

Creating a Culture of Progressive Planning Practice in America's Medium-size Cities

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on progressive planning practices in three medium-size U.S. cities in the Northeast and Midwest: Dayton, Ohio, Syracuse, New York, and Worcester, Massachusetts. The five planners interviewed were all motivated by social justice issues and valued social inclusion. Progressivism, however, appeared to be more closely associated with public service motivation than specific planning practices. The clearest articulation of progressivism in practice was the idea that physical space was, and should be, an embodiment of values, not just a compromise of competing interest in the public realm. Leadership, market conditions, and form of government were found to be important influences on municipal planning functions. Organizational structures and decisions tended to reinforce a culture of planning practice that stressed practical responses to weak markets based overwhelmingly on an economic development rationale, as opposed to explicit concerns for equity and social justice.

I dedicate this work to the memory of
Paul “Pepe” McNeil
Whose bigness of spirit is both sorely missed and ever present

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**Creating a Culture of Progressive Planning Practice in
America's Medium-size Cities**

Reform planning of one kind or another has played a role in much of modern planning. Even when its focus has been purely on the physical aspect of urban space, on harmony or beauty or order, it has seen those characteristics as requiring changes in the urban environment contributing to general human welfare, and as requiring changes in conditions as they are with that purpose in mind. As with utopian planning, there is a grounding in social ideas and values, but, as opposed to utopian planning, the changes viewed as needed are not fundamental but are capable of being accomplished within the framework of the existing social, political, and economic order, even if they may lead to or be dependent on changes in that order at the margins. Thus the scope, the depth, of reform is limited, both in nature and in scale, in most reform endeavors.

—Peter Marcuse

INTRODUCTION

Pierre Clavel (2015) remarked that, “writing about ‘progressive planners’ is one of the best things - maybe the best thing—an academic can do.”¹ Perhaps he’s right, but who are “progressive planners” and what do they do? What is “progressive planning?” Why is it practiced more in some places than others? What lessons can we draw for places where progressive planning is less prevalent?

To address some of these questions, this thesis investigates the claim that contemporary progressive values tend to take root in planners’ standards for the physical environment, while the normative aspirations of equity planners practicing during the last three decades of the 20th Century remain rare in practice. It posits that redistributive municipal policies are more prevalent in strong market cities, supporting Norman Krumholz’s observation that “in many cities, what now passes for planning is simply called economic development” (Krumholz 1996). However, Krumholz’s claim that municipal planning practice can pivot on decisions to shift money, power, and influence from those with plenty to those with little is perhaps more of a wishful expression of a

Epigraph. From the “The Three Historic Currents of City Planning.” in Bridge, Gary, and Watson, Sophie, Eds. Wiley Blackwell Companions to Geography: New Blackwell Companion to the City. Somerset, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2011): 643-655.

1. A collection of Clavel’s writing can be found at *Progressive Cities and Neighborhood Planning*, a website supporting and sharing the work of progressive planners.

desired authority than an accurate assessment of the influence and motivations of actual practitioners. Prominent scholars of progressive planning have conceded that real gains by way of redistributive municipal policies tend to be the exception, and are hard won (Forsyth 1999; Krumholz 2001; Drier et al. 2004, 171). Cities commonly cited as “progressive” and at least somewhat successful in shifting and institutionalizing municipal practices and policies toward more equitable objectives are diverse and difficult to categorize. However, many tend to be either large, strong-market cities, or smaller, more affluent cities with major research universities and populations with higher levels of educational attainment (Clarke and Gaile 1998, 200).

Another way to understand the contribution this thesis makes to the literature on progressive planning practice is to think of the practice of individual planners as a product of their personal disposition (e.g., beliefs, attitudes) playing out within the specific organizational and structural constraints of municipal government. This account is necessarily introductory, meant to illuminate the freedoms and constraints of the planner within the limited context of their work environment and how they self-define their roles. How these elements interact with the full array of community and private interests in medium-size cities is a subject for another study. However much it anticipates agreement with established ideas of general urban structure and change, it is also a rudimentary challenge to the notion that “what is true for large previously industrialized cities will likely be true to some degree for all U.S. cities (Pohlmann 1993, 10).” It is the belief of this author that the differences are equally important, and that if a planner’s role and agency is to be better understood, then it must necessarily be so within that framework.

This thesis looks at planning practice in three medium-size cities in the U.S. and sets out to answer three primary questions:

- Who among medium-size city municipal employees serve in the role(s) of planner? What are their primary roles and responsibilities?
- What are the opinions of municipal planners in medium-size cities in regards to progressive planning practice (i.e., how do they define it and think about it)?
- Where, how, and from whom do municipal planners in medium-size cities learn about progressive planning practices? To what extent are they involved in these practices?

Planners' Values

Many planners grapple with the tension between serving the immediate needs of property owners and development interests and pursuing long-term community goals. For a future-focused endeavor, planning can be mired in the past, bound in structures that seem calcified and prohibitive, rather than flexible and permissive. Planning often defers to convention and procedure, rather than imagination and possibility. To help define how planners align professional and personal values with the procedures, standards, and expectations that they routinely encounter, this thesis relies on the American Planning Association's code of ethics. Municipal planners—those working directly or indirectly for a city administration—are bound by this code of ethics. According to these professional principles laid out by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP 2009), planners primarily “owe [their] allegiance to a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest that is formulated through continuous and open debate.”

AICP makes many of the elements of this allegiance explicit, including an obligation to

. . . seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. [Planners] shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.

In short, the AICP code of ethics mandates a commitment to progressive planning practice, which seeks to advocate for, empower, and transform people and communities that are socially disadvantaged, economically marginalized, and physically segregated.

A good deal of this analysis sets out to explore those structural impediments—the “policies, institutions, and decisions” resisting these obligations by examining how planners in medium-size cities perceive, think, and feel about these obligations.

Limits of Progressivism

For the three cities in this thesis—Dayton, Ohio, Syracuse, New York and Worcester, Massachusetts—structural, organizational, and professional limitations were observed in the ways planners could exert authority and influence practices. These included economic and fiscal realities for both the cities at large and local government, the form and structure of government, and the relative importance of planning as a municipal function. These constraints are often qualitatively different in medium-size cities than larger ones. In this sense, seeing the planner in the medium-size city as a primary driver of social justice may be missing the point; every planner interviewed expressed a sincere commitment to this end. The real power of the planner appears to derive from their privileged role as an impartial actor and effective shaper of perceptions. It is a view in line with Forester’s (1988) articulation of the planner as a “communicative actor,” suggesting that in medium-size cities planners with a progressive disposition, rather than leading the charge and basing their decisions on progressive principles, are more likely to be mediating conflicting interests with a dispassionate countenance, regardless of their own opinions and proclivities (Pendall 1993). This does not suggest that the planner cannot still be a subtle advocate and “inside activist,” but without a progressive mandate, without strong leadership from managers, elected officials, appointed boards or special authorities, gains will tend to be incremental and opportunistic.

Core Concepts and Categories

Progressive Planning Practice

In this thesis, “progressive planning practice” refers specifically to policies and practices that seek to advocate for, empower, and transform people and communities that are socially disadvantaged, economically marginalized, and physically segregated. The challenge of progressive planning for the last half century has been precisely how to advocate for social and economic justice by opening up government to, and creating initiatives for, poor and working-class residents. For this reason participatory planning models, whether based in the community or officially sanctioned structures, have been promoted as the primary means for safeguarding against the dominance of elite interests and power, and remain a hallmark of progressive planning practice (Sutton 2008).

The term “progressivism” itself is tied closely to specific policies, periods of history, and political attitudes, and can carry powerful connotations, which might not be shared by everyone in the same way. What’s more, the historical record and academic literature diverge on some essential elements of progressive practice, even when the goals of progressivism are ostensibly in alignment.

Making Sense of Culture

For this thesis, the concept of culture relies on Edgar H. Schein’s seminal work *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2004).

The culture of a group can . . . be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein 2004, 17).

Necessarily broad, Schein’s definition recognizes the complexity and divergent understanding of culture in the scholarly literature, but integrates their various

characteristics for a comprehensive understanding of the term based on the shared components of groups.

While ambiguity and conflict are common attributes within cultures, Schein helps us understand that all culture is essentially a striving toward stability, consistency and meaning. His framework identifies different levels of culture, from macrocultures, such as exist at the level of nationality or ethnicity, to organizational cultures, subcultures, and microcultures. Accordingly, the subjects here—occupational and organizational cultures—may be viewed not as singular phenomena, but as entities that exist at different functional levels. Thus, “planning culture” can be understood as an occupational culture at either the macroculture or subculture level, depending on whether one is looking at broad professional attributes at the national or international level or specific departments at the local one. A stable culture can exist at one level but not another. For instance, in this thesis, a clear professional planning culture was identified at the macroculture level, but there was considerable variation in cultures at the municipal and departmental levels, suggesting that planning subcultures could stabilize, become subordinate to municipal or other occupational subcultures, or fail to form altogether. Furthermore, even when there is a clear occupational culture, there can be the added distinction of microcultures within the same department, such as project teams, or across organizational boundaries, such as might exist between transportation and land use planners, for instance.

There is a temptation to view these different levels of municipal and professional cultures as overlapping influences, as might be represented with a Venn diagram. However, despite accuracy in one instance, such a representation may not prove transferable to another. Where a planner possesses the values and beliefs of a macroculture, for instance, she may be unable to mobilize many of them within her practice, where the culture of her day-to-day work environment may resist them, perhaps

eventually reorienting her away from seeing their value and applicability altogether.

Figure 1 provides a modified way to visualize these relationships as they pertain to an individual planner's practice.

The planners here were articulating shared elements of an occupational macroculture, but were also translating (and in their practice, transforming) those elements into the particular aspects of their municipal cultures or organizational subcultures. In this sense, "practice" can be seen as a set of inputs and outputs. So when the AICP mentions "the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions" they are talking about agency and leadership, about the interrelationships between these inputs and outputs and the responsibility to make them clear and influence them. To say it another way, the structural (institutions), organizational (decisions), and administrative (policies) elements that contribute to a culture of progressive planning depend on leadership as an essential factor in understanding how that culture forms, how it stabilizes, and how it changes.

Effective leaders are both steeped in and understand the abiding culture within which they operate, and are capable of navigating a new path that can transform its outputs or even the culture itself. Municipal culture, then, can be stable, tied to the structural elements of government, bureaucracy, and occupational standards, and still be capable of changing rapidly in response to strong leadership, especially at the microculture level or in the production of specific outputs.

Borrowing from Schein's definition, this thesis looks at how municipal planners perceive, think, feel, and most importantly, act, on the macrocultural elements of their profession, and the difficulties encountered when they are mediated through the prevailing organizational culture in which they ply their trade. The research questions, therefore, directly reflect this definition while the analysis attempts to link them to the broader cultural elements embodied in organizational structure and leadership.

Elements of Personal Planning Practice



Figure 1. Representation of the cultural elements of personal planning practice. This thesis deals primarily with the intersection of the professional and municipal communities, defining the area labeled 'municipal planning' above. However, a planner's practice depends on other elements of their personal life and community relationships. The culture of planning as defined here—how planners perceive, feel, and think about their work—and how those elements affect the way they act, will be greatly influenced by leadership and professional standards. This may mean that the influence of the municipal community and subcultures will be disproportionately larger than that of the planning community, and though not the focus of this thesis, these relationships also indicate that planning and municipal culture can be strongly influenced by leadership from within the local community as well.

Three Classes of Progressive Planning Practice

This thesis developed three general categories for progressive policies and practices: redistributive policies, growth strategies, and procedural policies. The first two are roughly analogous to people-based and place-based policies, while the latter is associated with leadership, governance and decision-making policies. Redistributive policies include linkage programs, land banking, living wage ordinances, inclusionary zoning, and rent control, while development strategies might include New Urbanism, smart growth policies and transit-oriented development. Redistributive policies seek direct redress for the potentially negative impact of development or its sustained absence. Growth strategies, on the other hand, are indirect attempts to guide or spur development according to a broad set of design standards, spatial efficiencies, and quality of life metrics. They are considered progressive to the extent that they reflect an integrated approach to development that emphasizes people and their quality of life over the particular interests of landowners and developers. Among these considerations, health, economic opportunity, access to jobs and amenities, and diversity (race, ethnicity, income, and age) are of particular importance.

Progressive procedural policies and programs are those that seek to give citizens greater access to and control over government decision-making, service delivery, and strategic planning processes. These could include affirmative action, participatory budgeting, data sharing, e-government portals, and enhanced civic engagement and public participation programs.

These policies and practices may occur together, as part of a comprehensive strategy, or separately, as stand-alone initiatives. While it is difficult to assess a city's commitment to progressive ideals by virtue of the presence or absence of these policies, a case is made here that in the absence of strong leadership, procedural and redistributive policies are less apt to gain traction, whereas growth strategies are the

norm. Furthermore, these growth strategies tend to be based less upon specific local initiatives in response to the needs and desires of the general public than broad ideals of urban form and economic development prevalent within the professional planning community.

Procedural Policy and Public Participation

An important element of progressive procedural policy is the role of community engagement and public participation (CE/PP). Many scholars have stressed the demand for greater access to public decision making as a hallmark of contemporary planning practice, both within the broad community and an important element in the codification of public participation requirements in government procedures (Mollenkopf 1975; Drier 2006; Marcuse 2011). However, there is a divide between the practical aspect of public participation within the context of physical planning and the progressive potential for public participation to reshape municipal culture, delegate real authority to citizens, and coproduce the work of city making (Lemmie 2008; 2015). A fundamental issue that is raised with talk of progressive planning practice in the local public sector is the extent to which government is addressing the substantive issues and problems within the community—the “wicked problems” that matter most to people and have the greatest impact on their lives. This thesis acknowledges an apparent disconnect between the wicked nature of many local problems and the political will necessary to tackle them effectively.

For this reason, a distinction is made between the role of CE/PP in the public and private sectors. This distinction hinges on the acceptance and use of these techniques in the planning process as a practical element of successful plans. Public participation is not, by and large, an essential element of everyday government considerations (Lemmie 2015). Rather, it is more likely to be either a perfunctory element of administrative

procedure in decision-making or a specific element in the data collection process for strategic or comprehensive plans. It is therefore important to understand the progressive potential of CE/PP in municipal affairs as both an element of good planning practice necessary for the legitimate creation of plans that reflect specific community values, interests, and desires (Kearney 2015), and also as a potentially radical departure from the insulated nature of leadership and decision making in the actual work of government (Lemmie 2008; 2015).

The Role of the Planning Function in City Government

Two primary considerations emerged when assessing the culture of planning within municipal government, and the distinctions used here are original to this thesis. The first is the role of the planning function itself and the second is the organization of municipal departments. In regards to the primary planning function, it can serve either a foundational, complementary, or supportive role, but the extent to which that role influences actual development and policy depends largely on how municipal departments are organized and their relative levels of autonomy and cooperation, which is the second consideration.

