

Economic Growth, Politics, and Comprehensive Planning: Negotiating Sustainable Development
in Saratoga Springs, NY.

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Introduction

As a small town that is “blessed” with the “problem” of growth, Saratoga Springs faces the increasingly imperative challenge of planning for future development (personal communication, April 7, 2014). Planning must achieve a difficult and oftentimes problematic balance between growth, as a means of maintaining economic prosperity, and restraint, in order to work within the limitations presented by natural resources, with the overall goal of maintaining a healthy society. This struggle is perhaps best epitomized by the unofficial motto of Saratoga Springs, which refers to the town as a: “city in the country”, expressing that achieving this balance is integral to the character of Saratoga Springs itself. The concept of sustainable development was conceived as a solution to the conflictive relationship between growth and restraint, through incorporating three core pillars, economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity; into traditional definitions of development. Sustainable development also necessarily includes considerations of subsequent generations by stating that development is only sustainable when it “meets the needs of the present without compromising those of the future” (*Our Common Future*, 1987, p. 41).

Though planning practice and sustainable development theory share common goals, such as the three tenets of economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social equity, as well as preparing for the future, there is little literature connecting the two disciplines. Sustainable development is generally vaguely defined and lacks agreed upon guidelines for implementation. Urban planning, on the other hand, is a largely practical field that does not deeply consider the theoretical dimensions of development. This disparity between urban planning and sustainable development led us to question whether sustainable development could be implemented through urban planning. We posit that comprehensive planning may be an opportunity for the

achievement of sustainable development at the local scale, and use the past comprehensive plans and current political process of Saratoga Springs as a case study for the exploring this topic.

The comprehensive plan of Saratoga Springs is often referred to as a “visionary document” and is considered “a long term roadmap for development” (personal communication, April 1, 2014; personal communication, April 17, 2014). As such, a comprehensive plan is both a practical planning document that shapes future development and a document that incorporates more abstract principles and ideas to reflect community values and goals. One example of the inclusion of an abstract principle or theoretical concept is in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, which appropriates the generally accepted definition of sustainable development as its guiding principle. The explicit reference to the United Nations definition of sustainable development suggests that these plans look to implement a global standard or mode of development on a local scale, while also indicating a level of awareness of these concepts. For this reason, the comprehensive plans and the comprehensive planning process may present an avenue for bridging the gap between urban planning and sustainable development.

Research Purpose and Design

The purpose of our research is to examine the ways in which communities may approximate sustainable development through urban planning, because, as previously noted, there is a lack of connection between the two fields. This suggests that research such as ours is needed to augment our understanding of both urban planning and sustainable development. There is also little research on the politics of comprehensive planning (Centner, 2009; Berke, 2002). Therefore, in addition to studying the content of past comprehensive plans, our case study also analyzes the political process as a medium that translates sustainable development theory into the practice of planning. Saratoga Springs is a good location for this research because the

town has frequently drafted comprehensive plans and is currently updating the 2001 comprehensive plan, thus, it presents a unique opportunity to study both the evolution of comprehensive plans and the political process behind planning.

Our guiding research questions are:

How have the comprehensive plans changed over time?

When did sustainable development rhetoric enter the language of the comprehensive plans?

How is sustainable development defined or implemented by the Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan?

How do politics influence environmental discourse through the planning process?

We attempt to answer these questions through our research design, which consists of two components: the first component is a historical and qualitative analysis of nine Saratoga Springs comprehensive and master plans, dating from 1949 to the current draft update of the 2001 plan. The second component examines the political process involved in developing these plans and includes semi-structured interviews with city officials, urban planning experts, and local interest group members; as well as observation of the comprehensive plan committee meetings.

Theoretical Definition of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development became a widely used term after being explicitly introduced in a report by the United Nations World Commission on Economic Development in 1987, titled *Our Common Future* and more commonly known as the Brundtland Report. Sustainable development, as defined by *Our Common Future* (1987) “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 41). Embedded in this definition is the implication that economic development can be pursued simultaneously with environmental conservation, which is understood as the preservation of natural resources as a basis for future growth. In this way, the definition of sustainable development attempts to bridge environmentalist perspectives that typically argue against development as causing environmental degradation, and economic perspectives that advocate for

increased economic growth as means of alleviating poverty; this reconciliation has the overall effect of shifting the discussion away from limits of growth to sustainability (Mitcham, 1995). This is supported by the way that the Brundtland report relates sustainable development to limits, stating that it “does imply limits”, albeit “not absolute limits”; rather it defines limits in terms of what is currently feasible as dictated by “the present state” of technology, society and the environment’s capacity to absorb the effects of human actions (Mitcham, 1995, p. 16). In this context, limits are addressed as being dependent on the environment and necessary to consider as parameters for growth, but also relative to time and human progress, and thus, not restricting. This dichotomy satisfies both conservation and development, and for this reason, forms the central argument underlying sustainable development theory. In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s the concept of sustainability was expanded from definitions solely related to economic growth or environmental protection to also include social contexts, with the concept of “sustainable society,” coined by Lester Brown and Denis Haynes of the Worldwatch Institute (Mitcham, 1995, p. 321). In this definition, sustainability necessarily applies to all aspects of social and cultural life, including religion, businesses, schools, civil society organizations, and other facets of life within communities (Mitcham, 1995). The inclusion of social dimensions in sustainable development has resulted in the three core tenets of sustainable development that we study today: economic development, environmental protection, and social equity.

The influence of the Brundtland Commission’s report has been vast, and the concept of sustainable development has become widely accepted and used in various concepts, to the extent that more than eighty different definitions of the term existed by 1994 (Mebratu, 1998). This has led some to criticize sustainability as a “plastic word”, meaning that it can “mean almost anything”, and argue that this ambiguity has hindered the ability of communities to actually

implement strategies for sustainable development (Mitcham, 1995, p. 322; Fergus, 2005, p. 23). This difficulty can be seen in subsequent international conferences such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development or the Rio Conference in 1992 (Mebratu, 1998). These conferences raised questions concerning what sustainable development might mean at the local scale, how it might be implemented practically, and how it might be measured. Because these questions were never fully answered, however, experts generally choose to eschew the practical implications of sustainable development to simply use it as a guiding concept for development and planning (Mebratu, 1998). Thus sustainable development remains vague; and though it originally received wide consensus, this eventually translated into disagreement over the various definitions that have emerged out of the ambiguity of the concept and its application (Mebratu, 1998). Further, despite its contradictions and vagueness, sustainable development has become today's dominant development paradigm, but due to the lack of clear instructions for implementation, sustainable development theory lends itself to a variety of disciplines and has been used by governments at various scales and contexts (Neamtu, 2012). For this reason, disagreement over the definition of sustainable development has not only failed to produce action towards implementing sustainable progress, but also has meant that sustainable development has taken on meanings relevant mostly to dominant ideological perspectives, such as those centered on economic prosperity (Fergus, 2005). Therefore, today, sustainable development generally means something different from its theoretical origins, as a result of the ambiguity of its original definition and specifications for implementation.

On Parallel Tracks: Sustainable Development Theory and Planning Practice

As mentioned previously, in spite of its difficulties, sustainable development is today's mainstream growth paradigm, and is considered essential to ecological, economic, and social

issues at the local, national, regional, and global scales. Accordingly, sustainable development theory fundamentally affects approaches to urban development (Kreuger and Buckingham, 2012). Urban sustainability intends to re-imagine communities where people live and work by emphasizing inclusivity and growth within limits presented by the natural resources (Kreuger and Buckingham, 2012). The concept of urban sustainability is defined by the Environmental Protection Agency as “the effort to reconcile the competing demands of regional development, namely community integrity, economic development and environmental protection” (Jabareen, 2006). As this definition serves to demonstrate, urban planning goals correspond to the tenets of sustainable development theory, which attempts to balance environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic prosperity. Despite the seemingly apparent common aspirations of planning and sustainable development theory, scholars and researchers suggest a gap exists between sustainable development theory and urban planning practice, as there is no general agreement on how to translate the theory of sustainable development into the practice of urban planning (Grant, 2009; Zeemering, 2002; Conroy and Berke, 2000). For this reason, urban planning and sustainable development run on two parallel conceptual tracks.

History of Comprehensive Planning

Local governments are responsible for land-use planning, which characterizes the development and growth of a community (State of Georgia, 2013). The planning process typically culminates in important documents such “Comprehensive Plans” or “Master Plans” (State of Georgia, 2013). The term “comprehensive” refers to the value, scope, and importance of this planning document. The scale of a comprehensive plan covers the entire geography of a city and addresses the various components that make up the urban system, through its recognition that the system is composed of many complex relationships and the functions of this

system directly impact a town's physical form (Innes, 1996). Yet the plan's goals and recommendations are general guidelines rather than specific policies that must be implemented, such as zoning ordinances (Innes, 1996). A comprehensive plan's guiding recommendations provide a degree of certainty on how, when, and where development will or should occur (Georgia, 2013). Additionally, the plan "...articulates the City's goals for land use development, design and enhancement... [as well as] the justification for planning and regulatory policies that encourage desired development and efficient growth patterns to maximize the City's social and economic potential (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 3). In this sense, comprehensive plans are opportunities for changing communities to reflect on past development and envision a future for the city.

In 1954, The United States Congress passed the Federal Housing Act which included section 701, a federal planning grant program (Nelson, 2006). Over sixteen years, the federal government spent more than one billion dollars to fund state and regional planning through planning grants (Nelson, 2006). By 1980, funding for the grants was exhausted, and since then, local planning has not received support from the program. Today, planning initiatives take place at various scales, but funding must be provided by the community (Nelson, 2006). In Saratoga Springs plans from 1970 until 1978 were partially funded by the Act and the New York State Comprehensive Planning Assistance Program (*Saratoga County Land-Use and Development Plan*, 1978). Even after federal funding programs were canceled in 1980, Saratoga Springs maintained its commitment to comprehensive plans as its guiding development documents. The New York Department of State claims "the comprehensive plan should provide the backbone for the local zoning law" and that "to understand the power to zone, one must understand the comprehensive plan" (New York State Department Of State, 2009). Consequently, master plans

and comprehensive plans exist as the guiding documents for Saratoga Springs's development and growth.

Local Politics, Sustainable Development, and Urban Planning

The lack of theoretical consensus on what constitutes sustainable planning practices means that the implementation and definition of sustainable development are mediated through local political processes (Krueger and Buckingham, 2012). To approximate sustainable development, local political institutions design frameworks and policies that create "sustainable forms" (Jabareen, 2006). In order to achieve this, the planning process attempts to develop a community vision, by asking "what kind of community do we really want and how should we realize it?" (Tomalty, 2009). This vision is realized through consensus building and collaborative dialogue in the planning process, to promote transparency, non-confrontational politics, and community participation. With the help of planners as experts, various stakeholders and community members identify best land-use practices for the city's "common good" (Berke, 2002). In addition to providing advice and expertise, planners play a crucial role as mediators, communicators, and consensus builders (Berke, 2002). By listening to the concerns of citizens and stakeholders, they can directly address sustainability with practical, local solutions (Berke, 2002; Zeemering, 2009). In this sense, local participatory politics are a practice of sustainability. Therefore, planners stress the importance of public participation—and participants must trust that their comments, suggestions, and decisions will be welcomed by planners and incorporated into plans (Berke, 2002).

The same participatory structures that allow for local planning to approximate sustainable development, however, are also part of deeply political processes, and frequently feature the competition of different interests which result in trade-offs between those interests (State of

Georgia, 2013). In other words, participatory politics allow for the deliberation of complex public issues, but conflicting values can undermine the planning process, so that the implementation of sustainable development is accomplished through picking winners and losers, rather than a mutually beneficial integration of priorities (Godschalk, 2004). Research on local politics reveals these conflicting logics, but is relatively understudied in the field of planning (Centner, 2009; Berke, 2002). For this reason, researchers must identify and observe how political processes might reflect power relations and competing interests of various stakeholders and community actors (Centner, 2009; Bruff, 2000). Not only is the planning process prone to conflict, but also sustainable development is a concept that is often disputed due to its various definitions, which result from a lack of guidelines for implementation, and because the principles of sustainable development, as environmental, economic, and social concerns are often pitted against each other (Centner, 2009). Individuals involved in the planning process often have disparate understandings of sustainable development that reflect their own interests and values, resulting in disagreement and trade-offs between these values and the corresponding principles of sustainable development (Centner, 2009).

Considering the various obstacles and complexities inherent in the planning process and sustainable development, Berke and Conroy (2000) ask an important question: can we identify which plans might be more successful at achieving “sustainable development?” Because sustainable development within the context of planning is largely seen as a vague ideal or rhetoric used to support the agendas specific political interests, the response to this question remains largely unanswered.

Methods

Conceptually, our research was divided into two components. The first is a longitudinal study of the comprehensive plans of Saratoga Springs. As part of this historical analysis, we performed archival research, which included gathering all of the comprehensive plans of Saratoga Springs and collecting relevant newspaper articles and other documents that might provide context for the plans. For our longitudinal study, we also analyzed the content of the plans' policy outcomes and priorities using qualitative methods. The second component of our research involved a latitudinal study of the political process of comprehensive planning in Saratoga Springs. In this case study, we attended comprehensive plan committee meetings and performed semi-structured interviews with various local politicians, stakeholders, planning experts and involved community members. In total, the combined longitudinal and latitudinal components of our study included four research methods: archival research of newspaper articles and primary documents including 10 comprehensive plans, qualitative content analysis of those plans, direct observation of 5 comprehensive plan committee meetings, and twelve semi-structured interviews (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

1. Archival Research

We first gathered all of the previous comprehensive plans available from the Saratoga Springs Planning Office, resulting in ten comprehensive plans, spanning from 1949 until today, with parts of the plan currently being drafted. To inform our understanding of the plans and their historical context, we gathered and analyzed related planning documents, such as archived comprehensive plan board meeting minutes, documents from stakeholders, and news stories from the past and present (Marshall and Rossman, 2011) (Appendix A). The minutes from the previous 2013 comprehensive plan meetings provided us with a more complete view of the 2013

planning process, as we began attending meetings in January 2014. We also looked at Engage Saratoga, a website dedicated to public comment on the comprehensive plan and process. Online news articles about the recent re-appointments made in the Summer of 2013 further helped us to understand the politics of the current plan process.

