

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTION BUILDING

The Newhall Years: 1984-89

Sarah Newhall became ONA's Director roughly concurrent with Bud Clark's mayoral victory against incumbent Frank Ivancie, whose exit from local politics marked the tail end of the era against which Goldschmidt had first mobilized in the early 1970s. Ivancie had been the last scion of what Portland's 1970s activist vanguard viewed as the City's "old boy's club". Clark's decisive victory signaled that liberal populist sentiment had not withered in Portland in spite of the conservative backlash, then pervasive in many other U.S. cities, that was so emblematic of the Reagan presidency--a backlash which would play a decisive role in dismantling citizen involvement programs around the country (Berry et al, 1993).

Newhall's administration pursued several initiatives that, though in some ways carrying forth the programmatic adjustments undertaken by Jacobsen,

decisively shifted ONA's focus.¹ These shifts were in part triggered by events over which Newhall had no control. First, a heated neighborhood dispute at the Central Northeast Neighbors District Coalition over the siting of a Fred Meyer's Superstore catalyzed a crisis of identity for ONA. Secondly, a neighborhood association boundary dispute within the Northeast Coalition of Neighbors (the DC for Northeast Portland) triggered intense group infighting. Third, brimming conflict surrounding the North Portland Citizens Committee (the DC for North Portland) was hobbling that organization. Fourthly, the reaction against annexation in East Portland had emerged as a formidable threat to Portland's hopes to expand its boundary eastward to Gresham. Then, in early 1988, Newhall would head off a budget battle which, as with the Ivancie effort in 1983, threatened to halve the ONA program by doing away with the District Coalition offices.

¹ Newhall came to the ONA following her work at the Center for Urban Education (CUE), which provided outreach and assistance to immigrant populations. Throughout the early and mid-1980s, Portland had undergone waves of in-migration from Southeast Asian and Eastern European countries, and CUE served a kind of settlement house function for these dislocated groups.

Newhall's responses to these challenges signaled a clear shift in direction and outlook from the Jacobsen era, notably with regard to formalizing ONA/DCB relations. Whereas Jacobsen had hoped to achieve some of the same goals through building relationships within the system, Newhall undertook to engineer rule making as a means of fortifying the program against political exigencies and inherent vulnerabilities.

Besides standardizing relationships within the program, Newhall supported ONA staff efforts to strengthen the role and stature of the Bureau Advisory Committees.² Although Patti Jacobsen's administration initiated the "Budget Advisory Coordinating Committee",³ her efforts to push for BAC influence were not a decisive feature of her administrative strategy. At the time she supervised ONA, the BAC program was still relatively small. But by 1986, shoring up the strength of the BAC process fit well with the institution building aspirations Newhall was then

² Staffer John Legry took the lead on coordinating the BAC program.

³ As noted, the Budget Advisory Committee program was not renamed to "Bureau Advisory Committee" until 1986.

trying to materialize. Linked together, the BAC program and the routinization of ONA/DCB relations would garner for ONA a fully manifest institutional profile in city politics.

Rabble Rousing

Neighborhood association politics in Portland was tremendously contentious during 1985. The disputes raging that year, noted briefly above, brought to the foreground issues that had shadowed the ONA program for some time. Several themes subsequently emerged that would establish a mandate for routinizing relations among the various ONA players. Newhall achieved this through appointing a "Policies and Procedures Review Committee" in December 1985, whose task was to subject to formalization nearly every aspect of the ONA program. This committee consisted of DCB activists from each part of the city, DCB office staff and ONA personnel.

The outcome of these efforts was a set of "Guidelines" intended to serve as a regulatory framework for the ONA program. Although in many respects the Guidelines served merely to formalize conventions then in effect, they would also standardize relations in a manner that framed a unique

context--until that time not available to NA stakeholders--for power struggles to play out across the NA system.

Just ten years previously, such a gesture would have been unthinkable, as the City's NAs jealously guarded their various, and largely self-defined prerogatives, and fervently resisted the formulation of District Coalition Boards. Now, by 1987, rather than negotiate with 60 or 70 different neighborhoods, ONA, under Newhall, had managed to funnel its agenda through the six DCBs then in operation. Newhall's move in this case helped to define a forum through which a control dialectic could, and would, play out. To understand how this came about, it is first necessary to present the basic contours of the conflicts that would presage support for the Guidelines undertaking.

The 1985 proposal by Fred Meyer's to site a Superstore in the Sullivan's Gulch neighborhood near NE Broadway and 28th Street provoked a not unexpected outcry from some local residents. The proposal necessitated a zoning change for a twelve-acre parcel that abutted a stable residential community. The land had been zoned industrial and had served as the site of the Hyster manufacturing plant. Fred Meyers

applied for a zone change to allow commercial activity at the location.

As the issue developed, project opponents faced the shopping chain's powerful propaganda advantage. Promotion of the development included a neighborhood-wide survey sponsored by Fred Meyers, which it would use to claim that the project had broad-based support apart from a small clique of neighborhood dissidents. The dissidents would allege the survey was invalid and misleading.

