Integral to this was the idea that planning communications “are not just exchanges of words but reflect a variety of institutional, political, and power relationships” (Brooks 2002, 121). Thus planning processes offer an opportunity to build mutual understandings, trust, and collective meanings through dialogue, debate, and negotiation.

Communicative action theory really began to take hold in the 1990s (Innes 1995). With this, new roles for planners as mediators, consensus builders or facilitators emerged (Brooks 2002). Innes (1996) argues that consensus building requires bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders for face-to-face discussion with a facilitator who leads the group through a carefully designed set of procedures. All opinions and concerns are heard and taken seriously. The group explores common interests and agrees upon the relevant facts, creates alternatives, develops criteria for making choices, and finally makes a decision upon which they all agree (Innes 1996).

Both communicative rationality and consensus building emphasize the importance of learning and empowerment through planning processes, where planners facilitate communication among a diverse range of interests. These methods require a relationship between government and citizens that
legitimates community-based initiatives rather than purely top-down, one-size-fits-all solutions. The role of the planner is to act as facilitator or mediator in a community-based process of dialogue (Brooks 2002).

Expanding on the ideas of communicative action and consensus building are the models of collaborative planning and capacity building. Communicative action or collaboration is the theoretical model for planning, while consensus building or capacity building are techniques within those models. What makes a collaborative process different from the other models of planning is that it relies on engaging both public and private sector players, who represent a variety of interests, to work on projects related to the collective welfare (Innes and Booher 2002; Peterman 2004). In addition, collaboration involves planning with stakeholders rather than for stakeholders (Roseland 2005) thus bringing community participation to the forefront. Seen as a means for arriving at consensus (Peterman 2004; Innes and Booher 2002), it is not about finding that perfect solution that everyone agrees upon, but rather a means through which diverse interests can recognize their interdependence and find an outcome that they can all live with (Roseland 2005). Another characteristic of collaborative planning is an emphasis on the learning and accountability of all parties, which creates the conditions for ongoing evaluation and self-improvement (Innes and Booher 2002; Healey et al. 2003).

The ideas of collaboration are not new. While they have emerged only recently in the field of planning, collaboration has been used since at least the 70s in settling environmental disputes and by judicial system in multi-party cases (Gray 1989). Proponents see it as a strategy for dealing with conflict, turbulence, and the rapid changes in our society today, thus developing our capacity to respond to complex problems and opportunities (Innes and Booher 1999; Healey et al. 2003; Gray 1989). Even in the context of neighborhood planning, cities have been applying these processes in recent years in order to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change (Chaskin 2001).
However, contrary to earlier models of planning that focused on city-building, collaborative planning “is about fostering the institutional capacity to shape the ongoing flow of ‘place-making’ activities in ways which can promote long-term and sustainable improvements to material quality of life and to the sense of identity and well-being of people in places” (Healey 1998, 1544). This shifts the role of government and planners from experts who control the city-building process to facilitators and educators who build community capacity so that participants may shape public policies that affect their lives (Healey 1998; Innes and Booher 2002; Peterman 2004; Roseland 2005). This shift brings up important questions about what it should mean to govern, which will be discussed later in this chapter. First, however, it is important to understand the historical reasons for the citizen participation movement.

The evolution of citizen participation and the neighborhood movement

Planning enjoyed its heyday after World War II, when there was a high confidence in government action and large pots of federal money available to fund local projects (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003). The 1950s and 60s were dominated by large scale projects such as highway and airport construction, transit projects, and urban renewal, funded with federal dollars and often using the power of eminent domain to acquire property for economic development (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003; Weiss 1980). Urban renewal projects in particular were targeted at clearing what were considered to be slum areas in order to reclaim them for the benefit of the political and business elite (Weiss 1980; Anderson 1964). These were all top-down projects that rarely involved the public in developing plans or making decisions.

Because the neighborhoods targeted by urban renewal projects were mostly low-income and/or minority, they did not have a means of organizing effectively to resist the government plans or exert any control over the outcomes. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that they often did not understand what was happening or believe that they would really be forced to leave their homes and
businesses (Gans 1982). While the elite interests of the city saw these areas as “blighted” and thus marginal spaces that needed to be reclaimed for the benefit of the public (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003), many of the neighborhoods were in fact fully functioning communities (Gans 1982; Keating 2000) that were dismantled and displaced.

Inevitably, these top-down projects did eventually cause a backlash from citizens which provoked changes in the planning field. The citizen participation and neighborhood-based movements started as a defensive strategy where citizens organized to protect their community from these top-down redevelopment projects (Bratt 1983; Baroni 1983; Hou and Kinoshita 2007). With this came a recognition that public policy had not been very successful at intervening to stabilize or revitalize deteriorating neighborhoods, and that the programs that had been implemented “displayed limited knowledge of and sensitivity to neighborhood concerns and priorities” (Mayer 1984, 2). In addition, concentration on the economic development of the central business district (CBD) yielded few returns as far as increasing the quality of life for many residents (Krumholz 1999).

As communities started to organize against government efforts, there became increasing pressure on public officials to “do no harm” through projects (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003). Government at all levels responded by creating mechanisms for mitigation of negative effects and citizen participation in the processes of planning and policy-making. At this same time, theorists were arguing for either advocacy or increased equity in planning (Davidoff 1965; Krumholz 1994) and recognizing the pluralist nature of society.

The 1970s saw the beginnings of the neighborhood movement in federal policy. The Carter administration in particular passed a number of policies intended to involve community groups in the revitalization efforts of cities (Baroni 1983; Bratt 1983). In 1978 the administration proposed “A New Partnership to Conserve America’s Communities”, which called for a long-term commitment to revitalization, alluded to the fact that government cannot solve all urban problems alone, and called
for the involvement of the private sector and community groups for help (Baroni 1983). The
neighborhood was viewed as a more manageable unit for understanding and solving problems (Bratt
1983).

Morris and Hess (1975) argue that neighborhoods persist “for the simply practical reasons of
making life livable and resolving problems which have remained untouched by the movement toward
huge, dehumanized scale in social organization, economic organization, and in the organization of
resources and technology” (1975, 5). By the late 70s it became clear that neighborhoods and
community groups could be a “creative offensive force” to implement various initiatives related to
housing rehabilitation, economic development, and subsidized housing (Bratt 1983), among other
issues. When the Reagan administration took over in 1980, it cut much of the federal funding for
community self-help and other social service programs. Thus it fell to local governments to create
programs that would involve citizens in policy decisions and implementation.

Although both federal and local governments increased mechanisms for citizen participation
during the 70s and 80s, it was unclear how meaningful that participation really was. One strategy
widely used throughout the 80s was the citizen survey, which was seen as a way of measuring
neighborhood confidence and as a mechanism for citizens to communicate concerns and priorities,
provide information, and evaluate current programs (Bratt 1983). The issues that need to be
addressed in order for meaningful participation to occur are who participates, when they participate,
and how they participate (Roseland 2005).

Burby (2003) contends that in planning, meaningful citizen participation can both strengthen
plans and improve the likelihood of their implementation. This requires planners to invite a wide
variety of stakeholder groups to take part in the plan-making process, educate participating citizens as
well as learn from their ideas, and ensure that participation is meaningful by providing tools,
information, and opportunities for dialogue. “Meaningful participation requires that all concerned and
affected stakeholders are provided the information and resources they require to influence and contribute to the decision-making process” (Roseland 2005, 191). Citizen participation in planning can generate trust, credibility and commitment, a sense of ownership over a plan’s content, as well as reduce conflict in the long term (Brody et al. 2003). In addition, scholars also argue that inclusive politics achieve more equitable results (Godschalk et al. 1994; Roseland 2005).

Another prerequisite for meaningful citizen participation is empowerment. Sherry Arnstein (1969) explores the various levels at which citizens participate in urban programs that affect their lives. At the bottom of her “ladder” are two forms of non-participation that she describes as “manipulation” and “therapy”. While the planning agency may be going through the motions to involve citizens, “their real objective is… to enable powerholders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants” (1969, 246). Thus the purpose is not to allow citizens to influence the process, but rather to present and placate attitudes about a predefined solution.

In the middle of the ladder are methods that Arnstein describes as “tokenism”, which include “informing”, “consultation”, and “placation”. These mechanisms allow citizen voices to be heard during the process, but do not create conditions whereby those voices will be heeded by the governing body. Thus “token” mechanisms of participation are just that: superficial. The top three rungs of the ladder equate with citizen power and include “partnership”, “delegated power”, and “citizen control”. Through these forms of participation, citizens increase their power and influence over the decisions that are actually made, eventually becoming the decision-makers themselves. Arnstein’s theory begs the question of what is the right balance between citizen control over public policies and the role of elected officials and city staff, leading to a debate about representative versus participatory democracy.

“Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy” (Arnstein 1969). This goes along with the democratic principle that “those affected by a
decision should participate directly in the decision-making process” (Roseland 2005). However, for deliberative empowerment of citizens to actually occur, it is necessary to have both a participatory project at the bottom and strong political support (Fischer 2006), meaning that elected officials must relinquish some of their control over public policy-making processes. Empowered citizen participation is a crucial part of collaborative planning and building capacity. It is also a critical part of governance.

**Government vs. Governance**

Parallel and related to the evolution of the citizen participation and collaborative planning movements, political theorists have been expounding the differences between *government* and *governance*. This research indicates that recent changes in urban governing practices denote a transition from the former to the latter (Elwood 2002). The key debate surrounds the role of government and of citizens, which define where our notion of democracy falls on the continuum between representative democracy and participatory democracy.

“Governance and government are not the same. *Government* is about ‘doing’ things and delivering services, whereas *governance* is ‘leading’ society, convincing its various interest groups to embrace common goals and strategies” (Osborne and Gaebler 1993, as cited by Roseland 2005, 190). Governance involves a paradigm shift from viewing citizens as customers or voters with public professionals acting as service providers, to seeing citizens as “partners, educators, and organizers of citizen action” with public professionals becoming “problem solvers and co-creators” (Boyte 2005, 537). Thus, a local government would focus mostly on its service-delivery function, such as providing utilities, infrastructure, or doing administrative tasks while a local governance system might concentrate on bringing people together in order to work together towards an improved quality of life.
However, the way a government acts depends on how we define the roles of government and citizens. These two bodies have been assigned various roles over the years while theorists have considered the political and economic forces also at work in shaping urban spaces. Throughout the Progressive Era, and during the initial movements behind city planning in the U.S., local governments concentrated primarily on the provision of infrastructure and the physical regulation of space in order to protect the health, safety, welfare, and morals of citizens (Hall 2002). Even during the City Beautiful movement, the prevailing idea was physical determinism, where the interests of citizens were attended to through the structure of the physical environment (Le Corbusier 2002). At that time, government officials and planners were the guardians and determiners of the “public interest”, valuing their own expertise over actual citizen input. Under the rational paradigm, government officials were the “experts” who regulated and managed the city.

In his argument for shifting to governance, Harry Boyte (2005) turns to older practices of democratic politics, to define governance as “a political but non-partisan process of negotiating diverse interests and views to solve public problems and create public value. Politics is citizen centered, productive, and pluralist”. He goes on to note, that “in the paradigm of democratic society, government is a crucial instrument of the citizenry, providing leadership, resources, tools, and rules. Yet officials are not the center of the civic universe, nor is government the only location for democracy’s work” (2005, 537). Within the history of planning, this could be understood as the difference between top-down and bottom-up planning.

Another way of understanding this is looking at the relationships between government, community organizations, and individual citizens. “Governance involves collaboration and empowerment more than hierarchy and control… It suggests an emphasis on the people involved, ‘the tool-makers and tool users’ as well as the tools” (Boyte 2005, 537). Under this paradigm, the skills, knowledge, and relationships of individual participants become more important.
Boyte (2005) discusses several indicators of the presence of a governance system. First, governance uses citizen organizing as a method that can be practiced on a variety of issues as well as in everyday life. For this, government staff needs skills such as public speaking, active listening, conflict resolution, negotiation, and organizing. Second, he describes professionals as public workers who take responsibility or authority for solving social issues. Finally, a system of governance views “citizens as co-creators and democracy as a commonwealth, abundant in public goods” (2005, 543). This invites a sense of ownership in the community.

In addition, places that have shifted from government to governance are characterized by interactions among diverse stakeholders in “horizontal” relationships with each other, not just “vertical” relationships with government (Boyte 2005, 541). These stakeholders work together to solve common problems and use negotiation to get past differences. In this scenario, the organizers, or government staff, are coaches, while citizen leaders are “front and center” (Boyte 2005, 541). The government does not do things for citizens if they can do it themselves, a notion that goes against the service-delivery model where government is considered to be the “expert”.

When discussing lessons he learned from neighborhood planning in Seattle, Jim Diers (2004) comes to a similar conclusion, stating that “government should never do for community organizations what they can do for themselves. Community organizations dependent on government for their legitimacy and support are not community organizations at all” (2004, 172-73). To some extent, this involves finding a balance between representative democracy and participatory democracy, and recognizing that government cannot do everything. Table 2-1, on the following page, shows a summary comparison of the characteristics of government and governance. Governance has the potential to address complex issues that need government intervention, but cannot be solved by government alone (Boyte 2005). In describing Seattle’s neighborhood programs, former Director of the Department of Neighborhoods, Jim Diers, says, “community initiatives such as these are essential
as local government revenues fail to keep pace with increasingly complex social and environmental issues” (2004, 172). As the complexity and diversity of our cities grows, it is essential that the relationship between government and citizens is restructured to recognize interdependence and common purpose.

Table 2-1. Comparing Characteristics of Government vs. Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- “Does” things</td>
<td>- “Leads”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Function: service delivery of utilities, infrastructure, administration</td>
<td>- Function: convene interests to work towards common goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Service delivery of resources, tools, knowledge</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of City Staff</th>
<th>Role of City Staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Provide expertise and technical assistance</td>
<td>- Do outreach and share knowledge with the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assuage constituency</td>
<td>- Mediate/resolve conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Customer service</td>
<td>- Build consensus</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Local Government</th>
<th>Role of Local Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Service provider</td>
<td>- Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enforcement</td>
<td>- Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Administration</td>
<td>- Convener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economic development agent</td>
<td>- Facilitator</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Citizen</th>
<th>Role of Citizen</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Customer</td>
<td>- Partner, co-creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Voter / Constituent</td>
<td>- Owners of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Little responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representative Democracy</th>
<th>Participatory Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Public officials as “experts” or “managers”</td>
<td>- Pluralistic interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Citizens elect officials to represent their interests</td>
<td>- Power of citizens to affect decisions and policy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Mechanisms</th>
<th>Participation Mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Large format meetings</td>
<td>- Small, community driven meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Surveys</td>
<td>- Advisory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Neighborhood councils</td>
<td>- Both formal and informal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Key Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic: pursuit of exchange values</td>
<td>Social: pursuit of use values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Sustainability &amp; quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Equity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
shifts the focus of government efforts from pursuing “exchange values” to pursuing “use values”, concepts described by Logan and Molotch (2007). Exchange values are the transactional, economic values of land and property, while use values are the quality and identity associated with a place. With this shift, government must become responsive to all of its citizenry, not just the powerful interests. This involves continuously engaging in a community-wide conversation about the future direction of the city, and working to build community capacity so that citizens can meaningfully participate in planning and policy-making.

Defining capacity

The concepts of capacity and capacity building have been around since the 1960’s, when George A. Graham posed the question: “how can capacity to govern be measured?” (Honadle 1981). The idea of building capacity grew more popular during the 1970’s, when it was applied to both business enterprises and the management of public organizations. Since then, there has been a struggle to construct a definition of what capacity is, and to define what it means to build capacity (Chaskin 2001; Honadle 1981). The concepts have been variously defined to focus on specific qualities, ranging from the survival ability of an organization to its ability to deliver services, recognition of an inherent political dimension to the rational perfection of an administration, and to measurement by looking at either processes or outcomes (Honadle 1981).

After searching for a definition of capacity, Beth Honadle (1981) identifies the following characteristics: “Capacity is defined by the ability to: anticipate and influence change; make informed, intelligent decisions about policy; develop programs to implement policy; attract and absorb resources; manage resources; and evaluate current activities to guide future action” (1981, 577). Thus having capacity involves a degree of self-sufficiency, knowledge, power and influence, and a mechanism for feedback and adaptation.
Similarly, Robert Chaskin (2001) looks for a definitional framework for capacity, specifically as it relates to building *community* capacity. After reviewing the more recent literature of the 1990s, Chaskin identifies four defining factors that there is agreement on: “(1) the existence of resources (ranging from the skills of individuals to the strength of organizations to access to financial capital), (2) networks of relationships (sometimes stressed in affective, sometimes in instrumental terms), (3) leadership (often vaguely defined), and (4) support for some kind of mechanisms for or processes of participation by community members in collective action and problem solving” (292-293). If a community has capacity, these things will be present within it.

Based on this extensive review of the literature and his own research, Chaskin (2001) constructs the following definition:

*Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort (2001, 295).*

Thus, having capacity means the existence of resources, relationships, leadership and support, but that capacity may then be leveraged in order to “do” things within a community.

Healey (1998) identifies three similar dimensions when defining *institutional* capacity: knowledge resources, relational resources, and capacity for mobilization. She argues that collaborative planning builds institutional capacity by working on all three dimensions to create a more efficient and democratic process. In addition, she maintains that the building capacity is an active social process.

To add further complexity to this concept, capacity can be built or created at four different levels in a community: “within members; within their relationships; within their organizational structure; and within the programs they sponsor” (Innes and Booher 2002, 9). Or, as Chaskin (2001) outlines it, capacity is built through individuals, relationships, organizations, and governance. Increasing capacity at one level will have a ripple effect on the other levels.
Based on a review of 80 articles and book chapters on collaborative capacity (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001), Innes and Booher (2002) construct what it means to have capacity at each of these levels. Individuals with capacity have more skills, a better understanding of problems, opportunities, and other people, as well as more creative ideas. These individuals are self-reflective and self-aware; willing to experiment and learn, see their role in the larger system and the networks within that system. Changes in capacity at all other levels depend on the existence of capacity at the individual level.

Organizations with capacity are able to respond to change quickly. They are well networked and work collaboratively, both internally and externally. Information flows in many directions, rather than just top down. Organizational capacity is closely tied to relational capacity, which is about the relationships that individuals and organizations create. Such relationships may include collaborations, partnerships, or coalitions. In the case of a local government, they may include interdepartmental or inter-jurisdictional arrangements.

Relational capacity relies on sharing information through constructive dialogue. The goals are to reach a shared understanding of problems and recognize shared or reciprocal interests. If relational capacity is present, the parties involved deliberately engage diverse interests and include those normally excluded to work for the mutual benefit of everyone. Thus there is an atmosphere of working for the collective wellbeing or mutual benefit of the parties involved. Through these relationships, parties can mobilize participants quickly and create innovative solutions. Finally, because these partnerships are constantly trying to learn, they are apt to track outcomes and provide this information back to participants.

If capacity is built within individuals, organizations, and relationships in the community, it will ultimately change the governance system to be more self-organizing and inclusive (Healey et al. 2003; Innes and Booher 2002). A governance system with capacity is, according to Innes and Booher
(2002), characterized by collective action rather than conflict and stalemate. There are a variety of actors representing the full range of interests that have an empowered role in creating policy and affecting decisions. To ensure that role is meaningful, the governance system provides those actors with information, tools, resources, and communication mechanisms to facilitate participation. Other indications of governance capacity include an atmosphere of trust and emphasis on shared interests. The governance system relies on a “distributed intelligence system” where players can act independently (without getting permission from higher levels). Thus, the system is able to constantly evolve, and can respond quickly to changing conditions.

Based on these theories about capacity building, I have constructed a framework for understanding how it works as related to this case. When a government uses collaborative processes to build community capacity it works in a cycle, ultimately increasing capacity of the governance system as illustrated in Figure 2-1. The Seattle government builds capacity within individuals and organizations or neighborhood groups through collaborative neighborhood programs. That capacity reinforces itself because individuals belong to organizations and have relationships with other

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Figure 2.1 Capacity Building, Conceptual Framework
individuals. In addition, various organizations have relationships with one another. Ultimately, the additional capacity at the community level (within individual citizens, the organizations they belong to, and the relationships they have with one another) should increase the capacity of the governance system. This occurs when the government is able to leverage those newly created resources within the community.

One of the key components of community capacity is the knowledge resources that are available (Healey 1998; Chaskin 2001; Innes and Booher 2002). From a local government standpoint, to build capacity is in part to create a process that acknowledges that a diverse range of local knowledge is important and use varying approaches to tap into that knowledge.

What makes an urban governance process ‘knowledgeable’ is the collective capacity to establish arenas and discussions which enable interaction in ways which are sensitive to cultural differences in ways of thinking and valuing, and ways of communicating. In particular, it means that officials, professionals, and experts need to recognize that they have access to but one of many ‘forms of knowing and valuing’ (Healey 1998, 1540).

Thus, capacity building efforts incorporate a continuous learning orientation; including mechanisms for knowledge sharing between the community and the City, as well as consistent review of what is working and what is not in order to improve outcomes (Innes and Booher 2002).

The notion of capacity building is inextricably intertwined with empowered citizen participation in the processes of collaborative planning and policy making. Healey states: “the argument for collaborative planning thus lies in its contribution to building an institutional capacity focused on enhancing the ability of place-focused stakeholders to improve their power to ‘make a difference’ to the qualities of their place” (1998, 1541). “Such a discourse of collaboration can give community groups greater leverage to demand involvement, and reinforce the premise that community consultation and the knowledge of residents are important to urban governance” (Elwood 2002).
Under these theories, building capacity within a community will require a shift towards a political culture of governance, as citizens demand greater participation and governments recognize that they can solve complex issues more effectively if they work with the community. Local governments need citizens as community partners in order to move towards sustainable cities. Citizen organizations can provide innovative approaches, networks, and other resources not typically available to government (Roseland 2005). Thus, building capacity at the community level should increase governmental capacity, enabling it to leverage these resources.

