Nonprofit and Resident Collaboratives: An Alternative Model for Community Participation in Planning?

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Land Tenure Center

NONPROFIT AND RESIDENT COLLABORATIVES: AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING?

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ABSTRACT

Attempts to encourage and institutionalize citizen participation in planning are fraught with tensions between democratic participation and professional expertise; the reconciliation of local or group interests with larger, citywide interests; process versus outcome; and so on. Who participates, why, on whose terms, how, and with what consequences for themselves, their neighborhoods, the decision process, and outcomes, have been the subject of numerous studies. In this context, a distinction has emerged between mere citizen involvement in planning initiated by public agencies to grassroots and bottom-up planning that originates from within neighborhoods and citizen groups and whose decisions are adopted by public agencies.

Through a case study based in Madison, Wisconsin, this paper identifies an institutional alternative that addresses some of the tensions related to community participation in planning and the problems associated with collaboration: a resident-nonprofit collaborative within a larger urban context facilitative of neighborhood planning. The paper provides a brief overview of the process, identifies lessons from this process for community participation and grassroots planning, and places this experience in the larger debates on participation. It discusses the value of resident-nonprofit collaboratives within the comparative framework of alternative forms of community participation. A concluding section discusses the implications of these findings for planning practice.

NONPROFIT AND RESIDENT COLLABORATIVES: AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING?[1]

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The literature on community planning is replete with discussions on the importance of and rationales for community participation in planning, its historical development and forms, factors contributing to its success and failure, and how and why institutional players facilitate or undermine participation in planning (Altshuler 1970; Boyte 1980; Burke 1968; Cahn and Passett 1971; Gittell 1980; Tauxe 1995; Julian et al. 1997; Beatley, Brower, and Lucy 1994; Halpern 1995; Fainstein 1990; among others). Tensions abound in attempts to encourage and institutionalize participation. These include the tensions between democratic participation and professional expertise; the mediation of local (or parochial) interests with possibly conflicting larger, citywide interests; process versus outcome focus (or getting the job done versus the need to bring people along); the need for autonomy on the part of neighborhoods over developments therein versus the need to build legitimacy and relevance of citywide agencies; and so on.

Who participates, why, on whose terms, how, and with what consequences for themselves, their neighborhoods, the decision process, and outcomes, have been the subject of numerous studies. Advocacy for participation in these studies has varied based on the perspective and persuasion of the proponents: from the complete separation of communities seeking a measure of self-reliance and identity to efforts to stem violence and promote stability without significant changes to the overall system. In this context, a distinction has emerged between mere citizen participation or involvement in planning initiated by public agencies to grassroots or bottom-up planning that stems from neighborhoods and citizen groups (Arnstein 1969; Boyte 1980; Staples 1984; and others).

The Community Action Programs in the 1960s and the Community Development Corporations (CDCs) of the 1980s are two variations on the theme of guiding planning according to the needs and wishes of neighborhoods. One recent avatar of grassroots planning is the community development collaborative, the coming together of public, nonprofit, and private interests to engage in community development activities. The impetus for community collaboratives has come from many sources and includes the need for comprehensiveness of interventions, reducing duplication of services, and increasing the effectiveness of the policy advocacy and fund-raising capacities of individual organizations (Pitt 1997; Glickman and Nye 1996; Glickman and Servon 1997). Increasingly private foundations and other funders of community development activities are looking for collaboration among CDCs.

This study is about one such collaborative-based and community-initiated planning process in Madison, Wisconsin. It is different from the collaboratives discussed above—the subject of much recent literature—in that it was developed as a response to a crisis around land and land use in a particular neighborhood and specific, at least for now, to this particular project rather than to one more common to larger cities and addressing general community development in distressed areas. Different from collaboratives to enhance service delivery, fund-raising, or advocacy capacities, this project brought together neighborhood residents (and their organizations) and community-based nonprofits to address mutual interests in a particular piece of state-owned land that was under threat of being sold.

Through a case study, this paper raises propositions related to participation in the context of general government devolution and the current activities of local nonprofits to increase their capacity and effectiveness. It identifies an institutional alternative that addresses some of the tensions related to community participation in planning and the problems associated with collaboration. A single case study, this research cannot make claims of transferability of these propositions in other contexts. Hence the propositions are offered as hypotheses in need of further study. Nonetheless, the lessons from the process and the contextual analysis are useful in their own rights; they are offered in the spirit of the new planning paradigm that is concerned less with transferability than with identifying best practices (Turner 1996).