ONA eventually became caught up in the fight, with Fred Meyer's supporters alleging ONA had breached its historic role through becoming actively involved in the dispute.⁴ Conflict preceding the Fred Meyer issue kindled this skirmish, and involved a schism on the Central Northeast Neighbors Board of Directors (the DCB for Central Northeast Portland) that had embroiled the Coalition office coordinator, Marsha Moscovitz. A theme underlying these conflicts had, and would continue, to pose a long-standing dilemma with which ONA would have to contend: Wherein do neighborhood associations derive their legitimacy? By virtue of their representativeness of neighborhood-

⁴ ONA's decision to dedicate an ONA newsletter to the issue was looked at askance by Fred Meyer supporters.

wide viewpoints, or through participation of those who choose to become involved? Also indicated here was the question of ONA's primary function. Was it to serve as an advocate for neighborhood-based mobilization against development threats, or was it merely a general contractor for citizen involvement services, obliged to remain neutral with respect to developmental politics?^{5,6}

These were, and would remain, key issues of ambiguity and contest over which various ONA stakeholders would routinely spar. For their part, ONA and City Council would challenge DCB and NA authority on grounds that these organizations were not sufficiently representative, noting the lack of participation and new membership. District Coalition and NA leadership would retort, often bitterly, that claims against their representativeness were sham

⁵ The Central Northeast Neighbors District Coalition (CNN) was formed through active support from ONA in the early 1980s. As with the East Portland District Coalition--which would be formally recognized in 1990 after years of organizing efforts by ONA--disputes left unresolved stemming from ONA's involvement with CNN would hamstring the group's ability to form consensus.

⁶ Past ONA staff interviewed for this study would describe this issue as "ONA's schizophrenia". One City Commissioner interviewed for this study noted that the strong presence of the Portland Organizing Project, beginning in the mid-1980s around the mid-Multnomah County sewer development issue, posed a significant threat to ONA's stature because it underscored ONA's ambivalence towards "taking on the system".

maneuvers meant to end-run the citizen participation process.

The conflict within the Northeast Coalition of Neighbors centered on a boundary dispute over NA identification. A dissident faction drawn from residents from the eastern edge of the Sabin neighborhood had mobilized to establish identification with the Irvington neighborhood. This eventually led to an uneasy resolution involving the formation of a separate NA to be called Sabin-Irvington. The dissident group included middle-class residents who sought to identify with Irvington, one of the City's oldest and most stable middle-class enclaves. Sabin, for the most part poor and working class, was then facing redevelopment and gentrification pressures.

The dispute in North Portland had resulted from claims made by a group of dissidents who felt North Portland Citizens Committee (DC for North Portland) had been functioning in a manner that suppressed participation and dissent. One of the leaders of the dissident faction was Rush Kolmaine, a Public Cable Access activist and former Marine. Kolmaine had maintained a consistent barrage of accusations against NPCC over a two-year period beginning around 1984,

following a stint as an NPCC Board member in 1983.⁷ Incensed at the lack of response to grievances he had filed against NPCC, Kolmaine finally pushed his matter to ONA.

Ironically, a key feature of Kolmaine's grievance--that NPCC had suppressed the efforts of groups to form neighborhood associations in the North Portland area--highlighted a constitutional weakness of the 1975 ordinance under which the ONA program had been functioning. Since the ordinance made no specific mention of district coalitions, the matter of Kolmaine's grievance begged the question of clearly defining the entity he was grieving.⁸ Another key feature of Kolmaine's grievance involved claims he made that NPCC routinely violated Robert's Rules of Order, and that the intent and outcome of this was

⁷ Kolmaine became legendary with ONA and NPCC staff working at the time. At one point found rifling the office of NPCC coordinator Susan Chandler, Kolmaine would be escorted off the premises by then ONA staffer, Lee Perlman. Kolmaine protested, claiming that the office was "public property". In part due to Kolmaine's harangues, ONA requested a limited fiscal audit of the NPCC in 1984. The audit found no malfeasance, but did note bookkeeping irregularities.

⁸ Section 3.96.080 of the 1975 ordinance stated in part: "If a neighborhood association violates minimum standards of Section 3.96.030, a person of that neighborhood or the commissioner in charge may request the office [sic] of neighborhood [sic] associations [sic] to suspend any assistance to that neighborhood association. The office of neighborhood associations shall be responsible for initiating a mediation process immediately, and mediation efforts shall continue for thirty days. If at the end of thirty days, a satisfactory resolution of the problem has not been reached, then the commissioner in charge will issue a decision."

suppression of dissenting opinion as well as a violation of the rules NPCC was obliged to abide under contract with the City.⁹

Newhall led a three-member panel to hear the Kolmaine grievance. The panel found that while NPCC had failed to maintain a standing grievance committee, as called for in its bylaws, there was not clear evidence it was guilty of the more substantive claims made against it. Kolmaine appealed the mediation decision to Mayor Bud Clark (then Commissioner-in-charge of ONA) claiming the panel avoided key questions, including dealing with the amorphous standing of NPCC vis-à-vis member neighborhood associations, and allegations made by Kolmaine that NPCC had violated Oregon's Open Meetings Law. Clark eventually upheld the mediation panel's decision.¹⁰

⁹ According to interview accounts, a primary catalyst for Kolmaine's grievance was his dissatisfaction with the way that NPCC was supporting Kenton neighborhood residents in their ongoing fight with the Portland International Raceway over noise ordinance violations. The PIR fight with Kenton and Portsmouth would continue for several years.