Foundational, Complementary, and Supportive Planning

Municipal employees who serve in planning roles are not limited to professional planners. Planning professionals come from many sectors, may not be AICP accredited (Hoyt and Kobes 2007), and are often not responsible for setting the priorities that define the importance of planning within municipal operations and the ways planning activities are practiced. How planning is used in municipal government depends on several structural factors, which, in turn, reflect and influence the municipal planning culture. A distinction is made here between basic modes of planning in municipal affairs: foundational, complementary, and supportive. Foundational planning puts planning

practices—and planners—at the intersections of other government functions; it is integral to the way government operates, knitting together different departments, their staff and resources, and providing the framework for developing budgets, work schedules, department priorities, and regulatory controls, including specific policies and ordinances. Cities where planning is foundational utilize comprehensive plans as the basis of strategic planning.

Supportive planning involves practices that supplement other functions, rather than guide them. Typically, supportive planning is concerned with land use regulation through the zoning code, and the work of planners revolves around other functions and governing bodies. Planners research and suggest revisions to the zoning ordinance, prepare documents for various land use boards (planning board, historical commission, conservation commission, etc.), process permit applications, provide expert knowledge in adjudicatory settings, and contribute to area-specific strategic plans as necessary, among other routine tasks.

However, just as in plan states and non-plan states, there is no clear line over which a city can easily be placed into one category or the other, and a third category, complementary, can be used to designate a planning role somewhere between foundational and supportive. A complementary role would typically utilize long-range planning, perhaps codified in a comprehensive plan, and work to strengthen or coordinate the work of other departments and priorities. Thus, complementary would span the significant grey area between the two basic roles, where planning may be more foundational to some government functions than others, or where certain planning practices are adopted for particular purposes. It also speaks to the difficulty of categorizing what falls under the rubric of planning. For instance, in Worcester, it appears that master planning responsibilities rarely fall to the planning department; that this function is contracted out on an ad hoc basis under the auspices of economic

development.² And there is no reason to think that this is an uncommon practice, especially in cities where a lack of resources has established a perspective that the staff and funding required for a full-time planning department puts it beyond reach (Kearney 2015; Warner 2013; Joyce 2011; Shigley 2009). The role—and existence—of a comprehensive plan, however, does provide a useful distinction between the basic modes of planning, even if only in theory. It shifts the planning function from an ad hoc discretionary role to a preemptive and anticipatory one. The key difference as it concerns progressive gains, however, is a practical one, and remains the extent to which the plan is implemented and specific projects, in alignment with a broad vision, are realized.

Thinking of these categories in relation to Schein's conception of culture, then, foundational planning is where the elements of planning's occupational macroculture are accepted, shared, and integrated into the organizational subculture of municipal government. Complementary planning is where these macroculture elements are tolerated or accepted as an established subculture, but not necessarily shared or integrated, and supportive is where they may be tolerated, but are more likely suppressed, and not shared or integrated.

The Organization of City Departments

This thesis encountered significant variation in the organization of municipal departments and how that might influence the role of planning within city government. Just as the primary planning orientation may assume a foundational, complementary, or supportive role in regards to growth management and public policy, it appears that the relative role of the planning function in relation to other departments may help determine the overall efficacy of planning *within* government. If the existence of a comprehensive

2. Refer to area-specific "city initiatives," available at <http://www.worcestermass.org/city-initiatives>

plan is indicative of the outward orientation and value of city planning as an integral function of government, then use of strategic planning within government may help determine the general effectiveness of the plans produced.³

This second distinction is very much related to the first between foundational and supportive roles, but with one important difference; it is concerned with the value that municipal leaders and line managers place on the use of long range planning to coordinate the work of government. In other words, even when a planning department (or other department that produces plans) engages in comprehensive or strategic planning and uses it to guide work within that department, the overall impact of that plan may vary considerably according to how other departments recognize and value that information.

3. See Poister and Streib's (2005) study of the use of strategic planning in government for a compelling account of the underuse and limited effectiveness of strategic planning as a coordinating principle across government functions.

METHODS

This thesis relies on data from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including a synthesis of the literature, unpublished data from a national survey of planning professionals, statistical data, and personal interviews with past and present planning directors and city leaders.

Selection of Cities

The three cities for this thesis were chosen based on key similarities and differences that would reveal important factors influencing planning at the municipal level. Based on evidence from Hoyt and Kobes (2006) that the majority of public-sector planners are Caucasian males, care was taken to consider cities where women and minorities were in positions of power, if not directly associated with planning functions.

The basic unit of analysis in this thesis is the public-sector planner, but is necessarily framed by the larger constraints particular to the individual cities. It was not the intention to produce individual case studies in the traditional sense in order to provide in-depth pictures of contemporary issues that cannot be obtained through other methods (R. Yin 2013). It is the intention to provide some insight into the particular circumstances and practices in the selected cities, but the primary goal is to understand some of the general constraints and opportunities arising from medium-size cities as they pertain to progressive planning practice as a normative and codified goal.

An initial selection of cities was generated based on various census data comparing populations, regions, growth trends, and historical data. Cities were selected in the “Rustbelt” spanning the two census sub-regions comprising the Northeast—New England and the Mid-Atlantic States—and the East North Central sub-region of the Midwest. Cities in these regions were among the first on the continent to experience industrialization, and they share similar histories of ascension and decline, immigration

patterns, and development patterns. In selecting cities, particular attention was paid to the diversity of leadership, population trends, and government structure, as well as the adoption and duration of long-range planning efforts as evidenced through the existence of comprehensive master plans. Additional consideration was given to the likelihood that interview candidates could be identified and recruited within a reasonable timeframe. This produced a set of twelve cities.⁴ Three were selected (Worcester, Massachusetts, Syracuse, New York, and Dayton, Ohio) that were in a reasonable population range for the purpose of comparison (140,000 – 180,000), and where direct knowledge of potential interview candidates was known or highly likely.⁵

Literature Review

The literature is to explore the history of progressive planning practices and how this history relates to small and medium-size cities. As well, an exploration of the origins and evolution of municipal organization was essential to this analysis, and provided the foundation for obtaining relevant information from selected case studies and interview subjects.

Statistical Data and Profiles

Three weak market cities were chosen that might reveal important factors influencing planning at the municipal level. Profiles provided a convenient way to make meaningful comparisons between the cities and critically weigh the importance of various differences and similarities. The choice of data to consider was based largely on metrics commonly used in other studies to gauge the economic health of communities, such as measures of distress used in Hollander (2011), Mallach and Brachman (2010), and Kasarda (1993), and to categorize weak market cities in Furdell and Wolman (2006).

4. See additional data available at progressiveplanningculture.wordpress.com

5. The author lives in Worcester, Massachusetts and has direct knowledge of several local planners and officials, and the committee members also provided suggestions based on their contacts in other locations.

Hoyt and Leroux (2006) also provided a useful way to choose metrics that could reflect characteristics of both urban decline and revitalization, such as institutional resources and child poverty levels.

Survey Data

Hoyt and Kobes performed a survey of 2000 planning departments in small and medium-size U.S. cities in 2006. These data, which remain unpublished, guided specific inquiries into the circumstances, experiences and behaviors of individual planners and officials from the selected case study cities and provided invaluable comparative data as a foundation for generalizing the results of the interviews.

Interviews

With the help of existing professional networks two interview subjects were chosen from each subject city based on investigations into current and past planning staff and city officials. Preference went to directors of planning agencies and/or public officials who had discretionary authority over planning decisions. This included mayors, city managers and other department heads.⁶

A standard interview guide was prepared based on the research questions (see Appendix C), the preliminary results of the literature review, and the Hoyt and Kobes survey results. Questions were composed and ordered according to Kvale (2008, 56-65) and the *Profiles of Practitioners* interview guidelines from Cornell University (Cornell

6. Five interviews with planning professionals and civic leaders formed the core of this analysis. Lara Bold, now an Adjunct Professor at Saxion University in the Netherlands, served as planner in Worcester beginning in 2005, and chief planner from 2007-2011. Steve Kearney, now a Senior Planner for Stantec in Boston, served as an Economic Development Specialist in Syracuse from 2005-2007, and Deputy Planning Director from 2007-2010. Valerie Lemmie, now the Director of Exploratory Research with Kettering Foundation, served as Dayton's City Manager from 1996-2002. She also served as City Manager for Cincinnati, Ohio and Petersburg, Virginia, among other roles in public administration. Andrew Maxwell, currently the Director of Policy and Innovation for the City of Syracuse, has served as a planner in Syracuse since 2006, was the Director of the Syracuse Bureau of Planning and Sustainability from 2010-2013, when it merged with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, which he directed from 2013-2015. Aaron Sorrell has been Dayton's Planning Director since 2011, and has worked for the city's Community Development Office since 2000.

2005). Particular attention was paid to the order of questions and the use of the “double vision” technique that balances inquiry about the direct experiences of the subject with the analytic intent of the study; a method aimed at balancing the story with the researcher’s own interests.

Most interviews were conducted over the phone. Some subjects for Syracuse, New York and Worcester, Massachusetts were interviewed in person and via e-mail. All interviews followed Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards for human behavioral research and explicit approval was obtained from the IRB as a prerequisite to the study (see Appendix B). Candidates were recruited with an initial introductory e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. If they agreed, a consent form was forwarded along with a standard questionnaire. Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes, and permission to record the interviews for analysis was sought and granted in all cases.

All interviews were partially transcribed. Direct quotes were selected when appropriate, but the primary analysis followed the meaning condensation method as discussed in Kvale (2008, 106-107). Some meaning interpretation (Kvale 2008, 107-109) was used as an analytical tool linking the subjects’ experiences to the research questions and the general implications for other cities and practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Birth of Progressive Planning and the Structure of Local Government

Born from the tumultuous progressive era, between 1890 and the 1920's, the American planning profession is understood to have its origins in both the social reform movements which advocated for better living and working conditions for the poor, and the political reform movements which sought to oust corruption and inefficiency from local government (Platt 2014, 32-60; Halpern 1995, 19-56; Marcuse 2011). Some scholars have viewed the rise of the American planning profession as a technical discipline firmly rooted in the City Beautiful movement and the field of Landscape Architecture, coupled with an increasing trend in building regulation for fire and sanitation in the growing urban centers. In this view the planner played an important function in transitioning local government from machine politics, which relied heavily on the voting power of ethnic populations, with its attendant patronage systems and political logrolling, to forms of government that were more responsive to the interests of business and reform groups, mediating an increased role of federal and state government in local affairs. In this account the planner's role was to bring logic, order, and efficiency to local government, regulating industrial development, protecting residential neighborhoods, and systematically providing for new infrastructure and essential public services. While the two primary forms of local government we see today—mayor-council and council-manager—were developed and popularized during this period, the role of the municipal planner was codified from “citizen planner” groups, such as civic improvement associations with the rise of zoning and the adoption of enabling legislation promoted at the national level (Ascher 1954; Hays 1974).

Charles Ascher (1954) describes a trend whereby the passionate citizen activist became weary with ceaseless meetings and administrative minutiae, or whose passion

was unmatched in subsequent generations of board members. According to this telling, such administrative weariness and attrition to those “who never stormed the battlements in the first attack” weakened the imperative and force of public commissions, eventually causing them to lose the attention of policy makers and fall from influence. But planners, at least philosophically, sought to serve, in Rexford Tugwell’s words, a “fourth power” of government. Beyond the executive, legislative and judicial branches, planning—the “investigative” branch—was idealized as the foundation for fact-based decision making, able to be objective and impartial. Alfred Bettman, considered one of the fathers of zoning, displayed his optimism for such logical functionality when he commented on council-manager government that council makes policy and the manager “if he is the kind of manager that the theory of manager government assumes, administers” (Ascher 1954).

Current progressive planning practices also owe much to the labor, social, and government reform movements at the turn of last century (Platt 2014, 32-60). In the wake of New Deal legislation and fractious urban policy in the postwar years, growing urban problems met the rise of the civil rights, women’s liberation, and environmental movements that came into their own during the 1950s and 60s. Within the planning profession there was a theoretical reassessment of “rational” planning practices that focused primarily on the built environment, and a corresponding effort to shift planning practice to be more responsive to the needs and demands of average citizens and underrepresented and marginalized groups (Davidoff 1965). Many of these efforts were mandated requirements of federal programs throughout the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and grew out of demands forged in the radical social movements of the time (Sutton 2008). They helped to foster and sustain community-based planning, service delivery, and development organizations, such as action councils and community development corporations (J. Yin 1998).

The progressive-era reforms from the 1880s to the 1920s were often spearheaded by religious, charitable, or private-interest groups and they did not necessarily reflect the specific interests of the socially marginalized or most vulnerable among the population—indeed, they could be explicitly racist, sexist and xenophobic—whereas the progressive movements of the 1960s and 70s were marked by an increasing demand for participation and decision-making from the most disenfranchised groups (Arnstein 1969). Alternatively known as “advocacy planning” or “equity planning,” (Davidoff 1964; Clavel 1994; Krumholz 2011) progressive planning practice and ideals that grew out of this later era have been well documented in places like Cleveland, New York, San Francisco, and Chicago (Pendall 1993), and public participation has remained central to the progressive ideals and practices of many large city planning departments to this day (Clavel 1986; Edsall 2014).

Valerie Lemmie (2008) provides a useful account of the rise of bureaucratic government and the alienation of managers and administrators from the citizenry. During the Progressive Era, Republican dissidents who sought to counter the corruption and patronage of party politics (Mugwumps) were allied with progressive reformists who sought a collective ethic that could raise the fortunes and welfare of those most in need. Whereas the Mugwumps were distrustful of democracy and sought to limit the rights of immigrants and African Americans, the progressives believed in the power of government to protect the common person and promote the public good. Progressive reforms that advocated for such things as administrative efficiency, secret ballots, and short ballots, transformed voting and politics from social acts to civic processes, alienating the public from political life (Lemmie 2008). Lemmie goes on to observe,

By weakening rather than reforming the structure of political parties, the Progressives and Mugwumps took the excitement and enthusiasm out of politics for the average citizen. And with the creation of means tests and citizenship requirements, they virtually eliminated African

Americans, immigrants, and many poor whites from the electorate altogether.

To this day, the profession has difficulty balancing its ideals as a neutral supplier of expertly rendered analyses with the necessary advocacy—and authority—to uphold a commitment to social justice. Indeed, this perennial tension between planning’s explicit obligation to elevate collective values and the long-term trends toward bureaucratic efficiency helps us understand the precarious position of planners in relation to elected officials and appointed commissioners.

Lemmie’s observations also support Forester’s (1989) assertion that one of the central dilemmas decision makers face in organizing others’ attention toward a more participatory mode of governance is how to balance the actual work of responding to citizens’ concerns with the essential—and sometimes unhelpful—ways we communicate. “Bringing the outsider in” to the process of governance requires not just an obligation to foster and shape communication that is relevant, accurate, timely, and meaningful, but to protect the public from communication that is intended to be just the opposite (Forester 1989, 23).

Shifting National Trends in Political and Administrative Leadership

Ascher’s and Lemmie’s observations regarding the development of planning and local government in the U.S. point to the increasing removal of the work of government from the public sphere. The work of researchers such as Kearney, Feldman and Scavo (2000)⁷, and Schneider and Teske (1992, 1994) also paint a picture of local administrative environments that have trended away from deliberative and collaborative approaches to service delivery. While these trends may have inhibited the development of progressive practices, they support the idea that planners, regardless of disposition,

7. Survey of 912 city managers

would increasingly value public opinion as a measure of efficiency, even if they assumed a more managerial role in program delivery.