The paper is organized in two major sections. The first provides a brief overview of the process as it unfolded, the players, and its significance for them. The second identifies lessons from this process for community participation and grassroots planning and places this experience in the larger debates on participation. It discusses the value of resident-nonprofit collaboratives within the comparative framework of alternative forms of community participation. A concluding section discusses the implications for planning practice.
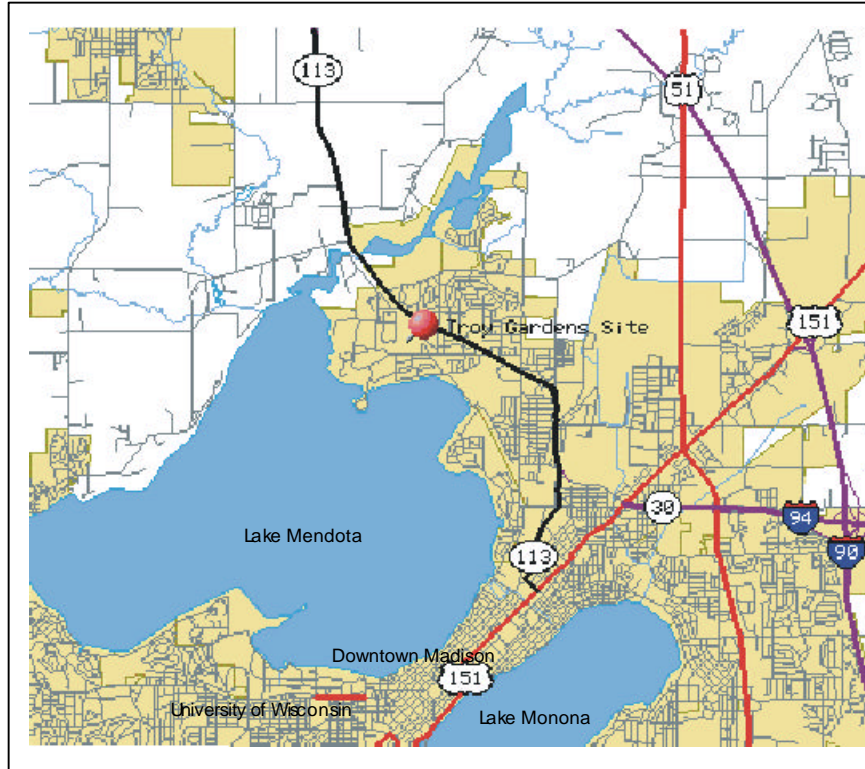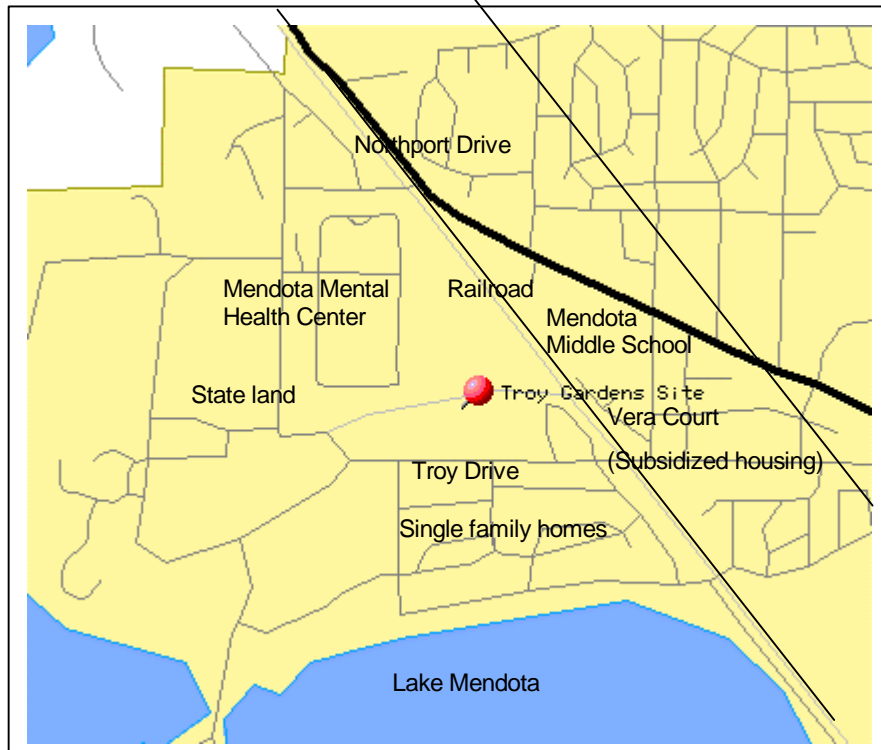
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Figure 1: The Troy Gardens site in reference to the rest of the city

Figure 2: The Troy Gardens site—surrounding context

2.   THE TROY GARDENS COALITION

In late 1995, the State of Wisconsin placed 15 acres on the city's Northside on the surplus land list as part of a statewide measure to raise revenues. The vacant land was adjacent to the state-operated Mendota Mental Health Center, which was under the State Department of Health and Family Services (see figures 1 and 2). It was home to 5 acres of community gardens leased on an annual basis to the Community Action Coalition (CAC),[2] the area's community action agency, and operated by their community-gardens program. Community gardeners were of mixed ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, but a majority were Southeast Asian refugees and African-American households from nearby subsidized housing complexes. The gardens are an important source of food to the households that farmed there.[3] The news of the sale distressed two groups the most: the gardeners and the homeowners across the street, the latter who also used the open space for various personal recreational uses—such as dog-walking or bird-watching—or simply appreciated having the undeveloped expanse across the street. Some homeowners also expressed fears of increased densities, traffic, and crime in community meetings conducted to gauge resident response and devise alternative solutions for the land.

2.1   PHASE 1: PROTEST (NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 1995)

In December, the gardeners and their CAC coordinators, along with the Madison Community Gardeners Coalition (MCGC), sponsored a protest rally on the steps of the State Capitol located downtown. They distributed fliers and were featured in the following day's newspapers.

At the same time, residents across the street met in neighbors' homes to discuss the state decision and its possible impacts on them. A focus group conducted later in the process revealed that many were upset about the recent sale and ground-breaking for housing development on a similar tract of state-owned land north of the current site. Also, many had moved into the neighborhood explicitly because of the open space amenity and the benefits it provided their households. On the face of it, this was a classic NIMBY response of middle-class homeowners on the urban fringe wanting to close the doors behind them to development.

News spread, and the Northside Planning Council (NPC) convened meetings involving area residents, gardeners, and two local land trusts. An umbrella organization for the 17 neighborhood associations in the area, NPC serves three major roles: to conduct community organizing in its neighborhoods, to inform area residents about and seek their input in major planning activities affecting them, and to publish the *Northside News*, the community newspaper. Established by mutual agreement between and funded by the City of Madison, Dane County, the Madison School District, the Madison Community Foundation, and the local United Way, NPC is one of two neighborhood councils in the city.

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[2] See table 1 for a list of participants and a brief description of their activities and interests related to the site.

[3] According to one Hmong woman interviewed for the study, it is typical for these Asian families to meet all their needs for fresh produce through the gardens during the growing season, thereby saving large sums of money that otherwise might need to have been spent on food.

Table 1: Major actors within and outside the Coalition and their contributions

Acronym	Actor	Activity	Interest / (contribution)
Community nonprofits			
CAC	Community Action Coalition	Area's community action agency. Manages community gardens	Preserving the Troy Gardens from development
MACLT	Madison Area Community Land Trust	Land Trust, acquire and hold land in trust, affordable housing developer	(prepared development plan; proposed developer of mixed-income housing)
UOSF	Urban Open Space Foundation	Land Trust, acquire and hold land in trust, conservation activities	(mobilized $75,000 DNR Stewardship funds for land acquisition)
NPC	Northside Planning Council	Community organizing, community participation	(facilitated and managed process)
	Design Coalition	Design	Prepared design plans
University units			
MFSP	Madison Food System Project	Education/Research/outreach on food system issues	Helped raise funds from the Wisconsin Food System Partnership ($15,000+$10,000); brought UW faculty into process
CIAS	Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems	Research/Outreach	As MFSP above
	Urban and Regional Planning faculty	Education, research	Involved students; participated in planning, fundraising
Issue advocates			
MCGC	Madison Community Gardeners Coalition	Local advocacy for community gardens	Led community protest; community education on gardens
	Porchlight Cohousing	Advocacy for and proposed development of cohousing	Community education on cohousing; participated in design for cohousing
Neighbors involved			
	Lerdahl Park Neighborhood Association	Prevent undesirable development; preserve open space	Participated in steering committee
Affected neighbors not directly involved in Coalition			
	Vera Court	Minority, low-income residents; many gardeners	
	Kennedy Heights	Minority, low-income residents; many gardeners	
External actors influencing process			
	State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration, and Health and Family Services	Landowner	(State DNR stewardship grant for land acquisition) --Agreed to postpone sale twice
	City of Madison	Determine zoning for parcel Approve plans; provide planning and development assistance (CDBG)	Contributed planning assistance ($20,000 CDBG); recommended higher-density housing (opposed by Coalition); advised state to add 25 acres north of initial site to surplus—extending process beyond Phase 1.

