

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Communities across the United States are experiencing a “civic revival” that is reconnecting community members with local decision-making and civic life in their communities. Over the past decades, researchers have studied many aspects of this “revival” in an effort to better understand the origins and key elements that lead to success or failure.

This chapter reviews the academic literature and what scholars have discovered about the nature of the “civic” problem that needs to be solved, the many terms they use to talk about this work, common elements researchers have found advance participatory democracy in a community, and the processes by which such reforms are adopted and embedded in the culture and practices of a community and local government. This chapter also reviews the research on the evolution of Portland, Oregon’s internationally recognized neighborhood and community involvement system.

#### What’s the Problem to be Solved?

Since the 1960s, many researchers have warned of a decline in democracy in the United States. They cite declines in traditional forms of political involvement, such as voting and participation in traditional political parties. They warn of the growth in single-issue interest groups that focus on “check-book” participation in which individual “members” participate primarily by contributing funds rather than engaging in hands-on and face-to-face interactions with other members (Sirianni and Friedland, *Civic Dictionary*. [no date]).

They write about the increase in the “professionalization of politics” in which a “politics” is carried out by politicians, professional lobbyists, and experts and is separate from the civic activities carried out by the general citizenry in local communities (Barber 1984, Boyte 2004, Mathews, 1999). “Citizens have become increasingly disengaged and cynical about politics because they see it as an exclusive game for professionals and experts, such as politicians, campaign managers, lobbyists, pollsters, journalists, talking heads.” “Technocratic approaches within public administration exacerbate this sense of the displaced citizen” (Sirianni and Friedland, *Civic Dictionary*. [no date]).

Political discourse also has become more simplistic. Sirianni and Friedland warn of the growth of “Direct Plebiscitary Democracy”—the ...”ascendancy of opinion polls, talk show democracy, referendums, and primaries” lead to policy questions becoming “oversimplified and stylized, and our capacity to solve increasingly complex public problems declines” (Sirianni and Friedland, *Civic Dictionary*. [no date]).

Community members not only have been disengaging from governance and politics, they also have been disengaging from each other. De Tocqueville highlighted the extensive use of voluntary associations by Americans to get things done in their communities. This web of voluntary associations provided a ...”mechanism for combining the relative weakness of individuals in an egalitarian society into aggregations of power that could effectively solve problems, asset needs and preferences, and engage government....” also “ these associations were the training grounds for citizenship and civic competence” (Cooper 2006 77).

Putnam has documented a national pattern of decline in these collective practices and structures across the country. This decline in “social capital”—the “social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”—further reduces the capacity of community members to work together to develop the skills to work together and the connections needed to get things done (Putnam 2000 19).

Americans have grown increasingly alienated from government and trust in government institutions has fallen steadily. Although the “Tea Party” and “Occupy” movements that arose during the late 2000s and early 2010s tend to be at different ends of the political spectrum, they share a distrust of large institutions and the belief that powerful interests drive policies in this country that serve their interests over the interests of the general community.

Smock argues that while democratic participation has ebbed and flowed for some groups in our society, significant social and economic inequalities in our society also have ensured “a significant portion of our nation’s population has *always* been excluded from meaningful participation in the democratic arena.” “In the United States, disparities in financial resources, social status, education, and other resources confer political advantages on the most privileged and effectively exclude a sizeable portion of our populace from meaningful public participation.” Traditional channels for civic participation in policy making frequently are “dominated by an economic and political elite.” Smock writes that “as our society becomes more economically and socially stratified, this pattern has only worsened” (Smock 2004 5).

The alienation and exclusion of many community members from politics and governance is exacerbated by a long-standing cultural tradition among public agency leaders and staff who view the public as having a fairly limited role in policy development and the day-to-day operations of government (Cooper 2011). This tradition is rooted in the reforms of the Progressive Reform movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century that sought to ground public administration in “norms of professionalism, efficiency, scientific management, and administrative management” and which led to the creation of “barriers against the influence of the citizenry on the day-to-day administration of government (239-240). While the “de facto power of the bureaucracy” has increased dramatically since the Progressive reform era, this “professionalization of administration” has established “formidable barriers” to meaningful civic engagement by community members in governance.

More recently, this traditional expert-driven public administration culture has faced increasing resistance from community members. Leighninger has written that elected officials and administrators are finding it more difficult to govern. The public has grown alienated from the government as a tool of collective action. Community members trust government less than in the past. They are less willing to pay to support government services. Also, many of the problems facing communities today are complex. Government leaders and administrators find they need to leverage community resources to solve them—“government can’t do it on its own” (Leighninger 2006).

Leighninger writes that “...citizens seem better at governing, and worse at being governed....” Many community members resent what they see as an “adult-child”

relationship between government and the community. Local leaders who try to make decision in this old way often “are faced with angry, informed, articulate citizens” who are more able to oppose government actions. Leighninger found that” local leaders are becoming tired of confrontation and desperate for resources” (Leighninger 2006 1-2).

### Terms Used to Describe the Goal of a Civic Revival

Researchers have used a variety of terms to characterize the democratic governance approaches they believe are needed to remedy many of the problems they see plaguing civic life and governance in our nation and our local communities. Some of the prevalent terms used in recent years include:

- Citizen Politics (Boyte 2004)
- Citizen-driven Administration (Cooper 2011)
- Collaborative Governance (Sirianni 2009)
- Community Governance (Somerville 2005)
- Deliberative Democracy (Gastil and Levine 2005)
- Democratic Governance (Leighninger 2006; National League of Cities)
- Local Democracy (Leighninger and Mann 2011)
- Neighborhood Governance (Chaskin 2003)
- Participatory Democracy (Berry, Portney and Thomson 1993)
- Public Work (Boyte 2011)
- Shared Governance (Leighninger 2006)
- Strong Democracy (Barber 1984; Berry, Portney and Thomson, 1993; Thomson 2001)

- “We the People” politics (Boyte 2011)
- Empowered Participatory Governance (Fung 2004)

These terms embody some key themes, governance orientations and values. Some focus on specific approaches and methods—others focus on capacity building in the community or in government. Commons themes that emerge across these terms include:

- Broadening the concepts of “politics” and “governance”
- Ensuring broad and deep participation
- Governance as a “partnership”
- Deliberative decision making
- Building strong capacity in the community to engage in governance
- Government willingness and ability to partner with the community

**Broadening the concepts of “politics” and “governance”:** Barber, Boyte, and the Kettering Foundation believe that the definition of politics should be expanded to include the practical decisions and active work community members engage in to shape their communities. The work community members do is important and needs to be seen to be so by traditional decisions makers and by community members themselves. Chaskin suggests that the conception of governance shift from the traditional focus on “governmental decision making and the wielding of political authority.” to include the structures and process that define relations between civil society (including the private sector, community organizations, and social movements) and the state (Chaskin 162). Boyte defines “citizen politics” as “ordinary people of different views and interests working together to define and to solve problems...” (Boyte 2004 xiii).

**Ensuring broad and deep participation:** When Berry, Portney and Thomson undertook their study of citywide community involvement programs across the nation, they noted that efforts to expand the public role in democratic processes at that time focused mostly on increasing voting. The authors wrote that “Voting does little to build a sense of community.” “Rebuilding citizenship in America means that reform must move beyond getting more people in private voting booths to getting more people to public forums where they can work with their neighbors to solve the problems of their community” (Berry, Portney and Thomson 2).

The authors argued that “strong democracy” would include strong participatory structures that ideally would include: (1) the ability of community members to develop and propose alternatives in the participation process; (2) that all individuals would have identical information; (3) that every citizen would express their preferences among alternatives considered in the participation process; (4) that the choice of each individual would be given identical weight, (5) that the alternative with the greatest support would be chosen and (6) that it displace other alternatives with less support, and (7) that the chosen policy be implemented, and (8) that implementation decision hold true to the outcome of the process or that new decisions go through the stages of the process again (Berry, Portney and Thomson 53-54).

Based on these criteria, Berry et al suggest two broad parameters by which to evaluate practical community participation efforts—breadth (elements 1 through 3) and depth (elements 5 through 8). “The breadth of a participation effort is the extent to which an opportunity is offered to every community member to participate at every stage of the

policy making process.” “The depth of a participation effort is the extent to which the citizens who choose to participate have the opportunity to determine the final policy outcome by means of the participation process” (54-55).

Berry, Portney and Thomson set out the “critical elements of strong participation” in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Critical Elements of Strong Participation**

	Structure	Desired outcome
Breadth	Outreach effort —Open access —Full information flow —Realistic opportunities to participate	Increase numbers of people who participate Improve representativeness of participants Include all citizen concerns on decision making agenda
Depth	Decision making process —Equal consideration of ideas —Direct translation of citizen preferences into policy decisions Effective implementation of participatory decisions	Improve match between policy outcomes and participants' final choices Improve match between policy outcomes and needs of all population arguments.

(Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993 55).

Smock's research additionally stresses that broad involvement must include portions of communities that always have been "excluded from meaningful participation in the democratic arena" (Smock 5).

**Deliberative Decision-making Processes:** Many researchers maintain that "expanding opportunities for community members to deliberate" is necessary to increase "meaningful involvement in political discourse and decision-making" and to strengthen democracy and expand governance partnerships.

Sirianni and Friedland write that "Deliberative democracy rests on the core notion of citizens and their representatives deliberating about public problems and solutions under conditions that are conducive to reasoned reflection and refined public judgment; a mutual willingness to understand the values, perspectives, and interests of others; and the possibility of reframing their interests and perspectives in light of a joint search for

common interests and mutually acceptable solutions” (Sirianni and Friedland, *Civic Dictionary*. [no date]).

The Kettering Foundation argues that “deliberative democratic practices and community decision-making processes” are important factors in helping “democracy work as well as it should.” Phil Stewart describes six “democratic practices” that the Kettering Foundation maintains “enable citizens to gain a significant measure of control over their lives” (Stewart 2008 25).

- Naming: “‘naming’ issues so that citizens can see themselves implicated in them”
- Framing: “‘framing’ approaches and alternatives in ways that enable citizens to recognize the tensions among things held valuable that must be resolved to enable community action”
- Public Deliberation: “making choices through ‘public deliberation,’ which enables citizens, through listening to diverse perspectives, to work through the inherent tensions in serious issues and come to some form of public judgment;”
- Covenants: “Once a community comes to judgment regarding a course of action, citizens make ‘covenants’ with each other, most often informal and tacit, but sometimes formal and explicit, regarding actions to be taken, singly or collectively;”
- Mutually Complementary Public Acting: “These covenants lead to ‘mutually complementary public acting’ on the collectively agreed change or course of action;” and

- *Learning*: “In the final step of this ‘citizens political process,’ ‘citizens learn’ from their experience, and the cycle begins again.”

Many organizations have developed formal process models that include deliberative elements, including the Kettering Foundation’s National Issues Forums, Everyday Democracy’s Study Circles, and the large group deliberative processes organized by American Speaks.

**Governance as a “partnership”:** Many researchers argue that more democratic governance would include a more equal partnership between government and the community in which community members play an active role in governance and both sides recognize that they other can bring important knowledge, skills, and resources to solving the problems of the community.

Many researchers argue that the role of community members needs to shift from being passive recipients of the work and services of “government” to being active participants in “governance” (Barber 117). Leighninger characterizes this as a shift away from the currently more prevalent top-down, expert-driven, “adult-child” relationship between government and the community to an “adult-adult relationship” (Leighninger 2006 3). Sirianni writes that in “collaborative governance, “policy design aims to ‘empower, enlighten, and engage citizens in the process of self-government’” (Sirianni 2009 39) and should enable the “work of citizens themselves in coproducing public goods.” (42).

In a governance partnership, community members actively would participate in defining problems, helping set government priorities, and in the development and monitoring of government policies, programs, and projects.

**Government Openness and Ability to Partner with the Community:**

Achieving an effective “governance partnership” between government and the community requires that both sides need to have the capacity and ability to work together. Some researchers focus on one or the other of these.

The National League of Cities (NLC) recognizes that a “fundamental shift” is underway “in the way that citizens and government work together.” The NLC notes that “many local leaders have put a new emphasis on mobilizing citizens in order to make decisions, overcome conflicts, and solve critical public problems. The NLC actively encourages and supports this shift through its Democratic Governance project. The NLC defines “democratic governance” as “The art of governing a community in participatory, deliberative, and collaborative ways” (National League of Cities [no date] 1).

The National League of Cities recognizes that the shift to democratic governance will require a shift in the attitudes of local government officials and public employees. Many officials ran for office with the expectation that they would be the decision makers, and the role of community members would be limited to evaluating their performance at the next election. NLC writes that “Ensuring the effective governance of the community—rather than simply running the local government—requires different skills and attitudes than the ones taught in most public administration schools.” NLC quotes a city manager who says: “You have to be able to frame issues in language that brings

people of different perspectives to the same table.” NLC quotes another local official who said: “You also have to make it clear to citizens that you aren’t just asking for their input: you want them to contribute their own time and effort to solving problems in their neighborhood and community” (4).

Cooper, Bryer and Meek write that traditional public administration culture and practices act as major barriers to effective community involvement in the work of government. Reforms in public administration instituted during the Progressive Reform Era of the early 1900s, transformed “administrative institutions of government based on the norms of professionalism, efficiency, scientific management, and administrative management (Cooper, Bryer and Meek 77). These institutional reforms resulted in “the creation of barriers against the influence of the citizenry on the day-to-day administration of government.” Citizens were to vote for representatives, “but otherwise leave the administration of government services to the professional experts and their ‘scientific’ methods” (Cooper 2011 240). As the “defacto power of the bureaucracy” increased dramatically, “citizens were increasingly confronted by a technical professional role definition of the administrator that precluded the need for their lay input.” This “professionalism of administrated established formidable barriers to anything like sustained civic engagement.”

Gibson says that a shift to more “citizen-based approaches” will need to focus “primarily on culture change, rather than on short-term outcomes, issues, or victories, and include a cross-section of entire communities, rather than parts of them” (Gibson 2006 2).

Any effort to shift government culture toward greater participatory democracy will need to change the willingness and ability of both elected and appointed officials and public employees to work collaboratively with community members.

**Strong Governance Capacity in the Community:** Sirianni writes that in “collaborative governance, policy design aims to ‘empower, enlighten and engage citizens in the process of self-government.’” Sirianni states that he drew on civic engagement and collaborative governance literature and empirical analyses literature and eight case studies he developed to “extract eight core principles of collaborative governance” (Sirianni 2009 39). These core principles are presented in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2: Eight Core Principles of Collaborative Governance and Policy Design**

<i>Core principle</i>	<i>Policy design</i>
Coproduce public goods	Policy should enable the work of citizens themselves in coproducing public goods.
Mobilize community assets	Policy should enable communities to mobilize their own assets for problem solving and development.
Share professional expertise	Policy should mobilize expert knowledge to enlighten and empower everyday citizens and to use citizens' own local knowledge.
Enable public deliberation	Policy should enable and expect citizens to engage in the public reasoning upon which good policy choices, democratic legitimacy, and effective implementation depend.
Promote sustainable partnerships	Policy should promote collaborative work and partnerships among citizens, organized stakeholders, and public agencies.
Build fields and governance networks strategically	Policy should mobilize field-building assets strategically to enable citizens, civic associations, and broader governance networks to work effectively together.
Transform institutional cultures	Policy should catalyze public and nonprofit agencies to become learning organizations for community empowerment and civic problem solving and draw market actors into civic partnerships and culture change as well.
Ensure reciprocal accountability	Policy should promote mutual accountability for collaborative work among the broad range of democratic actors and partners.

(Sirianni 2009 42).

Phil Stewart of the Kettering Foundation writes that “At the heart of self-organizing systems are *networks of interaction*.” “The most influential organizations in citizens politics often will not be formal, nor will they be highly visible. Rather, they tend

to be those informal networks, with changing and overlapping ‘membership’” (Stewart 2008 26).

Boyte quotes Jonathan Sacks “In today’s liberal democracies, it is not that we are too much together but that we are too much alone and seek to learn again how to connect with others in lasting and rewarding ways” (Boyte 2008 4). Boyte writes about an emerging citizen movement that is “beginning to overcome people’s feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness about the large problems facing us” (3). Boyte emphasizes the importance of building community strength,” mediating institutions, and building the skills of individuals.

Putnam and Feldstein state that increasing social capital is vital to expanding local democracy. They argue that, in the community building efforts they studied “...interpersonal connections and civic engagement among ordinary citizens were essential to making participatory democracy work” (Putnam and Feldstein 274). They also note that “...a society that has only bonding social capital will”....”be segregated into mutually hostile camps.” “So a pluralist democracy requires lots of bridging social capital, not just the bonding variety” (3). America’s communities have experienced a trend in which community members are “no longer building the dense webs of encounter and participation so vital to the health of ourselves, our families, and our polities.” The authors maintain that local leaders need to reweave social webs “through the sometimes slow, frequently fractious, and profoundly transformative route of social-capital building” and need to “create new spaces for recognition, reconnection, conversation, and debate” (294).

Chaskin defines “neighborhood governance” as “...the engagement of neighborhood-level mechanisms and processes to guide civic participation, planning, decision making, coordination, and implementation of activities within the neighborhood, to represent neighborhood interests to actors beyond it, and to identify and organize accountability and responsibility for action undertaken.” Chaskin defines “governance” as a broader conception of governance than traditional “governmental decision making and the wielding of political authority” (162). Chaskin defines governance broadly to include the structures and process that define relations between civil society (including the private sector, community organizations, and social movements) and the state (162 referring to McCarney, Mohamed, & Rodriguez, 1995).

Researchers have identified the importance of building and sustaining community capacity to engage in civic life and local decision making. So what happens next? Thomson states that “A central question in the civil society debate... is what forms of organizations and activities have the potential to bridge the yawning gap between citizens and their governments” (Thomson 2)?

What will Get Us There?—Elements of Successful City-wide Community Involvement Systems

Researchers have found that expanding participatory democracy requires establishing activities and structures that build capacity in a community for community members and government to work together in the shaping their community and in local decision making. Many communities have tried different approaches and strategies to create these structures and build this capacity.

Leighninger has found that democratic governance efforts have taken two main forms: “temporary organizing efforts and permanent neighborhood structures.”

Leighninger writes that the temporary efforts include a wide variety of one-time processes often referred to as “citizen involvement” and “public engagement” processes—what Leighninger suggests should be called “democratic organizing.”

Examples include visioning processes, community budgeting, deliberative dialogues on different topics and policy issues, advisory groups created for specific policy and program development projects, etc. The most prominent examples of permanent community involvement systems are the formal, ongoing city-wide systems of neighborhood associations and neighborhood councils that have been created in some U.S. cities since the 1970s (Leighninger 2006 3-4).

This section identifies some of the key elements researchers have found exist in city-wide systems and examines other important community organizing concepts.

Leighninger argues that the best examples of both temporary and permanent structures embody four principles: (1) broad recruitment of participants through groups and organizations in the community to assemble a “large and diverse ‘critical mass’ of citizens;” (2) involvement of participants in a combination of small and large-group facilitated meetings that allow them to identify shared conclusions and move to action; (3) the opportunity for participants to “compare values and experiences, and to consider a range of views and policy options;” and (4) an effect on change by “applying citizen input to policy and planning decisions, by encouraging change within organizations and

institutions, by creating teams to work on particular action ideas, by inspiring and connecting individual volunteers, or all of the above” (Leighninger 2006 3).

