The Downtown Austin Planning Process as a Community of Inquiry: An Exploratory Study

By

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Abstract

  The Downtown Austin Plan phase one planning process was used as a case study to explore pragmatic community of inquiry principles. A community of inquiry is defined by a problematic situation, reinforced by a scientific or experimental attitude, and linked together by participatory democracy. On December 12, 2005 the Austin City Council approved a resolution initiating the Downtown Austin Plan and authorizing the search for a planning consultant to guide the process. In October 2006, a consultant was selected and the final agreement was approved by City Council to begin planning services in April 2007. The Downtown Austin Plan phase one report was developed April 2007 to February 14, 2008, when recommendations were presented to the council. Document and archival data analyses, as well as structured interviews with City of Austin staff, consultants, and stakeholders were used to test three working hypotheses that were developed based on community of inquiry principles. Research findings established the use of community of inquiry principles to some degree. Support for critical optimism was most apparent, while support for scientific attitude and participatory democracy was less obvious.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Are the authenticity and soul of Austin, Texas in jeopardy? Population growth is 3.5 times the national average,[1] and more than 7.3 million square feet of downtown development are now under construction or in the approval pipeline.   The City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office (EGRSO) estimates that downtown development will bring 8,500 new residents to the city.[2] Considering the massive growth occurring, one glaring fact is obvious: Downtown Austin is evolving at an unmanageable rate.

Community concerns about the impact of rapid downtown growth are aimed at ensuring progress toward vitality and sustainability. New development leads to increasing traffic congestion, soaring property values that create social exclusivity, and a fundamentally changed physical environment. The Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) should help the community understand how the forces of growth are reshaping its urban core and how it can develop new policies to harmonize the community's desire for sustainability, vitality, and inclusivity.

Austin is an attractive place to live and work. Moreover, this status has been nationally recognized for many years. In *Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida (2002) cites Austin as the quintessential example of a creative class city, one of a handful of places in the country (alongside Seattle and San Francisco) which has transformed its

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[1] Wall Street Journal 8/22/07
[2] Last two statistics from: City of Austin, Economic Growth & Re-development Services Office (EGRSO) 2008

economy with a new culture and workplace ethos.[3] Strengthened by a diverse economy, Austin benefits from office, technology, tourism, culture, retail, government, and educational sectors that provide wide-ranging possibilities for its diverse community.

The economic vitality of Austin's live music, tourism, retail, government, and education sectors, all located downtown, underscores the regional importance of the urban core. The central city is 1.65 square miles or .6% of total city land area.[4] Furthermore, retail and property tax values for downtown Austin are $3.4 billon or over 5% of total city taxable value.[5] The economic impact of downtown Austin extends well beyond its boundaries.

The live music industry generates significant economic activity and contributes to the cultural identity of downtown and the city as a whole. This sector employs 5,600 people full-time and 13,000 others in jobs related to music-based tourism, brings $420 million in annual sales, $580 million in tourism revenue, and $25 million in city taxes annually.[6] The local music scene and live music venues vital to festival success are concentrated in downtown.[7]

Tourism is an important generator of economic activity. Tourists propel the downtown economy as they enjoy the many cultural events, live music venues, hotels, and restaurants. More than 8,000 visitors come to downtown daily, 40,000 visitors to Austin City Limits, 30,000 visitors to South by Southwest, 35,000 visitors to each University of Texas (UT) football game, and more than 40,000 visitors to the Texas Bike Rally. The total economic impact of tourism in 2006 is estimated at more than $2.82

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[3] From Phase One Report, Downtown Austin Plan
[4] From: "Why Prepare a Downtown Plan?" ROMA Design Group, 2008
[5] Economic Growth & Re-development Services Office (EGRSO), 2008
[6] "The Role of the Cultural Sector in the Local Economy: 2005 Update"
[7] "Economic Viability: Live Music and Culture" Phase One Report, DAP 2008

billion.[8] Tourism sustains the rich commercial activity in downtown, generating massive tax revenue.

Perhaps the most significant economic anchors in downtown Austin are state government and education. Today, the federal, state, county and city governments employ 18,000 people in downtown Austin.[9] The impact of this level of employment spreads economic resources to retail, live music, and restaurant sectors in downtown.

The University of Texas brings cultural and economic activity to Austin's central core. UT contributes $2 billion annually to the local economy, as well as enlivening the city with over 50,000 students. The prominent UT Tower at the center of the original Forty Acres is a character-defining feature of the downtown landscape.[10] A symbiosis exists between the university and downtown Austin because UT depends on the attractiveness of downtown to lure the nation's top students and professors.[11]

The vitality of each economic sector depends upon the health of the other. Live music creates jobs and stimulates tourism, while tourism sustains local retail and restaurant activity. Furthermore, government employment fuels these sectors while the University of Texas creates and is dependent upon the continued attractiveness of downtown. Downtown Austin is the beating heart that circulates economic resources and opportunity throughout the region.[12]

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[8] Austin Convention Center and Visitors Bureau, 2006
[9] "Economic Viability: Government, Downtown Austin Plan, 2008"
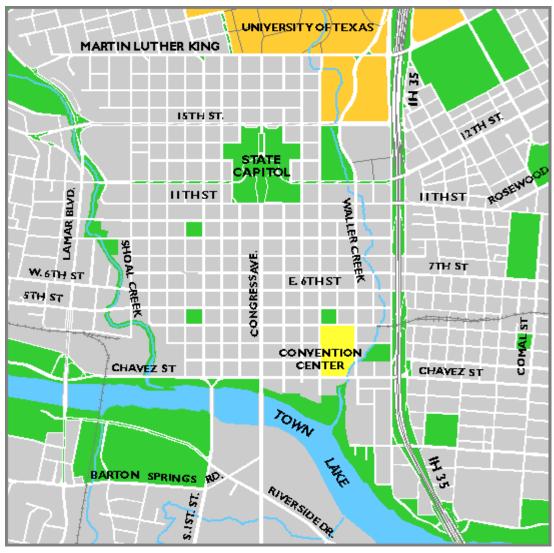[10] Economic Viability: DAP Phase One Report, 2008
[11] DAP: Phase One Report, 2008
[12] R/UDAT Austin, 1991

Figure 1.1 – Map of Texas

Texas

© 2005 Sperling's BestPlaces

Figure 1.2 – Map of Downtown Austin

Problematic Situation

Despite the obvious advantages of astounding growth and a powerfully diversified regional economic engine, the continued preeminence of downtown Austin is not certain. Creating a balance between downtown and the countervailing forces beyond its limits remains a complicated proposition. Ultimately, downtown Austin is in competition with outlying regional activity centers that enjoy access, mobility, and lower development cost advantages.[13] Businesses are more likely to locate or relocate their operations in areas where the market dictates more affordable land values, where there is convenient access to local or regional transportation options, and where lower surrounding development densities offer greater mobility.

Transportation capacity within and around downtown is seriously limited. The downtown street grid is fully built out, as is the surrounding street network. Current and expected growth indicates that travel in and out of Downtown will become increasingly difficult. In fact, without continued major investment, road congestion is predicted to be severe throughout the region, further isolating downtown.[14]

The citizens of Austin value affordability, local unique businesses and authenticity.[15] In 2007 the Downtown Austin Alliance estimated that over 50% of businesses in the central city were locally owned.[16] Strong growth attracts the attention of wider audiences in the business community, and market conditions result in national chain retailers' relocating into the central core. Unfortunately, unguided new growth in

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[13] From "Why Prepare a Downtown Plan": Phase One Report, Downtown Austin Plan 2008
[14] Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2007
[15] Online Community Values Survey, ROMA Design Group 2007
[16] This figure was not statistically verified by ROMA Design Group during planning for DAP Phase One

downtown has the potential to push out local businesses and dilute the local flavor that made Austin attractive in the first place.

Residential dislocation is also of concern. There are 5,000 people living in downtown Austin.[17] By 2010 this number is expected to grow to 14,000. Downtown Austin includes established residential apartment and condo spaces and dense urban neighborhoods where new high-rise condo development is causing a spike in property taxes. Expensive living condominiums has caused exodus of urban neighborhoods and older apartment dwellings.

Redevelopment and new residential and commercial construction are raising housing costs beyond the reach for average citizens. The currently sales price of a new one-bedroom condo in Downtown is $468,669.[18] The cost of construction for a high rise development project is $275 per square foot.[19] Downtown living in new residential units is unattainable for the average individual; fewer than 7% of Austin citizens can afford to buy a new condo in downtown. The community is concerned that downtown is becoming an exclusive place for the affluent, and it will no longer be affordable for many Austinites to live, shop, eat, or play there.[20] Austin is at the crossroads of formative change; never has the need been greater for a community-based planning effort to steer diverse facets in the right direction.

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[17] Data provided by the City of Austin Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department
[18] Part Four: Diversity & Affordability, DAP 2008
[19] ROMA Design Group, 2008
[20] "What is at risk?" DAP Phase One, 2008

Research Purpose

On December 12, 2005, the Austin City Council approved a resolution authorizing the initiation of the Downtown Austin Plan. After an extensive search, the planning consultant was selected in October 2006 and services began in April 2007. This research project focuses on the planning process for phase one of the Downtown Austin Plan that occurred between April 2007 and February 2008. Public meetings, multiple drafts of the Downtown Austin Plan phase one report, historical plans and data, and structured interview data were analyzed.