Note: Shaded portion indicates coalition membership.

2.2 PHASE 2: A PLAN EMERGES—HOUSING PLUS GARDENS (JANUARY– AUGUST 1996)

As a result of several meetings of what had come to be known as the Troy Gardens Coalition, several positive outcomes emerged. One, the informal group of residents across the parcel crystallized into the Lerdahl Park Neighborhood Association, a more formal entity recognized by the city.

Two, Sol Levin, director of the Madison Area Land Trust (MACLT), led the Coalition to formulate a plan for the land, which, if approved and adopted by the city, would drive the development for the site. The group decided that the best way to get what they wanted of the land was to purchase the land from the state themselves.

Three, as the group settled into a forum for planning for the land, it organized itself into multiple tiers with different functions and open membership. The steering committee provided broad direction for actions and was the major decision-making forum; the working committee responsible for more technical aspects of planning was composed of the two land trusts, NPC, CAC, the Design Coalition (see table 1 for list of participants), and University of Wisconsin– Madison members. Community meetings were held periodically to update the community on decisions and to get input into the plans while the *Northside News* continued to broadcast information to the general Northside community.

Four, although residents and gardeners were opposed to development of the site, which they perceived to be inevitable if the land were sold to a private developer, the compromise solution that emerged in the Coalition itself was a proposal for partial development of mixed-income housing. The housing would subsidize the purchase of the property and allow the preservation of a significant amount of open space for gardens and related uses. Designs developed after numerous sessions to brainstorm alternative plans and review sketch proposals were put together by the Design Coalition, a nonprofit community design firm.

Five, Porchlight Cohousing, a group interested in cohousing—a community form of housing characterized by communal spaces, ownership, and consensual decision-making—joined the group and informed the design process by educating the coalition about cohousing and its benefits.[4]

The proposed plans consisting of cohousing on 5 acres and another 5 acres dedicated to community gardens were prepared to be presented to the City's Plan Commission (see figure 3). Coalition members were excited not only for the participatory planning process but also for the new ideas about housing and community gardens that the plans incorporated. The development would benefit many constituencies—middle-class homeowners across the street and low-income, mostly minority gardeners.

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[4] The group later withdrew from the Coalition for reasons discussed in the following sections.

Figure 3: The Troy Coalition's 15-acre proposal
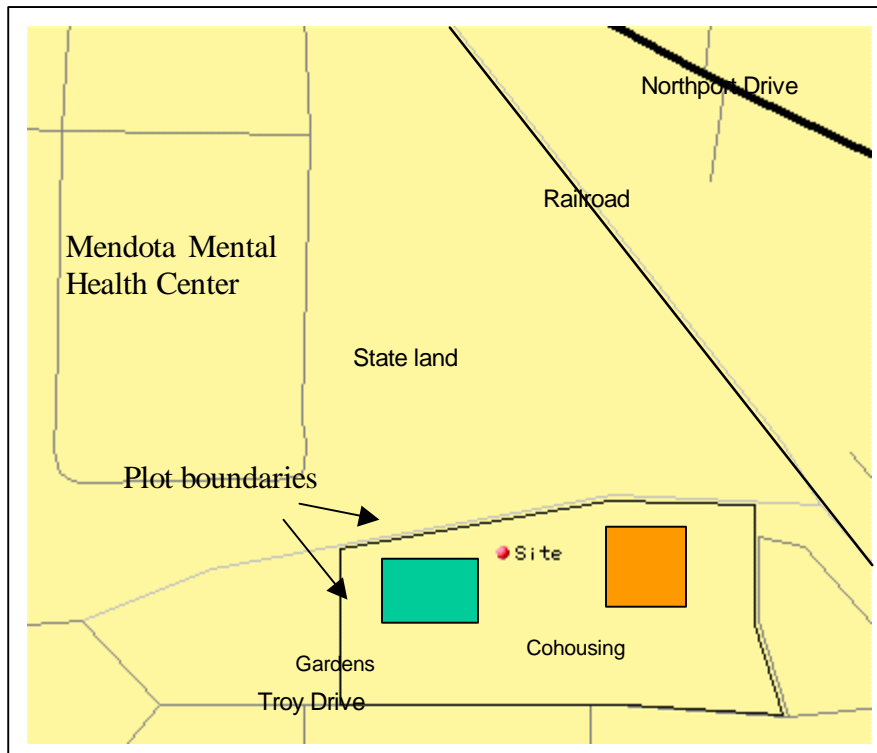
2.3 PHASE 3: DISAPPOINTMENT, REGROUPING, AND ENGAGING THE STATE (SEPTEMBER 1996–FEBRUARY 1997)

Just as the plan was assembled and presented to city departments and the Plan Commission, the state came back with a decision to add 25 acres abutting and north of the previous 15 acres to the surplus list (see figure 4).[5] The additional piece was landlocked and would be without road access if the first 15 acres were sold independently. This decision was a blow to the Coalition. Its plan for the 15 acres could not be approved; city planners required two rights of way into the northern part through the southern one, effectively destroying the Troy Coalition's plan.

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[5] It was the city that advised the State Department of Administration officials of this step after receiving the Coalition's proposals and seeing how the proposed development would have closed off access to the northern part of the open space.

Figure 4: Tackling the additional 25 landlocked acres to the north of the site
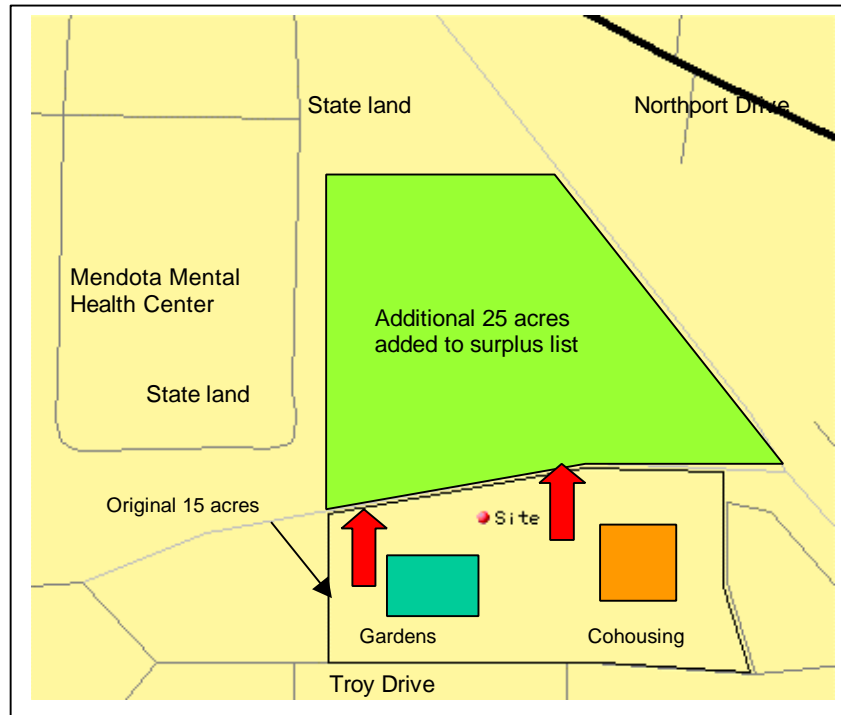
The Coalition was stymied. Neither could it go through with its original plan nor, given lack of resources, could it embrace the additional acres and plan for them as well. Contacts to city and state officials allowed the postponement of the sale, but few concrete means of addressing the dilemma of the additional space emerged. After considering several unsuccessful alternatives that included having the university lease the northern part, which would have kept the initial plan intact, and a greater number of housing units, some members began to question the original premise that the 15 acres had to be purchased to preserve the gardens.