Leighninger notes that some of the common weaknesses of the permanent neighborhood structures appear when participants see themselves as representing their community as opposed to involving their community. Other typical weaknesses include low turnout and high burnout (4).

Berry, Portney and Thomson completed the most comprehensive national study of city-wide neighborhood council/association systems in the late 1980s. They studied four cities with city-wide “joint citizen-government participation” neighborhood council/association systems—Portland, Oregon, Dayton, Ohio, Birmingham, Alabama, and St. Paul, Minnesota. They also examined the Industrial Areas Foundation COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service) organization in San Antonio. Like the programs in the other four cities, “citizen demands for participation were the energy” for the COPS organizing efforts. The initiation of the COPS initiative, unlike in the other four cities, was not supported in any way by city government (52).

Berry, Portney and Thomson found that cities must meet three important conditions to have a good chance of their citizen participation systems becoming an integral part of city government:

- “Exclusive powers must be turned over to the citizen participation structures.”

The primary participation structures “must have authority to allocate some significant goods and services in their communities.”

- The structural changes must be accompanied by “an administrative plan that creates sanctions and rewards for city hall administrators who must interact with the neighborhood groups.”
- “Citizen participation systems must be citywide in nature” (295).

Other structural features that also will contribute to the success of citizen

participation programs include:

- *Control over funds*: “Ideal neighborhood-based public involvement programs should have control over some significant discretionary financial resources.”  
Nothing will make neighborhood organizations more credible to residents than the right to appropriate funds as the organizations see fit.
- *Resources for communication*: “The city should provide financial support to enable the neighborhood associations to communicate with every household within their boundaries at least a couple of times a year.”
- *Feeders to other participation structures*: “Neighborhood associations should be feeders to other citizen participation structures in the city. If there are citywide bodies that include public representatives, the neighborhood associations should be a primary source for recruitment.”
- *Early warning system*: “An early warning system should be built into the administrative structure of city government to provide notice to neighborhoods of pending city activities that will affect them.”

- Term limits: “Terms of office for volunteers leading the neighborhood associations should be relatively short to work against the development of oligarchies.”
- Non-partisan: “Neighborhood associations should be prohibited from involvement in electoral activity. They should be nonpartisan organizations in all respects” (296).

Ken Thomson developed his own independent analysis from the Tufts University team’s research and identified a number of elements required for the practical development of participatory democracy (Thomson 2001). Thomson identified three essential components: “The Core”—“Small, face-to-face decision-making bodies that he says “are the fundamental structures of any participatory endeavor;” “The Link to the Community”—“Energetic outreach by the core groups is essential to keep participatory opportunity alive for all members of the community;” and “The Link to Government Policymaking”—“To create participatory democracy, the core groups must have political impact” (Thomson 2001 5).

Thomson also identified a number of important sub-elements, including:

- Participatory Core: “five propositions about the internal requirements for the core groups of a participatory democracy” (50)
  - Communitywide Representation: “To the maximum extent possible, the network of participation organizations should represent every segment of the community on an equal footing” (50).

- Multi-Issue Responsiveness: “Within the context of a continuously evolving set of priorities determined by participants, the organization should tackle any and all issues that are brought before it” (59).
- Internal Democracy: “To the maximum extent possible, the activities and operations of such organizations should take place in a democratic, deliberative manner” (63).
- Openness: “To the maximum extent possible, the organizations should be continuously open and responsive to new participants” (67).
- Network Maintenance: “The group should have a strong, ongoing relationship with a support network that can help it to maintain these characteristics over time.”
- Aggressive Outreach
  - Interpersonal Relationships: “A structure of involvement is needed that enables the development of an extensive set of interpersonal relationships” (77).
  - Timely Information: “The outreach process must provide timely information to all community members about the issues at stake, and the opportunity to be involved (78).”
  - Information Flow from the Community: “The outreach process must ensure a constant flow of perceptions, concerns and reactions from community members to the participation groups and citywide decision makers” (79).

- Crisis Preparedness: “Additional mechanisms to fold in the involvement of much larger number than usual are needed when controversies arise and the public interest peaks” (80).
- Broadening the Base: “Ongoing efforts to broaden the base of participation among the lowest-income members of the community are crucial to prevent the exclusion of their interests by default” (81).
- The Policy Link
  - Collective Decisions: “The participation core groups need to be able to reach collective decisions on public policy” (95).
  - Inter-Group Dialogue: “A dialogue needs to be maintained among the participation core groups to identify common ground and work out differences” (96).
  - Multi-Group Decision Making: “The network of participation core groups needs to be able to reach decisions on the priority issues that emerge from the individual groups” (98).
  - Legitimacy: “The core groups, the decision-making process, and its outcomes need to be recognized and accepted by policymakers, administrators, and the public as a whole” (101)”
  - Oversight: “Once a decision is made and accepted, the participation core groups need to be able to oversee policy implementation” (103).
  - Thinking Big, Thinking Whole: “The big issues need to be confronted, and parochialism overcome” (104).

- Standing Up: “The process needs to be able to withstand the dual threats of cooptation by the bureaucracy and alienation from the bureaucracy” (105).
- Democratic Connections: “Constructive relationships between the participation group process and existing forms of representation need to be developed and maintained” (107).

Warren added to the understanding of the Industrial Areas Foundation COPS program in San Antonio with his 2001 book, *Dry Bones Rattling*. Warren framed the broader problem in the United States as an erosion in social capital in communities and a disconnection between people and the political system. He argues that “the key to reinvigorating democracy in the United States can be found in efforts to engage people in politics through their participation in the stable institutions of community life” (15). “Revitalizing democracy, then, requires community building, but also something more: creating institutional links between stronger communities and our political system” (19).

Warren presents four-part framework to help ‘specify the necessary components of the process of building social capital to revitalize democracy.’”

- “First, the process of building social capital needs to start with the institutional life that still exists in local communities.”
- “Second, since these institutions and the social fabric of communities are weak, an effective strategy is needed to develop cooperative ties and enhance the leadership capacity of community members.”

- “Third, strong local communities can be isolated, inward looking, even anti-democratic. In order to develop broader identities and a commitment to the common good, we need a strategy to bridge social capital across communities, especially those divided by race.”
- “Finally, building strong communities with diverse connections may not matter if they lack the power to shape their own development. Effective power requires mediating institutions capable of intervening successfully in politics and government” (19-20).

Sirianni, in his book *Investing in Democracy* (2009), explores “ways government can serve as a critical enabler of productive engagement and collaborative problem solving among ordinary citizens, civic associations, and stakeholder groups—and how public policy and administration can be designed to support this involvement” (1). Sirianni used his “eight core principles of collaborative governance and policy design”(presented earlier in this paper) to analyze Seattle’s citywide neighborhood empowerment and neighborhood planning system. Sirianni found that “Seattle’s neighborhood system of district councils, matching funds, community gardens, and neighborhood planning embodies the core principles of civic policy design....” (106).

Sirianni reports that the City of Seattle “took its first steps in creating a system of formal neighborhood representation in 1987-88 when it established twelve district councils to represent independently organized ‘community councils,’ the preferred term for neighborhood associations....” (Sirianni 2009 66). The City created the system in response to rising neighborhood “activism and outright resistance to unchecked

development and top-down, zone-by-zone planning.” The Seattle Planning Commission investigated neighborhood representation systems in other cities (including Portland, Oregon and St. Paul, Minnesota), and in 1988 created the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods to support the system. Jim Diers was hired to be the first director of the Department of Neighborhoods and served in that capacity for the next thirteen years, during which the scope of the department’s activities grew.

Significant elements of the Seattle system include: Neighborhood Service Centers, District Councils, Leadership Development, Neighborhood Matching Fund, P-Patch Program, and Neighborhood Planning, which emphasizes asset based community development approaches.

Sirianni identified key ideas that led to the success of the Seattle program:

- Involvement and empowerment of community members;
- A strong focus on relationship building;
- Emphasis on facilitating culture change in city agencies; and
- Support for wide range of community organizing.

Sirianni also identified key challenges for Seattle’s system, which include:

- Ensuring diverse involvement not domination by white middle class participants;
- Turnover in mayors and a loss of political support at the top—a new mayor was not invested in community governance and instead focused on centralizing power vs. empowering community members;

- Disinvestment by the city in the neighborhood program overtime, illustrated by the loss of the leadership training program, the elimination of neighborhood planners, and a reduction in the number of district coordinators; and
- The need for ongoing support to sustain community involvement and capacity and the willingness of government leaders and staff to work with the community. Turnover among city leaders and staff and among community activists without new training and relationship building will erode advances.

Jim Diers, in own his book, *Neighborhood Power: Building Community the Seattle Way* (2004), describes his experience helping to develop and lead the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. Diers identifies three forms of “participatory democracy” that he says have emerged over the past third of century that he finds especially promising: “asset-based community development, formal participation structures, and community organizing” (8).

### Social Capital and Community Building

Community building is a vital part of giving individuals the capacity to join together to shape their community.

In a follow up to Robert Putnam’s book, *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam and Feldstein sought out examples of effective social capital and community building across the country. They identified key characteristics of these examples in their book, *Better Together* (2003). The authors maintained that the stories in the book show “the positive effects of social capital, the ways that people in relationship can reach goals that would

have been far beyond the grasp of individuals in solution” (2) and argued that interpersonal “connections and civic engagement among ordinary citizens” is “essential to making participatory democracy work” (274).

Some of the authors’ key findings were that effective social capital building is a local phenomenon “because it is defined by connections among people who know one another” and “trust relationships and resilient communities generally form through local personal contact.” People also come together and develop social capital “in pursuit of a particular goal or set of goals and not for its own sake. Creating “robust social capital takes time and effort.” The authors state that “For the most part, it develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversation between two individuals or among small groups of people” (9-10).

The authors also found that smaller organizational structures are better for creating bonds of trust and reciprocity, and bigger structures are better for extending the power and reach of social networks (9-10). Listening and trusting are easier in smaller settings” as is the ability to “discover unexpected mutuality even in the face of difference” Smaller groups are more likely to share assumptions and easier tacit communication. Smaller settings “offer easier footholds for initial steps,” and people are more likely to feel individual responsibility for maintaining the group. Smaller settings also allow the one-on-one, face-to-face communication that is more effective at building relationships and creating empathy and understanding” rather than remote, impersonal communication. The density of interaction matters as well as the small size of the setting. Redundancy of contact is needed to “foster virtuous circles of mutual responsibility.” The

authors found that larger settings are better for developing “critical mass, power, and diversity” (276-277) and for developing the power needed to achieve objectives. They found that creating bridging capital in large organizations is a challenge (10).

Putnam and Feldstein identified a number of characteristics of the successful community-building examples they studied.

- *Networks of networks*: Nesting smaller groups within larger more encompassing ones” (10) facilitates both “mixing” and “bridging” among the small groups that can “harness the benefits of both intimacy and breadth.” and responds to the need to and importance of “building horizontal ties among local groups” (278-279).
- *Protagonists and enabling structural conditions*: The author’s found that “Building social capital depends both on the actions of protagonists” and on “key enabling structural conditions in the broader environment, many of which are immutable in the short run (though not in the long run).” Support from large, private foundations was important in one example. Education often is the most powerful predictor of high levels of social capital. Educated people and educated communities have skills and resources that enable them to form and exploit social networks more readily, whereas less educated communities have to struggle harder to do so.” Urban sprawl and people’s complex lives and the resulting demands on their time can inhibit social capital creation (271-272). Government policies can encourage or destroy community (e.g. the destruction of communities by urban renewal). Political

actors who maintain commitment to and support for local participation are important. The authors found that it “helps to be blessed with ‘true believers’ in positions of power” who are “committed to grassroots participation” and will “follow the social-capital route through all its apparent meanderings” (274).

- *Shared common space*: Shared commons spaces are important mechanisms that bring people together across social boundaries and encourage shared activities that “bridge ethnic, gender, class, and age distinctions” (281), “build in redundancy of contact” (291) and create intergenerational and interethnic bonds. Commons spaces can enable people to have informal interactions in a number of different settings which helps strengthen social capital through building “multi-stranded relationships, for example encountering the “same person at the market and the ball field and a political rally...” (291).

Common spaces can be physical spaces such as plazas and parks.

Communication technology also can create commons spaces, such as through a local newspaper and other technologies that ...”provide a forum for exchange among editors, reporters, readers and residents”. The authors also found that new communications technologies support and stimulate “long-standing forms of community” but did not believe that computer-based technologies on their own could create , rather than as instigators of radically new ‘virtual communities’ ....”. They suggest that computer-based technologies matter not because they can create some new and separate forms

of virtual communities, but because they can “broaden and deepen and strengthen our physical communities (292-293).<sup>1</sup>

- *Successful community organizing*: The authors found that successful community organizing was an important element in social capital building efforts. They found that “Organizing is about transforming private aches and pains into a shared vision of collective action.” While they found the successful organizing sometimes is achieved through a single leader, more often it is a “process of ‘interest’ articulation’ and ‘interest aggregation’” that emerges “from carefully nurtured conversations among ordinary folks” (282). Putnam and Feldstein found that organizers need to help members “find their own voice” and “take the lead on their own projects.” Effective community organizing recognizes community members “interests and needs (including their need for fun and fellowship), not just their ideals” and has more staying power if it starts with “what people care about, not some external agenda.” A strong emphasis on having people tell their stories helps people “acknowledge and recognize their interests,” provides easy entry for integrating new members into an organization and helps people find their commonalities (283-284). Building on existing networks is an important strategy especially for communities that do not have a lot of social capital (227-228). The authors found that people are more likely to get involved through “preexisting

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<sup>1</sup> The authors based their findings on partly on their examination of Craigslist in the early 2000s. Recent examples of community organizing in the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Arab Spring’s use of Twitter and Facebook and other social media offer interesting tests of the authors’ conclusions.

friendship networks” than through “ideological commitment and objective self-interest.” Building on existing networks complement with a “strategy for encouraging ‘walk-ins’ and for reaching out to the social disconnected.

Acknowledging and celebrating successes also is important. The author’s found that “Success breeds success”. It’s important to show residents what they can “accomplish by working together” and lay “the groundwork for bolder efforts” (289).

- *Sustain and embed success*: Success in building social capital also needs to be sustained as conditions and circumstances change over time. Successful organizing can change a community—as in the case of gentrification. Political champions can move on as can founding community leaders and early enthusiasts. The authors found that it is important to embed opportunities for involvement in government decisions making processes, community organizations and community culture (289-290).

In 2007, Putnam recognized that “Ethnic diversity is increasing in most advanced countries, driven mostly by sharp increases in immigration.” He wrote that while, “In the long run immigration and diversity are likely to have important cultural, economic, fiscal, and developmental benefits,” in the short turn “immigration and ethnic diversity challenge social solidarity and inhibit social capital” (Putnam 2007 137-138). Putnam suggests that residents in ethnically diverse neighborhoods tend to “hunker down.” (137). He asserts that “Diversity does *not* produce ‘bad race relations’ or ethnically-defined group hostility” but rather that:

”inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of colour of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television” (150-151)

Putnam writes that in the “medium to long run” “successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities” (138-139). Putnam asserts that the “central challenge for modern, diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of ‘we’” (139).

Putnam identifies the need for policies that foster “a sense of shared citizenship.” He called for more opportunities for “meaningful interaction across ethnic lines where Americans (new and old) work, learn, recreate, and live” to strengthen “shared identities. He advocates for expanded “public support for English-language training, especially in settings that encourage ties among immigrants and natives of diverse ethnic backgrounds,” “national aid to affected localities,” and “locally based programs” that “reach out to new immigrant communities” as “a powerful tool for mutual learning” (164).

### Community Organizing

The citywide community involvement systems commonly depend on some form of neighborhood council or neighborhood association system as their main model for neighborhood organizing. Some researchers have focused on understanding better the

strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood association model as compared to other community organizing models.

Smock, while agreeing with other authors about the importance of community organizing for achieving broader local democracy, believes that neighborhood associations/councils are unlikely to achieve this end by themselves. She argues that a variety of community organizing mechanisms are needed to help ordinary people, especially the most disenfranchised, directly participate in public decision making and impact the social and economic conditions that affect them.

Smock identifies some core features that characterize effective urban community organizing initiatives:

- Building individual capacity—developing local leaders
- Building community capacity—networks and social capital
- Building a community governance structure (democratic governance structures that allow members of a community to make collective decisions)
- Diagnosing and framing the community’s problems
- Taking collective action for community change (Smock 6).

Smock writes that, in some cases, “organizing also goes beyond its community-based focus to contribute to broader social structural change...by building the foundational infrastructure for broader movement building and by providing the spaces for residents to reflect on their experiences and develop a collective vision for society” (7).

Smock studied community organizing efforts in Chicago and Portland, Oregon and, from this research, identified five models of organizing. Her book describes examples of these five models (Civic, Power-based, Community-building, Women-centered, and Transformative) and identifies their particular strengths and tradeoffs.

Smock maintains that no one model can fill all objectives of community organizing in complex urban environments. She argues that it takes the coexistence of many different organizations representing different models in a neighborhood to promote broader civic participation. She suggests that it is best to create cooperative relationships between these organizations versus a hodge-podge of unconnected activity.

Smock shows that each model has distinctive advantages and tradeoffs. Community organizers need to think strategically about what niche each model can fill in response to particular factors in a community, such as neighborhood population, the type of neighborhood problems, the political climate, etc. She warns that community organizers and their support networks need to avoid narrow dogmatism and turf battles among different models.

**Civic Model:** Smock's civic-organizing model represents the relatively unstructured and informal form of traditional neighborhood associations. Smock writes that the civic model focuses on "protecting the neighborhood's public order," which often is threatened by "the absence of shared behavioral norms and ineffective monitoring of the neighborhood's public spaces" (21). Civic organizations "sponsor informal gatherings and unstructured meetings where residents can share news and information, voice

concerns, and develop strategies for tackling local problems. These strategies typically involve the use of organized peer pressure and hands-on voluntary activities to shore up the neighborhood's public order."

Smock found that Civic Model organizations are 'easy to implement' and help connect residents to city services. She writes that these organizations are the "simplest to create and sustain," typically "operate as all-volunteer groups with little to no funding," and are the "most informal and unstructured of all the groups." "As long as there are enough residents in the neighborhood with the basic skills necessary for keeping the organizations running, civic organizations can operate with minimal investment of time and resources" (248).

She writes that "Civic organizations link residents to the city's established mechanisms for solving local problems. They provide residents with information about how the city services system works, and they give residents an opportunity to communicate directly with the city services personnel assigned to address specific problems in their neighborhood. By giving residents clear information about city laws and ordinances and direct access to the bureaucracy, civic organizations help to democratize the provision of city services" (248).

Smock identified the weaknesses of the civic model in its limited capacity, its tendency to become a forum for the middle class, its potential for insularity and exclusion, and its "emphasis on stability and control rather than proactive change" (248-249).

Smock writes that “lack of paid staff or formally designated leaders” requires civic model organizations to rely on the “personal initiative and individual discretion of each participant to get anything done.” The absence of effective mechanisms for internal accountability hinders the ability of these organizations to “perform the necessary behind-the-scenes work to move their projects and campaigns forward.” Civic organizations lack “formal mechanisms for recruiting and training local leaders” and have to rely on residents who already have “leadership skills and experience.” As a result, these organizations often are “dominated by the neighborhood’s most privileged residents, particularly landlords, business owners, and middle-class professionals.” The unstructured nature of these organizations does not “provide a way to ensure that the interest and perspectives of all the participants are heard” and they offer “few opportunities for less experienced residents to become involved in community life” (248-249).