Ultimately, the system changes from a centralized hierarchy to a decentralized network of partnerships among government agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizen groups. Elinor Ostrom (1999) found decentralized governance with high participation had advantages in efficiency, sustainability and equity. These governance systems were successful because they incorporated local knowledge, built relationships based on trust and reciprocity, established mechanisms for feedback, and were characterized by adaptability, lower enforcement costs, and less redundancy among programs. In other words, they had capacity. However, Ostrom also noted that these systems could have uneven involvement, discrimination, lack of innovation and access to knowledge, as well as the inability to cope with large common resources. Ostrom argues for a mixed, polycentric system; it may be messy, but tends to outperform centralized government (as cited by Boyte 2005).

**Conclusion**

The notions of collaborative planning, capacity, governance and empowerment closely resemble one another in the processes and outcomes they promote. This research looks at those interrelationships, particularly as related to a city government effort to build community capacity through collaborative planning programs and the effect that has on the governance structure. Based on the theory, it seems that in order for this community and governmental capacity to be built, there must be a shift towards empowering citizens through a culture of governance.
While previous research has focused on understanding collaborative planning and capacity building processes and examining various regional and other community initiatives, there is still a lack of understanding about the long-term effects of such initiatives (Innes and Booher 1999) as well as whether or not the outcomes are improving the ability of government and citizens to respond to conflict and change. In addition, there is a need to look at the issue of capacity from the perspective of the local government (Chaskin and Garg 1997). This research helps to fill in some of those gaps and works to build on the existing theory by examining a case where a local government has engaged in these efforts. Thus, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying how increased capacity can lead to better governance.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This is a case study to test the theory on collaborative planning and capacity building, to determine whether building capacity within the community will ultimately increase the capacity of the governance system, and to discover how the collaborative neighborhood planning efforts of the 1990s have changed the relationship between the Seattle city government and its citizens. To understand these effects, I draw on the theory about what it means to build capacity as well as various frameworks for evaluating collaborative planning. This research argues that these processes require a shift from government to governance, enabling the city of Seattle to better respond to problems and opportunities by engaging with the community.

In the late 1980s, the City of Seattle created a department and several programs for working with neighborhoods to try to mitigate the frequent conflict between the City and neighborhood groups. The major issue of contention was consistently over how the City was managing growth and its attention to the Central Business District (CBD) rather than neighborhood issues. However, these programs did not immediately translate into highly participatory planning processes. After the new Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1994 and met with neighborhood resistance, the City created a new mechanism for involving neighborhood interests: neighborhood-specific plans. Under this new program, neighborhoods were required to identify and attempt to bring all stakeholders to the table for the planning process. Following several years of intense community and city staff involvement, the 38 neighborhood plans were reviewed and adopted by the City. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan was updated to include a chapter discussing the neighborhoods plans, and other amendments to align the plans with one another.
Proponents of collaborative planning methods, of which capacity building is an integral part, argue that a government with increased capacity will be less characterized by conflict and stalemate, and more likely to respond to new problems and opportunities quickly (Innes and Booher 2002; Healey 1998; Gray 1989). Seattle is a real world example of a citywide collaborative planning effort, thus offering a chance to study how the process and its outcomes have impacted a city governance system. By examining this single case in-depth, I hope to test the relevance of the body of theory, and discover possible unanticipated outcomes of such efforts.

**Hypothesis and Purpose**

Although there is quite a bit of research on the processes of collaborative planning and building community capacity, many studies have focused on regional initiatives (Innes and Booher 2002) or initiatives by Community Development Corporations (Chaskin 2001). Little study has been done examining a collaborative effort by a city government, or the after effects of such a process on the local system of governance. Hence there is a need to examine the following questions, which I will do in this research:

1. How did Seattle’s neighborhood planning process build community capacity?

2. Has building capacity at the community level subsequently increased the capacity of Seattle’s government? Why or why not?

3. How has collaboration changed the relationship between Seattle’s government and citizens?

I argue that by building capacity at the citizen/community level the capacity of the government increases as well, requiring a shift of political culture from government towards governance. This shift enables the City to better respond to complex contemporary issues by expanding the resources the City can leverage within its citizenry.
Methodology

This is a single, in-depth case study that examines the history and context surrounding why the City of Seattle chose to design a collaborative neighborhood planning effort and how that effort has affected community capacity, governance capacity, and the relationship between the government and citizens. Yin (2003) outlines five reasons for using a single case: when the case represents a critical test of existing theory, a rare or unique circumstance, a representative or typical case, when the case serves a revelatory purpose, or when the case serves a longitudinal purpose.

This case study falls into three of those categories. First, I have designed the study as a longitudinal look at how conditions in Seattle have changed over time. The conditions under particular examination are: the relationship between City and citizens, public involvement in the planning process, and level of capacity within the community and the governance system. The study period is from the early 1980s to the present. Second, this case is intended to test the existing body of theory about collaborative planning and capacity building. These theories have a “clear set of propositions” (Yin 2003, 40) about both processes and outcomes that will be used as a framework to guide the inquiry. Finally, neighborhood planning in Seattle provides a unique and exemplary example of collaborative planning due to an unprecedented kind of program design, leadership, provision of resources and support by the local government to the community. In addition, because neighborhood planning ended ten years ago, it offers an opportunity to study some of the after effects.

This methodology combines a deductive approach with a mixed-methods design. Using a deductive model to derive expectations and hypotheses from theories (Babbie 2007), I am able to test the existing body of knowledge about the effects of collaborative planning processes and community capacity building, and explain how using a collaborative approach to neighborhood planning has affected the City of Seattle’s government after twenty years, including how it has changed the relationship between government and citizens. Theorists say that such an approach will led to
increased capacity at the governance level (Chaskin 2001; Innes and Booher 2002; Healey 1998), enabling the City to better deal with complex contemporary issues. I argue that by using a collaborative approach to neighborhood planning and deliberately building capacity at the citizen level, the City has shifted from a singular government to a system of governance with much greater capacity.

This study is rooted in pragmatism, where “knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (Creswell 2003, 11). Because of this, a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis is used in order to better understand the research problem and provide insight into different levels of analysis (Creswell 2003). Additionally, this approach strengthens the validity of the case study by examining multiple sources of evidence in order to draw conclusions (Yin 2003; Creswell 2003).

Using a mixed-methods approach involves bringing in both qualitative and quantitative data, although this study focuses primarily on qualitative data and uses quantitative data in a supplementary way. For this study I employ “transformative procedures”, which means using a theoretical lens to explicitly provide a framework for topics of interest and anticipated outcomes (Creswell 2003, 16). Thus the theory is the driving force behind all choices throughout the research process. Because my intent is to test the existing theory about collaborative planning and capacity building, this technique is appropriate.

The way this case study is organized is represented in Figure 3-1 (shown on the following page) and based on Yin’s methodology for case study design (2003). The first analysis chapter is the narrative story, which starts by providing a description of the historical conditions leading up to the decision that the City of Seattle made to do neighborhood planning. It is important to identify the preceding conditions in this case because they help to explain the controversy and adversarial relationship that City and citizen groups had going into the neighborhood planning process in the
1990s. The narrative goes on to explain the impetus for creating first the Office of Neighborhoods in 1988 and then the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) in 1994. This chapter also describes the period during neighborhood planning and implementation, explaining how the process worked to build community capacity, thus answering the first research question.

The second analysis chapter is intended to answer the remaining two research questions and explain the effects of neighborhood planning on the City of Seattle, particularly on the capacity of the government and the shift towards a culture of governance. While the narrative story describes the changing relationship between City and citizens, this chapter goes into more detail analyzing that change. To add another layer of evidence to the discussion, I look at an embedded unit of analysis: the Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF).

The NMF is a program that was established in 1988 at the same time as the Office of Neighborhoods, but prior to neighborhood planning, representing the first commitment of the City to work seriously on neighborhood issues. It provides a mechanism for supporting projects that are community-driven, organized, and maintained. In exchange for funding, Seattle citizens match the City through in-kind or cash contributions. The program has continued throughout the past 20 years, and was strongly impacted by the neighborhood plans. Thus, it offers a focused look at how the City
is able to leverage citizen resources, and how that relationship has changed with the adoption of neighborhood plans. It also provides a quantitative mechanism for showing this change over time.

**Conceptual Definitions**

This study is strongly rooted in the existing body of theory about the processes of collaborative planning and more specifically, capacity building. The intent is to test the theory “on the ground” in a real world situation, and fill in an existing gap within the literature related to the after effects of such processes on governance. The core concepts of the research are capacity, governance, empowerment, and meaningful citizen participation. These concepts are integrated in order to provide the study variables and framework for answering the research questions.

Capacity is a somewhat elusive concept, and there have been a number of studies aimed at understanding and defining it (Honadale 1981; Chaskin and Garg 1997; Healey 1998; Chaskin 2001; Innes and Booher 2002). At the most basic conceptual level, capacity simply means “ability” to do what is required (Honadle 1981). However, that “ability” needs to be further broken down, defined as the combination of resources, leadership, networks of relationships, and support for participation by members of a community in collective action and problem solving (Chaskin 2001). Within a community, capacity is something that must be “built” through active processes that involve engaging diverse stakeholders, a continuous learning orientation, and the formation of new partnerships and organizations. In addition, it involves the empowerment of citizens by government to effectively participate in shaping public policies and programs (Fischer 2006).

The existence of an empowered citizenry is closely related to the idea of meaningful citizen participation as well as the notion of *governance* as opposed to *government*. Empowered citizens have some degree of control over public policies and decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, in a planning process, citizen input directly translates into plan goals, recommendations and outcomes. In addition, citizens may drive the planning process, with city staff acting as educators and facilitators.
rather than experts. To empower citizens, the City must give them access to the appropriate tools and resources (data, staff, funding) and legitimize the process. This legitimacy may come in the form of support from public officials (mayor, city council, department heads), through legal means (establishment by resolution) or both. The characteristics of an empowered citizenry are nearly identical to the definition of capacity.

Previous studies have concentrated on how capacity is built through various types of community initiatives, particularly focusing on the increased capacity of individuals, organizations and relationships (Chaskin 2001; Chaskin and Garg 1997), or capacity at the community level. There has been little research on the resultant effect on a city government. By studying one case where a government has built neighborhood capacity through collaborative planning efforts I hope to determine whether or not the capacity of the government can indeed be subsequently increased, and what the challenges or barriers to this may be. A governance system with capacity “can learn, experiment, and adapt creatively to threats and opportunities. It is characterized by regular interaction among diverse players who solve problems or complete complex new tasks by working together” (Innes and Booher 2002, 3). Often, this means changing how key decision makers think about citizens and their participation in shaping public policy (Healey 1998).

**Operationalizing Variables**

In order to operationalize variables, I use a method suggested by John Creswell (2003) that involves developing categories of questions to direct the course of study. Using this method, I first identify my three central research questions and then use subquestions to narrow the focus of each, while still leaving the questions open. These in turn become topics or questions that are explored in my interviews, review of secondary sources, and data analysis. As such, they seek to identify patterns and look for specific outcomes in the case study. The questions and subquestions, listed in Appendix A, are based on the operational and theoretical frameworks presented below.
Operational Framework

The theoretical definitions of capacity are complex, and while the concept is elusive to define, it is even more difficult to measure. To operationally define capacity, I first tried to create “indicators” in order to explain how the Neighborhood Planning Program built capacity in the community and measure whether or not the governance capacity of Seattle has subsequently increased. These indicators, shown in Table 3-1, attempt to synthesize the definitions of capacity, what it means to build capacity and characteristics of governance by organizing them into four themes or variables. The themes provide the operational framework guiding the research study, informing the questions during both data collection and analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Inclusion of diverse stakeholders, and the associated challenges and benefits</td>
<td>• New partnerships created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication methods</td>
<td>• City’s view of public involvement and of citizens (change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consensus processes</td>
<td>• New organizations created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Citizens as “partners” or “co-creators”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Governance / Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gains in individual skills / knowledge</td>
<td>• Providing resources to citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changed perceptions</td>
<td>• Attitudes about the balance between representative and participatory government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Innovations / new initiatives</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges of information sharing</td>
<td>• Less conflict / stalemate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge resources</td>
<td>• Improved relationship and trust between City and citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• City staff as “educators”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research focuses on the local government perspective. Thus, for example, outreach looks at the methods City of Seattle staff use to involve diverse stakeholders, as well as their attitudes about doing so as indicators that capacity is present or being built. The analysis looks for evidence of these indicators within the interview and other data. While the ultimate goal is to discover whether or not governance capacity has increased, governance capacity is dependent upon building capacity at the other three levels (individuals, organizations, relationships); therefore part of the research will examine where and how this has occurred. Because the concept of capacity is abstract and often
intangible, I use the analysis to discover new ways of clarifying this concept, thus contributing to theory of what it means to build community (and particularly governance) capacity.

**Theoretical Framework**

Innes and Booher (1999; 2002) present a framework for evaluating collaborative planning grounded in research and practice, complexity science, and the notion of communicative rationality. They argue that typical ways of measuring success and failure are difficult to apply to collaborative projects for several reasons. First, processes and outcomes are difficult to separate; both matter, but they are often thoroughly intertwined. Second, collaborative projects are adaptive and evolving, making it difficult to define the scope or even length of the effort. In addition, each process is “uniquely defined” by its individual participants, political and social context, environment and interactions; with the result being that it is hard to evaluate based on comparing one process to another (1999, 416-417). This reasoning provides further justification for studying one case in-depth.

This framework is based on examining both processes and outcomes, including what they call “second and third order effects” that can appear during the process or years after the process has ended (1999, 413). Innes and Booher (1999) spell out a number of criteria for evaluating both the process and the outcomes, which are shown in Table 3-2 on the next page. Outcomes may be identified as either direct effects (first order), effects that occur while the project is ongoing (second order) or not until sometime later (third order) as shown in Table 3-3, also on the following page. This research uses these evaluation criteria as anticipated characteristics of the Neighborhood-Planning process and its outcomes in the Seattle case study. These criteria, along with the operational framework defining indicators of capacity, inform the questions I ask in order to operationalize the study variables, as well as to collect and analyze the data.
Table 3-2. Evaluation criteria for collaborative projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Criteria</th>
<th>Outcome Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Includes representatives of all relevant and significantly different interests.</td>
<td>• Produces a high-quality agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is driven by a purpose and task that are real, practical, and shared by the group.</td>
<td>• Ends stalemate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is self-organizing, allowing participants to decide on ground rules, objectives, tasks, working groups, and discussion topics.</td>
<td>• Compares favorably with other planning methods in terms of costs and benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engages participants, keeping them at the table, interested, and learning through in-depth discussion, drama, humor, and informal interaction.</td>
<td>• Produces creative ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporates high-quality information of many types and assures agreement on its meaning.</td>
<td>• Results in learning and change in and beyond the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeks consensus only after discussions have fully explored the issues and interests and significant effort has been made to find creative responses to differences.</td>
<td>• Creates social and political capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Produces information that stakeholders understand and accept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sets in motion a cascade of changes in attitudes, behaviors and actions, spinoff partnerships, and new practices or institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Results in institutions and practices that are flexible and networked, permitting the community to be more creatively responsive to change and conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Innes and Booher (1999)

Table 3-3. Anticipated outcomes of collaborative projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Order Effects</th>
<th>Second Order Effects</th>
<th>Third Order Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Social Capital: trust, relationships</td>
<td>• New partnerships</td>
<td>• New collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intellectual Capital: mutual understanding, shared problem frames, agreed upon data</td>
<td>• Coordination and joint action</td>
<td>• More co-evolution, less destructive conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political Capital: ability to work together for agreed ends</td>
<td>• Joint learning extends into the community</td>
<td>• Results on the ground: adaptation of cities, regions, resources, services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High-quality agreements</td>
<td>• Implementation of agreements</td>
<td>• New institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Innovative strategies</td>
<td>• Changes in practices</td>
<td>• New norms and heuristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes in perceptions</td>
<td>• New discourses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Innes and Booher (1999)

Data Collection: Units of Analysis and Methods

The purpose of using a mixed-methods study is “to better understand a research problem by converging both broad numeric trends from quantitative research and the detail of qualitative research” (Creswell 2003, 100). For data collection, I use a “concurrent” strategy where the various types of data are collected at the same time and then integrated during the analysis and interpretation.
stages of the research process. This differs from a sequential strategy, where data from the qualitative and quantitative phases are kept separate, although one may be used to expand on the findings of the other (Creswell 2003).

There are a number of “topics” or units of analysis, that I collect data about. Thus, although this is a single case, it has an embedded design where multiple units of analysis are considered (Yin 2003). Data sources are summarized in Table 3-4. To provide context and historical background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary data sources</th>
<th>Secondary data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11 semi-structured, formal interviews  
  o Current & former Department of Neighborhoods (DON) staff (7)  
  o Neighborhood leaders (2)  
  o Other City staff (4*)  
| Documentation  
  o Memos, letters  
  o News articles  
  o City publications, reports, program evaluations  

| 2 informal interviews  
  o Neighborhood tours  
| Other research  
  o Carmen Sirianni (2007) article on Neighborhood Planning Program  

*Note: Two of the former DON staff are currently working in other City departments and therefore fall into both categories.

about the relationship between the City of Seattle and citizen groups prior to neighborhood planning, I examine documentation, including news articles, memos, letters and other secondary sources related to the 1985 Downtown Plan and the citizen backlash that resulted in the Citizen’s Alternative Plan, also known as the CAP Initiative or Initiative 31. These documents were collected from the Seattle Municipal Archives, and include a review of the original plan documents. The review of these records helps to establish a baseline description of the relationship between City and citizen groups, specifically how the City used participation mechanisms, what issue(s) were at stake, whose interests the City prioritized, and why the CAP Initiative was created. In addition, I am able to ascertain the level of trust between the Seattle City government and citizens, particularly neighborhood groups.

The second and third “topics” also work towards building the case and understanding the context behind why neighborhood planning began. For this, I first describe the creation of the Office of Neighborhoods and some of its early programs. Next, I look at the 1990 State Growth
Management Act and the subsequent 1994 Comprehensive Plan that the City of Seattle developed in response. Data about these two areas come from documentation, archival records, City publications, and information gathered during the interviews.

As the major method of data collection to examine the effects of the collaborative planning process, I use open-ended, semi-structured interviews with key people to understand their perceptions of how the neighborhood planning process has changed the nature of governance in Seattle. The eleven interviewees fall into three major categories: 1) Seattle city staff and public officials closely involved in the neighborhood planning process; 2) citizen leaders involved in the neighborhood planning process; and 3) Seattle city staff and public officials not directly involved in the process of neighborhood planning, but who have been affected by it indirectly. The intent was to interview people who have a variety of perspectives on both the neighborhood planning process and the after-effects.

In addition to the interviews, I review a report published by the Seattle City Auditor in 2007 that evaluated the neighborhood-planning program, particularly the implementation of plan recommendations. For the evaluation, the City Auditor reviewed documentation related to neighborhood plans, the Comprehensive Plan and subsequent planning efforts, conducted a survey of citizens, reviewed a sample of 100 plan recommendations to assess implementation status, conducted interviews, and reviewed City funding related to plan implementation. This documentation provides a rich complement to the interview data I collected first-hand, and fills in pieces that are not within the scope of this research.

Finally, to gain a sense of the tangible change in City support for community initiatives, I take a quantitative look at the Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) as an embedded unit of analysis. By examining community-driven projects that are receiving City funding support, I use quantitative
data to show the breadth and diversity of issues that Seattle is working on and discover evidence of increased capacity.

**Interview Design, Methods, and Procedures**

As mentioned previously, the major method of data collection is formal, semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions. In order to choose interview participants I used a snowball sample, starting with a few key informants based on previous research that has been conducted about Seattle’s Neighborhood Planning Program. These informants occupy or have occupied leadership positions within neighborhood planning, and are likely to have been involved for a longer period of time, thus giving them knowledge of how Seattle governance has changed. In addition, their contact information is available on the City website. I asked each informant if they could direct me to others who are familiar with the process and who may have a different point of view. Carmen Sirianni (2007) used a similar method when examining how Seattle created and structured their neighborhood-planning program. The intent was to gather a diverse range of perspectives from stakeholders who have held various positions directly involved in neighborhood planning, as well as city staff who can discuss how the neighborhood plans have affected other departments.

Once I established contact (via phone or email), I sent a formal letter of introduction explaining the research, the interview process, and the commitment to confidentiality. At the beginning and end of the interview, participants were given the choice to remain completely anonymous or agree to have their name associated with direct quotes. For those that chose the latter option, they were offered a chance to review the quote’s content prior to its inclusion in this thesis. The phone scripts, letter of introduction, interview guides and confidentiality protocols were all

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1 A professor at Brandeis University, Carmen Sirianni published an article on Seattle’s Neighborhood Planning Program in 2007, titled Neighborhood Planning as Collaborative Democratic Design. He also has a forthcoming book chapter about the program.
reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board at Iowa State University’s Office for Human Subjects Research.

For the formal interviews, I developed standard interview guides for each category of respondent (see Appendix B for full interview guides). The interview guides were developed to ensure that key questions were asked of all participants, for consistency. These guides were then tailored to each individual, depending on the role they have played in neighborhood planning and their knowledge of the process and outcomes. The questions were designed to answer the main research questions and subquestions. However, participants were also encouraged to expand beyond these questions, enabling me to discover issues that were not previously anticipated. New questions were also added as these issues emerged during the field work process, on topics such as the influence of the Mayor on City priorities and processes, as well as the neighborhood plan updates. I recorded all formal interviews electronically for accuracy. After conducting all eleven of the formal interviews, I listened to each recording and took detailed notes to use in analysis for identifying both common patterns (and themes which emerged) and exceptional statement from participants. I often transcribed direct quotes for use within this thesis, although none of the interviews were fully transcribed.