Sensing failure of the Coalition's efforts to plan for the land, one faction of the Coalition met with the local state senator to explore the possibility of getting the land off the surplus list altogether. This meeting, conducted without the knowledge or approval of other members, outraged especially the land trust representatives, whose organizational interests lay in purchasing and holding the land—interests that would be jeopardized by actions to take the land off the surplus list. Divisions arose in the Coalition and accusations of sabotage, self-interest, and deception were flung back and forth. Several members, including the cohousers, dropped out of the process, uncertain of its capacity to satisfy their interests.

Finally, the Coalition, after much dialogue to clear the air, decided to explore the possibility of securing the entire 40-acre tract of land. They hoped that the state would set a price they could afford given the community-oriented nature of the proposed activities and the participatory nature of the process. They hired an attorney, Bill O'Connor, to clarify the state's decision-making process and to help them negotiate with the state and launched a series of contacts with state officials. Time was running out on yet another postponement of the sale of the land, and the

outcome was uncertain. As the Coalition increasingly looked to the state actors for decisions, residents were less and less involved, leading to a sense of disengagement from the process.

A few weeks later, these efforts finally paid off. An official of the Department of Administration offered the land on a long-term lease to the Coalition at no cost. The lease was to be for a term of 6 years, extendable to 2 additional terms of 5 years each. Plus the Coalition could have the option to purchase the land. Members were ecstatic! This outcome far surpassed any of their expectations and was a greater improvement than even before the land went on the surplus list because of the long-term security it provided the gardens.

2.4   PHASE 4: MANAGING THE LAND AND THE PLAN (MAY 1997–)

Four members of the Coalition formed a partnership to manage the land and programs on a day-to-day basis. These were the two land trusts (MACLT and UOSF), CAC, and NPC. In May 1997, a lease-signing event was celebrated in which local lawmakers, including the mayor, state officials and politicians, neighbors, gardeners, and university members and students participated. The gardens were set up for yet another growing season and university faculty from several departments expressed interest in and suggested programs for open space and food system uses. Several meetings and one major community planning session later, planning ideas for the land are beginning to crystallize. In June 1998, the Troy Gardens Advisory Council, composed of organizational members and neighborhood residents, made recommendations to MACLT and UOSF, thereby institutionalizing the steering committee role. A set of guiding principles was also developed emphasizing community participation and benefits to which all organizations and individuals involved in the Troy property will agree to adhere. In August 1998, meetings with state administration officials also clarified the mutually acceptable boundaries of the parcel that the Coalition is preparing to purchase.

The Coalition is now in a comfortable place: it has managed to secure the land for its purposes, gained time to plan for purchase and development, and, through its persistence over the last two years, gained the respect of the decision-makers at the state and city level who would be involved with future decisions.

3.   SIGNIFICANCE OF AND BENEFITS FROM PROCESS

Twenty-three individual semi-structured interviews with Collaborative participants, neighborhood residents, local and state officials, and planning staff; three focus groups; and a mail survey of 100 Northside residents were conducted over a period of six months following the state's offer to lease the land to:

- ♦ understand the significance of the process (or its lack) for them and the community at large (questions related to knowledge and opinions on the process and its outcomes were more central to the mail survey);

- ♦ document and analyze the benefits of the process and its outcomes to participants and the community;

- ♦ document and analyze the reasons for and the benefits of participating in the process for those who did, and reasons for nonparticipation of those who did not; and

♦ reflect collectively on the lessons from this process for planning locally and elsewhere.

The three focus groups consisted of 9, 6, and 5 individuals, respectively, from among residents of the Lerdahl Park Neighborhood Association, cohousers who dropped out midway into the process, and interested neighbors who nevertheless did not participate actively in the process. The mail survey of randomly selected residents from the area's 17 neighborhoods received a 30 percent return rate—unsurprising given the large number of renters, poverty households, distance of many of the surveyed addresses to the Troy Gardens site, and the presence of non-English speaking households in our sample.

Not surprisingly, groups and individuals differed on their understandings of the significance of the process and the benefits accrued to them personally and to their communities. Most residents who had little prior knowledge of development planning, exposure to city and state decision processes, or experience in participating in such projects had no context within which to place the process or its outcome. Their responses were more personal and immediately local. Over half of those who responded to the surveys had not heard of the Troy Gardens process. Those who had tended to react positively to the process and its outcome.

However, the following themes were common to most participants and nonparticipants of the process in their reflections. Like other studies gauging the success of participation, this one too led to a definition of success that involved successful outcome; overcoming of bureaucracy; positive community rather than profit-oriented land uses; generation of knowledge, networks, and organizational capacity; and meaningful participatory process (Daniels et al. 1994; Wondolleck and Yaffee 1994).

3.1 SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME: CONTROL OF LAND, LAND USE, AND THE COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

The gardens were saved and neighbors felt that they had warded off unacceptable development and obtained greater control over the land in the neighborhood and its future uses. The gardeners also felt they won out on better terms than before the surplus land decision. Previously, they had leased the land on an annual basis from the state; now they were party to a long-term lease that protected the gardens over a much longer term, possibly into perpetuity.

Related, the process also helped the Coalition feel relatively secure about its future interactions with the state and the city. The two entities that had authority over the land and related decisions were initially viewed as distant actors unresponsive to the needs and desires of local communities. Both contributed to decisions that encountered great opposition and discontent among Coalition members. But the outcome of the process turned some of these views around in different ways. For some it was the realization that the "city and the state are us"; for others, "we looked them (the state and the city representatives) in the eye, and they blinked" (interviews with participants). All this led to a sense of greater control over the future of the community as the process was expected to spawn other, similar initiatives in the community.