Civic model organizations tend to have homogeneous membership which, combined with their limited size, can foster “insularity and exclusivity.” “The organizations’ members do not typically reach out to other populations or social groups outside of their immediate clique, and they rarely work in cooperation with other institutions or organizations.” This leads them to define problems in ways that “tend to ignore the interests and perspectives of other social groups within the community,” which can “exacerbate social division in the neighborhood and limit the community’s overall problem solving capacity.” The model’s emphasis on “stability and control rather than proactive change” and its “orientation to the public sphere,” while helping “residents

obtain information about” city services, “they do little to increase residents’ influence within the public sphere or to alter the way that government operates” (249).

Smock’s analysis of the traditional neighborhood association model is particularly valuable given that many researchers encourage the development of citywide neighborhood structures as an important strategy for increasing participatory democracy in a community.

**Power Model:** Smock’s identifies the power-based model being rooted in traditional Saul Alinsky-style community organizing, which she writes has at its core the belief that “urban problems stem from residents’ lack of power within the public sphere.” Proponents of this model believe “urban residents must be organized into large, well disciplined ‘people’s organizations’ and need to have “both the opportunity to formulate their program...and a medium through which to express and achieve” it. Community members then engage in “public confrontation with power holders in order to win a seat at the negotiating table.” Paid staff often lead the organizing effort and focus on recruiting and building individual leaders in the community (14).

Power-based organizations tend to build strong organizations that have an impact on public decision making. They involve large numbers of residents by “recruiting and agitating residents around their most immediate concerns.” Hierarchical organizations and majority voting allow the organizations to “identify neighborhood priorities and develop strategic campaigns quickly and efficiently (249). Extensive “leadership training and logistical support” helps “create a skilled and disciplined base of leaders. Power-based organizations “are able to alter the balance of power in urban neighborhoods”

through “a well-developed repertoire of techniques” and “engage large numbers of inexperienced residents in collective action” (250).

The reliance of power-based organizations on majority voting can “undermine full inclusion of all members voices.” The “imperative to develop winnable strategies through a quick and efficient decision-making process can lead to manipulation of the members and oversimplification of the issues,” and sometimes framing of the political process in polarizing and one-dimensional ways leaves little “possibility for engaging members in genuine deliberations over public priorities.” While “strengthening residents’ influence at the public bargaining table” these organizations are “able to alter the distribution of public resources, but they have little impact on the overall structure of local government or the public sphere” (250).

**Community-Building Model:** The community-building model “focuses on strengthening the internal social and economic fabric of the neighborhood. This model uses an “asset-based” approach—similar to that championed by Kretzman and McKnight—to “build collaborative partnerships among the neighborhood’s stakeholders...” “Every institution and organization with a stake in the neighborhood...is seen as a potential source of assets and resources...” Community-building organizations “develop a shared vision among these groups” by engaging in “a comprehensive planning process to assess the overall assets and needs of the community,” and, based on this plan, “develop a holistic plan for rebuilding the community’s economic base and social infrastructure.” Smock writes that proponents of this model argue that “urban neighborhoods must develop consensual working

partnerships with government officials and policymakers...to leverage the resources and support necessary to achieve the community's goals" (18).

Smock finds that community-building organizations build a community's institutional capacity to address its problems and can develop comprehensive plans to respond to the needs and concerns of the community as a whole. Smock found that the community-building model "is most at risk of leaving individual residents who are not the staff and leaders of local institutions and associations out of the organizing process." "The emphasis on comprehensive planning and technical expertise privileges the involvement of community-based professionals and administrators...." Also, "the pressure to reach consensus among institutions with widely varying interests can limit the potential scope of the organizations' work." Community building organizations also require "substantial external resources and support" to "implement their comprehensive plans," which "creates a dependence on government funding and assistance that forces them to frame much of their work to fit within existing governmental priorities." This makes the organizations "vulnerable to manipulation and cooptation by political leaders who may not share their substantive goals" (250-252).

**Women-centered model:** Smock argues that the most disenfranchised groups often need special community organizing mechanisms to bring them together, build their confidence and skills, and help them see the public policy aspects to the challenges they face in their daily lives.

Smock suggests that Women-centered model is the "most effective at engaging society's most disenfranchised members in public life." This model creates "a fluid

connection between the personal and public spheres,” and provides for “mutual sharing and support” that enables “participants to overcome personal obstacles and build collective leadership,” which allows them to “work on broader community issues.” This model also “promotes a highly democratic and inclusive process for decision-making about local priorities and goals.”

The Women-centered model approach limits the “organizations’ size as well as the breadth of their networks” and impact, and the “emphasis on building face-to-face relationships within local institutions, one person at a time, typically limits their ability to gain meaningful influence over the public decision-making process” (252-253).

**Transformative Model:** Smock argues that most community organizing models focus primarily on helping community members have a greater voice in getting their needs met within an existing power system. Smock writes that achieving a broader and lasting community voice in shaping communities requires transforming the dominant system. The transformative model strongly focuses on challenging dominant ideological frameworks and seeks to build the foundation for social change. The common weakness of these organizations is their limited capacity to engage community members, the difficulty of achieving concrete results, and the tension between educating community members and mobilizing them to take action.

Smock maintains that knowing the strengths and weaknesses of different models allows people to “make strategic decisions about which approach to organizing will be most effective in a given situation.” “The effectiveness of a particular model can vary in response to a wide variety of different factors—the distinct composition of the

neighborhood's population, the specific nature of the neighborhood's problems, the political climate, and the primary focus of the organization's goals" (255).

For instance, Smock argues that the traditional informal neighborhood association model "is uniquely suited for neighborhoods that have a predominately middle-class, homogeneous population and relatively few social problems. The model provides meaningful leadership opportunities for primarily middle-class residents with preexisting leadership skills and experience, but it does little to include low-income, disenfranchised residents in community life." The civic model can "provide an easy way for residents of middle-class neighborhoods to get involved in public life, learn about city government, and solve small problems as they arise" but "is not capable of addressing complex community issues" (255-6).

Smock suggests the "creation of complementary relationships among organizations implementing different models provides a way to maximize the models' distinctive strengths while avoid their limitations." Smock refers to Fisher and Taafe study of the organizational structure of one Texas neighborhood (Fisher and Taafe 1997) and asserts that "in a 'postmodern' society with multiple identify and interest groups, the coexistence of many different organizations in a single neighborhood promotes broader civic participation." She also suggests that "hybrid organizations" could be developed that would incorporate "elements of more than one model within a single organizational structure" (257-258).

Smock notes that "...some scholars and activists" have concluded "that community-based organizing is incapable of contributing to long-term social change."

She clarifies that she believes that “community organizing can provide an essential *building block* for achieving broader structural change” (225). She cautions, however, that “In an increasingly globalized world, however, not all problems can be addressed at the community level. The problems experienced by urban residents are typically rooted in political and economic structures that are anything but local in their origins” ( 222).

Smock argues that “History suggests that if we want to transform the social and economic arrangements underlying contemporary urban problems, we must build a broad-based social justice *movement*” (225).

Smock argues that community organizing “actually provides one of the most effective (and realistic) starting points for movement formation” because “local neighborhoods remain the center of most people’s lived experience;” and “...people experience contemporary social problems as they are manifested at a local level.” Smock suggested that “...the most effective way to get people involved in social action of any kind is by engaging them in struggles that related directly to their everyday experiences....” She finds that “Local based organizing thus provides an essential mechanism for getting ordinary people—particularly America’s most disenfranchised residents—involved with public life” (226).

Smock argues that local organizing can help engage residents and develop their skills and capacities as public actors, can generate the stability and hope “necessary to enable them to participate in long-term campaigns for social change; raise their awareness of “the limitations of an entirely locally-based strategy,” and creating the momentum “necessary to propel residents to engage in broader movement work” (227).

Smock argues that to contribute to long-term social structural change, community organizing must be able to both build upon and transcend its neighborhood focus. She says that this requires the creation of a “supra-local infrastructure of well-networked organizations” and “an overarching ideological framework that challenges society’s dominant economic and political arrangements” (227).

Taafe and Fisher propose that “community organization models need to consider that highly diverse and often contentious community efforts within a single community represent well the context of life in contemporary heterogeneous urban neighborhoods.” “...a highly diverse and often fragmented public life has been developing at the grassroots. The disparate aims of different community groups in a single neighborhood reflect a movement towards organizing based on communities of interest—racial/ethnic/political—as well as organizing based on communities of place” (31-32).

Grossman and Gumz found that “Neighborhood organizing has been an important aspect of community organization over the last 50 years. However, as individuals identify less with geographic communities and community organizing efforts become issue—as opposed to locality-based, the viability of neighborhood-focused organizing efforts becomes more uncertain” (47).

Chaskin studied community organizations in Portland (Oregon), Boston, Baltimore. The intent of his study was to “call attention to, define, and provide an analysis of the broader ecology of organizations and processes that constitute neighborhood governance systems—to synthesize and make explicit the systemic nature

of such relations—across the different cities, and to provide some framework for considering how these patterns may play out in particular (other) contexts” (163).

Chaskin encouraged organizations that seek to work within community not to focus just on one organization. He encouraged them to recognize that individual neighborhood associations or other community-based organizations “operate within a local ecology of organizations and inter-organizational relationships that help define and condition their work and influence.” He found that often community organizations operate “in a context that is often already well populated with a range of associations, organizations, and crafted coalitions that would also claim—in particular cases or around particular issues—to speak for and act on behalf of the neighborhood and its members” (163).

An increasing number of communities are creating city government sponsored “citizens academies” as a way to increase the ability of community members to engage effectively with their local governments. Morse (2012) studied citizen academies in North Carolina and elsewhere in the country to learn more about their purposes and goals, content, and other characteristics.

Morse (2012) emphasizes that the “increasing emphasis on collaborative governance and citizen engagement in local government” raises the issue of “how communities can build capacity for collaboration and engagement.” He goes on to say that “Local government leaders may have a strong *commitment* to citizen engagement and collaboration, but success, ultimately, is dependent upon the *capability* and *willingness* of citizens, groups, and organizations to be engaged partners in the governance process”

[emphasis in the original] (79). Morse suggests that “The issue of civic capacity may be one answer to why the practice of citizen engagement is not as widespread as its acceptance as an ideal” (82).

Morse differentiates citizen academies from two other forms of local training programs: citizen police academies and community leadership programs. Morse describes “citizen police academies” as opportunities offered by police departments of local governments “to inform citizens of police operations, create opportunities for positive citizen-officer interactions” and to “develop a relationship of trust and cooperation between the police and citizens” (85). “Community leadership programs” “exist for the purpose of developing active and informed citizen leaders who can collaborate with other individuals and groups to solve community-based problems.” These training programs focus broadly--not just on a single local government—and promote leadership skills and community networking. Community leadership programs usually are sponsored by a chamber of commerce, a local United Way or some other non-profit organization (86).

Citizen academies commonly are sponsored by a single local jurisdiction and focus on activities of and issues relevant to the government enterprise. Like citizen police academies “they are civic education programs for local citizens, conducted by local government,” and like community leadership programs “they cover a broad range of topics and seek to develop civic capacity through the civic education of citizens” (86).

Morse found that the purposes and goals of the citizen academies he studied were fairly consistent. They usually focus on: improving “participants’ knowledge of local

government;” increasing the involvement of citizens in local government, for example through service on local boards, commissions, and committees; and improving community relations by helping community members to get to know local officials and to open lines of communication between local officials and staff and community members. Morse found that the program he studied varied in their focus from a more basic emphasis on public relations to a more advanced and substantive focus on “building community capacity for citizen engagement.” For example, some programs focused more on a one-way transfer of information from city staff to community members, while others incorporated dialogue opportunities that allowed two-way information sharing and learning between city leaders and staff and community members.

Morse’s key observations about “citizens academies and capacity building” from his research included:

- “Citizens academies can improve the skills and knowledge of citizens with respect to engaging in community affairs.”
- “The more citizens academies emphasize avenues and opportunities for participation, the greater impact they will have on developing leadership and active participation among citizens.”
- “The more citizens academies facilitate community-building and dialogue, the more impact they will have on developing the social capital and ‘space for dialogue and collective action’ dimensions of civic capacity” (95).

Morse concluded that “As local governments look to promote more citizen engagement and collaboration, they will need to simultaneously work to build the

capacity of citizens to do so.” He also encouraged local government staff members who develop these programs to “(re)consider to what extent they capture the more advanced, capacity-building potential inherent in the citizens academy concept” (96).

### Advancing System Reforms

We have explored the basic characteristics of participatory democracy and the elements different researchers have suggested are needed for a community to move toward greater participatory democracy. Another important aspect is the process by which communities adopt and implement the policies and programs to move down this path. What does it take to develop and enact these participatory democracy reforms in a community?

Kingdon’s “multiple streams” theory offers a useful model to explain how participatory democracy reforms are likely to get on a local government agenda and be acted on (Kingdon 1995). While Kingdon’s research focused primarily on the federal government level, the theory may be a good fit for agenda setting at the local level with some minor adjustments.

Kingdon suggests that three separate “streams” flow through the governmental agenda-setting system, each with its own dynamics and rules. He identifies the three streams as: problems, policies, and politics.

- Problems: The process by which decision-makers learn about conditions and the ways in which conditions are defined as “problems” that government should address. Problems can be identified through indicators, a focusing event “such as a disaster, crisis, personal experience or powerful symbol,” or feedback about “the

operation of existing programs.” Conditions also can be re-defined as problems when people “in and around government” see that important values are violated, or see that other jurisdictions have chosen to address a similar problem, or people re-categorize a condition increasing its priority—such as when a service delivery problem is refined as a civil rights issue.

- *Policies*: The process by which proposals are developed and by which “the list of potential alternatives for public policy choices [is] narrowed to the ones that actually receive serious consideration...” Potential alternatives often are raised, tested, and refined by “loosely knit communities of specialists” in an issue or problem area. These communities often include “academics, researchers, consultants,” long-time government staff, interest group analysts.” Kingdon notes that policy proposals often go through a long process of “softening up” the system before they move forward (200-201).
- *Politics*: A problem can move up on a government agenda with the arrival of a new administration or a change in the national or community mood. Participants in the political stream “recognize problems or settle on certain proposals in the policy stream...” (199). Participants often include both “visible” and “hidden” players. Visible participants often include prominent politicians, high-level appointees, the media, and other political players, such as political parties and campaigners. Hidden participants often include “academic specialists, career bureaucrats, and congressional staffers” (199).

Kingdon found that these three separate streams sometimes come together, increasing the chance that a problem will be addressed or a proposal moved forward. The “complete joining of all three streams dramatically enhances the odds that a subject will become firmly fixed,” not only on “government agendas” (the “lists of subjects to which governmental officials are paying serious attention”) but also on a government’s “decision agenda” (“a list of subjects that is moving into position for an authoritative decision....”) (202).

Kingdon identified “policy entrepreneurs”...individuals who “broker people and ideas” as being crucial to the agenda setting process (201). Policy entrepreneurs are “people willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favor” (204). Policy entrepreneurs can include: elected officials, career civil servants, lobbyists, academics, and journalists (205). Policy entrepreneurs play a major role in drawing attention to and defining problems. They seek to push “their concerns about certain problems higher on the agenda,” push their “pet proposals during” the process to soften up the system, and coupling streams together—e.g. problems to policy opportunities.

Policy entrepreneurs especially seek to couple streams at critical times when “open windows” open up that would allow them to draw attention to problems that concern them and get policy proposals on the government decision making agenda. Kingdon defines “open windows” as “an opportunity for advocates to push their pet solutions or to push attention to their special problems.” Windows can open either in the “problem stream”—such as the emergence of a new problem to which policy solutions

can be attached, or the “political stream”—such as the election of a new administration, a swing in national or community mood, or vigorous lobbying (203).

Kingdon maintains that “Elected officials and their appointees turn out to be more important than career civil servants or participants outside government.” He notes that his research into the roles of various participants in agenda setting has found that “a fairly straightforward top-down model, with elected officials at the top, comes surprisingly close to the truth.” Given this, we would expect a strong role for local elected officials, especially the mayor (199).

Kingdon’s “multiple streams” theory would lead us to look for certain patterns in the path by which participatory democracy policies and programs get on the local government agenda and are adopted, especially in the three “streams” of problems, policies, and politics.

We would expect to see reforms move forward when general agreement among decision-makers that a problem exists that needs to be solved through the adoption of greater participatory democracy elements. We would also expect to see both “visible” and “hidden” participants who develop reform proposals and advocate for them—most likely over many years. Major advances would be most likely when a political champion—most likely a mayor at the city government level—supports the effort, and when crises or studies draw attention to an issue. Policy entrepreneurs would be likely to play a crucial role in advancing coupling of the three streams—problems, policies, and politics--especially during “policy windows.”

### Embedding Change—Sustaining Progress Toward Participatory Democracy

Gibson argues that “Citizen-based approaches” to governance focus “primarily on culture change, rather than on short-term outcomes, issues, or victories, and include a cross-section of entire communities, rather than parts of them” (Gibson 2). She says the challenge is to inculcate a “deeper and more firmly entrenched cultural ethos of *civic engagement*—an ethos that helps give people a sense of public purpose and a belief that their voice matters in larger issues” [emphasis in the original] (5).

Fagotto and Fung (2009) studied the embedding of deliberative practices in communities. They found that “A community that has embedded deliberation in its practices of public reflection and action (i) utilizes methods of organized—more or less formal—deliberation (ii) to consider a range of public issues or problems (iii) over a period of several years. Often public deliberation is (iv) linked to a range of community-based or governmental organizations in ways that affect the decisions, resources, or policies of those bodies.”

Stone (1998), in his research on urban regime theory and public education reform, notes that many public policy arenas largely are controlled by “semiautonomous subsystems.” “The most active players tend to be the ones most directly affected...and are most likely to “direct the day-to-day activities of these subsystems” (6-7). Stone argues that the goal is to alter the subsystem relations and to establish an “institutional legacy” to ensure that the changes are lasting. Fundamental reform requires sustained mobilization and the institutionalization of new practices and relationships. Stone argues

that the inner core of a subsystem rarely reforms itself and that some form of civic mobilization is needed to achieve and sustain reform (8).

Fung, in his 2004 book *Empowered Participation*, studied community participation structures created by the Chicago Police Department and Chicago Public Schools in the 1990s to see whether these types of institutional mechanisms can help further participatory democracy “even in the most depressed areas and for the poorest people” (ix). Fung’s study identifies a number of elements that can assist in the success of these types of participatory mechanisms.

Fung reports that both the Chicago Police Department and Chicago Public Schools “reorganized to create new channels through which residents could exercise their collective voice and influence. Extensive powers were devolved from their headquarters out to the neighborhoods” through neighborhood “beat” meetings and local school councils (3). Fung believed that these reforms “advance the central tenet of participatory democracy: that people should have substantial and equal opportunities to participate directly in decisions that affect them” (3-4).