The planning process is an attempt by the City of Austin planning staff, urban design professionals, community stakeholders, and citizens of Austin to guide future growth in a way that achieves the community's core values of livability, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, beauty, economic growth, and the preservation of history and culture (ROMA Design Group and HR&A Advisors, 2008). Downtown Austin has been the subject of various plans and studies. Unfortunately, these have failed to produce a single plan with the capacity to guide future development, embody the core values of the community, and establish mechanisms that foster greater density through urban diversity. To achieve sustainability and ensure vibrancy for future generations, the process of developing an all-encompassing plan for downtown Austin is underway.

Throughout the history of planning in the United States there has been a significant lack of literature examining downtown plan implementation (Ryan 2006, 36). Traditionally such planning was a top-down, expert-driven activity. Howard-Watkins (2006) found that a more successful plan takes community preferences into

account. There is interest in a plan with community input that incorporates larger community values in the planning process. Demetria Howard-Watkins (2006) developed a way to study how well the community is incorporated into the planning process. She did this using the community of Inquiry framework derived from classical pragmatism. She examined the African American Quality of Life Initiative in Austin, Texas. Application of community of inquiry principles to the planning process is a way to analyze the process while taking into account citizen participation and community values.[21]

The purpose of this paper is to explore whether the City of Austin's Downtown Plan and the planning process itself use community of inquiry principles. This exploration should provide insights for future efforts and be a source for recommendations to improve the process.

Overview of Chapters

The next chapter reviews relevant planning literature and explains the application of community of inquiry principles. Chapter 3 explores the historical context of previous planning efforts in Austin, Texas. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the methodology and results of this research effort, and chapter 6 includes conclusions and recommendations for the future.

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[21] See for example this concept was developed by Dr. Patricia Shields through her in-depth exploration of the origins of classical pragmatism in public administration (PA): Shield 2008. Rediscovering the Taproot: Is Classical Pragmatism the Rout to Renew Public Administration? *Public Administration Review.* Shields 1996. Pragmatism: Exploring Public Administration's Policy Imprint. *Administration & Society,* 28(4), 390-411. Shields 1998. For other Texas State Applied Research Projects that explore the connection between classical pragmatism and public administration see: Perez (2000); Wilson (2001); Gillfillan (2008); Gatlin (2006); Howard-Watkins (2006).

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Purpose

Ensuring a community's long-term sustainability requires an equitable balance between urban, residential, commercial, and recreational land uses. Boyce (1963, 242) explains that two widely accepted planning goals are "to maintain a relatively compact urban form to prevent urban decentralization and sprawl," and "to restore the central business district to its rightful place in the metropolis." Achieving compact urban form is no easy task. Through a research effort aimed at cultivating the desirability of urban redevelopment, Mary Huth (1980, 124) discovered that downtowns across the country "have been subject over the years to different positive and negative influences."[22] Stability in downtowns across the country is subject to a cyclical pattern. Downtowns considered to be in the "upward swing phase" are characterized by "more creative and successful multiple use of urban space dictated by economic considerations and the physical need for compactness" (Huth 1980, 124-125).[23] There is growing "pedestrian emphasis; increased housing demand and attention to urban design which carefully blends intensity and openness" (Huth 1980, 125).[24] The combination of these traits has resulted in many central business districts' becoming far more useful, desirable, and viable (Huth 1980).[25]

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[22] Also see: Knack, R. 1998. Downtown Where the Living is Easy. *Planning.* 64: 8 (1998-01-01) ISSN: 0001-2610

[23] Also see: Cervero, R. 1997. Travel demand and the 3Ds: Density, diversity, and design. *Transportation Research* Volume: 2 Issue: 3 (1997-01-01) ISSN: 0041-1647

[24] Also see: Southworth, M. 2003. New Urbanism and the American Metroplois. *New Urbanism.* 29: 210-226

[25] This trend is continuing today.

The implementation of land use planning has traditionally been an assignment given to local governments. Burby and May (1997) explain that "some states have enacted laws requiring local governments to develop growth management plans, urban growth boundaries, and the like, the majority of states leave it to local governments to decided if, and how, land use planning will be done" (as cited in Koontz 2005, 465). All major urban governments have a myriad of planning activities being carried out simultaneously, and the scope of planning has changed with regard to citizen participation (Harman 1970). In most cities, citizens are now attuned to the planning function, and they force planners into the public domain (Harman 1970).

Active citizen participation in the planning process does pose dilemmas for decision-makers that cannot be ignored. Harman (1970)[26] summarizes this situation succinctly:

> At the same time that it may satisfy the citizen demands for inclusion
> in the process, it seems to create a slow, awkward delivery system in
> a period when government is under great pressure to show decisive
> action on urban problems (452).

Government responsiveness is increasingly seen as "a passive unidirectional reaction to the people's needs and demand based on market place view of better service for clients or customers" (Vigoda 2002, 527). Kathi and Cooper (2005) suggest that responsiveness is a necessary evil that may inhibit the performance of professional administrators. As a solution to Berman's (1997) notion that cynicism and mistrust are fostered by inadequate governmental responsiveness, Koontz (2005) points out that citizen participation in planning should be viewed through a focus on deliberative processes. "Forums such as collaborative task forces can provide opportunities for citizens to engage in self-reflection

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[26] Also see: Day, D. 1997. Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept? *Journal Of Planning Literature* Volume: 11 Issue: 3 ISSN: 0885-4122

and communication to express interests and develop shared social constructions" (Koontz 2005, 461). Adams (2004, 52) explains that "a process that lacks opportunities for constructive citizen deliberation will lead to disillusionment between citizens and their government." Meaningful collaboration between citizens and administrators provides legitimacy to the formulation of public policy goals. Pointing out potential pitfalls, Lynn and Kartez (1995) caution:

> Even a well-facilitated process of citizen deliberation that fosters
> apparently meaningful discourse does not meet process criteria of
> fairness and competence if the sponsoring agency does not intend
> to incorporate the discourse into policy decisions.

The unfortunate reality for the practice of planning, as Ryan (2006, 36) notes, is "the relative paucity of literature examining downtown plan implementation." Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the origins of planning in the United States and provide a context to the practice. While exploring the subsystems of planning and its relationship to politics and administration, the concept of citizen participation in planning is examined. Finally, the community of inquiry framework, employed by Demetria Howard-Watkins (2006) is utilized to formulate three working hypotheses and several sub-hypotheses to explore the downtown Austin planning process[27].

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[27] Dr. Patricia Shields developed Community of Inquiry: See for example the forthcoming: Shields, P. 2008. Rediscovering the Taproot: Is Classical Pragmatism the Route to Renew Public Administration. *Public Administration Review.*
Shields, P. 1996. Pragmatism: Exploring Public Administration's Policy Imprint. *Administration and Society*, 28(4), 390-411. Shields, P. 1998. Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: a Toll for Public Administration. *Research in Public Administration* 4: 195-226.

PLANNING IN THE UNITED STATES

In the beginning

The origins of planning can be traced back to the latter part of the nineteenth century. The good government movement was born in response to the emergence of the big-city political machines, the spoils system, and extensive graft and corruption (Cohen 1969). During this period, Cohen notes, "the reformers promoted the merit system, contract bidding systems, the auditing and budgeting functions, the machine ballot, and many other changes" (1969, 180). Public sentiment supported the notion that government officials did not act with the public's best interest in mind. Appetite for reform was pervasive. As such, "reforms made in one city after another were the creation of boards and commissions to supervise different sectors of public activity and to provide these activities with some insulation or protection from public officials" (Cohen 1969, 180). Good government reform movements spread across the country, attempting to infuse control and accountability into a broken system. "Given the reform mentality and mood, it could only follow that the function of city planning would also be insulated from the greasy palms of elected officials" (Cohen 1969, 180). As reform spread, public improvement projects were initiated to counter dismal urban conditions.

City Beautiful

Projects encompassing municipal art, civic improvement, and outdoor art (Blackford 1980) were initiated to infuse the urban environment with a sense of hope. As Wilson notes in *The City Beautiful Movement,* "As cities became larger, urban problems became more pronounced"; "cities across the country were crowded and dirty, with many

poorly-made buildings and unpaved roads" (Wilson 1989, 78-79). Poorly constructed

roads and buildings were not the only problems for citizens during this period. Social

troubles such as poverty, prostitution, and corruption were increasingly apparent as well

(Wilson 1989). To combat these issues, a seminal reform movement began pushing back

against harmful forces strangling the urban environment. "With the growing evidence of

the need for urban reform, the City Beautiful movement began, spanning from 1899 to

the start of World War I" (Bjelajac 2000, 244). As Bjelajac notes in the book *American

Art: A Cultural History*, "this movement, with supporters in cities across the country,

attempted to address urban problems through systematic urban planning and

beautification" (2000, 240).   Many cities considered varying programs of urban planning

and efforts originated in myriad sources (Blackford 1980). Larger urban centers of

activity in America set the stage for early planning efforts, and their popularity begin to

spread. Local city beautiful projects inspired planners to begin transforming the urban

environment. Blackford explains, "In the first decade of the twentieth century, the park

movement merged with other campaigns to create sentiment favorable to the idea of

urban planning" (1980, 652).