The formal interviews lasted approximately one hour each, and were conducted either face-to-face or over the phone. Participants were allowed to refuse to answer any question, or request that the recorder be turned off while addressing a particularly sensitive subject. At the end of each interview, the participant was asked to suggest others to talk with. Several of the final interviewees were identified this way. In addition to the formal interviews, I conducted two informal interviews with neighborhood district coordinators while touring the neighborhoods they manage, without recording the conversations. For a list of the interview participants, please see Appendix C.
Data Analysis

Based on the indicators identified in the operational framework, the evaluation criteria presented in the theoretical framework, and the questions used to further operationalize those variables, I coded the interview data according to each theme, looking for the indicators I had identified through the theory and for new, unanticipated outcomes. For evidence of increased capacity, I categorized the data based on its relation to outreach, partnerships, learning, or governance and empowerment. I also looked for evidence (or lack of evidence) of a shift to governance, based on the different characteristics between government and governance identified previously in Table 2-1. This section of the analysis is specifically designed to answer the second research question, of whether building capacity within the community has increased the governance capacity of Seattle.

To answer the third research question, describing how the nature of the relationship changed between the City of Seattle and its citizens through this process, I use the longitudinal analysis - relaying the context surrounding Seattle’s decision to do neighborhood planning, the process of creating and implementing the neighborhood plans, and the current conditions or political atmosphere today. This analysis not only provides the narrative story for this case study, but also reveals the changes that have occurred. The narrative section also answers the first research question, by examining how the Neighborhood Planning Program built community capacity.

To integrate the research questions and further validate the evidence, I examine the Neighborhood Matching Fund as an example of a partnership between the City of Seattle and community groups that has been ongoing throughout most of the study period.

Conclusion

The theory about collaborative planning, capacity building and governance provides a strong framework for evaluating this case study. By using a variety of data sources, the validity of this research is strengthened. The primary data comes from eleven interviews with key people in Seattle.
and examines both the process of the Neighborhood Planning Program as a collaborative effort and its outcomes. Secondary data provides supplemental evidence and helps piece together the narrative story and context surrounding these events. The next two chapters tell the story of Seattle, show the changing relationship between the City and its citizens, and analyze whether or not governance capacity has indeed been increased.
CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on establishing the historical context of the relationship between the City of Seattle and its citizens, particularly neighborhood groups. For a timeline of relevant events, see Appendix D. The primary issue of contention in Seattle has been over growth management and attention to downtown over neighborhood interests. The chapter begins by looking at the 1985 Downtown Plan and the citizen backlash that resulted in the Citizens’ Alternative Plan, or CAP Initiative. The CAP Initiative was placed on the ballot and passed by voters in 1989, sending a strong message to city officials that the community wanted a say about how their city would grow. Around the same time, Seattle created its Office of Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Matching Fund, the first real attempt at a partnership with neighborhood groups.

Shortly thereafter, the State of Washington passed its Growth Management Act, which required cities over a certain population threshold to designate urban growth areas in their comprehensive plans. In response, Seattle began updating its comprehensive plan in accordance with the new law. When the Mayor’s recommended plan met with serious opposition once again, the mayor and city council decided to add a neighborhood-planning component, giving neighborhoods the choice of creating their own plans. This decision resulted in the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP), which began in 1995 and ended in 1999 with the adoption of 38 neighborhood plans.

The City of Seattle designed the NPP as a broadly inclusive, citizen-driven process, where in exchange for accepting the growth targets outlined in the Comprehensive Plan neighborhoods could specify what they wanted that growth to look like. By establishing parameters, the City created mechanisms for accountability. To give citizens the appropriate tools, the City dedicated staff resources, funding, educational materials, and allowed neighborhoods to hire their own consultants.
By the end, the process had involved nearly 30,000 residents. This chapter reviews the NPP and examines how the process worked to build citizen/community capacity.

Looking at the history of interaction between the City of Seattle and neighborhoods establishes the baseline relationship for this study and also helps show how this relationship has changed over time through various demands by citizens and decisions by city officials. The neighborhood programs and, in particular, the neighborhood planning process were the first efforts of collaboration and have changed the nature of that relationship in a significant way.

**The 1985 Downtown Land Use and Transportation Plan**

The City of Seattle began a planning process in 1978 to replace the Comprehensive Plan, based on the findings of the citizen-based “Seattle 2000” Commission (City of Seattle 1983). Downtown planning began in 1981 when the City held a series of workshops and public forums where citizens could identify problems and express concerns. At the same time, the City conducted a public opinion survey, and the findings of both were published in a newsletter. Individuals and organizations were then invited to prepare plans identifying “soft alternatives” at a general concept level. These “soft alternatives” were used to create Guidelines for Downtown Alternative Plans in 1981 and then again as staff prepared “hard alternatives” which addressed the more technical details of how to actually get there. The goal was a 20-year vision for downtown Seattle (City of Seattle 1983).

After several iterations of the plan, Mayor Charles Royer released the “Mayor’s Recommended Land Use & Transportation Plan for Downtown Seattle” in May of 1984 (City of Seattle 1984). The Mayor’s recommendations had a strong focus on economic development and transportation, with the goal of maintaining Seattle as the primary activity center in the region. Shortly after the Mayor’s plan was published, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) published a response. The DSA was founded in 1958 by a coalition of businesses owners and developers, who
“saw the need to create unity in plan and action to ensure that Downtown Seattle would mature into a wonderful place to live, work, and visit” (Downtown Seattle Association 2009).

The DSA response agreed with the overall tone of the Mayor’s recommendations, but argued for an even stronger emphasis on economic development (Downtown Seattle Association 1984). With regards to transportation, the DSA generally agreed, except with the extensive provisions for bicyclists. They were strongly opposed to creating bicycle corridors and setting aside street space for bicycle usage, instead wanting to leave that space for auto and transit use. Their argument was that bicycle commuting is not feasible during much of the year with Seattle’s climate (Downtown Seattle Association 1984).

In addition, the DSA did not want requirements for bicycle parking/storage in new development, although they did argue for more short-term parking garages near the retail core and surface parking throughout the city to “cleanup deteriorated unsightly properties” and provide additional parking for the increased traffic (Downtown Seattle Association 1984, 3). They also lobbied for increased economic development opportunities by allowing commercial and housing development on the piers, an area that the Mayor’s plan had designated for shoreline restoration and revitalization as an open space asset.

Another point of major contention for the DSA was affordable housing. The Mayor’s recommendations placed a strong emphasis on the provision of affordable housing through the use of inclusionary zoning, incentives, and an anti-demolition ordinance aimed at maintaining the current level of low-income housing. The DSA wanted a softer stance on these items, arguing that the burden of low-income housing should be spread around the city’s neighborhoods rather than being concentrated in downtown, and expressing a fear that the requirements would dissuade developers from building in downtown (Downtown Seattle Association 1984).
Finally, the DSA wanted density to be controlled through floor area ratio rather than imposing height limits on buildings in the downtown core. They criticized the Mayor’s plan for restricting growth too much, scorning the priority of protecting viewsheds (Downtown Seattle Association 1984). City officials must have taken this criticism to heart, because the adopted plan contained no height restriction for the core zone of downtown. This became the major impetus for the citizen backlash that resulted in the CAP initiative, which is discussed in the next section.

In concert with their clear pro-growth agenda, the DSA also advocated on behalf of mixed-use areas throughout Seattle. The Mayor’s plan proposed a stricter separation of uses, targeting housing in areas that were already predominantly residential (City of Seattle 1984). The DSA cautioned against creating areas for housing only, and emphasized the importance of reasonable amounts of commercial development in residential areas.

The Plan and adopted policies should not become too restrictive of commercial development, leaving the area only one development option, which is housing. It is important to remember that it is the diversity and activity of Downtown which attracts many who want to live there (not the promised quiet of traditional single-family neighborhoods). (Downtown Seattle Association 1984, 5).

While this may have been simply an attempt on their part to allow more commercial development, Seattle’s neighborhoods may not be as vibrant as they are today without this mix of uses.

The plan that was eventually adopted in 1985 was a scaled down version of the Mayor’s recommended plan, which did concede on some points to the Downtown Seattle Association, in particular on the height restrictions and mix of uses. However, the 1985 “Land Use and Transportation Plan for Downtown Seattle” closely resembled the Mayor’s recommended plan in its framework policies. The plan outlined 16 framework policies to guide its recommendations. Priorities included: maintaining Seattle’s primacy in the region; increasing density and encouraging growth, especially in the downtown core; making transportation improvements, including a significant focus on bicyclists and pedestrians; “significantly expanding” housing opportunities for all
income levels; increasing the cultural, shopping, and entertainment functions of the city; and revitalizing the waterfront (City of Seattle 1985). Although the plan greatly emphasized the livability of the City, its overall priority was encouraging growth.

**The Citizens Alternative Plan (CAP)**

The Citizens’ Alternative Plan (CAP) arose out of the citizen backlash to the adoption of the 1985 Downtown Plan, and sought to impose stronger limits on growth in Downtown Seattle. CAP gained enough momentum to be placed on a special election ballot in May of 1989 as Initiative 31, and was passed by a 62 percent vote despite the opposition being more powerful and better funded (Inkley 1989; Corr 1990). The election, however, only brought out 24 percent of the city’s 292,000 registered voters (Corr 1990).

The major contentions in CAP were with the height of the skyline and the pace of construction, which proponents felt was having an adverse impact on the quality of life (Corr 1990; Initiative Measure No. 31 1989). The initiative attracted the support of 25 community organizations, Councilmember Virginia Galle, and nearly 15 percent of registered voters. However, the measure was strongly opposed by developers, architects, labor councils, business groups (Initiative Measure No. 31 1989), and then-Mayor Charles Royer (Corr 1990) who put his own alternative on the ballot with Initiative 31.

![Figure 4-1. Downtown zones with limits on development, per CAP](image)
These opponents argued at first against the specific provisions and then switched to saying the measure would damage the region’s economy, a tactic which may have hurt their campaign because it confused voters (Corr 1990).

The CAP initiative revised the Downtown Plan and amended Seattle’s land use code in three ways. First, it imposed density and height limits in three downtown zones: Downtown Office Core 1 ("DOC-1"), Downtown Office Core 2 ("DOC 2"), and the Downtown Retail Core ("DRC"). Figure 4-1, on the previous page, shows a map of the affected area. Density in downtown was regulated by floor area ratio (FAR) and thus Initiative 31 imposed new base and maximum allowable FARs, lowering the ranges in all three zones. In addition, the initiative imposed a height limit in Downtown Office Core 1, where there had not been one previously under the adopted Downtown Plan. Table 4-1 shows a comparison of the height and density differences between the two plans. The measure did still allow height bonuses for adding amenities such as retail or a performing arts center, and density

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<th>Table 4-1. Summary comparison of height and density</th>
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<td><strong>Existing Law (1985 Plan)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DOC-1</strong></td>
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‘ = feet  
MR = Major Retail Store  
PA = Performing Arts Theater  
Note: One story equals about 12 feet. This means that a 450’ building is between 35-40 stories.  
Source: Attorney’s Explanatory Statement, Initiative 31 Brochure, p. 3-4

bonuses for providing “public benefit features” like child care, low income housing, or using a transfer of development rights from low income housing. However, it reduced these bonuses from the
adopted 1985 plan. Thus the first revision dealt mainly with reducing building size and the height of the skyline, particularly in the downtown core around the existing skyscrapers.

The second way in which Initiative 31 revised Seattle’s land use code was by imposing annual office space limits. At the time, the existing law did not impose any limits on new office space. Initiative 31 limited new office space to 500,000 square feet each year until 1994, and then to 1 million square feet each year from 1994-1999. Any space not used in one year could be carried over to the next year. In addition, the measure set aside a certain amount of space annually for smaller buildings, and exempted buildings under 50,000 square feet from the limits. With this revision, the measure attempted to slow growth for at least five to ten years.

Finally, Initiative 31 required the City of Seattle to conduct studies related to the effect of the initiative on the region and measures for long-term growth management. Proponents were concerned with problems of traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and increasing property taxes in Seattle neighborhoods. They pushed for an emphasis on affordable housing, a regional transportation system, and improved air quality (Corr 1990; Initiative Measure No. 31 1989) in order to achieve “balanced growth” and a livable city (Paulson 1989).

The CAP initiative resulted in a major struggle between the slow-growth and pro-growth coalitions, both during and after its campaign. Both sides used “quality of life” in their argument (Paulson 1989; Citizens for a Better Downtown 1989; Rolland 1989; Inkley 1989). CAP supporters, mostly residential neighborhood councils and environmental groups, said that the current pace of growth was detrimental to the livability of the city because it caused traffic congestion, air pollution, and drove up prices. CAP was created to send a message to city officials that residents were unhappy with how growth in Seattle was being managed, demonstrating that they did not trust the government to act in their interests (Inkley 1989; Corr 1990). They urged city officials to consider spreading some of the increased density into the inner-ring of residential neighborhoods, creating mixed-use pockets
and providing opportunities for people to live near their jobs (Paulson 1989). In addition, they lobbied for a regional approach to transportation.

The campaign resulted in a huge backlash from the business, labor and development sectors; the pro-growth coalition whose economic interests were being affected by the initiative. These opponents insisted that passing CAP would harm the economy and therefore inhibit the city from providing services and amenities that contributed to the quality of life (Rolland 1989). They argued the current plan already placed sufficient limits on building height and bulk, addressed transportation, and had gone through an intensive four-year process before adoption (Citizens for a Better Downtown 1989b; Kraft 1989). Opponents also contended that passing the measure would push development outside of the city, resulting in a major loss of tax revenue to the city, thus cutting revenue for schools and other public services, raising sales and property taxes to cover the loss, and slashing incentives that supported the provision of downtown amenities (Initiative Measure No. 31 1989; Rolland 1989). Fearful of lawsuits, most city officials took the anti-CAP position, indicating their allegiance with growth interests. City officials, especially at this time, often took this stance as part of a “growth machine” (Logan and Molotch 2007).

The after-effects of CAP were not as dramatic as the campaign struggle suggested. Opponents of CAP argued that demand for office space would exceed the supply allowable if the initiative passed. However in November of 1989, Seattle’s Office of Long-Range Planning released a report concluding that the supply of downtown office space would mostly likely meet the demand through 2001 (Schnellinger 1990; Corr 1990). The downtown construction boom began to slow, due to difficulties of obtaining financing, not CAP’s restrictions (Schnellinger 1990).

The passage of the CAP initiative did mark an important victory for neighborhood groups and non-business/development interests in Seattle; their voices were heard loud and clear, not just in Seattle, but at the county and state levels as well. “Regional planning” became the buzzword for
1990, and the State of Washington passed its growth management law the same year, skipping their usual process (Schnellinger 1990). However, CAP did not result in significant victories in the 1989 fall election for the initiative’s supporters (Corr 1989; Schnellinger 1990).

Although the measure did not allow amendments for a two-year period, council members were working on an exception with a developer a year later (Schnellinger 1990). However, the CAP initiative did cause city officials and the new mayor, Norm Rice, to revisit the 1985 Downtown Plan and create a more extensive public input process for the revisions (Kraabel 1989). The process included a variety of measures for gauging public opinion including polls, a Citizens Advisory Committee, public forums, community meetings and workshops, plus outreach through both public information channels and the media (Seattle Planning Commission 1989). In addition, the Planning Commission suggested devising a system for implementation and monitoring of the revised plan.

This story shows that during the 1980s at least, the City of Seattle placed its priority on downtown growth, without really considering the impacts on other neighborhoods or allowing citizens to have meaningful input during the planning process. The input process could be characterized as “tokenism” on Arnstein’s ladder. The battle between pro-growth and slow-growth coalitions caught the attention of planners as well. In a 1991 article, W. Dennis Keating and Norman Krumholz reviewed six cities’ plans from the 1980s including Seattle, contending that too much attention had been paid to downtown interests and too little to citywide social problems. “Seattle…is an example of a city whose official downtown plan failed to fashion a publicly acceptable compromise between continued CBD development and public concern about its negative impacts” (1991, 142). Keating and Krumholz argue for increased emphasis on social equity issues in future planning efforts, to avoid “uneven development” of the central business district (CBD) at the expense of surrounding neighborhoods.
The reaction to the 1985 plan is one example of the contentious relationship between the City of Seattle and neighborhood groups at this time. The CAP Initiative forced the City to re-think how it was working with its citizens and resulted in the creating of a city department to interface directly with neighborhoods. This is discussed in the next section.

Creating the Office of Neighborhoods

While the CAP Initiative was gaining momentum, city officials saw the need to change their strategy for working with neighborhood groups. As is evident with the CAP Initiative, the 1980s were characterized by controversy between the City and neighborhood groups, who were often reactive and single-issue focused. City officials, developers and neighborhood groups were spending a lot of time and money in adversarial processes that were getting them nowhere (Diers 2004). Finally, city councilmember Jim Street and neighborhood activists got together and proposed neighborhood planning as a solution.

In 1986, the Seattle City Council asked the Planning Commission to design a neighborhood-planning program. Working with consultants, the Commission held a series of public hearings and conducted surveys. They discovered that growth was not the only issue neighborhoods had concerns about; gangs, drugs and increased crime were also problems. “Citizen activists in every neighborhood shared a common concern that city hall wasn’t working with them. They charged that too many resources were going to large downtown projects and not enough to neighborhoods” (Diers 2004, 29).

In July of 1987, the Planning Commission submitted to the mayor and city council its “Recommendations on Neighborhood Planning and Assistance”, which proposed Neighborhood Service Centers throughout the city, creating a district council system, expanding resources for neighborhoods, and increasing neighborhood participation in city processes. Despite some objections (Diers 2004), the council passed a resolution in October 1987 establishing a Neighborhood Planning
and Assistance Program and creating the Office of Neighborhoods. The resolution also created the Neighborhood Matching Fund. The objectives of Resolution 27709 included (City of Seattle 1987):

1. To create a partnership between the City and its neighborhoods in order to provide the neighborhoods with tools and resources for planning and development which reflect their needs and values.

2. To design City plans, regulations and programs to suit the diverse character and development patterns of the City’s neighborhoods.

3. To strengthen and coordinate City departments’ responses to neighborhood problems and requests for help.

4. To foster cooperation and consensus among diverse interests within neighborhoods and to encourage the constructive settlement of disputes involving neighborhood groups, prospective developers and the City.

5. To facilitate communication between neighborhoods regarding common concerns.

This resolution represents the first attempt by the City of Seattle to really partner with neighborhood groups. However, at this point the City did not do much to empower citizens, aside from providing them with tools and resources through the Office of Neighborhoods. Still, it was an important first step towards improving their relationships.

Jim Diers, who was hired as the first director for the Office of Neighborhoods, remembers the relations between the City of Seattle and neighborhood groups when the Office of Neighborhoods was created:

I think the prevailing attitude at that time was not even thinking of people as citizens, but as customers, and about providing good customer service. Which the city needs to do…but it needs to go beyond that. There were some council members who saw the need to create a department of neighborhoods, mostly because people were pissed off and they wanted to keep their jobs. And then there were other people who really saw value in involving citizens, and that we weren’t getting value out of treating people as customers, but that people have a lot to offer in terms of their knowledge and their relationships, and their skills, their time and all kinds of resources, perspectives. They saw that we really benefit by having people involved. So there have been different perspectives right from the start, and I think you still find that full range within the city.

While the neighborhood-planning efforts discussed in this research study did not start until the mid-90s, this resolution laid the foundation for much of the work that was to come. With this
resolution, the City of Seattle took one of the first steps towards creating a political culture of
governance, by empowering neighborhoods to have a voice in the processes of planning and policy-
making.

This action was the beginning of the collaboration in Seattle between City and citizens,
fundamentally changing their relationship. Jim Diers talks about the impact: “I think the
neighborhood programs did have a very positive effect on those relationships, because they gave a
basis for partnership”. He goes on to say that this was when the City really began thinking about how
to support community initiatives, through matching funds, little city halls, and district councils.
These became forums where you could bring people together, which meant fewer issues within the
neighborhoods. Unfortunately, creating neighborhood programs did not totally end the controversy
between neighborhood groups and the City.

State Growth Management and the 1994 Comprehensive Plan

In 1990, perhaps partly in response to the outcry the CAP Initiative created about growth, the
State of Washington passed its Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA states:

The legislature finds that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of
common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and the wise use of our
lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health,
safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that
citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate
with one another in comprehensive land use planning. Further, the legislature finds that it is
in the public interest that economic development programs be shared with communities

The GMA mandated planning in counties that had a population of 50,000 or more, or that had
experienced a population of more than 10 percent in the previous ten years as of 1995. If a county
met the criteria, all cities located within that county were also required to plan (Washington 2003,
36.70A.040).
Another important requirement of the GMA was mandated citizen participation. The law states:

Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. The procedures shall provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments. (Washington 2003, 36.70A.140).

Washington is one of the few states to have mandated citizen participation, and in particular, to require the dissemination of information to participants. Most states and local jurisdictions limit participation requirements to notice of public hearings (Brody et al. 2003).

The Act contains a number of planning goals related to responsible growth, multi-modal transportation, protection of natural resources, provision of affordable housing, and economic development. In addition, the GMA outlined a number of mandatory elements for comprehensive plans, including elements for land use, housing, a capital facilities plan, utilities, rural areas (counties only), transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation. Later, the GMA added a shoreline element. Counties were required to designate “urban growth areas” where growth would be planned for and encouraged, and to establish growth targets for those areas based on projected population estimates provided by the Office of Financial Management. Finally, plans had to be coordinated with others in the county or region to ensure consistency of goals.