2. Plan Evaluation Method

2A. Content Analysis and Prioritization

After collecting all of the plans and reading them, we performed a qualitative analysis of the content of each plan, which involved our own methodology for determining a plan's top priorities and categorizing these priorities into groups based on Tanguay et al's model of sustainable development (2009). First, we identified each plan's primary, secondary, and tertiary priorities, which required us to develop a weighting scheme. A primary priority was discussed at length, described with strong language and a highly prevalent issue throughout the plan and/or executive summary. A secondary priority was an emphasized and present issue that was revisited throughout the plan. A tertiary priority was consistently mentioned, yet was not emphasized. We then compared the content and priorities of different plans to understand the evolution of these plans and identify specific trends. After determining the top priorities of each plan, we attempted to categorize each of these priorities within a model of sustainable development theory that incorporates the three tenets of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental issues) and the overlaps between these three tenets, which are equitable (intersection of economic and social dimensions), livable (intersection of the environmental and social needs), and viable (economic dimensions that support natural systems and environment) issues (Tanguay et al., 2009). After determining each plan's three main priorities and their categorization, we counted the number of priorities categorized under each tenet. From this, we identified what the

trends of the priorities have been over time and what tenets of sustainable development have been the most common or emphasized in all the plans. Our methods have some drawbacks, however; weighting is subject to criticism given its lack of structure and arbitrary nature (Tanguay et al., 2009) Further, the content analysis is also largely subjective, as the process required us to interpret the plans (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). We relied on intercoder reliability to ensure weighting and content analysis were consistent.

2B. Policy Outcomes

The second part of our plan evaluation method included coding of the plan policy recommendations within each comprehensive plan's organized theme based on a framework of sustainable development principles developed by Berke and Conroy (2000). We evaluated the 1949, 1970, 1978, 1987, 1999, 2001, 2007 plans, and draft materials from 2014 current update. We did not evaluate the 1960 plan because we did not obtain the entire plan and the 1964 was also not evaluated because there were no policies included. We identified 555 policies in total. Each policy was classified according to its promotion of a sustainable development principle within an organizing theme of the plan (Berke and Conroy, 2000). The organizing themes were housing, transportation, environment, energy, land-use, economic development, public facilities, and open space/recreation; while the sustainable development principles were harmony with nature, livable built environment, place-based economy, equity, polluters pay, and responsible regionalism (Conroy and Berke, 2000). Classification required us to discuss and interpret the main goal and rationale of policies to reach agreement on which principle the policy promoted (Berke and Conroy, 2000). In the final step of the coding process, we totaled the number and percentages of policy outcomes in each sustainable development principle and organizing theme of all the plans. We then analyzed the total counts and percentages to determine if any

correlation between content and policy outcomes existed. This guided our content analysis of the language of the plans and policies; the length and detail of the presented organizing themes/issues; the organization of the plan; and its key objectives and goals. We cautiously examined and reviewed these documents and plans with the recognition that misinterpretation is a possibility and that our categorization of policy outcomes is inherently subjective in nature (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). To reduce this factor, we considered the broader cultural, political, and scalar contexts in which these plans were written.

3. Interviews

The latitudinal research relied on semi-structured interviews of previous city administrators including two mayors, one deputy mayor, six current comprehensive plan committee members, planners, and other community members involved in planning and city politics. We conducted twelve semi-structured interviews over a three-week period (Appendix E). Six interviews were conducted in person and the other six were phone interviews. We determined our interviewees in several ways. We initially contacted three individuals we knew were directly involved in the drafting process. After attending several comprehensive plan committee meetings and our first wave of interviews, we identified four active and involved committee members that could offer greater insight. Additionally, in our interviews, we asked interviewees to identify other potential participants to contact. The goal of the interviews was to gain various perspectives on the planning process and the plans from differing interests, such as sustainability or business interests. Part of the interviews inquired about personal opinions on the effectiveness of the plan, the planning process, and their notions of sustainable development. Interviewees could elaborate on or verify events, language, and other components of the current,

past, and proposed plan update, while also providing insight and knowledge of events surrounding the comprehensive planning process.

4. Observation of Comprehensive Plan Committee Meetings

We attended five comprehensive plan meetings in order to better understand the planning process and local politics. At each two and a half hour long meeting we counted the number of committee members and public observers present, and the number of men and women present both on the committee and in the public audience. We did not provide any public comments. As observers we took notes on the discussion, quoted committee members, and timed the length of discussions. Attending meetings allowed us to observe the language and tone of the meetings firsthand. The meetings revealed which committee members played an active role in the process as well the extent of attendance and participation of both committee members and the public. Attending meetings provided us with insight on how sustainable development theory was interpreted by committee members and how it informs the plan and planning process. We were also able to directly observe how the current plan changed from one meeting to the next.

Results and Analysis

Plan Evaluation Method

As part of our longitudinal analysis of the evolution of comprehensive plans, we used a two-step plan evaluation method that included a content analysis of the top planning priorities and coding the policy outcomes of most of the comprehensive plans we collected (Appendix B and Appendix C). The 1960 plan was not included in the content analysis because we did not receive the entire plan from the planning office. The 1976 and 1999 plans were not included in the second step of the evaluation because they lacked clear policy outcomes.

Content Analysis and Prioritization

1949: Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future

In 1949, the Saratoga Springs planning board prepared and presented its first comprehensive plan. Carl R. Comstock, M.D., a Skidmore College sociology professor, and the chairman of the planning board headed the project. Skidmore students participated in the process by collecting data “to discover what Saratogians feel and think about their city; what they like; what they dislike; what they want done” (*Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future*, 1949, p. 3). In addition to the data collected by students, the report integrates census data and other technical information provided by government agencies and professional consultants. The community concerns culminated in a guiding principle and vision statement: of “A Balanced Community Life,” as:

“(1) a community with a more stable year-round source of income; (2) a community less dependent on the outsider; (3) a community with diversified local activities: economic, cultural, educational and recreational; (4) a community with a better balance of old and young people, men and women. Basic in this idea is the belief that, by cooperative action, the people of the city can gradually shape their city into a pattern which will combine the best features from the traditional past with the changing needs of the present and future” (*Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future*, 1949, p. 3).

As this excerpt shows, the language of the vision statement relates to the UN definition of sustainable development, which also considers growth sustainable when it does not compromise the needs of future generations. Though the plan is aware of the necessity of conserving resources for future use, the plan’s rhetoric also focuses on “progress” and a new cycle of growth, anticipating the automobile’s role in development, the need for male employment, and an “outward expansion of the city.”

The plan’s primary concerns were related to issues of stormwater and flooding. The plan describes the drainage basin as a physical reality defining Saratoga Springs, as its topography

dictates the flow of water, and thus guides development. Stormwater mitigation also affected development as growth of the town demanded the extension of sewage and drainage systems, apparent in the plan's statement that "further growth of the city in population tends to push beyond the natural drainage basin and necessitates new solutions for extensions of sewage and drainage services" (*Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future*, 1949, p. 6). In addition, the plan clearly states actions for managing water, such as the need to "protect the watershed," "increase metering," "survey leakage," and "increase size of some pipes for better fire protection" (*Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future*, 1949, p. 26). Because the plan identifies features of the environment as constraints for growth and attempts to manage stormwater and growth to accommodate the limits of natural resources, it considers economic development within the context of the environmental limitations. For this reason, we classified this primary priority as a concern of "viability."

The secondary priority was related to concerns of congested, narrow streets, and poor traffic flow that inhibited the movement of goods, services, and people around the city. Congestion directly impacted downtown businesses, and much of this was attributed to the Delaware and Hudson railroad, which ran southwest to northeast through the city's center. To mitigate the traffic issue, the rerouting of the railroad was a necessary project. We determined that this priority fell under the economic area of Tanguay et al's (2009) diagram because it describes intentions to alter the built environment for economic development.

The plan's third priority was community development. Various projects such as improving water infrastructure, increasing employment, and constructing or revitalizing public facilities, like the establishment of the library on Broadway and the increase in funds for the hospital for example, were seen as important contributions to community character and the

creation of a suitable built environment. We categorized this priority as belonging to the sustainable development principle of “livability”, as it predominantly focuses on place-making, which incorporates environmental and social priorities by emphasizing how the urban environment can be changed to improve its societal functions and add value to a community.

1970: Comprehensive Development Plan

In May 1970, the city adopted the *Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for The City of Saratoga Springs*, prepared by Murphy & Kren Planning Associates, INC., a New Jersey based planning firm. This plan was consistent with the state requirement to update plans every 10 years, and follows the *1964 Urban Renewal Plan*, which updated land-use regulations and standards. The first 148 pages of the plan includes data, trends, and analysis. Economic, housing, and employment data were compared to Troy, Albany/Rensselaer, and Schenectady to contextualize Saratoga Springs within what is now referred to as the Capital District Region. The new Northway, Interstate-87, meant new prospects of economic growth, as Saratoga Springs became more accessible to travelers heading north to Canada through New York State. The plan suggests that community needs change constantly, and, accordingly, that this plan reflects necessary city improvements and new development (*Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for The City of Saratoga Springs*, 1970, p. viii). Much like the 1949 plan, unconstrained development, contrary to today’s planning approaches, was the status quo. Consequently, issues related to drainage, swamps, and other features of the natural environment were described as hindering large-scale development.

Existing land-use followed the Post-World War II model of suburbanization, the consequences of which were discussed at great length. Given the length of discussion, strength of

language describing housing as one of the most pressing concerns, and the prevalence of housing problems in every neighborhood, we agreed that housing was the plan's first priority concern.

We placed this issue within the "equitable category" as housing issues were understood as a need for more middle-income housing and renovations of blighted neighborhoods or "slums"

(Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for The City of

Saratoga Springs, 1970, p. 26). The Neighborhood Analysis section addressed housing

conditions, the extent, causes, and potential for blight; adequacy of community facilities and services, and the characteristics of families impacted by poor housing conditions

(Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for The City of

Saratoga Springs, 1970, p. 26).

The secondary concern of the plan was local industry and employment. The plan's economic analysis compared Saratoga Springs's local economy to neighboring communities.

The plan's rhetoric emphasized Saratoga Springs as an alternative destination for shopping in the capital area, given that other cities were developing large malls and shopping areas. Though no

specific action or project was proposed, emphasis on developing the Central Business District was described as an important factor for the creation of a competitive local economy

(Comprehensive Development Plan A Planning Study and Development for The City of Saratoga

Springs, 1970, p. 68). For this reason, we categorized the secondary priority under the "economic" category of Tanguay et al's model (2009).

A tertiary priority was identified as the expansion and improvement of public facilities including water, stormwater, and sewage infrastructure. A consultant completed the studies and

included recommendations for accomplishing these improvements. We categorized this priority as concern of "viability" because it includes consideration of environmental resources, such as

water and stormwater; and economic considerations, such as the expansion of facilities to be able to accommodate more development.

1976: Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan

Like the 1970 plan, the 1976 Comprehensive Plan update was prepared by Murphy & Kren Planning Associates, a planning firm based in Westwood, New Jersey. It begins with an introduction that emphasizes the significant changes that have occurred since the last plan in 1970, including an increase in population and residential development, as well as the annexation of the new Skidmore campus. Subsequently, it notes that Saratoga Springs “has not been and is not expected to be a static community” and that the “objective” of the comprehensive plan is to “encourage and coordinate orderly change and growth” (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.1*). Rather than being organized into topic sections, the plan first presents planning policies and goals, then a development and land use plan, a study on traffic, analysis of some public facilities, guidelines for plan implementation and information on the progress of past projects, as well as data on population and housing, as provided by the census.

We identified the achievement of development that is compatible with the natural environment as the primary priority of the plan. The plan emphasizes that Saratoga Springs is a town composed of diverse forms of development of varying densities, including urban, suburban and rural areas, with urban development in the core of the town and rural and suburban development around the outside. Maintaining this variety of development was considered to be a primary priority because a “major goal” of the 1976 plan “is to preserve the integrity and character of these residential areas” (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.3*). The Land Use Plan delineates the different areas of

development density and what kind of development should be permitted for each area and type. Low-density development areas are marked as areas most removed from the core of the city. The plan discourages development in these areas in order to preserve open space, provide opportunities for future development, prevent the overextension of public utilities that the city cannot afford and overall to “avoid undisciplined and needless urban sprawl” (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.6*). The plan also states that by preventing development in low-density areas, the environmental services of these areas can also be protected. Medium density residential land use is considered to be mostly suburban development that occurred in the outer regions of the city in the years following World War II. Though the plan mentions that there are very few large areas of empty land that could be developed for single-family homes, it does not discourage suburban development, rather it recommends that this type of development take place within the Western area of the city. Restricting development in this way is meant to prevent “scattered development” (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.8*). High-density residential land use areas are designated as areas fringing the central business district. Development in this area is encouraged to be highly concentrated, which in addition to providing the benefit of protecting open space, can also serve to revitalize the core business district by increasing foot traffic. This priority was coded under the category of livability because it included social and environmental concerns. This is evident in how the plan policies attempt to concentrate development to protect the natural environment in areas with low-density development, while also providing opportunities for population growth and improving access to the central business district.