3.2 NATURE OF SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME: NONTRADITIONAL PLAN, DIVERSITY OF USES, AND BENEFICIARIES

Despite the real conflicts within the Coalition among advocates of different agendas for the land (complete open space, partial development, a mixture of both) as the process was proceeding, most of those interviewed felt a sense of accomplishment at achieving an outcome in which diverse interests could be accommodated, integrated, and mediated. Participants felt pride at arriving at a solution that combined progressive and community-oriented uses benefiting various groups by socioeconomic class and purpose.

3.3 GAINS FROM PROCESS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Aside from the tangible benefits to the community discussed above, a variety of individual and organizational gains were identified, especially as a result of the participatory planning process in the Coalition.

- Individual benefits included the development of:
  - competencies on specific community issues ("I learnt a lot about many issues like community gardens, land trusts, cohousing, etc."), democratic process facilitation and group dynamics ("I have learnt to listen more carefully to others, be respectful but skeptical, especially of the so-called experts"), planning and strategy-formulation to achieve community goals;
  - greater sense of place and sense of community; and
  - greater sense of empowerment ("my voice counts in terms of people valuing what I have to say, but also to get results," "I have learnt a lot about how planning decisions get made and what is called 'politics'—you know, negatively—is really how things get done; you have to know how the system works, or you'll get left out").
- Organizational development and capacity increments included:
  - the development of the Lerdahl Neighborhood Association, gaining greater legitimacy for residents within planning arenas;
  - the constitution of the Madison Community Gardeners' Coalition, which used the Troy Gardens experience and success to respond to garden loss elsewhere in the city;
  - the development of the Urban Open Space Foundation's first-ever project;
  - greater visibility and recognition for the Northside Planning Council in the local planning arenas as a result of the effective and successful facilitation of the Troy Process (as a result, NPC has been invited to facilitate other community projects); and
  - greater community presence and outreach capacity for university units like the Madison Food System Project and the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

3.4   FOSTERING UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The process involved the university in a community project in ways that the city had rarely experienced previously. The process provided educational opportunities for students in urban planning, landscape architecture, sociology, and agriculture. University faculty (including the author) with a variety of interests, including urban planning, sociology, food systems, agriculture, and design, participated actively in the process. Eleven university units enthusiastically endorsed their support in a University-Community Partnership grant submitted to the Fannie Mae Foundation to fund community development initiatives springing from the project. Finally, several university units submitted serious and innovative proposals for programs on the site, including a community-training program in prairie restoration, an urban agriculture farm, and a food systems education program. The Troy Gardens planning process also received significant interest and commitment to partnership from the university president's office.

Although some community members continue to fear a university "take-over" of the site, participating faculty have demonstrated respect for the community-initiated and participatory nature of the process so far and the multiple stakeholders it has coalesced. The university partners have also provided $20,000 in planning assistance to the Coalition. Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which university participation contributed to the success of the project, university faculty were actively involved in all phases of the process and also used their influence within the university and the community at large to publicize the project and gain the support of local leaders.

3.5   EMPHASIS ON CONTINUED NEED FOR PROCESS

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the successful outcome from practically all who were familiar with the process and its active participants, there was also an emphasis on the need for continual work and vigilance on the process despite the apparently successful outcome. There was also the sense that the task was as yet unfinished and that much more needed to be done on an ongoing basis to maintain momentum and continue successful outcomes. Among some quarters in the community was a sense of ambivalence of the university's potentially key role in instituting and managing programs—on the one hand, fearing dominance, and, on the other, withdrawal or the inability to accomplish much given its slow-moving nature. Residents were also fearful of benign neglect from Coalition members, now that the "land is ours." And organizations interested in housing development were fearful that consensus reached on housing would dissipate absent the continuing need for development to finance the acquisition or that the time granted to the Coalition would lead to delays in taking much needed steps to formulate more detailed plans for housing development.

4.   ANALYSIS OF AND LESSONS FOR PARTICIPATION

As pointed out earlier, this particular case of a community-based collaborative is different from other, larger ones involved in comprehensive community development in the distressed

neighborhoods of, say, Boston or Baltimore.[6] Nonetheless, as this study indicates, there are some lessons that may be derived from this process that are common to those in more distressed areas. Some insights that emerge from an analysis of this process are probably true as well for these other, better-known processes.

> **Lesson 1: Resident-nonprofit collaboratives are a viable alternative form of community planning to that initiated by public agencies, CDCs and community-based nonprofits, and volunteer advocacy groups.**

The literature on planning initiated by community-based nonprofits and other volunteer groups indicates that these often are effective alternative sites and agencies for planning for communities—alternative, that is, to public agencies. This study adds resident-nonprofit collaboratives to this list. Neighborhood residents, gardeners and their advocates, advocates for food system issues and the poor, land trusts, housers, conservationists, university faculty, and others came together in the Coalition to save the open space and the gardens and prevent undesirable development. They prevailed in their objectives to introduce the community's agenda into the decisions of higher-level players like the city and the state. They were able to agree on goals, objectives, and strategies and were satisfied that the process would serve their multiple interests. Despite the fissile tendencies in the Coalition, and the loss of the cohousing group, it encountered few serious blows from inside or outside to cause it to disband or give up.

Thus the Coalition was able to plan for the site—that is, assess the situation, formulate goals that were acceptable to players, devise multiple alternative strategies, and implement them. It was not an easy or straightforward process, but it accomplished the outcome that far surpassed the expectations of participants. While it is not clear to what extent the planning process was responsible for achieving the outcome, what is clear is that absent the planning process, the property would have been sold, like others on the state surplus list, and developed.

> **Lesson 2: Collaboratives like the Troy Gardens Coalition need effective facilitation to ensure participation and mediation of conflicts.**

The Coalition's internal integrity and effective functioning were in large part due to its effective facilitation and management by Northside Planning Council's facilitator, Tim Carlisle. Given its role in community organizing, NPC was an entity already established and trusted in the community and accountable to it. At the same time, it is formally connected to the city and county by having been created by the city and receiving some of its funding from these sources. NPC was a strictly neutral facilitator—neutral, that is, in terms of being interested in a particular outcome—aside from ensuring resident participation. While gardeners argued to have the land taken off the surplus list, the housing land trust argued for acquisition and partial development, and the neighbors argued against development, Carlisle was both without an agenda and encouraging of the voices of neighborhood residents—his organization's most direct constituency.

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[6] See, for example, Medoff and Sklar (1994); McDougall (1993).