¹⁰ As it would happen, Kolmaine's grievance would be the last grievance to be considered on appeal by a City Commissioner. A 1987 re-write of the 1975 ONA ordinance following the Policies and Procedures Review process would curb appeals privileges such that ONA would have final say over neighborhood association grievances in the event they could not be resolved through mediation. No appeals past ONA would be granted. The 1975 ordinance established a process whereby citizens could appeal ONA decisions to the City Council. The limit of this authority to the ONA Director would exacerbate relations with East Portland activists in the mid-1990s.

In fact, many issues plagued ONA's relations with NPCC. In this respect, the adjudication of Kolmaine's grievance was more an expedient resolution than it was a vindication of NPCC. The issues Kolmaine raised had been and would remain problematic for several years, and would eventually contribute to NPCC's downfall in 1992. Newhall's handling of the matter needs to be considered within the context of the entire ONA program in place at the time. Excessive ONA meddling would appear suspect to onlookers, and would bolster long-standing claims that ONA could not resist impulses to control citizen involvement. Rather than wield a heavy hand in a grievance setting, ONA parlayed the notoriety of this and other events swirling around NA activity to garner support for the Policies and Procedures review process.¹¹

Of all these incidents, the fight in East Portland was probably the most momentous and far-

¹¹ There was another layer to the Kolmaine grievance. Newhall appointed Kolmaine to the 1985 Policies & Procedures Review Committee. For his part, Kolmaine published an opinion piece in support of the Guidelines process in the *Oregonian* ("Neighborhood group fine-tuning takes time," October 7, 1986). Kolmaine's piece followed an *Oregonian* editorial written two weeks previously which tersely criticized the process, arguing that the Guidelines appeared to be bureaucratizing citizen involvement ("Too much bureaucracy", September 22, 1986). Newhall also responded to the *Oregonian* editorial. ("Clear rules necessary for growth", October 9, 1986.) By appointing Kolmaine to the P&PR Committee, Newhall managed to head-off a likely appeal by Kolmaine to City Council. In addition, she would also garner support from Mayor Bud Clark to initiate the P&PR process.

reaching. At issue was a dispute over the City's plans to annex 25 square miles of territory from N.E. 82nd Avenue eastward to Gresham. Portland had marshaled massive political resources to insure that this process would proceed unimpeded, but officials leading the charge had not anticipated the ardent challenge their actions would trigger from a group of East Portland activists. The issue erupted when residents of then unincorporated mid-Multnomah County received news in 1985 of the costs for mandated sewer system development, estimated to reach \$362 million, only a small percentage of which would be offset by federal grants for major facilities. The bulk of the price tag would be footed by private property owners, at an average cost of \$4,100 per household (Morgan and Vizinni, 1999). Facing intense pressure from the Portland Organizing Project, a church-based activist organization which formed over the sewer development issue, then City Commissioner of Public Works, Earl Blumenauer, assembled an \$88 million subsidy to help offset the financial burden on East Portland residents.

The sewer development issue was a significant embarrassment to the City because of claims it had made that it could insure a continuity of urban

services following annexation at costs comparable to previous service arrangements. ONA's involvement made matters worse. Its efforts to organize new NAs in the territory appeared to old-guard activists--many of whom were associated with Multnomah County's Community Planning Group process--as a blatant effort to divide and conquer the territory. As such, ONA was viewed as a latter-day settlement program intent on rendering toothless the activist legacy of East Portland. Starting in 1985, Newhall went head-to-head with these activists, insisting that the County Community Planning Group boundaries be partitioned in order to accommodate more reasonably scaled neighborhood association areas.¹² The old-guard activists counter-punched, and remained opposed to Portland's efforts both in annexation and neighborhood organizing over the next several years.¹³

Unlike other neighborhood districts in Portland, which were typically able to marshal group identity through at least nominal opposition to downtown, the East Portland District Coalition (EPDC), officially

¹² Community Planning Group boundaries were typically much larger than Portland's average neighborhood association boundaries.

¹³ East Portland activists Pete and Dorothy Smith would challenge over 100 annexation applications by the City of Portland. This would cost the City an estimated \$80,000 per year over a several year period in City Attorney efforts to defend Portland's annexation procedures.

inaugurated in 1990 at the height of the annexation fights, began as a house divided. While this factor was not decisive in the downfall of EPDC in the Fall of 1996, the reluctance of Community Planning Group leadership to relinquish power made EPDC vulnerable to later efforts to exploit Board divisions.