The secondary priority of the plan was the protection and conservation of natural resources and thus coded as an “environmental” priority within the Venn diagram of the principles of sustainable development (Tanguay et al, 2009). During the 1970’s, environmental issues were becoming increasingly salient, with popular environmental movements and the passage of several landmark policies related to environmental protection, such as the Clean Air and Water Acts of 1972. The 1976 plan mentions new federal regulations such as these that were considered during the drafting of the plan, in particular, development controls related to the prevention of flooding and the protection of wetlands. The protection and conservation of natural resources was chosen as the secondary priority of the plan because “environmental concerns” are mentioned as being “explicitly addressed in new planning policies and goals statements [SIC] in the updated plan” and because the protection of wetlands is to be “strictly” enforced (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.2*). In the land use plan, development in outer areas with wetlands and floodplains is highly discouraged, in order to prevent flooding of residential communities and to protect the “drainage function” of all streams and wetlands (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.4*). The areas delineated as floodplains and wetlands are marked in the Land Use Plan, as was mandated and designed by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. The plan also states that development in critical watershed areas, such as streams and water bodies like Lake Lonely, should be prevented in order to avoid pollution. These goals were defined as being environmental because they directly concern protecting the natural functioning of the environment.

The tertiary priority of the plan was development of the urban core and coded as an economic priority because it concerns commercial development. In relation to the primary

priority of maintaining the balance between a developed urban core and suburban and rural outer area, the 1976 plan states that commercial development should be concentrated within the central urban core of the city in order to maintain it the focal point of the town. This “central business district” would be “pedestrian oriented”, but also contain some off-street parking (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, 1976, p.3*). The plan also states that this area is in need of revitalization and that further development within the central business district could help to increase the city’s tax base by fully realizing the market potential of this area.

1978: Saratoga County Land Use and Development Plan

The 1978 Saratoga County comprehensive plan was partially funded through a federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the state of New York. It was written under the Comprehensive Planning Assistance Program for the New York Department of State. Unlike previous plans, this comprehensive plan considers the development of all the towns within Saratoga County, not simply Saratoga Springs, as is evident by its title. Accordingly, the introduction of the plan emphasizes the necessity for the towns within the community to cooperate for the achievement of common goals. Similarly, the purpose of the *Saratoga County Land Use and Development Plan* included the integration of the planning concerns of the various towns of Saratoga County through coordinating development and creating a common framework for recommending improvements and zoning reviews. After outlining this purpose of the plan, the comprehensive plan describes the characteristics of Saratoga County as related to planning themes such as transportation, economy, housing, recreation, open space, etc. and provides data on other relevant conditions, such as population

and physical features of the county's geography. Finally, the plan synthesizes information from this previous section in order to present a relevant policy framework.

The primary priority of the 1978 plan is the protection and conservation of natural resources because the goal to "enhance the environmental quality of Saratoga County" was mentioned as the plan's first objective and is defined as restricting development in specific areas to "preserve the ecosystem" (*Saratoga County Land Use and Development Plan*, 1978, p.5). These areas are laid out in the description of county shaping elements and include regions with physical constraints such as poor soils and excessive slope, which make development unfeasible, and regions such as wetlands, floodplains and drainage basins, which are to be protected primarily to sustain the ecological functions of the natural environment. Like the 1976 update, the 1978 plan mentions federal legislation that mandates the preservation of wetlands and that in order to comply with these laws, development in areas with wetlands will be prevented, "thus insuring their existence as a valuable part of the County's open space resource" (*Saratoga County Land Use and Development Plan*, 1978, p. 27). Drainage basins are marked as areas that should also have minimal development in order to protect water quality. The plan states that by limiting development in drainage basins, point and non-point sources of pollution can be eliminated and eutrophication can be mitigated. The priority of preventing developing in wetlands and drainage basins was coded as an environmental concern because it is directly related to preserving the intrinsic value of the environment, as well as protecting ecosystem services that are crucial to environmental health.

The second priority of this plan is development compatible with the natural environment. Like the 1976 plan, the 1978 comprehensive plan emphasizes the need to preserve the variety of development densities in Saratoga County by concentrating development within specific high-

density areas and protecting low-density areas, indicating that the maintenance of urban, suburban and rural service areas are a top priority within planning themes and policies. The plan mentions that the “scattered residential growth pattern” that emerged in previous years had several negative impacts related to overextending public facilities and services, excess energy consumption and inadequate employment opportunities nearby these distant residential areas. It also notes that recent increases in the growth of Saratoga County have contributed to the loss of major agricultural areas and that concentrating development through in-fill of highly developed areas is “of the highest priority” to prevent any further loss of agricultural land (*Saratoga County Land Use and Development Plan, 1978, p.95*). The plan states that in concert with the concentration of development to high-density areas and limiting of development in low-density areas, land use should be decided on by considering the natural conditions of the environment and whether ecosystem functioning may be hindered by development, in addition to the availability of public facilities and infrastructure. This priority is considered to be a concern of livability as it incorporates social issues, such as housing and access to public facilities, with environmental issues, such as the preservation of open space and natural areas.

The tertiary priority of the 1978 plan was identified as providing diverse and affordable housing, as it is stated as one of the top goals of the plan, but is mentioned less than the primary and secondary priorities. The plan speaks to the importance of this goal by stating that nearly half of all the families in Saratoga County would not be able to afford the new single-family homes that were being constructed at the time. Rapid population growth and migration to Saratoga County during this time period was a main cause of the sharp increase in residential units, however, because low income housing was generally not built, the use of mobile homes also increased. As a response, the plan suggests that towns with few low and moderate income

housing options should provide new options to accommodate varying income levels. It also indicates that in-fill development of urban and suburban areas can increase density and lower housing prices, combining the goals of the secondary and tertiary priorities. Other strategies include community redevelopment or revitalization and providing new forms of housing financing. This priority was coded under the category of “equity”, as it combines economic policies related to maintaining communities of varied income levels and preventing the degradation of low income areas, and social concerns, such as providing equal access to housing for all residents of Saratoga County (2009).

1987: Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs

The 1987 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the Saratoga Springs Planning Board with the help of the city planner, Geoff Bornemann. The introduction of the plan states its purpose, which is “to guide the future physical development of the City” (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.i). Major changes that have occurred since the last plan are also discussed, and mostly emphasize the remarkable growth that the city and county faced in recent years; in the period from 1970 to 1980, Saratoga Springs experienced a 27% increase in population, making this decade one of the most rapid periods of growth the town had ever experienced. In the first chapter of the plan, demographic trends and their implications are further elaborated on. Following chapters concern “inter-municipal problems and opportunity”, as well as the typical planning topics such as utility systems, housing, economic development, transportation, recreation and open space, community facilities and environment, in addition to a plan for implementation (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.2.1).

Because it was frequently mentioned as a top priority and thoroughly discussed throughout the plan, not exclusively within its designated chapter, development of the downtown core was identified as the primary priority of the 1987 plan. This priority was coded as an economic goal because, like many plans before it, the 1987 comprehensive plan stresses development of the urban core as a means of enhancing the central business district. The plan mentions that Saratoga Springs is unique because towns have “scattered” commercial lands and are characterized by shopping centers or “retail plazas” (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.5.1). This model of commercial development is described as a possible threat to the success of Saratoga’s central business district because the downtown area is relatively small, meaning that the number of businesses and flow of goods is somewhat restricted. For this reason, the plan considers expanding commercial development into residential areas, however, it also recognizes that there would likely be strong backlash from residents. Consequently, it suggests further concentrating development in commercial areas, with strategies such as increasing maximum building height or filling in vacant spaces of commercial buildings, which include basements and upper floors, for office or residential use. The plan also recognizes that, even if these policies are instituted, the central business district will not be large enough to fill all the needs of Saratoga’s residents. Therefore, shopping centers are necessary, but their growth should be controlled because “the central business district should continue to be the primary retail and commercial center of the City” (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.5.21).

The secondary priority of the 1987 plan was stormwater mitigation and expansion of water facilities and the sewage system. This priority was labeled as secondary because it is mostly discussed in the chapter on utility systems, however it is heavily emphasized as requiring

action. The plan describes the various water sources of Saratoga Springs and estimates that the safe yield for the entire system is 5.3 million gallons a day, at that time average daily water consumption was estimated to be approximately 3.8 million gallons a day, well within safe yield. Future water demand was expected to increase significantly, however, as the town continued to grow rapidly and the most conservative estimates of population growth estimated water demand beyond the system's capacity. Thus, the plan states that "as the City's population grows it will become increasingly important to investigate new sources of water for the City's systems" (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.3.3). Possible impacts of increases in population were also considered in relation to Saratoga County's sewage system, however it was determined that because the county's sewage system operates at roughly 66% capacity, population growth was not a significant concern. Within the chapter on utility systems, stormwater runoff is also discussed. The plan notes that several areas in Saratoga Springs are prone to flooding, due to a lack of a stormwater drainage system, which is described as "a constraint on further development" (*Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1987, p.3.9). It also states that stormwater runoff has serious consequences for the health of the environment, as it can carry pollutants into streams, lakes and other water bodies. We categorized the secondary priority of stormwater management and the expansion of water utilities as a viable goal, that combines economic considerations, like the accommodation of further population growth as related to the need to expand public facilities and the lack of a stormwater drainage system preventing development due to flooding; and environmental considerations, such as the limits of natural resources like water bodies and the pollution of water bodies that can result from stormwater runoff.

Transportation was labeled as the 1987 plan's tertiary priority because it was discussed at length within the plan but not heavily emphasized. The plan states that the public transportation, such as the Capital District Transit Authority buses are essential for the high number of Saratoga Springs residents who must commute to work, and for this reason, the preservation of subsidies for public transportation is crucial. The expected increase in Saratoga Springs' population also presented an impetus to expand funding for public transportation and highway maintenance. Because transportation was discussed in social terms, as necessary for improving the lives of Saratoga's residents and their access to other regions, and economic terms, as a means of facilitating employment of the city's residents and the movement of goods to and from Saratoga, we coded it as a priority of equity.

1999: Growing a City in the Country

The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan Committee prepared the 1999 Comprehensive Plan with technical assistance provided by The Chazen Companies, a consulting firm from Glen Falls, New York, and Bradley Birge and Geoff Bornemann, two city planners from Saratoga Springs. The comprehensive plan begins with an Executive Summary that states, "Saratoga Springs currently possesses the attitude and momentum to take a decidedly positive approach to update the 1987 plan in a succinct and usable format" (*Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. i). The plan's ultimate goal was to "enhance [Saratoga Springs'] unique balance of charm and diversity of assets, and ensure its long term financial stability" (*Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. i). The executive summary is followed by an introduction which describes Saratoga Springs as a great American place due to "our community's unique quality of life and strong sense of place to create a balance of physical, economic and social assets" (*Growing a*

City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, 1999, p. 1). Additionally, it is of note that the 1999 comprehensive plan introduced the concept of the “city in the country” and the greenbelt. Saratoga Springs is often called the “city in the country” because of the large rural open space surrounding the urban core, which is frequently referred to as the greenbelt. The introduction also states the main purpose of the comprehensive plan is to articulate goals for the City’s development by “[providing] the justification for planning and regulatory policies that encourage desired development and efficient growth patterns to maximize the City’s social and economic potential” (*Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. 3). The following section is Issue Identification in which the plan lays out all of the major concerns facing the city. Planning policy areas include transportation, utilities, open space and recreation, housing and economic development.

Due to the length of discussion, strength of language, and consistent importance attributed to the creation of a strong economic center downtown, we determined that economic development was the primary concern of this plan. This priority is coded as an economic concern because of the major focus on “...appropriate development to improve and contribute to a balanced economy; that is, better and more creative development, not necessarily bigger development” (2009; *Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. 22).

The secondary priority was diverse and affordable housing. We coded this as an equitable concern within Tanguay et al’s model because housing incorporates both social and economic considerations (2009). This is evident in the plan’s encouragement of a diverse range of housing options and high-density development downtown to further maintain the urban core as the center of economic development. The tertiary priority of the 1999 plan was development consistent

with the natural environment. This is demonstrated in the language as the plan, which aimed to “promote balanced development in selected areas that is compatible with surroundings and good for the City as a whole” (*Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. 25). We coded this as a priority concerning “livability” in accordance with Tanguay’s et al model (2009). Overall, the 1999 Saratoga Springs comprehensive plan was very much a pro-development plan that focused on economic growth as a means of enhancing physical, social and cultural resources.

2001: The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan

In July 2001, the Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the city council. It begins with an executive summary that states: “[t]his Plan is based on the ‘City-in-the-Country’ concept, meaning a city with an intensively developed urban core and an economically vibrant central business district, with well-defined urban edges and an outlying area comprised of open lands, a landscape or rural character and low density residential development” (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 3). Additionally, the executive summary states “[t]he overriding philosophy that will guide future development of our ‘City in the Country’ will be sustainability” (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 3). Though maintaining the balance between the urban core and the rural periphery has been a priority through several plans, this is the first time that sustainable development or sustainability is explicitly referenced in a comprehensive plan. In the plan sustainable development is defined as “development that enhances economic opportunity and community well being while protecting the amenities upon which our economy and our community depend (...) Through sustainable development, we aim to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 3). Following the

description of sustainable development as a guiding principle, the plan has very similar introduction to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan and then identifies main issues and policy areas. The policy areas include transportation, utilities and public safety, open space and recreation, housing, and economy. The priorities identified were extremely similar to those of the 1999 plan, such as minimizing sprawl to encourage sustainable growth and preserving the greenbelt.