Fung wrote that these reforms represent a type of participatory democracy that can be appropriately referred to as “Empowered Participatory Governance” because it is “participatory,” “empowered,” and “deliberative”:

- “participatory” because CPS and CPD invited “ordinary individuals to take part in crucial governance decisions about the goals, priorities, and strategies of policing and public education.”

- “empowered” because “unlike the case with regard to many advisory panels, public hearings, and discussion groups, decisions generated by these processes determine the actions of officials and their agencies.”
- “deliberative” because “members of Local School Councils and beat meetings make decisions through a process of structured reasoning in which they offer proposals and arguments to one another” (4).

Fung recognizes common criticisms of participatory democracy, including that the “scale, technical complexity, and intricate division of labor of government, and the privatization of public life” cannot adequately be responded to by traditional participatory democracy mechanisms, and that the devolution of decision making authority will not be able to overcome social tensions in the community (4).

Fung states that his core argument is that “troubled public agencies such as urban police departments and school systems can become more responsive, fair, innovative and effective by incorporating empowerment participation and deliberation into their governance structures” (4).

Fung advocates for blending devolution of decision making authority with some centralized support and oversight, which he calls “Accountable Autonomy.” He contrasts this approach with traditional, top-down government decision making, the market-influenced, choice approach to public management, and complete devolution of decision-making to the community. Fung suggests that:

- “Decentralization, by contrast, allows localities to formulate solutions tailored to their particular needs or preferences” (reference to Tiebout 1956) (4).

- “Devolution can also free residents, teachers, and police officers to imagine and implement innovations that depart from conventional wisdom and routine, and are therefore unlikely to come from the central office.”
- “residents and officials may have local knowledge that can usefully inform policy strategies but that may not be systematically available to or easily usable by centralized organizations.”
- “citizens who depend on these public services have strong motivations to contribute to their improvement through civic engagement. Given opportunities to participate in school governance or community policing, they can contribute distinctive resources and expertise....” “...they also can use these opportunities to hold principals and police officers accountable when they shirk, lie, or act incompetently” (5).

Fung also notes that scholars who study participatory small-group decision processes have identified some common dangers of these process. They have found that these processes often are no more fair than other kinds of governance and decision-making (reference to Mansbridge 1980; Gastil 1993; Sanders 1997) (5). Some of the common dangers include:

- “Voices of minority, less educated, diffident, or culturally subordinate participants are often drowned out by those who are wealthy, confident, accustomed to management, or otherwise privileged.”

- “Liabilities such as parochialism, lack of expertise, and resource constraints may impair the problem-solving and administrative capabilities of local organizations relative to centralized forms” (5-6).

Fung also warns that “groups may lack the wherewithal, goodwill, or motivation to come together” (7). Two particular threats to democratic values in small group processes include:

- *Internal divisions*: Internal divisions “among participants, for example, between factions of residents or between residents and officials” that “may paralyze the group or allow some to dominate.”
- *Lethargy*: “even in the absence of conflict, groups may be unmotivated to utilize local discretion to innovate and advance public ends through problem solving.”

Fung argues that the problems of devolution of decision making to the community are more dependent on institutional design rather than innate to participatory democracy. He suggests that “a judicious allocation of power, function, and responsibility between central authorities and local bodies can mitigate these pathologies of inequality, parochialism, and group-think and so better realize the ideals of empowered deliberation and participation.” “Centralized authority in ‘accountable autonomy’ can reduce these internal obstacles through mechanisms to safeguard both local processes and substantive outcomes” (6-7).

Fung argues that “Support and accountability are two pillars of a reconstructed relationship between central power and neighborhood action that can reinforce local autonomy” (6). He found that achieving this requires:

- “Successful local action, especially in depressed urban contexts, frequently requires external support.” This support can include “financing, other direct resources, expertise or cooperation from larger entities.” Fung found that CPS and CPD organized themselves “to provide quite systemic forms of assistance for local planning and problem-solving” that included:
  - “Extensive training for both participating residents and street-level officials”
  - “Changes in the legal and regulatory environment of these efforts”
  - “The pooling of knowledge and experience”
  - “Provision of technical assistance” (6-7).
- Increased discretion for street-level officials and flexibility in centralized rules and oversight, while providing “bottom-up” accountability, both internally and externally , through citizen participation to “assure that street-level officials utilize their irreducible discretion to advance public ends.” Internal accountability happens when citizens are “invited to deliberate with street-level officials, in forums like beat meeting and local school councils, on how public power and resources should be deployed.” External accountability comes when “these group deliberations, subsequent actions, and the results of those actions” are “fully documented and available to the wider public” (20).

- External reviews and audits “check domination and faction”: “...external reviews and audits can verify the integrity of local decision-making processes and intervene when procedures seem suspect.” For example, CPS and CPD “require local groups to document and justify their missions, agendas, strategies, and particular actions and then subject these plans to supervisory review.” “To assure that local groups utilize their discretionary latitude constructively, outside bodies monitor the relevant outcomes—through student test scores, truancy rates, incidents of crime, and more discerning measures—to detect trends of improvement, stasis, or decline in performance.” Fung argues that substantive accountability requires “developing sensitive performance metrics and judiciously associating observed performance with internal effort...” (7-8).

Fung also argues that “community organizations and civic associations” can play “crucial roles in designing and establishing these deliberative and participatory reforms....” These groups can contribute their own expertise in the policy issues being address, be strong champions to ensure the process achieves a stronger voice for community members, mobilize neighborhood participants to participate in civic engagement opportunities, mobilize broad city-wide constituencies to support their positions, and act as “watchdogs of public accountability” and hold “officials responsible for the implementation and development of participatory and deliberative reforms.” These community organizations can play an important role by “raising awareness, providing training and technical assistance, and trying to give ordinary parents and

residents the confidence and presence of mind to deal as equals with their street-level public servants in forums such as community beat meetings and [local school council] sessions” (228-229).

Cooper (2011) advocates that local public agencies use a “citizen-centered” approach to working with community members. He agrees with Gibson (2006) that this approach needs further development that includes moving away from an emphasis on “particular participatory techniques, specific projects, and particular problems” and toward a broader “citizen-centered approach to civic engagement” that would focus primarily on:

- “Cultural change instead of short-term solutions and outcomes.” Numerous engagement techniques are available, but often an adequate culture of engagement does not exist to “sustain and effectively employ them. “
- “Providing opportunities for ‘people to form and promote their own decisions, build capacities for self-government, and promote open-ended civic processes.’” Cooper refers to Gibson’s contrasting of this with “offering specific focused opportunities for citizens to ‘plug into’ projects, events, techniques, and exercises ‘driven by outside experts, professionals, organizations, or those external to the community.’”
- “Approaches that are ‘pluralistic and nonpartisan.’” Cooper argues that “building a culture of engagement requires interaction with diverse people holding a variety of beliefs and political perspectives.” Techniques that create collaboration across various divides is “required to ground a culture of

engagement.” Cooper suggests that practice with this type of approach can “support all kinds of problem solving.”

- “Transcending ideological silos.” Citizen-centered civic engagement should be “oriented toward the needs and concerns of citizens rather than the advancement of a partisan agenda.”
- “Going beyond ‘the perennial and wearisome debate over which is more important or lacking—‘service or politics’—that tends to dominate public discussions about civic engagement in the United States.’”
- “Doing more than just talking” about deliberation and pursuing deliberation that leads to “tangible results.”
- “Understanding that citizen-centered approaches ‘do not replace politics or other democratic processes’” (249).

Cooper examined Los Angeles governance reforms in 1999 which sought to apply “neighborhood-level civic engagement institutions” to a larger-scale urban area. Cooper maintains that Los Angeles was the first major metropolis “that attempted to create formal links to communities intended primarily for participation in governance rather than the decentralized delivery of services.” Voters adopted city charter reforms in 1999 that mandated “that a citywide system of neighborhood councils be organized from the grass roots up, allowing for considerable variation in form, structure, and size of the councils.” The system required “people in each community” to “identify their own boundaries, design their own bylaws, adopt their own systems of financial accountability, and then request certification from the city Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.” The

system requires neighborhood councils to involve all of the neighborhoods stakeholders. The City initially provided \$50,000 annually to each neighborhood council to support its work (Cooper notes that the City Council later reduced this amount to \$45,000).

Cooper has studied many aspects of Los Angeles's neighborhood council system through his work with the Civic Engagement Initiative at the University of Southern California (USC). Cooper refers to a major summary of research on Los Angeles's system titled "Toward Community Engagement in City Governance: Evaluating Neighborhood Council Reform in Los Angeles" (Musso et al. 2007). Cooper reports major findings of the report include:

- "A citywide system of operating neighborhood councils" was successfully established "in the five years since the Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment was fully functioning..." "Contrary to the myth that the people are apathetic and uninterested in participation" Los Angelenos "were eager to engage in the difficult process of organizing neighborhood councils..." "Unfortunately, the city was much less forthcoming with its support, staff and funding to assist those volunteers in accomplishing such an enormous task" (245).
- "Based on surveys of the boards, it is clear that most of those participating in the organizing process are not newcomers to civic activity but people who have been relatively active in community and political life in their areas and the city. The report found that board members are "more likely

than neighborhood residents to be white, wealthy, highly educated, and homeowners” (245)

- “The focus on the complex certification and board election processes may have drained energy away from outreach to the communities the councils represent, thus producing the lack of adequate representation” on the councils. The report also notes a tendency to confuse “outreach” with “organizing.” The report defines “outreach” as involving “distribution of information through flyers, e-mail, posters in prominent locations, notices in community newspaper, and similar means of notifying people of the new councils.” The report defines “organizing” as requiring “personal contact in addition to the dissemination of information to persuade people to participate and to create social capital by establishing bonds of trust.” “In the early years there was insufficient organizing and too much reliance on outreach” which, in some cases, “has created a deficit in social capital that can be invested in the governance process” (245).
- The “political leadership of the city “ assumed that the councils would provide a “way of more effectively connecting the people to the governance process...” This anticipated interaction between the councils and city officials “was slow getting started.” “This was mainly because the city was slow initiating some of the mechanisms that would encourage this interaction, such as the early notification system to let people know of planned city activity in their communities and the participatory budget

mechanisms to involve citizens in the development of the annual city budget.” “Also, some elected officials had not fully embraced the neighborhood councils and tended to keep them at arm’s length.”

Engagement with the city bureaucracy also was hampered because “most of those agencies were still dominated by personnel with the old Progressive-era technical professional role identities. They tended to see the new councils not as assets, but rather as annoying distractions from their main work” (246).

- “The people of Los Angeles appear to have felt empowered by the creation of the neighborhood council system within a relatively short time, even though the city’s performance had actually changed little” (246).

Cooper also notes that “several formal and informal elements of the system have helped in building the capacity of the councils for collective action, sharing of information, and engaging the administrative agencies of the city. “ These include the development of regional and citywide networks, including the “Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils,” similar regional alliance organizations, and “other issue- or identify-oriented networks” (246-247).

Many researchers have found that changing the culture of local government is a key factor in truly advancing more collaborative working relationships between government and community. Fernandez and Rainy (2006) reviewed the literature on organizational culture change in the public sector. They found “remarkable similarities” among the models and frameworks for organizational change that they reviewed.

Fernandez and Rainey identified eight factors that they suggested “change leaders and change to which participants” should pay special attention. These eight factors are described below.

**Factor 1: Ensure the Need.** “Managerial leaders must verify and persuasively communicate the need for change.” People have to be convinced of the need for change and suggest beginning by “crafting a compelling vision for it” that is “easy to communicate,” “appealing,” “provides overall direction for the change process” and “serves as the foundation from which to develop specific strategies for arriving at a future end state.” Fernandez and Rainey found that some research shows “it is easier to convince individuals of the need for change when leaders craft a vision that offers the hope of relief from stress or discomfort.” Researchers found that public sector leaders can take advantage of “mandates,” “political windows of opportunity,” and “external influences” to verify and communicate the need for change (169).

**Factor 2: Provide a Plan.** “Managerial leaders must develop a course of action or strategy for implementing change.” The vision for change needs to be transformed into a “strategy with goals and a plan for achieving it.” The strategy should offer “direction on how to arrive at the preferred end state,” identify obstacles, and propose measures for overcoming these obstacles. Specific goals will limit “the ability of implementing officials to change the policy objectives” and provide “a standard of accountability”(169-170).

**Factor 3: Build Internal Support for Change and Overcome Resistance.**  
“Managerial leaders must build internal support for change and reduce resistance to it

through widespread participation in the change process and other means” (170).

Fernandez and Rainey write that a “crisis, shock, or strong external challenge”—real or manufactured—“can help reduce resistance to change.” They caution that managers run the risk of “playing it too safe” if the urgency rate is not pumped up enough. “

Wide-spread, effective and ethical participation” can support change and lower resistance. Effective approaches managers can employ include: “persuasion, inducements and rewards, compromises and bargaining, guarantees against personal loss, psychological support, employee participation, ceremonies and other efforts to build loyalty, recognition of the appropriateness and legitimacy of past practices, and gradual and flexible implementation of change. Fernandez and Rainey write that “participation is particularly important in the public sector.” “...career civil servants...can use the frequent turnover among top political appointees to their advantage by simply resisting new initiatives until a new administration comes into power”...”their participation in the stages of change can help reduce this kind of resistance.”

Successful implementation of organizational change often resembles a hybrid of “lower-level participation” and “direction from top management.” In addition to widespread participation, leaders must “take participation seriously, commit time and effort to it, and manage it properly” (170-171).

**Factor 4: Ensure Top-Management Support and Commitment.** “An individual or group within the organization should champion the cause for change.” Some studies stress the importance of having a single change agent or ‘idea champion’ lead the transformation.” Others stress the need for a “guiding coalition” of individuals

“who lend legitimacy to the effort and marshal the resources and emotional support required to induce organizational members to change.” “Successful reform requires “leadership continuity and stability,” which is a particular challenge in the public sector because of “frequent and rapid turnover of many executives in government agencies.” Because of this, career civil servants often lead significant government reforms (171).

**Factor 5: Build External Support.** “Managerial leaders must develop support from political overseers and key external stakeholders...” partly because of the ability of these players to: “impose statutory changes” and “control the flow of vital resources to public organizations.” Political overseers can influence reform efforts by “creating and conveying a vision that explains the need for change” as well as selecting political appointees who are “sympathetic to the change” and “have the knowledge and skills required for managing the transformation” (171).

**Factor 6: Provide Resources.** “Successful change usually requires sufficient resources to support the process.” Fernandez and Rainey maintain that “...change is not cheap or without trade-offs.” “Planned organizational change involves a redeployment or redirection of scarce organizational resources toward a host of new activities,” including:

- “developing a plan or strategy for implementing the change”
- “communicating the need for change”
- “training employees”
- “developing new processes and practices”
- “restructuring and reorganizing the organization” and
- “testing and experimenting with innovations.”

“Ample funding is necessary to staff implementation agencies and provide them with the administrative and technical capacity to ensure that they achieve statutory objectives” (712).

**Factor 7: Institutionalize Change.** “Managers and employees must effectively institutionalize and embed changes.” “Virtually all organizational changes involve changes in the behavior of organizational members.” For changes to endure, “members of the organization must incorporate the new policies or innovations into their daily routines.” “Employees must learn and routinize these behaviors in the short term and leaders must institutionalize them over the long haul so that new patterns of behavior displace old ones.”

Fernandez and Rainey cite one model for “reinforcing and institutionalizing change,” developed by Armenakis, Harris, and Field (1999), under which leaders can:

- “modify formal structure, procedures, and human resource management practices;”
- “employ rites and ceremonies”
- “diffuse the innovation through trial runs and pilot projects”
- “collect data to track the progress of and commitment to change” and
- “engage employees in active participation tactics that foster ‘learning by doing’” (172).

The collection of data and monitoring of the implementation process can help “keep managers aware of the extent to which organizational members have adopted the

change” and “should continue even after the change is fully adopted to ensure that organizational members do not lapse into old patterns of behavior” (172-173).

**Factor 8: Pursue Comprehensive Change.** “Managerial leaders must develop an integrative, comprehensive approach to change that achieves subsystem congruence.” Similar to Stone, Fernandez and Rainey argue that systemic changes are needed to the subsystems of an organization and “must be aligned with the desired end state.” “Changing one or two subsystems will not generate sufficient force to bring about organizational transformation.” Fernandez and Rainey note that “subsystem congruence may be more difficult to achieve in the public than the private sector because change agents in the public sector exercise less discretion than their private sector counterparts” (173).

#### Literature Specific to Portland

A number of scholars have studied different aspects of Portland’s neighborhood system since the early 1980s. This section reviews their research and findings.

**Abbott (1983):** Abbott documented the origins and early development of Portland citizen participation system as part of his broader examination of how Portland came to be seen—by both residents and outside evaluators—as one of the best planned and most livable cities in the nation in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In Chapter 9, Abbott describes the origins of Portland’s “neighborhood planning revolution” and the founding and early years of Portland’s formal city-wide neighborhood system.

Abbott found that, prior to the mid-1960, Portland city planners generally did not involve community members in their planning activities. They saw older inner neighborhoods had outlived their usefulness as residential areas. They proposed that these neighborhoods be redeveloped to support the “growing downtown office district,” light industry, warehousing, and “expanding institutions, such as hospitals, the state university, and shopping centers” (186-187). Community activists began to organization in these inner neighborhoods to oppose city government land use and urban renewal proposals and to advocate for revitalization, rather than replacement, of their neighborhoods.

Abbott found that planning in Portland underwent “startling changes” from 1966 to 1972 that included:

- “the emergence of active and often angry neighborhood association organizations” that “made local residents the actors rather than the objects in neighborhood decisions”
- “a change of generations on the Portland City Council in 1969-70” that brought on leaders who “were more willing to respond to neighborhood requests” as well as Neil Goldschmidt, who was a strong champion of increased neighborhood involvement in city governance and who, as mayor, oversaw the creation of Portland’s neighborhood system.
- Strong requirements by the federal government for citizen participation in city policy and spending decisions through the Community Action Program of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Model Cities program, and the Housing and Community Development program. (190-91).

Abbott writes that by “1971 and 1972, active neighborhood associations and planning committees were a presence that politicians and planning administrators could not ignore” and together constituted a citywide “neighborhood movement” (192).

The Portland Planning Commission with input from community activists began to explore the “definition of a formal role for neighborhood groups in city decision making.” In 1971, the City Council established a District Planning Organization (DPO) Taskforce to “define the role for neighborhood groups in planning decisions, establish criteria for their recognition, identify funding needs, and describe channels of communication between neighborhoods and the council” (199).

The DPO Task Force’s report recommended a two-tier system of self identified existing and future neighborhood associations and the creation of district planning organizations defined by the Planning Commission that would have full-time staff “to assist neighborhood access to city bureaucrats.” Neighborhood associations would have access to city planning staff who could help them develop neighborhood comprehensive plans (200).

The City Council created Portland’s formal neighborhood system in 1974 by ordinance, which included the creation of a new city agency, the Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), dedicated to supporting the creation of the new neighborhood system and supporting citizen input and participation into government decision making.

The City Council dropped the proposal to create district planning offices in response to strong opposition from neighborhood activists who feared that these offices

would introduce a new layer between neighborhoods and city leaders that would serve the interests of city government over the interests of the neighborhoods.

Abbott wrote that ONA's essential function was to "assist neighborhood organizations through a central office and five area offices." ONA's purpose was "to provide standards and procedures whereby organized groups of citizens seeking to communicate with city officials and city bureaus on matters concerning neighborhood livability may obtain assistance from staff...and to provide certain minimum standards for said organizations." Neighborhood associations were required to have open membership and to record minority as well as majority opinions.