Defining Planning

The notion of a city as an ecological pattern of densities, functions, and values is

central to urban planning (Friedmann 1967). Significant variation in the definition of

planning is suggestive of a scholarly topic that encompasses a wide breadth. Carroll

argues that planning is "concerned with programs for shaping the urban environment"

(1952, 189). From a similar vantage, Friedmann defines planning "as the guidance of

change within a social system" (1967, 225). From a varying perspective, Boyce explores planning by focusing on outcome: "The most fundamental goal of planning [is] to help make the community a better place in which to live" (241). More logically, the end result of planning might best be to facilitate change in light of the new possibilities (Boyce 1963).

Despite variation and divergent approaches to the concept, planning clearly entails change, or more specifically, facilitating change. Friedmann (1967) admits, "There are various ways of defining planning" (227). Conceptualizing the practice as the introduction of ways and means for using technical intelligence to bring about changes that otherwise would not occur is more appropriate (Friedmann 1967).

Planning Subsystems

Understanding planning through its practice requires a more involved exploration of the theory-practice link. Friedmann (1967) views planning through a lens of various theoretical subsystems. He contends that theory has a direct relevance for practice and that a comprehensive model of planning must include forms of thought as an important category for analysis. Harman (1970) takes a more practical approach and points to functional subsystems shaped by the physical problems of cities (1970). Transportation, land-use controls, redevelopment, and public facilities are major planning subsystems, each having its own special characteristics and dominant issues.

Friedmann's (1967) theoretical approach distinguishes four modes of planning: developmental, adaptive, allocative, and innovative (225) to provide a framework for further analysis. Planning for urban development at the city level is more adaptive.

Friedmann contends, "The ongoing stream of life does not wait for planners to give it direction" (1967, 229). As a result, planners must act upon social and economic processes with their minds to guide society toward desired objectives (Friedman 1967). Harman (1970) follows suit more practically by suggesting that "as problems of cities and the activities of planners have changed, the planning subsystems have also changed" (451). He points out that contemporary literature fails to recognize the "rapidly expanding scope of the planning function" (ibid).

Cohen also acknowledges the changing framework of planning (1969). Enlargement of the scope of planning beyond physical environment issues to basic social and economic problems of the community, and intensification of efforts in the areas of urban design and neighborhood development, are transforming practice. Despite rapidly changing boundaries, practical spatial and physical resources, requirements, and relationships remain a vital organizing focus (Cohen 1969). Cohen (1969) describes practical considerations of planning in detail:

> How buildings relate to one another; how land-uses relate to
> one another; how people move from one building to another,
> and from one land-use to another; how particular buildings
> and uses generate traffic and air and water pollution; how
> certain combinations of buildings or uses create amenities,
> convenience and comfort, or fail to; what factors generate
> building or area growth or decline, blight or vitality - all
> these remain important, central issues for any community of
> men to be concerned with (184).

The interrelation of theoretical and practical notions of planning has contributed to the understanding and formulation of subsystems. Planning has supported broad social and economic programming efforts in addition to more conventional neighborhood urban renewal activities (Cohen 1969). As Cohen explains, "rational planning depends heavily

on a deliberative consideration of long-term goals and objectives" (1969, 179). Planning

practices should help decision-makers review and weigh alternative courses of action,

make a careful allocation of resources, and assess effect and impact (Cohen 1969).

Link to Politics and Administration

The planning function is centrally related to both politics and administration.

As Friedmann (1976, 125) notes, "Every planning endeavor rests on a political

foundation." Despite the obvious political nature of planning, Harman (1970, 450)

explains, "Comprehensive planning doctrine has encouraged people to think of planning

as a unified and rational process in which all of the appropriate parts fit neatly together."

The perception that a planner plays a mainly technical role is pervasive, and is not an

accurate description (Harman 1970). Harman (1970, 451) notes, "It has become apparent

that effective planners are ones who play more than just a technical role."

In *Planning and Politics in the Metropolis*, David C. Ranney (1969) describes

planning heritage in relation to urban politics: "The strong physical bias, the tradition of

utilizing utopian solutions to urban problems, and an aversion to politics are major

elements of the planner's heritage" (161). The potential effectiveness of planners in the

urban political system is reduced by this heritage (Harman 1970). Realization of this

point in the practice of planning has contributed to advancement in the discipline. As

Harman (1970, 425) explains, "Planners have been made aware of the political nature of

their work, and as a result, there seems to be a growing recognition that they must

develop political skills if they are to be effective."

Congruent to planning and politics is the link of planning to administration

(Cohen 1969). Cohen notes, "The older views of planning were based on the assumption

that planning was a series of steps rather distinct from administration" (1969, 184). The changing framework of city planning entails abandoning the concept which kept planning separate from administration (Cohen 1969). The planning-administration dichotomy is best explained by exploring the traditional tools of planning. According to Cohen (1969, 184), "The major traditional tools were the master plan and the zoning ordinance, both of which were based on general relationships, general principles, and guidelines." Lack of participation in the specific application of a general principle often meant abandonment of the principle (Cohen 1969). Cohen (1969, 184) notes, "attention to the specific application could evolve a modified principle which would be more creative than the preconceived general principle" and "lead to more creative applications." Replacing the planning-administration dichotomy with the planning-administration continuum increased effectiveness and widened the scope of planning practice (Cohen, 1969).

Citizen participation

Despite a rich history, citizen participation has not received wide acceptance in the planning community. Morgan, Pelissero & England (1979) explain, "Although citizen involvement in planning dates back to the 'city beautiful movement,' popular participation has not received wide acceptance by planners" (380). This relationship is understood due to the notion that the "dominant posture among planners can be characterized as technocratic" (Anthony Cataneses, cited by Morgan, Pelissero & England 1979, 380). Planning problems are primarily technical in nature, requiring the expertise of trained specialists (Morgan, Pelissero & England 1979). Morgan continues, "Change in this posture is slowly evolving" (1979, 380). Planners are beginning to "seek

a more participatory form of planning" in which "citizen involvement is viewed as an integral part of local policy determination" (Morgan, Pelissero & England 1979, 380).[28]

The influence of this approach has led to "increased interest in finding appropriate ways of providing greater citizen input" (Morgan, Pelissero & England 1979, 384). The partnership between citizens and planning officials attempts to add value to the process through consideration of diverse views. "As described by Gray (1989), collaboration is characterized by diverse stakeholders working together to resolve a conflict or develop and advance a shared vision" (Gray 1989, cited by Koontz 2005, 460). Koontz notes, "Governments and citizens have sought, through land use planning, to combine the interests and insights of multiple stakeholders to develop plans" (2005, 460). To ensure the full benefit of citizen participation in the planning process, "regularly soliciting the opinions of community activists" is critical (Anthony Downs 1975, as cited by Morgan, Pelissero & England 1979, 384).

COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

The foundation of citizen participation in planning policy creates an opportunity for a new analytical approach. In 2006, a graduate student at Texas State University - San Marcos, Demetria Howard-Watkins, completed a study entitled *The Austin, Texas African American Quality of Life Initiative as a Community of Inquiry: An Exploratory Study.* Howard-Watkins set out to identify pragmatic community of inquiry principles used in implementation team work sessions for the quality of life initiative. She determined "long-term citizen-administrator collaborations that convene under the weight of dissension need a framework through which to unravel and resolve complex,

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[28] For more discussion of citizen participation and planning see Day, 1997.

multi-layered issues" (Howard-Watkins 2006, 5). The community of inquiry approach is "pragmatically focused" and through its implementation seeks to "establish resolution" (Howard-Watkins 2006, 4). The framework is valuable to public administrators because "it creates an atmosphere that invites input and encourages unity to address dilemmas" (ibid).

Application of pragmatic community of inquiry principles to the practice of public administration is born from the research of Patricia Shields, a professor at Texas State University - San Marcos. Shields developed the framework through "her avid study of Pragmatism as a valuable philosophy for public administration in practice" (Howard-Watkins 2006, 4-5). "A community of inquiry is defined by a problematic situation and reinforced by a scientific or experimental attitude and linked together by participatory democracy" (Shields 2003, 511). The community of inquiry is "a method for administrators to rethink how problems are confronted and resolved" (Howard-Watkins 2006, 5). Utilizing the community of inquiry framework may add substance to citizen-administrator collaborations (Howard-Watkins 2006, 5) during "fact finding analysis and democratic decision making"; "making mistakes and making progress" (Shields 2003, 512) while striving for "critical optimism" (Shields 2003, 514). Citizen participation through the community of inquiry approach has the potential to strengthen acceptance of public participation in the planning process and legitimize policy decisions.