We identified the achievement of a balance between environmental protection and development as the primary priority of the 2001 plan and coded this as a concern of viability, as it necessarily includes economic and environmental considerations. One policy that was designed to accomplish this balance was the creation of conservation development districts in what is known as the green belt, to preserve the country overlay and prevent sprawling development. This purpose is explicitly stated, as attempting to “...achieve a balance a between well designed residential development, meaningful open space conservation, and natural resource protection...” (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 45). Conservation development districts guided the location and type of development that could be permitted in open space, yet did not completely prohibit development entirely. Additionally, conservation development districts were meant to “[i]mprove the City’s open space resources”, further illustrating the plan’s commitment to protecting natural resources and open space.

The secondary priority of the 2001 plan was identified as diverse and affordable housing and categorized as a priority of equity. The housing section in the plan’s policies was very lengthy and stressed the importance of providing fair and equal housing opportunities, which the plan defined as “cost[ing] no more than 30% of one’s household income” (*The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2001, p. 24). The tertiary priority of the 2001 plan was identified as reinforcing the downtown as the economic core and coded as an economic priority. The

preservation of Saratoga Springs' downtown as a central commercial center was mentioned throughout the plan, but was not discussed at length like the primary and secondary priorities.

2007: Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan (Failed Plan)

The 2007 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan was a third amendment to the *Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan* but was never passed by the City council. This particular comprehensive plan is unique in that it was drafted by volunteers, not appointees made by the Mayor or City council members, which had been customary in the past. In addition to being led by a group of volunteers, there was no city planner involved in the drafting process. The 2007 plan contained many sections similar or identical to those of the 2001 comprehensive plan. For example, the Plan's vision was also based on the City in Country concept and named sustainable development as its overriding philosophy. One noticeable difference was the definition of the three pillars of sustainable development: “[s]ustainable development is that which supports long term economic vitality, environmental integrity and social equity. All three systems-- the economy, the natural environment and society-- must be carefully nurtured to achieve a healthy, efficient and more harmonious city” (Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, 2007, p.5). Some other unique sections of this plan include three pages devoted to sustainability and recommendations to conduct a Sustainability Study “...to inventory City and community global warming emissions and then set appropriate reduction targets” (*Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2007, p. 10). Other notable sections included E-Government and scenic rural roads, vistas, and signature gateways; which had not been included in plans before.

The 2007 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan was extremely focused on the protection of environmental resources and green space. We determined this to be the primary

priority of the plan and categorized in the environment area of Tanguay et al's model (2009). The plan strongly encouraged conservation of open space because it "contributes to quality of life and provides earth services" (*Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2007, p. 30). Environmental and open space protection was brought up in the plan repeatedly and was a major theme throughout the vision statement. The secondary priority was identified as diverse and affordable housing. We placed this in the area of equity in Tanguay et al's model (2009). Similar to the 2001 plan, the housing policies "...recommend[ed] the elimination of density bonuses for affordable/workforce housing in this plan" and encouraged "affordable/workforce housing in order to further foster its support of... diversity" (*Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2007, p.25-26). We identified the tertiary priority of the plan as growth of the downtown core and coded this as an economic priority. Economic policies were considered to be a tertiary priority because they were not emphasized or discussed as thoroughly as the environmental policies. While there was a focus on "[m]aintain[ing] the downtown as the economic center of the community..." it was not reinforced throughout the policy sections (*Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 2007, p.15).

Classic Planning Concerns

After analyzing the content of eight out of the ten comprehensive plans that were collected, we found that four planning priorities were consistently repeated in the plans. The four "classic" planning priorities were: adequate and affordable housing, economic development of the downtown core, parking and traffic flow, and storm water management and flooding. The need to provide adequate and affordable housing was present in the 1976, 1978, 1999, 2001 and 2007 plans. *Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*

(1999) noted that “[a] fundamental building block in attracting and maintaining this diversity of population is the availability and similar diversity of housing options” (p. 20). The plan recommended that the city “[e]ncourage a diversity of residential opportunities available to all residents to promote the social and economic diversity vital to a balanced community” and “[e]ncourage the development of housing options available to a diversity of residents including the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged” (*Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan*, 1999, p. 21-22). Similarly, the Saratoga County Land use and Development Plan (1978) recognized the “...increasing need for moderately priced housing in rural areas and, in many cases, unregulated land use” (p. 69) and called for “...municipalities with a disproportionately low share of the region’s low and moderate income households to provide additional housing opportunities for these income groups” (p. 70).

In addition to affordable housing, the importance of economic development of the downtown appeared as a priority in seven of the eight plans. The *Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, New York* (1987) recognized the need to create a defined economic core and that “[the p]roliferation of these small plazas might threaten the viability of the City’s downtown,” (p. 52) and therefore needed to ensure that downtown develop “...into a retail area dominated by some specialty stores and boutiques” (p. 51). Over twenty years later, The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan (2001) stated that “...the most important policy is to maintain Downtown as the City’s economic center” (p. 25), “including the primary retail and commercial center [as well as] encourage the infill of a well-defined urban core” (p. 26). It is important to note that concerns of economic development were also considered in relation to preserving open space and low-density development in the city’s outer regions.

The third reappearing priority was the need for more parking and the rerouting of truck traffic. *Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for the City of Saratoga Springs* (1970) recognized “[t]here is a need for additional parking conveniently near the stores of the east side of Broadway” (p. 22) and “[o]n street parking and narrow pavement width also causes traffic delays and inconvenience (...) [and] there is a definite need to improve the function of internal arterial streets (p. 19). Parking issues were even recognized in *Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future* (1949): “downtown business districts thrive only if traffic circulation is maintained and parking space provided” (p. 15).

The final repeating priority, the need for better stormwater and flood management, was also in many of the plans. *Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future* (1949) stated that there was a “...lack of adequate drainage in various parts of the city” (p. 6) and that “ the failure... [of] basic services of water supply, storm drainage, or sewage could cause great discomfort...and is of vital importance” (p. 26). Additionally in *Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, New York* (1987) one of the major utility policies was to “establish adequate standards for storm water retention and detention in areas not serviced by storm drainage systems” and the “City should develop a Master Plan for storm water management which will identify rehabilitation needs and areas for new storm system development” (p. 3.11).

Changes in Plan Language and Organization

Though many of the priorities of the comprehensive plans have stayed the same with time, we noticed that language and organization evolved significantly. For example, the terminology of low-income housing changed over time. Under the traffic problems section in *Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future* (1949), the land between Congress Park and high Rock Park are

described as having "...the greatest mixture of land use and slum conditions" (p. 18). Later in 1978, "slums" changed to "...low and moderate income households..." (p. 70). This same issue was discussed in 1987, but was referred to as "...affordable rental or homeownership units" (*Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, New York*, 1987, p. 4.8). The last change in housing language was observed in *Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan* (1999) in which the plan called for "...safe, affordable housing" (p. 21) instead of adequate or affordable renting units.

Another example of language change is in the plans' discussion of the environment, as terminology related to the environment became more scientific over time. The 1976 comprehensive plan called to prohibit "[d]evelopment on the steep slopes and in the swamps and marshes..." (*Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs*, 1976, p. 4). But two years later, "swamps and marshes" changed to "wetlands and flood plains" (*Saratoga County Land use and Development Plan*, 1978, p. 26). This reflects a growing understanding of environmental issues and a shift in knowledge of these issues.

Lastly, the organization of the plans have evolved over time. Earlier plans, until 1987, included extensive census data and analysis. For example, the 1970 plan contained almost 150 pages of census data and analysis. After the 1987 plan, the plans were more visionary and focused on policy recommendations as advances in technology made census information and data became more readily available through other means. Additionally, the plans decreased in page length over time. *Comprehensive Development Plan: A Planning Study and Development for the City of Saratoga Springs* (1970) was 216 pages, *Saratoga County Land use and Development Plan* (1978) is about 113 pages, *Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan* (1999) is 54 pages and *The Saratoga Comprehensive Plan* (2001)

is 59 pages. Plans became more compact and concise and thus were more accessible and easier to read.

Overall Content and Weighting Analysis

Categorizing the primary, secondary and tertiary themes of eight of the comprehensive plans revealed that many of the priorities fell within the intersections of economic, social and environmental concerns, and therefore, were sustainability oriented, as sustainable development seeks to combine economic, environmental and social goals. Sixteen out of twenty-four total priorities were equitable (intersection of economic and social dimensions), livable (intersection of the environmental and social needs), or viable (economic dimensions that support natural systems and environment) (Appendix B) (Tanguay et al, 2009). Because every single plan contained priorities that fell within the intersections of sustainable development, this indicates that sustainable development concerns and priorities have been consistent throughout every plan, even if not explicitly stated (Appendix B). The word sustainable development does not appear until *The Saratoga Comprehensive Plan* (2001), but it is clear that even in 1949, Saratoga Springs was concerned about the economy, environment, and social equity. Many of the “classics” of the comprehensive plans also were considered as intersections of economic, environmental and social priorities; we determined that affordable housing fell under equality in Tanguay et al’s model, development of the urban core addressed viability, and stormwater and flood management addressed livability (2009). The fact that many of the plan priorities have stayed the same over time, and also were usually categorized within the intersections of the three principles of sustainable development, further demonstrates that sustainable development has been a consistent factor in the comprehensive plans, even if not always consciously so. The changes in language that we observed may be an indication of the growing awareness of

sustainable development, as language referring to the environment became more scientific, specifically during the 70's when environmental issues were especially salient, and affordable housing came to be understood more as an responsibility of social equity, rather than as "blight" or a purely aesthetic burden.

Policy Outcomes

After reading each plan, we coded its policy outcomes. During the coding process, we had to define a policy outcome. Some policies were listed as recommendations within a policy section, while others were less obvious and were included in the content of the plans. We determined that strong language such as "will," "shall," "should," "must", or other similar words, indicated a policy or policy recommendation, which we collectively recognized as policy outcomes. Then, using Berke and Conroy's principles of sustainability, we categorized each plan's policies into an organizing table (Appendix C) (2000). However, as we had previously experienced, categorizing policy outcomes into Berke and Conroy's principles was difficult, as most policies integrated the tenets of sustainable development and Berke and Conroy's principles seemed overly generalized (2002). Despite these challenges, we discussed and agreed on categorization based on our best judgment.

The content analysis reflects the data from the coded policy outcomes (Appendix D). Overall, 20% of the policy outcomes addressed economic development. While policies within plan topic areas of transportation (19.5%), housing (15.5%), environment (14.4%), and public facilities (12.3%) followed economic development as the most common. Energy, land-use, and open space/recreation has the least policy outcomes ranging from 1.3% to 12.3%. This data largely corresponds to the trends we identified in the first portion of the plan evaluation method.

When categorizing policy outcomes into the principles provided by Berke and Conroy, we found that over half of the policy outcomes fell within the “liveable built environment” principle. The “liveable built environment” principle is defined as,

The location, shape, density, mix proportion, and quality of development should enhance fit between people and urban form by creating physical spaces adapted to desired activities of inhabitants; encourage community cohesion by fostering access among land uses; and support a sense of place to ensure protection of any special characteristics of urban forms that support community identity and attachment (Conroy and Berke, 2000, p. 23).

This principle’s broad definition addresses the concepts of “liveability,” “viability,” and “equity” as seen in Tanguay et al’s model, and reflects these intersections as it seeks to create a livable urban form that address social, physical, and aesthetic (ie urban or natural) concerns (2009). As we categorized 50.4% of the policy outcomes within this principle, and 66% of the plans’ priorities within the intersections of the three sustainable development principles, the data supports our findings that most plan content fell within the livable, equitable, and viable areas of sustainable development. Despite the challenge of coding the policy outcomes, we found that the policy outcomes reflect the non-policy content of the plans.

Interviews

As part of the latitudinal study in our project, our interviews were designed to further our understanding of the political process implicit in the drafting of the 2014 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan by exploring the values and opinions of different community members who are involved in, or may otherwise have a stake in, the comprehensive planning process. In our interviews, we asked each interviewee to discuss their connection to Saratoga Springs and their involvement in city politics and/or planning (Appendix D). Most have been involved for a number of years, including two participants having lived in Saratoga Springs for most of their

lives. These individuals are deeply invested in their community and bring varying interests and experiences to city politics and comprehensive planning. Our interviews revealed several important findings. First, interviewees had differing definitions of sustainable development, that typically focused on either economic development or environmental protection. Despite differing conceptions of sustainable development, nearly all interviewees pointed to the greenbelt as a practice of sustainable development. In fact, most referred to it as the City's "greenest" feature. We also asked our interviewees about their perspectives on the role of politics in comprehensive planning, and most explained that politics have a role in planning, and thus the community's development.

Varying Definitions of Sustainable Development

Interviewees had varying interpretations of sustainable development. Most agreed that sustainable development is not clearly defined, and that "a sustainable future has a lot of different meanings for different people", confirming literature that posits that the vagueness of the conceptual definition of sustainable development has led to sustainable development being interpreted in diverse, possibly conflicting ways (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Similarly, another committee member noted that "when you start to look at specifics (...) it gets more difficult to figure out what is really is", which also speaks to the lack of implementation guidelines for sustainable development (personal communication, April 7, 2014). Additionally, the connection to planning and sustainable development was not apparent for some. One participant said the discussion of sustainable development has expanded to new contexts and it is "now operationalized" through comprehensive planning (personal communication, April 8, 2014).