Table 2: Comparative models of neighborhood planning / Characteristics affecting participation

Characteristic	Issue-advocacy groups	Categorical nonprofits and CDCs (housing, services, economic development)	Citizen involvement in public agency-initiated planning
Goals for participation	--Educate about, advocate for issue in community/policy contexts --Obtain specific changes in policy or individual behavior --Build organization	-Develop and implement programs related to physical, economic, and social services development --build organization	--Gain citizen input into comprehensive or neighborho plans or projects --build support for plans/projec --(social control, pacification, legitimacy for decisions)
Definition of community	--Issue-oriented; place boundaries may vary	--issue and place specific; domain may vary between neighborhood to region --emphasis on serving low-income communities	--place specific, according to p jurisdiction, or other recognize boundaries
Who initiates/manages process	Member "experts" or issue-advocates	Non-profit staff	Public agency staff or outreach affiliate
Organizational structure/membership	--Membership organization; educated, middle-class --less separation between experts and members	--Dependence on professional staff and citizens as clients or volunteers --Hierarchical structure for effectiveness—conflicts with participation, empowerment	--top-down; bureaucratic struct --wide separation between exp and citizens --professionals may depend on elected representatives for job security
Favored model of planning[7]	Social action, advocacy, community education (occasionally physical development or social services)	--Physical development, economic development, or social services	--physical development/land u (comprehensive, neighborhoo strategic, or sectoral) --services—program developm and implementation
Accountable to	--Other issue supporters/advocates --funders	--formally to funders (public and private) --nonprofit governing board --in principle—to community of place, people and issue (varies in reality)	--through political representati community --higher levels of government of mandates

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[7] For a discussion of the various models of community planning, see Checkoway, Pothukuchi, and Finn (1995). The six models of community planning policy advocacy, physical development, community education, and social services planning.

Possible participation-expertise conflicts[8]	--issue expertise/interest, commitment among participants --participatory facilitation/ management competence may vary --low potential for conflict—shared views/values or deference to experts	--expertise in planning and implementing programs --community participation typically at lower levels—program design and implementation (as opposed to setting policy priorities)[9] --high potential for conflict—due to resource constraints for participation and accountability to funders	--long history of documented conflicts[10] --participation to legitimate ex decisions --planner control of informatior process, agenda, and place --lack of citizen impact on outc --dominance of elites --successful cases do exist[11]
Role of planning institutions in encouraging participation	No mandate for participation	Participation mandated by public funding	Participation mandated by fed government
Resources for participation	Varies	Dependence on public, categorical funds	Local and supra-local public sc
Citizen empowerment	Varies	Greater for higher level of involvement	--low given inherent conflicts (participation-expertise; outco process; diversity of stakehold

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[8] These conflicts between local democracy and technical expertise are well discussed, especially in Benveniste (1989) and Burke (1968).

[9] See Halpern (1995), Fainstein (1994), and Piven and Cloward (1979) for historical information on how neighborhood-level activism was co-opted into

[10] See Tauxe (1995); Halpern (1995); Benveniste (1989); Checkoway and van Til (1978); Rosenbaum (1978); Benz (1975); Arnstein (1969); Burke (196

[11] For example, see Beatley, Brower, and Lucy (1994).

Lesson 3: Resident-nonprofit collaboratives may be more effective in enlisting effective community participation than planning initiated by public planning agencies, nonprofit CDCs, or volunteer advocacy groups interested in particular issues.

Few of the nonprofessional Coalition participants or nonparticipant residents who were surveyed had participated in previous neighborhood, comprehensive, or strategic planning initiatives undertaken by the city. Reasons for nonparticipation varied from person to person: they had never been asked; no planning event in their neighborhood was enough of a concern to motivate them to participate; they had no time to participate in ongoing community planning; they were unconvinced that their participation would influence decisions—in this view, participation is best served by "holding a job, contributing taxes, and keeping your own home in order" (survey response); they had little to contribute to planning; or they didn't know how.

The apathy and disengagement of community members in mainstream planning has been well documented (Halpern 1997; Gittell 1980; and others). So how did this Coalition generate such interest, concern and sustained participation, and, most importantly, a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants? A neutral facilitating role committed to inclusion and effective participation—discussed above—provides some clues. Not less important is that residents and organizations participating in this process were motivated throughout the process by an expectation of significant payoffs to themselves and their own organizations.

Table 2 compares some key characteristics pertinent to community planning as initiated and conducted by these groups when compared with resident-nonprofit collaboratives. While sensitively conducted and effective public participation initiatives by city planning agencies and CDCs *do* exist,[12] and the real behavior of individual members of the categories in the table may not always generalize to the entire category, the table suggests characteristics of planning initiated by each category that influence the quality, effectiveness, and "empoweringness" of the participation it is able to generate. From this analysis, facilitated coalitions or collaboratives actually may be more conducive to participation than other, more mainstream models of planning and more able to mediate among conflicting interests and dynamics to sustain participation.

The general propositions in table 2 are certainly true of the various organizations in this process. Members of issue-advocacy groups such as the Madison Community Gardeners Coalition, Madison Food System Project, or Porchlight Cohousing saw their participation in the Coalition as a way of advocating for and achieving their particular interests in gardens, food issues, and cohousing. Indeed, both MCGC and Porchlight were formed as a result of the opportunities (and challenges) presented by the state's decision to sell the land and the subsequent organizing of the Coalition. These organizations are constituted entirely by volunteers who have significant commitment to and expertise in their specific issue areas— community gardens, food systems, and cohousing in this case. It is unclear if MCGC and Porchlight would even have been created, let alone engaged in planning for their respective issues, had the Coalition not come together. Their issues and their members' contributions were strengthened by their participation in the Coalition.

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[12] For example, Beatley, Brower, and Lucy (1994), and Julian et al. (1997), although in this latter case participants were selected by the local United Way for participation, a not-unusual situation for CDC planning.

The community-based nonprofits, constituted to provide categorical services such as affordable housing (MACLT), land conservation (UOSF), and social services (CAC), also realized early on that participating in the Coalition could have significant payoffs for their organizations in tangible and intangible ways. The Madison Area Community Land Trust, a local Community Development Corporation (CDC) and affordable housing developer, was facing significant challenges in selling the land-trust idea as a way to keep housing affordable. It had developed seventeen units over the last five years, most of which were sitting vacant because of potential buyers' suspicion of the nontraditional nature of land-trust housing ownership and the shared appreciation of value. Participation in the coalition gave it greater visibility and buy-in and the housing that was planned would be its biggest ever development yet. For UOSF, less than a year old at the time of joining the Coalition as it was being formed, the purchase of a conservation easement on the Troy Gardens land would be its first major project. UOSF wanted to build visibility and credibility in the community as well. CAC had recently lost two other garden sites to development and stands to lose two more in the near future for development currently in the planning stage.