The Purpose of a Community of Inquiry

The most basic foundations of public administration, viewed through a pragmatic lens, are critical to the community of inquiry. Shields (1998, 199) notes that

public administration is concerned with "the stewardship and implementation of the products of a living democracy." Specifically, public administrators are "concerned with accountability and effective use of scarce resources" and with "making the connection between the doing, the making and democratic values" (Shields 1998, 199). Shields (1998, 199) explains, "Pragmatic inquiry is well suited to facilitate this vision of public administration." To further clarify the purpose of this framework, Howard-Watkins (2006, 44) explains, "With a community of inquiry, citizens and administrators have a map to guide the direction of their efforts."

Employing the ideas of John Dewey and Jane Addams, Shields introduced the community of inquiry concept by explaining that the philosophy is "a powerful idea developed by classical pragmatists[29] that has wide application to the many contexts within public administration" (Shields 2003, 511). Community of inquiry is a "powerful organizing principle" (ibid). This framework is structured within classical pragmatism, which Shields (1998, 197) defines as the "philosophy of common sense" (Howard-Watkins 2006, 44). Unlike administrative reliance on expertise, experimenting is at the core of classical pragmatism (Snider 2000, 330). In "Rediscovering the Taproot: Is Classical Pragmatism the Route to Renew Public Administration?" the relevance of inquiry is underscored by stating that "pragmatism's experimentalism is part of a larger theory and process of inquiry" (Shields 2008, 208). To further underscore inquiry in this context, Shields (2008, 208) notes, "Classical pragmatists believe that purposeful human inquiry is both provisional and grounded in a problematic situation." Perhaps the

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[29] Although there were others, this group includes those considered the founders of classical pragmatism: John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., William James, and Jane Addams. See: Shields, P. 2008. Rediscovering the Taproot: Is Classical Pragmatism the Route to Renew Public Administration? *Public Administration Review.* 68: 2, 205-221

best explanation of the applicability of inquiry and the classical pragmatist view of the

problematic situation is summarized as follows:

> Practitioners face problematic situations daily – balancing
> budgets, presiding at tense meeting, hiring new employees.
> Problematic situations can also be big – hurricanes, planetary
> warming, terrorism, poverty. The problematic situation as focal
> point is flexible enough to capture the operational world of the
> street level practitioner and large enough to demand
> sophisticated theory, methods and sometimes – international
> cooperation (Shields 2008, 208).

In *The Logic of Inquiry*, John Dewey (1938, 171) defines inquiry as:

> The controlled or directional transformation of an inter-
> determinant [unsettled] situation into one that is so determinate
> [conclusively settled] in its constituent distinctions and relations
> as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified
> whole.

Karen Evans (2003) argues convincingly that public administration practice should

reclaim Dewey's philosophies. By confronting problematic situations with classical

pragmatism, "opportunities for collective inquiry and agency" (Evans 2000, 322) abound.

At the heart of this understanding rests the notion that pragmatic community of inquiry

principles traverse disciplines and provide a solid launching point to explore citizen

participation in public planning programs.

The Key Elements of a Community of Inquiry

As Demetria Howard-Watkins (2006) identified in her exploration of the

African American Quality of Life Initiative, the key elements in the community of

inquiry approach are a group united around a problematic situation, examining the

problem with a "scientific or experimental attitude" (Shields 2003, 511), and the link to

participatory democracy (2006, 46). A problematic situation catalyzes the formation of a

community of inquiry (Shields 2003). When a problem is identified, the natural

inclination is to "link problems to final solutions" that "close off discussion and debate

and may put a public bureaucracy in an untenable position because it is expected to solve

unsolvable problems" (Shields 2003, 516). The framework developed to explore

pragmatic community of inquiry principles during implementation team work sessions on

the quality of life initiative also facilitates the development of working hypotheses to

explore other critically important public policy issues.

WORKING HYPOTHESES

Working Hypothesis 1: A Scientific Attitude

Demetria Howard-Watkins explains that a "scientific or experimental attitude"

comprises a key element of a community of inquiry (2006, 50). More specifically,

Shields (2003, 511) notes a "scientific or experimental attitude…is a willingness to tackle

the problem using working hypotheses that guide the collection and interpretation of data

or facts." This approach "involves a willingness to see and learn from experimental

failures" (Shields 2003, 21). As departure from the more traditional hypothesis, Howard-

Watkins (2006, 50) continues, "a *working* hypothesis is not a prediction, but an inkling."

This tool is clarified by Dewey (1938/1998, 173) as an "anticipation of something that

may happen; it marks a possibility." In their article "Intermediate Theory: The Missing

Link in Successful Student Scholarship," Shields and Tajalli (2005, 13) confirm

that"working hypotheses signal that conceptualization is in its preliminary stages."

Howard-Watkins (2006) explains that a scientific or experimental attitude suggests that participants should step away from their preconceived ideas about how a problem should be resolved. Discussing classical pragmatism, David Hildebrand (2005, 348) presents the idea that the community of inquiry "stands in opposition to the idea that there are absolute values that are immovable and eternal and that can be judged absolutely true or false." This approach relies on "adaptability, innovation and responsiveness to changes in the dimensions and dynamics of the problem being solved" (Stolcis 2004, 363). Discussing pragmatism, Miller (2004, 245) concludes that "allegiance to some principle or universal ethic" is nonexistent.

The characteristics of a scientific attitude are presented by Shields (2003, 513) who states that "members of a community of inquiry…would talk to each other, compare perspectives, argue, and test hypotheses." The goal of this process is to foster differences of opinion amongst group participants. Howard-Watkins (2006, 51) explains, "Utilizing data and working hypotheses, participants in a community of inquiry arrive at different principles." The true benefit of this process is the "possibility of criticism and revision of (developed) principles in light of reflection on the consequences" (Webb, 2004, 489). Furthermore, determining more about issues which may justify a recommendation may also direct the team members toward information it needs to determine the extent of the problem (Howard-Watkins 2006).

Dewey (1938, 173) explains:

> Observation of facts and suggested meanings or ideas
> arise and develop in correspondence with each other.
> The more the facts of the case come to light in
> consequence of being subjected to observation, the
> clearer and more pertinent become the conceptions of the

way the problem constituted these facts is to be dealt with.

Dewey notes that working hypotheses are a "means of advancing investigation" (Dewey 1928, 142). The goal of this method of investigation is that the use of working hypotheses "leads to discovery of other facts" (Shields and Tajalli 2005, 14). Thus working hypothesis 1 (WH1) was formulated as follows:

Working Hypothesis 1: **City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders created and utilized strategies with a scientific attitude to develop the four foundations of phase one in the downtown Austin plan.**

Working Hypothesis 2: Participatory Democracy

Shields (2003, 522) explains that participatory democracy "is both the simplest and the most profound component of community of inquiry for public administration practice." Communication is the focus, in the sense that participatory democracy is "shaped by the interaction of the community and the facts" (Shields 2003, 511). Through participatory democracy, citizens are granted roles beyond that of "client or consumer" (Boyte 2005, 537 as cited by Howard-Watkins 2006, 53) and granted influence as "owners" (Vigoda 2002) or "decision makers" (Raffray 1997). In the article "Collaborative Governance Practices and Democracy," David Booher (2004) points out that participatory democracy takes place in "new spaces" that find government institutions defying a hierarchical, command-and-control power structure. Booher (2004, 33) asserts that participatory democracy in this form depends on "new ways of interacting, increased communication, a high level of trust, and new processes and rules for accountability." Howard-Watkins (2006) concludes that "these new spaces align with

Dewey's philosophy that conflicting parties should allow for the other to express itself as opposed to having "one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other" (Dewey 1939/1998, 342).

Howard-Watkins (2006, 53) solidifies the point that "new spaces" (Booher 2004) provide the capacity for public administrators to exercise active listening and responsiveness. This idea is justified by the notion that "listening immerses and engages" (Stivers 1994, 336). Stivers (1994, 367) further explains that active listening "promotes openness, respect for difference and reciprocity." This process "must be flexible and capable of adaptation" (Shields 2003, 526). However, the need for flexibility should never trump a stalwart focus on the "end-in-view" (Shields 2003, 526).

As Morgan, Pelissero & England (1979) point out, citizen participation in planning dates back to the city beautiful movement. Gray (1989) presents the popular notion that through public planning efforts, collaboration is "characterized by diverse stakeholder participation working together to resolve a conflict or develop and advance a shared vision" (Gray 1989 as cited by Koontz 2005, 460).

Therefore, WH2 was developed as follows:

Working Hypothesis 2: Principals of participatory democracy are reflected in the planning process to identify the community's core values and develop the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan.

Working Hypothesis 3: Critical Optimism

Critical optimism is perhaps the most significant component to a community of inquiry. Howard-Watkins (2006) notes that critical optimism is central to a community of inquiry. Shields (2003, 514) explains that the idea is rooted in the notion that "if we

put our heads together and act using a scientific attitude to approach a problematic situation the identified problem has the potential to be resolved." By design, this approach "bridges optimism and pessimism" by embracing "uncertainty and change but with a skeptical attitude" (Shields 2003, 515).