For many sustainable development meant trade offs. A local politician stated that “you could make the right case for [sustainability] by saying that this is the right thing to do for the environment. The way you made the case was, it’s going to save us money. If it would save us money, then everyone would listen to that” (personal communication, April 8, 2014). In other words, this politician posited that most community members do not perceive environmental protection and economic prosperity as being mutually inclusive, thus, efforts to achieve environmental sustainability need to provide clear monetary incentives for implementation. A comprehensive plan committee member succinctly captured this perception of trade-offs between the different principles of sustainable development within the planning context:

A city needs to be able to grow because the fact of the numbers are quite clear, and that is people expect to deserve services from the city. The largest part of the cost are [city employees]... and those people need to have reasonably increasing streams of income in order to live comfortably, and they need retirement plans, and health plans, and those are all more expensive each year. And so, if you are not growing your tax base, you have to increase your taxes. That’s a fundamental underlying goal of any successful urban setting. (personal communication, April 7, 2014)

As is evident from this quote, the comprehensive plan committee member focuses on economic development as essential to the success of a city and thus more important than environmental or social objectives. Though this member elaborated that “it’s certainly a wonderful idea to plant more trees around Saratoga, and that’s clearly sustainable,” they concluded that policies for environmental protection under sustainable development must be economically feasible, reasonable, and justifiable, otherwise they will not be effective or beneficial for the community (personal communication, April 7, 2014). Despite support for these sustainable initiatives, the same committee member explained that “to talk about climate change or global warming for a city of 25,000 people is probably wishful thinking”, again revealing that the primary concern of planning is economic development and that environmental goals can be sacrificed to serve this

purpose. (personal communication, April 7, 2014). The “jobs versus the environment” is very apparent from this perspective, and differs from other perspectives which see environment intertwined with economy.

Others suggested that sustainability was an integrative concept of urban design. One participant said that “sustainability can fold in, in my mind, a lot of different ways through buildings, energy efficiency, through better paths and walkways, and better bike lanes and complete streets” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). A committee member expanded on this perspective by adding that Saratoga Springs’s awareness of sustainability resulted from greater knowledge of climate change and the rise of New Urbanism in the 1980s (personal communication, March 26, 2014). One of the politicians we interviewed even explicitly used new urbanism and sustainable development to describe Saratoga’s Sustainable development model. This participant also stated that they believed they were elected to create a sustainable future for the city, and this reasoning is supported by his/her observation that “[people] move to Saratoga Springs because... we have a walkable, friendly community, a core downtown– we call ourselves the ‘City in the Country’” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). In this perspective, sustainable development is seen as essential to the character, and by extension success, of the town because it is inherent in urban design, and this urban design is what attracts people to Saratoga Springs. Overall, the mostly divergent opinions on the meaning and practice of sustainability support the literature suggesting that term is vague and undefined. Yet, others perceive sustainable development to be an integral part of urban planning, as a former city planner stated that “in good planning sustainable development is inherent” (personal communication, March 24, 2014).

The City in the Country is Sustainable Development

The phrase “the City in the Country” captures the character of Saratoga Springs as an urban area surrounded by rural outskirts. Hence, the concept an expression of the City’s development paradigm, which aims to focus growth in the downtown core, while leaving the city’s outer areas as conservation development districts, or low-density residential development areas, and county overlay areas. Though the distinction between the “city” and “country” has always been present throughout Saratoga’s planning discourse as defining different tax districts and areas with different concentrations of development, the phrase “the City in the Country” was only coined in 1987 when Jane Weihe, ran for mayor in 1987 and used it as her campaign slogan. It did not become a part of the planning rhetoric until the 1999 plan, the plan written after Weihe’s 1987 campaign. Further, the outer rural area of Saratoga Springs was not formally defined as the Green Belt until the 2001 plan with the establishment of conservation development districts, which prevent high-density development in the outer region of Saratoga. In the greenbelt, other zoning policies include county overlay areas and low-density residential districts. These policies formally define the greenbelt region by maintaining its rural character.

Because the greenbelt was formalized in 2001, many regard it as a practice of sustainable development, which was the guiding principle of the 2001 plan, and many consider it favorably, as is demonstrated by this quote, stating that the “success of the [2001 plan is] the preservation of the greenbelt” (personal communication, April 8, 2014). Two interviewees even cited the green belt as “the bible of a green moment” (personal communication, March 27, 2014 & personal communication, March 31, 2014). Much like the differing opinions on sustainable development and valuation of its varying principles, the greenbelt was seen in economic, environmental and social terms. A committee member explained, “the green belt is important economically, it keeps

Saratoga beautiful, and that's why people want to be here and that's why the move here... we are better off than if we had developed it", in this sense the economic benefit of the green belt is conceived as a result of its aesthetic function and contribution to the character of the community (personal communication, March 31, 2014). This member further added that "because we forced developers not to develop in the greenbelt, they were forced to develop downtown... economically its a good thing"; this demonstrates that the green belt is also considered beneficial to community character and the economy because it shapes the built environment (personal communication, March 31, 2014). Others, however, did not see the green belt as providing these multiple benefits and felt that the green belt was an impediment to development and growth. Though one interviewee who held this opinion conceded that "huge resources in the city of undeveloped land... [are] a very positive thing for wanting to maintain that ambiance", they emphasized that "also it's [the green belt] a problem, if you look at growth, because you cannot expand the tax base" (personal communication, April 7, 2014). In this way, the green belt is not viewed as achieving mutually beneficial social, economic, and environmental goals like the first interviewee opined, but rather understood as achieving goals within some of these principles, such as the social goal of maintaining community character, to the detriment of others, such as the economic goal of expanding the tax base. This perception was not only limited to those with primarily economic interests, one interviewee commented on the importance of the green belt for purely environmental purposes, stating that "environmentally, its gigantic on different levels-- wetlands, biodiversity, animal habitats, paths... but it could be better", noting that because development is permitted within the green belt, its ecological value is not maximized (personal communication, March 31, 2014). Another member said that "The 'City in the Country' is not primarily about economic protection of the downtown or avoiding the hideousness of endless

sprawl, but about protecting our natural resources... and we need to make that explicit” (personal communication, April 1, 2014). These quotes exemplify perspectives that see the greenbelt in mainly intrinsic, environmental terms, rather than its potential economic value or use for multiple purposes.

Even though the green belt has been Saratoga Springs’s crowning “green moment,” a fear of its erosion was a theme in several of our interviews. One member expressed concern that the “consensus we have is very fragile”, reflecting the fact that the development of the green belt is largely dependent on decisions made by the zoning board (personal communication, March 31, 2014). A former city administrator suggested that the greenbelt “is something that people are always weary about when projects are proposed”, because development projects in this area are frequently proposed (personal communication, April 8, 2014). A committee member confirmed this fear by stating that the green belt is “nibbled at” through zoning board approvals of development projects in the region, because it is not a pure conservation area (personal communication, April 1, 2014). Part of this fear is legitimized by recognition that the comprehensive plan is a guiding document and that even though the “committee ultimately shapes development... the zoning committee puts it into law, and that’s where the abuses could happen, and not a lot of headlines would not be made” (personal communication, March 31, 2014). This has been observed over time, as exceptions to the zoning, recommended by the plan and implemented by the zoning board, “poke holes” in the comprehensive plan (personal communication, March, 27 2014). Overall the fear of increasing development in the green belt, as is expressed in these interview excerpts, shows that the implementation of policies related to sustainable development, like the green belt according to many of our interviewees, are ultimately shaped by the political process. This is especially true in Saratoga Springs, where

visionary policies of sustainable development are drafted by the comprehensive plan committee, but actions regarding these policies is decided by the zoning board. The role of local politics in mediating the definition and implementation of sustainable development is further illustrated in the next section of our interview results.

Local Politics: Committee Appointments and Development Interests

The 2013-2014 comprehensive planning process has been marked by political conflict and upheaval, most notably with the election of a new mayor and subsequent reappointments to the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Previous Saratoga Springs Mayor Scott Johnson (R) began the update process for the 2001 Comprehensive Plan in the beginning of 2013, despite upcoming mayoral elections. The city council was responsible for hiring the planning consultant. In January, former mayor Scott Johnson had appointed the 13 committee members (McCarty, 2013). Even though his appointments were not illegal, three Democrat city council members and the council majority refused to commence the hiring process given the appointments, and the late addition of 13th member from Sustainable Saratoga (McCarty, 2013). The 2001 City Charter does not stipulate who makes appointments to the Comprehensive Plan Committee nor does it require that the appointments be approved by the city council (McCarty, 2013). However it does require the plan to be updated every 5 years under the initiation of the mayor. The last attempt to update the plan failed in 2007 (McCarty, 2013).

The democrats argued that the appointments were not “community-based,” and that past council members were granted appointments (McCarty, 2013). Even though the three Democrats conceded that the list was well rounded, they felt the appointees were not representative of the community (McCarty, 2013). City council members stated that the committee would focus exclusively on development interests (McCarty, 2013). One member argued that the committee

was disproportionately representative of business and developers (McCarty, 2013). They further argued that state law suggests city council members should make appointments (McCarty, 2013). A resulting stalemate in the city council that tabled the hiring process led to a compromise in March when the Mayor approached the council with an offer for each member to make two appointments (McCarty, 2013). Johnson removed 6 appointments from the committee, allowing each council member two appointments for a total of 15 members (personal communication, March 19, 2014). The issue of the appointments was deeply political and sparked concern about the representation of the city's best interest.

The city council agreed to the Mayor's offer. The new appointments were made simultaneous to the election of current mayor, Joanne Yepson, who then appointed Geoff Borneman, a former city planner, as the committee's chairperson. We asked interviewees about the role of politics in comprehensive planning, and after this recent political issue, many agreed that politics impact the plans. The backlash to the appointments respond directly to the previous board's composition that, to some, foreshadowed the draft being written today. An original committee member stated that a plan drafted by the original committee likely would not have differed greatly from the one the current committee will draft, despite reappointments (personal communication, April 7, 2014). Yet, that member offered to resign from the comprehensive plan committee after reappointments were demanded, but was encouraged to serve by the recently elected mayor (personal communication, April 7, 2014). On the other hand, a different interviewee stated that "the appointments were not reflective of a broad-based view of the community, that it could be like it was skewed to development [SIC]" (personal communication, April 8, 2014). For some, if the committee had not changed, the plan would have been "fast tracked... development proposals would've been accepted much more quickly without

questioning” (personal communication, March 31, 2014). Another member suggested that “it’s still a committee that’s heavily colored by the appointments made under the last mayor.

Although there are a number of new appointees who are pointing in a sustainable direction, its still a minority” (personal communication, April 1, 2014). The “sustainable direction” this interviewee describes may be referring to the fact that several committee members belong to a local non-profit organization that promotes sustainability and environment awareness. The critique of business interests claiming power in the political process has also been made regarding sustainability advocates, as a former mayor stated that the non-profit “[is] going to get their point across and whatever its going to be is the basic tenets [it] holds, and I don’t think that’s a secret” (personal communication, April 8, 2014). However no other interviews supported these sentiments.

Appointments to the comprehensive plan committee are political, as a mayor’s previous experience reveals that he “wound up with a pretty sympathetic committee for the things we wanted to do” (personal communication, March, 27 2014). Another member said “when we had a more pro-development mayor, we had a more pro-development board, and we had a more pro-development plan,” thus supporting the observation that appointments are potentially politically motivated (personal communication, March 31, 2014). Most committee members disagreed with these views, and their role as members were to draft a plan that for the common interest and good of the city. However, the comments from the interview give evidence contrary to this belief, and these agendas may not actively pursued. But the knowledge base and perspectives brought the to the drafting process are meant to add expertise and insight from selected perspectives. The planning process, according to a city mayor, “becomes political, a lot of decisions are political and its a small town, people know who is active on what side, who

supports what things and people get a reputation for taking a certain position” (personal communication, March, 27 2014). A member from the community had a similar comment that, “it’s a political process, differences are going to be aired out in the community. This is emphasized by the fact that the comprehensive plan process has played out over an electoral turnover [SIC]” (personal communication, March 19, 2014).

Overall, the interview process reveals that sustainable development is understood differently by different people and that their individual values and priorities have a large effect on how they define sustainable development. This was shown not only directly, by asking interviewees to describe sustainable, but also indirectly through interviewee’s perceptions of the green belt as a practice of sustainable development. Thus, sustainable development remains undefined, though notions lie on a spectrum from economic growth to environmental protection and awareness. Further, we also found that the implementation of sustainable development is dependent on the political process, as was shown in the interviewee’s perceptions that the zoning board would have a great effect on the green belt and other policies of the comprehensive plan. Further, politics are informed by the appointments, knowledge bases, and interests; as was demonstrated by interviewee’s perceptions on the reappointment process. Through the interviews were able to understand the political space for discussions at comprehensive plan meetings.

Comprehensive Plan Committee Meetings

The second component to our study of the political process included observation of comprehensive plan meetings, during which the thirteen comprehensive plan committee members draft the plan update. In our observation of the five comprehensive plan committee

meetings, we identified three characteristics of the political process. These include the extent of public participation, knowledge of environmental concepts, and occurrence of conflict.

Participation

Public participation was measured in two ways: breadth and depth. Breadth is the number of public comments, while depth is the content of the comments. Public attendance and participation was poor. The highest number of citizens at one meeting was fifteen, and the highest number of public comments for one meeting was three. Most comments were related to high-profile community issues such as the new Casino and the Beekman Street rezoning proposals, rather than the long-term policies discussed by the comprehensive plan itself. Six were about the Beekman street rezoning and two were about the casino proposal. Of the total eleven comments made at the five comprehensive plan committee meetings we attended, only three were not related to either the Beekman street rezoning or casino. On the other hand, a public comment regarding the comprehensive plan discussed the administrative issue about recusal policies the committee established. The breadth and depth of the comments were overall lacking. Further, the issues that are brought to the committee are not aligned with the plans goals, as most issues reflect on-going, site-specific zoning issues irrelevant to the committee's and plan's agenda.