Besides these issues, ONA also had become, beginning around 1987, increasingly enmeshed in the City's budget planning process. The Bureau Advisory Committee program, as it was then called, had grown in size and stature. By the mid-1980s, the City was just beginning to climb out of the recessionary cycle that had gripped it since 1982. Ongoing budgetary shortfalls and fiscal planning complications had created flux in downtown political alignments. The Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee became closely involved in these dynamics, and would acquire greater power and stature as a result of building alignments to key Council members.¹⁴

RULE MAKING AND THE DCB LOGIC

¹⁴ An extended discussion of the history and development of the BAC program through Newhall's administration is presented in Appendix B.

In 1980, Commissioner Charles Jordan empanelled an "ONA Review Committee" in response to a grievance filed against the Northwest District Association (an NA serving a large portion of NW Portland) that alleged violations very similar to those Kolmaine made against NPCC in 1985. The Review Committee's charge was to assess the entire ONA program to test the extent to which the problems indicated by allegations made against the Northwest District Association were apparent elsewhere in the City. The committee would base its recommendations in part upon survey responses solicited from NA participants. A major theme of the Committee's findings and recommendations was that the existing ordinance governing ONA program functioning be retained in its then current form. As the committee noted:

The historic trend in the evolution of ONA has been away from specific structural requirements for neighborhood associations and toward looser performance guidelines and standards. In 1973, the Council rejected the idea of highly structured District Planning Organizations after extensive discussion. In 1974, the Council rejected segments of the original ONA ordinance that established procedures for official Council recognition of neighborhood associations that submitted acceptable bylaws and whose boundaries did not overlap those of another association. In both cases, Council decided that looser rather

than tighter structures best suited Portland's needs.¹⁵ [underlined text in original]

The report stressed that survey respondents overwhelmingly opposed more precise standards for NA recognition. Respondents were split about 50-50 on the question of boundary overlap stipulations. The report continued:

The present ordinance provides performance standards which are adequate to assure democratic procedures if these standards are conscientiously followed. To assist neighborhood associations, we suggest that ONA work to develop means to assist associations in following these standards.

The report went on to make four suggestions for providing further assistance to NAs. Two suggestions focused on shorning up leadership training and providing workshops for NA activists on how to maintain successful outreach efforts. The other two suggestions recommended providing a standard set of NA bylaws for boilerplate purposes, and a standard form for NAs to report Board decisions to City bureaus. Summing up its recommendations on the point of revising the ONA ordinance, the committee tersely

¹⁵ From "Report and Recommendations", ONA Review Committee, February, 1980, p. 2.

concluded: "We find little basis in our own investigations to alter these earlier decisions."

This outlook had shifted dramatically by April 1987, at which time ONA's 1985 Policies and Procedures Review Committee had completed its final version of what would become Portland's NA rulebook. Entitled "Guidelines for Neighborhood Associations, District Coalition Boards, and the Office of Neighborhood Associations", this document set out in painstaking detail the various types of relationships and responsibilities that the ONA program encompassed. For purposes of analysis, the Guidelines offer a road map by which to gauge and understand the ongoing contests for control among the various NA stakeholders.

As noted briefly above, the Guidelines were, in part, essentially a formalization of conventions that had guided Portland's NA program until that time. In this respect, the effort served to consolidate a normative framework for Portland's neighborhood association system, and did so at a time when several threats were challenging and eroding the institution.¹⁶

¹⁶ The Tufts study claimed that the impetus for the Guidelines had originated from neighborhood activists. This study found some support for that claim, but interview data also shows that the matter had to be handled delicately by ONA in order to establish buy-in among key neighborhood association leadership in order to

But from another perspective, the Guidelines process signaled the end of the era captured in the 1980 ONA Review Committee report noted above. In so doing, it heralded a shift in focus from a relationship building ethos dependent upon close ties between ONA and neighborhood associations, to the full enfranchisement of the District Coalition model--a feature the City Council, and many activists, had found so problematic at the outset of the program.¹⁷

By 1986 there were, nominally, six District Coalitions in Portland; yet, in fact, there was broad variability in how each of the district offices serving these areas actually functioned. The North Portland Citizens Committee (NPCC), though nominally recognizing neighborhood associations as members, hosted only two active NAs by the mid-1980s. The West-Northwest District functioned very informally and met only four times annually, and was dominated by the Northwest District Association, the NA serving most of

head off broad based skepticism among NA ranks. Newhall chose Moshe Lenske, then Chair of the Southeast DCB (Southeast Uplift), to chair the Guidelines review process. Lenske had a solid reputation among NA leadership across the City.