Following a trend beginning in the 1980s Kearney, Feldman and Scavo (2000) assessed the efforts of American city managers to “reinvent” government away from bureaucratic decision-making toward decentralized, private-sector solutions to urban needs and problems. This trend was not just the result of administrative soul-searching at the local level, but, akin to trends during the progressive era, was the product of national and international reform advocates deriding the failures of local government. This effort was taken up by approximately 60% of states with “total quality management” programs, opening the door for new procurement procedures, voucher programs, and private contracts. Accompanying this trend was the devolution of many federal programs to the local level, with an emphasis on “customer service.” In the face of increasingly perilous economic situations, cities assumed greater responsibility for national program delivery under a mandate of efficiency. City managers, it was argued, could “reinvent” government through entrepreneurial activities, generating non-tax revenue and using technology to provide public services efficiently and effectively. The authors found a definite bias among city managers in support of reinvention principles, but did not find the same level of implementation of these same principles, suggesting, perhaps, that municipal subcultures within separate departments could provide considerable inertia in the absence of coordinated efforts.

When it comes to administrative leadership shifting government toward more progressive ends, there is some research to suggest that city managers are more likely to pursue progressive practices for non-altruistic reasons, such as interlocal service delivery that benefits underserved communities based on career advancement motivations (LeRoux and Pandey 2011), or the adoption of e-government platforms as a response to greater citizen demands in larger cities (Moon and Norris 2005). However,

Nalbandian (2005) offers a useful way to perceive the gaps between administrative efficiency and greater citizen engagement, suggesting that several components of administrative efficiency are correlated with complementary components of civic engagement, and that we can see the gaps between them as potential bridges that can be pragmatically developed. Valerie Lemmie (2008; 2015) supports this perspective, and emphasizes the important role leadership plays in drawing the connections between the actual work of government and public officials, and the practical implications of sharing this work with citizens and community groups.

How Municipal Planners Perceive Their Roles as Civil Servants

Bonnie Johnson (2012) explored this issue of how municipal planners perceive their role as civil servants and what motivated them to pursue the profession.⁸ She bases her findings on the self-classification of planners by theoretical disposition—rational planning (technical role), advocacy planning (political role), and communicative action (facilitator role), according to how they responded to particular normative and declaratory statements regarding the roles and functions of planners. She finds that public service motivation is more closely associated with the facilitator role, and that planners with formal training or that belonged to professional organizations tended to have higher public service motivation. Her results show that, as a group, planners are as diverse in their dispositions toward policy-making and civil service as they are in their respective roles, making planners difficult to categorize due to the necessity in crossing these boundaries.

The roles of planners showcase the dilemma planners face in knowing when to push for particular policies, when to be neutral technicians, and when to say “I know best” and when to say “together we know best”. . . combining the

8. Johnson applied Perry's Public Service Motivation Scale to the Social Capital Benchmark Survey 2000 data collected by Robert Putnam of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

roles can create “an almost schizophrenic result” for planners in practice. . . The technician is comfortable in serving the public interest but not in making policy. The political planner is not related to any of the public service measures . . . The facilitator planners appear most comfortable with public administration’s version of public service. They are able to take a more active role in pursuing the public interest than the technicians but, unlike the political planners, are able to embrace policy making and the regime values of public organizations (Johnson 2012).

In accord with the finding that public service motivation is more associated with communicative (facilitative) planning practice in complex work environments, the work of Kettl (2000) suggests that the way citizens and officials perceive government (and therefore how they interact with it and what they expect from it) often does not match actual government structures or the relationships and constraints that help determine the day-to-day realities of government administrators. This supports Forester’s analysis of the insufficiencies of once-dominant models of planning practice—planner as problem-solver and planner as information processor (Forester 1989, 14-24). In much the same way Forester’s critical theory of planning practice acknowledges the actual communicative functions and practices of local actors, Kettl stresses the need to move away from established and inaccurate conceptions about how government works—or should work—to a more nuanced view that acknowledges the major changes that have taken place at every level of government since the 1970s and now define the landscape of private, non-profit, and government relationships that are the true substance of a municipal administrator’s reality.

The Planner as Activist

Planners, like any other professional class, are not a unified group. They share different values, beliefs and approaches to their work. Forester (1989, 29-31) has laid out five dispositions (technician, incrementalist or pragmatist, liberal-advocate, structuralist, and

progressive) that planners may exhibit, which define the basis of a planner's power and orient their practice. Such dispositions, however, are by no means mutually exclusive.

Paul Davidoff (1965) famously called for planners to take explicit action in the name of underrepresented groups, and many early studies of progressive planners are founded on this idea of the planner as an individual agent of change—an “inside activist,” as it were, invested with the authority to shift administrative practices and policies, but otherwise confronted with dominant political and development pressures inimical to the kinds of changes or proposals they are charged with implementing (Krumholz and Clavel 1994, 11-19; Forester 1989, 76-81; Hoch 1994, 273-275). It is not uncommon that such planners were handpicked by popularly elected mayors who ran on progressive platforms (Krumholz and Clavel 1994). The ability of mayors to appoint department heads under mayor-council forms of government has often opened up opportunities for non-career public administrators to wield significant authority. In many of the cases in Krumholz and Clavel's accounts, planning directors were selected from academia, community-based organizations, or activist groups, often because they were vocal sympathizers of a mayor's message, helped craft that message in the first place, or whose philosophies were well known and appealed to the kinds of changes the mayor sought.⁹ For these larger cities with diverse and separate departments, this may be one of the mechanisms that have helped legitimize community activism and strengthen ties to groups and interests outside of the halls of government. The authority invested in appointed department heads to make staffing changes, set priorities, and restructure operational protocols, implies that gradual structural changes in the administrative culture and organization might outlive individual actors—mayors and department heads, most notably—and solidify cross-sector relationships that raise community expectations

9. See, for instance, the examples of Robert Mier in Chicago and Peter Dreier in Boston. In both cases these appointees were academics actively engaged in their communities.

and bring about significant changes over time.

Krumholz and Clavel (1994), in their study of equity planners and their habitats found that the most cited obstacle to implementing more progressive and equitable planning practices were the “lack of political support and other factors external to the ‘professional’ role of the city planner” (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, xi). Nevertheless, they conclude that the greatest gains toward progressive planning will come from the inside, from planners diligently and confidently attempting to change prevailing ideas and power structures in the direction of social, economic and environmental equity. However, most of the municipal planners interviewed for this study were from cities with mayor-council forms of government (NLC 2013), and all but one (Krumholz and Clavel 1994, 127-150) were riding on the coattails of a popularly elected mayor with a decidedly progressive agenda. All the departmental planners were practicing in major cities, raising a number of questions about whether the experiences of these planners is readily applicable to small and medium-size cities or if planners can be considered independent actors outside of the political system in which they operate, and the personal politics of elected officials.

The contribution that this thesis makes is to point out that planners are as bound to the specific political and organizational structures they work within as they are to professional standards and their own disposition. The technician, liberal-advocate, and progressive may be one and the same, for instance, depending on the situation, opportunity, or how the culture and leadership that defines the planning function allows the planner to transform their personal practice toward these dispositions. It raises the perennial question about how planning theory may or may not influence the way planners actually ply their trade, suggesting that the specific elements of a planner’s work environment—including economic and social conditions—have an oversized role in determining the intent, means and authority with which to act. The same planner may act

very differently depending on whether they work in a big city, medium-size city, or small town.

Documented stories from smaller cities such as those found in Krumholz and Clavel (1994) are rare. This thesis suggests that in smaller cities, which are by and large dominated by the council-manager form of government, administrative efficiency is typically given priority and structured to isolate itself from direct public influence, potentially alienating the planner in an administrative role and greatly limiting her potential to influence progressive policies (Hoch 1994, 42-43). In this thesis, where the majority of the cities in the region have mayor-council forms of government, there may be the additional question of departmental size and autonomy, and how they influence the likelihood of administrative leaders to pursue certain policies. Without specific mandates from public officials, planning administrators may defer to a neutral stance in light of shifting political actors and unarticulated views regarding the value of planning in relation to the other objectives of elected officials and board members. In addition, or perhaps alternately, progressive policies may not be as readily sustained in medium-size cities with strong mayor governments if the intimacy of departments under executive leadership reduces their autonomy, eliminating the organizational insulation that would allow them to develop a separate culture and institutionalize practices that could resist repeal or the appointment of new department heads. In either case, this does not suggest that the values of the planner are undermined, but rather that those values are sustained through other means and within other cultures, such as the broad array of professional and community relationships that support their work.

This potential relationship of policy and change to city size and administrative capacity is supported by the work of Sapotchne, Johnson and Park (2013). The authors explore government change through two different models: incrementalism and punctuated equilibrium. They observe a general pattern of incremental change

punctuated with over-responses to pressing policy concerns. A pattern supported by Lemmie's account of how public officials are often forced to respond disproportionately to crises, often taking valuable time and resources away from the slow work of relationship-building and the tackling of chronic community problems. In one sense, Sapotchne, Johnson and Park's findings are unsurprising, as the stable, incremental policy intervals are generally associated with core "housekeeping" functions of municipal government—police, fire, sanitation, and utilities—and periods of national economic decline and falling municipal revenues. Such conservative, preservationist tendencies of local government seem particularly apparent among very small cities (population less than 10,000), but no observable differences were detected between other cities based on population, type, density, or form of government. Municipal functions that displayed the greatest variability, however, were consistent across cities, with attention paid to such areas as community and economic development, health and human services, and recreation and culture occurring in times of fiscal strength, or when problems grew so severe as to demand attention in a reactionary fashion. However, rather than contradicting the idea that progressive policies and citizen participation are associated with certain government structures and forms, it supports both the ideas that strong market cities are more likely to "afford" progressive policies and Lemmie's claim that city managers (and mayors) end up overcompensating for a lack of sustained attention to important community issues when they bubble over into the spotlight, and when leaders have fewer options, more pressures, and less time to broker solutions. In other words, these incremental changes tend to be ad hoc, limited in scope, and outside the policy arena in which the planner typically operates.

Hoch (1994, 9) describes the tenuous position of the municipal planner in relation to both the inner working of government and the broader public by reminding his readers that

. . . official public planning holds a subordinate organizational position at the local level. Planners are pushed to the margins of civic life and public culture in the United States. This lack of institutional authority handicaps professional planners when they offer advice from their government offices. When Planners expose the conflicts between private purposes and the public good, they receive little institutional support. Planners are left to cope on their own with the conflicts that public planning engenders when it tackles some of the paradoxical problems of a liberal, capitalist society.

Forester (1980) helps us understand the role of the planner as an active communicator, as opposed to a goal-oriented bureaucrat. This view acknowledges the planner's position in a larger web of political activities, activities that intersect the worlds of elected officials, administrators, citizens, and private special interests. As Forester puts it,

If planners do not recognize how their ordinary actions may have subtle communicative effects, the planners may be well-meaning but counterproductive nonetheless. They may be sincere but mistrusted, rigorous but unappreciated, reassuring yet resented. Where they intend to help, planners may create dependency; where they intend to express good faith, they may raise expectations unrealistically.

Forester's work builds on the idea of communicative action as the basis for a "critical theory of planning practice" which not only identifies and explores the role of the planner in the shaping of the opinions of others, but also as the basis for practical knowledge helping the planner understand her or his various roles and influence, and thereby develop a more effective practice.

Completing the Circle: Progressive Reform, Government Structure, and the Limits of Participation

Central to the idea of communicative action and a critical theory of planning practice is public participation. It's the grist in the mill; the stuff of work that puts the rest of the planner's skills in motion. However, the structure of local government since the progressive era has tended to alienate the citizenry in favor of administrative efficiency

and the internal management of public services (Lemmie 2008). In instances where public participation is a mandated component of a program or policy, procedural rules have tended to minimize its use as a component of decision-making, reducing the ability of individuals to participate as well as the duration and effectiveness of the interaction itself. This shielding of administrative function from both public input and scrutiny is not accidental; it is among the motivations at the very heart of Progressive Era municipal reform. Indeed the primary reason for the development of the two major forms of government was that political machines in larger cities were too powerful for reformists to replace with council-manager systems, and they retained the executive power in a single popularly elected position (Ascher 1954; Hays 1974). This has important implications for planners working in small and medium-size cities with council-manager forms of government, in which the role of the public has intentionally been marginalized in the election of and interaction with policymakers (council), while executive functions remain isolated from public fiat in the role of the manager. In this model the citizen is reduced to a consumer of government as opposed to a driver of it. Census data and information compiled from city websites and the National League of Cities (see Table A1 in Appendix A) shows that smaller cities are disproportionately council-manager cities, and mayor-council cities are predominantly concentrated among the largest US cities. However, in the Northeast and Midwest, Mayor-Council government is the norm even among medium-size cities. There is an implication here that many cities in this region may be shut out from some progressive policy gains when mayoral authority, even when buoyed by popular mandate, encounters a general lack of resources and municipal inertia, or that such gains will dissolve or atrophy if they are not institutionalized or otherwise structured (e.g., with comprehensive planning) to survive political succession. Furthermore, this structural role implicates city managers as essential actors in the transition of government from an efficient supplier of public services to a partner in long-

term joint problem solving. So whereas both forms of government are constrained by the fiscal realities of the city, they both have different positive potential to make government more responsive to citizen concerns and elevate planning as a core, and progressive, function of government.

Checkoway (1994) noted the shift away from physical planning that dominated the profession from its inception until the 1960s, when municipal planners began to actively advance social justice objectives. However, there is evidence that many planning departments in small and medium-size cities have been less successful in transitioning practice away from regulatory and bureaucratic functions toward a more responsive culture of planning that includes direct participation and long-range goal setting based on the values of social justice (Mallach 2010).

Many municipal planners, especially those in smaller city departments, face several challenges in articulating community goals and developing unified visions and long-term plans (Hoyt and Leroux 2007; Mallach 2010). There may be structural barriers, funding pressures, cultural resistance, ethnic and racial tensions, few minorities in positions of power, lack of knowledge or capacity, or any of several other factors contributing to the maintenance of a status quo and the preservation of autocratic and patriarchal modes of governance.¹⁰ To the extent that these are real barriers to the conscious adoption of progressive practices, it is the aim of this thesis to reveal some of the prevailing attitudes and dispositions of government leaders and municipal planners.

10. For analysis of the political dimension of municipal planning and the various elements of local government that might inhibit more inclusive, democratic, and participatory practices see Davidoff (1965), Forsyth (1999), Hall and Tewdwr-Jones (2010), Johnson (2012), and Cullingworth and Caves (2013).

PROFILES AND COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

These profiles provide an overview of selected trends and characteristics that would be of interest to city planners and economic development staff; they are not meant to convey the culture and essence of the subject cities, and little is provided about the history of these communities. As well, analyses were not included for many trends that would prove valuable for an extended study, including an analysis of the gender, race, and ethnicity of state and municipal workers and public officials (EEOC/ACS Survey Data), or population flows at the census tract level between the subject cities and their surrounding metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), counties, and states. Dayton, Syracuse, and Worcester differ dramatically in many key ways from larger cities and other cities in their states and regions. However, an important consideration is that while they share similar characteristics in the broad view, they differ substantially between each other according to specific regional factors. Table 1 compares basic geographic, demographic, and housing data for the three cities.