Lack of Knowledge and Understanding

One of the biggest sources of conflict during committee meetings was a lack of understanding of environmental concepts. Lack of understanding extended to basic knowledge of environmental concepts such as sustainable agriculture and open space, but also the ways in which environmental and social concerns are related economic concerns. An example of this disconnection between environmental and economic concerns was seen in a discussion on April

7, 2014 about stormwater mitigation and wetlands protection. One committee member was adamant that protecting streams and having an effective storm water mitigation plan would be costly and unnecessary. This sentiment was rejected by another member who stated that protecting streams and a storm water mitigation plan would actually economically benefit the city in the long run because it would prevent flooding in the downtown and preserve the city's water resources. There was a clear conflict between the two different committee members and it was partially due to the fact that they had different understandings in the way that environmental policies can benefit the economy and vice versa. The first committee member viewed environmental protection as a trade off for economic growth, while the other member was integrating the two policy areas. A second example of conflict based on lack of understanding was the varying definitions of downtown Saratoga. This conflict was seen in a meeting on April 21, 2014 and was prompted by the discussion of what defines the urban core. Some committee members saw the urban core and downtown as Broadway, while others saw it as the Broadway and the surrounding area. The varying definitions of the urban core ultimately created conflict because the committee could not agree on where the economic focus should be and where they should recommend commercial development and high-density residential areas. Further, even the concept of sustainability and sustainable development was brought to question several times though it is defined in the 2001 comprehensive plan on which the current plan update is based. This clear lack of mutual understanding highlights the disconnect between the conceptualization and implementation of sustainable development principles, as well as the diverse perceptions of how development should or can be integrated with environmental and social goals.

Conflict: Differing Values and Competing Interests

We observed conflict among committee member perspectives, specifically between business and environmental interests. Conflicts were especially apparent throughout the April 7th 2014 meeting when the draft items for the “Environmental Health and Resiliency” organizing theme were discussed. To explain the conflicts that occurred, we used Godschalk’s (2004) modeling of conflicts that arise when the three “E’s” of sustainable development (economics, ecology and equity) are negotiated (Appendix F). We observed a resource conflict, a property conflict, and development conflict.

The issue of stormwater and flooding of the downtown was discussed. A member suggested that the policy draft item must address the mitigation of stormwater and another member emphasized the use of green infrastructure to deal with the problem. One member, with strong business interest expressed that additional mitigation of stormwater using green infrastructure would be expensive and unnecessary as Saratoga already has a means of dealing with stormwater. In order to appeal to this member’s interests and demonstrate that *not* having additional means for mitigating stormwater would be expensive, another member explained that the recovery costs after a flooding event was high for small businesses, homeowners, and shops. We saw this as a resource conflict, where green technologies were included in a rhetoric that emphasized the cost for “green” or “sustainable” solutions, demonstrating that the draft policy item was seen as infeasible through an economic lens. From an environmental perspective, this conflict was challenging and individuals with environmental interests attempted to also use economic language to express the importance of the issue and overcome conflict.

Another conflict occurred when a draft policy item that would require new urban developments to include a minimum of 10% public space was proposed. Members with

economic interests opposed this suggestion on two bases: first, they argued that development was not imposing on public space and that public space was interpreted as green space. To help define open space, the planning consultant suggested that the policy should include the term “civic space,” instead of “open space.” The consultant explained that within context of Saratoga Springs, “open space” relates to the rural, low-density development areas outside the urban core. Yet, with this new language, the conflict continued. In attempt to reach consensus about the issue, another member offered a creative approach to this potential land-use regulation. The member strongly opposed to the draft item offered a creative solution for the development requirement. The member suggested the inclusion of a minimum civic space requirement, but also the option to export that 10% requirement to another development project where a civic space would be more appropriate. Two members were strongly in favor of this new option to transfer civic space requirements. Other members disagreed with option as it would undermine the purpose of the policy. We considered this a property conflict, as economic rights competed with interests of the greater community and public space. Even after citizens and community members have expressed concern in response to the streetscape at Railroad Place, developers strongly sought to maintain their right to build in communal areas. And with the transfer option, those community spaces would exported to unspecified development projects.

The discussion of the draft item proposing protection to all water bodies including lakes, rivers, streams, and tributaries demonstrated a development conflict. The protection of water bodies was framed through an ecological perspective to reduce pollution, namely phosphorus inputs into lakes. A member expressed confusion, as they thought all water bodies were protected by city, state, and federal policies. Another member explained the various protections, and noted that not all streams are protected, nor are the measures and standards for protection

consistent across city, state, and federal governments. Two members also opined that federal and state regulations were not adequately protecting Saratoga Springs's water bodies. To protect all types of water bodies the draft item would establish development buffer zones along all bodies of water. A member interpreted these protections as "taking away my right to develop." In response, another member explained that the draft items include "recommendations for what you can and cannot do on land because it is harmful to the environment", but that it would not infringe significantly on development. We interpreted this as a development conflict where ecological concerns competed equity interests, as the development interested committee member advocated for their "rights", and thus framed the conflict concerning fairness.

On the whole, these conflicts exemplify the differing values and priorities related to the economic, social, and environmental issues. Interests, values, and knowledges thrust against each other, and arguments are made based on the relative importance of these issues. These priorities are discussed competitively and often understood as being mutually exclusive, or as trade-offs. Further, the misaligned vocabularies suggest a lack of recognition that environment, economy, and social equity are deeply intertwined, and that the perception that these principles compete with each other, leading to conflict in the meetings, is facilitated by a lack of understanding of concepts related to sustainable development.

Discussion

Longitudinal Study—Historical Analysis of Comprehensive Plans:

Through our historical analysis of the nine different comprehensive plans we found that sustainable development does not necessarily imply a trade-off between economic, environmental, and social concerns, rather, these three themes are integrated and mutually

beneficial. The main four repeating planning concerns, adequate and affordable housing, economic development of the downtown core, parking and traffic flow and stormwater management and flooding are all categorized as integrations of the three sustainable development principles: viable, equitable, and livable. Additionally, we found that most plan priorities were also categorized as intersections of the three main sustainable development principles. These findings reveal that most planning concerns incorporates more than one principle of sustainable development and that this has been common throughout the history of the comprehensive plans. Therefore, we believe that Tanguay et al's (2009) Venn diagram model of sustainable development is a more accurate representation of the concept, rather than presenting sustainable development principles as pillars, which implies that the three principles, economy, environment and equity, are mutually exclusive and do not affect one another. This perpetuates the idea that sustainable development is a rigid and narrow development approach that can only be accomplished through tradeoffs between the three principles. In contrast, Tanguay et al's Venn diagram shows sustainable development principles as integrative and interlocking, which is a more accurate conceptualization of the ways in which sustainable development principles act with one another in the actual comprehensive plans (2009). Thus, in order to have effective economic policies, it is imperative that social and environmental concerns enter the conversation; furthermore, the three principles of sustainable development are not only integrative, but they also support one another.

The results from the second step of the plan evaluation suggest that the policy outcomes reflect the classic planning concerns, as we coded them into organizing themes. Roughly half, 50.4%, of the policies were categorized as "livable built environment," which captures several important features of a successful urban setting and integrates the three principles of sustainable

development (Conroy and Berke, 2000). When evaluating Conroy and Berke's definition of this principle, we related the "greenbelt" and its land-use regulations and zoning ordinances as a feature of the urban form. It exists to define the area of the urban core not only through policies, but through aesthetics. Further, this principle emphasizes the importance of place-making to create an "emotional center," like the downtown, which is essential to the identity of both the city and its citizens. We argue, that the livable built environment principle best approximates a synthesis of livable, viable, and equitable areas of Tanguay et al's model (2009). This is confirmed by our interviewees, as many considered the green belt to be a practice of sustainable development. However, equating Conroy and Berke's "livable built environment" principle as sustainable is inaccurate, as sustainable development does not exist a direct policy objective. Rather, this principle is most related to planning's interest in achieve a balanced community life and environment for the "common good", and this "common good" may be an approximation of sustainable development as a policy objective.

Sustainable development has been a hidden concept in all the plans, as many plan priorities include the three intersections of economic, social and environmental goals. For example, this is evident as in rhetoric related to the natural environment, which considered its limits and capacities as impacting the shape of development throughout all of the plans. The weighing of the priorities and principles of sustainable development has changed over time, however. The plans in the 1970s were unique as they marked conservation and protection of the natural environment a top priority, coinciding with national discourse about the environment, public health, and natural resources. Although we cannot directly attribute these national discourses to these plans, we suggest that broader concerns may impact the outlook of the plans. As the repeating planning concerns were present from 1949 to even the current plan update, the

historical analysis of the comprehensive plans shows that although a city might drastically change over time, the issues for creating a sustainable community remain the same. Yet, depending on the larger community concern the priorities and principles of sustainable development are weighed differently.

Latitudinal Study–In-Depth Case Study of Political Process

The political process revealed the ways in which sustainable development is constantly redefined and negotiated. Throughout meetings and interviews, we observed a lack of mutual understanding of both the definition of sustainable development and how, by not understanding it as an integrative concept, this led to conflict over how its principles should be prioritized. In other words, given the lack of a clear definition of sustainable development, the political process served as the means for defining the concept because competing interests reflect differing values of the three main principles. Further, the “jobs versus the environment” discourse was very apparent as many committee members perceived development interests as clashing with concerns for environmental protection. Sustainable development as a concept became defined through negotiation, in which protection of the environment could only be achieved by sacrificing economic growth. In another sense, sustainable development was seen as an ideal, but economically infeasible.

Conflict developed along lines between individual’s interests and values, as business and pro-development interests aligned while others with more liberal and progressive perspectives on environmental protection and equity were connected. Individuals built-on, expanded, or offered further knowledge to convince other members of their argument. However, we must note that conflict was nuanced and professional. Competition was subversive, but not extreme. One member mentioned that there were no “minority reports,” so divisive politics are avoided

(personal communication, April 10, 2014). The member elaborated that consensus is ultimately achieved, as the most interests are for the “common good” (personal communication, April 10, 2014). Conflict also seemed to rise out of a lack of environmental knowledge. The discussions were based on mismatched vocabularies, thus adding to confusion or disagreement. However, some members provided their knowledge and insight to shed light on certain issues from different disciplines and interests. This was useful in building consensus. Even though the challenge of knowledge bases was apparent, some issues, especially those addressing equity, were not discussed.

Throughout the data collection process, we observed that social equity was absent from the political discussion, but apparent within the plans. Social equity policy outcomes dealt with access to housing, but rarely expanded to other concepts of equity such as access to various social services or environmental resources. When we asked a committee member about affordable housing, they explained that to address the lack of affordable housing, density caps would have to be reduced to encourage intense high-density development downtown to push housing and real-estate prices down. This member later conceded that this idea might not be well received—and could have them “run out of town” (personal communication, March 31, 2014). This member’s statement revealed to us that the political space is well defined as topics can be too contentious for political discussion within the “public” setting of a meeting. Our observations and interviews revealed that conflicts are also situated within a sphere. Ideas highly divergent from mainstream interests or feasibility are trumped by the process itself.

It is clear that conflict within the political process is inevitable. Even though the process can be challenging and frustrating, it serves an essential function to for implementing and operationalizing sustainable development. The political process serves as a space to define and

negotiate the meaning and the relative weights of its principles within the plan via the interests and values of those involved. Conflict between individuals involved in the process ensures that one competing ideology or interest does not dominate the discussion, and therefore prevents the tipping of the scale a certain interest aligned with a certain sustainable development principle; in this way, conflict may actually lead to the integrative approach to sustainable development that was evident in the content of the plans. The political deliberation of the concept produced perspectives reflective of the “common good” as the consideration of these competing interests lead to discussions on the policy outcomes. Given that consensus via the “common good” was necessary, the actors developed policies that integrated the three main principles. However, the interests and knowledge bases still emphasized certain agendas, thus leading to a complex, yet expected conceptualization of “the common good” as both conflicted but agreeable.

The Common Good

Combining our two areas of study, the historical analysis of comprehensive planning in Saratoga Springs and the in-depth case study of the current political process, reveals that within comprehensive planning, the implementation of sustainable development is case-specific and localized. The definition and negotiation of sustainable development through the political process presents an opportunity for the principles of sustainable development to be weighed and prioritized in a way that best fits the communities needs and “reflect[s] the community’s interest” (personal communication, March 31, 2014). Thus, comprehensive planning in Saratoga Springs uses sustainable development as a way to identify, debate, and negotiate what our community feels is the most important in order to create a livable city. Most of our interview participants placed a value in preserving the greenbelt’s aesthetic, environmental, and economic benefits, and considered the green belt as a form of sustainable development. This highlights the ways in

which the definition of sustainable development is interpreted and transformed based on community identity and needs. In this sense, comprehensive planning is an opportunity for sustainable development at the local scale. As we have seen, sustainable development is an integrative concept that is redefined and negotiated through the political process and conflict. Conflict and negotiation through the political process is an opportunity to mediate the ways in which sustainable development principles are weighted and prioritized. Consequently, the ambiguity and plasticity of sustainable development theory is both beneficial and detrimental to its implementation, because it allows for the individualization and localization of how its principles are weighed, but this can lead to unequal value and poor distribution of its basic tenets, depending on the context of the local political process.

Conclusion

The political process is fraught with conflicts between competing interests related to environmental, economic, and social issues. The plans demonstrate that these conflicts are resolved in the plan's content and policy outcomes which tend to address the intersections of at least two of the three sustainable development principles. Yet, the focus on each area varies, and over time economic development has played a central role to planning in Saratoga Springs, as growth is necessary to sustaining a city, though it does not crowd out environmental or social goals. Further to understand this translation from conflict to synthesis, more knowledge of the political process might reveal the changes in the political processes and the direction of conflicts, consensus, and decisions based on the relevance to these principles to community concerns over time.

Despite the possibility that comprehensive planning can act as a mode of sustainable development, the politics of the drafting process are one part of the plan implementation process. Subsequent political processes will occur as the plan may or may not be adopted by the city council, for which there is a public hearing and commenting process. Further, after adoption, the zoning board then implements the adopted plan. The policy outcomes which seek “sustainable development” are translated into zoning ordinances and land-use regulations, thus requiring another political process to translate sustainable development vision to practice. Ultimately, in a city, the politicization of these development concepts is a way of determining how to make a place we want to live in, while also paving the path for a sustainable future that is representative of the common good.