Abbott noted that ONA coordinated a new Neighborhood Needs program that allowed neighborhood associations to communicate their priorities for capital improvements in their neighborhoods. Planning staff also began to notify neighborhood associations of zoning change requests and began to work with "individual communities on down-zoning and district plans." Abbott found that the number of active neighborhood associations doubled between 1974 and 1979 (from 30 to 60) (200-201). ONA staff also quickly reintroduced the strategy of providing services to neighborhood associations through district level, community-controlled organizations by contracting with community organizations to serve as field offices for ONA.

Abbott recognized that many of forces that led to the "neighborhood revolution" in Portland mirrored similar calls for greater citizen participation across the nation. He noted that "Portland provided a receptive environment for a new style of neighborhood planning." City council member and then Mayor Neil Goldschmidt was "able to lead and

to personify a major change in local politics.” Goldschmidt also “attracted and supported a new generation of city employees who worked to alter the direction of Portland Planning” (206).

**Berry, Portney and Thomson (1993):** In the later 1980s, a research team from Tufts University identified Portland’s citizen participation system as one of the best examples of participatory democracy in the country. The team investigated participation systems in a number of cities and identified a number of elements important for citizen participation system to advance participatory democracy (discussed earlier in this paper).

Berry, Portney, and Thomson identified Portland as a city that is democratic and had made had made an impressive commitment to the idea of participatory democracy.” The authors maintained that increased people participation in government required to have “the foundation on which to build a true participatory democracy” (1). They found that Portland was a city that had decentralized decision making and that relied “on structures of strong democracy to provide a high level of neighborhood government” (283).

The authors found that what made the five cities, including Portland, that they studied different included: groups were “organized in every neighborhood of the city and therefore cover all the population,” “regular two-way channels to and from city hall,” “comparatively extensive support staff, training opportunities, technical assistance, and neighborhood offices...,” neighborhood groups were “empowered to act on behalf of the residents and local businesses, and “Access, support, and a recognized, ongoing mission—these factors add up to impact on local policy” (46-47).

Berry et al examined the Portland system against the “breadth” and “depth” criteria they had identified as the critical elements for strong participation:

*Breadth:*

Access of Citizens to the System: The authors recognized the strong tradition of independence of Portland’s neighborhood associations. Many neighborhood associations predated the creation of the City of Portland’s formal neighborhood system. From the founding of Portland’s Office of Neighborhood Associations, individual neighborhood associations also had “fought any sign of structure or control by city hall.” Also, fourteen years after the founding of the neighborhood system went by before neighborhoods accepted the development and adoption of written guidelines for neighborhood associations, such as requirements that neighborhood membership be open to all residents and that minority points of view be reported, and clarification of the the responsibilities of neighborhood association for the use of city funds.

The authors particularly singled out the independence of the neighborhood district coalitions “with boards made up entirely of neighborhood association representatives” that “help support neighborhood outreach and advocacy activities and provide the day-to-day link to city hall.”

“Individual neighborhoods are also encouraged to work directly with city agencies and with the city council, and many additional participation opportunities, such as they citywide Budget Advisory Committees, are open to individuals in the city without regard to neighborhood affiliation.”

Berry et al found that neighborhood-based organizations in all five study cities provided “a clear means of access” and found that citizens are likely to know where to go to have a voice on issues covered by the system.

The authors cautioned that, in Portland, “ a proliferation of committees and formal participation opportunities tends to undercut the claim of either neighborhood groups or district coalitions to be the voice of the citizens” (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 59-60).

Information and Outreach to Citizens: Berry et al stated that “Citizens cannot participate without early and adequate information about the participation process, the times and places they can become involved, and the potential impacts of the issues upon their lives” (60). They found that the City of Portland supported direct communications by neighborhood associations and district coalition with citizens by providing “a specific amount of city funds” for “the printing and postage of at least one neighborhood newsletter for every household.” The City also required district coalitions to support neighborhood communications in the City’s contract with the district coalitions. Neighborhood associations that found ways to cut costs could use their allotment to produce more newsletters.

Berry et al found that “The sum of these efforts—providing open access, maintaining an extensive information flow, and establishing a long-term commitment of city resources to the participation process—represents a serious attempt to offer realistic participation opportunities, continuously, to every resident of the city” (62).

*Depth:*

Opportunity to Affect Citywide Budget Priorities: Berry et al maintained that “One of the most direct measures of the depth of a participation system is its ability to

grapple realistically with the city budget.” “In Portland, the Budget Advisory Committees perform this role to some degree, but actual ability to affect budgets varies greatly from one committee to the next” (64).

Opportunity to Affect Neighborhood Allocations: The authors determined that the ability of neighborhood associations to influence the allocation of city spending in their neighborhood, is an important element of strong participatory democracy. They found that in “Portland, the process of defining neighborhood needs highlights the neighborhoods’ priorities.” They also found that “small projects are handled well, but larger projects tend to remain attached to the traditional city development systems with little input from citizen groups” (65).

Ability to Define the Decision Making Process: The authors determined that having more public involvement opportunities is not always better and can lead to confusion. Competing public involvement options can lead to uncertainty about who truly speaks on behalf of a neighborhood or a group of citizens.

The authors found that “Portland offers a good example of multiple participation opportunities and uncertainty in representation.” City administrators emphasize the openness of city government and provide many different avenues for public involvement and take citizen input seriously. Individual citizens can meet with agency administrators. Dozens of special citizen advisory committees existed. Neighborhood association representatives had the opportunity to speak before the city council, district coalition boards, and the City’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Special participation efforts, such as the Central City Plan planning process at the time, brought in thousands of

responses from targeted outreach efforts. The authors found that these many avenues for input into decision making had had many positive effects.

Berry et al noted, however, that despite all this “relative levels of dissatisfaction and distrust of city government appear to be higher among participants in Portland than in some of the other cities. The citizen interviews revealed considerably more hostility among neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and city hall than elsewhere. “

They also suggested that “the uncertainty about who is speaking for whom may be one factor that left Portland’s neighborhood associations vulnerable to the charge of being “unrepresentative” of their neighborhoods” during a particular land use controversy of the time. The authors noted, in contrast, that in St. Paul ...”district councils clearly speak for residents in their area and form the majority in most citywide citizen bodies” (66).

**Strength of Administrator Involvement:** Berry et al determined that the “access that citizens have to line administrators during the participation process has a major impact on their ability to affect services and programs. They noted that in most cities, administrators only go to neighborhood meetings during some sort of a crisis.

The authors found that Portland had extensive mechanisms to provide “regular, ongoing contact between administrators and citizens. They particular lauded the Budget Advisory Committees (BACs) that each major department had that included neighborhood associations representatives and other interested citizens. The BACs “act as a sounding board for administrative initiatives throughout the year, particularly at budget preparation time.” “They do not allow for widespread contact between citizens

and administrators on routine issues but do give a few citizens the opportunity to grapple with agency problems in depth and to bring fresh perspectives to the departments.” “Recruitment and initial training for the BACs is handled by the central Office of Neighborhood Associations.” “In addition, the ‘big BAC,’ or Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee, brings together representatives from all the individual BACs to consider citywide administrative policies” (67-68).

Control of Staff: Berry et al wrote that “[p]aid staff supply the administrative support and organizational abilities that citizen participants often cannot devote to volunteer work.”...”staff also provide the cohesion that keeps the organization together year after year, through the ups and downs of volunteer leadership energy and attention.” The authors recognized that in Portland the district coalitions had the power to hire and fire and direct their staff free of control by the City even though the city provided the core of the district coalition funding (68-69).

*Controlling the Public Agenda:* Berry et al explored the extent to which neighborhood associations are able to get items on or keep them off the public agenda. They looked particularly at the institutionalized role of neighborhood associations in “transmitting the demands, preferences and complaints of their constituents to various administrative agencies.” The authors cited Portland’s formal Neighborhood Needs process as an important vehicle to channel “complaints from citizens to a central office that, in turn sends them on to the relevant administrative agency” (110-111).

They identified value in community members having an existing network of organized neighborhood associations in place. “Would-be policy initiators know that

residents do not have to overcome inertia to organize to stop something they disapprove of. Each community is already organized....” Administrators were somewhat self-regulating as well. “The anticipation of what will pass muster at the neighborhood level is augmented by agency rules and norms designed to keep administrators from trying to escape or minimize neighborhood review” (112).

The authors also identified the bureau Budget Advisory Committees as important vehicles by which community members could affect agency agendas. They found that each administrative agency had a Budget Advisory Committee and selected members for the committee from names provided by neighborhood associations. “The BACs tackle a wide range of issues from the geographic distribution of expenditures in a development agency to the need for a new computer system in a personnel office.” “In many cases, citizens on these committees respond to specific questions and issues raised by agency personnel, but in other cases the citizens themselves are raising previously unrecognized concerns and developing initiatives for change that would otherwise never have been raised.” Portland’s Office of Neighborhood Associations coordinated the program and provided training and support to citizens serving on the BACs. “The BACs are not focused on the neighborhoods, but they provide an unusual opportunity for citizens to become directly involved in the nitty-gritty of city policymaking” (113).

Berry et al also found that the influence of the neighborhood associations over the agenda-building process is also magnified by the planning processes” in Portland. “Whenever...Portland does any planning, it is *participatory* planning. The neighborhood associations are always involved, and in neighborhood-level zoning decisions they are

dominant.” They noted that in “Portland...neighborhood plans commissioned by the city are done by the neighborhood associations. Most of them have land use committees and some even have a land use specialist on their staff.” City planners also selected community members to participate in the formal Central City Plan process from lists provided by the neighborhood associations. “All development proposals are made within a set of constraints established by plans in which neighborhood associations have participated” (113).

The authors do recognize that “not all business-related decisions are created equal,” however. They found that “on the most critical development issues, the development side almost always wins” (142). “On other important but smaller projects and proposals, business is quite vulnerable” to neighborhood input and advocacy.

The authors summarized that “More than anything else, the neighborhood associations give an institutionalized voice to residents at the early stages of the policymaking process when ideas are being formulated into proposals” (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 114).

**Adler and Blake (1990):** Adler and Blake, in their 1990 article, discuss the “evolution and dynamics of citizen participation in planning” in Portland and reviewed patterns of neighborhood participation across the city related to land use regulation by analyzing the ways neighborhood associations responded to notifications of zone changes and conditional use permit applications. They focused especially on the evolution of the role of the district level neighborhood offices in supporting this participation. (These district offices were independent organizations governed by their constituent

neighborhood associations that the city funded through contracts to provide citizen participation and community organizing support to their neighborhoods.)

Adler and Blake noted that the “structural, program, and operational aspects of the Portland system” embodied several important recommendations made by advocates of more effective citizen participation, including:

- “city government funding for operation of neighborhood associations, so these organizations can gain access to community organizers and publish newsletters;”
- “establishing nonprofit, tax-exempt status for neighborhood organizations to allow them to seek additional sources of financial support;”
- “developing pre-service and in-service training for neighborhood activists;”
- “establishing an early notification process, whereby neighborhood organizations are brought into the planning of city actions at the earliest possible stage; and”
- “assuring the active cooperation and support of local government officials, particularly top agency officials” (37).

They found that Portland’s system of citizen participation, as “facilitated by the district-level organizations” appeared to be effective in equalizing “across the city the capacity to participate in the land-use decision-making process” (42). Neighborhood association response rates (with the exception of one district) did not vary a great deal and were “not strongly influenced by either socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of residents or the volume of challenges confronting a neighborhood.”

Adler and Blake suggested that the “main question confronting the future of the Portland participation system is whether city hall and the neighborhood associations can sustain the creative tension that is embodied in the set of district-level organizations“ (43).

The authors note that the district organizations, despite receiving much of their funding from city government, “adamantly maintain their autonomy from city hall.” The district organizations increasingly, at the time, “translate city agency initiatives into locally oriented terms. Because the district organizations are shaped by and responding to the needs and direction of their constituent neighborhood associations they vary in the way they operate and their capacities.

The authors found that city hall “had been working to boost the managerial capabilities” of the district offices to “create more operational uniformity” and that city agencies increasingly were using the “office to rationalize their own participation programs.” They found that these pressures challenge “the autonomy of the district-level organizations and their responsiveness to constituent neighborhood associations.”

The authors conclude by writing that the “success of the Portland participation system—rooted precisely in autonomy and responsiveness—intensified tendencies to routinize the system, particularly during the administration of a neighborhood-oriented mayor. This has been the case in Portland since 1985. Continued success of the system depends on the capacity of volunteer activists to balance these tendencies, maintaining the focus of district offices on neighborhood concerns” (43).

**Witt 2000:** Witt's dissertation provides the most detailed description available of the evolution of Portland's neighborhood association system from the 1970s to 1999. Witt contends that Portland's commitment to citizen participation has been lasting and significant and also conflicted (39).

Witt criticizes the Tufts University study for failing to "adequately theorize control" issues in Portland's neighborhood system as well as issues of "co-optation." He further argues that the Tufts researchers "failed to theorize the manner in which incentive frameworks shape interest groups processes at the neighborhood association and district coalition levels" (40). A significant flaw in the Tufts study, according to Witt, "was the omission of any systematic examination of how District Coalition Boards of Directors (DCBs) work on a day-to-day basis" even though the "DCB level of activity is integral to the overall working of Portland's NA system" (3-4).

In addition to exploring these issues across the evolution of Portland's neighborhood program, Witt also describes in detail internal conflicts in two of the previously independent, community-governed neighborhood district offices that led to the dissolution of these organizations and the takeover of the management of those offices by the City's Office of Neighborhood Associations.

Witt notes that the Tufts University study claim that "citizens have a real and ongoing capacity not only to influence but also to shape policy outcomes in accordance with their stated preferences through participation in their respective neighborhood associations" pre-dated some key shifts in the Portland program, including: the dissolution of city's Bureau Advisory Committee program and the Neighborhood Needs

process in the 1990s—both programs identified by Berry et al as important examples of participatory democracy elements; the break up of two of the independent district coalition offices and takeover of the management of these offices by the city’s Office of Neighborhood Associations; and the shift in focus of the city’s formal citizen participation program away from a neighborhood-centric structure “towards an assimilation of other interest groups and agendas” (40).

Witt identifies a number of phases of the evolution of Portland’s neighborhood involvement system. These phases and Witt’s assessment of their key events and themes are presented below.

*Capacity Building—1974-83:* Witt writes that the first ONA director Mary Pedersen ‘faced significant obstacles in launching” the neighborhood program. She was “forced to operate within a climate of two-pronged distrust.” She needed to “dispel the suspicions of existing neighborhood groups that ONA was a front for downtown control,” while at the same time demonstrating to “City council that the program she sought to foster had sufficient support in the community to warrant Council’s ongoing support” (101). Witt reports that Pederson drew on her faith in a participatory ethos and worked diligently to make neighborhood concerns visible to City Council. Her “capacity building” approach emphasized that “neighborhood-based action could serve as a catalyst for community building” (102).

The next ONA director Pattie Jacobsen focused on building “the capacity of District Coalition staff as well as the leadership skills of NA participants. She also focused on building trust with City Council and city bureaus “after [their] often-times

stormy relations with Mary Pederson” and her advocacy for neighborhood associations (110). Jacobsen tried to get more reporting from the neighborhoods to demonstrate to city council and bureaus that the program was ”able to function smoothly and accountably,” but Jacobsen told Witt, “Getting information from neighborhood coordinators at first was like pulling teeth” (110). As the number of neighborhood associations grew, “ONA needed to build District Coalition capacity in order to help spread the burden of accountability in the program” and to show city council that the “two-tiered, sovereignty model” (independent neighborhood associations served by independent district coalition offices) was viable. This was difficult. Neighborhood activists “remained leery that ONA sought to subordinate them to the downtown bureaucracy” (109). Neighborhood association and district coalition leadership often viewed ONA contract dollars “as entitlement funding” and often were indignant about ONA request for greater accountability (111-112).

Jacobsen paid special attention to downtown city administrators. Some city council members and some city administrators feared “losing control of City agenda setting” to neighborhood activists. In response, Jacobsen “sponsored workshops for downtown staff covering the skills necessary for successfully communicating with neighborhood activists.” The Tuft research team’s selection of Portland’s neighborhood involvement system as one of the best examples of strong participatory democracy in the country also helped city administrators hold Portland’s system in higher esteem (113).

Despite neighborhood and coalition suspicion of ONA, Jacobsen successfully organized the community in 1983 to fend off conservative Mayor Frank Ivancie’s attempt

to cut district coalition funding from “residual skepticism and fear that the [district coalition] level would detract authority from City Council” (115).

During the mid 1980s, the ONA program also expanded to incorporation community-based crime prevention services and the city’s neighborhood mediation program (114) .

*Institution Building—1984-89*: Sarah Newhall became the next ONA director at about the same time that neighborhood and community activist Bud Clark was elected as Portland mayor. This time period was marked by a severe economic recession in Portland in the early 1980s and by the beginning of Portland’s contentious process to annex the unincorporated land east of the city. ONA also starting wrestling with North Portland activists who had developed a strong district structure without strong neighborhood involvement. Newhall also focused on standardizing relationships within the program and rulemaking to fortify “the program against political exigencies and inherent vulnerabilities” (121).

By 1987, ONA also was “increasingly enmeshed in the City’s budget planning process” through its coordination of citizen participation through the city’s Bureau Advisory Committee program (132). Previous ONA Director Jacobsen had initiated the Budget Advisory Coordinating Committee which tied together the individual BAC’s and gave citizens a stronger voice in the development of the overall city budget (121).

Portland’s neighborhood system faced some long-standing dilemmas. One was the question of the basis for the legitimacy of neighborhood associations. Did they have legitimacy “by virtue of their representativeness of neighborhood-wide viewpoints, or

through participation of those who choose to be involved” (124-5)? Another was the role of ONA. Was it to “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 development politics” [emphasis in original] (125)? City Council and ONA sometimes challenged DCB and NA authority saying these bodies were not representative and “noting lack of participation and new membership.” DCB and NA responded by accusing City Council and ONA of “sham maneuvers meant to end-run the citizen participation process” (125-126).

The pressure to provide greater structure and rules for the neighborhood system continued. Witt describes a number of processes convened to review the workings of the system and to propose guidelines and rules. In 1980, City Commissioner Charles Jordan “empanelled an ONA Review Committee” whose charge was to “assess the entire ONA program to test the extent to which the problems indicated by allegations” made by neighborhood activists against one of the district coalitions “were apparent elsewhere in the City” (133). In 1985, Newhall appointed a “policies and procedures review committee,” that included a move that just ten years previously” “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” (123). Newhall’s committee included DCB representatives from across the city, as well as DCB and ONA staff (122). The committee produced the first set of “Guidelines for Neighborhood Associations, District Coalition Boards, and the Office of Neighborhood Associations,” which “set out in painstaking detail the various types of relationships and

responsibilities that the ONA program encompassed” (135). It essentially formalized the conventions at the time, but it also represented an end of an era. Witt argues that the new Guidelines “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 model the City Council, and many activist, had found so problematic at the outset of the program” (136). The Guidelines were followed by a rewrite of the 1975 ONA ordinance that eliminated reference to the NA role in city planning and to the NA role in providing recommendations on zoning (137).