¹⁷ Central to both Council and citizen complaints about the "District Planning Organization" feature of the 1974 ordinance was that this structure would impede access between citizens and individual City Council members. Part of this concern derived from the agency management function Portland's Council form of government requires of each Council member.

Northwest Portland. Animosities between member NAs had kept this DCB weak. Other parts of the City would also struggle with NA rivalries for District dominance and control over staff resources. In addition, the tensions in East Portland required that ONA establish a framework for incorporating and enfranchising the NAs it sought to organize in the area under annexation.

In actuality, the 1987-89 Guidelines signified more than merely formalizing relationships among ONA participants already in operation at the time. Several provisions of the Guidelines significantly altered the terms for engagement within the NA edifice.¹⁸ Primary among these was the explicit delineation of District Coalition Board functions. Among the various duties assigned DCBs were the requirements ONA established for annual DCB work plans and mid-year progress reports. These provisions quite clearly laid down the need for NAs to sort through their differences and establish a basic consensus in order to acquire yearly contracts that would pay for

¹⁸ The Guidelines were followed in 1987 by a re-write of the 1975 ordinance. Besides explicit reference to the Guidelines, the re-write would make notable revisions. Explicit references to the role NAs would play in city planning efforts would be deleted in the 1987 ordinance. Also, reference made in the 1975 ordinance to neighborhood association roles in providing recommendations regarding zoning would be dropped in the 1987 re-write.

district staff and office resources. The Guidelines stressed the importance of full NA involvement at the DCB level. Under the section, "Requirements for being recognized as a neighborhood association by the City of Portland and to be eligible for services from ONA," the Guidelines made provisions for the "Liaison to District Coalition Board," stating in part:

To have a voice in setting goals and priorities for a District Coalition Board, and to determine the allocation of that DCBs resources, a Neighborhood Association must participate as a member of its District Coalition Board.¹⁹

While the Guidelines established provisions for serving NAs not participating in the DCBs, the thrust of the document made clear that preference would be made for NAs who were full DCB partners.²⁰ Certain provisions would more fully make this point, including: that DCBs provide for the orientation of NA

¹⁹ From ONA Guidelines, April 1987, p. 2.

²⁰ A final Chapter of the 1987 re-write of the ONA ordinance-- Chapter 3.96.090, "Assistance to Neighborhood Associations"-- stipulated under what terms ONA would be obliged to offer services to non-aligned neighborhood associations. These strengthened ONA's hand in dealing with rogue NAs. Article B of this Chapter stated: "If a neighborhood association fails to continuously meet the minimum standards contained in this Chapter, the Office of Neighborhood Associations may suspend partial or all assistance to that neighborhood association until such time as it achieves compliance." A similar provision in the 1975 ordinance gave this power to the Commissioner-in-charge in the event a mediation process could not settle the matter. The new ordinance conferred more authority in this case to ONA.

and DC members on the operations and procedures of the DCB and the district offices, and that they develop annual workplans specifying goals and objectives. Other provisions would pin down and specify contractual relations between ONA and the DCBs.

A draft version of the Guidelines was released for City Council review and public scrutiny in July 1986. Several provisions detailed in that version elicited strong negative reaction, including a tersely worded *Oregonian* editorial decrying the whole Guidelines undertaking under the banner, "Too much bureaucracy" (*Oregonian*, September 22, 1986). Of particular concern was a provision that appeared to confer unilateral control over Guidelines revisions to the ONA Director. That provision was dropped in the final version, which specified that any party could propose amendments to the Guidelines through first notifying ONA of the proposed amendments in writing. Furthermore--in capitulation to DCB and NA demands--it was established that ONA would undertake Guidelines revisions every two years, in cooperation with NA and DCB stakeholders.

Finally, the adopted Guidelines established procedures for dealing with grievances among and between NAs and their DCBs. Significantly, these

procedures did not outline methods for dealing with grievances filed against ONA itself. Moreover, in a departure from the July 1986 Draft version, the final version's grievance procedures marginalized the role ONA would play in grievance mediation. Under the new provisions, squabbles amongst DCBs and member NAs were to be sorted out amongst themselves. Only in situations where grievances made against NAs or DCBs pertained to the Guidelines would ONA be involved in settling disputes. This was a significant departure from procedures stipulated in the 1975 ONA ordinance, which allowed for the consideration of grievances beyond ONA to the Commissioner-in-charge, and an appeal to City Council. Considered within the context of a conflict avoidance paradigm, the curtailment of the grievance process is significant, for it would compel suppression of evidence that the system was not functioning as democratically as presumed.

There were also Guidelines provisions that explicitly dealt with issues then under close scrutiny by ONA. Provisions for resolving neighborhood boundary disputes addressed then current contests faced by the Northeast and East Portland districts. Explicit newsletter policies addressed the Fred Meyer

fight among neighborhood associations in the Central Northeast district.