In response, Seattle began the process of developing their comprehensive plan. Although the City followed the citizen participation mandates and did fairly extensive public outreach to develop guidelines for the plan, when it came to the actual writing of the document the process become much more internal. While topical advisory groups met several times with Planning staff, no large city-wide meetings were held. Former director of the Seattle Planning Commission, Marty Curry, remembers that after developing the plan’s Framework Policies the Planning Department spent about six months
creating the actual plan document. “By then people were really nervous about whether this plan reflected their earlier input…so [the City] learned a lot through that process about communication, and that you have to keep people up to date about what you’re doing”. After limited communication during the plan-writing phase, the City found that neighborhoods did not approve of what they put together. In particular, they responded negatively to the “Urban Village” strategy which targeted growth in various areas.

As with the 1985 Downtown Plan, then-Mayor Norm Rice released his recommended version of the Comprehensive Plan. According to Curry, it was a large and very detailed plan. It was at that point that things really blew up; neighborhood groups, particularly in areas that were targeted for growth, were extremely unhappy with the results. Curry recalls, “the council got it from some citizens…not all, but we have very vocal citizens…and they got the brunt of that, so they boiled [the Mayor’s recommended plan] down to about a one hundred page document, and it had been several hundred pages. It’s a much more bare bones policy document now”.

The comprehensive plan *Towards a Sustainable Seattle* was officially adopted in 1994. While a neighborhood plan element had not originally been included in earlier versions of the plan, it was a part of the adopted plan. According to Curry:

> The council said: the only way we’re going to get through this is if we respond to the neighborhoods’ concerns that nobody really listened to them, or involved them that much. While the Mayor formally initiated the process of creating the Office of Neighborhoods, the Council was instrumental in launching and supporting this step to show their responsiveness to citizens’ concerns.

Based on the neighborhood plan element, neighborhoods that were designated urban growth areas (urban villages, hub urban villages, or urban centers) could choose to either defer to the comprehensive plan or create their own neighborhood-specific plan. All 38 neighborhoods chose to create their own plan.
This choice was a clear message that citizens wanted to have a say over *how* growth occurred in their community. By empowering them to do so, the City of Seattle showed that it was responding to neighborhood concerns in a tangible way. A former staff member for the Department of Neighborhoods, Rebecca Herzfeld comments on this action:

The whole reason the city did this, is the idea came up of urban villages and accepting more growth and people were saying wait a minute, we don’t like that. So to give people a say in how the growth would look, and to essentially promise that the city would give them the amenities to go along with the growth and increased density…it sends a powerful message.

Marty Curry also discusses why people got involved: “people did neighborhood planning partly to protect themselves and promote their issues and concerns. However, once they got into it, many enjoyed it and felt it was something good to do for their neighborhood.” She notes that not all neighborhoods even had huge growth targets:

People were probably more concerned than they needed to be about growth per se, but it did get them to focus on how do we want to grow, acknowledging what we have now, and determining what we want for the future. So from that standpoint I think it was a very valuable process for people.

After the City tried to impose a broad, top-down Comprehensive Plan citizens demanded more meaningful participation in decisions about growth in their communities.

To avoid further controversy, the city council officially established the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) with Resolution 29015 in October of 1994.

Be it resolved by the city council of the City of Seattle, the Mayor concurring: That the City of Seattle shall undertake a Neighborhood Planning Program which shall enable the City and its communities to work in partnership to improve goals and the citywide vision as described within the Comprehensive Plan.

The purposes of the neighborhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city by: 1) helping people achieve their goals for their neighborhoods; 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established citywide goals; and 3) creating an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods. (Seattle City Council 1994, 1).
The resolution also instituted a number of parameters to guide the process that outlined the City’s responsibilities, which are summarized in Table 4-2. The process began in earnest in 1995.

**Table 4-2. Summary of Resolution 29015, Section 2: Basis of collaboration**

| 1. | Provide clear goals to be realized within the scope of the neighborhood goals; |
| 2. | Present information so that all neighborhoods could understand how the Comprehensive Plan would impact them; |
| 3. | Define rules and parameters that would also provide flexibility; |
| 4. | Provide geographically specific information to each neighborhood and incorporating participants’ local knowledge into that information base; |
| 5. | Allow neighborhoods to define their own boundaries; |
| 6. | Listen, respect, and respond to neighborhood concerns in exchange for respect from citizens; |
| 7. | Provide resources to communicate with a broad range of stakeholders, including other agencies and jurisdictions, to be inclusive and representative of all members of the community; |
| 8. | Establish an interdepartmental team within the City to assist with and respond to neighborhood plans; |
| 9. | Work with participating neighborhoods to create the planning process; |
| 10. | Incorporate recommendations into capital and operating budgets and service delivery systems; |
| 11. | Give priority to plans that have addressed Citywide goals in review and adoption by the City Council; and |
| 12. | Commit adequate resources for the planning program in exchange for neighborhoods responsible use of them |

*Source: Seattle City Council 1994*

The guidelines set forth by this resolution established the basis for not only the collaborative-planning effort, but also the attempt on the part of the City to build community capacity. With this resolution, the City commits to providing tools and resources, educating neighborhood groups so that they can participate effectively, and treating neighborhood concerns with sincerity. It also promises to incorporate plan recommendations into City functions, giving a sense of legitimacy to the process. The result of these parameters is empowering neighborhoods to engage in meaningful participation.

**The Neighborhood-Planning Program (NPP)**

After deciding that the City would make a serious commitment to neighborhood planning, a small group that included representatives from the Mayor’s office, the Department of Neighborhoods (DON), the Planning Department, the City Council, and the Planning Commission got together to design the model. Marty Curry, who was part of that process recalls:
We knew we needed to do something that was a different model than had traditionally been used by the city, and there was a lot of push to go to the citizens and give them responsibility for doing their outreach, getting to know and bringing people in from their own neighborhood. One of the decisions was that we would not use the district councils, because they are staffed and supported by DON and they work well for some kinds of things, but they are largely made up of middle class homeowners, which is not representative of the diversity in most neighborhoods. So the mayor’s office laid out a new way of doing this by providing resources to neighborhoods to design and implement their own planning process. This included doing outreach and making sure they were bringing a full spectrum of people into the process. It was and still remains a challenge; nobody did it perfectly and we all learned how difficult it is to bring people from other cultures and financial circumstances into a “planning process”. We’re still trying to figure out how to engage people. There was also a desire to have citizens have a larger role in developing plans but also to take some responsibility and be accountable to the residents in their neighborhood for what they came up with.

The model started with the creation of the Neighborhood Planning Office (ONP), which only existed for three years during the development of the plans. Karma Ruder was hired as the director and it was to be a distinct entity from the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Curry says: “we were intentional about having it be separate from DON, to keep it more neutral, from being closely tied to neighborhood advocacy”. ONP reported directly to the Mayor and regularly updated the City Council.

Curry says at first, ONP hired community organizers and a few planners, although more planners were added to the staff later in the process. Neighborhoods that participated entered into a contract with the City that agreed that each neighborhood had to accept some growth. Ref Lindmark, from the Green Lake neighborhood, remarks:

In return for getting growth, then we got to participate in the planning process. This meant we got to have some say in what that growth looked like, how it happened, where it happened. The other part of that was…if we accepted growth, there was a commitment from the city that said, ‘we will give you the public resources during the planning process’.

In exchange for public resources, each neighborhood had to form a planning group that reached out to all community stakeholders. According to Lindmark “the City said, ‘we’re not satisfied with traditional outreach. It is not acceptable for neighborhood planning.’ They provided a significant amount of dollars for outreach”.

Each neighborhood was eligible for a $10,000 grant to involve all major stakeholders in defining a neighborhood vision (Sirianni 2007). Each neighborhood planning organization had to conduct a stakeholder analysis and create an outreach plan. If a stakeholder group was left out, the neighborhood was challenged to find other ways to get their opinion, for example, through surveys or informal activities. Neighborhoods had varying degrees of success with this, sometimes unable to get certain stakeholder groups involved even when they did reach out to them. For example, Ref Lindmark remembers that Green Lake tried to involve a dairy operation that was a major industrial use in their neighborhood. However, the dairy refused, thinking that the neighborhood plan was just trying to run them out of the area. Other neighborhoods resisted doing the outreach, but were told that it was not a choice (Sirianni 2007).

When I asked Jim Diers if there was resistance about doing outreach from community groups who wanted to dominate the conversation, his response was “oh yeah. But the rules were very clear [about reaching out to all neighborhood stakeholders], so I don’t think that people really had an opportunity to do that”. Setting rules allowed for the City to hold neighborhoods accountable and ensure an inclusive process. Ref Lindmark, who participated in creating the Green Lake neighborhood plan, comments on the decision to form new organizations rather than work with the district councils:

The City felt better dealing with neighborhood planning organizations than with community councils. The City has to be careful about the authority they give to the councils because they’re not always the most representative, democratic, etc. With the neighborhood planning organizations that we put together, we followed their rules for that, which lent a sense of greater legitimacy to the group.

By having each neighborhood form a new organization, rather than working through any existing organization, the City tried to ensure that the neighborhood planning organizations were as broadly representative of neighborhood stakeholders as possible.
For some participants, it was the proactive approach that attracted them to the process. Jean Sundborg, who participated in the Queen Anne neighborhood plan, recalls how she first got involved:

I came in after the process had already started. [Before neighborhood planning] I didn’t want to join the Queen Anne Community Council because it was very much a NIMBY group. My personal attitude is let’s accomplish something and be positive. Then local paper started talking about neighborhood planning. The city was making a statement that either they could plan or we could plan how we’re going to grow. Well, that fit my personal outlook on life…to get involved on the front end of the process instead of being reactive.

Neighborhood planning offered citizens the opportunity for meaningful participation in City processes and decisions.

Every neighborhood had to go through the process of doing outreach and visioning, and then they were given another set of resources to do the actual plan (Curry 2009; Siriani 2007). These resources included more funding, between $60,000 and $100,000 (Siriani 2007), and a toolkit prepared by City staff that included all sorts of data and educational materials, on everything from land use to outreach activities. Many neighborhoods used the funding to hire consultants that would help them create their plan.

Although they had assistance from City staff, neighborhood groups were the ones that put out the call for consultants, interviewed consultant teams, and ultimately decided on whom to select. When talking about the process, Marty Curry says:

[Neighborhoods] were given a certain amount of money to do the outreach and visioning, and then another set of resources for the actual development of the plan itself. In most cases, they hired outside consultants for that, which had its ups and downs. There were a couple of cases where the city had to hire another consultant to go in and fix poorly developed plans, but that didn’t happen very often.

The consultants brought in expertise about planning issues, the planning process, and helped neighborhoods stay on track. Ref Lindmark believes the consultants were helpful, although in hindsight he may have done things differently in his neighborhood.

In Green Lake’s case, the consultant we selected I think was fine, but in hindsight looking back, he came with bias. Their firm…they were very environmentally focused. And I think the plan suffers a little because it’s not grounded in concrete things like bricks and mortar
issues, it speaks to softer issues like community values, these kinds of things. Which means when you look at our plan, the city has its list of things to do that’s relatively small, but there’s a long list of things the community is going to do that we could never sustain. But it was the NPO staff and consultant helped us stay focused.

Jean Sundborg, who participated in the Queen Anne neighborhood, remembers their consultant was very helpful, particularly with interpreting City policies and ordinances as well as communicating with the City throughout the process and keeping the neighborhood up to date.

In addition to working with private consultants, each neighborhood had an assigned staff member from the NPO to work with. Ref Lindmark talks about this experience: “You would get a planner assigned who then accessed the city bureaucracy…transportation people, parks people, utilities people, etc. They were literally the conduit back to the city for the planning effort as well as the outreach that the city set”. When I asked him what he liked most about working with the City, Lindmark says “for the first time, when we wanted to engage the city in a conversation, we actually got a very responsive city”. He notes that for whatever topic they wanted to talk about, the city would send out a person from that department to help the community understand what they needed to do in order to accomplish their goals:

Up to that point if you requested that information, you may or may not have gotten the bureaucracy to help you. But given that [City staff] were charged with supporting the neighborhood planning effort, we had resources. [And so] work happened that had never happened before.

Planning staff also played the role of “relational organizers”, working to build relationships among community members and between neighborhoods and the City (Sirianni 2007). With support from the mayor and city council, and by establishing the guidelines for collaboration in Resolution 29015, the City of Seattle gave legitimacy to the neighborhood planning process, and designed mechanisms for meaningful citizen participation and interaction with city departments.

City staff also put together a toolkit for each neighborhood. The toolkit contained data and educational materials from nearly all City departments on various planning topics as well as outreach
and participation methods. However, it seems that not all neighborhoods found them very helpful. Jean Sundborg from the Queen Anne neighborhood never saw the toolkit until after the process. But she did feel it provided a good reference resource and may have “helped give everybody a level playing field”. She comments that her neighborhood is very well educated, but other parts of the city are not and would have benefited from the resource. Marty Curry, former director of the Planning Commission thinks the toolkit may have provided too much information, and volunteers often did not have the time to use it, but would rely on the consultants to help them assess which materials were important.

Putting the toolkit together provided an education for City staff too, helping them to think more like citizens (Sirianni 2007). It also involved other departments, something that had not been done in previous neighborhood planning exercises. Jim Diers speaks about this:

They put together a toolkit for neighborhoods to think about good strategies for traffic calming, or attracting businesses, or whatever it was. This was unlike some of the planning we’d done through the Neighborhood Matching Fund which were more Department of Neighborhoods (DON) focused and didn’t have other departments at the table. With the departments there as resources, [neighborhoods] had data and expertise and realized it was important to have their buy-in as well.

Although the City of Seattle had engaged in neighborhood planning prior to this, the process in the 1990s was the first time that City departments aside from DON had been involved. Departments such as Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Utilities, etc., provided resources to the neighborhoods, and by working with various departments, citizen participants realized how important it was to have their support for the plan recommendations.

After the main plan components were drafted, each neighborhood presented options at an “alternatives” fair. The entire neighborhood was invited, and the event resulted in new ideas, changes, and additional people to help with the process (Sirianni 2007). Once the draft of the plan was ready, it was sent to every household, business and property owner in the neighborhood as a “validation mailer”, a process designed to measure the consensus within the neighborhood. Residents
and other stakeholders then voted either for or against the plan with the enclosed ballot or at a community meeting. For some neighborhoods this resulted in additional revisions (Sirianni 2007).

The next stage of the process involved a formal review by the City. An interdepartmental team compared the neighborhood to the Comprehensive Plan for consistency, made sure it complied with any applicable laws and policies, and looked to make sure the neighborhood had followed the correct process and documented participation. The team went on neighborhood tours and then gave recommendations to the city council’s neighborhood committee who also reviewed the plans, although less intensively. The neighborhoods also had to present their plan to the council. Jean Sundborg remembers of her experience with Queen Anne:

After we had “community buy-in” then we had to go to city council. And prior to that we had to go to the committee on neighborhoods of the city council. For me personally that was a big step, because I’d never done lobbying or public speaking [in that situation], although I have been a public speaker. But here I was thrust into this position of being the spokesperson for Uptown.

Sundborg was part of a panel of four or five people from the Queen Anne neighborhood that gave their recommendations to the council. She says that it helped her comfort level to have a personal friend on the council.

By the end of 1999, all 38 neighborhood plans were complete and recognized by the City. “Between 20,000 and 30,000 residents (out of a Census population of approximately 563,000) participated in the various public meetings, land-use walks, planning workshops, door-knocking campaigns, surveys, and other events at one time or another” (Sirianni 2007, 379). In general, those who participated felt positive about the process. Recalling his experiences, Ref Lindmark says:

[Neighborhood planning] was really the high water mark for City’s engagement in the community, or in the neighborhoods. There has never been...before or since then...anything that has worked as well. I think every neighborhood activist felt, that for the first time in a long time, we really had access to city hall and we really could learn things and do things in our neighborhood...and a lot of us felt it was the first time we were able to really bring a lot of people into the process, and so the product is better because a lot of people participated in it. And it wasn’t just a bunch of whiners...neighborhood planning was around what we wanted for our neighborhood, it was the future, it was the vision...it was very proactive.
Lindmark’s comment points towards a change in the relationship between City and citizens: for the first time, Seattle residents felt truly empowered to influence the planning and decision-making process. By providing them the opportunity to have a seat at the table, the City met with less citizen opposition and fewer NIMBYs and narrow interests. This was partly due to how the City designed the process, requiring neighborhoods to be broadly inclusive and reach consensus. However, it also had to do with a different attitude from the City; they took neighborhoods seriously and engaged in a legitimate partnership with them about how to shape the growth of Seattle.

After the planning process: implementation and increased capacity

Although the planning process was completed, the work was not done. Out of the neighborhood plans came over 4,000 recommendations that various City departments had to figure out how to incorporate into their work plans and budgets. To do this, the City created a number of structural mechanisms to shepherd the plans through the implementation period. Part of this occurred at the City level, with an interdepartmental team charged with coordinating the work of various departments. In addition, the city was divided into six sectors and each sector was assigned a Neighborhood Development Manager (NDM) who was responsible for overseeing the plans in that area and accessing the City bureaucracy.

The NDMs played a critical role in advocating within the City for plan implementation and encouraging sometimes-reluctant departments to work with the neighborhoods. Rebecca Herzfeld, who oversaw plan implementation for DON from 2001-2004, says this about the approach and the challenges of working with other departments:

One of the strong points of the way it was set up was the NDMs also chaired an interdepartmental team, and every department had representatives who were supposed to work on neighborhood plans. So [there was] a lot of coordination, and sometimes people realized they could tweak something their department was doing to implement part of a neighborhood plan. Sometimes departments were frustrated that they were being asked to do things that they felt were beyond the scope of their responsibilities. One of the hardest parts was that many of the recommendations were about transportation. Walkable neighborhoods,
sidewalks, traffic calming, all kinds of things. But it’s very expensive to do some of these things. At that point (and it’s gotten a lot better), but then the transportation department had an all or nothing approach to projects, and we were trying to get them to be more creative about solutions. We got them to do some experiments, such as trying lower cost paving materials for sidewalks. But if people said this intersection is dangerous…to do a study about how to fix that is really expensive, just to even find out whether there were ways to change that. And that was the hardest thing, even when the department wanted to help. To get funding for things that were community driven versus city driven, that was a challenge.

Ref Lindmark from the Green Lake neighborhood also comments about the varying degrees with which City departments embraced the neighborhood plans:

Each department’s own bureaucracy and leadership, the people at the top, effected how successful they were at getting things implemented [from the plans]. Parks knew they needed the plans’ guidance to be successful. Other departments (SDOT) did not embrace it in the same way. They’re engineers; they know best and aren’t real excited about the citizen input.

Although there was some resistance from City departments and there were other cases where neighborhood plan recommendations were concluded to be not feasible, overall the recommendations were successfully incorporated into a number of future planning efforts by the City. The NDMs and interdepartmental team played an important role in making that happen. The City also had citizens working on the implementation initiatives.

At the citizen level, each neighborhood had a “stewardship group” that moved forward with the plan. In some neighborhoods this was the community council and in others a new organization formed to be the champion of the plan. A citywide committee, the Neighborhood Planning Citizens Advisory Group, was also formed and met regularly. According to Ref Lindmark who was part of the group, their job was to “hold the city’s feet to the fire” and make sure the plans got implemented. Various departments would come and present their work plans for the next year, so the group could see pieces of their work plans that were tied to neighborhood plans. Lindmark feels that the city was “making a good faith effort within the bureaucracy to take on the planning action items and I, as a participant in that citywide group, felt that most of the departments (although not all to the same degree) were looking to the plans for guidance as they developed their work plans”. He notes that
there were varying degrees of opinion on this: “some communities felt the city ignored those plans and just did whatever they wanted”.

In addition, the City and newly elected Mayor Paul Schell had to figure out how to fund the implementation. To help, the Mayor placed a number of bond and levy measures on the ballot, trying to get taxpayer support to fund some of the common proposals. Although many doubted that taxpayers would agree to such large requests (Sirianni 2007), in 1998 citizens passed the first measure at $200 million, the “Libraries for All” bond. The next year, citizens approved a similar measure for community centers, and in 2000 the “Pro-Parks” levy passed. Overall, taxpayers approved $470 million in funding, most of which went towards specific plan recommendations. In 2002, they voted for a low-income housing levy for $86 million. Many of these measures have been recently renewed.

These measures are a significant example of how the City has been able to leverage resources that they normally may not have had access to, thus providing evidence of increased capacity.

Another impact the neighborhood plans had was changing the perceptions of citizens about the Comprehensive plan because they better understood what the City needed to do in order to meet the State’s requirements, plus they had a say in the process. Finally, the mechanisms the City created for implementing the plans helped to increase the confidence citizens had in their government and improve that relationship. Jim Diers comments on this:

It was a good sign that people wanted to be part of [neighborhood planning]. I think it improved [the relationship with the City] a lot. There was a lot of skepticism…this city is like any city I know of and doesn’t have a reputation for implementing plans. I think people felt pretty positive about the response…about the plans, about how they were received by the city and taken seriously…they built bonds and levies around the key recommendations, and a lot of implementation happening with the sector managers. It was really the first time the city had focused geographically across the city in other departments aside from [the Department of Neighborhoods].

For the first few years after the plans were adopted, there was a huge amount of momentum in getting the plan recommendations implemented. The neighborhood planning process increased governance capacity by giving the City access to taxpayer resources, through bond approval, for
parks, community centers, libraries, and other public value-adding projects. It leveraged a huge number of volunteer hours in creating the plans and then driving the implementation of plan recommendations. The structure that the City put in place to work with plan implementation helped citizens feel like their plans were being taken seriously. However, this changed quite a bit after a new Mayor, Greg Nickels, was elected in 2002.