Cohen (1969, 180) explains the early impetus for reform of planning systems relates to ensuring that city planning would be "insulated" from powers that sought to work against the best interests of the public. Shields (2003, 515) affirms that "critical optimism should surround the application of any idea or organized effort to achieve the public good." Howard-Watkins (2006, 47) developed three central questions based on critical optimism for individuals coming together to resolve a problem(s):

1. Why are we here?

2. Do we believe that the problem(s) can be resolved?

3. Are we able to work together to resolve it (them)?

Rosener (1978) maintains that citizens and administrators should understand the nature of the tasks before them and be clear about their collaborative vision. The power of a well-developed vision "moves people toward future conditions" (Brown-Graham & Austin 2004, 15). Dewey explains the importance of vision in action by stating that "action which is not informed with vision, imagination and reflection, is more likely to increase confusion and conflict than to straighten things out" (Dewey 1917/1981, 95). Without clear goals and objectives, "exaggerated expectations" validates public resentment and cynicism toward government (Irvin & Stansbury 2004, 59).

Critical optimism requires that city planners and members of the community involved in the planning process believe in their goals and objectives. The concept itself

actually contributes to this posture; as Shields (2003, 515) explains, critical optimism "orients the practitioner toward his obligations and his duty." Kweit and Kweit (1981, 57) suggest that administrators should "believe in and mean what they are doing."

The benefits produced by city planning efforts rest on the belief that collaboration between city planners, design consultants, and the public will produce the desired results. According to Howard-Watkins (2006, 48) explains, reaching a collaborative goal "rests on trust developed by participants." Differences of opinion exist in any endeavor where multiple participants seek common ground. Berman (1997) believes that trust is a key component because it can establish unity between conflicting parties. Yang (2005, 273) explains that mutual trust is a "necessary condition for collective action and societal learning."

Morgan, Pelissero and England (1979, 380) explain that planners exhibit an aversion to citizen participation due to the "technocratic" nature of the discipline. The "citizen-as-decision maker" model (Raffray 1997) is applicable in this context.   For mutual trust to develop between participants in city planning efforts, citizens must be perceived as "problem solvers and co-creators of public goods" instead of "clients, consumers, or spectators" (Boyte 2005, 537). Smith and Beazley (2000, 862) explain that "as problem solvers and decision makers, citizens require access to resources to strengthen their understanding of policy matters." This approach encourages stronger participation through a balance of power (Smith & Beazley 2000).

Therefore WH3 was formulated as follows:

Working Hypothesis 3:   City of Austin staff members, in conjunction with consultants and stakeholders, displayed critical optimism as they developed an approach to phase one of the downtown Austin plan.

CONCLUSION

The history and evolution of planning in the United States provides context for current policy proposals. Exploring various planning subsystems, as well as their origin and growth over time, reveals important distinctions about planning initiatives. The relationship of the discipline to politics and administration underscores the need for in-depth policy analysis. Concentration on citizen participation during the creation and implementation of planning proposals is lacking. Therefore, applying the principles of pragmatic community of inquiry to explore the Downtown Austin Plan may provide valuable insights for public administration and strengthen citizen confidence in government.

Table 2.1 summarizes the working hypotheses and identifies the sources used in forming each hypothesis.

TABLE 2.1

SUMMARY OF THE WORKING HYPOTHESES

Working Hypothesis	Sources
WH 1 The community of inquiry approach is used in municipal planning if planning strategies are developed with a scientific attitude.	Dewey (1938 / 1998); Shields (2003); Shields (2008); Hildebrand (2005); Stolcis (2004); Miller (2004); Howard-Watkins (2006); Webb (2004); Evans (2000); Shields (1998);
WH 2 The community of inquiry approach is used in municipal planning if planning strategies are developed employing participatory democracy.	Gray (1989); Koontz (2005); Forester (1993); Webler (1995); Lynn & Kartez (1995); Booher (2004); Boyte (2005); Dewey (1939 / 1998); Raffray (1997); Shields (2003); Vigoda (2002); Shields (2008); Addams (1902); Booher (2004); Boyte (2005); Dewey (1939 / 1998);
WH 3 The community of inquiry approach is used in municipal planning if planning strategies are developed with critical optimism.	Shields (2003); Howard-Watkins (2006); Brown-Graham & Austin(2004); Evans (2000); Irvin & Stansbury (2004); Rosener (1978); Berman (1997); Yang (2005); Boyte (2005); Smith & Beazley (2000)

Chapter 3 focuses on an explanation of the planning context, and the working hypotheses are refined for the case of the City of Austin.

Chapter 3

Setting

Purpose

This chapter examines the history of Austin's planning efforts and the current planning initiative. Information about the consultants who were active in developing the Downtown Austin Plan is included to provide clarity and context. In addition, the generic community of inquiry working hypotheses developed in chapter 2 are refined. The refined working hypotheses are now tailored to a specific problematic situation: the formal downtown planning in the City of Austin.

History, 1839 to 1984

The city of Austin was founded as a deliberate act of civic boosterism. There was no economic reason for the city to be located where it is; there is no port, and no intersection of roads or railroads. Instead, the bucolic location was selected by Stephen F. Austin in 1839 to secure its position over other communities as the capital city of the Republic of Texas.[30] While one can look back to the birth of Austin and identify many examples of urban design, five major events spanning a 145-year time frame[31] have influenced the modern form of downtown and continue to affect life in Austin to this day.

The Waller Plan of 1839 shown in figure 3.1 depicts the birth of Austin and stands today as a record of the historical origin of the city's physical form and place.

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[30] "Physical Form & Place" DAP, 2008
[31] The Waller Plan of 1839 to The Capitol View Corridors 1984, DAP 2008

Figure 3.1
The Waller Plan 1839

Source: Map produced for The Waller Plan of 1839[32]

Framed by Waller Creek and Shoal Creek on its east and west edges and the

Colorado River on the south, the plan put Capitol Square at center stage. The original

boundaries of the City were West Avenue, East Avenue (IH 35), West 15th Street, and

Water Street (Cesar Chavez). The ceremonial streets of Congress Avenue and College

Avenue (Twelfth Street) radiated out from Capitol Square, and four blocks to the south

were dedicated as public squares, to be surrounded by civic and public uses.[33] The grid

structure of the Waller plan conveys a sense of place to the downtown area and creates an

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[32] Obtained from: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/DAP_PH_1_REPORT_2-14-08
[33] "Physical Form and Place" DAP, 2008

environment of livable, pedestrian-friendly streets. From conception, the importance of open space and a focal point for the Capitol City are evident in its design.

Improving transportation technology led to broad expansions in commerce throughout the United States in the late 1800s. Industry depended on rail lines to bring goods to market. During this period, Austin progressed with the rest of the country. The arrival of three intercity freight and passenger rail lines (see figure 3.2) at the end of the 19th century, located at Congress Avenue along Third and Fourth Streets, marked these corridors with warehouse and rail yard land uses.[34]

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[34] "Physical Form and Place: Five Interventions" DAP, 2008

Figure 3.2
Intercity Rail Lines

Historic Passenger Rail Network in Austin Metropolitan Area circa 1920s
(streetcar map source: W.P. Donalson, Austin History Center)

Source: Austin History Center[35]

Austin's privately-owned streetcar system developed at the end of the 19th century. The system included nine lines radiating out from 6th and Congress and provided connections to Austin's two original transit-oriented developments, Hyde Park and Travis Heights. Additional locations included East Austin, The University, Deep Eddy, the public golf course and dam, and Austin High School.[36] Rail lines in Austin encouraged commercial growth and expanded economic opportunity into other parts of

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[35] From: Physical Form and Place Presentation, DAP 2008
[36] ROMA Design Group, 2008

the city. Bus transportation and individual car ownership eventually diminished commuter rail use, but remaining lines offer the opportunity for modern redeployment of alternative forms of mass-transit options.

By 1893, political forces in the city had begun exploring ways to increase commercial and industrial opportunities. Mayor Wooldridge, in an effort to promote industry for what he termed an "overdone and rather poor capital city…situated in the midst of a limited and unreliable agricultural region," spearheaded the first Colorado River dam project.[37] Damming the river provided security against catastrophic flooding that ravaged the area and created what is now Lake Austin and Town Lake (recently renamed Lady Bird Lake). For the last 51 years[38], various documents pertaining to general aspects planning have been developed to accomplish goals, propose projects, or guide growth and development in downtown Austin. The construction of Interstate Highway 35 in the 1950s[39] along the eastern portion of downtown is perhaps the most controversial feature in the area. The highway has created a hostile edge to both downtown and East Austin, and positive development along its frontage is limited.[40] Construction of the highway and urban renewal programs in the 1960s displaced residential neighborhoods and concentrated land ownership in the hands of State government and the University of Texas.[41] The construction of Interstate Highway 35 (IH35) caused a division between communities on the east and west sides of Austin that has resulted in numerous conflicts and continues to have a significant effect on the physical form of downtown.

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[37] Damming of the Colorado River 1893, ROMA Design Group, 2008
[38] This number was calculated from Downtown Austin Bibliography, EGRSO 2008
[39] 1928 City Plan and 1950/60s Urban Renewal, ROMA 2008
[40] Physical Form & Place, DAP, 2008
[41] ROMA, 2008

As has been the case in many cities, reaction to new development sparked ordinances and legislation aimed at preserving cultural or historical identity. As early as the 1960s, with the construction of some of the high-rise residential buildings north and west of the Capitol, citizens in Austin became concerned with the resulting obstruction of views to the Capitol and the dominance of these buildings in height over the Capitol.[42] As depicted by the Waller Plan in 1839, Capitol Square was originally intended to be the dominant feature of downtown Austin. Preserving unobstructed views of the Capitol gained community support as larger buildings began to rise. Figure 3.3 is a map showing protected views of the Capitol.