Considering both its substantive and symbolic effects, the Guidelines process constituted a major turning point for Portland's NA program. Although many active NA participants supported the idea of developing Guidelines, others remained leery of the final outcome. Those appointed to the Policies and Procedures Committee for the most part hailed the Guidelines outcomes as beneficial to the whole program, noting--in concordance with Newhall--that the then current stress the system faced necessitated an effort to standardize the roles and responsibilities of the various program players. This support for the process from NA participants seems likely to have originated from a perceived need to shore up the "coercive powers" of the institution. Facing internal squabbles and contention, NA activist clearly understood how rules could serve to buffer the institution from scattershot and disabling claims made against its legitimacy. The winnowing of rules from the 1986 draft Guidelines also indicates that a minimalist logic influenced and guided this process.

Others, especially in North and East Portland, lamented the Guidelines process. Some North Portland

activists, notably those who had been involved with NPCC in the 1970s and early 1980s, viewed the Guidelines effort as a rear guard gambit by ONA to fragment NPCC's hard-fought influence in local politics. By encouraging the development of independent NAs, ONA would, according to this dissent, fragment NPCC's capacity to speak with a unified voice.

East Portland activists also viewed the Guidelines effort with suspicion. Its emphasis on developing NAs clearly signaled a challenge to the Community Planning Groups' organizing legacy in mid-Multnomah County. These activists would scramble over the next few years to head off threats to partition their boundaries.²¹ Besides North and East Portland, activists from the Northwest District Association, the NA that dominated the West Northwest district, clearly understood the threat the Guidelines posed to their hegemony over decision making in their territory, and lobbied heavily against adoption of the July draft version.

²¹ Pete Smith, a key leader among East Portland activists, lobbied hard to be appointed to the 1989-91 Guidelines Review Committee in order to watchdog ONA and safeguard the interests of East Portland's Community Planning Groups. Smith had spent several years in legal dispute with the City over the East Portland annexation process.

In each of these cases, the operative logic driving development of the Guidelines--that DCBs derived their legitimacy from NA involvement and visa versa--signaled the need for neighborhood activists to address and sort out interest group issues among themselves. From the standpoint of some participants involved at the time, ONA's actions in this regard amounted to making trouble where there had been none previously: by hastening the need for NAs to organize and form up at the DCB level, the Guidelines might trigger interest group skirmishes that otherwise would not have occurred.

From one perspective--nominally that of old-guard activists in North Portland--the outcome of this would in fact be just the opposite of ONA's stated intentions. Less resource-dependent neighborhood associations would gain more stature through alignment with and, eventually, informal control over DCBs. Weaker NAs would become subordinate to the new rule-driven logic. In total, from this perspective, this would serve to further consolidate middle and upper class control of the NA network, and would displace the lower class agendas a few stalwart activists had managed to amalgamate over the years. Hence, an NA ethos dependent upon strong DCBs would enfranchise the

better off at the expense of poorer groups. Additionally, increased attention to rules and contract stipulations that were now demanded by ONA would shift activist attention towards maintaining relations between DCBs and Downtown. Little by little--as this criticism claimed--the neighborhood association program's center of gravity would shift towards the center.

This suspicion was in part fostered by actions that Newhall would take subsequent to the Guidelines to distance ONA from dealing with NAs on an issue-by-issue basis. In accordance with the Guidelines, DCBs were now responsible for dealing with NA affairs in ways that supplanted the historic functioning and role of ONA. By curtailing lateral access by NA activists to ONA, Newhall evoked the suspicion from some that she was attempting to insulate ONA by off-loading administrative duties onto DCBs with which they were ill-equipped to deal. One poignant criticism alleged that Newhall's intention in strengthening DCBs was to centralize the program in order to more fully control it. This critique was echoed in the tersely worded *Oregonian* editorial (noted above). Referring to the July 1986 draft version of the Guidelines, the editorial stated in part: "(T)his draft has the tone

of a bureaucracy preparing to tell community organizations how to operate. The organizations should resist being wagged by the bureaucratic tail" (*Oregonian*, September 22, 1986).

Proponents of the Guidelines, and supporters of Newhall, would hail the process as a brilliant resolution to the problems that the program had then been facing. In one stroke, these supporters would claim, Newhall and the ONA Policies and Procedures Review Committee convened by her had managed to deal with several forces threatening to pull the neighborhood association program apart from different directions. On the one hand, the Guidelines served to stall criticism that the NAs were unaccountable and prone to self-destruction. On the other hand, codification of the DCB structure was thought to have purchased for ONA a new lease on consolidating a legacy of NA involvement. Through stronger DCBs, capacity building could be achieved at the NA level with minimal intrusion from downtown. This would, it was hoped, finally head off suspicions that ONA was prone to pitting NAs against one another. At the same time, a strong DCB network would enable ONA to mobilize and target resources in ways it had been unable to achieve previously: strengthened DCBs would

provide the administrative armature that would allow ONA to focus its efforts on "watchdogging" City Council and downtown bureaus to insure citizen involvement would remain a priority.