Changing tides: The new administration

When Greg Nickels was elected Mayor, he had the unfortunate position of dealing with the post-9/11 economic recession that our country was experiencing. This meant budget cuts for the City of Seattle. In the Department of Neighborhoods it impacted the Neighborhood Development Managers, first cutting the positions from six to three, and then cutting the positions entirely. Plan implementation fell to the Neighborhood District Coordinators, with varying degrees of success. Rebecca Herzfeld talks about the effect of the budget cuts:

[There were] two phases…2002 and 2003. A symptom [of the] change in administration. The current mayor, Nickels, was not here when the plans were developed, so he didn’t feel ownership of them. He had other priorities. One of the reasons the NDMs were affected was that people knew that the previous mayor supported them. They went on the mayor’s staff retreat. They were considered very close to the mayor and the authority of the mayor, so people in other departments listened when they called. That went away. Then the money went away. And then the district coordinators jobs were upgraded and they were given more money with the idea that they would carry this forward when the NDM positions were cut. There have been mixed results…this didn’t make up for the loss of the other positions. [But…this is] the effect of political decisions.

Mayor Nickels had a different attitude about working with neighborhoods, feeling that his predecessors did the plans and therefore they were not his legacy. There were similar experiences at the neighborhood level, as new people became involved and felt little attachment to the plan documents. Marty Curry discusses the situation, and how this has changed things at the City since then:

When Mayor Nickels came into office, his first response was, ‘that was the previous mayor’s process, so why am I going to continue to support it?’ But he has learned over time,
sometimes very painfully, that citizens do matter. You don’t just tell people, do a slick brochure, and start a new program. So we went through some growing pains with that, but what the neighborhoods and the City lost were the neighborhood liaisons in the six districts who were responsible for coordinating implementation of the neighborhood plans in that area. This meant that the City lost capacity to keep track of neighborhood plan priorities within City departments and to coordinate between neighborhoods and City departments. Some of the plans needed additional work done later, and there was nobody advocating for that except the citizens who worked on the plan. There was nobody assigned to this in the City, and there was no process to figure out how to deal with those things. Some departments tried to keep a focus on the neighborhood plan activities, but didn’t have dedicated resources. So they ended up trying to wrap as many of these recommendations into their normal budgeting process as possible. They didn’t have money to work specifically on neighborhood recommendations.

Losing staff resources and funding stunted the momentum that had been created around neighborhood plans and the implementation of their recommendations.

The City Auditor documented the effects of these losses, in an evaluation of the Neighborhood Plan Implementation conducted in 2007. One of the issues they identified with the implementation phase from 2003-2007 was “plan implementation was slowed by the reduction in staffing dedicated to neighborhood plan implementation and decreases in the DON budget”. In addition, they noted: “while initially the plans directed the departments, now the departments direct the plans, and the approach changed from a bottom-up to a top-down approach”. These changes point towards the strong influence the Mayor exerts over the City government. This effect, and its impact on the governance capacity of Seattle, will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

The history and narrative recounted in this chapter helps to establish the relationship between the City of Seattle and neighborhood groups before, during, and after neighborhood planning. During the 1980s, the City focused on the development of downtown, using “token” citizen participation mechanisms. A coalition of citizens was unhappy with the resulting 1985 Downtown Plan and its lack of attention to the citywide impacts of the growth that it allowed. In response, they created the CAP Initiative and managed to get it passed on the ballot. Because the citizens demanded greater
input, the initiative did cause some changes in how the City approached citizen participation. For the most part, these mechanisms remained fairly “tokenistic”; leaving citizens feeling like the City was merely going through the motions.

However, another effect of this controversy was that the City created the Office of Neighborhoods, the Neighborhood District Councils, and the Neighborhood Matching Fund. These programs represented the first attempt on the part of the City to truly partner with neighborhoods and give citizens some influence over what happened in their communities. Unfortunately, the City still did not allow meaningful participation in citywide planning efforts, and the situation blew up again when Mayor Norm Rice published his recommendations for the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

Because of the reaction, the mayor and city council decided to create the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP), giving citizens the choice to defer to the comprehensive plan or create a plan specific to their community. The State Growth Management Act required that the City of Seattle specify urban growth areas, which they designated as urban villages, hub urban villages or urban centers. Seattle citizens made it clear that they wanted a say in what this growth would look like by choosing across the board to develop neighborhood plans.

To avoid the conflict they had experienced in the past, the City designed the NPP as an independent program that would hold citizens accountable to the City for certain things, particularly having an inclusive process. Citizens were allowed to manage and devise their own plans, and given resources from the City as long as they made every attempt to include all the stakeholders in their neighborhood. By providing resources, educating citizens, and ensuring diverse representation, the City took the first steps towards building citizen capacity. By empowering citizens and designing a collaborative process, the City was able to mobilize tens of thousands of residents in this planning process, an accomplishment that increased governance capacity. The City would not have been able to create these plans without that volunteer involvement.
After the City adopted the plans, the structures and mechanisms they created for plan implementation begin to show evidence of increased governance capacity. The City was able to leverage nearly $500 million in taxpayer funds for various bonds and levies, many of which have since been renewed. These measures were targeted towards recommendations that were common among many of the neighborhood plans. They resulted in creating more livable communities, by building public goods like parks, community centers and libraries. Further evidence of increased governance and citizen capacity is explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: RIPPLE EFFECTS

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the processes and outcomes of Seattle’s Neighborhood Planning Program in terms of their propensity to increase community and governance capacity. The indicators identified in Chapter 3 (outreach, partnerships, learning, and governance and empowerment) provide the organizational framework for the analysis. Each section discusses the evidence that is most relevant to that indicator, although in reality they are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. Results will be synthesized at the end of the chapter and be drawn upon again in Chapter 6.

Outreach: Engaging stakeholders

The first indicator of increased capacity examined here has to do with outreach. If having capacity at the community level means involving diverse stakeholders (Innes and Booher 2002; Chaskin 2001; Healey 1998), then having capacity at the governance level should mean working to engage a wide range of stakeholders in City processes. Thus, outreach involves the value that the City of Seattle places on having an inclusive process, the mechanisms through which they engage stakeholders, and how the City approaches challenges associated with involving a diverse community. This section discusses how these have manifested both during and after neighborhood planning.

The neighborhood planning process set a new precedent for outreach, among both citizens and City staff. To ensure a representative process, the City made funding contingent on reaching out to all community members. Jim Diers, former director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON), has this to say about that stipulation and the subsequent challenge of finding consensus among those involved:
I think the key thing they did was require that all stakeholders be at the table before they gave them any money. I always find that whenever people feel like something’s being done to them, even if it’s a good thing, they resist…it’s not their idea. They’re often suspicious…‘if it’s really good for me, why wouldn’t they consult me?’ There were some tough issues that fell out of the plans. But overall I think it was amazing. It’s amazing when people come together to see how much they really have common interests. If you can work out those differences, you are much stronger when you’re working against the city.

Diers’ comment makes several important points. First, part of the benefit of involving a variety of stakeholders up front is that there was less resistance to the plans when they were finally completed. At the same time, however, some issues were left out of plans when groups could not reach consensus. Despite this, another important thing the outreach requirement established was new expectations about citizen participation. Ref Lindmark from Green Lake comments about the effect this had:

Because the city had a really high bar of expectations set for outreach, we had people at the table that we’d never had before…All of a sudden the stakes were higher. A lot of people were willing to put the time and effort in because they liked doing something, knowing that something was going to happen. That was huge. I think it was getting the city to do more than it’s ever done before and getting community people to do more than they’ve ever done before that was really the two major pluses.

By making the decision to design a process that would be as inclusive as possible, the City challenged citizens to get to know their neighbors and other members of the community. Unfortunately, many neighborhoods were not able to reach all stakeholders.

Neighborhoods had varying degrees of success with engaging all stakeholders in their community, the biggest challenges often being with low-income or minority populations. There were a few cases when a neighborhood tried to exclude stakeholder groups or those that did not participate in the process tried to fight the plan later (Sirianni 2007). In these instances, the City was very clear that the community had to try to work together, and in general the neighborhood plans were able to bring diverse voices together to find common ground. This established new relationships, and a forum where people from all walks of life could get together and discover common interests.
However, the system did not work perfectly and inclusiveness continues to be a challenge. For Councilmember Richard McIver, the lack of diversity is his only major criticism of the neighborhood-planning process. “I’m not sure they reached all the voices through the neighborhood planning process, and I was disappointed in that…some of these neighborhoods, as mixed as they are, probably have 150 different languages spoken, and it was only white people [who participated].”

This comment points out one of the major challenges of a collaborative process, and of building capacity: how to get participation from a diverse range of stakeholders, especially low-income or minority groups.

Councilmember Sally Clark, who also spent time working as a Neighborhood Development Manager, says that some people just are not interested or able to participate in civic affairs.

Traditionally you have folks come to the table who have the time and who are already interested. To some, this is incredibly exciting stuff. And other people… just cannot believe that we get together and talk about this stuff…There’s also the issue of whether or not they can come to a meeting at 7:30 on a Wednesday night…You need all of those people at one point or another during the planning process. It has to be balanced out between those who can afford to come and those who traditionally would not. You have to deal with challenges of cultural diversity, meeting times, people’s availability. It’s a matter of how you connect the information and how you ask for help.

Seattle is an incredibly diverse city, and that diversity continues to expand. In 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 18.4 percent of Seattle’s population was foreign-born, and 21.4 percent spoke a language other than English at home. The City has tried a number of methods to make sure they are able to communicate with all of its citizenry, for example, translating City program materials into a number of different languages and offering translation services.

Councilmember McIver comments that the way to get to those other voices might be to bring the conversation to them. When asked why it is so important to reach out to everyone, he says: “In many cases, I think we have put off voters; people just don’t participate in the election at all because they don’t feel responded to. Or they get disenfranchised. And I think we need to re-enfranchise them. Let them know that they count. They may not get their way, but at least they got their say.”
The comments of Councilmember’s Clark and McIver indicate that they recognize the value of including all stakeholders, and encourage the City of Seattle to find new ways to do so.

The experience of neighborhood planning has taught City staff about outreach as well, and they continue to experiment with new methods to engage more stakeholders. David Goldberg, former DON staff now working in the Department of Planning and Development, talks about their current outreach methods:

Now it’s partly traditional outreach approaches, in addition to more outreach into people’s organizations. And not really outreach…we’re using a trusted advocate model – people who have contacts throughout the community in groups that don’t usually come to meetings – to meet with them in venues and formats where they do get together to inform them about the project, to gain input from them in parallel to the traditional planning process. We’re not trying to make sure everyone gets in the same room at the same time. It’s a much more dispersed method and kind of embracing process.

According to Goldberg, the “trusted advocate model” is a more informal means to relay information between the City and the community and get to those hard to reach populations who either cannot attend or are not comfortable with large meeting formats. The City finds someone in the community who has a strong network of relationships and then pays them to be a liaison.

The benefit of this method is that the “trusted advocate” is not charged with representing the community but merely communicating back and forth, and recording the variety of opinions so others may see what was said. Goldberg says, “I think that conscious choice of not having to represent is an important part of enabling people to participate”. This model is working well with traditionally hard to reach populations, and the City works to keep the process transparent by reporting what they hear so community members can either see what took place or comment on the interpretation. Rather than basing interactions on relationships with organizations, this model is closer to building relationships through social networking.

Goldberg thinks part of this change started with the Race & Social Justice initiative that Mayor Nickels started. Other reasons have to do with a “growing knowledge of experience with
public involvement” in the upper echelons of Seattle government. Three examples are currently on
the City Council – Sally Clark, who was a Neighborhood Development Manager, Richard Conlin and
Nick Licata, who were grassroots organizers and on the committee that helped steward neighborhood
plans. With these people and other City staff who have been involved at one point or another in
neighborhood planning, Goldberg says there’s “been a lot of learning about what’s working and
what’s not”.

For Rob Mattson, Neighborhood District Coordinator in Ballard who has been working for
the City over 30 years, the key to broad stakeholder engagement has been to recognize that
community groups are not just based on geography. “This department [is] not the department of
neighborhoods so much as it is the department of communities. We’ve tried to help get rid of barriers
to reach out to non-traditional people and diversify”. In his neighborhood, Mattson works with
traditional, geographically specific groups such as the local Chamber of Commerce, groups that are
tied to a specific economic sector or citywide such as the maritime industry, as well as non-traditional
groups that may be based on ethnicity or interest.

Even with extensive variety of outreach methods, engaging some groups remains a challenge.
Mattson says, “you have to see everything as a potential opportunity to get someone plugged in.
You’ve got to start somewhere. It’s hard to break into old institutions. It is the right thing to do to try
to find people who are not traditionally involved”. Rebecca Herzfeld, former DON staff now
working in the Legislative Department at the City, makes this comment about working with a wide
range of groups in sometimes informal ways: “for the most part, I think it meets people where they’re
comfortable, and that’s good. So you’re not dictating to people ‘you have to do this or that’.”

Mayor Nickels has made it clear that one of his priorities is attending to the issue of diversity
through his Race and Social Justice Initiative, both internally within the government and externally
within the community, as well as the interface between the two. The purpose of the initiative is to
“end institutionalized racism in City government and to promote multiculturalism and full participation by all residents” (City of Seattle, Office of the Mayor 2009). One of the outcomes of this initiative is a new directive to City staff to engage more than just the “usual suspects” in civic affairs, traditionally white, middle-class homeowners over 40.

While those I spoke with believed the motivation behind the initiative is a good one, many were wary of the Mayor’s approach. According to Jim Diers, part of the reason why participation is not as diverse currently is because the mayor reinstituted top-down processes when he was first elected. Diers says:

I think we did have a pretty broad involvement in the [neighborhood] planning process. And when [Nickels] walked away from that and went back to the old processes, you do get the “usual suspects”, and that ends up being very narrow. But to say we don’t need homeowners or business owners at the table…we need everybody at the table. And we should always focus on the people who aren’t at the table and try to get them there…It’s never as much as you’d like, but it’s hard to reach everybody.

Ref Lindmark from Green Lake echoes this sentiment, commenting that Nickels’ could have challenged the Department of Neighborhoods to get more broad representation by working with the community in ways similar to those during the planning process, rather than mandating certain representation in community councils in order to claim the appearance of diversity.

Rob Mattson cautions against the City “turning its back” on traditional civic leadership, saying:

Instead of a blending of both [established leadership and new participants], there is this response that is “lacking in sincerity” to civic leadership…We haven’t quite resolved the difference between the civic leadership and emerging leadership. It’s lopping off the peaks and filling in the valleys, which is kind of a dangerous thing to do because you turn your back on people who are leaders in their community.

Mattson notes that the traditional participants or what the mayor has termed “usual suspects” often have a wealth of knowledge, connections, and institutional memory and understand how the system works. Thus it is crucial to maintain accountability to seasoned participants as well as find new voices, and create relationships between both groups.
Sally Clark says that there can be a problem with people who have been involved in their community for a long time taking up “too much space in the room”, without giving the opportunity to newcomers who are less experienced. “There’s a very fine line between being that wise elder and being the person who really, unfortunately, doesn’t create space for new folks to get involved”. However, Clark does not believe this is because of anyone’s malicious intent, but rather because they have a passion for their role in the community. This debate about how to be truly representative in citizen participation brings up an important question: how can collaborative processes engage all stakeholders and ensure an appropriate balance and diversity of participants?

Despite these issues, the Race and Social Justice Initiative is helping to change outreach methods, as well as internal practices of departments. Michael Killoren, Director of the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, talks about how his department works on outreach:

[There’s been] a lot of discussion on civic engagement…that it has tended to attract white middle class homeowners. We’ve been trying to advocate for using arts and culture as a way of engagement. One of the criticisms of the last neighborhood planning process in some circles is that participants were the ‘last person standing’, [the one] who could go to meeting after meeting. A lot of people have ideas but can’t do the meetings. 20 percent of Seattle’s population was born in another country. How do you engage them? Ethnic groups come together for culture, so this could offer opportunities for engagement. There is another way…to go where people are gravitating naturally and use polling or something to get information there.

Killoren also says the initiative has changed the hiring practices in his office. They now place an emphasis on having a staff as diverse as the Seattle community in order to improve the interface between government and the community.

Sally Clark says this focus is not very different from that of the neighborhood planning effort, but the advantage now is having hindsight. “[It’s] easy now to find out who was not involved and figure out what did and didn’t work to get people to the table. The emphasis on getting as many voices to the table as possible is still the same. It’s not just capturing it; it’s trying to figure out how
to make it a part of the fabric of the whole process.” Clark believes in having an inclusive government, but recognizes that this is often easier to say than to do:

I think we all believe and say we want inclusiveness…and that’s not hard to say. But I think the actual fulfilling of that value is much more difficult. It is a much more precious and fragile task to carry out. And I think that goes for both community folks and City folks. There are certainly folks within the City that see that it makes their job harder to have to talk to a lot of people….I believe that it should make your job easier in the long term to have a wide conversation, and to be as transparent and as inclusive as possible. Not everybody feels that way.

The challenge is convincing those who see involving citizens as slowing the process down that the input gained can be incredibly valuable in the long run.

In the Neighborhood Planning Program, the City of Seattle set a new precedent of inclusiveness, perhaps in order to avoid the kind of backlash and resistance they had experienced with previous planning efforts like the 1985 Downtown Plan and the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, when only the obligatory outreach was done. Although some neighborhoods were not as successful as others in being inclusive, and the neighborhood planning process as a whole has been criticized for lacking minority representation, the NPP set new standards for citizen participation. The City continues to be faced with challenges of cultural barriers, disinterested parties, and hard to reach populations. Staff are faced with a directive from Mayor Nickels to hear all the voices, rather than just bringing in the “usual suspects”, which brings up the issue of finding an appropriate balance between old and new participants.

However, Seattle is trying to meet these challenges by learning from what did and did not work in the past, and designing new processes to increase communication between City and citizens, particularly hard to reach populations. Currently the City uses both formal and informal mechanisms for participation, exploring new ways of community engagement. Despite individual successes or failures, there is clearly a higher value placed on broad involvement of citizens by City staff, council members, and even neighborhood leaders than ever before. Therefore, by this measure, the
governance capacity of Seattle has increased and continues to adapt to meet new challenges and opportunities.

**Partnerships**

A second indicator of increased governance capacity in Seattle is whether or not going through the process of neighborhood planning resulted in new partnerships among groups of all kinds: within the government, within the community, and between the two. In this context, “partnerships” encompass the formation of new organizations, collaboration between existing organizations or agencies, relationships that have been built or improved and the various accomplishments of these arrangements. This is another area where Seattle seems to have had some success, albeit limited at times.

The greatest effect appears to have been among citizens, as various neighborhoods have recognized the value of working together towards a common goal, and created new organizations in order to do so. The area that has run into the most challenges, especially as time has passed, is within the governance structure. Some City staff struggled with the directive to collaborate to begin with, reluctant to spend time on neighborhood plan implementation when they were not participants in the process. With a new mayoral administration in charge that directive has faded, and departments tend to concentrate mostly on their own projects. However, a number of participants in this research still felt that at least small inroads have been made towards cooperation among departments.

The neighborhood planning process created new opportunities for citizens to connect with one another and form new organizations. One example is in Queen Anne, a neighborhood just north of downtown Seattle. Queen Anne is physically characterized by one of the steepest slopes in Seattle, separating the neighborhood into “Queen Anne Hill” and “Lower Queen Anne”. Through the neighborhood planning process, some of the residents of “Lower Queen Anne” began to realize that their interests were very different from those at the top of the hill. They also felt that the name
“Lower Queen Anne” was somewhat belittling, and so they renamed the area “Uptown” after the many cafes and shops in the vicinity that already included that reference (Sundborg 2009).

After completing the plan, they formed the Uptown Alliance to represent the interests of those at the bottom of the hill. Jean Sundborg was a founding member of that group ten years ago, and describes the impetus behind the organization:

Five people involved in the neighborhood planning process started the group. As a result of meeting during that process, we realized nobody was going to be the stakeholders for Uptown unless we formed a group here. The other choice was the community council, who are located at the top of the hill. Big changes were going to happen in Uptown. We saw them coming and the city told us they would happen, so we formed our own group to take care of our own needs.

The mission of the Uptown Alliance is to implement the recommendations from the Queen Anne neighborhood plan that apply to the Uptown area. They work with the Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce on some things, but are mostly a champion for the interests of residents at the bottom of the hill.

The Uptown Alliance has accomplished a significant number of things in the years since the plan was adopted, ranging from finding their own office and community meeting space to building their own neighborhood park (shown in Figure 5-1) in partnership with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, using funds from the Pro-Parks Levy. Counterbalance Park now serves as a community gathering space for festivals, events, and concerts. The Alliance has tackled issues related to transportation in their area as well, creating restricted parking zones to reserve parking for residents at night and continuously advocating for improved transit options.
Perhaps one of the best examples of their efforts is a project they worked on with the Safeway Corporation, developing a model streetscape. When Safeway wanted to build a new grocery store, the Uptown Alliance asked to work with them on the design of the project. Their efforts resulted in the replacement of an entire city block with a mixed-use building (grocery and retail below with housing above), and a newly designed streetscape with pedestrian amenities. Safeway funded and constructed one side of the street and the Uptown Alliance used Neighborhood Matching Funds and volunteers to construct the other side. As other developers have come in, the neighborhood now has a “model” street to show how they would like the streetscape to be designed, including things like benches, pedestrian scale lighting, and greenery (trees and plantings).

The experience of the Queen Anne neighborhood and the Uptown Alliance offers one example of how going through neighborhood planning has resulted in new organizations and partnerships within the Seattle community, providing a means through which citizens can tackle their own issues and create change within their community. The neighborhood plans have also opened the door for partnerships with the private sector, as evidenced by the Uptown Alliance’s experience with Safeway. Another example of this is the design guidelines created by many neighborhoods, which help make community support more predictable for developers. Providing the plans to developers is positive from all angles. Ref Lindmark comments: “if developers bring a proposal and can relate it to a plan, then the City feels better about it and the neighborhood feels better about it because there is some support for it. [And] that makes me feel like the plan was worthwhile and it’s being used”.