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Appendices:

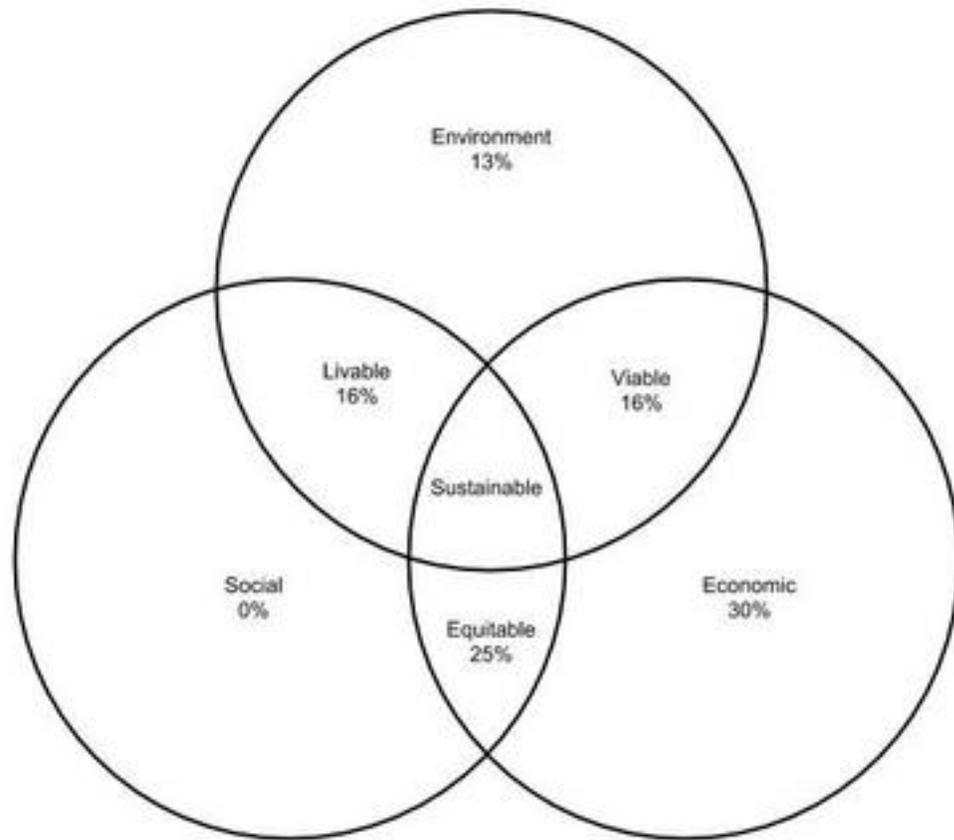
Appendix A. List of Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plans

Year	Title	Mayor	Planner	Notes
1949	<i>Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future</i>	Addison Mallery Non-partisan	-----	Skidmore College students prepared data
1960	<i>A Master Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs</i>	James E. Benton Non-partisan	Planning Consultant: John F. Calbreath Burdis Consulting Engineers: Benjamin L. Smith and Associates and City Engineer John H. Sheehan	Chairman of the planning board: Robert L. Quinn
1970	<i>Comprehensive Development Plan A Planning Study and Development for The City of Saratoga Springs</i>	Sarto J. Smaldone Unknown	Murphy and KREN Planning Associates, INC, New Jersey; Planning board board and consultants	Funded by: Federal Housing Act of 1954 HUD Section 701 Comprehensive Planning Assistance Program State of New York State Department of State Funded, City
1976	<i>1976 Update of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs</i>	Raymond Watkin Democratic	Murphy and KREN Planning Associates, INC, New Jersey. Planning board and consultants	-----
1978	<i>Saratoga County Land use and Development Plan</i>	Raymond Watkin Democratic	Saratoga Planning County Board	Funded by: Federal Housing Act of 1954 HUD Section 701 Comprehensive Planning Assistance Program New York State Department of State
1987	<i>Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs, New York</i>	Ellsworth Jones Republican	Geoff Bornemann	-----
1999	<i>Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan</i>	Mitch O'Connell Republican	Bradley Bridge Geoff Bornemann Comprehensive Plan Committee	-----
2001	<i>The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan</i>	Kenneth Klotz Democrat	-----	-----

2007	<i>Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan</i>	Valerie Keehn Democrat	-----	-----
2013/14	Draft Update	Joanne Yepsen Democrat	M.J. Engineering and Land Surveying	-----

Plan	Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
1949	Viable <i>Stormwater Mitigation & expansion of sewer system</i>	Economic <i>Transportation & local jobs</i>	Livable <i>Community development</i>
1970	Equitable <i>Prevention of Blight Urban Renewal</i>	Economic <i>Local industry & jobs</i>	Viable <i>Expansion of public facilities especially sewer system</i>
1976	Livable <i>Development compatible with natural environment</i>	Environmental <i>Protection and conservation of natural resources</i>	Economic <i>Development of Urban core</i>
1978	Environmental <i>Protection and conservation of natural resources</i>	Livable <i>Development compatible with natural environment</i>	Equitable <i>Diverse & affordable housing</i>
1987	Economic <i>Development & growth of downtown core</i>	Viable <i>Stormwater Mitigation & expansion of sewer system</i>	Equitable <i>Transportation</i>
1999	Economic <i>Development & growth of downtown core</i>	Equitable <i>Affordable & diverse housing</i>	Livable <i>Development compatible with natural environment</i>
2001	Viable <i>Balance between environmental protection & development</i>	Equitable <i>Diverse & affordable housing</i>	Economic <i>Maintain downtown as economic core</i>
2007	Environmental <i>Protection of green space and natural resources</i>	Equitable <i>Diverse & affordable housing</i>	Economic <i>Development & growth of downtown core</i>

Venn Diagram (Tanguay et al, 2009)



(Tanguay et al, 2009)

1949 Saratoga Springs Looks to the Future

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 (7%)
Transportation	0	3	0	0	0	0	3 (21%)
Environment	2	0	0	0	0	0	2 (14%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	1	2	0	0	0	3 (21%)
Economic Development	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 (7%)
Public Facilities	0	2	0	0	0	0	2 (14%)
Open Space/Recreation	0	2	0	0	0	0	2 (14%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	2 (14%)	9 (64%)	3 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	

1970 Comprehensive Development Plan A Planning Study and Development for The City of Saratoga Springs

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	1	5	0	0	0	6 (13%)
Transportation	0	12	2	0	0	0	14 (30%)
Environment	1	0	0	0	0	0	1 (2%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	9	2	0	0	1	12 (26%)
Economic Development	0	3	1	0	0	0	4(9%)
Public Facilities	1	7	2	0	0	0	10 (21%)
Open Space/Recreation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	2 (4%)	32 (68%)	12 (26%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	

1978 Saratoga County Land use and Development Plan

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	3	1	4	0	0	8 (15%)
Transportation	0	9	0	0	0	0	9 (16%)
Environment	11	6	0	0	0	0	17 (30%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Economic Development	0	0	7	0	0	0	7 (13%)
Public Facilities	1	6	0	0	0	0	7 (13%)
Open Space/Recreation	0	7	0	0	0	0	7 (13%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	12 (21%)	31 (56%)	8 (15%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	

*1987 Master Plan or Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs,
New York*

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-Based Economy	Equity	Polluter Pays	Responsible Region.	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	2	6	1	0	0	9 (14%)
Transportation	0	5	1	0	0	1	7 (11%)
Environment	3	0	1	0	0	0	4 (6%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Economic Development	0	1	9	0	0	1	11 (17%)
Public Facilities	3	9	2	1	1	0	16 (25%)
Open Space/Recreation	0	11	2	2	0	2	17 (27%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	6 (9%)	28 (44%)	21 (34%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)	

1999 Growing a City in the Country: The 1999 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	5	1	3	0	0	9 (19%)
Transportation	0	11	0	0	0	0	11 (23%)
Environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Economic Development	0	2	7	0	0	0	9 (19%)
Public Facilities	1	6	1	0	0	0	8 (17%)
Open Space/Recreation	2	7	1	0	0	0	10 (21%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	3 (6%)	31 (66%)	10 (21%)	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	

2001 The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan (Current Adopted)

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	2	4	6	0	0	12 (25%)
Transportation	0	9	0	0	0	1	10 (21%)
Environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Economic Development	0	2	7	0	0	0	9 (19%)
Public Facilities	1	2	2	0	0	2	7 (15%)
Open Space/Recreation	3	4	1	0	0	2	10 (21%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	4 (8.3%)	19 (39.6%)	14 (29.2%)	6 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	5 (10.4%)	

2007 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan (Failed)

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Themes
Housing	0	6	1	9	0	0	16 (22%)
Transportation	0	11	0	1	0	1	13 (18%)
Environment	3	0	1	0	0	3	7 (10%)
Energy	0	0	7	0	0	0	7 (10%)
Land-use	1	2	0	0	0	0	3 (4%)
Economic Development	0	5	10	1	0	0	16 (22%)
Public Facilities	1	10	1	0	0	0	12 (16%)
Open Space/Recreation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	5 (7%)	34 (46%)	20 (27%)	11 (15%)	0 (0%)	4 (5%)	

2013/2014 Draft Update

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based economy	Equity	Polluters Pay	Responsible Regionalism	Totals of Organizing Theme
Housing	0	5	6	14	0	0	25 (12%)
Transportation	0	35	6	0	0	0	41 (20%)
Environment	19	21	8	0	0	1	49 (24%)
Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Land-Use	1	14	16	0	0	0	31 (15%)
Economic Development	0	17	35	0	0	2	54 (26%)
Public Facilities	0	4	2	0	0	0	6 (3%)
Open Space/Rec	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Totals of Sustainable Development Principles	20 (10%)	96 (47%)	73 (35%)	14 (7%)	0 (0%)	3 (1%)	

Total Policy Outcomes by Plan

Year	Total Number of Policies in Each Plan
1949	14
1960	47
1970	55
1978	64
1987	47
2002	48
2007	74
2014	206

Total of Policy Outcomes by Organizing Theme

Organizing Theme	Housing	Transportation	Environment	Energy	Land-use	Economic Development	Public Facilities	Open Space/Recreation
1949	1	3	2	0	3	1	2	2
1970	6	14	1	0	12	4	10	0
1978	8	9	17	0	0	7	7	7
1987	9	7	4	0	0	11	16	17
1999	9	11	0	0	0	9	8	10
2002	12	10	0	0	0	9	7	10
2007	16	13	7	7	3	16	12	0
2014	25	41	49	0	31	54	6	0
Totals	86	108	80	7	49	111	68	46
Percentages	15.5%	19.5%	14.4%	1.3%	8.8%	20%	12.3%	8.3%

Total of Policy Outcomes by Sustainable Development Principles

Sustainable Development Principles	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-Based Economy	Equity	Polluter Pays	Responsible Regionalism
1949	2	9	3	0	0	0
1970	2	32	12	0	0	1
1978	12	31	8	4	0	0
1987	6	28	21	4	1	4
1999	3	31	10	3	0	0
2002	4	19	14	6	0	5
2007	5	34	20	11	0	4
2014	20	96	73	14	0	3
Totals	54	280	161	42	1	17
Percentages	9.7%	50.5%	29%	7.6%	0.2%	3%

Appendix E. Semi-structured Interview Questions

Sustainable Saratoga Member

What is/has been Sustainable Saratoga's involvement over time and recently.

What are Sustainable Saratoga's views on the effectiveness of comp plans and process.

What happened in 2000? Can you redescribe the local political shift?

Is comprehensive planning "worth it?"

History of Sustainable Saratoga's involvement in the planning process and the board? When did this become an agenda for Sustainable Saratoga, and why?

Opinions on the Guiding Principle and definition of sustainable development.

How can we engage public interest and involvement? How should the be public engaged?

What is the ideal planning process? Who is involved?

What are the challenges, weaknesses, and strengths of the planning process.

How has the process differed from plan to plan?

How have the ideas of the Position Paper developed? What sources? Other plans? Literature?

New Urbanist

What's your history with Saratoga Springs and the region?

What interests you about urban planning, architecture? Why are these important?

How involved have you been in city politics? Do you agree with the observation that "Politics shape city development?"

Have you been following the current comprehensive plan update? If so, why or why not.

What have been the challenges of development for Saratoga? What are the current challenges?

How has your knowledge shaped the development of the City?

Even though New York State does not mandate or require comprehensive planning, why do you think Saratoga continues to practice comprehensive planning?

Locally the sustainable development rhetoric has entered the planning dialogue fairly recently.

How has this impacted development, do you think it really think it is a guiding principle?

In terms of comprehensive planning, do you think it is the most effective way to achieve development or to change a city?

How closely does development follow the comprehensive plans?

Could you comment on our ideas about connecting sustainable development and planning, and politics?

Is comprehensive planning an effective means to achieve sustainable development at the local scale?

What is the value of comprehensive planning in a country/region where it is not commonly implemented?

Researcher on Urban Development

Why did you come to Saratoga Springs? How did you get involved with City Politics? We saw that you represented Concerned Citizens of Saratoga throughout the 1999 process. Could you discuss your involvement and engagement?

Could you discuss some of your knowledge about the development of the Saratoga region? Especially the urban development of the City?

Do you feel that Saratoga has gotten stronger as a place since the adoption of the 2001?

Could you describe what the concerns were during 1999?

What is the value of comprehensive planning in a country/region where it is not commonly implemented?

What has contributed the lack of regional coordination in planning? Are there specific reasons why this county/capital region has difficulty planning comprehensively?