Committed to serving the community and its poorer members, and to community participation, these organizations have nonetheless faced numerous challenges in involving the community in their planning and program design. These organizations have community residents on their boards and often hold meetings that are open to the public, but this is typically the extent of citizen involvement in their activities.[13] This is not due to a lack of commitment to citizen participation, but a combination of organizational resource constraints, some of the inherent conflicts in reconciling participation with other organizational mandates, and the general disengagement from the community of the groups they serve.[14]

The evidence from this study suggests that facilitated collaboratives with multiple interests and stakeholders have a capacity to attract more participation due to the possibility of achieving multiple organizational interests, the cumulative impact on outcome, and the relative assurance of meaningful involvement of participants. Of course, they are not always successful in maintaining participation, as the exit of Porchlight members in Phase 3 indicates.

Lesson 4: In addition to enhancing participation, collaboratives may also be able to better mitigate the typical participation-expertise conflicts due to the community-based service-oriented nature of expertise provided by nonprofits.

The community-based expertise offered to the Troy Gardens project in development planning, strategy development, and design that was provided by representatives of nonprofits also made the process more conducive to participation by possibly mitigating some of the conflicts between participation and expertise so commonplace in more mainstream, agency-based planning contexts. These conflicts derive from the authoritarian tendencies of expertise, the conservative

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[13] This pattern is not unusual. See Halpern (1995), Gittell (1980), and others for documentation of the quality of community participation in neighborhood planning and its lack of effectiveness in gaining control for neighborhood residents of the activities of the organizations.

[14] Of course, community organizations are not immune from corruption, bureaucratic resistance to participation, co-opting of participation to rubber-stamp professional decisions already made within organizations, and marginalizing participation to shape program details or enlist volunteers rather than to guide basic policy decisions (see Gittell 1980, for example).

requirements of bureaucracies within which planners operate, and the perception among community members of planning as a profession serving more elite economic interests (Burke 1968; Checkoway and van Til 1978; Benveniste 1989; Brittel 1991; Tauxe 1995; and others). That the expertise-providing MACLT, UOSF, and Design Coalition were community-based and not-for-profit made their own interests palatable to other, especially nonprofessional, participants.

This is not to suggest that participation-expertise conflicts were entirely absent in this process or that participation in planning initiated by community-based nonprofits is immune from these conflicts. In fact, Sol Levin of MACLT and Heather Mann of UOSF were frequently accused by the Troy site neighbors of railroading the Coalition into making quick decisions to meet some funding-related or other deadline. Rather, it is to emphasize the lower rates of suspicion of their interests given their own service-orientation to the community. In fact, when Bill O'Connor, the attorney, was hired to advise the group—the only time an outside professional expert was paid for his *presence in meetings*—there was much negative reaction to the need for hiring a professional. His participation was recognized as worthwhile soon thereafter because of the positive outcome of his contributions and because he had few interests in the site itself, unlike the other nonprofit providers of expertise who were also members of the coalition.

This combination of publicly funded process-facilitation (through NPC) and nonprofit community-based expertise (through MACLT, UOSF, and the Design Coalition) is in many respects a reversal of the traditional, public agency-based planning context in which dilemmas for participation historically have been documented. In the latter context, planning staff provide the substantive expertise, and informed facilitation is either absent, or provided by planning staff (often untrained and leading to perceived conflicts of interest), or performed by community organizers based within the communities and with few resources to support their role and function.[15] The distribution of expertise and participation-management roles among nonprofits and the fact that the facilitation role was publicly funded have contributed significantly to the successful community participation in this process.

Lesson 5: The local context and history in fostering grassroots planning and community participation remain important to gaining successful outcomes.

The role of the context external to the Coalition in fostering participation and facilitating community planning processes like the Troy Gardens project is clearly important. The Northside Planning Council, so central to the process, was not created in a vacuum. It was born out of ten years of community process to build a greater sense of community in what is now known as Madison's Northside, to gain access to more planning resources to the area's neighborhoods, and

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[15] It may be argued that as nonprofits, there is little difference between the contributions of expertise between MACLT, UOSF, and the Design Coalition—the technical expertise providers to the process, and NPC—the process facilitator. There are differences, however. Although MACLT and UOSF are heavily dependent on city and state funding, they are structurally and functionally autonomous from public institutions and are accountable first and foremost to their own governing boards. NPC, while technically incorporated as a nonprofit, derives its creation and existence via the agreement and financial support of public and community agencies and has its primary function in facilitating community participation. It is also nominally a coalition of neighborhood organizations and functions at their behest. If it failed to secure the trust of the community at large, it would cease to be legitimate within the formal institutional circles of the city and the county. Unlike the other community nonprofits, it also had little interest in a particular outcome for the site, simply in ensuring resident participation.

to provide community input to planning. The Northside historically has had more than its fair share of the community's subsidized housing and therefore is home to a larger proportion of the city's poorer and minority residents and to organizations that exist to serve them. Therefore, the institution of the NPC by joint agreement between local public and community agencies needs to be seen as a symbol of the city's commitment to provide greater attention and resources to that community.[16]

Additionally, Madison is a city with a history of strong neighborhood planning, which helped provide support for the Troy Gardens process despite the occasional tensions between the community and the planning department.[17] The representation of a variety of stakeholders and interests in the process also resulted in multiple connections to influentials outside the Coalition—including political representatives, other community leaders, and university officials. Awareness of the external and historic aspect of the success of the process is especially high among those who are familiar with the context and history of community planning in Madison— the planners and CDCs in the process.[18]

What was a successful grassroots planning process in Madison may or may not be possible in communities without Madison's history of support for neighborhood planning and actions to install an organization like the NPC to facilitate community participation. Nonetheless, evidence from the literature suggests that "cities that foster a positive citizen attitude through a variety of strategies of participation, information exchange, and reputation experience less cynicism" and potentially greater propensity to become involved than cities that do not (Berman 1997).

> **Lesson 6: No community process involving a variety of players can be without conflict, internal or external. Resident-nonprofit collaboratives have to acknowledge and address internal conflict as an ongoing function.**

Tensions and conflicts are inevitable in any democratic process involving people with diverse backgrounds, interests, needs, and resources. Tensions between individuals, between organizations, between residents and professionals, between university and community members, between process and outcome, between the Collaborative and the city and the state, between participants and nonparticipants, and so on, were ever present in the process. On two occasions, conflicts almost threatened to break up the coalition. Yet the coalition survived.

The lesson in dealing with conflicts is not to preempt, control, or avoid them, but to acknowledge their existence, allow their articulation and collectively analyze their source and

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[16] While not negating the institutional commitment, it is also important to note some ambivalence on the role of NPC on the part of city staff interviewed for this study. On the one hand, neighborhood planners are pleased to have greater contact with Northside neighborhoods through the NPC; on the other, some planning staff see the NPC as duplicating the city's role in enlisting community participation and partially diluting the city's powers in this area.