City programs such as the Neighborhood Matching Fund and the various levies enable these community initiatives. Many of these projects also require at least some partnering with City departments, such as Parks and Recreation or the Seattle Department of Transportation, either in the design or implementation stage. Partnering between the community and the City is initiated from both sides. Asked if the City collaborates more with citizens, David Goldberg who now works for the
Department of Planning and Development says, “I think there’s more of a partnership. It’s more typical, I think, that we go to communities and involve them”. That involvement takes various shapes and sizes, sometimes in the form of a very structured process and other times through more informal mechanisms, such as using the “trusted advocate” model described in the previous section.

It does seem, however, that at least those City staff or officials who were involved with neighborhood planning recognize the value of partnering with citizens. Sally Clark talks about why she thinks the idea of partnership with the community is so important:

What I really liked the most about the way we did [neighborhood planning] 10 years ago was…the language and the action was really, really about doing it as partners and diminishing this barrier between government and citizens. And the fact is, you know, it’s their big company. I’m their hired, elected official for a while. The people who are doing transportation planning work for them. And at the same time the transportation planning people need the community because they don’t know how to make an effective project unless they can really talk with the community about what people are looking for in terms of outcomes. It’s all done in partnership.

She also notes:

Currently, I think we’ve gotten away from that a little bit by accentuating the differences more than we did ten years ago. Like you’re the customer somehow, and that it’s transactional rather than a partnership. I’ve never really liked that language much.

Councilmember Clark’s comments point out one of the conditions that have perhaps inhibited the full effect of neighborhood planning on the City government: changing administrations and priorities. When Mayor Greg Nickels took over in 2002, the emphasis on neighborhoods changed and the general perception is that the City has gone back towards more top-down processes. The mayor’s influence will be discussed further later on.

Despite a renewed emphasis on customer service by the current mayor, many Seattle City staff see roles for themselves as champions for the community they serve. Michael Killoren describes the role of the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs: “It’s our job to emphasize what’s happening out in the community. We’re a facilitator and a convener and a funder. It’s our job to amplify and promote what they’re doing”. The Office has done this in a variety of creative ways, including playing local
artists as the on-hold music for the City’s phone lines, installing public art in City facilities, and providing a number of funding mechanisms for artists.

Another area of difficulty has been getting City departments to collaborate with one another. Marty Curry gives her thoughts about whether or not departments started to collaborate more after neighborhood planning, noting the importance of the interdepartmental team responsible for coordinating plan implementation:

I think there was an increase in cooperation. The challenge was that each department assigned just a few people to work on neighborhood plans. So those people learned to work with one another through their interdepartmental teams. But then they had to go back to their department to convince other staff, who weren’t involved, of the importance of neighborhood plan priorities. Most of the staff involved in neighborhood plan implementation had a fairly good experience working across departments on issues, so it opened the door to more collaboration. While this didn’t totally change the old City culture of departments working mostly on their own, this process certainly helped the City move toward an environment with more information sharing and collaboration.

There were others who agreed that working interdepartmentally had its challenges, and that it helped to have strong support from the mayor. Jim Diers, director of the Department of Neighborhoods until 2003, notes:

There was definitely resistance [to working interdepartmentally], but I think it really helped to have a mayor…Paul Schell at the time…who was really clear that this was going to be a priority. He had accountability measures in place. We spent some cabinet meetings on it, so people were really clear that it was a priority. [He] once talked about me hiring “gunslingers” to hold a gun to department heads heads. Instead, we tried to hire people who were from those departments who were also very committed to the community, and who were willing to think outside the box and couldn’t say no. The whole idea was really to try to change the culture so people wanted to do this, rather than forcing them to.

Rebecca Herzfeld, who oversaw the neighborhood plan implementation from 2001-2004, expresses how difficult it was at times to get other departments to respond:

One of the things that was frustrating when I was at DON, was that we would ask departments how they were doing on their neighborhood plan implementation and some would call projects that were in a plan area ‘implementation projects’ even though they had nothing to do with what the community wanted. [There was] a lot of going around inside the city making sure people and departments…whose job this wasn’t [were on track]…the interdepartmental teams and ambassadors were very important. But these [ambassadors]
were sometimes viewed as nuisances in huge operating departments like transportation and utilities. But on the other hand they were sometimes very effective.

The major success stories that Herzfeld mentions are the library bond measure and pro-parks levy, which both helped to implement many of the communities’ recommendations. Another important success was the number of volunteers that were mobilized for various projects. She says, “[There is] a lot of amazing work that was done and is still being worked on, that has community support and momentum”.

Despite the difficulties that were encountered, the City Auditor recognized coordination among City departments, between communities and the City, between the City and non-City government agencies, and among subsequent City planning efforts as one of the positive “side-effects” of the neighborhood planning program, particularly in the period immediately following plan adoption from 1999-2002 (Seattle City Auditor 2007). Out of 38 subsequent planning efforts by a wide range of City departments between 1998 and 2007, only two did not make explicit reference to any neighborhood plan. A table showing these plans can be found in Appendix E.

Jim Diers believes that having a community driven project is more likely to result in interdepartmental cooperation at the City.

It’s when you have more of a community focus, and it’s a combination of having a neighborhood focus and being community driven, that you get departments to start working together. Because if it’s just neighborhood focused but city driven, [the work is] still in silos. Diers is not the only one who mentioned government working in “silos”. A number of City staff also believe that working with the community can result in coordination among departments, whereas top-down processes tend to steer individual projects through a single department. Community members focus more on the work to be accomplished, rather than worrying about assignment to a specific operation in the government.

With regards to partnerships, it seems that the community has demonstrated the most increase in capacity through the formation of new organizations, using plan recommendations to partner with
the City and the private sector, and partnering with other community organizations to pursue common goals. At the City governance level, there is some evidence of additional cooperation among City departments, although this appears to have declined somewhat over time due to either individual reluctance or lack of directive from the mayor. However, the City of Seattle in general does seem to place increased importance on partnering with citizens, indicating that they may have shifted somewhat towards a culture of governance. The difficulty is maintaining this position when new people enter the administration. Some feel that engaging citizens will slow the process down, while others think the benefits of understanding community needs and goals far outweigh the extra time and staff required.

Learning

Proponents of collaborative planning and capacity building tout the benefits of creating a learning environment. Based on the theory, education in these processes results in enhancing understanding and knowledge at the individual level, can change perspectives about other participants, and may result in innovative solutions and self-organizing communities. It also means learning from the process in order to do things better in the future. This section describes the results of Seattle incorporating a strong learning component within the neighborhood planning process and in assessing the process afterwards.

One of the major outcomes of neighborhood planning was the educational opportunity it provided, for both citizens and City staff. Citizens learned about a range of planning topics. Ref Lindmark comments on this: “One of the things that was really valuable was…more than any exercise the city’s ever done since…the citizens actually learned a great deal about planning.” He went on to say that participants in the planning process not only learned the basics about planning issues, but also about what it meant to achieve their goals. He says, “[the City] educated people about the give and take necessary to make a city work”. For example, staff helped participants in Green Lake learn
about why it is important to allow growth within existing neighborhoods, and what it means to
increase density. They discussed scenarios, costs of implementation and affordable housing.

Lindmark notes: “It was an incredibly powerful education tool, that I think paid huge rewards for the
city”. In some cases, neighborhoods asked for more density, or came up with innovative solutions to
both accommodate growth and add amenities to their community.

From the City standpoint, one of the main advantages was that citizens gained a greater
understanding of what it means to plan, and how difficult it can be to incorporate divergent interests.

Marty Curry, former director of the Seattle Planning Commission comments on the education that
took place and how this has changed things:

I think one thing residents did learn is that planning is hard, because everyone has a different
opinion. And when you’re the one doing the planning, you have to be the one that listens…
Roger Wagoner [one of the consultants and a Planning Comissioner] said, ‘The city didn’t
realize they were creating a thousand planners…’ It’s good because [now] people really
understand how much you have to balance when you do planning. But it also meant that
there are a number of neighborhood planning participants who think they know as much as
the city experts do, which has created a different dynamic.

Going through the process also helped citizens understand how the City functions. Rebecca Herzfeld
makes this observation:

The initial process…one of the benefits of it was that it did create a group of people who
were very knowledgeable about the city and how different city departments worked, and how
to get the ear of the elected officials. And [it created] organizations that were made up of
people like that.

In addition, citizens began to realize the costs and benefits that the City must reconcile when creating
plans and implementing plan recommendations. Jim Diers alludes to this, saying: “There was
incredible education for citizens through this process. When you have to go through this process you
begin to realize the constraints the city has to work with, and the trade offs. So I think it was a huge
issue for the people who were involved, and that was one of the greatest benefits of the program.”

The community, therefore, learned how to work with the City more effectively. Ref Lindmark
comments, “We got educated in how to engage the City, so we knew better how to make the levers of power move”.

Councilmember Sally Clark has this to say about the importance of educating citizens during a planning process:

I think it’s actually pretty important. It’s important for a few reasons…one, so that they’re really able to at least understand what can be important and effective in a plan. [Plus] any effort to educate people on what they should be expecting from city government is good, especially with groups who we know really don’t expect much from government. For example, [groups like] low income or new immigrant populations, or people who just don’t know they can call the city to ask for help.

For her, the neighborhood planning experience provided an opportunity for citizens to learn about what government can do for them, and may have changed their expectations for the City. Thus it provided another mechanism for engaging those who may not ordinarily participate based on the perception that government will not work with them, or even for them in some cases.

The importance of setting expectations during a planning process came up with others as well, although in a slightly different way. David Goldberg who is currently with the Department of Planning and Development stresses the importance of educating citizens about what government agencies can and cannot do so that they understand the possible constraints. Ref Lindmark also feels that the City needs to be up front with citizens about what they are able to deliver, “so that people know what it is they are actually participating in…and don’t feel like they aren’t being responded to”.

Thus, for the City, part of educating citizens needs to be about expectation setting.

The neighborhood planning process did not just educate citizens about planning. It also changed the perceptions of the City about planning with citizens. Jim Diers discusses this change and why it is so critical for government to engage in a conversation with the community:

One of the reasons the City hadn’t wanted to do bottom up planning was because they were afraid the neighborhoods wouldn’t accept the growth from the comprehensive plan. But in fact none of the neighborhoods asked for lower growth targets, and they could have. So the issue wasn’t the density, it was creating livable communities around it. [Neighborhood planning] was a more holistic approach. A lot of places see density as the answer to
everything. Density doesn’t have to be a bad thing for a neighborhood, they can benefit from it. But there needs to be complements to it – open space, design, fitting the character, more businesses…When the city tried to do one-size-fits-all there was this [negative] reaction. With neighborhood planning people could choose how they wanted to accommodate the density.

According to Diers, going through neighborhood planning helped the City to understand that by engaging citizens in the process and letting them drive the process to some extent, the City could not only meet its own goals, but better understand the diverse needs and goals of each community. While the process was certainly more complex, the outcome has been more livable neighborhoods and happier citizens.

Aside from changing their perceptions about citizen involvement, City staff also learned that they would do some things differently next time. As one example, Rob Mattson, District Coordinator for the Ballard neighborhood thinks:

One of the things the city failed to do was deal with overlapping areas between plans, and conflicts about how those areas were to be used. Instead of the City addressing those conflicts or creating dialogue, they just said thank you very much…next? They decided to move on instead of dealing with the issues…especially this administration.

This issue relates to how the plan area boundaries were established. Because each neighborhood defined its own boundaries, some areas overlapped with other plans while some areas of the City were left out entirely. This has created other difficulties with plan implementation, since a mechanism for resolving these types of conflicts was not well defined.

Rebecca Herzfeld directed the team that was in charge of monitoring plan implementation. From her position, she feels that the City could have done a better job providing a framework for the plans, to help create some consistency of issues across neighborhoods and devise concrete recommendations where the status could be more easily tracked. She feels, and others reiterate, that some controversial issues were left out of plans altogether when groups could not reach consensus. David Goldberg notes: “when you ask people to do consensus, sometimes they don’t tackle the issues. And government is at its best when there’s a difficult issue…and you can develop a new direction”.
While some neighborhoods were reluctant to address tough issues, Ref Lindmark thinks that the City skirted around the issue of density in an attempt to protect the Comprehensive Plan goals. “The [issue of exchanging zoning] was perceived to be one of the things the City wanted us to be careful about. The question of density wasn’t allowed to be addressed in a real meaningful way. A lot of people participated because they wanted to protect their single-family zoning”. While the City had a responsibility to the State to implement the growth targets specified in the Comprehensive Plan perhaps, given the other evidence, it may have been worthwhile to have the conversation.

Another thing the neighborhoods did not do at first was prioritize plan recommendations. This was done later when budget cuts restricted the attention departments could pay to plan implementation. The neighborhood plans were also limited in scope to the plan area, not making much of an attempt to look outside neighborhood boundaries or coordinate efforts. Marty Curry talks about the next step being citywide conversations:

One thing we did not do well was taking the next step, bringing neighborhoods together and looking at things we could do jointly across areas of the city. Neighborhood plans were pretty myopic, unless there was a conflict. [It was] left to the city to deal with conflicts, like with transportation issues affecting more than one neighborhood. The city has tried to do some all-city workshops, but it’s still a challenge. You want people to care about their own neighborhood and most people can’t get beyond that because they’re worried about getting their own people involved. So to take that next step... you need staff resources, and dollar resources. If you want the neighborhoods to do that, you need to give them resources to help them coordinate... They don’t have the time to really get the big picture. Most people want to see an end, and with planning it may seem as if there is no end.

Curry’s comment points out one of the challenges that came up with a number of other interviewees: how to sustain an effort like this and make it into a continuing conversation. Seattle is currently working on creating a process for updating the neighborhood plans based on the lessons learned from the previous process and new goals for this point in time. However, some feel that the plans should have been more frequently refreshed, rather than waiting ten years to do so.

Learning was an integral part of the neighborhood planning process, and has changed the dynamic between the City and the community. Citizens involved in the process received an
education about various planning topics (land use, density, zoning, etc.), gained a better understanding of the various constraints involved with development, and learned how to rally around common interests to effectively engage City departments in partnerships. City staff and public officials learned the value of involving the community in a meaningful conversation about how Seattle’s neighborhoods should grow. In addition, the City has learned that working with the community can often result in creative solutions to problems, and that local knowledge is extremely valuable. Finally, both staff and citizens have been able to evaluate what works and what does not, enabling them to create a more efficient process going forward. These educational processes have helped to improve the relationship between City and citizens and the resulting changes in perceptions, as well as better awareness of how to work together, provide evidence of increased capacity.

Empowerment and Signs of Governance Capacity

There are a number of signs that Seattle has moved from a culture of government towards one of governance, both in devising the neighborhood planning process and in the effects of that process. What became apparent through conducting this research is that the City of Seattle is constantly re-establishing the balance between representative and participatory democracy. Part of achieving this balance is being comfortable with empowering citizens to have meaningful input in decisions that affect their communities. It is important that government fulfill its service delivery function, by providing infrastructure, utilities, and administration over various public activities. However, neighborhood planning created a new paradigm for Seattle, changing the expectations of both citizens and government with respect to their ability to partner on various initiatives.

The previous sections of this chapter discuss how neighborhood planning has changed the way the City looks at outreach, partnering with the community and among their own departments, and knowledge sharing with citizens. All of these areas have had their ups and downs, successes and failures. The priorities of the mayoral administration have had a strong influence on the shape and
support behind these initiatives. However, there is evidence that by going through a collaborative planning process, citizens and government both place higher value on working together, and they have been able to accomplish many things they would not have before.

As shown in Chapter 4, the relationship between City and citizens prior to neighborhood planning was very contentious. The City provided limited mechanisms for citizens to participate in planning, partly because they viewed them as reactive and negative about City efforts. Jim Diers speaks about how neighborhood planning affected this viewpoint:

I also think [neighborhood planning] changed a lot of perceptions about neighborhood groups from the City’s perspective. Previously it was like, ‘they’re reactive and NIMBY and have narrow interests’. And part of that was because of the history, but part of it was because of the processes the city had in place that sort of yielded those results.

Part of the problem previously, Diers says, was the City asking for input up front but not really being serious. “Then you get very narrow participation, and often by people who are kind of a pain to deal with. So it’s sort of self-fulfilling. I think through this process which was much more democratic and inclusive, you got much better results.”

Citizens clearly felt that their interests were being ignored by the City, and appreciated the neighborhood-planning model that encouraged them to participate in a meaningful way. Ref Lindmark from the Green Lake neighborhood says,

I personally have a lot of trust in people when you engage in an adult conversation, and I think that the neighborhood planning process that happened was a really intense adult conversation about growth and about what do we want as a community, and most everybody in my neighborhood…the reason they participated is because they knew that growth was going to happen and said they’d rather be part of it than have it happen to me. And that was a good paradigm.

By having this serious conversation, and empowering citizens to drive their own process, the City of Seattle recognized that they were not going to be able to push their growth agenda onto neighborhoods without letting them contribute.
Councilmember Sally Clark describes neighborhood plans as “partnerships between residents, business people and the City”. She notes that prior to mid-90’s, Seattle experienced fits and starts with planning and growth management planning, and they ended up with a system under Mayor Norm Rice that was “predicated under the assumption that you had citizen groups that really took the lead on working with the City to come up with a mini-growth management plan for each neighborhood”. This system, Clark says, can be messy and chaotic, which makes some uncomfortable. However, she also thinks “it can be incredibly valuable”.

Part of the issue in opening government processes to the general public is that it requires the City to relinquish some of their power to citizens. Ref Lindmark comments that there are times when the community is going to know best what will work for them. “A city has to have a lot of trust. You’ve got to trust people and give them the tools, and make them powerful”. This also means that the City may need to change its ideas of what citizen participation entails in order to reach everyone.

When discussing how to engage non-traditional groups such as minority, low-income or new immigrant populations, David Goldberg says:

I’ve been personally advocating for focusing more on variety of ideas and seeing where that heads us. Maybe it’s messier, but maybe that’s better. If we’re learning about what foreign cultural expression takes in our community then maybe it’s best if we don’t fit that in to our preconceived notions [of how to do or solve things].

He goes on to say that rather than always trying to reach consensus, this method could encourage solutions that are innovative and work better for the community, although they may not always match policy prescriptions.

Within the neighborhood planning process the City was able to “lead” its citizenry by establishing parameters and accountability measures. They devised a process that tried to be as broadly inclusive as possible. Although there have been criticisms of how successful that attempt was, the City came away from the process really valuing the input of diverse voices. This change in values coupled with the fact that the City of Seattle is continuously working on new ways to engage
all citizens, is evidence of increased governance capacity. The reason for this is because by bringing a wide range of stakeholders to the table and having working relationships with those stakeholders, the City has a large pool of resources and local knowledge that it is able to tap into. This not only helps them create more effective policies that reflect the interests of the citizenry, but also increases the mobilization capabilities of the City.

According to Marty Curry, former director of the Seattle Planning Commission, one of the greatest successes of neighborhood planning was the number of volunteer hours people put in. “It motivated people to get involved in their own neighborhood. And that’s a big accomplishment”. Unfortunately those who participated in the process did feel incredibly burned out by the end. One of the issues that Seattle is wrangling with currently is how to sustain the energy behind an effort like this by bringing in new people. Curry notes that the people who are most likely to push a plan or project forward are those who were most involved in its design and feel passionately about it. This makes it difficult to find someone new to carry an initiative forward with that same passion.

When asked the question directly, both Marty Curry and Jim Diers thought that neighborhood planning had resulted in an increased capacity for the City of Seattle. Diers says:

Absolutely no question. Well, in my view anyway…there are people that question that, right? In tough economic times, cities tend to cut programs that they see as sort of frills and icing on the cake…it’s nice, but not part of our core mission…police, utilities, roads…all that. To me, participatory democracy is sort of the core mission of government. And I think the benefits far outweigh the costs, and we saw that with the neighborhood planning by how people voted. When other cities had to cut back because [their constituents] didn’t relate to the government…here was a city where people were asking the government to increase their taxes because they wanted libraries and parks and community centers…and where the city’s $50 million contribution to matching fund leveraged $470 million in bond and levy measures. [There have been] all kinds of private funds, [and] resources from other jurisdictions that were leveraged. The city has a hard time accepting those other players at the table, but the citizens can…the County, or the school district. So there were changes with those levels [of government] that the City never could have done alone.

Marty Curry sees the evidence in other areas as well:

When I look at newer council members…Sally Clark, even Tom Rasmussen…they really see the value [of involving citizens], and they can go out to neighborhoods and there are more
people they can be in contact with right from the outset that are involved, and they’re not just going to the district council. There are other entities there that they can work with. And council members tend to have a pretty open door policy to citizens coming in and talking with them. You’ve got more people who were involved in the neighborhood planning process who feel comfortable doing that.

Because of the education that citizens gained by going through neighborhood planning, they have a better understanding of City processes, planning issues, and how to work effectively with government. This provides evidence of increased capacity at the community level. Curry says: “part of the legacy of neighborhood planning is [that] people learned how to work with each other, and with the city. They’re more confident in their own ability to change things”.

The fact that City staff and council members see the value of that input and are able to mobilize it points towards increased governance capacity. The City is able to engage in a more frank and open conversation with citizens, if it chooses to, because there are more people who understand the issues. When there is better understanding between City and citizens, both sides feel like their opinions are more likely to be heard and responded to. It has created a more active citizenry in general, because people see physical results of their efforts within their community. These results draw new people interested in the process, as they see that the City has been responsive to community initiatives. While challenges still remain with how to sustain an effort like this and turn it into an ongoing, continuous process, the City has seen significant results and increased capacity at all levels.