Dayton, Ohio

Dayton lies in the Miami River valley of southeastern Ohio. Like the other cities in this thesis, its industrial legacy hinged on the inland proliferation of canals to transport goods between major inland waterways, the Great Lakes, and coastal ports, and its industrial economy diversified rapidly with the advent of steam power and the expansion of the railroads. It experienced significant population growth during the 19th century, and in 1910 had a foreign-born population of 11.9%. In 2013 the foreign-born population was 3.8%. Dayton was a major manufacturing center around the turn of the century, and grew in significance with the proliferation of the auto industry and expansion of National Cash

TABLE 1. Selected Statistics for the Three Subject Cities*

	United States	Dayton	Syracuse	Worcester
Geography				
Land area in square miles	3,531,905	56	25	37
Distance, in miles, to nearest city	N-A	50 ^a	75 ^b	36 ^c
Distance, in miles, to nearest large city ^d	N-A	50 ^a	136 ^e	39 ^f
Shares commuter shed	N-A	Yes ^a	No	Yes ^g
Population				
Total	308,745,538	141,527	181,045	145,170
Population Density per square mile	87	2,543	5,797	4,845
Race and Hispanic Origin				
	%	%	%	%
White	72.4	51.7	56.0	69.4
Black or African American	12.6	42.9	29.5	11.6
Asian	4.8	0.9	5.5	6.1
Hispanic or Latino	16.3	3.0	8.3	20.9
White alone ^h	63.7	50.5	52.8	59.6
Housing				
Housing units	131,704,730	74,065	64,356	74,645
Percent owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2009-2013	64.9	48.8	39.4	44.4
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2009-2013	176,700	69,600	86,200	216,000
Median gross rent, 2009-2013	904	637	708	910

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, April 1, 2010; American Community year estimates, 2009-2013

*All numbers from 2010 census unless otherwise indicated

- a. Cincinnati, Ohio
- b. Rochester, New York
- c. Providence, Rhode Island
- d. A city with a population greater than 250,000
- e. Buffalo, New York
- f. Boston, Massachusetts
- g. Providence and Boston
- h. Not Hispanic or Latino

Register Corporation (NCR), whose founder, John Patterson, was instrumental in making Dayton the first large city in the nation to adopt the council-manager form of government in 1913 (Lemmie 2008; Hays 1964). The city was a significant destination during the Great Migration, and African Americans now make up 42.9% of the population, compared to 4.2% in 1910.

Among the three cities Dayton was the only one to see sustained postwar population gains in the city core, peaking around 1960 with over 260,000 residents. Dayton, which is now the smallest city among the three, was once the most populous, with 19% more residents than Syracuse and 29% more than Worcester at their peaks a decade earlier in 1950. Dayton's decline has been among the steepest of any medium-size city in the region, losing 42% of its population between 1950 and 2010, second only to Youngstown, Ohio, which lost 60% of its population during this same period.¹¹ Table 2 compares the population changes between the three subject cities from 1950-2010. Accompanying these losses have been associated declines in the manufacturing sector and the housing market. Of the three cities Dayton and Syracuse exhibit the highest levels of economic stress, with Dayton showing the most acute levels for nearly every metric, including poverty rates, housing vacancies, income levels, wage growth, unemployment, and educational attainment. Refer to Table 3 for comparative data on housing stress, economic, and personal well-being indicators for the three subject cities alongside the three primary cities in their respective states.

In its relation to other major cities, Dayton has characteristics of both Worcester and Syracuse in that it lies at the nexus of several other major metropolitan areas, but retains its own centrality and independent "gravity." Dayton lies in an area that includes Cincinnati (47 mi), Columbus (65 mi), and Indianapolis (104 mi). Though its density profile parallels that of Syracuse beyond a ten-mile radius, the populations in these

11. Supplementary data is available at progressiveplanningculture.wordpress.com

regions are considerably higher. Of the three cities in this thesis Dayton is the most sprawling. Dayton's population density is less than half that of Syracuse and almost half that of Worcester (see Table 1). It also has a density profile that sharply diverges from the other two cities,¹² showing a less dense urban core, then population rising as you move out toward the city limits, and then rising sharply as you move beyond them. Outside of the ten-mile radius, Syracuse's and Worcester's density profiles are more convergent, with high central city population levels that decline gradually toward the city limits and then fall off precipitously as you move beyond them, only to rise again further out. This drop happens at roughly the two-mile radius in Worcester and the three-mile radius in Syracuse, indicating a less sprawling development pattern throughout Syracuse, which conforms to both that city's relative overall density and land area.

Syracuse, New York

Syracuse, which lies on the southern end of Onondaga Lake, was part of the extended Erie and Oswego Canal systems. Located on extensive salt deposits and brine springs, salt was the foundation of the city's economy throughout the Nineteenth Century, and though it waned by the century's end, the city's industrial economy had diversified enormously. Known for the production of air conditioning equipment since the 1930s, Syracuse was buoyed by the growth of southern cities in the 1950s, but followed the familiar patterns of decline as industrial displacement moved westward.

12. See note 11.

TABLE 2. Population Change in Subject Cities and Surrounding Counties, 1950-2010

	1950				1980		
	City		County		City		
	Pop.	% Change	Pop.	% Change	Pop.	% Change	
Dayton Area	243,872	—	398,441	—	203,371	-17%	5'
Syracuse Area	220,583	—	341,719	—	170,105	-23%	4'
Worcester Area	203,486	—	546,401	—	161,799	-20%	6'
	2010				Net Change 1950		
	City		County		City		
	Pop.	% Change	Pop.	% Change	Pop.	% Change	
Dayton Area	141527	-30%	535,059	-6%	-102,345	-42%	1:
Syracuse Area	145170	-15%	467,204	1%	-75,413	-34%	1:
Worcester Area	181045	12%	799,553	24%	-22,441	-11%	2:

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1950, 1980, 2010

TABLE 3. Common Economic and Social Indicators for Select Cites 2000-2013*

	Dayton	Columbus	Syracuse	New York City	Worcester
<i>Stress Indicators</i>					
Population change	-13.7%	12.5%	-1.7%	3.3%	5.4%
Housing vacancies	22.6%	13.3%	14.4%	9.2%	10.3%
BA degree or higher	9.9%	22.0%	14.2%	20.4%	18.5%
Under poverty level	28.4%	17.0%	28.2%	17.3%	17.0%
<i>Economic Indicators</i>					
Change in employment	-21.8%	5.3%	-10.2%	7.8%	4.5%
Change in wages	16.1%	27.8%	27.4%	33.5%	39.5%
Change in establishments	-22.7%	-23.3%	-31.1%	-32.3%	-31.8%
<i>Well-Being Indicators</i>					
Median household income	\$28,456	\$44,072	\$31,365	\$52,259	\$45,932
Unemployment rate	17.9%	9.6%	12.4%	10.6%	11.0%
Labor force participation rate	83.7%	91.2%	87.4%	89.5%	89.5%
Per capita income	\$16,494	\$24,351	\$19,121	\$32,010	\$24,330

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, three year estimates; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

*The first four measures are used in Mallach and Brachman (2010) to develop stress rankings for eight Ohio cities for the period 1980-2000 measures were used in Furdell and Wolman (2006) to develop a national typology of weak market cities for the period 1990-2000. Data fo with incomes under 80% area median income, which was used in Mallach and Brachman, was not collected for this study.

Syracuse experienced significant population gains through European immigration during the industrial era but only moderate growth in the African American population through the first wave of the Great Migration. In 1910 the city's population was 22.4% foreign born, falling to 13.4% by 1940. The city's African American population grew from 0.8% to 1% during this same period, but by 1970 had increased more than ten times to make up 10.8% of the population, and since this time has risen another 55% to comprise 29.5% of the population in 2010. Like Dayton, economic conditions in Syracuse for the African American and Latino communities remain dire, with 43.9% of the former population and 56.3% of the latter population with incomes below the poverty line.

Syracuse, which is neither part of the Great Lakes nor the Northeast megalopolis regions, showed significant central city population losses between 1950 and 2010 (Table 2), but a stable suburban population (Onondaga County) from 1980 to 2010. This possibly indicates the strong role that Syracuse plays as a regional center. This relative isolation may have a centralizing effect, with spatial development patterns that follow a prototypical core and suburb system with the limited influence of neighboring metro regions. The city is clearly the economic center within its region of the state, and is associated with an extended network of small towns, cities, and educational institutions. Syracuse, like Worcester, is home to three major research universities—Syracuse University and two SUNY campuses—but is also close to many other significant schools, including Cornell University, Ithaca College, the extended SUNY system (Cortland, Oswego, Utica), and Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester, Massachusetts is part of the Greater Boston (39 mi) Metropolitan area and lies within close proximity to other urban centers, including Providence, Rhode Island (36 mi), Springfield, Massachusetts (42 mi), and Hartford, Connecticut (57 mi). Worcester's rise as an industrial city began with the construction of the Blackstone Canal in 1825, which originated in the city and terminated in Narragansett Bay at Providence. Due to a lack of natural waterpower, Worcester would seem an unlikely place for the development of heavy industry, but as the county seat, and with a central geographic location, the city had already become an important political and trading center. Worcester would eventually be known for its wire and abrasives production, but engineering innovation and entrepreneurialism drove much of the industry in the area, developing alongside educational institutions, and Worcester produced many of the machines that were at the heart of economic production elsewhere. Power looms, steam turbines, valves, fittings, and other specialty machine parts were among the products produced by area companies.

Like many other New England cities, Worcester benefited from an influx of European immigrants after the Civil War, and by 1910, the foreign-born population was roughly 37% of the population. Worcester, like most other New England cities, was not a major destination during the Great Migration. In 1910 the city's African American population was 1241, or 0.8%. In 1940, after more than 1.6 million African Americans had migrated north since the beginning of the First World War, this population rose to only 1353, dropping to 0.7% of the total.

Postwar national urban policy had a major impact on all three cities in this thesis. In Worcester, the growth of suburban subdivisions was accompanied by major downtown urban renewal projects and a loss of central city population.

However, between 1980 and 2010, Worcester was the only city of the three to experience net population increases in both the central city and surrounding county (Worcester), due in large part to increases in immigration, the strength of the health and education sectors (see Table A2 in Appendix A) in the central city, relatively low housing costs, and growth pressures in the surrounding towns where commuter sheds are shared with both Boston to the east and Providence to the south. Worcester enjoys considerable institutional resources. It has three significant research universities—UMass Medical School, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and Clark University—and many smaller colleges, as well as several full-service hospitals and a robust medical and life sciences industry.

Three Trajectories of Decline

Kasarda's (1993) study ranking the 100 largest U.S. cities by their level of concentrated poverty and neighborhood distress looked at several socioeconomic indicators between 1970 and 1990. Dayton, Syracuse, and Worcester roughly represented the distribution of the range, with Dayton ranked 22, Syracuse 38, and Worcester 92. When the large cities are eliminated from these findings, thirty-eight medium-size cities remain, and the rankings shift to 1, 7, and 34, respectively.

Different levels of extreme poverty and economic distress late last century continue to be reflected in the relative socioeconomic status of the residents of these cities. Dayton and Syracuse have poverty levels that remain more than 60% greater than those in Worcester, as well as with median household incomes around two thirds, and home values roughly one third compared to that city. All three cities experienced a rise in poverty levels between 1999 and 2013, with the most dramatic changes in Dayton and Syracuse, consistent with the rise of levels

in other cities in Upstate New York and the Great Lakes regions. Dayton experienced the steepest increases, yet its 2013 poverty levels are comparable to those in Syracuse, which began the period with the highest levels of the three cities. Childhood poverty remains an acute issue for all three cities, but is rising to epidemic proportion in Upstate New York and the Great Lakes regions, where urban childhood poverty rates of 50% or higher are commonplace. In 2013, Dayton and Syracuse were among the poorest places in the continental U.S. with populations over 65,000, ranking 20 and 23, respectively.¹³

While net population losses since 1950 have been noted for all three cities, each city has been on a different trajectory since 1990. Dayton and Syracuse continued to face severe population declines in the 1990s, but Syracuse's population began to stabilize in the 2000s while Dayton's continued to fall, and did not begin to stabilize until a decade later in 2010. Both of these cities are still experiencing population loss, but at much lower rates. Worcester's population, as mentioned above, has been growing steadily.

Population trends for the surrounding counties during the period from 1980 to 2010, however, indicate three distinct regional trends. Dayton not only saw the steepest inner city population losses between 1950 and 2010, it is the only city whose surrounding county (Montgomery) also experienced net population losses between 1980 and 2010, reflecting the sustained job and population losses that have been characteristic of the region as a whole (Mallach and Brachman 2010). This corresponds to a disproportionate rise in suburban poverty in Dayton's suburbs. Between 2000 and 2011, poverty in Dayton's suburbs jumped 109% to a 14.5% poverty rate. In comparison, the rate in

13. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2013 ACS data

Syracuse's suburbs rose 37.9% to a rate of 10.8, and in Worcester suburbs the increase was 39% with a rate of 8.7.¹⁴

All three city's metro regions in this thesis showed marked changes in the composition of the labor market in the last quarter century. Table A2 in Appendix A shows that in 1990 manufacturing was still the predominant occupation in the Dayton and Worcester MSAs, with transportation, trade and utilities the top sector in Syracuse. Today, the relative roles of manufacturing and health and education have been inverted. In all cases the latter is now the dominant sector with manufacturing ranked 5th in each case. During this period the Dayton area lost close to 12,400 government sector jobs, while Syracuse saw only modest gains (2,100). Worcester, on the other hand, experienced a 34% increase in government jobs, adding nearly as many government jobs to the labor force as Dayton lost (11,300).

These profiles indicate the large role geography and regional trends play in shaping these cities' trajectories and their prospects for revitalization. Larger urban centers are driving much of the growth in these respective regions, and both the historic turn from industry and established development patterns will continue to have a lasting influence. For instance, Dayton lies in a region that was still reeling from the loss of the steel, automotive, and related industries when the housing crisis hit, which had a disproportionate effect due to the sprawling development patterns, precipitous population losses, and lack of growth in new employment sectors. Syracuse, while facing similar issues, seems further down the road to recovery. With a relatively stable population and indications of growth in new employment sectors, Syracuse, despite its medium

14. See the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program's data portal, *Confronting Suburban Poverty*, at <http://confrontingsuburbanpoverty.org/action-toolkit/top-100-us-metros/>

size, is the largest economy in the Central New York region. It also possesses a high-density urban core with considerable intact infrastructure. Worcester, on the other hand, is difficult to consider independent from the growth of the Boston-Washington megalopolis region. While it, too, has suffered considerable decline, there is little doubt that its central location, competitive housing prices, and links to an advanced regional economy have contributed to positive population growth and, perhaps, a less precarious future.