[17] One indication of the strength of the commitment of city planners is in their responses to the negative community reactions to their alternative proposals for the site—proposals that contained no acknowledgment of the then 8-month old process that generated the Coalition's first development plan at the end of Phase 1. Interviews conducted with city planners later in the process indicated that they felt that they were "burnt by not doing their homework and paying closer attention to what the community wanted" (interview with the director of the department of planning and development; similar sentiments were echoed by other staff members).

[18] Another note on context: one of the reasons for a positive state response to the Coalition in the transfer of the land also was tied to the replacement of the former secretary of the administration, Jim Klauser, with Mark Bugher (also Republican), who nonetheless was more supportive of the Coalition's goals.

meaning, and achieve resolution. Collaboratives are by their nature unstable; this fact also needs to be acknowledged head-on. Collaboratives are built of human relationships; to be effective, these need to be nurtured to as much or perhaps even more than specific organizational interests. Collaboratives need to devise plans to deal with conflict on an ongoing basis.

Nonetheless, given the nature of the larger context of decision-making ridden with power and resource imbalances, not all parts of the coalition process can lend themselves to equal participation by members. Coalitions in communities of poverty and diversity will tend to exclude some groups for all or part of the time. All decisions in the Troy Coalition were made by consensus. Not all participants were expected to contribute equally to the process. Membership in the three committees with varying responsibilities and activity-intensities was voluntary and open to all.[19] Phase 3, in which practically all Coalition process occurred in working group meetings, led to the disengagement of some residents. Despite the frequent updates to the larger steering committee when the process was stuck in Phase 3, many residents felt left out. Focus groups reflecting on this stage of the Coalition could not come up with suggestions for an alternative course of action that would have been more satisfactory. This is not to deny the possibility of total participation in a process; it is to acknowledge the real inequalities associated with time and resources and the constraints associated with bureaucratic structures in the external contexts of community planning. It is also to point to the difficulty and necessity of maintaining consensual decision-making and democratic process in the face of externally imposed constraints such as deadlines, bureaucratic nonresponse, and the need for highly expert technical assistance.

The process was less than perfect in its ability to enlist all groups of residents affected by the decisions on the land. African-American residents from Vera Court, a subsidized housing complex adjacent to the parcel, Southeast Asian refugees from nearby neighborhoods who gardened on the site, and young people who might benefit from the educational and employment-training opportunities in the programs planned for the site were conspicuously absent. Neighborhood associations whose residents were affected by the development were kept updated on information and were requested for input outside meetings by the NPC, but these groups did not participate in Coalition meetings themselves. The pressures of survival, the disbelief that their opinions mattered, and the foreign culture of meetings conducted in English were just a few factors that prevented their ongoing participation.[20]

5. CONCLUSION

This paper suggested that resident-nonprofit collaboratives (project-specific ones, in this case) have the potential, in addition to plan for their communities, to elicit participation more effectively than more traditional forms of planning initiated by public agencies or community-based organizations. In this case, community participation was successful because of: the

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[19] "Experts" who were compensated included professionals who conducted economic analyses for the housing development, developed the designs for the project, and provided counsel on state legislative and administrative decision-making processes.

[20] This exclusion of some groups also highlights the importance of neighborhood and community networks—both personal and organizational. It is indeed interesting to note that every single participant in the process had a connection with at least one other person in the process and was persuaded to participate as a result of this personal connection. Not one came to the process "cold from the street," as it were, or having read of it in the *Northside News*.

effective facilitation that mediated the diverse and conflicting interests, encouraged the participation of nonexperts, and remained outcome-neutral; the technical expertise that was provided by community-based nonprofits; a generally supportive planning context; and resources for planning that, once again, were not tied to a particular outcome.

Based on this study, a matrix was developed of the characteristics affecting participation in planning initiated and conducted by issue-advocacy groups, nonprofits addressing categories of community development funded by the federal government, and planning agencies to compare the nature and potential effectiveness of that generated by resident-nonprofit coalitions. The matrix suggests that collaboratives like the Troy Gardens Coalition are more flexible in their structure and planning style, more inclusive, more able to mediate conflicts, more able to address participation-expertise conflicts, and more accountable to their communities than other community-based planning entities. These propositions, of course, need to be seen as testable hypotheses rather than definitive facts and need further confirmation and elaboration by comparative case-study methodology. And good planning that mobilizes and incorporates effective participation can and does occur when initiated by public or nonprofit community agencies that may share the ingredients of this process.

This study raises several implications for community planning practice to enhance participation, regardless of where it emanates from or whether it is project-specific or oriented to more comprehensive community development.

First, this paper points to the importance of the commitment to participation and the knowledge of the challenges impeding effective participation—regardless of whether these challenges emerge from citizen perceptions or agency constraints. On one side are the unequal distribution of power and resources, diversity of culture and value, differential knowledge base among community members, and time and resource constraints to participation. On the other are real challenges facing planners in fostering participation, including resource constraints, needs for expertise, insufficient information, inadequate representation among participants, and need for training in participatory management of planning. This process demonstrates that resident-nonprofit collaboratives can be effective planning entities through a process of facilitation that is committed to inclusion and is informed of the typical challenges to participate. Overcoming these challenges kept both residents and organizational players involved in the process; the loss of membership from either group would have diminished the credibility or the effectiveness of the process and its outcomes.

Second, this process suggests that a community-initiated process, with adequate internal support in terms of resources, technical assistance, and collaboration of diverse actors, can successfully mobilize external support from public entities and representatives. It also demonstrates the importance of a wider planning context that is facilitative and supportive of community participation and community-initiated planning. Planners need to support community-initiated planning processes through outcome-neutral resources, including with data, technical assistance, and participation management.

Third, the importance of mediating institutions for community participation is also highlighted by the process. The NPC representing area neighborhoods provided a ready tool to organize, facilitate, and manage the process. It was created with an institutional function in community organizing, to be accountable to the community in addressing emerging issues, and at the same time to be formally connected to public agencies. Such a mediating institution can

enhance not only the effectiveness of neighborhood collaborations in its organizing role, but also the connections it provides to public decision-contexts. Planners need to encourage the creation of similar mediating institutions that can respond effectively to neighborhood initiatives, organize participation, and connect initiatives to public agency structures and resources.

The neighborhood collaborative studied here was specific to a particular site and resulted in a particular community planning project in the relatively well-off community of Madison. But it is a more common, if less stable and long-lived, form of collaboration. The lessons emerged from a process of reflection and dialogue among participants in the process and need to be heeded by others involved in or wishing to facilitate similar community processes. The lessons derived from this study may or may not apply to other forms of project-specific or more institutional community collaboratives and need to be the basis for further study.

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