There was, notably, another motivation for the Guidelines. Beginning at least as early as 1986, discussions were being carried out between Newhall, Bureau of Human Resources Director Rachel Jacky, and City Council about how to integrate the City's human resources functions with its citizen participation program. ONA would figure prominently in the City's plans to shift its human service commitments following an agreed swap of service obligations between Portland and Multnomah County in the mid-1980s. This swap was formalized in 1983 under "Resolution A", an intergovernmental agreement intended to address annexation issues and the City's urban services boundary. A 1986 issues paper drafted by Newhall and Jacky addressed the question of a merger of service obligations with the City's citizen participation program. The paper noted both the benefits of such a plan and caution about how to synthesize various programmatic elements. Newhall and Jacky commented on the possible benefits of expanding citizen participation to more fully incorporate human resource

issues, noting a trend in the City's thinking at the time:

With the continuing cutbacks in funding for social programs, neighborhoods are in fact becoming the "people's safety net". Neighborhood groups are being drawn, sometimes in spite of themselves, into a wider range of self-help problems than has been customary.²²

Beginning in 1989, ONA assumed responsibility for three advocacy agencies--the Portland Multnomah Commission on Aging, the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission, and the Youth Commission--following the dissolution of the City's Bureau of Human Resources and subsequent reorganization of human service obligations. Although this move was approved by the ONA Bureau Advisory Committee, it elicited strong reaction from some DCB and NA activists fearful this move signaled a trend away from support for NA activism. In a departure from previous hiring practices involving candidate selection and review, Mayor Bud Clark installed Jacky as ONA Director. (A fuller discussion of Jacky's tenure at ONA follows in Chapter V.)

²² From issue paper authored by Sarah Newhall and Rachel Jacky, dated December 24, 1986. Though lacking a title page and salutation, the tone and subject matter of the paper suggests it was prepared for City Council.

The reactions to the Guidelines are consistent with dynamics we would expect to unfold within ONA's control dialectic. Moreover, the different positions maintained by ONA and NA stakeholders throughout negotiations over the version the final Guidelines would take are very consistent with the notion that the NA process is conflicted over *process* and *product* imperatives. As it was written, the July 1986 Draft included several redundancies. Besides mandating that DCBs "actively recruit and maintain participation from member neighborhood associations", it also specified that the DCBs

(c)onduct regular District Coalition Board meetings to review progress in accomplishment of work plan, compliance with contract, and to receive input from neighborhood association members on activities, needs for service, and issues affecting neighborhood livability.²³

It seems likely that ONA had been anxious to push hard for DCB accountability, and had used the draft version to test tolerance for ONA's control imperatives. As it happened, the neighborhoods resisted. ONA relented, but in retrospect, it secured many of the provisions it had set out to establish.

²³ From draft "Office of Neighborhood Associations Standards & Guidelines", July 7, 1986.

For the first time in the program's history, the various stakeholders would be forced to confront the clash in their agendas. Newhall had called a bluff that was foundational to the program: that everyone could continue defining for himself or herself what the program stood for. We shall see in subsequent chapters how this would play out.

CONCLUSIONS

By formalizing relations within the NA edifice, the Guidelines process helped surface contradictory and ambiguous aspects of the program that had been tolerated for some time--aspects of the program Newhall's critics believed would have been better left dormant. But as it happened, events occurring during 1985 strained these tolerances, triggering for ONA a crisis of identity. For her proponents, Newhall's efforts subsequent to these threats garnered for Portland, through the neighborhood association program, an ongoing means by which pressures stemming from the City's pro-growth agenda could be challenged at the grass roots level. From this standpoint, Newhall's institution building efforts brilliantly assimilated an activist agenda into the routines of

downtown decision-making in a manner that had not been fully actualized by her predecessors. As such, these moves were thought to have achieved a more sophisticated balance between the enduring tensions of downtown and neighborhood imperatives.

For her critics, Newhall's efforts had more to do with personal political aspirations. In this view, the Guidelines initiative was seen as an effort to consolidate her influence by exploiting the organizational weaknesses, resource dependencies, and disabling ambiguities from which the NA system chronically suffered. From this standpoint, initiatives undertaken through Newhall's administration had homogenized the program in a manner which, ultimately, would sap its potency and undermine its grass roots integrity.

Newhall's initiatives, including the Guidelines as well as her support of efforts to consolidate the Bureau Advisory Committee program, did result to some degree in shifting the focus of attention within the program towards the center. On the one hand, this was simply the result of more fully manifesting the role of DCBs and thereby fostering greater attention on relations between them and ONA.

This shift was necessary, in part, in order to bring into focus the evolving nature of the ONA program. By 1986, nearly every part of the City--with the exception of East Portland--was hosted by, or had defined boundaries for, a neighborhood association. Though there was great variability in NA activity, the City had at least achieved a significant developmental milestone. Logistically speaking, ONA could not serve the system as it had done so previously. In this respect, the shift in focus towards DCB capacity building was necessary in order to maintain the administrative viability of the NA network.