Unpublished Survey Data

In 2006, Hoyt and Kobes conducted a survey of 1,887 planning directors in small and medium-cities. This unpublished data set offered a useful starting point for this investigation, and conforms to other analyses (Hill et al. 1998; Kasarda 1993; Vey and Forman 2002) showing that the most distressed cities are predominantly located in the Mid-Atlantic Northeast and Midwest regions.

Results of this survey are generally consistent with this thesis, which found that medium-size cities in the Northeast and Midwest regions are more likely to experience chronic population declines, rely more heavily on federal and state funding and have planners that are likely to collaborate with private-sector organizations. In addition, planners in these cities were less likely to be African American or members of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). Though these data showed that planning directors are predominantly white males, among small and medium-size cities the latter tended to have the most diversity in terms of the race and gender of planning directors.

All cities tended to be involved in economic development and revitalization plans, with planning departments across the board overwhelmingly concentrating on land use, zoning, and growth control issues. Interestingly,

medium-size cities tended to be more likely to collaborate with neighborhood groups, and have comprehensive plans with longer time horizons (median of 15 years).

Northeastern cities in particular were more than twice as likely (59%) to collaborate with federal agencies than Midwest cities (27%), and also most likely overall to collaborate with state agencies and community organization. Job loss was viewed as a chronic problem in both the Northeast and Midwest, and housing was also seen as a problem in both small and medium-size cities, though unsurprisingly, growing cities cited a shortage of affordable housing as a primary issue while shrinking cities cited a problem with vacancies.

DISCUSSION

One of the assumptions that helped guide initial inquiries in this thesis was the idea that planners might be both well placed in municipal government to influence community/government relationships and professionally disposed toward progressive ideals. It was thought that planners might serve as the bridge between public opinion and government decision making, and in this way help shape opinion and steward progressive practices across government functions. This assumption may have proved useful as a foil in understanding how planners thought of progressivism, but ultimately fell short in helping to explain the true role of planners in medium-size cities, how they think about their responsibilities, and how they go about their work. What emerged, unsurprisingly, was a picture of a municipal function subject to a great many external factors and a class of professionals forced to navigate a difficult path between their obligation to a broad public good and deference to specific authority. The kind of administrative advocacy associated with equity planning in the public sector (Krumholz 2013) was found to be largely absent in this thesis. Far from guiding departmental decisions based on a strict determination of whether a proposal, policy, or project would either serve or restrict a progressive end (Krumholz 1996), departmental decisions were overwhelmingly based on an economic development rationale under the presumption of impartiality.

What also emerged was an articulate program for urban revitalization that harkens back to the City Beautiful movement and the early urban reformists of the late 19th century. A concentrated focus on infrastructure, quality public spaces, and civic amenities appears to guide a much broader concern for the

overall survival of urban communities. Whether or not it is guided by well-established precepts and principles of sustainable development and smart growth, place-specific investment is a practical strategy emerging in the wake of severe urban decline. This return to design and urban form as the catalyst for renewal appears to be a primary vehicle with which planners are attempting to address issues of social justice and inequality. Such “urban-form progressives,” as they have been called (Atkinson and Jorgenson 2014), are well familiar with the municipal “race-to-the-bottom” characteristic of weak market cities competing for corporate investment, and the planners interviewed commonly framed their ability to address the legacy of disinvestment—including social justice issues—in terms of improving the quality of life for both existing and future residents by way of changes to the physical environment. However, the focus on physical improvement and quality of life in the cities studied here was not necessarily tied to holistic concepts of sustainability, but were primarily seen as an economic strategy that emphasized the core components of a pre-Fordist urban fabric as the key ingredients in attracting new investment. Unlike larger urban centers, where issues of urban reinvestment often raise claims of gentrification, the medium-size cities looked at here appeared to welcome many gentrifying processes as a positive step toward fiscal health and economic development. This potential conflict between the creation of opportunity for established populations and a hegemonic transformation of neighborhoods with lifestyle preferences that reflect leisure, exclusivity, and affluence was rarely raised as an issue. One reason might be that these weak market cities are seeking to reproduce many of the physical elements of gentrified neighborhoods as a prerequisite for growth, rather than mediating their effects as a byproduct of

economic exclusivity.¹⁵ Another explanation may be that planners in these markets are responding to demographic and economic analyses that anticipate a growing demand for an urban lifestyle among young professionals and retirees alike. In this case, a latent need for progressive action may not so much be ignored as appear non-compelling as the basis for tractable development schemes. In a sense, such trends and projections allow for a facile acceptance of a dominant economic logic. It is a matter of “having skin in the game” with the self-understanding that one is expected to compete, rather than conceive of new ways that could potentially “buck the trend” and expand available resources. So while there is significant work showing that such efforts, as part of a comprehensive strategy, are both wise and viable, and may contribute to real progressive gains (Hoyt and Leroux 2007), there is also the lurking danger that urban-form progressivism will fall short of its promise and reinforce the idea that there is only so much of the economic pie to go around, with clear winners and losers as a result. Even in the absence of a comprehensive approach, however, this scenario certainly paints an understandable picture of cities that are responding to job loss and industrial obsolescence through the restoration of one of the few resources they might still have, traditional urban form and infrastructure.

Instead of the planner emerging as a primary catalyst for progressive change, what emerged was a view of the planner as a kind of bulwark against rash decisions, as though the planner served as part of the deliberative conscience of government; a check on both the emotional zeal of legislators and

15. See Uitermark and Bosker (2014). This study looks at the mixed results of a conscious effort to revitalize weak neighborhoods and mitigate displacement, even while promoting gentrification within the city core.

the specific desires of special interests. What also emerged was an array of conditions that could affect both the role of planning in government and the community, and the ways in which public participation might or might not be instrumental in shaping the work of government.

Government Organization and Planning

One element that sets the case cities apart is how planning functions within the overall scheme and culture of city government, not the extent to which other government functions or citywide activities are valued. It is not as if the practice of planning sits on a scale to be weighed against economic development, private investment, or essential city services, for instance, but rather the degree to which it enhances them. This links back to the classification of planning culture as either fundamental, complementary or supportive introduced earlier. In none of the cases investigated here was there a perceived disdain for any of the areas encompassing the model of sustainable urban growth; private development, social justice, and environmental concerns were clearly valued in all of the conversations. What was less apparent was the degree to which planning complemented those values. In some cases, such as in Syracuse, planning was clearly foundational and cross-cutting, but essentially concerned with the translation of different departmental functions into the built environment; planning provided both the vision and the vehicle that allowed multiple city functions to be synchronized and compatible, but seemed to orient those concerns into a future *physical* reality. Both Syracuse and Dayton relied on significant public participation programs and comprehensive planning to set goals and coordinate development, but whereas planning functions in Syracuse seemed to have direct influence on other departmental functions and agendas, planning in Dayton

appeared more complementary and independent, knitting together cross-departmental issues in an advisory fashion in what might be described as a customer service model of government.

Worcester appeared to have the least defined planning functions of the three cities. Whereas planning was foundational in Syracuse, and complementary in Dayton, it could be best described as supportive in Worcester. Planning functions in Worcester seem primarily to support the various land use boards, assisting with project review, and administering the regulatory functions of development—the zoning ordinance. Whereas Dayton and Syracuse used planning to set priorities for future growth, coordinate cross-departmental issues, and support community efforts, in Worcester those functions appeared to be delegated to other departments independently. The Office of Economic Development appears to be the umbrella for long-term planning functions, where strategic planning is done by area—cultural planning, sustainability planning, downtown planning—rather than as an integrated effort based on comprehensive planning. There are features of this model that look similar to that of the other two cities. First, they all differentiate the functions of planning from community development and housing, which tend to serve administrative functions for federal grantmaking authorities (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development most notably). Second, they all engage in master planning to some degree. However, in Worcester, those plans are not components of a larger planning scheme or guided by a set of shared principles that have been legislatively endorsed. Also, master planning in both Syracuse and Dayton appear to be core responsibilities of the planning department, whereas in Worcester those responsibilities appear to be contracted out to third-party consultants and performed on an ad hoc basis.

Worcester is an example of a city where the role of planning is supportive, and departmental organization stresses an ad hoc economic development policy in a relatively siloed environment. Planning in Dayton might be best described as complementary, where the role of planning is ostensibly foundational, yet remains relatively isolated from other departmental functions. In recent years Syracuse has moved from being a non-plan city to a strong-plan city where there is an ongoing attempt to establish long-range planning as a foundational component of city government. It is an interesting example of a city with shared city and county planning functions, which has necessitated a cooperative approach to planning on both the municipal and regional levels. The limited research here supports the idea that the council-manager form of government may be more historically resistant to the formation of a planning culture that is foundational and integrated across municipal departments.

This thesis has found that the area of local government most associated with progressive practices—housing and community development—typically takes the form of a separate administrative entity that processes and distributes state and federal funds. This may come under the rubric of planning services, as it does in Dayton, or fall under another entity, as it does in Worcester, where it is an office of the Department of Economic Development. What is clear is that it is often considered a separate function distinct from the core responsibilities of the city; it is intended as an interface between the city and community organizations in the nonprofit sector—CDCs, action councils, youth programs, land trusts, etc., who do the actual work within the communities and neighborhoods. This might be true of other government offices as well, such as Worcester’s Office of Human Rights, whose functions may be considered ancillary rather than integral to other core city services. Local government typically administers much of the state and

federal funds that flow to community organizations.

Growth Strategies

There is an essential economic development focus to planning departments in weak market cities. In the absence of development pressure, there is a corresponding absence of exactions on and concessions from the private sector to combat the ongoing legacy of disinvestment and decline (Dalton et al. 1989). Linda Dalton (1989) wrote

When distributive and redistributive policies are implemented by a regulatory agency, . . . they become subject to the limits of regulatory policy. That makes them contingent upon the demand for new development—which is likely to be absent in some of the very communities where distributive and redistributive programs are most needed.

Business and development interests, therefore, become the primal pool to which all rods bend.¹⁶ Steve Kearney (2015) was quick to point out the role of young professionals and their spending power in creating the potential for successful plans in central business districts. He also mentioned that in many of the strong market cities in which he has worked, such as Boston, developers are often “falling over each other” to meet the demands of city officials and community stakeholders in order to obtain the necessary permits to build. Attracting private investment, existing businesses, and encouraging new start-ups in conjunction with educational and cultural amenities are also becoming cornerstones of a new

16. An interesting finding in this thesis is that to a great degree planners appear to have reconceived of the city from a place of opportunity to a place of choice. The issue of job creation in many ways appears secondary to the question of where professionals—the people with the best paying jobs—choose to spend their time and money. Unlike the planners of yesteryear who helped to literally reform cities to reflect the interests of a growing indigenous leisure class, the planners of today in many ways see an exogenous leisure and professional class as an economic resource in and of itself. Job growth is important, but equally important is where the beneficiaries of these jobs choose to live and spend their income for the benefit of the city at large.

urban ethos (Katz and Bradley 2013). These strategies are seen as both the means and the ends for a sustainable urban future. In an environment where intense competition to attract new business and development is the norm, smaller cities are adopting smart growth strategies to play up their existing assets, which may include historic structures, abandoned industrial sites, prestigious institutions, and high-density infrastructure that predates the automobile. This is an alternative to the “race-to-the-bottom” approach to economic development that pits one municipality against another in providing incentives and tax breaks to prospective businesses and development interests (Krumholz 1999; Aoki 2005). While this approach does not seem to be going away, investment in core urban infrastructure, property stabilization, and environmental remediation are increasingly seen as a ways to sweeten an otherwise generic offering.

The value proposition for us is that we're really trying to build that sense of place; how the public space looks and functions. When it comes to development incentives for a business we all offer the same package; as a developer, you can get the same package in Kettering that you can in Dayton. So for us, what are the intangibles that we can offer? An interesting downtown, a diverse mix of housing for employees. So we're not really competing with tax breaks and the traditional economic development tools. (Sorrell 2015)

Smart growth as a physical development model has been closely associated with the New Urbanist movement, which has largely been championed by private developers. The embrace of smart growth by many private developers has led to a proliferation of private sector planners and the popularization of many planning techniques that stress community engagement and public input (Loh and Norton 2015). It may also be largely responsible for the general lack of opposition to smart growth as a progressive policy tool, and there is considerable evidence

suggesting that incorporating smart growth principles into a municipal revitalization strategy really is smart. Hoyt and Leroux (2007), after many conversations with planners, civic leaders, and elected officials from several smaller, post-industrial “forgotten cities” in the north, identified eight characteristics of successful revitalization. At least two of them, improving the quality of life for existing citizens and changing the image and perception of the city, can be directly addressed with the careful implementation of a public-sector smart growth program. This has shown some success in places like Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Youngstown, Ohio, where it has sometimes been termed “smart decline” as a hopeful acknowledgement that these cities can still have a vibrant and viable future without the populations of their industrial heyday (Hollander 2011; Popper 2010).

However, there are two observations that complicate the progressive potential of public smart growth strategies. The first is that these strategies are often area-specific, with a concentration on downtown redevelopment, whether by necessity or by design. This specificity can be functional or physical, linked to comprehensive efforts or stand-alone initiatives. On the one hand, this can cause consternation among residents of other neighborhoods that are not receiving attention and investment, and elicit criticism (Kearney 2015) as a form of state-supported gentrification, as opposed to sincere efforts to link existing residents to future growth and opportunities (Goetz 2011). On the other hand, they can produce tangible results that help people see the value of planning, develop civic infrastructure, and orient people toward a hopeful outlook. The second observation is that smart growth is an inherently different proposition in weak market cities than in strong market ones. Smart growth in strong-market cities is demand-driven, attempting to guide severe growth pressures, skyrocketing real

estate prices, and gentrification. It produces municipal revenues, allows for the imposition of redistributive policies and programs, and unsubsidized investment in civic infrastructure. In weak market cities, it tends to be just the opposite, more a strategy to lure new investment and residents than to guide existing growth pressures.