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[42] "Five Interventions: DAP, 2008"

Figure 3.3
Capitol View Corridors

The Capitol View Corridors (CVC) ordinance and the corresponding State legislation

protect three-dimensionally-described view corridors which limit height from 35 different

public place viewpoints, including IH 35, Lamar Boulevard and Loop 1.[43] These laws,

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[43] ROMA Design Group, 2008

combined with community support for preservation, have significantly impacted development in downtown Austin.

R/UDAT (1991 to 2000)

More recent planning efforts have been aimed at evaluating urban form and developing plans to guide future growth in downtown Austin. In May 1989, the Downtown Commission presented the Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) concept to the City Council as the next step after the adoption of Austinplan, the City's draft comprehensive plan (R/UDAT Austin, 1991). R/UDAT represents the Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The AIA has been sending R/UDAT teams to various U.S. cities since 1967[44] to advise and develop strategies of good urban form. Team members are selected based on specific knowledge or experience they have dealing with problems relevant to a particular area of study. The Austin team was the 112th such team to be invited into a specific area to deal with environmental and urban problems.[45] Generally, the overarching goals for R/UDAT teams are improve physical design nationally, demonstrate the importance of urban and regional planning, stimulate local public action, give national support to local AIA chapters, improve communities, and become involved in urban design and planning issues.[46]

The R/UDAT planning began in 1989 when the first group was invited to Austin. Their charge was to analyze current downtown conditions and to recommend

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[44] From: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudataustin.htm
[45] From: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudataustin.htm
[46] American Institute of Architects, 2008

strategies to usher Austin into the 21st century.[47] Subsequent planning and reevaluation

took place over several years. The initial team was invited to Austin by the city

government, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the Austin Chapter of the

American Institute of Architects (AIA). Goals included "assisting in the assessment of

those current conditions and transferring today's community interest in downtown into a

strategy for action to provide a spark for additional public-private actions" (R/UDAT

Austin, 1991).

The first R/UDAT plan in 1991 explored context and existing conditions,

attempted to develop a vision for downtown, assessed relevant issues, highlighted

important relationships and linkages, and made recommendations for the implementation

of *Austin's Downtown Vision*.[48] "We have listened to people who work downtown, own

businesses there, are resident, live in adjoining neighborhoods, and study downtown.

What we have seen and heard supports Austin's reputation as a very special city with

high regard for participating democracy" (R/UDAT Austin, 1991).

The first R/UDAT plan emphasized participatory democracy and the relevance of

assessing community values. As Hoch (2008) notes, "Urban planning relies upon

representations of what people believe and do in interactive settings across scale (from

block to region). Planners use different forms of inquiry to observe, compose, analyze

and justify representations of these settings."[49] In planning there is a strong and relevant

correlation between assimilating community values and the incorporation of those values

into the planning process. This noble approach is often difficult to synthesize. As the

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[47] Obtained from R/UDAT Austin Implementation: "The Call", 1991
[48] The full plan can be found at: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudat_91-1.htm
[49] Obtained "Making Plans – Draft for Review" directly from Dr. Charles Hoch (University of Illinois at Chicago) via email, 3/2/2008

R/UDAT plan in 1991 points out, "There is no dearth of creativity, energy or

opportunities in this community. What is lacking is a basic vision to guide downtown,

one based on fundamental values strongly held and adhered to by the community"

(R/UDAT Austin, 1991). Channeling the inertia of community values into visionary

action is difficult to achieve but its importance cannot be understated.

The creation of R/UDAT Austin in 1991 ultimately necessitated the need for

further planning to outline implementation and shape further action. A community group

worked for a year to develop an action plan based on R/UDAT Austin (1991).[50]

Beginning with "The Call" to assess the history and heritage of Austin and followed by

"The Action" to outline detailed recommendations, R/UDAT Austin's "Implementation:

A Call to Action, 1992" was born:

> From Mirabeau B Lamar's decision to establish the
> capital of the Republic on this soil, Austin has struggled
> to blend its heritage of natural beauty with its vision of
> urban growth. Current concern to protect the
> environment in the midst of urban development parallels
> the caution city planners expressed three generations ago.

The second significant modern planning effort for downtown Austin further

established the idea that conflict surrounding preservation versus the pressures of

development and growth has a storied past. In reference to this difficult balancing act,

Hoch notes, "When we do planning we cannot rely directly upon the intuitive sensibility

of our own bodies but must turn to the complex mediation of social and institutional

relationships" (C. Hoch, e-mail message to author, 3/2/2008).

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[50] R/UDAT Review, 2000

The detailed recommendations contained in R/UDAT Austin Implementation (1992) include goals for urban design, natural environment, community issues, cultural arts, transportation, economic development, and a downtown management organization.[51]

> Downtown Austin is the center of government, education, culture and ideas for the Lone Star State. Downtown Austin cannot fulfill this role and potential, however, unless carful attention is given to issues that accompany growth and evolution. Responsibility for, and benefits from, its development and social well-being must be shared by everyone.[52]

Emphasizing community values, participation, and shared benefits remains a consistent theme in the second R/UDAT Austin implementation plan. "More than six decades have passed since a comprehensive Downtown proposal was implemented; now is the time for the Downtown community to unite in commitment to a revitalized Downtown" (R/UDAT Austin Implementation, 1992).

Engendering broad community support for a plan that combines multiple individual issues to provide direction for future efforts is not a simple task. Hoch (e-mail message to author, 3/2/2008) explains, "When professional planners represent urban change they selectively frame and organize different representations used to order shifting relationships based on the purpose of the plan." This organizational process could alienate citizens from participating and make them feel as if their influence in the process failed to affect the outcome.

Review of the R/UDAT process was motivated by desire to stimulate development and revitalize downtown. "Downtown Austin was still in desperate need of development in 1997, when the team was brought back for R/UDAT Revisited"

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[51] The full plan can be found at: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudatcall.htm
[52] R/UDAT Austin Implementation, 1992

(R/UDAT Review, 2000). In 1997, Austinites were invited to participate in R/UDAT Revisited: A Call to Finish.[53] "Almost 500 citizens responded and participated in this follow-up session to the 1991 visit by the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team from the American Institute of Architects."[54]

Since R/UDAT Austin (1991) and R/UDAT Austin Implementation (1992), many of the recommendations from the earlier plans had been implemented. The revisit session was designed to evaluate what had been done and make further recommendations about priorities still needing attention. The main topics included organization, marketing, management, natural and built environment, markets and economic potential, transportation, community issues, and government policies.[55] The primary opportunity areas determined by R/UDAT Revisited (1997) relate to keeping the list of projects small and getting them completed; choosing projects with a high degree of potential for success; and using leverage to produce spin-off benefits, tangible impact, and acceptable public cost.[56]

Three years after the 1997 R/UDAT Revisited conference yielded a short list of priority projects; the community reconvened to review downtown's progress.[57] During this conference Robert Gaston, then board chair of the Downtown Austin Alliance, noted that the 1997 R/UDAT report attributed Austin's lack of progress toward the shared vision of a great downtown primarily to a lack of leadership. Austin had excellent plans for downtown, but got bogged down in the process of implementation.[58]

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[53] For more information see: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudat_revisited.htm
[54] Report: R/UDAT Revisited, 1997
[55] For more details see: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/rudat_revisited.htm
[56] From R/UDAT Revisited Report, 1997
[57] R/UDAT Review, 2000
[58] Not a direct quote, R/UDAT Review, 2000

The review in 2000 was designed to prompt community discussion relating to achievements of previous plans and challenges for the future. The main points of this dialog related to mobility, environment, linkages, smart growth, and community.[59] Driving the 1997 R/UDAT Revisited report was the sense that downtown Austin needed new development to stimulate economic anchors and provide an enjoyable space for the community. The report that was produced just three years later was stunningly different.

> Downtown Austin is at the beginning of a renaissance.
> Since the 1997 R/UDAT Revisited, remarkable arrays
> of projects have been launched. Downtown is no
> longer a neglected place needing projects to stimulate
> development, but it is still a long way from being
> finished.[60]

Consultant Team

Two primary consultants provide planning and economic development expertise.[61] "ROMA Design Group is an urban design firm of architects, landscape architects, and planners based in San Francisco that undertakes projects throughout the United States and abroad" (Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department[62], 2007). ROMA Specializes in transformation of the post-industrial city, the creation of livable communities, and the design of public spaces is central to ROMA's curriculum vitae[63]. HR&A Advisors the second group of consultants hired by the City of Austin is a full-service firm "that provides analysis and policy solutions to public and private sector clients working on a

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[59] The full report is available at: www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown.htm
[60] R/UDAT Review, 2000
[61] Eight local Austin engineering, economic development and design firms are also involved. To see the full list visit: www.downtownaustinplan.com/team.htm
[62] This information was taken from City of Austin, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department's website: www.downtownaustinplan.com/team.html
[63] A complete description of the design firm can be found at the website referenced in foot note 1.

wide array of issues" (Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department[64], 2007).