The Guidelines required the DCBs to develop annual work plans and to submit mid-year progress reports. The Guidelines also “stressed the important of full NA involvement at the DCB level” (138). Witt writes that the logic of the Guidelines was that “DCBs derive their legitimacy from NA involvement and vice versa....” (143). Some critics saw the provisions of the Guidelines as too bureaucratic (139) or as an effort to undermine the influence of the district coalitions, particularly the district coalition in North Portland and the former county-established Community Planning Groups in East Portland, by creating and strengthening independent neighborhood associations (142).

Witt argues that, with the Guidelines process, 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” (Witt 149).

The role of ONA continued to shift in the 1980s with the addition of new functions. In 1983, the City of Portland and Multnomah County adopted Resolution A which divided duties among the two jurisdictions—human services went to the county,

while the city focused more on services related to the city's physical infrastructure. Witt reports that in 1986, Newhall began discussions with city staff and the City Council about integrating some of the City's human services functions "with its citizen participation program" (Witt 146). Newhall suggested that "neighborhoods are in fact becoming the 'people's safety net'" (Witt 147). As a result, in 1989, ONA assumes responsibility for three bodies formerly supported by the City's Bureau of Human resources:

- Portland Multnomah Commission on Aging
- Metropolitan Human Rights Commission
- Youth Commission.

DCB and NA activists feared that ONA incorporation of these programs "signaled a trend away from support for NA activism."

*Retrenchment—1989-93:* Witt identifies this period as one of the most difficult in ONA's history. Neighborhood leaders continued to be suspicious of Rachel Jacky--the ONA director during that time period--partly because of her previous position as director of the city's Bureau of Human Services. They feared that the transfer of the three commissions to ONA "signaled a drift in the ONA mission away from its historic role of NA support towards an emphasis on human services delivery" (157). Instead of responding to calls from neighborhood leaders for more support from the City, the City Council instead cut funding for the neighborhood system after voters approved a property tax limitation ballot measure in 1991. ONA and leaders of the northwest coalition office locked horns repeatedly over their negotiations of the terms of ONA's contract with the district coalition office. Jacky attempted to include requirements in the contract that

would have removed the DCB control over the crime prevention programming, given ONA the ability to request DCB staff to meet with ONA on ONA request, not just quarterly, and required “that DCB members and staff actively encourage citizens to attend training and orientation sessions sponsored by ONA, as well as related activities set by city bureaus; and would have reduced DCB control over office staff salaries” (161).

DCB leaders were unhappy but signed the contracts, except for the northwest coalition office. ONA and the northwest district coalition negotiated changes that removed some of these requirements, and these changes were applied to the other district coalition contracts as well (162). Similar issues arose in contract negotiations in subsequent years.

City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury was given responsibility for ONA in the early 1990s. She was an ardent social service and affordable housing advocate. Witt reports that “her zeal to mobilize an agenda for assisting disenfranchised groups would set her at loggerheads with key NA leadership” when she and Jacky tried to “harness the NA program” to serve Kafoury’s social service efforts “(167-168). Witt reports that none of Jacky’s initiatives originated with DCB leadership (170).

Kafoury and Jacky also worked to incorporate neighborhood association activity into Mayor Bud Clark’s Portland Future Focus (PFF) citywide strategic planning process. The PFF process identified 25 strategic goals, some of which related directly to ONA programs, including crime prevention, tolerance for diversity, and leadership development (171). Some of the PFF action items including “an elaborate schedule for

evaluating neighborhood association activity”, the establishment of a “mentoring program for new and emerging leaders using” neighborhood association leadership; and a logo contest for kicking off a public relations campaign on diversity issues.” The ONI [Bureau Advisory Committee (BAC)] said the goals were laudatory, but opposed imposing any new priorities on the neighborhood system without additional funding (172).

In response to Commissioner Kafoury’s push to establish a city government and ONA-initiated agenda for the neighborhood system, “DCB activists from around the City came together, on their own terms, to define for themselves why they existed” [emphasis in original] (172). DCB leaders pressured ONA to support a survey of the district coalitions and a retreat in February 1992. The survey results showed that district coalitions said their relationships with city bureaus “tended to be reactive and adversarial” (175). They also complained that ONA was not providing enough technical assistance to the district coalitions and focused too much time on fiscal and performance oversight of the coalitions. Jacky responded that most of ONA’s time was spent on technical assistance to neighborhood associations and citizens, and ONA spent little time on fiscal and performance oversight of the district coalitions. She maintained that ONA had a legitimate role to play in overseeing performance because ONA’s primary function with regard to the district coalitions was contract compliance oversight (176).

In 1992, Commissioner Kafoury hired Margaret Strahan, former NW activist and city commissioner, to set up focus groups to “assess the suitability of adapting NA efforts to fit with the Future Focus agenda.” “Strachan reached out to neighborhood association

participants, current and past district coalition staff people, “neighborhood business interests, representatives from community-based organizations, and City bureau personnel” (Witt 177). One theme Strachan’s work identified was that “organizations other than NAs and DCBs were needed to broaden the base of citizen participation in Portland.” Another was that neighborhood associations ‘were being burdened with too many tasks from ONA.’ Strachan’s findings “echoed DCB disgruntlement about Kafoury’s ‘agenda’”. She found that: “Neighborhood Associations must maintain their grassroots orientation. The city cannot use them as another service delivery network without risking co-optation of their independence, credibility, and ability to get things done by pulling neighbors together and speaking with an independent voice” (quoted by Witt, 178).

Witt reports that Strachan made “another notable observation.” She noted the ‘suggestion that gained strong support’ and which proposed “more personal intervention and fewer legalistic approaches to problem-solving with neighborhoods and between the City and neighborhoods” (178). Witt suggested that this suggestion should be “taken as implicating all NA stakeholder groups” including neighborhood associations and district coalitions. Witt notes that both had been criticized for garnering coercive powers through the Guidelines “as well as through procedural innovations (including the sometimes heavy-handed use of Roberts Rules of Order), had drawn “accusations about power cliques taking control over agenda setting, especially at the DCB level” (178). ONA’s increasingly rule-based approach to controlling the neighborhood system also provoked resentment.

Strachan went on to work with neighborhood and district coalition leaders to plan a three-day gathering of that became known as “Portland’s Neighborhood Congress.” Strachan “pushed hard to frame the Congress effort as a citizen-led charge to revitalize Portland’s commitment to neighborhood-based citizen involvement” (179). The Congress took place over a weekend in October 1993. Participants identified and voted on a number of resolutions. “Congress planners hoped to establish a mandate for revamping the NA program” (180-181). Witt reports that, while the City Council and ONA did not adopt the resolutions produced by the Congress, “the Congress was a significant historic marker for Portland, for it demonstrated that there still existed fervent interest in sustaining and renewing the NA program” (182).

Also during the early 1990’s internal conflicts and actions by ONA led to the first dissolution of an independent district coalition--the district coalition in north Portland--and the ultimate takeover of staffing responsibilities for the office by ONA.

Witt contends that “collective action problems” were “chronic among all of Portland’s” neighborhood associations (215). He suggests that collective action problems are more like to occur in poor and rich neighborhoods than middle class neighborhood. Witt maintains that “Portland’s NA program was never devoted to mobilizing working and lower-class interests” (216). Witt says the implosion of the north Portland district coalition raises questions about the Tufts conclusions “that claimed NA’s typically host hospitable venues for constructive dialogue” (219). Witt poses the question of whether the implosion of the north Portland district coalition was an ‘anomalous event’ or “more

endemic to Portland's NA program than we might otherwise expect." Was the experience in north Portland just "more externalized" (219)?

*Recapturing, Recasting—1993-1999*: Diane Linn served as ONA director from 1993 to 1998. Key events during her tenure included the implosion of the East Portland District Coalition because of internal strife—similar to the demise of the north Portland district coalition—followed by an ONA takeover of the staffing of the office, and another major review of Portland's neighborhood system, the 1995 ONA Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement (TFNI).

Witt suggests that the 1985-87 Policies and Procedures Review Committee and the 1995 TFNI were "triggered by crises confronting the NA institution" (Witt 222). Witt reports that Linn faced two years of various disputes in East Portland, "continuing drift in the program and on-going DCB disgruntlement and intransigence stemming from the unresolved bouts with Jacky and Kafoury" as well as the "uneasy acceptance for long-time NA activists of the North Portland" city-run district office model. Also, antagonisms had arisen between the Portland Police and the DCBs over who controlled the City's Community Policing program" since its inception in 1990.

Witt also reports that "...steady and clear signals of new alignments between downtown policy makers and development interests beginning around 1991 (and continuing throughout the decade) signaled NA and DCB activists that their role in the land use development review process was becoming less clear and certain" (Witt 222). Linn "under significant guidance from" City Commissioner Charles Hales, who had been given responsibility over ONA, attempted to rein in and recast the neighborhood program

institution by enlarging “ONA’s purview, by codifying new stakeholder interests and redefining the terms for engagement....” (223).

The TFNI membership included representatives from neighborhood associations, district coalitions, business associations, community-based organizations “representing various civic and ethnic interests,” as well as district coalition staff, the police, and staff from the county chair’s office (224). Commissioner Hales gave the TFNI a broad mandate that included, but was not limited to:

- “...a thorough examination of the structure, effectiveness, funding needs, and distribution of the citizen involvement system; and the identification of options for enhancing citizen participation and citizen/government communication” (quoted in Witt, 224-5).

Hales later expanded the scope also to include:

- An examination of the NA/DC/ONA structure regarding citizen involvement with city government and other government agencies
- A look “beyond the current ONA structure to find opportunities to broaden citizen involvement and to encourage participation by the full diversity of our communities;” and
- A look “for opportunities to make significant improvement in citizen participation.” (225).

The TFNI gathered input from neighborhood association and district coalition representatives, key City agency staff, representatives from other government entities,

and from the general public. The TFNI also reviewed the “ONA Guidelines, ordinances, budgets and contracts” and citizen involvement models from other U.S. cities (227).

The TFNI report and recommendations reaffirmed the important role that citizen and neighborhood involvement plays in the life of all Portlanders and in “promoting an effective and responsive government” (228). Rather than focusing on involvement by neighborhood associations, the TFNI stated that “The highest level of involvement is participation of the full diversity of neighbors sitting face to face with those planning and implementing public policy/action” (229).

The TFNI report articulated new language for the purpose of neighborhood associations: “to promote community, not just to communicate with government” (230). Witt notes that “nowhere in past ONA documents is such an explicit description of NA’s rendered.” Witt suggests that “This language is clearly intended to establish a seamless correspondence between NAs and other stakeholder groups the Task Force was charged to accommodate.” Witt maintains that this represented a major shift in how NAs were being talked about.” He suggests that a statement that NAs should “promote community” “would never have been tolerated previously” and would have been “taken as a burden (or prerogative) left for each NA to define for itself” (231).

The TFNI recommended that neighborhood associations be allowed to consider “alternative structures” to the traditional district coalition model, which Witt suggests was a challenge to the district coalitions and opened the door for their replacement by alternative models, like the city-run district office model (231).

The TFNI also recommended that Portland's formal neighborhood involvement system be expanded to include business associations and "communities beyond neighborhood boundaries, " defined by the TFNI as "Ethnically-based community organizations whose members face unique differences, particularly in the areas of language and cultural adjustment" (247). In recognition of this expanded focus, the TFNI recommended that the name of ONA be changed to the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI). The TFNI also envisioned ONI again serving as the central agency for "coordinating the efforts of the Bureau to reach out to citizen/neighbors to involve them in key planning and implementation efforts" (223-224). Over time, many major bureaus had developed their own internal capacity to reach out to and involve the public. Witt describes and discusses the many other TFNI recommendations.

The TFNI marked another turning point in the evolution of Portland's neighborhood involvement system. By 1995, Witt argues, "not even the staunchest advocate of NAs could refute serious claims made against the institution" (250). The time had come for some major adjustments.

Witt's research provides valuable insights beyond the basic structure and programs of Portland's neighborhood involvement system and looks at how the system functions and the control issues that Witt argues shape much of the interaction between the City Council, ONA/ONI, the district coalitions, and the neighborhood associations. The 1995 TFNI formally introduced the need to consider whether neighborhood associations and district coalitions alone are sufficient vehicles to promote participatory democracy or whether Portland's renowned neighborhood system needed to expand its

mechanisms and structures to ensure that other groups not well served within the neighborhood association system have a strong voice in public decisions making and in shaping their communities. Witt also questioned the stability of the DCB model—Would it survive the City’s takeover of the two formally independent district offices in north and east Portland?

**Johnson (2002):** Johnson’s 2002 study examined the evolution of civic life and civic organizations in Portland, Oregon between 1960 and 1999. His research challenges Putnam’s contention that civic life in the United States has declined since the 1950s. Johnson argues that while traditional civic organizations did decline significantly in Portland after 1960, these civic organizations were displaced and replaced by “advocacy oriented organizations: identity interest groups, neighborhood associations, citizen interest organizations, and social service organizations that advocated for causes” (Johnson 1). Johnson’s research found that the civic infrastructure in Portland by 1999 was “a complex one that facilitates civic engagement by a broader cross section of citizens, utilizing a far richer repertoire of civic actions than were available in the 1950s” (7).

Johnson disagrees “with Putnam and Skocpol’s declaration that civic life has declined in America.” He argues “that civic life has changed for the better because it now involves a broader cross section of citizens and incorporates more open and democratic processes” (34).

Johnson identifies and examines “four discernible periods” in the “history of civic life in Portland from 1960 to 1999,” which include:

- “Traditional civic life” (1960s): Johnson writes that this “should be what Putnam (2000) defines as the height of post World War II civic life, dominated by the ‘long generation’ . . . .”
- “Civic reconstruction period” (1968 to 1974): This is when “social movements of the 1960s were institutionalized through new organizations and practices, and traditional civic life began to unravel.”
- “Populist pluralist period” (1975 to 1990): During this period “new institutions and practices took hold” and “the growth of new organizations and civic practices was most prevalent.” This is when civic life in Portland “incorporated the broadest cross section of citizens in public policy deliberation, and the most extensive array of new civic actions and into common practice.”
- “Civic innovation period” (1990s): Johnson found that this period saw “continued growth of new civic organizations and civic practices, a withdrawal from some of the broadening democratic principles and actions from the previous period, and the emergence of civic innovations that focused on building consensus across interest communities” (4-5).

Johnson argues that “that the new civic organizations, and civic engagement processes established by local government citizen participation programs, blend the democratic virtues of effective participation in democratic institutions with social capital engendering activities.” He suggests that, in Portland, the “potential undemocratic voices of single issue interest groups have been tempered with the development of:

1. “direct, or face-to-face, democratic venues such as neighborhood associations,”
2. “an expanding arena of representative civic bodies, especially citizen advisory committees,”
3. “many and varied citizen participation programs,” and
4. “the creation of innovative civic engagement processes that facilitate both civic engagement opportunities along with social interaction” (3).

Johnson found “that in Portland, civic life evolved since 1960 from a fairly limited array of civic organizations, a narrow cross section of citizens, and limited repertoire of civic actions, all operating within an informal and closed political system, and evolved into a system with a more diverse and innovative range of civic organizations, a broader cross section of citizens, and a more structured, open and democratic political system” (13-14).

While “traditional civic life was defined by charity and community service” “a new more democratic civic life is defined by collaborative decision making through more open democratic processes. Bridging interest representation is not done within organizations so much as it is between organizations.” Johnson also argues that “traditional civic organizations failed to provide a forum for a broader cross section of citizens” and “did not incorporate the new civic players—in particular, women, minorities, and a new cohort of citizen activists.” Johnson maintains that today citizens learn “essential skills for civic participation through interest groups, neighborhood associations, citizen advisory groups, and publicly sponsored citizen participation

processes” (13-14). The new civic organizations also expanded the repertoires of civic actions that are important to and used by civic organization to maintain a “strong civic life” (26).

Johnson suggests that while the research done on Portland by Berry et al (1993) and Witt (2000) “provide in-depth analysis of a particular democratic institutional arrangement,” his study “provides an analysis that is based more on how the entire body of the civic infrastructure and its repertoires of civic actions, influence the capacity of the community to maintain a strong civic life.” Johnson maintains that his study “provides a more sweeping view of changes in Portland’s civic life” by not only including “the direct democratic venues of the neighborhood system,” but also examining “representative or appointed forms of citizen involvement through civic bodies....” (31).

Johnson states that he focuses on “civic infrastructure itself as a key variable” instead of focusing on “individual civic attitudes and behaviors....” as Putnam did. “Notable differences in levels of civic action, or even changes in civic attitudes, may not be the cause of individual preferences as much as the availability of structures, practices, and opportunities that facilitate civic engagement” (34).

In his review of each of the four periods, the largest growth in the number of non-traditional civic associations occurred in 1972 to 1985, which included significant growth in the number of neighborhood associations and the number of citizen advisory committees (as opposed to more traditional city boards and commissions). “Neighborhood activism was at an all-time high. Citizen participation through civic bodies was also at an all time high. Both trends indicate Portland’s expansion of civic

involvement processes had peaked” (118). “Membership on all citizen advisory committees increased. In the 1980s there were almost twice as many appointments to citizen advisory committees and task forces as there were to city commissions and boards” (129).

Johnson suggests that “it seems likely that the increased activity in civic engagement processes that were recognized by the City of Portland slowed down the growth of outside advocacy organizations, as activists become more involved in the formal civic structures.” “Likewise, neighborhood activists who in the 1970s may have operated on their own through informal networks by the 1980s had City-sanctioned associations operating under the umbrella of the City’s Office of Neighborhood Associations” (128).

The 1990s, the last period of the study, was “marked by continued growth of advocacy and social service organizations, accompanied by a small decline in the City of Portland’s investment in the direct democratic structure of neighborhood involvement and representative democratic structures of civic bodies.” Civic innovations emerged “in the public and nonprofit sectors to respond to the complexity of empowered citizen groups,” as did a “need to re-establish community consensus about a common vision for the community” (130).

“Overall the growth of civic bodies in Portland was stagnant between the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, the total number of bodies decreased slightly.” “The number of citizen advisory committees and commissions stayed the same, while boards and task forces decreased. There were 51 fewer citizen advisory committees working on social issues in

the 1990s than in the 1980s. Some committees were created in the 1980s to focus on social issues, such as rising crime rates” (155-156).

Johnson also examines the news coverage of civic associations across the four periods. News coverage of “the actions of neighborhood associations and civic bodies” increased significantly between 1972 and 1985 (128). “News about advocacy organizations in 1999 accounted for 60% of all the news, up 10% since 1985” (134). “From 1985 to 1999, news about advocacy organizations changed dramatically in several ways. The most notable change was a 50% drop in news about neighborhood groups and civic bodies.” “Reports of neighborhood actions were down from 1985 levels, and the news tended to be more negative than positive as some of the City’s formal civic planning processes turned contentious” (155).

Johnson deduces from the “decrease in positive news about neighborhood actions and changes in policy about involving citizens on bureau advisory committees, that the City of Portland pulled back from its wholehearted endorsement of direct democratic processes and the representative form of civic engagement citizen advisory committees” (155-156).