Government Structure

Another important factor for the culture of planning appears to be the form of government. Indeed, form of government seems to play such an important role that it is tempting to postulate that *in general*, planning in strong-mayor cities with mayor-council governments is more likely to be used as a means of institutionalizing executive authority within the administrative functions of government, and in weak-mayor and council-manager systems planning is more apt to serve an administrative function in a service-delivery model of municipal government, regardless of the underlying function of planning as either foundational or supportive in nature. This view was reflected strongly in the opinions of Lemmie and Sorrell in Dayton, the first large U.S. city to adopt the council-manager form. This should also come as no surprise when we take into consideration the intimate historical relationships between progressivism, local government reform, and the planning profession. There is evidence that voters prefer the stability and predictability of council-manager governments, which tend to be less prone to changes in organizational structure, administrative functions, and departmental priorities (Lemmie 2008). In addition, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that planners working in mayor-council governments perceive special interests as having more influence on land use policies than their counterparts in council-manager governments (Heberlig et al. 2014;

Ramírez de la Cruz 2009). This not only supports the general claims of many urban theorists on the role of special interests in urban politics and land use policy (Dahl 1961, Fainstein et al. 1983, Stone 1989, Logan and Molotch 2007, Imbroscio 2011), but also suggests that government in large U.S. cities, which are predominantly of the mayor-council variety may be more responsive to the efforts of a variety of community groups and special interests (see NLC 2015).¹⁷

According to the National League of Cities (2015) and the U.S. Census, more than two thirds of the top twenty-five most populous U.S. cities utilized a mayor-council form of government, even though it is utilized by only 34% of all U.S. municipalities according to surveys by the International/County Management Association (Moulder 2008). The same surveys revealed the council-manager form to be, by far, the most utilized, at 55%. Interestingly, however, only nine of the thirty most populous cities in the U.S. utilize this form, seven in the American Southwest alone (and one of the other two is in California), and five of these seven are in Texas. By implication, we would assume that the mayor-council form predominates in large eastern cities, and indeed this is the case across the board with 78% of all cities in the study region with populations of 100,000 or greater using this form of government.¹⁸

There has been a trend in cities attempting to change their charters and adopt new forms of government. By and large, the cities that have been successful in their attempts have switched from mayor-council to council-manager governments, not the other way around. A 2008 ICMA study that compiled responses from 3,629 U.S. cities found that of 105 cities that attempted to change their forms of government, 55 (52%) of them were mayor-council cities

17. See note 11.

18. Ibid.

proposing a change to a council-manager form of government, while only 19 (18%) proposed the opposite change. What is more interesting is that in the former group 25 (45%) of those cities were successful, compared to only 2 (10%) of the latter group.¹⁹

The Vital Role of Leadership

Leadership plays a central role in the formation and acceptance of progressive municipal culture. The municipal planner has an important role in shaping the communication between citizens, business interests, professional advocates, and official decision makers, and may be able to exert considerable power through her disposition in executing professional responsibilities. However, in the words of Norman Krumholz (2001), “[a] planner who undermines or embarrasses a powerful politician is skating on thin ice with the day warming rapidly.” Without the needed administrative and political support, planners have to balance what discretion they do have with the expectations, wishes, and demands of the people who have the power and authority to hire and fire them.

The central importance of leadership was a recurring theme in the conversations. It was particularly salient in Syracuse, which has completely remade its planning department in the past several years. The leadership roles of Mayors Matt Driscoll and Stephanie Miner, and the county executive, Joanne Mahoney, were cited again and again as *the* determining factors in establishing planning as a fundamental organizing and operational function across departments.

Syracuse did not have a central planning department prior to Mayor Driscoll establishing the Department of Planning and Sustainability in 2005,

19. ICMA 2008

before that time center city planning was the responsibility of the county and was performed at the regional level. Under the leadership of Mayor Stephanie Miner (Driscoll's successor), planning became a central function of city government with the head planner assuming a role akin to a cabinet position directly advising the mayor (Maxwell 2015).

Syracuse is a good example of both the benefits and drawbacks of mayor-council government to the role of planning in a medium-size city. On one hand, the commitment of a mayor was a key factor in establishing planning as a central function of city government, one meant to guide and implement important long-term policy decisions. This helped elevate both administrative and prescriptive planning functions beyond the necessary and perfunctory state and federal funding requirements and regulatory oversight of zoning ordinances. Planning became the coordinated and focused means to understand the needs and aspirations of the citizens and established a more democratic vision of the future to guide investment and development. However, Syracuse is also a good example of how unstable planning can be under this form of government. Syracuse's planning department had been eliminated under a previous mayor, and though Mayors Driscoll and Miner reestablished it again, it was absorbed back into county government and the regional planning authority in 2011 due to funding pressures. Now Mayor Miner is establishing another oversight body with planning authority over central infrastructure projects—and a 5-person innovation panel—led by the former planning director and funded in large part through the private philanthropic efforts of Michael Bloomberg.

There is evidence pointing to a divide between citizen concerns and government action that has a direct bearing on the formation of a culture of progressive practice. By their very nature progressive policies and practices

revolve around their ability to address real issues in the community. This is not just a philosophical commitment to social justice, but a practical response to a wide array of community concerns. This is fundamentally a question of access to, and influence over, decision makers. Public participation, in and of itself, is not necessarily indicative of access, influence, and power, as Sherry Arnstein (1969) famously sketched out in her 1969 article. What's more, participation and an ability to influence decisions may technically be afforded to everyone, but in practice may favor elite groups with better connections, more resources, and greater civic capacity.

Elected officials can—and often do—make the claim that they represent, and therefore speak for, the true concerns of their constituents (Lemmie 2015),²⁰ and yet there is a common perception that government is unresponsive to their concerns. How can this be? How can elected and appointed officials sincerely believe they are responding to the real community concerns even while the community feels abandoned and ignored?

While serving as city manager in Cincinnati, Valerie Lemmie (2008) asked “why couldn't the city fix problems like racial profiling, economic inclusion, violent crime, and neighborhood disinvestment?” She went on to observe that “[e]lected officials ran on a platform of ‘fighting crime’ or attracting ‘new development’ or ‘revitalizing downtown,’ but problems only got worse. . . and no one was

20. Political leaders, officials, and administrators can claim that the general public does not understand the processes and functions of government, and thus progress, though occurring, remains largely “invisible.” This is the “ignorance” argument and can appear in many forms. Elected officials can claim that politics is a slow process, full of compromise and conflicting interests, and their job is to balance them for the sake of the larger good. This also allows officials to claim a level of expertise, that they have better knowledge of the “full picture” of issues and actors. Administrators, consultants, and technicians can claim that the public is not privy to expert knowledge, professional standards, and regulatory controls. This is the “complexity” argument; that the public's view is necessarily simplistic and does not encompass the full array of factors necessary in any given decision.

prepared to make this level of commitment, or to be honest about it with citizens. Improvement, then, occurred on the margins.”

There is a clear progressive underpinning to Lemmie’s concern about a recalcitrant government, but it is the practical aspect of citizen engagement and public participation that stood out in this thesis. For Lemmie there was no question that it was an obligation of government to improve the lives the others, but it was a question of its failure to do so that elevated the potential of citizen involvement as a pragmatic way to frame problems, seek solutions, and co-produce the work of government. From a city manager’s point of view, which tends to be a long one, there is a potential attraction toward reorienting professional management standards with principles and techniques that directly expose the manager to the concerns of citizens, especially if they grant citizens a role in tackling those issues.

Steve Kearney made a clear distinction between the role of public participation as a token gesture of government sincerity and the functional role it plays in the planning process. For Kearney, like Lemmie, an absence of citizen involvement is akin to binding ones hands, as it is one of the most powerful tools a planner has in understanding the context of a planning process and the fine grain of the urban fabric that cannot be exposed through any other means. For Kearney this might mean learning the central importance of a small neighborhood market to the life of a community, or an opportunity to educate neighborhood residents about specific trends in the regional housing market that will have a direct bearing on how they understand their own property and their ability to improve or sell it. For Lemmie, it might mean the difference between an ineffective police response to drug dealing and an effective community action based in a knowledge of who the dealers are and an understanding of why they

prefer certain areas, or why a community would like to use code enforcement as a tool to combat absentee landlords and abstain from its use in a case of elderly homeowners that cannot afford to make improvements.

In both council-manager and mayor-council systems, leadership is crucial to whether planning will be more foundational or supportive, but more broadly, it is also crucial to changing government culture, whether in one office or department, or many. It is interesting to note that an institutionalized public participation mechanism in Dayton has recently been eliminated. Dayton restructured its Priority Board system²¹ to increase diversity and turnover in board leadership and to better understand the needs and desires of the community, citing how the boards had become an unnecessarily complex level of government, often causing conflict with city council, and mediating the direct input of residents. While Sorrell mentioned that many residents in well-organized and civically engaged neighborhoods welcomed their departure, the losers were the neighborhoods where the priority boards served as one of the few available outlets to elevate concerns into the view of higher officials. Here the lesson seems to lie between the bureaucratic dysfunction of the boards on the one hand, and an otherwise unsupportive pipeline for citizen concerns where they may have been functioning appropriately, if not well, on the other. The practical aspect of the boards as mechanisms to impart a deeper understanding of place and share the work of transforming neighborhoods was absent. This again stresses the importance of leadership in shifting emphasis from competent management to incorporate transformation in the public realm.

21. Dayton's Priority Boards were a lasting remnant of Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities program. Established as official government bodies in 1971, the Priority Boards were an attempt to increase citizen participation and decision-making in local government. (Thomson 2009, 126-127).

Public Participation in Relation to the Role of Planning

The above discussion regarding public participation in government focused on the role of leadership in realigning the purpose of citizen involvement to the actual work of government. Regarding the basic role of planning, this thesis did not seek to answer the question of whether community groups, advocacy organizations, and development interests were more influential under one form of government or another. What seems clear, however, is that public participation, and the structures and practices that influence it, are more prevalent in cities where planning is foundational than where planning is supportive, at least through the eyes of planners. Citizens themselves may likely contest this assertion, and no doubt one could find a significant contingent who believe that municipal government routinely ignores the issues that matter most to them and feel left out of decision-making processes, regardless of where one looks. Indeed, this thesis can say little about the effectiveness or perfunctory nature of public participation efforts aside from the observation that in plan-cities provisions for it tend to be more extensive in the context of strategic planning efforts.

Community engagement and public participation have become core elements of planning protocol, and regardless of their positive effects on building civic capacity and community cohesion, they remain an instrumental tool for building consensus around focused development, helping to serve a broad range of stakeholders and preempt community opposition. As Steve Kearney commented, “what planning does is it convinces people that something can happen. As much as [planners] learn from the community, our job is to educate the community so they can make fair decisions.” He went on to say that “successful plans and redevelopment are 100% tied to public participation. The community makes things happen or not happen. The community has power and

should have power.” According to Kearney, progressive planning is synonymous with “successful” planning, culminating in the realization of the plan.

Among municipal and consulting planners, community engagement and public participation are closely associated with comprehensive and master planning efforts, and may or may not be supported by legal requirements. Such efforts are predicated on the use of planning as a strategic function of government, not just a regulatory one. However, the extent to which these planning efforts create meaningful, and potentially progressive, change depends on the extent to which plans are realized. This is what Steve Kearney would term “success,” and that success, in turn, depends on the integrated efforts of municipal departments as well as marshaling external resources and private development interests in accord with the plan.

The public knows when their voice has not been included, and might oppose projects for that reason alone. As Innes and Booher (1999) wrote, “no matter how good an agreement is by some standards, if it was reached by a process that was not regarded as fair, open, inclusive, accountable, or otherwise legitimate, it is unlikely to receive support.” The public can also see through attempts to understand specific neighborhoods using generalized data. Kearney stressed the ability of communities to see through neighborhood analyses based solely on socio-economic indicators and limited site visits. He also stresses the practical importance of engaging the public:

[I]f you're not holding events that really capture a diverse group of people, and if you're not organized and have all of the pieces of paper that capture all of the visioning exercises, and all of the goals, priorities, concerns, issues; if you don't have a way to capture that and have a way to talk to each other, and you don't have the community's list of top ten concerns, then when you come back to the

office and try to write a plan, or a memo, or summarize anything about what the community is saying, you don't have anything, so it's not a community plan. It's just not.

Public participation in this model is an expansive data collection and sharing effort. The public supplies essential details about how neighborhoods and areas function as well as a nuanced account of historic problems and current issues. The planner distills the content, presents alternatives, and focuses the results on things that can be achieved given the constraints of the project. But Kearney is quick to mention the constraints of the process as well. These kinds of efforts are extremely time consuming and demand considerable resources. The municipality may not do them because they neither have the time nor money. Similarly, contracting an outside private planning consultant to do it can prove prohibitive. The planner may often appear forced into focusing efforts with scant knowledge or general information.

Who Planners Are and What They Do

Municipal employees who serve in planning roles are not limited to professional planners. Planning professionals come from many sectors, may not be AICP accredited (Hoyt and Kobes 2007), and are often not responsible for setting the priorities that define the importance of planning within municipal operations and the ways planning activities are practiced. The way planning is used in municipal government depends on several structural factors, which, in turn, reflect and influence the municipal planning culture. Using the framework of foundational, complementary, and supportive planning functions, allows us to understand how the work of individual planners may be propagated, limited, or even ignored within the broader functions of government, but the role of leadership is still

essential in understanding how municipal culture may support or subvert a planner's values. The prevailing perceptions, thoughts and feelings that define a planner's immediate and broader work environment may be inimical or friendly to their own disposition, perhaps to the point of coloring or even changing how a planner feels about and approaches their work.

It is easy to conceive of the planner as a neutral party as s/he dispenses her duties. Fair and rational; willing to spend time collecting, interpreting and analyzing data in order to form unbiased pictures of various proposals; shaping those proposals to satisfy the necessary regulations and standards of good design; assembling and conveying that information to public officials, stakeholders and the community at large in ways that can be easily grasped so their merits or faults may be properly weighed. Indeed, the interviews here indicate that maintaining this perception is important to a planners' sense of fairness and efficacy. This is decidedly different than the cool and steely vision of the "rational" planner of yesteryear; we see the planner today more as mediator, balancing the interests of the community at large with the specific interests of developers, regulatory bodies and powerful elites. The modern planner should be well-tempered and patient; willing to listen and consider seriously the interests and opinions of all parties, no matter how incongruous or difficult to realize. And yet the planner has to be practical. There is only so much time, money, and staff. The planner cannot simply dig her heels in and insist on comprehensive inputs and processes if this means grinding projects to a halt; she must make do, and in so doing, do the best she can.

There is an overall indication that planners view their roles holistically, as members of a broad community of practice rather than a specific dedication to one particular place or community or political entity. That is, they tend to view

planning as a vocation that requires an allegiance to principles and codes of conduct that transcend any particular place they may work. Planning culture, in this sense, can be quite distinct from municipal culture. A planner can share values with a broad professional community and still feel either frustrated or liberated in their ability to reflect those values in their day-to-day work. For instance, in Worcester, where the planner is likely to be marginalized as an administrative agent, Lara Bold was well connected to community activists and neighborhood leaders, but often felt stymied in her role, thus suppressing her power as a mediator and shaper of perceptions (Bold 2015). Aaron Sorrell also mentioned that planners tend to be few in number, and form close associations and networks not just for practical purposes, but because of their mutual respect and like for each other (Sorrell 2015).

Planners have the difficult task of managing perceptions where different views may reflect different interests or strategies, even when the desired outcome is the same. Similarly, different interests have an enormous influence on the support a project receives based on what different people think it will achieve. For instance, an elected official may put their weight behind a new commercial development, believing it a catalyst for new job growth. Meanwhile a resident, seeing similar existing establishments (like a competing pharmacies across the street from each other, for instance) may view the project as potential blight, while the owner of the underperforming or vacant property on which such a project is proposed may see a potential windfall. In such cases, Steve Kearney (2015) would suggest, it is the planner's responsibility—not the official, or resident, or landowner—to bridge these interests, explain the legal implications, use guidelines and design standards, and help manage expectations by framing a project according to broader standards of good planning and public input.