One of the best examples to show increased capacity is the Neighborhood Matching Fund program. This program has been around since before the neighborhood plans, and continues to the present day. It provides public dollars for community-driven projects, and thus shows the variety of ways that the citizens and the City of Seattle have been able to accomplish significant projects by working together.
The Neighborhood Matching Fund

The Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) was created with the same council resolution that established the Office of Neighborhoods in 1988, based on recommendations from the Seattle Planning Commission (Seattle City Council 1987). Because the resolution was passed at the end of October, it designated a small amount of funds for the remainder of the year. The resolution also established a budget for 1989 of $1.5 million, with a third of the money from CDBG and two-thirds from the general fund. The funding was to be used mainly for improvement projects, with a smaller amount allowed for other neighborhood-planning efforts (Seattle City Council 1987).

In the resolution, the City outlined the requirements for the community match, which was to be cash or in-kind contributions. In addition, at least $750,000 per year was to go to low-income neighborhoods. The resolution also established the City Neighborhood Council (CNC), made up of citizen representatives, as part of the administering body along with the Office of Neighborhoods. It empowered the CNC to review the applications and rank projects for awarding of funds.

Jim Diers, who was hired as the director of the new Office of Neighborhoods was a major proponent of the program. However, it did not immediately meet with great buy-in from other city staff. When Diers first approached the department of Parks and Recreation about the matching fund, he met with a long list of concerns about liability, enforcement of city standards, provision of staff resources, and maintenance of projects (Diers 2004). Despite the initial dismissal, Diers and his staff worked with Parks and Recreation and other City departments to craft a program that addressed these concerns by obtaining liability insurance, creating a review process, and designating three staff positions to act as liaisons to the community. In addition, approved projects were contractual with the City, and had provisions related to ongoing maintenance after implementation (Diers 2004).

The Neighborhood Matching Fund provides a different mechanism for people to get involved in civic affairs, one that involves a short-term commitment with fairly immediate, visible results.
(Diers 2004). This attracts a group of people that may not want or be able to attend meetings or participate in a prolonged planning process. And by structuring the program so that projects are initiated, designed, and funding applied for by the community, the City can ensure community support. Furthermore, the act of creating and implementing each project offers an opportunity for community building, a chance for citizens to come together and build relationships while working towards a common goal. In fact, one of the main purposes of the program is to support “projects and activities that unite and build stronger communities” (City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods 2009, 1).

From the City’s perspective, the NMF allows departments to work collaboratively with the community and provides a means for city departments to meet the community halfway rather than having to say “no” to a community initiative that the department alone does not have the resources or funding to implement (Diers 2004). An additional benefit of the NMF is that it has drawn attention to other city programs, resulting in what Diers calls “conversion experiences” (2004, 57) where community members use other city programs to implement or maintain their projects.

The Neighborhood Matching Fund has leveraged millions of hours of volunteer labor, both skilled and un-skilled, millions of dollars worth of donated materials, and resulted in the creation of new community organizations. It has also trained community organizations in project management and implementation, as well as grant writing and budgeting (Diers 2004). It is the community that reviews and awards funding to projects each year, not city officials. Because community members conduct the review process with “great integrity”, it leaves politics out of it; thus earning the respect of citizens, elected officials, and other funding agencies (Diers 2004, 59). The City Neighborhood Council, an advisory body made up of neighborhood district representatives, was also responsible for creating the matching fund guidelines, including the eligibility and selection criteria.

According to the guidelines:
Community building projects offer an opportunity for all segments of a neighborhood/community to participate in a project that will improve the quality of life in a specific neighborhood or community. Community building projects foster and sustain positive change, while honoring the culture, traditions, values, and relationships in that community (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2009, 1).

By awarding funds to community-initiated projects, the City knows it has community support. The City is able to “lead” by establishing guidelines (in partnership with community leaders) that emphasize equity and broad representation and by creating categories of projects that address various issues like climate protection, provision of public goods, and building community capacity.

**How the Neighborhood Matching Fund Works**

Two types of community groups can apply for funding: groups who are neighborhood based, and groups who are not geographically defined but rather communities of “interest”, based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc. All applicant groups are required to have open membership and actively seek involvement. There are also two funds: “Small and Simple Projects” that can apply for up to $15,000 or “Large Projects” that range from $15,000 - $100,000. Applications for small projects can be submitted four times per year, while large projects are only considered once a year. The review processes are also different levels of intensity, with large projects reviewed by a citywide team. (City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods 2009). Currently there two additional types of funds, the Neighborhood Tree Fund for planting street trees, and the Neighborhood Outreach and Development Fund, which gives small awards for projects which involve new people in community activities.

Within the main project funds, there are several categories of project types, which have changed over time and include both physical and non-physical projects and activities. In order to be considered for funding, the proposal must demonstrate that a project is going to build a stronger, healthier community by providing a public benefit, emphasizing self-help activities, involving neighbors or community members, and having a community match (City of Seattle, Department of
Neighborhoods 2009). Currently, groups can apply for projects that fit into the eight categories shown in Table 5-1. The “race relations and social justice” category is the newest, started in 2003.

Table 5-1. Neighborhood Matching Fund: 2009 project types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race Relations and Social Justice</td>
<td>Creates grassroots opportunities for diverse communities to interact, encourage mutual understanding and respect, celebrate uniqueness, openly address issues of racial and social inequity, and help improve the quality of life for all City residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Climate Protection Fund</td>
<td>Creates opportunities for neighbors to connect and collaborate on community-driven approaches to addressing climate change. Must still build meaningful connections between residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Violence Prevention</td>
<td>Creates opportunities for young people to organize around their creativity, intellect, and energy and positively engage with their peers as alternatives to delinquent and/or violent activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Planning and/or Design Project</td>
<td>A plan, design, or report outlining specific actions that will serve as a guide for future action in, or changes to, your neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building Project</td>
<td>Creates, diversifies, or enlarges participation in a community, neighborhood-based association or organization in a low-income neighborhood that diversifies and benefits community members in the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Physical Improvement Project</td>
<td>Builds or enhances a physical improvement in your neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Non-Physical Improvement Project</td>
<td>An activity or event such as a festival or celebration, a training session, an educational campaign, or a workshop. A festival or celebration will only be funded one time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School Partnership</td>
<td>Encourages partnerships between Seattle Public Schools and the surrounding community for the benefit of a stronger neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NMF funding is used for a wide variety of projects. The physical projects tend to be used in building parks, environmental restoration projects, and building community centers or other neighborhood gathering spaces. Non-physical projects include everything from cultural celebrations, to educational workshops, to buying computers for public use. Examples of race relations and social justice projects include building or renovating cultural centers, educational training programs on everything from racism and multiculturalism to buying a home, creating programs to involve youth, or gathering data on community needs. Most of these projects focus on integrating new immigrant populations or other ethnic communities as well as increasing awareness of multiculturalism in the wider Seattle community.

Largely because of its success, the Neighborhood Matching Fund has grown over the years, with the City currently budgeting over $4 million annually. After twenty years, the program has
become a valuable asset to the City of Seattle (both staff and community members) with over $106.5 million invested, and 61 percent of that has come from the community. Table 5-2 shows the investment over the years, broken out by project type.

Table 5-2. Neighborhood Matching Fund investments 1989-2008

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>Year Started</th>
<th># of Projects</th>
<th>NMF Totals</th>
<th>Total Investment (1989-2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Match Amt</td>
<td>NMF (City) Amt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Protection</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$601,804</td>
<td>$333,366</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Non-Physical</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>$6,035,202</td>
<td>$3,895,464</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Organizing</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>$2,094,883</td>
<td>$1,880,958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Physical</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>$32,764,397</td>
<td>$19,625,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Planning**</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>$3,742,103</td>
<td>$3,679,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School Partnership</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>$2,361,810</td>
<td>$1,756,271</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race Relations and Social</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>$4,118,644</td>
<td>$2,189,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncategorized</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>$12,898,024</td>
<td>$8,553,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong> (1989-2008):</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,808</td>
<td>$64,616,867</td>
<td>$41,912,829</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note: This category refers to neighborhood planning projects, some before the neighborhood planning effort described in this study, and some related to that effort.

Source: City of Seattle, Neighborhood Matching Fund Office

By setting aside funding for community projects, the City has been able to leverage huge contributions, both cash and in-kind, from the community. Figure 5-2, on the following page, shows just how significant these matching contributions have been, by comparing the yearly contribution of the community and the City (NMF Amount). As shown, the community contribution has exceeded the City contribution every year since the program’s beginning. In the period after the neighborhood plans were adopted, 1999-2004, the community’s contributions were significantly higher than the City’s, matching the City by 150 percent up to 275 percent.

The fund has also been used frequently as a means to implement neighborhood plan recommendations from the 38 plans completed in the mid-90s. However, neighborhood plan projects only accounted for a small portion of the total projects each year, as shown in Figure 5-3 (also on the following page). Ref Lindmark from the Green Lake neighborhood notes that this neighborhood
planning helped solidify the commitment of the City to the NMF: “there are some pots of money for neighborhoods to use for their ideas. Those were around to some extent before neighborhood planning, but there’s an expectation now that no matter what the city does, those pots will be there and that’s partly because of neighborhood planning.”

Figure 5-2. Comparison of City contributions and community match amounts.

Figure 5-3. NMF projects related to neighborhood plan recommendations
One of the important things that the Neighborhood Matching Fund is often used for are projects that create a sense of identity for neighborhoods, enhancing the quality of place. For example, in the International District where there is a large community of Asians and Asian-Americans, community members used the NMF to install “Dragon Poles”, shown in Figure 5-4, in order to enhance way-finding and use public art as a source of neighborhood identification.

As another example, one of the earliest NMF projects is also one of the most famous. In the Fremont neighborhood, neighborhood residents wanted to clean up a space under the Aurora Bridge, an elevated bridge that spans part of the neighborhood. This space had become an eyesore in the community, with homeless encampments and garbage dumping. It was also an unsafe space. Neighbors decided to put public art under the bridge and held a competition for entries. Community members then voted and chose the sculpture, which was then constructed and installed using a Neighborhood Matching Fund award. The City contributed $22,400, which leveraged a match of $27,325 from the community. The result, the now renowned Fremont Troll shown in Figure 5-5 on the next page, is a landmark that brings tourists to the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Matching Fund offers one more concrete example of the increased capacity of governance due to partnering with citizens. By allocating some money in the City budget each year for community-driven initiatives, the City of Seattle has been able to leverage resources from the community to construct new parks and community centers, preserve environmental resources, provide education and training programs, and organize community-building activities. The NMF also provides funding so that neighborhoods can conduct studies, gather data, and become
better informed about their community’s needs. In addition, the Neighborhood Matching Fund creates an opportunity for citizens to form new partnerships with one another as well as engage with various City departments to accomplish goals. All of the NMF projects work towards an improved quality of life, emphasizing “place-making” activities. The projects serve as a mechanism for building citizen capacity, as community groups come together to design, fund, and implement their visions.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown evidence of increased capacity at both the citizen and governance levels in a number of ways. First, the process of neighborhood planning has established and then increased the value that the City places on involving diverse stakeholders in planning processes, continuously creating new mechanisms to reach all citizens, and engage them in a meaningful way. However, Seattle continues to face challenges with involving minority and low-income populations, requiring City staff to design new methods of reaching these people. While it could be argued that this agenda of inclusiveness has been compromised by the new administration and its top-down procedures, it is evident that planning with citizens rather than just for them has become a priority for a number of City council members and other staff.

Second, the neighborhood planning process spurred a number of new partnerships: within the community, within the City, between the City and the community, and between the community and the private sector. There has also been some success working with other levels of government. The
most noticeable impact has been at the community level, although there is some indication of increased cooperation among City departments. This too has faded as the neighborhood plans become older and departments have less of a reason to work together. But the idea of partnership with the community still shows up in many cases.

The third indication of increased capacity is the learning environment that neighborhood planning created. The process gave citizens a huge education about what it means to plan and accommodate growth, producing a very knowledgeable body of citizens who now have the information and the skills to effectively engage with the City on various projects. The process also changed the perceptions of the City about the value of citizens as resources, rather than just narrow interest groups. In retrospect, both City staff and neighborhood leaders are able to look back on the process and evaluate the successes and failures. Not only do they choose to do so, but are working on an update process for the neighborhood plans that will incorporate what they’ve learned, showing their ability to adapt and evolve.

Finally, there are concrete indications of increased governance capacity from the mobilization capabilities gained by the City. Seattle was able to leverage millions of taxpayer dollars in bonds and levies, a few of which have been recently renewed. The key to this was designing those measures based on what the neighborhoods wanted in their community. In addition, programs like the Neighborhood Matching Fund have continued to build community relationships and add physical assets to the City. These projects have encouraged citizen innovation and the City has been able to “lead” its citizenry by establishing the parameters and guidelines for funding.

All of these indications together show that going through the collaborative neighborhood planning process has increased capacity at the citizen level as well as at the governance level. There have been complications and that capacity has not remained constant, but rather it has expanded and contracted over time. However, through these processes and programs, there is some indication that
the City of Seattle has shifted towards a culture of governance where there are networks of relationships among community and government, decisions are more citizen-driven, and elected officials view citizens as partners rather than as constituents. Again, this “culture” does not extend across the board with all City staff or officials, but those who have been involved with the programs explored here are advocates who continue to fight for this type of relationship with citizens. The next chapter explores some of the influences that have caused those changes, the challenges of sustaining the momentum of this kind of effort, and lessons learned for future endeavors.
CHAPTER 6: LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

Introduction

This research examines Seattle, a case where a local government chose to embark on a collaborative planning effort with its neighborhoods, empowering citizens to participate in decisions about how the city would grow, and building community capacity by providing the tools and resources to do so. Widely recognized for its innovative and democratic approach to neighborhood planning, Seattle provides an exemplary case for this research, and contributes to the existing body of knowledge about capacity building, collaborative planning, and governance. This study is also somewhat unique in focusing on the interactions between a city government and citizen groups, as well as in examining the long-term effects of going through these processes on the governance structure.

The City of Seattle increased capacity within individual citizens and community organizations through the neighborhood planning process. The principles underlying that process were broad representation of stakeholders, learning opportunities for participants, equal access to resources, accountability, and partnership; all characteristics of a collaborative process. Citizens were educated not only on a wide range of planning topics, but also on how to work together towards common goals, reach consensus, and engage effectively with government officials. City staff took on the roles of facilitators, educators, mediators, and relationship-builders. The City empowered citizens to drive the process and gave legitimacy to that power by incorporating plan recommendations into many subsequent planning documents, departmental work plans, and City budgets.

Because the City of Seattle was able to build capacity within its citizenry, the ultimate effect was an increased capacity at the government level. This has required a shift towards governance, which is apparent in two main ways. First, governmental capacity is increased by the City’s
continuing efforts to engage a variety of stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes through multiple outreach mechanisms. Because of these efforts, the City has access to a wide range of local knowledge, thus providing them the opportunity to better understand the problems facing the community. Second, the neighborhood planning process and the outreach efforts have built a network of relationships (both horizontal and vertical), which the City works to maintain. These relationships allow the City to mobilize citizens to volunteer, taxpayers to approve bonds and levies, and communities to provide matching resources in exchange for support on projects.

The key to maintaining capacity, however, is that the City must continue to listen and allow citizens to have a voice in policy-making. It must continue to recognize the value of neighborhoods as a locus for problem-solving rather than trying to push one-size-fits-all solutions. The City must continue to engage citizens in a conversation about the future direction of the City, rather than relying solely on top-down methods of planning and policy-making. Fortunately, the neighborhood planning process gave citizens enough of a taste of that influence that it has raised their expectations for government designed participation mechanisms.

**Research questions, hypothesis, and framework**

This study investigated three main research questions: How did Seattle’s neighborhood planning process build community capacity? By building capacity at the citizen level, has the capacity of Seattle’s government subsequently increased? Why or why not? And finally, how has collaborative planning changed the relationship between government and citizens? The hypothesis for the study was that by building capacity at the citizen level the capacity of the government increases as well, requiring a shift of organizational culture from *government* to *governance*. This shift enables the City to better engage with citizens in responding to complex contemporary issues.

The framework for this research drew heavily from the conceptual definitions of capacity and governance. This conceptual framework focused data analysis on four themes: outreach,
partnerships, learning, and governance/empowerment, as well as looking for signs of governance rather than government. Outreach involved looking at the value the City of Seattle places on including diverse stakeholders in their processes, the mechanisms for doing so, and the associated challenges. Partnerships examined the creation of new organizations and partnerships created after the neighborhood planning process, as well as how the City views citizens currently. Learning explored knowledge gains by both citizens and City staff through the process of neighborhood planning, changed perceptions, and innovation. Governance/Empowerment reviewed some of the accomplishments of going through this process, and evidence of increased capacity. Throughout, governance is indicated by a partnership with citizens, rather than viewing them as constituents to be served by government.

The evaluation framework proposed by Innes and Booher (1999) for examining collaborative processes establishes a number of criteria for both processes and outcomes, and identifies potential first, second and third order effects. These criteria and effects helped to guide the data analysis by providing anticipated processes, outcomes and effects, creating the deductive framework for the research. Throughout the analysis, the neighborhood planning process and its outcomes/effects were examined together, in accordance with the argument that they are thoroughly intertwined. A summary reviewing the anticipated effects and comparing them to the research findings is presented in Table 6-1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated first order effects</th>
<th>Research findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital: trust, relationships</td>
<td>Relationships among community groups (within neighborhoods) and between those groups and the City improved significantly during the neighborhood planning effort of the 1990s, resulting in greater trust. However, when the City tries to impose top-down, “one-size-fits-all” solutions, this trust decreases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Capital: mutual understanding, shared problem frames, agreed upon data</td>
<td>Working collaboratively encourages greater understanding and promotes solutions that are mutually beneficial to all involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Capital: ability to work together for agreed ends</td>
<td>If the City of Seattle chooses to engage in a meaningful conversation with community members, it can result in innovative solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-quality agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated second order effects</td>
<td>Research findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New partnerships</td>
<td>• After neighborhood planning, community groups formed new partnerships within their neighborhoods or districts to solve collective problems or work together towards implementing plan goals. In addition, there are a number of City staff members and public officials who place increased value on partnering with citizens in subsequent efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coordination and joint action</td>
<td>• Citizens received an intense education about planning topics, City constraints, how to set and accomplish goals, and how to work with the City. They are more confident about their ability to create change. In addition, they are able to share their knowledge with newcomers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Joint learning extends into the community</td>
<td>• The City continues to evaluate what works and what does not, devising new ways of reaching out and involving citizens in public processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implementation of agreements</td>
<td>• The City continues to collaborate with citizens through some of its programs, in particular the Neighborhood Matching Fund. However, this atmosphere of collaboration has been greatly reduced with Mayor Nickels in office, who prefers top-down solutions and views citizens as “customers” more than “partners”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changes in practices</td>
<td>• Neighborhood planning has created new discussions on civic engagement in Seattle, with certain key leaders on the City Council and within departments who recognize the value of collaborating with citizens. It continues to be a challenge to convince some City staff that the additional time, resources and effort is worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changes in perceptions</td>
<td>• The efforts that the City made to partner with citizens on growth management issues have diminished the adversarial nature of the former relationship. However, this is a delicate balance to maintain. When citizens feel their interests are being ignored, they are likely to react to the City in a negative way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated third order effects</th>
<th>Research findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• New collaborations</td>
<td>• There is evidence that the City continues to collaborate with citizens through some of its programs, in particular the Neighborhood Matching Fund. However, this atmosphere of collaboration has been greatly reduced with Mayor Nickels in office, who prefers top-down solutions and views citizens as “customers” more than “partners”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More co-evolution, less destructive conflict</td>
<td>• Neighborhood planning has created new discussions on civic engagement in Seattle, with certain key leaders on the City Council and within departments who recognize the value of collaborating with citizens. It continues to be a challenge to convince some City staff that the additional time, resources and effort is worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Results on the ground: adaptation of cities, regions, resources, services</td>
<td>• The efforts that the City made to partner with citizens on growth management issues have diminished the adversarial nature of the former relationship. However, this is a delicate balance to maintain. When citizens feel their interests are being ignored, they are likely to react to the City in a negative way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New institutions</td>
<td>• The theory on collaborative planning, capacity building and governance helped create the framework guiding this research. However, to some extent these theories were difficult to apply in terms of defining the concepts clearly or constructing variables to measure. In addition, the theory does not discuss the challenges associated with processes of collaboration or capacity building, such as the difficulty of involving diverse stakeholders or the necessity of support from those in power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New norms and heuristics</td>
<td>• Nor does the theory provide advice for sustaining this type of effort after the fact, seeming to presume that once “capacity” is present, it remains a constant within that community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New discourses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theory on collaborative planning, capacity building and governance helped create the framework guiding this research. However, to some extent these theories were difficult to apply in terms of defining the concepts clearly or constructing variables to measure. In addition, the theory does not discuss the challenges associated with processes of collaboration or capacity building, such as the difficulty of involving diverse stakeholders or the necessity of support from those in power. Nor does the theory provide advice for sustaining this type of effort after the fact, seeming to presume that once “capacity” is present, it remains a constant within that community.
Summary of findings: Increased capacity and signs of governance

The major issue of contention between the City of Seattle and neighborhoods has been growth, and more specifically, who participates in the decisions about how to manage growth. During the 1980s, the Seattle political scene was dominated by development of the downtown, and politicians catered heavily to business interests, while providing “token” mechanisms for other citizen participation. This is a classic tension between the central business district (CBD) and neighborhoods, and one that is not unique to Seattle. With the CAP Initiative, citizens demanded a say in how Seattle manages growth, leading to the creation of the Office of Neighborhoods and possibly influencing the passage of the state Growth Management Act.