Together, these consulting firms and City of Austin staff from the Neighborhood

Planning and Zoning Department and Economic Growth and Re-development Services

Office have been given the responsibility of developing the Downtown Austin Plan

(DAP) to cultivate the diverse characteristics that represent the urban core and create a

vision for development over the next 5 to 20 years.[65]

The Downtown Austin Plan

Shields (2008) asserts the process of purposeful inquiry links the problematic

situation to an end-in-view, thus connecting goals to the "real world that cannot be

separated from a problematic situation or human experience" (206).

Considering the enormous attention given to downtown Austin in the 1990s, the

fact that a major planning effort for this integral part of the city has not occurred in over

seven years seems somewhat irresponsible. In fact, the R/UDAT Review in 2000

highlighted the need for regular reevaluation. "Three years from now, Austin should

have as much news, as many exciting things in progress, and as much reason to hold an

R/UDAT Review as it does today" (R/UDAT Review, 2000).

The effort to implement the DAP materialized in the form of an Austin City

Council resolution on December 12, 2005. The resolution outlined several priorities and

authorized the national search for a consultant to lead the effort. Modernizing the city's

development codes governing height and density, creating mechanisms to fund

Downtown infrastructure, promoting transit-oriented development planning areas,

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[64] A full profile of HR&A can be found at www.downtownaustinplan.com/team.html
[65] City of Austin Request for Statements of Qualifications Relative to the Selection of Professional Planning Services April, 2007

creating programs to redevelop government-owned land, increasing affordable housing in

the downtown residential mix, and working with a broad range of stakeholders and

citizens were the primary goals of the resolution.[66] In October 2006, the ROMA Design

Group was selected and a scope of work was approved by the City of Austin in April

2007.[67]

The DAP is being created in a two-phase process. Phase one provides the

framework for analyzing baseline information, interviewing key stakeholders, articulating

a vision for downtown, and assessing opportunities and challenges to achieving that goal

through clearly prioritized actions aimed at implementing the downtown vision.[68] Phase

two will focus on implementation of recommendations contained in the phase one report.

This research project focuses only on phase one, beginning with Austin City Council

resolution 20051215-056, approved 12/12/2005, and extending through to the final

presentation of phase one to the Austin City Council on February 14, 2008.

DAP Phase One

Phase one of the DAP focuses on issues and opportunities for the central city.

The beginning of the plan presents information related to economic growth, quality of

life, and the rationale for preparing a forward-looking plan for downtown. Information

obtained from stakeholder meetings and an online community survey provided city staff

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[66] Council Resolution, 12/12/2005
[67] See www.downtownaustinplan.com/dap.htm
[68] www.downtownaustinplan.com/dap.html

and consultants with data on the core values of the community.[69] Community values

identified by DAP phase one include:[70]

- Livability
- Sustainability
- Diverse and Inclusive
- Engaging
- Beautiful
- Respectful of history and culture

On the basis of the community survey and stakeholder interviews, seven key risks were
identified:[71]

- The economic and competitive position of the downtown in relation to other parts of
  the region.
- Accessibility to and mobility within the downtown.
- The concern that the downtown is losing its unique and authentic character and
  "soul."
- The ability to sustain live music as a vital component of the region's economy and
  identity.
- The affordability of the downtown, both as a place to live and as a place to shop and
  dine.
- The effect that the expanding downtown is having on the scale and character of
  existing districts, as well as historic buildings and landscapes; and
- The state of public streets as places that support people as well as cars.

Community goals and risks indentified in the DAP phase one report could be linked

to the end-in-view that helps the community of inquiry coalesce around a problematic

situation.

Four Foundations

The DAP phase one report is thematically organized around four foundations:

physical form and place, sustainability and mobility, economic viability, and diversity

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[69] This interpretation was obtained in an interview with Jim Robertson, NPZD, 3/21/08
[70] Issues and Opportunities Report, 2/14/08
[71] Issues and Opportunities Report, 2/14/08

and affordability.[72] Each foundation identifies existing conditions, goals, and objectives. The phase one report emphasizes that these four foundations were developed based on goals and objectives identified by the community during the planning process. One of the research goals, to indentify community of inquiry principles, was achieved by analyzing the four foundations using the working hypotheses stated in chapter 2. A brief discussion of conditions, goals, and objectives identified within each of the four foundations follows.

Physical Form and Place (Foundation One)

      Goals identified within foundation one relate to "ensuring that the public and private realms of Downtown combine to create a vibrant and livable mixed-use environment that builds on the unique history, landscape and culture of the place."[73] An historical exploration of policymaking and urban form is central to establishing a clear understanding of how downtown Austin has evolved to the present day. The DAP identifies five historical interventions that shaped the city. They are:

1. The Waller Plan of 1893

2. Intercity rail (1870s - 1900s) and the Streetcar (1890s-1910)

3. Damming the Colorado River (1893)

4. The City Plan (1928) and urban renewal (1950s/1960s)

5. The Capitol View Corridors (1984)

N phase one of the DAP, multiple issues related to physical form and place are explored to highlight current conditions and the relevant need for a plan to resolve existing

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[72] Issues and Opportunities Report, 2/14/08
[73] DAP Part 1: Four Foundations, 2/14/08

problems. Downtown is reaching its development capacity because it is landlocked on

four sides by neighborhoods, the constraints of the Capitol View Corridors, the floodplain

along Waller Creek, and fewer undeveloped sites within the traditional urban core along

Congress Avenue. This landlocked condition pushes new development to the edges of

downtown to accommodate growth and intensification.[74]

Other issues addressed by the plan include Capitol View Corridors prohibiting

redevelopment to create good urban form, and the failure of current zoning to maintain

the organizational integrity of the Waller Plan. To maintain the organizational benefits of

the grid system created by the Waller Plan, the implementation of urban form districts is

proposed. Districts promote livability and density according to design requirements that

aesthetically shape new buildings to ensure that they are compatible with their

surroundings and district priorities, such as streetscapes, parks, and affordable housing

provide benefits to the community.[75]

The DAP suggests the formation of several districts shown in figure 3.4 including:
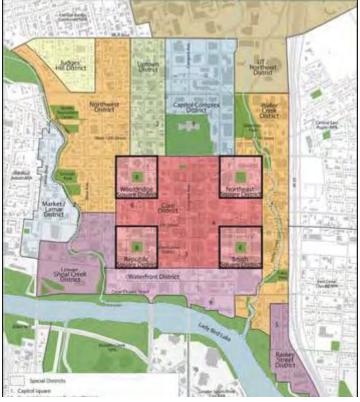
- Northwest Neighborhood

- Waller Creek District

- Capitol District

- Waterfront District

- Priority Use Districts

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[74] Physical Form & Place: Issues 2/14/08
[75] Physical Form and Place: Districts 2/14/08

Figure 3.4
Map of Proposed Districts

The districts concept provides critical mass and regional identity for nodes of activity and a various mix of uses.[76]

Other issues prioritized by part one of the DAP relate to regulatory controls on new or existing redevelopment projects. The plan explores an approach referred to as floor area ratios (FAR) which is implemented as a part of commercial business district design guidelines.

> (FARs) is a system that determines allowable floor area as a ratio of the site area, so if the FAR is 2.0 and the site is 10,000 square feet, a total of 20,000 square feet is permitted to be constructed on the site. This could result in a two-story building if the entire site was covered, or a four-story building if only half of it were used."[77]

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[76] Physical Form and Place: Districts, DAP 2008
[77] Physical Form and Place: Regulations, DAP 2008

Density in most cities is controlled using the FAR approaches and Austin has offered

bonuses on an informal case-by-case basis. A more formal program of density bonuses

should be established.[78]

Sustainability and Mobility (Foundation Two)

Goals presented in foundation two relate to promoting and encouraging

policies that support sustainability and mobility to achieve the goals of Envision Central

Texas (ECT) in downtown Austin. The vision of ECT includes sustainable living;

lifestyles less dependent on land, utility, and infrastructure consumption. ECT's focus is

on fostering a greater sense of community, and creating social equity.[79] Austin is a

national leader in establishing sustainable policies, programs, and buildings that have

encouraged pedestrian and transit-oriented, compact development in the central city and

the region, and the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands. Among these plans

and policies are the:[80]

• Save Our Springs Ordinance

• Green Building Program

• Smart Growth Program, including the Second Street District Initiative

• Mueller Redevelopment

• Downtown Revitalization, Major Employer Initiative, Second Street District

• Envision Central Texas

• UNO, Commercial Design Standards, VMU

• Capital Metro Commuter Rail Line and TOD Ordinance

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[78] Physical Form and Place: Regulations, DAP 2008
[79] From Envision Central Texas website
[80] Sustainability & Mobility: Regional Transportation DAP 2008

• Austin Climate Protection Plan

Despite Green Building and progressive land-use policies, Austin is still considered a relatively sprawling city. According to the Smart Growth America *Sprawlometer*, the Austin area is the 25th most sprawling of the 83 metropolitan areas rated. Factors considered are street connectivity, "centeredness," mixed-use, and density. The Austin metro area scores particularly poorly due to its low density and poor street connectivity.[81]

Environmental policies place further emphasis on the need for significant public investment to offset automobile dependence in Austin. Creating alternatives such as a commuter rail system, a streetcar system, and an improved the pedestrian environment will allow greater density and minimize the congestion associated with new development. More efficient parking management practices, coupled with utility upgrades and improvements to parks and open space, will provide a foundation for increasing density downtown.