Planners tend to be practical. What they do and how they understand what they do is as much a product of their day-to-day work environment as it is a personal response to the ideals of public service. Valerie Lemmie commented that most planners she had known were denizens of city hall and did not spend a lot of time out in the community talking to people (Lemmie 2015). Many planners are responding to the requests and needs of board members, managers, and legislators. They process permits and review development plans; they field calls that primarily concern land use issues, local ordinances and zoning. Lara Bold suggested that this role could be both prosaic and meaningful at the same time:

Planners, much like educators, operate in a realm of day-to-day administrative realities with underlying principles that guide that work. Some days these principles are manifest in the way you handle a phone call from a concerned resident or the extra call you make to have someone check on a property that does not seem to have planted the trees they promised. In some rare cases, you have actual policy windows where the broader community, along with a strong leader, is ready for a particular policy change and you happen to have something you've been working on in your back pocket that you just reach out and send. Those moments are few and far between.

The typical planner, it would appear, is less of a conduit for progressive values (and establisher of progressive practices) and more of a network operator. The planner seeks, receives, interprets, shapes, and shares information, and is in constant contact with a diverse array of people and interests, and somehow must make sense of competing opinions and requests. They must uphold a public good, but within their professional capacity there is enormous leeway to interpret what constitutes such a good. The realities of their position often require them to be competent and fair before they can be forthright and just, and even within their capacity to advocate and advise, they must consider the political and

professional consequences of their actions. Bold also commented on “how powerful being prepared and courteous could be; how important it is to come into meetings about land use with a neutral, inquisitive tone instead of pre-judging,” suggesting that her ability to gain information, shape perceptions, influence opinions, and become an effective communicator was dependent on the trust she was able to cultivate. For a planner, maintaining this neutrality and keeping an open mind can enable access to a privileged space where they are entrusted with information in exchange for fair treatment. This disposition not only applies to relationships within the community, but also within government itself and one’s ability to move projects along. As Aaron Sorrell put it, “if not all the agencies play well together, then that really hinders new development opportunities. I think one of the things that planners have to consider is that personal relationships are important to getting things done.”

It would appear safe to say that among planners there is a shared fascination for the public realm—not just how the built environment became what it is, but how it reflects social norms and values (Peiser 1990). The planners in this thesis were certainly no different. All the planners interviewed expressed progressive values and a commitment to social justice, but unlike Krumholz in Cleveland, did not base their everyday decisions on a strict analysis of whether they met social justice or equity objectives.

When planning is primarily concerned with the built environment, it is no surprise that planners tend to view their roles in the context of physical development. They are there to make projects better, to help developers navigate local ordinances and the permitting process, and to assist the planning board in making good decisions about projects, helping them to understand the finer points of local ordinances, their legal foundations, and best practices. They

are there to shape policy so that it is consistent with the wishes of the community and elected officials.

Planners define progressive planning practice in many ways. Some see the essence of planning itself as a progressive endeavor, a set of techniques and practices embedded in a visionary program for future development. Every planner interviewed for this thesis found an essential nexus between planning and land use, and regardless of the culture or form of government in which they worked, progressivism appeared to be associated with the underlying obligations of public service rather than particular planning principles. For the most part, the planners in this thesis expressed a practical view of planning. Progressive planning was not normally associated with social justice per se, but more generally framed within the concept of sustainable development and smart growth; development must balance economic viability, social equity, and environmental protection.

Whether planners embody progressive values or not, many planners may feel that their influence is restricted to the administrative realm, and that they are prohibited from taking part in the essentially political process of decision-making. To the extent the core elements of planning practice intersect with political dialogue, such as public participation efforts, the planner must balance her neutral role as conduit for dialogue and faithful communication with the discretion necessary in shaping information and upholding professional standards. One of the elements of planning practice that is both prominent in the literature and emerged in this thesis is the central importance of listening to what planners consider successful practice and good outcomes. It raises an important distinction between how the planner navigates this difficult path between values and obligations. Andrew Maxwell in particular articulated what he felt was a

central duty to listen to his staff, absorbing their recommendations and the results of the data they collected, and faithfully translating that work into both the Mayor's ear and the broader work of government. As a manager, he felt obliged to use his expertise to coordinate work and responsibility, not interpret the work of other expert planners. When a planner advocates for her values, she tends to do so through well-established standards of fairness and public service; she is upholding the institution of planning itself by reflecting those values into the substance of her work.

The theory of communicative action recognizes that the planner, despite their political environment, must still employ a good deal of professional discretion in many areas of their work (Forester 1984, 103). This could include who they associate with, how they organize their time, and how they perform perfunctory duties. For instance, a planner may exert considerable control on a decision depending on whom they invite to meetings and negotiations, with whom they decide to share information, and what information they decide to share. However, something that is not commonly discussed is the extent to which this discretion is overwhelmed by that of superiors or rendered ineffectual due to a planner's advisory role. This certainly seems to be a factor at play in both Dayton and Worcester, and prior to the reestablishment of a planning office in 2010, Syracuse as well.

Visioning and planning can serve an important role for cities that have suffered severe decline. Accepting a "new reality" and forgoing hopes of returning to a bountiful industrial wellspring necessarily requires a transition from backward looking to future-focused outlooks (Hoyt and Leroux 2007). Comprehensive planning can function as a kind of withdrawal aid to help wean city leadership and the old guard from a nostalgic conservatism and help educate

leaders and citizens about complex urban issues on both sides of public/private divide, moving them toward honest assessments and new possibilities. In the words of Aaron Sorrell (2015), undertaking a comprehensive planning process meant

. . . looking ahead at what the next twenty years hold and trying to get ahead of that; setting the stage for a sustained comeback for the city, but a different city . Over the past few years one of the sustained efforts we've been a part of is talking to community groups and neighborhood associations about what the future of Dayton really looks like and getting past that mourning phase of "woe is me, it's not like it was twenty five years ago," and reframing the issue in terms of what we want the city to be like in next twenty five years, because those 90,000 jobs are not coming back in our lifetime, so how do we set the stage for redevelopment in the future?

Outside of strong leadership, the presence or absence of a comprehensive plan, and the relationship of that plan to operational priorities and neighborhood investment were among the most salient elements linking planning to progressive principles and objectives. For two of the cities in this thesis, setting the vision and agenda for planning was or had been the domain of economic development staff. Steve Kearney was working in Syracuse's Office of Economic Development when he was tasked with establishing a planning team. In Worcester, all planning functions (except those associated with the Department of Public Works) occur under the rubric of economic development. In Dayton, the planning department is more closely associated with housing and community development, but still works closely with economic development staff. Whereas Kearney warned about the dangers of comprehensive planning in the absence of specific and focused redevelopment efforts, Sorrell spoke to the administrative challenges of aligning planning efforts across departments. "Part of [managing change]," he said, "is

managing expectations; aligning internal city resources and policies so that the Planning Department, the Code Department, the Department of Public Works are talking the same talk and walking the same walk, so we know what we're all doing and doing it in concert. It's easy to say but its not always well executed."

For planners in medium-size cities that have suffered decline, the potential positive influence of comprehensive planning should not be overlooked, but it needs to be tied to real gains. Concentrated focus on hard-hit areas outside of the downtown can have a real impact on changing attitudes and getting people to accept the value of planning as a tool for empowerment and positive change, not just for elite interests. Downtowns serve important symbolic and democratizing functions. They engage the outside world, reflect a city's identity, and can be sources of both derision and pride. In weak market cities, downtown investment is typical of smart growth strategies that rely on attracting young professionals and catering to particular lifestyles. As Kearney said, "If you can't attract quality workers, you're not going to succeed." This can cause discomfort and resentment from other neighborhoods. However, Kearney's proposition that progressive planning is successful planning rested on this idea:

When I say success, I mean that your planning has led to a successful outcome. Be it health and wellness strategies; be it better educational opportunities; be it better neighborhoods. Rebuilding your downtown is great, but that's market rate housing; that's creating an environment for restaurants, for walkability, for lights. You need to have a job to eat at those restaurants and enjoy the amenities that a revitalized downtown provides.

Sorrell articulated the progressive potential for physical planning by framing it as a pragmatic way to understand, respond to, and influence economic factors.

"Progressive planning is knowing your market and staying one step ahead of it," he said. "It's thinking about what the next project or program is that will enhance

a sense of place, and then from a social justice standpoint making sure we are paying particular attention to the vulnerable citizens in those areas. The homeless, the mentally ill, the frail and elderly, making sure that they are not being affected in a negative way by our policies and development pressures.”

The Culture of Planning in Dayton, Syracuse and Worcester

Planners, it turns out, tend to collaborate. They network often and rely on each other to share information, skills, and strategies. For instance, in Syracuse, Andrew Maxwell understood one of his primary roles as planning director as listening to the ideas and opinions of the expert staff planners in his department and reflecting them into the coordinated work of city government, development objectives, and regulatory structure of local ordinances. In Worcester, Lara Bold stressed the importance of communication with other practicing planners through regional listservs and national online forums, such as Planetizen. This ongoing communication helped her feel less isolated, empowered her to explore new ideas, and benefit from the very practical elements of managing specific issues and developments at the local level by soliciting the expertise and experiences of her peers. In Dayton, Aaron Sorrell made specific mention of the camaraderie planners experience in wider circles of communication. “When you think about the planning community there are relatively few of us, so we tend to know each other and to socialize, and so there’s a lot of informal coordination that happens that is not necessarily institutionalized processes and procedures; it’s just that we all like each other” (Sorrell 2015).

All of the planners interviewed for this thesis and many who are depicted in the literature highlight a dedication to public service as a primary motivation. They usually saw themselves in a vocation that was much broader than any

specific position they might hold. However, unlike fire or police departments, planning is not often considered an essential public service, and both the emphasis on planning and the departments that pursue it can vary widely from one place to the next, suggesting that progressive values, though broadly held, are unevenly applied. Even if planners were dedicated to promoting progressive practices whenever they could, whether it is through explicit advocacy, subtle negotiation or tactical communication, they may not enjoy the full benefits of a planning department working in concert toward agreed-upon goals or the immediate camaraderie that accompanies professionals working in the same vocation.

It is not uncommon to see planning departments separated from other related activities such as housing and community development, economic development, and zoning and regulatory services; they may share the same offices or function within the same domain of government or they may not. Creating a culture of progressive planning, therefore, often depends on the role of government leadership, specifically mayors, city managers and council members, and the importance they place on planning as both an essential function of city government, and an instrument for public input and progressive action. Leadership was a key ingredient of effective planning cited in every conversation in this thesis. However this thesis indicated that smaller cities might be less likely than larger ones to have dedicated planning departments that coordinate functions across different topical areas and influence policy beyond specific land use regulations.

This thesis presents a way of thinking about planning culture in relation to the functional and structural elements of planning departments within city government. Dayton and Syracuse rely more on public participation by way of

comprehensive and strategic planning than Worcester, for instance, and both of those cities have robust landbanking initiatives and institutionalized smart growth agendas. Categorizing the role of planning in the three cities as is done here—Planning as foundational, but weak in Dayton, foundational and strong in Syracuse, and supportive and weak in Worcester—help in beginning to understand the potential array of responsibilities and policy objectives one is likely to encounter in each city, but does little to predict the extent to which progressive values are institutionalized in the broader municipal culture. It is argued here that such an understanding is more likely a function of leadership, and is mediated through authority delegated to leaders by the form of government and the standards and methods that are common within those roles and upheld by professional associations and communities of practice. It does not, however, suggest that a commitment to progressive values or practices is dependent on any of these factors, simply that leadership is essential for their taking root in municipal culture and that the structure of government can be resistive or conducive to the various ways this can happen.

What follows is a brief review of some of the ways planners in Dayton, Syracuse and Worcester have fostered transformative, and potentially progressive, ideas in relation to the shared challenges these cities have faced.

All of the planners interviewed for this thesis were motivated by social justice issues and valued social inclusion. Both Steve Kearney and Lara Bold specifically mentioned the importance of social inclusion, whether wedded to ideas of “successful planning” or “progressive planning.” Bold, for instance, defined progressive planning “as an open and fair dialogue process by which the strengths and weaknesses of a community are discussed by a wide variety of stakeholders, including typically underrepresented groups. This dialogue leads to

broader policy discussions and addresses issues of space, land, resources and opportunities.”

A focus on quality of life and livability was the underpinning of several efforts to drive investment and reach a tipping point for revitalization. For instance, smart growth investments that improved walkability, remediated environmental liabilities, created open space, and encouraged development and urban design that was consistent with historic infrastructure were seen as generating demand by creating spaces that people want to be in and live near. For these reasons it also shaped the way planners conceived of progressivism. For Kearney, it was the culmination of a project itself that was progressive. A planning project that was not based on careful consideration of citizen interests and inclusive participatory process was, by definition, a failure, but it was also a failure if it met these criteria and failed to materialize. In either case, the project failed to improve quality of life. Progressivism, in this sense, is the physical realization of the community’s will within the necessary constraints of time and budget.

The availability and acquisition of resources as a prerequisite for change was an important element in the interviews. Kearney addressed this issue head on, and he made an important observation that successful planning in smaller weak market cities is dependent on finding the resources to make large up-front investments and get the ball rolling. He mentioned a planner’s ability to foster partnerships, identify and acquire grant funding, and the established presence of philanthropic interests within a city as crucial elements of a successful revitalization strategy. Maxwell also cited the important role of outside investment—in this case the Bloomberg Foundation—in supporting critical initiatives and funding new approaches to governance and concentrated focus on

specific policy issues. Lemmie, Maxwell and Kearney all understood the limited resources available to weak market cities as an essential goad to innovation and the necessity to be efficient and use targeted approaches to change. Lemmie, however, was the only one to specifically identify the community as a resource in the actual work of government and delivery of government services. Her approach, folding citizens into the intimate process of joint problem solving, is perhaps the most radical (and progressive) departure from other forms of resource acquisition encountered in the study, such as the pursuit of grants, private funding, or federal and state resources. Lemmie suggests that citizens may be a largely untapped resource that when understood and accessed, can increase the both the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

The image and perception of a city was clearly an important element of how planners framed and interpreted their roles. This ranged from the potential positive effects that smart growth and investment in public amenities could have on public perception, but also implied a strategic way to attract more business and residents to the city. In addition, this implied the procedural necessity to inform and engage residents and stakeholders in such a way that they could envision new possibilities for their neighborhoods and public spaces, know that these visions and goals were realistic and achievable, and feel that they had a positive role to play in their realization. For the planners, this meant listening, sharing information, explaining concepts, and managing expectations. This has particular significance to urban-form progressives who are operating in cities where community planning and public engagement are not the norm. Shifting image and perception may have to work against a long tradition of public frustration and apathy, with the risk that comprehensive planning and public participation without results can easily backfire, exacerbating frustrations and

further alienating residents and stakeholders. “We can’t be all things to all people,” Sorrell said, “. . . we need to be very specific and focused in our redevelopment efforts, and not spread the peanut butter too thin by trying to cover the whole sandwich, so to speak.”