But this presented a crisis, for it meant all stakeholders had to adapt to new roles. Furthermore, this crisis was exacerbated by a fundamental dilemma: it would increase pressure on the various players to come to terms with ambiguous aspects of the institution. Barring a radical shift in the City's outlook towards NA activism, these ambiguities were irreconcilable. These ambiguities centered on the tendency for program stakeholders to define the NA institution on their own terms. Thus, Newhall's moves were risky, and seem to have been based upon a gambit. By rewriting the "rules" of engagement, she hoped that the various institutional stakeholders, including City

Council, would trade the safety and comfort of ambiguity for the potential benefits of adapting to new (and stiffened) roles and responsibilities.

In this analysis, it seems probable that Newhall used the assimilation of human service duties by ONA, in part, to purchase ongoing support from City Council. Needing to navigate through budgetary skirmishes and around political impasses, Council appreciated Newhall's (and Jacky's) accommodations. But the result was a pull towards institutionalizing the idea that neighborhoods served as "the people's safety net", an idea that had been antagonistic to the view held by many NA activists that the NA system needed to be kept separate from a service orientation. Seeking to find ballast for the NA program, Newhall and Jacky would thus end up tethering it to an idea against which it had long struggled,²⁴ while at the same time proclaiming an enduring commitment to neighborhood associations, status quo ante. The vague and ambiguous terms by which the program had endured

²⁴ This struggle had been particularly acute in North Portland in the early 1970s. Conflict on the North Community Action Council (North Portland's CAA) over policy direction would lead in 1974 to a breakup of the board and the independent formation that year of the NPCC, which would become the NA contracting agency for the North Portland community. The NPCC wished to break away from the welfare service orientation of the NCAC and pursue housing rehabilitation, street improvement, and urban renewal initiatives (Abbott, 1983).

would enable this to happen. The "active co-optation" of NA participation that, in Dondero's analysis, had marked the Goldschmidt era, thus underwent a subtle but decisive shift.

ONA pursued the logic that consolidating the role and functioning of DCBs was necessary in order to continue building neighborhood association capacities to advocate for themselves. But ONA did not fully anticipate the degree to which DCB activists would chafe at its agenda. As a result, the control dialectic encoded into the program would fully materialize over the next several years as a control/counter-control dynamic, wherein DCB activists bridled at perceived encumbrances placed upon them by ONA. For its part, ONA struggled with defining terms for accountability--through various contract stipulations and the Guidelines--as a way of anchoring a program that was struggling to reconcile the competing pressures it then faced.

It is important to note that the formal stature DCBs acquired as a result of the Guidelines did not give rise to more democratic terms for involvement, rather; interest group processes, as anticipated by Guidelines detractors, often compelled a dynamic of alliance building between District office staff and

key DCB activists. This was triggered as a result of the premium ONA placed upon contract compliance as it endeavored to actualize the Guidelines. What would emerge as ONA's ongoing lament would stem from its inability to fulfill its stated aspirations of strengthening the program through a rule driven approach.

Successes in program building would certainly be achieved, but the hoped for outcome of engendering greater DCB capacity and a strengthened NA program through a combination of carrot and stick incentives would not materialize as envisioned. Although in many cases this approach would stimulate innovation in consensus building at the DCB level, it would too often have the opposite effect.²⁵ Instead, this dynamic would frequently compel an "empire building" logic that would exacerbate weaknesses inherent in the entire program, pitting NA delegates to DCBs against one another, thereby placing a premium among NA contestants to define the "rules" in narrow and, often, self-serving ways. Soon the system would

²⁵ The West-Northwest District Coalition, after struggling for years with consensus formation among its competing neighborhood groups, would emerge as the most powerful DCB in the City by the early 1990s, in large part through fully assimilating the DCB logic established by the Guidelines. The power garnered by this DC will be more fully discussed in Chapter V.

valorize a new kind of activist--the parliamentarian--who would invoke bylaws and Roberts Rules of Order to beguile and trump would-be adversaries. Meanwhile, district office staff would be swept into petty disputes that would place tremendous pressure upon them to take sides. Although North and East Portland would present particularly acute examples of this pattern, Portland's other District Coalitions would, though with different outcomes, suffer from the same tendencies.²⁶

Moves made by Rachel Jacky early in her tenure as Newhall's successor triggered a shift in ONA's conflict paradigm, and activists at the DCB level around the City--most notably in the West-Northwest, East, and Southwest Districts--routinely sparred with ONA throughout this period. For its part, ONA's efforts to vitalize neighborhood association leadership clashed with an increasingly obstinate DCB contingent distrustful of Jacky and ONA's Commissioner-in-charge, Gretchen Kafoury.²⁷

²⁶ North Portland politics will be more fully examined in Chapter V. East Portland politics will be covered in Chapter VI.

²⁷ Leadership at the West-Northwest coalition was particularly successful in marginalizing Jacky's ability to cultivate connections with NAs in that District.