Johnson found in the 1990s a trend of forming new organizations and processes to accommodate multiple-interest communities and stakeholders” (156). The City formed the Taskforce on Neighborhood Involvement to re-examine Portland’s neighborhood involvement system. The Portland Future Focus strategic visioning forum “was created to bring together a cross section of leaders and citizens to create consensus about a vision for the community.” “The Coalition for a Livable Future was created to bridge

progressive interest groups concerned about urban growth management under one umbrella.” “The Johnson Creek Watershed Council, and others like it in the region, were created to bring together citizens, organized groups, and government agencies to build consensus and work together to solve difficult environmental issues” (156).

Johnson summarizes his research by concluding that during the study period “the City of Portland greatly increased the opportunities for a broader cross section of citizens to be involved in public affairs through civic bodies.... In the 1960s, the predominant civic bodies commissions and boards. Starting in the 1970s, citizen advisory committees became more dominant.” Johnson argues “that this change represents a broadening of civic engagement in terms of opportunities and the diversity of citizens involved” (165).

Johnson found that by 1999, “three times as many citizens” were “involved through citizen advisory committees as there were in 1960. On the other hand, there were fewer citizens involved in civic life through city commissions and boards” (166).

Johnson notes “that there was a peak of civic engagement during the 1980s represented by the number of citizen advisory committees and the high number of appointees to all bodies, but especially citizen advisory committees. Johnson recognizes that this corresponds to Witt’s (2000) findings that the City of Portland’s political and monetary investment in its neighborhood involvement program peaked at about this same time, and then declined” (169).

Johnson found that the “City continued large-scale citizen involvement processes into the 1990s (such as the Albina Community Planning Process) and others in outer southeast and southwest Portland, but they were fraught with more contention.” The City

also recognized that the neighborhood system was in need of evaluation in the early 1990s when it convened the Neighborhood Involvement Taskforce. “Since that time, the City has allowed individual bureaus more discretion to decide how to involve citizens, especially neighborhood associations.” “City bureaus continue to draw upon citizen resources, but the more widely used civic structure is the stakeholder committee. While these types of committees still draw upon citizens at large, they are more likely to be populated by established interest groups and professional citizen activists” (169-170).

Johnson finally concludes that “It is difficult to see from this vantage point if the diminished important of face-to-face democratic deliberation through the neighborhood involvement process and the narrowing of representative democracy through citizen advisory committees is a short-term or long-term trend. It is most likely the reflection of a civic infrastructure in need of repair or innovation. With a more diverse population and more empowered citizens and citizen interest groups, finding innovative and democratic institutional arrangement and civic actions is critical for a healthy civic life” (Johnson 170).

**Putnam and Feldstein (2003):** Putnam and Feldstein include a chapter in their book, *Better Together* (2003), in which they look for an explanation for Portland’s strong local tradition of neighborhood activism and civic participation.

Their research showed that in the early 1970s, Portlanders “were no more or less civically engaged than any other Americans” (Putnam and Feldstein 241-242) “but twenty years later, Portlanders of all walks of life were three or four times more likely to be involved in civic life as their counterparts elsewhere in America” (243-244).

The authors ask why Portland became so different than other cities in the 1970s and 1980s. They attribute the difference to: "...institutional innovations that began in the Goldschmidt era;" "...those institutions (epitomized by the Office of Neighborhood Associations) [that] helped sustain and encourage the sort of civic activism that bubbled up from the grass roots in the 1960s in Portland....;" and that "Goldschmidt and his successors in local government seem to have been unusually effective at working with (and struggling with) activists to create innovative channels of access and a new spirit of openness that enabled the community to reach a new level of civic participation" (252-253).

Putnam and Feldstein give a lot of credit to Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt who was elected mayor in 1972 and championed the creation of Portland's formal neighborhood association system. The authors write that Goldschmidt's administration "developed structures that not only supported citizen activism but embedded it in the government's decision-making processes. The most dramatic step in that direction was the creation of the Office of Neighborhood Associations, in 1974." The ordinance that established ONA "spelled out the direct active role of the citizen groups in the process of planning and carrying out government policy..." and gave neighborhood associations the power to "to recommend an action, a policy, or a comprehensive plan to the city and to any city agency on any matter affecting livability of the neighborhood..." ( 247). Goldschmidt also incorporated existing neighborhood association that had been created by community members rather than imposing a city-created system.

The creation of ONA and the neighborhood system “legitimized activism and built it into the official life of the city” (247) “...the city’s unusual engagement with citizens’ groups and the fact that citizen participation is a central feature of how government works have helped civic engagement flourish” (248). They found that “...the willingness of those in power to open the door to citizen influence rather than protect their ‘turf’ is a critical elements of the social-capital story” (248).

Putnam and Feldstein note that Abbott and others have suggested that Portland’s “modest size” and “history of slow growth” made the city “seem manageable and ‘imageable’ as a whole.” They also recognized that Portland was “fairly homogeneous racially and economically” making it easier for “many resident to think of themselves as members of one community and to avoid divisions along lines of race, income, and inner-city-versus suburb that have hindered efforts to unify other cities” (251).

The authors argue that “[t]wo things stand out about the Portland experience: “first, the skill, persistence, and reach of Portland’s activist community, and “second, the evolving capacity of public officials and government to respond and adapt.”

“Where they might have viewed such citizen initiatives as challenges to their competence and authority, stonewalled attempts to make changes, and vilified and dismissed their critics, in Portland government officials have evolved a culture of adaptation and accommodation” (249).

“Just as citizens honed their civic skills and vociferously pressed their views, government developed a culture of responding to and learning from, rather than rejecting, many grassroots initiatives” (249).

“From this ‘call and response’ evolved a pattern of citizen initiatives and government responses, with less of the acrimony, paralysis, and stasis that defeated change and discouraged activists in other cities” (49) Putnam and Feldstein also refer to this as a “virtuous circle” and suggest that, for the most part “the civic dialectic in Portland has led to positive feedback: more grassroots activism has (often through conflict) led to more responsive public institutions, and more response institutions have in turn evoked more activist” (262).

Putnam and Feldstein also found that “a critical mass of citizens is involved in Portland, which has helped make citizen participation the “norm.” The authors write that “it is clear that people participate because that is what many people do in Portland.” They suggest that success breeds success and quote local community activist Mike Roach who said “You see people being successful at it, you have visible proof that it can be done” (255). They also quote a former ONA employee who suggests that, of the 90 neighborhood associations “thirty of them are very active, thirty somewhat active, and thirty ‘moribund.’” Putnam and Feldstein attribute this partly to the “normal ebb and flow of galvanizing issue and the life cycles of organizations run by volunteers.” They also suggest that the extent to which activity in neighborhood associations in Portland may be decreasing may also “signal a shift toward membership in special-interest groups” as documented by Johnson (2002).

Looking ahead, Putnam and Feldstein identify some challenges for Portland’s participatory democracy system. They found that while people “who have been deeply involved in civic affairs know one another and are comfortable contacting one another to

a greater degree there than in larger and more divided cities,” some people in Portland are not, such as East Portland residents and other minority and outlying neighborhoods “are not part of that community of mutual acquaintance.” Making these civic connections is particularly challenging for “a low-income, ethnically diverse population not usually included in the process” (263-264). Putnam and Feldstein quote another Portland community activist who reports that, in his experience, people who are persistent about showing up and finding out who the decision makers are, are likely to find Portland’s community to be remarkably open. People who are less outgoing and determined may find that the system seems “closed or actually is closed.” He notes that having a voice in regional issues that can affect a neighborhood can be challenging and “requires sustained community involvement in lengthy city processes.” He suggested that, in these cases, often “access is a smaller problem for citizens than finding the stamina to stay engaged in multiple issues” for the time span required to have an impact (264).

The authors quote another long-time neighborhood activists who says that she and others have been fighting “to redefine what citizen participation means” in Portland. She said that while neighborhood associations have had some “success in getting a required meeting with developers at the beginning of the process,” “We at the neighborhood level need to be more sophisticated.” “It’s not enough just to say, ‘Don’t do it.’” She suggests that the blame for problems in citizen involvement is divided between “a city government inclined toward pro forma consultation” and “residents who need to participate more energetically and constructively in the process.” She said she sees “politicians failing to live up to earlier ideals of participation: ‘Goldschmidt wasn’t afraid of the people. He

knew if you explain what you want to do, people will allow you to do it. I don't think we've got leadership like that now" (264-265).

Putnam and Feldstein argue that while many things are going right about citizen participation in Portland, people who do not share the dominant progressive, "shared vision of a livable city in a healthy environment" "tend to be marginalized (and sometimes marginalize themselves)." They argue that the "process of widening the circle of engagement beyond homogeneous 'small-town' Portland has a way to go." Other challenges include "an influx of new immigrants who may not share the values of the 1970s and early 1980s" and increasing conflict over neighborhoods that are being changed by increased housing density as a consequence of the Portland area's Urban Growth Boundary and growth management policies (265).

Other tensions that have sprung up partly "from the success of the last thirty years that have made [Portland] an attractive place to live" include increasing housing prices that make affordable housing harder to find; and the gentrification of some neighborhoods that has made it "difficult for low-income residents, and principally renters, to stay in their homes." This has led to "some migration of lower-income Portlanders to the east and north" of the city. "They have been joined there by new immigrants to the area, many Southeast Asian and, recently Hispanic, sometimes with a limited grasp of English." Putnam and Feldstein write that Portland "is still at an early stage of dealing with its relatively new diversity issues" (266-267).

Putnam and Feldstein also recognized a real shift in Portland's neighborhood politics. They refer to Johnson's (2002) analysis of news stories about local issues in

1985 and 1999. “In 1985, 75% of the news about neighborhood action was positive. Neighborhood associations were described as saving neighborhoods, hosting block parties, and involved in positive encounters with government through sanctioned planning processes.” “In the 1999 news, the opposite was true” (267-268).

Putnam and Feldstein conclude their review of Portland’s experience by stating that the “greatest danger for Portland may be a new ‘tipping point,’ where privatism and skepticism about the responsiveness of government become the norm and positive reinforcement of the habits of participation and cooperation begins to diminish.” “If Portland is to maintain its uncommon level of citizen engagement, its officials and civic-minded activists cannot simply decry the forces of privatism; they need to find a way to bring into ‘the process’ more of the people who are antitax and antigovernment but are nevertheless citizens of Portland. Whatever the outcome, the future of civic engagement in Portland, like that of its past thirty years, will be well worth watching” (268).

**Public Participation and Planning in Portland:** Hovey (2003) and Irazábal (2005) both studied specific aspects of community involvement in land use planning in Portland.

Hovey (2003) explores how Portland developed its “deserved reputation for good city planning and strong citizen participation.” To discover how Portland was “able to combine strong planning with strong citizen participation to create a better city?” Hovey examines the process and dynamics of the development of the Northwest District Plan (1969-77) and the Southwest Community Plan (1994-2001). Hovey suggests that Portland’s achievements in and structure for planning and participation are the “cultural

product of the concerted mobilization of meaning through the use of language in planning, organizing, democratizing, and institutionalizing these practices” (140). His research provides interesting insights into the formation of Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system and into the tensions that arise between community members and city planners when they try to work together to shape local planning policies.

Hovey recognizes that “Portland has constructed an extensive system of citizen participation, in all aspects of governance but especially in planning” and that “Portland has a dense and active citywide system of neighborhood associations on which citizens rely and city government supports.” Hovey found that Portlanders have a pervasive “expectation that citizens will be involved in full and fair discussion about decisions that affect their city and their neighborhoods” and that this expectation “conditions a political life that is, in relative terms at least, open and deliberative” (140). Hovey asserts that the two processes he examines and the “stories of citizens and planners in Portland” show that Portlanders “made their city by talking” and by their collective participation in many different planning processes (141).

NW District Plan (1969-77): Hovey asserts that the process that created the Northwest District Plan significantly shaped both Portland’s approach to urban planning and helped lay the foundation for Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system.

Hovey reports that in the late 1960s city planners proposed clearing 16 blocks of an older, mixed neighborhood in northwest Portland around Good Samaritan Hospital.

Community activists quickly organized to oppose this plan and, in 1969, formed the Northwest District Association (NWDA), which was to become one of Portland's early and most influential neighborhood associations.

Community activists, working through the NWDA, convinced the City Council to authorize a process to develop a plan for the larger neighborhood before any smaller plan should go forward. NWDA activists, with help from "sympathetic planning staffers," proceeded to develop their own plan for their neighborhood. Community members and city planners together used many of the tools of professional planning and community outreach, including "conducting research, holding community meetings, formulating goals, crafting policy language, drafting a full plan, distributing thousands of copies, and vetting it with the community at large" (143).

Hovey says the records of the NW District Plan process "tell the story of a concerted critique of orthodox ideas in planning, the assertion of democratic rights for neighborhood territories, the challenge to professional prerogatives in planning, and ultimately the formulation of a new set of orthodoxies about what makes a good city." In opposition to the urban renewal thinking of the time, the Northwest District Plan developed and celebrated ideas, "vocabulary and concepts" that have "permeated Portland planning since then." "The importance of mixed uses, the possibility of mixed incomes, the importance of transit, the need for walkable streets and local retail services, the importance of density, the value of older buildings, and perhaps most important of all, the importance of strong citizen participation—all of these ideas gained local currency in Northwest and went forward in practice, policy, and rule" (147). Community members

and city planning staff released the proposed Northwest District Plan in 1972. The City Council adopted the community-generated plan for the neighborhood in 1972.

Hovey asserts that the legacy of the work of community activists and city planners on the NW District Plan “is multifold.” “They helped produce new ideas about city planning.” “They forced city leaders and planning bureaucrats to accommodate neighborhood plans within the structure of municipal law and administrative practices.” “They also contributed greatly to the creation of a permanent citywide structure of citizen participation through neighborhood associations” (146).<sup>23</sup>

*SW Community Plan (SWCP)*: Hovey reports that, nearly 30 years later, in the mid 1990s, the Southwest Community Plan became the “apogee” of the trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s toward greater friction between city planners and community activists “over the imposition of regulation stemming from the evolving growth management policy” for the Portland region (142).

In the early 1990s, community activists concerned about “the impact of unplanned growth on Southwest Portland” had convinced the City Council to initiate a district-wide

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<sup>2</sup> City planning staff cited the success of the Northwest District planning effort to help support their proposal to the Planning Commission, in 1971, to create a citywide system of community-based district planning organizations. This proposal then led to a subsequent task force report that proposed the creation of ONA and Portland’s neighborhood association system. (Portland. Planning Commission. *Proposal for a City Policy Statement on District Planning*. April 14, 1971.)

<sup>3</sup> Hovey also notes that a number of individuals who were involved in community activism in northwest Portland and the NWDA in the 1960s and 1970s went on to play influential roles in shaping Portland. Ogden Beeman chaired the 1972 DPO Task Force that proposed the structure for Portland’s neighborhood system. Mary Pedersen served as the executive director of the NWDA, and, in 1973, was hired to lead the effort to develop the 1974 Ordinance that create ONA and the Portland’s formal neighborhood system, and served as the first ONA director from 1973 to 1979. Margaret Strachan was a founding staffer of the NWDA and went on to serve as a city council member. Bud Clark and Vera Katz both went on to serve as mayors of Portland (Hovey 2003 146).

planning process for Southwest Portland.<sup>4</sup> City planners began to collect “base data and began an extensive process of public outreach.” In 1995 and 1996 “planning staff worked with neighborhood associations, one at a time, to create neighborhood plans.” Hovey argues that planners were working to implement the regional growth management policy framework, which sought to achieve a “denser, busier, more urban Southwest” Portland. Hovey says this ran up against the “citizens prevailing vision” for southwest Portland that “was very similar to what Southwest already was: an ordinary postwar suburb made bucolic by steep hills and tall conifers.”

In the summer of 1996, city planners “produced a ‘Draft Discussion Map’ that translated prevailing policies and growth concepts into a proposed zoning map for all of Southwest” (149). In response, “Five hundred angry residents showed up to a high school cafeteria that fall and turned a scheduled ‘workshop’ into a protest rally.” Community pressure forced city planners to negotiate a new process “with neighborhood association representatives under which residents would be allowed to propose their own zoning and that promised them ‘no surprises’” (150).

In 1998, community members submitted their “vision, policies, zoning map and action items.” City planners reviewed these products and proposed hundreds of amendments. Hovey says the “planners saw themselves simply as doing their job of interpreting adopted policy,” but “Citizens saw them as renegeing on a deal.” “In the anger and confusion that followed, the Planning Commission voted to suspend the plan.” Community members wanted to finish the plan “if for no other reasons than that the

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<sup>4</sup> The Southwest Community Plan was the fourth in a series of community plans (the early community plans were the Central City Plan, Albina Plan, Outer SE Plan) that city planners were using as their approach to updating Portland’s Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan already in place allowed for higher housing densities than they wanted.” However, “battered planning staff,” an “exhausted Planning Commission,” and ‘wary City Council” members resisted resuming the process (151).

In late 1998, community members regrouped under the auspices of the southwest neighborhood district coalition (Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI)). They “reined in their most militant members, and refined their list of demands to include only issues of the greatest importance” (151). It took a year to negotiate a new planning process with the City. Hovey notes that the “political context and policy ground had shifted beneath the SWCP.” The planning director had stepped down and Mayor Katz had taken over responsibility for the Planning Bureau. The City also was under pressure from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect fish that spawned in streams in southwest Portland. Oregon voters also had approved a statewide “property takings” ballot measure (Measure 7) that required local jurisdictions to pay land owners or waive regulations that reduced property values. The “city moved quickly to close the deal with Southwest.” The new zoning map for southwest Portland included “little up-zoning or residential density and some down-zoning in environmentally sensitive areas.” “[N]early seven and a half years after they had begun—the plan was adopted by City Council” (151).

Hovey asserts that “It might be fair to say that the SWCP had a major impact on the Portland way of planning—it was the bureau’s ‘Vietnam’—but just as fair to say that the impact was absorbed.” He said city planners seemed to have “learned some lessons about the limits of administration and the persistence of politics” (153). The City of Portland’s approach to involving the community in planning changed significantly after

the SWCP. City planners ended the program to work with neighborhood associations to create/update neighborhood plans. City planners also decided not to do any more community district plans. Instead they focused their efforts on planning projects for specific target areas and in areas where they were wanted by the community.

Hovey notes that, like the community activists in northwest Portland in the late 1960s and early 1970s, community activists in southeast Portland used a wide variety of policy, analysis and community organizing tools and strategies to challenge city planning policies and to craft “alternative policy language that detailed their emerging vision at the same time as it exposed the flaws of logic in what the city present” (151).

Hovey found that community members had “been very adept at constructing the kind of discursive spaces necessary to conduct their public conversation about the character of the city. Hovey asserts that strong democracy requires places for public discourse. “Contesting the terms of a dominant order” require the conditions and protocols for discourse” and “places for the conduct of what Barber called ‘strong democratic talk.’” Hovey states that without “some place to gather, some way to come together, some means to communicate, there is effectively, no public at all” (160). Hovey describes how in both the NW District Plan and the SWCP, community members made very good use of a number of different forums and strategies to create discursive spaces, including: public hearings, community committee meetings, house meetings, ‘neighborhood public meetings,’ neighborhood associations (162-163), community newspapers, and email listservs (164-166).

Hovey also notes that the citywide, formal system of recognized neighborhood associations provided community activists with ready-made organizing vehicles for which they did “not have to demand recognition or create the protocols by which they would participate” (164). He asserts that “The neighborhood association and all the discursive practices it supports are nothing if not structural. They are more or less a permanent part of the civic architecture of Portland, and they were created from the ground up” (162-163).