In creating the Office of Neighborhoods, the Neighborhood District Councils, and the Neighborhood Matching Fund, the City took the first step towards working seriously with neighborhood groups. These programs gave neighborhoods a mechanism through which they could pursue projects in their communities. However, the City did not go far enough. When Mayor Norm Rice released his recommended version of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood groups once again raised a voice of strong opposition to the growth targets slated for their communities. To appease these groups, the Mayor and the city council scaled back the details in the Comprehensive Plan and added a neighborhood planning element. This essentially gave neighborhoods the choice to either defer to the plan or create their own. All 38 neighborhoods designated for growth decided to do their own plan, sending a clear message that they wanted influence over what this growth would look like.

Although the initial motivation of the Mayor and council may have been to simply avoid further controversy, and the initial motivation of citizens may have been to protect their property values and single-family zoning, what happened was far from simply placating the community. Members of the council, the Planning Commission, the Department of Neighborhoods, and others
devised a collaborative planning effort that not only gave citizens a say over what happened in their neighborhoods, but let them drive the process. However, the City also set parameters to ensure that certain things happened, thus “leading” its citizenry.

The neighborhoods had to accept the growth targets, which were not only from the City, but mandated through the state legislation. Each neighborhood was also required to bring all stakeholders to the table, or reach out to them in other ways. In exchange for following the City guidelines, neighborhoods were provided with staff resources, funding, data and educational materials from nearly all City departments, and access to the City bureaucracy. Neighborhoods were also allowed and given money to hire independent consultants. While there were certainly variations in success at including stakeholders, reaching consensus, tackling difficult issues, and creating concrete recommendations, overall the process worked to significantly increase community capacity.

As a result of the neighborhood planning process, citizens formed new organizations, realized the advantages of working together towards common goals, built new relationships, and learned how to effectively interface with government. Again, this was not without its limitations and challenges. But in general, the citizens of Seattle have become active in civic life in a much more proactive way. Prior to neighborhood planning they resorted to NIMBYism and opposition to government solutions. After neighborhood planning, they were much more confident in their own ability to effect change in their community.

Because the process had the full support of Mayor Norm Rice and his successor Mayor Paul Schell, City departments had to take the neighborhood plans seriously. After the plans were adopted, Mayor Schell divided the City into six sectors, each with a Neighborhood District Manager (NDM). An interdepartmental team was formed, tasked with coordinating the 4,000+ recommendations that the plans outlined. Although plan implementation was often a frustrating and difficult task, the NDMs and interdepartmental team members were key in being liaisons to the community and
ambassadors to various City departments. As a result, department work plans, budgets, and many subsequent planning efforts have referred to the neighborhood plans. In addition, the plans provide guidance for private developers. Thus neighborhood planning resulted in new partnerships, increased cooperation among city departments, and a higher value placed on community input.

When Mayor Greg Nickels was elected in 2002, a number of things changed. Faced with an economic recession and entering with different priorities, Mayor Nickels cut the budget for the Department of Neighborhoods and ultimately, the six Neighborhood Development Manager positions. With the loss of funding and key staff resources, the momentum of the neighborhood plan implementation has slowed significantly. This administration has gone back towards top-down planning solutions, although the Race and Social Justice initiative does provide a mechanism for improving relationships with populations that traditionally do not participate in civic affairs.

Despite challenges and criticisms of the neighborhood planning process, both City and citizenry learned a great deal about how to work together, and they have produced some significant accomplishments that provide evidence of increased governmental capacity. Between 20,000 and 30,000 residents participated in the neighborhood planning process, an unprecedented rate of participation in planning. This involved a huge number of volunteer hours both during and after the planning process, which has resulted in thousands of projects improving neighborhoods all over the City. In the years after the neighborhood plans were adopted, the City constructed and taxpayers approved millions of dollars in bonds and levies for parks, libraries, community centers, and other public goods.

In addition, the Neighborhood Matching Fund provides a mechanism for the City to support community-driven projects. This was one of the first partnerships created between the City of Seattle and neighborhood groups, and has become increasingly popular over the years. Since the first year of the program, 1989, the community match has well exceeded the City’s funding level, at one point up
to 275 percent. Although the fund has been used to implement many of the neighborhood plan recommendations, those projects account for less than half of the total projects each year. The funding is used for physical projects like building parks, adding playgrounds, reconstructing natural features or infrastructure, or streetscapes. It is also used for community building activities, cultural events and celebrations, and educational training workshops. The fund allows both geographically based and interest based communities to apply, recognizing the diversity of interests within Seattle. It is doubtful that many of these projects would have been accomplished by either the City or the community alone.

All of these examples provide evidence, not only of increased capacity, but of a shift in the organizational culture of Seattle towards governance; where City and citizens partner together to improve the quality of neighborhoods and of the city as a whole. In this culture, the relationship between the City and its citizens has changed from one of vertical hierarchy to a horizontal network. With the change in administration, the relationship has shifted back towards a vertical, top-down approach. However, citizens demand a greater level of participation in planning and policy-making and city council members and other city staff who were part of the neighborhood planning process value citizen input. Thus the pendulum continues to swing back and forth between representative and participatory democracy.

Lessons, challenges and policy implications

This research is intended to better understand the theories about collaborative planning, capacity and governance by studying the effects on a local government that put these mechanisms into practice while doing neighborhood planning. While every city is unique and the contextual factors play a strong role in the success or failure of this type of effort, Seattle offers an example of a City that was able to transform a formerly contentious relationship with its citizenry by engaging in a serious discussion with them and empowering them to shape policy decisions. This section reviews
some of the lessons and challenges that have become apparent in the Seattle case, as well as a few policy implications for any City wishing to engage in this type of effort.

1. Collaborative planning requires significant resources from the City in terms of staff, funding, and tools (data, educational materials, etc). It also requires a significant time commitment from both staff and citizens. One of the challenges Seattle faced was with participants being “burned out” by the end of the process. It is also difficult to hand off the effort from one group to the next, when the new participants may have different goals in mind or not feel ownership of the original document. Thus, sustaining the momentum of an effort like this is a challenge.

2. Educating citizens during a planning process and engaging a wide range of stakeholders increases both community and governmental capacity by increasing everyone’s knowledge of a problem or opportunity. Trying to reach consensus can be one way of managing diverse stakeholders, however, it may also result in sidestepping difficult issues. The planner’s role should be to make sure the group is tackling these tough issues, and to mediate that process.

3. Engaging diverse stakeholders, and making sure that groups who do not normally participate such as low-income or minority citizens have a seat at the table can be extremely difficult. Not everyone has an interest in participating and those that do may not be able to attend traditional evening meetings. Therefore, planners and city staff need to be creative in using both formal and informal methods for outreach and communication with the community. This may involve using “trusted advocates”, blogs or email list-serves, having staff meet with people in their homes or churches or community gathering places. It helps to have a staff that reflects the diversity of the community. However, the city should take care not to discount traditional community leadership. Those that have been traditionally involved in civic affairs have a breadth and depth of knowledge and experience that is also very valuable. The trick is to try and capture all of those voices, and build sustainable relationships.
4. The individual philosophies of the people at the top (the mayor, city council, department heads) have a real effect on the power, influence, and capacity of planners and citizens. These philosophies can impose constraints. Some limitations may be necessary to find a balance point where the government entity can operate efficiently. However, the individual and collective philosophies of the decision-makers in many ways define the atmosphere and balance of power and determine whether planning and policy-making is top-down or bottom-up. Citizens can check this balance by electing officials who value citizen participation, or by organizing around common interests and presenting a united force against city hall.

5. Partnering with citizens and empowering them to directly influence decisions about their community, or at times to make the decisions about their community, can accomplish many things that government cannot do alone. By listening to citizens and understanding their needs and vision, City officials can create policies that reflect those values and may be able to leverage community support in taxpayer dollars, volunteer hours, or donated materials.

6. Having capacity is not only about possessing knowledge resources, individual skills, leadership, and relationships and it is not a permanent state once reached. Rather, capacity is always in flux, involving an active choice to create and maintain relationships, partner on various initiatives, and bring diverse stakeholders together. There must be an ongoing effort to continue working towards common goals, learn from past mistakes and accomplishments, and incorporate that knowledge into new processes.

Conclusion

Collaborative planning, capacity building and governance are perhaps less straightforward processes than rational models of planning and government. They are indeed messier, require commitments of time and resources, and involve empowering citizens to have meaningful input in the planning and policy-making arenas. However, as our cities face increasingly complex issues,
growing diversity of population, and falling revenues, it has become apparent that government alone cannot solve all city problems. As the case of Seattle shows, collaborative planning and building capacity at the community level can result in increased governmental capacity to create improved quality of place. These processes also promote equity and seem to result in more livable communities that reflect the values and needs of their residents.

While the City of Seattle certainly faced challenges with involving all stakeholders and maintaining the flow of resources and support to the community through changes in administration and staff, there is no question that the City was able to accomplish a number of things that it would not have been able to otherwise. Allowing neighborhoods to have a say in what growth in their community would look like helped the City to implement its Comprehensive Plan and probably resulted in better, more sustainable growth management techniques because the plans had community support. Although the process may be slower in some ways, it is less likely to result in the costly legal battles or NIMBYism that occurs when communities feel like their interests have been ignored.

Empowering citizens and engaging in a meaningful conversation with them has not only improved the relationship between the City of Seattle and its neighborhoods, but has led to innovative solutions that are customized to the individual neighborhood. The challenge is to continue this effort as populations and neighborhoods change over time. While collaborative planning may not solve everything, in Seattle it has helped to improve the quality of neighborhoods even through tough economic times. “There is a great deal that communities can do that government cannot do, and there is even more that communities and government can accomplish by working together as true partners” (Diers 2004, 32). Collaborative planning, meaningful citizen participation, and efforts to build community capacity certainly have the potential to create more sustainable forms of governance and a higher quality of life in cities of all sizes.
APPENDIX A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUBQUESTIONS

Operationalizing variables

1. *Has building capacity at the community level subsequently increased the capacity of Seattle’s government? Why or why not?*
   - Is the City better positioned to deal with complex contemporary issues / wicked problems?
     - Does it respond quickly to new conditions, events, opportunities, or problems?
     - Does it change its procedures, heuristics and relationships as needed?
     - Is there less conflict between the City and neighborhood groups?
   - Have attitudes about citizen participation changed? What has influenced the changes?
   - Does the City have well-networked, working relationships among jurisdictions, agencies from different sectors, business, education, social equity, and ethnic interests, the nonprofit sector, and advocacy representatives? Do they trust each other? Do they recognize shared interests?
   - Is the City able to leverage community resources? If so, how?
   - What role does leadership play?

2. *How has collaborative planning changed the relationship between Seattle’s government and citizens?*
   - Did the City of Seattle shift from government to governance?
     - Does the City view citizens as customers/voters or partners/co-creators?
     - Has the political philosophy of the City of Seattle changed?
       - How have the various mayors influenced the City agenda?
     - Is there a greater atmosphere of working for the collective welfare?
     - Who participates in the political culture of Seattle now? Is it a more diverse group of citizens that participate more frequently?
       - Has the nature of participation changed in general, for example from negative to positive? Is it characterized by collective action more than conflict and stalemate?
   - How have the City’s methods of communication / outreach changed?
     - Do city staff members feel that it is important to communicate with all citizens?
     - How frequently do city departments review and update their methods of communication? Is it a priority to keep as current as possible?
   - Does the City continue to provide tools and resources to citizens?
   - How has the operation of government changed?
Does the City involve citizens up front when approaching new projects?

Does the City fund more “public value-adding” projects/initiatives?

What programs have been created or leveraged as a result of neighborhood planning / initiatives? Are these new? How are they different from before?

How are services delivered to citizens? What are the advantages / disadvantages of this approach?

How have the spending priorities of the government changed?


- How have the patterns of investment by City and citizens changed over time?
- How have project types changed over time?
- Have other City programs have been leveraged as a result?

Bonds / levies as evidence of taxpayer support

Does the City include mechanisms for evaluating and adapting programs?
APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDES

Introductory statement for all interviews

I want to reiterate that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question at any point during the research process. Additionally, you may choose to end our research relationship at any time. With your permission I will be recording this interview to help ensure quality and accuracy, however you may ask that I turn off the recorder at any time. Finally, you may choose to have your responses kept completely confidential and reported in summary form only OR to allow me to associate your responses with your name or title. If you choose the second option, I will send you the written transcript of what I plan to include before I finish the draft of my thesis. At the project’s end, I will destroy any identifying information.

Would you still like to continue? _____ Yes _____ No

Would you like your responses to remain anonymous or may I use your name/title?
_____ Anon. _____ Name

Interview Guide: City Staff/Council closely involved with Neighborhood Planning

1. How long have you been working for the City of Seattle?
2. How long have you lived in Seattle?
3. Could you please describe your job duties?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What skills do you look for when you hire new staff? Why are these skills so important?
4. Were you involved in the neighborhood planning process? If so, how?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Is this position different from other planning positions that you’ve held? If so, how?
5. Tell me about the kinds of community groups or non-profit groups that this department works with.
   Possible follow-up prompt: What are the advantages or disadvantages to this?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What have some of the challenges been?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you expect that these relationships will continue in the future? Why or why not?
6. Has educating citizens been part of your job? If so, could you please describe the nature of the education?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What are the advantages or disadvantages to doing this? Do you think that City staff also learns new things because of this?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you expect that this will continue in the future?
7. Have you seen any changes in the way the City conducts business since the neighborhood planning process started? Please describe these changes.
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you think the direction of Seattle’s political philosophy has changed over the past 15 years or so? How? What contributed to that change?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do government departments or agencies collaborate more amongst themselves? With the public? Why is this so?

8. Have you seen any changes in how Seattle citizens and the city government relate to one another? Please describe these changes.
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you believe they have been positive changes, or negative? Please explain.

9. How often do you (as the City) deal with NIMBYism or neighborhood conflict? Has this changed from the way it was before?

10. As I’ve been reviewing various City programs, it seems that many of them have built in mechanisms for periodic evaluation, feedback to citizens, and accountability. Is it an explicit rule for City programs to include these things? Where does that directive come from?

11. In general, how do you think the City views citizens?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What are the responsibilities of this government with relation to its citizens?
   Possible follow-up prompt: How has working closely with citizens changed the outcomes of City programs or initiatives? Why do you believe these changes occurred?

12. What other things should I know about?

13. Is there anyone else I should talk to (maybe with a different viewpoint)?

Are you available for follow-up interviews? __________ Yes _________ No

Thank you for your time.

**Interview Guide: Citizens involved in Neighborhood Planning**

1. How long have you lived in Seattle?

2. Which neighborhood do you live in? Have you always lived in this neighborhood?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Could you please describe your neighborhood?

3. Were you involved in the neighborhood planning process? If so, how? If not, can you describe how you are involved now?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What have you learned by being part of the process?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What tools or resources did the City provide for you?
4. What do you like about working with the City of Seattle? What do you dislike?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you think the relationship between the City and the citizens has changed over the past 10-15 years? If so, how? Has this been a positive or negative change?

5. When you work with City staff, what is their role? What is yours?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Have you attended public meetings held by the City? If so, can you describe what happens at them? Who runs the meeting?

6. Do you feel like the City government adequately serves the public? Why or why not?

7. How have the budget and staff cuts in the neighborhood department affected the plans?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What do you think will be different with the nbhd plan updates? What is the reason for this change?

8. Do you feel that the City responds quickly when a new problem or opportunity arises? Please explain or give an example.

9. What other things should I know about?

10. Is there anyone else I should talk to (maybe with a different viewpoint)?

Are you available for follow-up interviews? ________ Yes ________ No

Thank you for your time.

**Interview Guide: City Staff/Council from other departments**

1. How long have you been working for the City of Seattle?

2. How long have you lived in Seattle?

3. Could you please describe your job duties?
   Possible follow-up prompt: What skills do you look for when you hire new staff? Why are these skills so important?

4. Were you involved in the neighborhood planning process? If so, how?
   Possible follow-up prompt: How have the neighborhood plans affected this department?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you see a change in how your department does things? If so, can you describe the nature of the change?

5. Tell me about the kinds of community groups that this department works with.
   Possible follow-up prompt: What are the advantages or disadvantages to this? What have some of the challenges been?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Have you seen a change in who participates in civic affairs in Seattle? Please explain.
Possible follow-up prompt: Do you expect that these relationships will continue in the future? Why or why not?

6. How does your department communicate with Seattle citizens?

   Possible follow-up prompt: Has this changed from the way it was done before? If so, how?
   Possible follow-up prompt: How frequently does your department review and update their methods of communication? Is it a priority to keep as current as possible? Is it important to try and reach all citizens?
   Possible follow-up prompt: When your department begins a new project or program, do you consult with citizen groups? Why or why not?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you feel that public input has become more credible? Why or why not? What do you attribute the change to?

7. Have you seen any changes in how Seattle citizens and the city government relate to one another? Please describe these changes.

   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you believe they have been positive changes, or negative? Please explain.
   Possible follow-up prompt: How has this changed the way the City does business?
   Possible follow-up prompt: Do you think the direction of Seattle’s political philosophy has changed over the past 15 years or so? How? What contributed to that change?

8. Can you describe for me what typically happens when the City is faced with a new issue – either a problem or opportunity?

   Possible follow-up prompt: How quickly is the City able to respond? Has this changed? If so, why do you think this is so?

9. In general, how do you think the City views citizens?

   Possible follow-up prompt: What are the responsibilities of this government with relation to its citizens?
   Possible follow-up prompt: How has working closely with citizens changed the outcomes of City programs or initiatives? Why do you believe these changes occurred?

10. What other things should I know about?

11. Is there anyone else I should talk to (maybe with a different viewpoint)?

Are you available for follow-up interviews? _________ Yes _________ No

Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX C. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

**Formal Interviews**

Jim Diers - Former Director of the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Marty Curry - Former Director of the Seattle Planning Commission
Rebecca Herzfeld - Former Department of Neighborhoods staff, Director of Neighborhood Plan Implementation
Ref Lindmark – Participant in the Green Lake neighborhood planning process, current member of the City Neighborhood Council (Chair of transportation committee)
Jean Sundborg – Participant in the Queen Anne neighborhood planning process, founding member of the Uptown Alliance
Rob Mattson – Neighborhood District Coordinator, Ballard
David Goldberg – Former Department of Neighborhoods staff, currently with the Department of Planning and Development
Michael Killoren – Director, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Sally Clark – Seattle City Councilmember, former Neighborhood Development Manager
Richard McIver – Seattle City Councilmember
Ron Angeles – Neighborhood District Coordinator, Delridge

**Informal Interviews / Neighborhood Tours**

University District Neighborhood (Karen Ko, District Coordinator)
Queen Anne / Magnolia Neighborhood (Christa Dumpys, District Coordinator)
### APPENDIX D. TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Royer elected Mayor (three terms)</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mayor’s Recommended Land Use &amp; Transportation Plan for Downtown” released</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1985 Downtown Plan adopted</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987 Office of Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Matching Fund, District Councils established by Resolution 27709</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 Citizen’s Alternative Plan (CAP) adopted by voter initiative</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman B. Rice elected Mayor (two terms)</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington State Growth Management Act passed</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Plan <em>Towards a Sustainable Seattle</em> adopted</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) established by Resolution 29015</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 Neighborhood Planning begins</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Schell elected Mayor (one term)</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999 Neighborhood Plans adopted; Seattle voters approve renewal of Community Centers Levy</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle citizens approve $198.2 million levy for Parks &amp; Recreation (Pro Parks Levy)</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Mayor Greg Nickels elected</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003 Budget cuts reduce staff and funding in Department of Neighborhoods</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Matching Fund celebrates 20th Anniversary</td>
<td>2008</td>
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</table>
## APPENDIX E. PLANS THAT REFERENCE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Planning Efforts</th>
<th>No Mention of Neighborhood Plans</th>
<th>Mentioned/ Addressed Neighborhood Plans</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seattle Bicycle Master Plan (2007)</td>
<td>X*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation Pedestrian Plan Resolution # 30951 (2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center City Seattle (2007)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Factor linked to Neighborhood Business District Strategy (2007)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Lands (2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Environmental Policies and Regulation Review (2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Main Street Mapping (2007)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete Streets (2007)</td>
<td>X*</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Park Action Agenda (2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast Seattle Action Agenda (2006)</td>
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<td>Central Waterfront Plan (2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livable South Downtown (2006)</td>
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<td>Multifamily Zoning Updates (2006)</td>
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<td>Transportation Strategic Plan (2005)</td>
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<td>Transportation Transit Plans (2005)</td>
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<td>Environmental Action Agenda (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Drainage Study (2005)</td>
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<td>South Lake Union Transportation Study (2004)</td>
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<td>University District Revitalization Plan (March 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidewalks Improvement Initiative (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northgate Action Agenda (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Lake Union Action Agenda (2003)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thornton Creek Draft Watershed Action Plan (2001)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 Parks Department Annual Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks Development and Acquisition Communications Plan (2001)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Transit Light Rail Station Area Plans (1998-2001)</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Pro Parks Levy</td>
<td></td>
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*Note: These plans have no explicit reference to any particular neighborhood plan, although the Executive has told the Office of the City Auditor that neighborhood plans were consulted in the process of developing both of these plans.

Source: Seattle City Auditor
WORKS CITED


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those who helped make this work possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank the people in Seattle who took time out of their busy schedules to share their stories and experiences with me. Without your perceptions and insights, this research would not have been possible, and I truly enjoyed talking with you. Second, I am so grateful to my committee: Tara Clapp, Betty Wells, and especially to my major professor, Gerardo Sandoval. Your encouragement, support and advice were invaluable, and I appreciate the times when you took it on faith that I would come through. I also need to thank the other faculty in the CRP Department, you have made my graduate education so rewarding. Finally, and certainly not least, thanks to my family and friends for always believing in me. I am especially grateful to Ryan, who kept me sane and smiling, and knew even better than I did that this would turn out well, even when he hadn’t yet read a word. Thank you for taking pride in my accomplishments.