Finally, there is a link between progressive culture and an ability to perceive positive gains. Kearney specifically mentioned the importance of starting small, taking an incremental approach, and being persistent. For this reason he believed that comprehensive planning had limited value if not coupled with smaller projects that produced real and visible results. A good example of this is the Connective Corridor project in Syracuse, which was a partnership between Syracuse University and the city that sought to physically tie the university campus to the downtown. It was a major planning effort that was mentioned by Kearney and Maxwell. It was credited with transforming the image of the area, elevating people’s perceptions of planning as a valuable and effective tool for change, and leading to the reestablishment of the city’s planning department.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis set out to find if there was any relationship between the size of U.S. cities and the kinds of practices municipal governments engage in to plan a better future for people who are disadvantaged, marginalized, or physically isolated from the rest of society. It sought to do this by first looking at several structural factors that might explain differences between large and medium-size cities as they affect planners. Of particular interest are those elements of government that have direct bearing on how public-sector planners perform their jobs; the historical, professional, organizational, political, and cultural elements of a planner's universe that constrain or enable their day-to-day work. Second, it looked at the predominant ways planners think of these issues in the abstract—the theoretical models that both inform planners' actions and our understanding of their behaviors. Last, it asked planners themselves what they thought about their own practices and the progressive ideals they might embody. It attempted to reconcile the potential, theoretical constraints of planning practice with the actual ways planners view themselves and their work.

Advocates of progressive planning have encouraged planners to be more forthright and take more risks, arguing that their public service mandate allows a greater degree of political power and protection than they realize, and that they can push those boundaries to the benefit of poor and working class families as well as administrative effectiveness (Krumholz 1996). While it is true that planning practice is shaped by the norms and standards of the profession, it is also evident that planners' primary effectiveness as advocates and change agents depend on the leadership of city managers and elected officials. There is no doubt that planners, across the board, could benefit from deliberate strategies

that make the process of “muddling through” more effective, but without direct authority over the basic purpose and direction of planning in relation to other government functions, they are essentially forced into narrowly defined roles with potentially limited influence.

In summary, the three principle questions this thesis set out to answer have raised more, perhaps more salient issues specifically related to a planner’s discretion and the role of leadership in orienting planning and related functions toward more inclusive and comprehensive practices. In regards to who among medium-size city municipal employees serve in the role of planner, it is clear that this extends to a range of people working within economic development, community development, and redevelopment and housing authorities in addition to offices dealing specifically with planning and zoning. Furthermore, it is also clear that the primary “planner” in any municipal setting is fundamentally the executive authority, whether it be a mayor, city manager, or county official, that sets administrative agendas and orients policy goals and practices either toward or away from a narrow or broad range of interests and functions. These might involve a more or less strict interpretation of a government’s role as public service provider, but will undoubtedly involve the degree to which these leaders are able to balance the interests of developers, business and civic leaders, state and federal authorities, special interest groups, boards and council members, and the citizens in the neighborhoods and communities they serve.

Understanding the progressive potential of leadership as it relates to planning, therefore, involves an understanding of how well government leaders foster an organizational culture that allows its associated practices to flourish. If based on the idea that a planner’s obligation to progressive values, as defined by the AICP, would be made explicit in practice, it can be assumed that such a culture

would promote collaboration, inquiry, and decision-making influence across this diverse field of players.

What are the opinions of municipal planners in medium-size cities in regards to progressive practice? By and large, there was no consensus on the actual term “progressive” as it relates to planning. Some interpreted it as advocating for citizens who were incapable of or did not have the capacity to advocate for their own interests, especially in regards to specific public initiatives and policies. Others interpreted it as executing plans that had their origin in a community process; that “progress,” in the strictest sense, meant change, albeit in alignment with the desires of a community. Without successful implementation, then, such plans were a failure, and likewise failed to progress anything. Others interpreted progressivism as a public process based in open dialogue and joint decision-making.

However, progressive practice as expressed in these ideals did not necessarily reflect the reality of the planners’ daily work or the orientation of their departments. These values were typically expressed in a planner’s basic motivation to enter public service in the first place, and remained elevated, if clouded, as a set of aspirations that competed with daily affronts complicating their realization in actual practice. The clearest articulation of progressivism in practice was undoubtedly the idea that physical space was (and should be) an embodiment of values, not just a compromise of competing interest in the public realm. In this sense, ideas central to concepts of sustainable development and smart growth played an important role in connecting economic growth and development to a set of values that linked growth policy, land use, and design standards to quality of life and access to opportunities attainable through government-mediated partnerships with private interests and community desires.

However, despite this articulation of values, there was nonetheless a clear economic imperative that shaped the adoption of physical growth strategies and objectives.

Finally, regarding how and from whom municipal planners in medium-size cities learned about and were involved in progressive practices, the answer to the first one was most clearly each other, while the answer to the second remained largely elusive, primarily because planners were already doing many of the things theorists of progressive and equity planning have recommended in the literature. Planners relied heavily on their peers, professional networks, formal education and academic contacts, and standard avenues for information sharing, including journals, listservs, online forums, conferences, and seminars. While most of the planners mentioned the importance of these resources to expanding their knowledge base and improving their practice, they almost all mentioned the difficulties in taking advantage of them due to the heavy time and resource constraints of their jobs and departments. For the most part, planners appear to pursue certain practices based not so much on the nature of the practice itself, but on directing inquiries and building networks in those places that are grappling with similar issues and constraints, or in consultation with experts in their existing networks that they think can provide insight to a particular problem or articulate the range of issues and interests involved. Again, this supports the idea that progressive values tend to be latent, general, and motivational, rather than drive particular policies or practices, which tend to be situational and opportunistic.

This thesis demonstrates that planners working in medium-size cities are already doing many of the things that leading progressive planners advocate. They are partnering with community organizations, advocating for disenfranchised groups, educating officials and planning boards about novel

policies and practices; they are opportunistic about how they advance progressive policies, utilizing policy windows and mandates to bring in fresh ideas and new voices; they are behaving with professionalism, negotiating conflicting interests dispassionately and presenting alternative approaches in measured and reasonable language. However important these actions are, this thesis also suggests that planners' pursuit of explicitly progressive policy in medium-size cities is severely hampered by the constraints of government and an imperative economic focus. Not only does this limit the potential progressive gains that can be achieved, it predisposes planners to remain within the confines of land use policy and physical growth controls, where concern for social and economic justice tend to be secondary to economic development objectives.

There are several impediments to progressive planning practice in small and medium-size cities that are not functions of size per se, but reflect different social, economic and political forces that are more likely to exist together without countervailing trends. There is an argument to be made that urban-form progressivism, as based in both comprehensive and area master planning, is a substitute for bona fide progressive policies that directly address issues of poverty, inequality, and economic opportunity. However, without the benefit of such planning efforts, the fact remains that planners are both limited in how they recommend new policy changes and denied one of the few established mechanisms for engaging with the community in a deliberate and meaningful way. The professional values and standards that are embodied in technical and physical planning competencies may help create an anchor for planners allowing the development of more explicitly progressive practices, even if only to the extent that they are endorsed as practical elements of effective plans.

There are many lessons for practicing planners that could be derived from this thesis. While this is a limited set of suggestions, one thing that is clear is that planners who desire to pursue more progressive policies need to have a keen sense of relationships, what weight they have to throw around, and where that weight will best help to tip the scales toward effective change. It is also clear that for planning educators and scholars interested in progressive practice, special attention needs to be paid to the lack of consensus on what constitutes progressivism in the first place, and the various ways progressivism is manifest in the underlying values of practicing planners. Creating a more robust and effective network of practicing planners may require clarifying the connections between popular practices and their potential for progressive or regressive consequences. Articulating these relationships means giving students of planning the tools to coherently convey the rationale behind certain practices and critically evaluate them in ways that are meaningful to decision makers, citizens, and special interests alike. These key lessons are:

1). *A planner needs to identify existing sources of official power.* This may seem obvious, but if a planner is going to push the boundaries of power or challenge the exercise of power, then she had better know and understand the wellspring from which it derived. This means understanding the structure of local government and the charter on which it rests. It also means understanding what powers are granted by state and federal authorities, and how those powers are being exercised appropriately, minimally, or not at all. This allows the planner to conceptualize their role not merely in terms of what is expected of them at the organizational level, but what power is explicitly granted them, what they are obligated to do, and what they are permitted to consider as fundamental elements of their role as public servants.

2). *Planners need to understand how information flows (or doesn't) into the hands of decision-makers.* Knowing the way decisions are made is just one part of understanding how they can be influenced; understanding how information reaches decision-makers and what weight they give to it is also important.

3). *Planners may change practice through policy and resource allocation rather than ad hoc solutions.* This applies at every level of procedure, from office management to federal law. This can also be “official” or “unofficial.” This can mean changing one’s own personal practice or that of an entire staff, department, or even a city board or council. Actively seeking out new resources in conjunction with other departmental objectives and the goals of decision makers could help knit together objectives, build bridges across administrative silos, and help identify areas where there might be duplicated efforts or competing and contradictory policy objectives. The most powerful aspect of this recommendation is that it can begin with one’s own personal practice. Again and again throughout this thesis, leadership, listening skills, and resources were mentioned as centrally important to effective planning. Interestingly, strong leadership was closely associated with good listening skills, and listening skills with exposing new or latent resources and building the capacity to act.

Perhaps the greatest lesson from this thesis is for anyone in a municipal leadership role, not just planners. Leadership is essential to reorienting government culture toward new methods and practices, and this means allowing the perceptions, thoughts and feelings at the core of municipal and professional cultures to come to the fore and coalesce in ways that resolve conflict and aid in the actual work of government. That requires leaders who understand the potentially conflicting roles of professional standards and personal practice, such

as a desire to promote social justice while deriving professional influence from a neutral disposition. A lesson for leaders, then, is the need for environments that do not suppress the professional and personal values of one group over another, but open the channels that allow them to be expressed and acknowledged at the executive level, freeing line managers and individuals to collaborate and work more effectively on the issues that are important to them and the community at large.

As a final thought, then, progressive planning has relied on calls for greater integration between city governments and the diversity of communities they serve, bringing the efforts of neighborhood leaders and the opinions of ordinary citizens into the fold of official governance to address problems of inequality, segregation, and physical decay (Davidoff 1965, Arnstein 1969, Krumholz and Clavel 1994). From an administrative perspective, progressive planning practice has often focused on housing, school integration, and social services, buoyed by federal funding and legal and legislated mandates, but many experts are now saying similar things; engage in smart planning, invest in the basics, and find ways to create new opportunities and reduce inequality (Katz and Bradley 2013; Ryan 2012, Tumber 2011; Hoyt and Leroux 2007).

Cities need to step up, they say, and claim the important role history has handed them. They also say they need to do it at the local and regional level where people actually live and work, and within the political and social structures with which they are familiar. If the moral imperative were not enough to motivate the work of planners in the name of equity and social justice, there is no lack of practical reasons why the pursuit of these goals remains essential.

APPENDIX A

Supplemental Tables

TABLE A1. Forms of Government for all U.S. Cities with Populations of 100,000 or Greater, 2010*

Size Category	Samples		Number in Sample		Percent
	Sample Size	Percent of Total	Council-Manager	Mayor-Council	Council-Manager
All Cities >100,000 people	286	100	165	105	58
Largest 25 Cities, by population	25	9	8	17	32
Cities with populations >250,000	75	26	30	43	40
Cities with populations 100,000; <250,000	210	73	135	62	64

Sources: National League of Cities, Forms of City Government. <http://www.nlc.org/build-skills-and-networks-resources-cities-11-forms-of-municipal-government>. Various City Websites and Charters.

*Only cities with either council-manager or mayor-council forms are tabulated

TABLE A2. Change in Composition and Rank of Workforce by Occupation for Subject City MSAs, 1990-2015 (thousands)

Workforce Sector	1990			2015			Change	
	No.	%	Rank	No.	%	Rank	No.	%
Dayton								
Total Workforce	399	100%	—	376	100%	—	-24	-6%
Health and Education	46	12%	4	71	19%	1	25	54%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	68	17%	3	65	17%	2	-3	-5%
Government	74	18%	2	61	16%	3	-12	-17%
Professional Services	46	11%	5	51	14%	4	5	11%
Manufacturing	79	20%	1	40	11%	5	-39	-50%
Total of top five sectors	313	78%	—	288	77%	—	-25	-8%
Syracuse								
Total Workforce	317	100%	—	319	100%	—	1	0%
Health and Education	38	12%	4	66	21%	1	29	76%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	72	23%	1	65	20%	2	-7	-10%
Government	55	17%	2	57	18%	3	2	4%
Professional Services	28	9%	5	34	11%	4	6	22%
Manufacturing	47	15%	3	24	8%	5	-23	-48%
Total of top five sectors	239	75%	—	247	77%	—	7	3%
Worcester								
Total Workforce	243	100%	—	352	100%	—	109	45%
Health and Education	33	14%	4	67	19%	1	34	102%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	47	19%	2	54	15%	2	7	15%
Government	33	14%	3	45	13%	3	11	34%
Professional Services	26	11%	5	28	8%	4	1	5%
Manufacturing	50	21%	1	27	8%	5	-23	-47%
Total of top five sectors	189	78%	—	219	62%	—	30	16%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Timeseries 1990-2015, <http://data.bls.gov-timeseries>

APPENDIX B

Supplemental Tables



OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH

Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research
Institutional Review Board
FWA00002063

March 11, 2015 | Notice of Action

IRB Study # 1501048 | Status: ACTIVE

ATTENTION: BEFORE CONDUCTING ANY RESEARCH, PLEASE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THIS NOTICE AS IT CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPER STUDY PROCEDURES.

Title: Creating a Culture of Progressive Planning Practice in America's Small and Medium-Size Cities

PI: James McKeag
Faculty Advisor: Lorlene Hoyt

The PI is responsible for all information contained in both this notice of action and on the following Investigator Responsibilities Sheet.

Only copies of approved stamped consent forms and other study materials may be utilized when conducting your study.

This research protocol now meets the requirements set forth by the Office for Human Research Protections in 45 CFR 46 under Expedited Category 7.

Reviewed 3/9/2015 – Expires 3/8/2016

- Approved for 12 participants for the duration of the study.

Protocol Management:

- All translated study documents must be submitted for review, approval, and stamping prior to use.
- For all changes to the protocol, submit: *Request for Protocol Modification* form
- All Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems must be reported to the Office of the IRB promptly (no later than 7 calendar days after first awareness of the problem) using the appropriate forms.
- Six weeks prior to the expiration of the protocol on 3/8/2016, investigators must submit either a *Request for Continuing Review* or a *Request for Study Closure*
- All forms can be found at: <http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/IRB/Forms.htm>

IRB Administrative Representative Initials: _____

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself . . .
 - Where are you from?
 - Where did you work before this?
 - What made you want to pursue a planning related career?
2. What are/were your primary responsibilities as a planning director?
3. How might you define progressive planning? Social justice?
 - What (values) are important to you as a planner?
 - How important is it for you to foster these values within your department?
4. As a primary decision-maker, how do you consider the interests and needs of other government colleagues?
5. What are/were the most pressing issues in the city you are/were trying address?
 - What are some of the ways you have responded to issues of poverty and neighborhood disinvestment?
6. How/from whom do you determine the needs of the community?
 - How do/did you learn about new strategies and practices?
 - Please tell me about some of the innovative or new strategies you have adopted and why.
7. What were some of the critical moments or tough spots you faced as a planner?
8. What are some of the surprises or lessons you learned?
9. Are you left with any particular puzzles or can you give any specific advice for other planners?

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