Hovey cautions that “The dilemma of institutionalization is inescapable. Without institutional foundations, any movement may wither. Given institutional support, any movement may ossify” (164). Hovey observes that after the SWCP, some people “charged that neighborhood associations have too much power in Portland. They say they bring a parochial and fragmentary perspective to policy making and give too much emphasis to homeowner issues to the neglect of broader environmental or social justice concerns” (163). Hovey maintains, however, that in Portland “there is an established time, place, and protocol for discussing issues of concern to residents” and there also is “a structure for aggregating those concerns to the citywide level when necessary.” He adds that “there are organs of communication as well as forms of deliberation” which ensure that “there is always some kind of clearly defined ‘space’ for these discussions to take place” (164).

Hovey recognizes that “While professional and citizen work have often gone hand in hand in Portland, there has also been great tension between the two.” “On the ground in Portland, the tension can be felt in the interactions of elected policy makers,

professional planners, and active citizens” (166). Hovey says these tensions are not simple. “They can be felt in the ongoing relationship between established policy and current planning activity, in the contest between rationality based in the professions and reason grounded in the polity at large, and in the disputes over the relative legitimacy of the status of office holders, bureaucrats, and citizens as participants in a public process and as representatives of others” (166).

Hovey identifies the center of the tension as “a conflict between planning and policy.” He asserts that community members “have privileged planning over policy because planning tends to offer democratic control over decisions that will apply here and now and in the immediate future.” In contrast, he asserts that “Planners prefer policy, and its stepchild regulation, because they promise the general application of favored principles predictably over time and space” (148). Hovey states that “Both planning and policy have derived from participation but planning is fluid and favors current participants. Policy, by comparison, is solid and fixed and gives more weight to past participants.” “The professionals prefer planning as the application of established policy.” “Citizens want to plan their neighborhood the way they want it to be, taking into consideration local circumstances and expressing community values” (149).

Another “axis of tension,” according to Hovey, are “competing claims to legitimacy from representatives of various sorts versus citizens participating directly in planning and policy making” (168). Community members, Hovey says, they have a “relative advantage...in establishing their legitimacy” over the “poor planning bureaucrat.” When a community member speaks out “it is clear to listeners that there may

be others who share their views.” When “they testify on issues in their own neighborhood, they implicitly claim to speak about things they know and care about more than people from some other part of the city.” Hovey says many people already had low opinions of elected officials. City staff maintained that they were just implementing existing policy and claimed to represent the “broader public interest.” City staff believed those policies “had a stronger claim to their loyalty than the seemingly more transient impulses generated by some citizens in a single planning process” (168).

Another tension identified by Hovey was over the very different role of city planners in working with the community on the SWCP versus the Northwest District Plan. Planners who worked on the SWCP had claimed “to represent special knowledge and skill in decision making” and maintained that “the tough technical work involving data collection and analysis, alternatives generation and evaluation, and especially mapping and zoning was reserved for the professionals.” This contrasted with the planners who worked with community members on the Northwest District Plan. “[T]heir own philosophical commitment was to democratize and demystify planning knowledge.” Hovey says they also “considered themselves working for the neighborhood and its desires, not the city and its policies” (169).

Tensions also arose over “who really represented the neighborhood.” City commissioners and city planners challenged neighborhood association activists with this question both the Northwest District Plan and the SWCP processes. Hovey noted that the “NWDA in 1969 was an ad hoc assembly of certainly fewer than a hundred active members” and the neighborhood associations that fought the SWCP “were no bigger”

although they were claiming to represent “neighborhoods with populations of two to five or ten thousand people.” Hovey says that when city leaders and staff asked ““How do we know you represent the entire neighborhood?”” community activists responded in effect, ““How do you know we don’t”” (169)?

Citizen advisory committees were another source of tension identified by Hovey. Portland city commissioners commonly appoint “citizen advisory committees” to advise the City on issues and projects. City leaders and planning staff in Portland used community advisory committees for many planning projects. In cases, like the SWCP, “citizen advisory committees became the target for activist opposition.” Community activists charged that the “members of such bodies were not representative of the community” but rather “were representatives of the elected officials that appointed them.” Southwest community activists “insisted that the only true representatives would be ones chosen by the neighborhood, not by the [city] commissioner.” Hovey reports that the SWCP Citizen Advisory Committee set up by the City ultimately was “hounded out of existence.” Community activists created their own “Summit Group of neighborhood associations as the ostensibly true representative body of the district.” Community involvement policies finally adopted by the City Council as part of the SWCP “stipulated that neighborhood associations would have more to say in the constitution of such bodies in the future” (169-170).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The final SWCP included a number of policies related to community involvement that specifically respond to problems, tensions, and conflict that occurred during the SWCP process. These policies are described in more detail in the chapter below that discusses increasing conflict between neighborhood and community activists and city leaders and staff in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Hovey answers his initial research question—How had Portland “been able to combine strong planning with strong citizen participation to create a better city?—by first recognizing that Portland “had a highly educated middle-class population, few minorities and little racial conflict, a beautiful natural environment surrounding [the] city, and a Progressive political culture unsullied by Eastern-style machines.” He also accepts that the “analysis of interest, the alignment of power blocs, or the machinations of political entrepreneurs” can explain to some extent how Portland urban planning and community involvement evolved and led to the “legend” of Portland planning.

Hovey, however, argues that the real answer is that Portlanders actively created their urban planning and community involvement culture through “continuing and repetitive acts of agency on the part of thousands of the inhabitants of Portland” (172-173).

Hovey concludes by saying:

“This is what makes the Portland regime so sturdy and adaptable. It is built from the ground up in the meanings of place, community, democracy, and planning. It is mobilized in discrete practices of public deliberation, policy making, planning, and regulation. It is perpetuated through organizations, public and private, that carry out these practices over time, like machines that produce the underlying meanings of the regime going forward. And it is installed in the city, providing a constant reminder of what the regime has created and what it stands for. Yet what permeates the entire structure, and what is at the root of all the attempts to change it, is what the people have to say” (173).

Irazábal (2005) chose to study Portland and Curitiba because “both cities are considered successful in the management of urban growth, the design of urban form, and the improvement of urban livability,” “both play crucial roles in the development of their metropolitan areas”, and “both seem to have achieved those goals using very different

means” (3). Irazábal, like Hovey, studied the Southwest Community Plan process. She considers the question of whether Portland has too much public process and concludes that rather than too much process, city planners did not do a good job of administering their efforts to involve the community in the SWCP. Irazábal offers a useful assessment of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the efforts of city planners to involve the community in decision making and identifies some important challenges for future planning and community involvement in Portland.

Irazábal argues that “visionary, broad-based, and continuous leadership; comprehensive, coordinated, and enforced urban policies and plans; and empowering, inclusive, and sustained citizen involvement” generate a “unique synergy” (3). She found that both Curitiba and Portland “have had strong leadership and effective urban policies and plans (governing agendas).” “Yet these cities have had some problems at the level of citizen involvement—either by deficit or excess of it, respectively, or by the mismanagement of those participatory processes—which have tampered with some of their planning experiences or have put their models of governance at risk” (4).

Irazábal argues that “citizen participation is considered an imperative for good governance in democratic societies, ensuring an open and legitimate relationship between civil society and the state.” She claims, however, “that there is an adequate level of citizen involvement that better promotes effective democratic planning—too much can entangle the process of decision-making and implementation, and too little can delegitimize the planning process” (136).

She warns, however, that “a rapid examination of certain planning processes in Portland may deceptively lead one to argue that the city has become an example of the former extreme. Indeed, there have been instances in which extensive, confrontational citizen participation has made significantly more difficult, or has altogether caused the demise of, some planning initiatives.” Irazábal argues that “the causes of planning entanglements in the city have been subtler and more complex than the ones derived from the mere scale of the participatory process (quantitative issue), to encompass the appropriate management of citizen involvement and power struggles among different stakeholders (qualitative issues)” (136).

Irazábal describes the evolution of Portland’s neighborhood involvement system and notes that the relationship between the city and its neighborhoods was “marked by alienation on both sides in the late 1990s.” She quotes City Commissioner Dan Saltzman who acknowledged in a newspaper interview at the time that ‘from a neighborhood perspective, a lot of them feel that the city isn’t listening to them. On the internal, city side, the perception is that all they [neighborhood groups] are is against something; they’re seen as more of an obstacle than an ally’” (158).

Like Hovey, Irazábal also examines—the Southwest Community Plan (SWCP) process and the siting process for the Southwest Community Center (SWCC)--“as emblematic examples at both the city and the neighborhood levels of the planning and architectural scales of the recent difficulties that participatory planning has faced in Portland.” She finds that these processes challenge both the “urban programs and the trust among all planning stakeholders in the city” (159).

Irazábal found that these cases “demonstrate that the critical planning problems occurred not because there was too much citizen involvement, but because there was an inappropriate administration of the processes for citizen participation that alienated trust and hindered collaboration among stakeholders, and promoted the adversarial, counter-productive planning climate I have described” (169).

Irazábal found that the response of Portland city leaders and planners showed their willingness to listen to the community and adjust their processes. The SWCP experience also yielded positive citywide impacts. “First and most importantly, it prompted a reevaluation of planning processes in the city and the role of all stakeholders within a participatory decision-making model.” Portland’s Planning Bureau abandoned large-scale community planning after the difficult experience with the SWCP. Mayor Vera Katz asked for an update of Portland’s 9-year-old strategic plan warning that “the city’s push to contain sprawl through higher housing density was alienating too many neighborhoods.” Former Mayor Neil Goldschmidt, an important champion of downtown revitalization and neighborhood involvement in the 1970s, said Portland needed to put the vision back into planning. Irazábal quotes Goldschmidt saying that “the goal should be to move toward ‘a unifying theology, a distilled and acute sense of what the fundamentals are’” (170-171).

Some of the issues raised by community members during the SWCP process had citywide and regional relevance, and city and regional planners responded by undertaking a number of initiatives to address stormwater management, tree preservation and

planting, accessory dwelling units, urban land standards, and system development charges for transportation and parks” (169).

Irazábal identified some of the factors she believed were causing difficulties and conflict in planning processes in Portland. She noted that Portland’s population had grown and was changing. More young people were moving to Portland, educational attainment was up, and more significantly, “the population is also diversifying in racial and ethnic terms.” She suggested that neighborhood disputes could be “an indirect reflection” of the psychological impacts on people of increase density and other changes in their community (173-174).

Irazábal suggests that the “ability to build and maintain consensus about the future becomes more challenging as Portland continues to attract a more ethnically and economically varied population, and urbanizable land becomes scarcer” (175). She notes that “Until today, the majority of new residents in Portland have been middle-class whites who move to the area for its environmental and urban benefits. This homogeneity has contributed to easing the way for building agreements” (175).

The author also found that “In Portland, the increasing diversity of the population poses challenges of maintaining equity in the region” (175). “Equity concerns in Portland include alleviating and deconcentrating poverty, redressing disparities of resource allocation among jurisdictions within the region, improving access to jobs, economic opportunities, training, education, health, and affordable housing” (176).

Irazábal recommends that “If Portland is to move towards a physical and social environment of equity, planning will have to tackle several important challenges. These

include the ability to maintain a long-term planning vision and the development of an ethos of solidarity in the region, a commitment to address disparities among regions in the state and metropolitan areas, and the development of a regional economic and community development strategy.” She suggested that “Those who administer the planning process need to have the ability to create, recreate, and not lose sight of a long-term planning vision and the development of an ethos of solidarity in the region” (178-179).

Irazábal notes that “...the role of citizens has been substantial in pressuring leaders to include their values and concerns into the plans, giving feedback on how the process was developing and evidencing flaws and strengths (through participation in committees, meetings, surveys, workshops, etc.), supporting in elections and demonstrations, and through the sheer appropriation of the city’s public spaces” (180).

Irazábal states that the “balancing interaction “between leaders and citizens, however imperfect, has continually managed to forge the required levels of support for the programs to proceed, even if through unstable consensus.” She notes that the SWCP, “one of the most ambitious planning projects since the central city plan,” was delayed because city planners gave citizen input “less attention than it deserved.” She says this experience “suggests, on the one hand, that Portlanders have become very empowered agents of planning, to the point of having the capacity to halt a major plan if they feel it is not appropriate; on the other hand, Portlanders have become very sophisticated at discerning and selecting the adequate treatment and consideration they aspire for in their

participations. The experience also demonstrates that city planners and elected officials in Portland have shown good will at learning and adjusting through the process” (183-184).

Irazábal illustrates some of the challenges for community involvement in planning in Portland by quoting Tasha Harmon, a housing affordability activist in Portland.

Harmon grants that the “planning experience in Portland is a lot better than the experience in a lot of other communities.” Harmon cautions, however, that “it’s still very top down, and very bureaucratic in a lot of ways...and there is never enough time given to building trust, building communication, and allowing people to talk to each other about what their conflicts are.” Equity issues “often get left out of the equation,” according to Harmon, “until somebody comes screaming about it, and then it doesn’t get resolved in the way in which we would like it to” (184).

Irazábal finds that, fortunately, “city and planning officials have recognized their responsibility in the inappropriate management of some of these processes, and have shown a will to rectify and make efforts to reverse stagnant and adversarial citizen involvement in the future.” She believes that citizens, for their part, will have to keep on making efforts to engage in meaningful participation, overcome selfish NIMBY attitudes, collaborate in the construction of a metropolitan vision, and recuperate the passion and trust that for decades had characterized their participation in planning processes” (184).

Finally Irazábal suggests that planning officials and institutions “will have to share a balance of power with citizens,” and should “humbly but wisely (re)locate themselves, both mentally and practically, as facilitators rather than experts in planning processes, and fully and respectfully accept and incorporate the community at the highest

levels of participation—the ‘power’ level (as expressed in Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation”). They should avoid manipulation or alienation of citizens and groups.” She also identifies a need to “develop strategies to ensure and strengthen the continuation of the participatory process.” She suggests that one immediate challenge is the encouragement of “under-represented citizens to be involved in existing civic forums and help create new ones as necessary” (184-185).

### What do I Expect to See in My Case Study of Portland’s Citywide Community

#### Involvement System?

My research will examine the forty-year history of Portland community and neighborhood involvement system from the early 1970s to 2013. I will continue the work of Abbott, Witt, and Johnson by adding documentation and analysis of the evolution of Portland’s system from 2000 to 2013. I will draw on the many system evaluations and reviews that occurred during that period as well as the substance and dynamics of major policy changes implemented. I believe that, over time, these sources provide a good indicator of what Portlanders believe are the important factors required to move their community toward greater participatory democracy .

My review of the general literature around participatory democracy as well as the Portland-specific literature helps define what I might expect to find in my review of Portland’s more recent history with neighborhood and community involvement.

I expect to find continued support for basic elements identified by Berry, Portney and Thomson and others, including:

- Existence of citywide structure of independent neighborhood and community organizations that serve as standing, available organizing vehicles for community members.
- Early warning and notification programs to ensure earlier involvement of community members in city decision making.
- Structural sanctions and rewards for city administrators who work with neighborhood groups.
- Control over some funding resources—through direct funding or grant programs.
- Resources to support broad communication and outreach by community organizations to community residents.
- Leadership training and skill building
- Technical support and organizational support
- Dispute resolution services
- Mechanisms to channel evolving and existing community activists into other city government participation structures.

I expect to see community interest in greater involvement in the City budget process and neighborhood planning activities--two areas of decision-making that have a great impact on the community, as well as other mechanisms by which community members can express their priorities to city government officials and staff.

I anticipate a continued need for paid staffing in the community to be able to support neighborhood associations and other community groups in developing the

capacity to be effective at identifying and pursuing their own goals in the community and in working effectively in city government decision-making processes. Witt poses the question of whether the independent, community-governed, district coalition model will survive that takeover of two of the district offices. The future of this model is not clear from the past research. Part of the answer will depend on how ONI and city government treat the district coalitions and part will turn on the capacity and interest of community members in making these bodies function effectively.

I anticipate that my research will support the importance of incorporating into Portland's neighborhood and community involvement efforts Smock's core features of urban community organizing initiatives:

- Building individual capacity—developing local leaders
- Building community capacity—networks and social capital
- Building a community governance structure (democratic governance structures that allow members of a community to make collective decisions)
- Diagnosing and framing the community's problems
- Taking collective action for community change (Smock 6)

I also expect that the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood association model, as identified by Smock, will be validated. A key question is whether ONI and the district coalitions can work together to compensate for the weaknesses and help ensure that neighborhood associations can avoid the dangers identified by Fung, who found that the complexities of some issues overwhelm community groups and that social conflict,

internal factions, and lethargy can undermine their effectiveness and ability to operate in democratic and fair ways.

I also expect to see neighborhood associations and other community groups having more power over citywide policies if they band together in the “nested structures” Putnam and Feldstein describe or through the creation of a “supra-local infrastructure of well-networked organizations” and “an overarching ideological framework that challenges society’s dominant economic and political arrangements” as recommended by Smock. I expect that any opportunities for community leaders to come together and build relationships and discuss issues will help magnify community power—similar to the value of bringing community organizers together as described by Smock and the city-wide neighborhood and community alliances in Los Angeles as described by Cooper.

Portland’s population continues to grow more diverse. I anticipate ever greater demands from people who are not well-integrated into Portland’s traditional neighborhood system for expansion of the system to better serve their needs and interests and increase the equity of access by all Portlanders to economic opportunity, education, housing, and the opportunity to shape their community and influence local decision making—a move already anticipated by the 1995 Task Force for Neighborhood Involvement. This transition would be in line with the research by Chaskin, Smock, and others that suggests that effective community organizing and involvement needs to recognize that communities are made up of a fabric of different types of organizations and are better served by an acceptance of this rather than the older style approach that anticipated that most people’s needs could be served through the traditional

neighborhood association model. Putnam and Feldstein argue that people are more likely to get involved in groups that include people they have something in common with and feel comfortable with (bonding social capital). Putnam and Felstein emphasize, however, that community groups need to develop relationships across boundaries between them to leverage the bridging social capital that generates greater political power and efficacy. I also expect to see that the more diverse communities in Portland become, the more challenging it will be to bring people in those diverse communities together to build both bonding and bridging social capital.

I also expect to see Kingdon's theories about public agenda setting supported by the Portland experience in successfully advancing needed reforms--or in the lack of progress. I expect to see continued strong connections between the presence of a strong political champion and the ability to enact reforms. I also expect to see policy entrepreneurs—both in the community and within government—play a valuable role in laying the groundwork for reforms by raising, developing, and championing policy proposals in anticipation of a “policy window” opening given them the chance to move their ideas forward. I also expect to see perceived crises and studies used to highlight the need for reforms and playing an important role in getting participatory democracy reforms on the public agenda.

As suggested by Gibson, Cooper, Stone, and Fernandez and Rainey, I also anticipate that meaningful progress toward participatory democracy will require a change in the willingness and ability of city leaders and staff to work collaboratively with the community. As many researchers have suggested, this likely will take a major and

intentional effort to change the culture of city government. I assume, as in Los Angeles and elsewhere, that most city leaders and staff will continue to be more comfortable with a top-down orientation to carrying out their duties. I anticipate that little progress will be made at changing the culture of local government without a clear vision, strategy, mechanisms, and political support in place to make it this happen.