Do you think our observation about language is a relevant discussion? 1976-1978 change of language from swamps to wetlands.

We have observed concepts of sustainable development have been present since the 1949 plan.

This might suggest that sustainable development is inherent in planning, but we also think that as a development approach it has helped solidify the concepts. We also think that sustainable development has tacked on new concepts that planning should address, do you think this could be the case?

Do you think the relationship between planning and sustainable development is a relevant issue needing to be studied? Why do you think these two concepts seem to run on parallel tracks but never actually explicitly converge?

Deputy Mayor

Can you start with your involvement in Saratoga?

As the deputy mayor, how high of a priority was the comprehensive plan?

What was your role in the comprehensive plan?

How involved are you with the comprehensive plan board and the members?

We know there was a change in leadership after the 1999 plan which led to the revisions for the 2001 plan. Could you further explain what exactly happened during that time?

Why were there revisions? Why did you update it?

If the Mayor has a certain vision, is that translated in the comprehensive plan? Can it be translated?

What was the composition of the comprehensive planning board like when you were involved?

What was the deal with Home Depot? We haven't heard much about it but are under the impression it was important during the 2001 plan.

Do you think parties play a major role in city planning?

Are local politics important in comprehensive planning?

Do you feel that there is value to comprehensive planning?

Is development shaped by the comprehensive plan committee members?

How have the plan's language, focus, content, changed over time in relation to political climate?

How closely does development follow comprehensive plans?

Why do you think Saratoga continues to use comprehensive plans?

How has public participation changed over time?

What factors might influence this?

When do you think sustainable development rhetoric entered comprehensive planning in Saratoga?

We've been reading about the relationship between sustainable development and planning and the literature suggests that maybe sustainable development is inherent but with the rise of the environmental movement we now have the word sustainable development. Do you think sustainable development has always been there or is more prevalent because we have a term?

Is the green belt meant to be sustainable development?

How has comprehensive plans in Saratoga changed?

How important is the "City in the Country" concept in the 2001 comprehensive plan and even for this current draft?

What would you deem as the biggest success of the 2001 comprehensive plan? the biggest failure?

What's your opinion of the current draft as a former mayor and someone heavily involved in planning?

Saratoga Springs Mayor

Can you start with your involvement in Saratoga?

As the mayor at the time, how high of a priority was the comprehensive plan?

What is the mayor's role in the comprehensive plan?

How involved are you with the comprehensive plan board and the members?

We know there was a change in leadership after the 1999 plan which led to the revisions for the 2001 plan. Could you further explain what exactly happened during that time?

Why were there revisions? Why did you update it?

If the Mayor has a certain vision, is that translated in the comprehensive plan? Can it be translated?

What was the composition of the comprehensive planning board like when you were Mayor?

Why did you appoint the people that you did?

What was the deal with Home Depot? We haven't heard much about it but are under the impression it was important during the 2001 plan.

Do you think parties play a major role in city planning?

Are local politics important in comprehensive planning?

Do you feel that there is value to comprehensive planning?

Is development shaped by the comprehensive plan committee member?

How have the plan's language, focus, content, changed over time in relation to political climate?

How closely does development follow comprehensive plans.

Why do you think Saratoga continues to use comprehensive plans?

How has public participation changed over time?

What factors might influence this?

When do you think sustainable development rhetoric enter comprehensive planning in Saratoga?

What role do you think sustainable development has in the 2001 comprehensive plan?

We've been reading about the relationship between sustainable development and planning and the literature suggests that maybe sustainable development is inherent but with the rise of the environmental movement we now have the word sustainable development. Do you think sustainable development has always been there or its more prevalent because we have a term?

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What would you deem as the biggest success of the 2001 comprehensive plan? The biggest failure?

What's your opinion of the current draft as a former mayor and someone heavily involved in planning?

Saratoga Springs Mayor

We'd like to hear about your experience in Saratoga, and how you arrival the local political scene.

How high of a priority was the comprehensive plan for you?

What's the mayor's role in comprehensive planning?

What's your involvement? How are you updated? Are you following the meetings?

Do you have a vision for this comprehensive plan update? Do you think its being translated?

Could you talk about the reappointments of the Summer, and how they impacted your approach to the planning, if they did?

Do you think political parties plan a major role in city planning?

Are local politics important in comprehensive planning?

What is the value in comprehensive planning?

Is development shaped by the comp. plan committee members?

How closely does development follow comprehensive plans.

Why do you think Saratoga continues to use comprehensive plans?

How important is sustainable development, the 2001 plan's guiding principle, to this update?

How should sustainable development be thought of in this plan? Is it more than just the "greenbelt?" ie should the plan address issues of recycling, renewable energy systems etc.

How do you think "equity" should fit into the plans? Housing, access to services ensure social equity, but how do we encourage people to think about intergenerational equity?

What are your hopes for the current plan? What do you hope will be most successful or enduring?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

Could you give us a brief history of your experience as Saratoga Springs City Planner? Start with first plan he was involved with until now.

How have the plan's language, focus, content, changed over time ie relation to political climate?

How has the role of the planner changed since you began planning?

How has the process changed-- ie who participates and why? How have the compositions of the previous boards changed over time? Do you feel that the composition of the board shapes the city's development?

Why are plans drafted in certain years?

Can you pinpoint when this idea of sustainable development became an important guiding principle in Saratoga's comp plans? When have these sustainability advocates entered the dialogue? Why?

What are the big green moments in past plans?

Do you believe this green focus was prevalent in past plans?

The greenbelt has played a crucial role in relating this concept of "city in the country." Could elaborate on the importance of the green belt-- both to achieve this goal of sustainability, but also urban planning practice? Is this green belt relevant-- because we have difficulty identifying what it is, where it is? Part of the rhetoric suggests that is a label of sustainable development, but how is it really a practice of sustainable development?

How closely does development follow these plans? For example the 1949 library project?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this current plan?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

Could you give us a brief history of your experience as Saratoga Springs City Planner? Start with first plan he was involved with until now.

How have the plan's language, focus, content, changed over time ie relation to political climate?

How has the role of the planner changed since you began planning?

How has the process changed-- ie who participates and why? How have the compositions of the previous boards changed over time? Do you feel that the composition of the board shapes the city's development?

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How closely does development follow these plans? For example the 1949 library project?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this current plan?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

How long have you been in Saratoga? How did you get involved city politics?

What is your past experience and involvement with city planning and comprehensive planning?

How were you appointed to this committee for the update? Can we ask who appointed you, and for what reasons? How did you react to this appointment?

What is your role in Sustainable Saratoga?

What planning issues are most important for you, personally/as a member, and as a member of Sustainable Saratoga?

What are Sustainable Saratoga's views on the effectiveness of comp plans and process.

What are the big green moments in past plans?

Do you believe this green focus was prevalent in past plans?

The greenbelt has played a crucial role in relating this concept of "City in the Country." Could elaborate on the importance of the green belt-- both to achieve this goal of sustainability, but also urban planning practice? Is this green belt relevant-- because we have difficulty identifying what it is, where it is? Part of the rhetoric suggests that is a label of sustainable development, but how is it really a practice of sustainable development?

How closely does development follow these plans?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this current plan?

Why do you think comprehensive planning has remained in Saratoga Springs?

Can you pinpoint when this idea of sustainable development became an important guiding principle in Saratoga's comp plans? When have these sustainability advocates entered the dialogue? Why?

How can we engage public interest and involvement? How should the be public engaged?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

How long have you been in Saratoga? How did you get involved city politics?

What is your past experience and involvement with city planning and comprehensive planning?

How were you appointed to this committee for the update?

As a committee member, do you feel that the decisions the committee tend agree on issues that align with the intentions of their appointers? In that sense this update could be very relatable to the goals of the City Council, thoughts?

How did you react to this appointment?

What planning issues are most important for you?

Who interests are you best representing? What are their concerns? Why?

As a member of the CPC mentioned in a previous interview that the composition of the board previous to the reappointments last summer would have drastically changed the look of the current update. Do you agree-- would the plan have taken a different approach to development had the committee changed?

How has the process changed-- ie who participates and why? How have the compositions of the previous boards changed over time? Do you feel that the composition of the board shapes the city's development?

What are the big green moments in past plans?

Do you believe this green focus was prevalent in past plans?

The greenbelt has played a crucial role in relating this concept of "city in the country." Could elaborate on the importance of the green belt-- both to achieve this goal of sustainability, but also urban planning practice? Is this green belt relevant-- because we have difficulty identifying what it is, where it is? Part of the rhetoric suggests that is a label of sustainable development, but how is it really a practice of sustainable development?

What do you think about sustainable development being the guiding principle? Do you think this is a good idea?

How closely does development follow these plans?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this current plan?

Can you pinpoint when this idea of sustainable development became an important guiding principle in Saratoga's comp plans? When have these sustainability advocates entered the dialogue? Why?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

How long have you been in Saratoga? How did you get involved in city politics?

What is your past experience and involvement with city planning and comprehensive planning?

How were you appointed to this committee for the update?

How did you react to this appointment?

What is your role in Sustainable Saratoga?

What planning issues are most important for you, personally/as a member, and as a member of Sustainable Saratoga?

What are Sustainable Saratoga's views on the effectiveness of comp plans and process.

As a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee mentioned in a previous interview that the composition of the board previous to the reappointments last summer would have drastically changed the look of the current update. Do you agree-- would the plan have taken a different approach to development had the committee changed?

As a committee member, do you feel that the decisions the committee makes tend to align with the intentions of their appointers? In that sense this update could be very relatable to the goals of the adopting body, thoughts?

How has the process changed-- ie who participates and why? How have the compositions of the previous boards changed over time? Do you feel that the composition of the board shapes the city's development?

What are the big green moments in past plans?

Do you believe this green focus was prevalent in past plans?

The greenbelt has played a crucial role in relating this concept of "city in the country." Could elaborate on the importance of the green belt-- both to achieve this goal of sustainability, but also urban planning practice? Is this green belt relevant-- because we have difficulty identifying what it is, where it is? Part of the rhetoric suggests that is a label of sustainable development, but how is it really a practice of sustainable development?

Opinions on the Guiding Principle and definition of sustainable development

How closely does development follow these plans?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this current plan?

Can you pinpoint when this idea of sustainable development became an important guiding principle in Saratoga's comp plans? When have these sustainability advocates entered the dialogue? Why?

What is/has been Sustainable Saratoga's involvement over time and recently?

How can we engage public interest and involvement? How should the be public engaged?

What are the challenges, weaknesses, and strengths of the planning process?

Comprehensive Plan Committee Member

How long have you been in Saratoga? How did you get involved city politics?

What is your past experience and involvement with city planning and comprehensive planning?

How has your development changed the city?

How were you appointed to this committee for the update?

As a committee member, do you feel that the decisions the committee tend agree on issues that align with the intentions of their appointers? In that sense this update could be very relatable to the goals of the City Council, thoughts?

How did you react to this appointment?

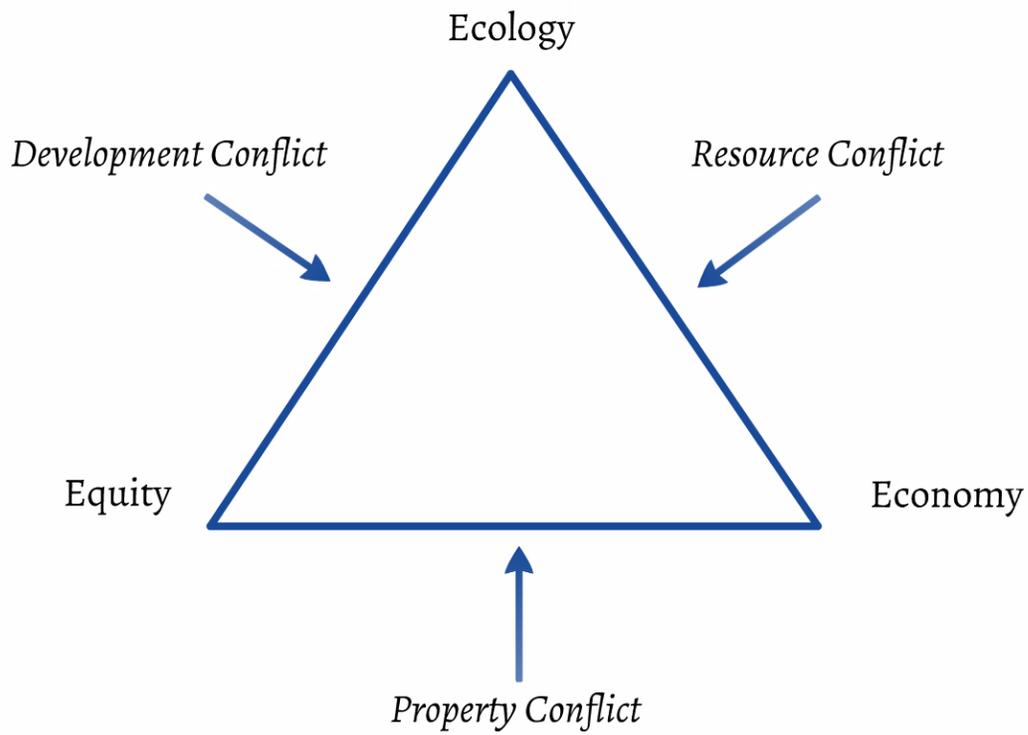
As a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee mentioned in a previous interview that the composition of the board previous to the reappointments last summer would have drastically changed the look of the current update. Do you agree that the plan would have taken a different approach to development had the committee changed?

What is the value of comprehensive planning?

Which plan has been most successful?

What are your hopes for this updated plan?

Appendix F. Conflict Triangle (Godschalk, 2004).



(Godschalk, 2004)