Economic Viability (Foundation Three)

Foundation Three of the DAP established a baseline assessment of economic viability and identified six anchors to illustrate the diversity and human capital of Austin's economy. The following sectors have a significant presence in downtown:[82]

- Office

- Technology

- Arts, Culture and Live Music

- Tourism

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[81] Sustainability & Mobility: Regional Transportation, DAP 2008
[82] Economic Viability, DAP 2008

- Retail

- Government

- University of Texas

Each sector plays a significant role in generating tax revenue and human capital; and in cultivating interest and attraction to Austin. These anchor sectors rely on the continued vitality of downtown Austin, and are economically and culturally intertwined.

Affordability and Diversity (Foundation Four)

Residents of Austin value affordability and inclusivity.[83] Achieving the community goal of affordable housing in Downtown is difficult due to costs associated with construction activity, as previously described. The community's desire for high-density housing that reduces sprawl and encourages a vibrant mixed-use environment complicates efforts to achieve affordable housing downtown. Foundation four explains house pricing and house affordability in comparison to minimum family income (MFI), and an extensive discussion of cost of development clarifies the differences between mid-rise and high-rise development.

> "Developing a mid-rise condo or apartment of up to five stories requires less expensive wood-frame or light weight steel construction. As a result the average sales price of a one bedroom unit in a mid-rise building is $285,086 or 60% of the same unit in a high-rise building."[84]

Density bonuses, SMART housing incentives, property tax abatements, and tax credits were potential solutions to achieve community goals for affordable housing in downtown Austin.

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[83] Downtown Austin Plan Community Survey, 2008
[84] Diversity and Affordability: Cost of Development, DAP 2008

Social service organizations are primarily located in downtown because the people they serve (transient, homeless) mostly live downtown. The Salvation Army, ARCH shelter, Caritas, and the cluster of downtown churches provide support to the disadvantaged. "While the proximity and accessibility of these services is critical to this vulnerable community, their concentration and the insufficient capacity to meet demand has created a negative impact on surrounding properties."[85] Foundation four concluded by pointing out that consolidation of social services organizations would yield new land within downtown for redevelopment opportunities to create mixed-income housing, ground-level commercial uses, and services oriented to the transient population.[86]

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this applied research project is to determine whether or not community of inquiry principles were utilized during the creation of the DAP phase one report. This study explores the time period from April 2007 to February 2008. In this section, the generic working hypotheses identified in chapter 2 are refined to fit the case of Austin and its downtown planning process. If the City of Austin is using community of inquiry principles in its downtown planning process, one would expect the following:

Working hypothesis 1a (WH1a): City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders utilized planning strategies with a "scientific attitude" to create the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan: phase one report.

The goal of community of inquiry is to identify and foster differences of opinion amongst group participants. As Howard-Watkins (2006) explains, "Utilizing

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[85] Downtown Social Services, DAP 2008
[86] Diversity and Affordability, DAP 2008

data and working hypotheses, participants in a community of inquiry arrive at different principles" (2006, 51). The true benefit of the community of inquiry process is the "possibility of criticism and revision of (developed) principles in light of reflection on the consequences" (Webb, 2004, 489). Hence, if the City of Austin is using a scientific attitude in the planning process, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 1b (WH1b): City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous downtown planning efforts to create the four foundations in the downtown Austin plan phase one report.

Learning more about issues that may justify a recommendation could lead the team members toward the information necessary to determine the extent of the problem (Howard-Watkins 2006, 51). Previous planning studies, community survey information, historical records, new city ordinances, and state or federal laws can assist city staff and the consulting teams to justify DAP recommendations. Consequently, if the City of Austin employs a scientific approach to problem-solving, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 1c (WH1c): City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine the core community values with regard to downtown Austin.

The full extent of the problem(s) must be identified by city staff and the consulting group to ensure that the recommendations address, and stand a good chance of improving, the long-term viability of downtown Austin. Thus, if city staff utilizes a scientific approach to problem-solving, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 1d (WH1d): **City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses to determine key issues affecting Downtown and to develop appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals in the downtown Austin plan phase one report.**

Dewey notes that working hypotheses are a "means of advancing investigation" (Dewey 1928, 142 as cited in Shields and Tajalli 2006, 14). The goal of this method of investigation is that the use of working hypotheses "leads to discovery of other facts" (Shields & Tajalli 2006).

The working hypotheses and subhypotheses dealing with scientific attitude are summarized in table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1

WORKING HYPOTHESES 1: SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE

City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders created and utilized strategies with a scientific attitude to develop the four foundations of phase one in the downtown Austin plan.

Working Hypothesis	Sources
WH 1 City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders created and utilized planning strategies with a "scientific attitude" to create the four foundations of the DAP: phase one report.	Dewey (1938 / 1998); Shields (2003); Shields (2008); Hildebrand (2005); Stolcis (2004); Miller (2004); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 1a City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous downtown planning efforts to create the four foundations in the DAP: phase one report.	Webb (2004); Shields (2003); Shields (2008); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 1b City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine the core community values with regard to downtown Austin.	Shields (2003); Evans (2000); Howard-Watkins (2006); Shields (2008)
WH 1c City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses to determine key issues affecting downtown and to develop appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals in the DAP: phase one report.	Shields (1998); Evans (2000); Shields (2003); Howard-Watkins (2006); Shields (2008)

Working Hypothesis 2: Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy grants citizens a role beyond basic levels of interaction. Boyte (2005) notes that citizens' move beyond "client or consumers." Vigoda (2002) and Raffray (1997) describe citizen roles as "owners" and "decision makers" when participatory democracy is present in a public process. As Booher (2004) notes, participatory democracy occurs in "new spaces" and requires heightened levels of

communication, trust between citizen and public officials, and increased accountability.

Participatory democracy requires that conflicting parties have the ability to express

concerns to each other as a mechanism for resolution.

If the City of Austin utilizes participatory democracy, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 2a (WH2a): Principles of participatory democracy
                               are reflected in the planning process to
                               identify the community's core values and
                               develop the four foundations of the DAP:
                               phase one report.

In the new spaces created by an environment of participatory democracy,

administrators must have the capacity to actively listen. Responsiveness must also

prevail as ideas evolve through the collaborative group process. Stivers (1994, 336)

notes that "listening immerses and engages." This behavior promotes respect amongst

participants and encourages reciprocity. Goals and objectives may change through

collaborative inquiry and the process must be flexible and capable of adaptation, but

never loose the end-in-view (Shields, 2003, 526).

If the City of Austin utilizes participatory democracy, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 2b (WH2b): City of Austin staff and ROMA Design
                               Group (consultants) encouraged ideas
                               and input from all team members
                               during internal team meetings.

Citizen participation in planning can be traced back to the origins of the

practice itself. Collaboration between citizens and administrators in the public planning

process should include diverse stakeholder participation, conflict resolution, and the

advancement of a shared vision.

These concepts represent the foundation of working hypotheses 2c and 2d.

Working Hypothesis 2c (WH2c): City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrated the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of the DAP: phase one report.

Working Hypothesis 2d (WH2d): City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrated the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained through stakeholder meetings during the creation of the DAP: phase one report.

The working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses dealing with participatory democracy are summarized in table 3.2

TABLE 3.2

WORKING HYPOTHESIS 2: PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Principals of participatory democracy are reflected in the planning process to identify the community's core values and develop the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan.

Working Hypothesis	Sources
WH 2a Principles of participatory democracy are reflected in the planning process to identify the community's core values and develop the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan phase one report.	Gray (1989); Koontz (2005); Forester (1993); Webler (1995); Lynn and Kartez (1995); Booher (2004); Boyte (2005); Dewey (1939 / 1998); Raffray (1997); Shields (2003); Vigoda (2002); Shields (2008); Howard-Watkins (2006); Addams (1902)
WH 2b City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group (consultants) encouraged ideas and input from all team members during internal team meetings.	Booher (2004); Boyte (2005); Dewey (1939 / 1998); Vigoda (2002); Shields (2008); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 2c City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrated the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of the downtown Austin plan phase one report.	Gray (1989); Koontz (2005); Forester (1993); Webler (1995); Lynn and Kartez (1995); Booher (2004); Boyte (2005); Dewey (1939 / 1998); Raffray (1997); Shields (2003); Vigoda (2002); Shields (2008); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 2d City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrated the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained through stakeholder meetings during the creation of the downtown Austin plan phase one report.	Koontz (2005); Gray (1989); Forester (1993); Webler (1995); Shields (2008); Howard-Watkins (2006)

Working Hypothesis 3: Critical Optimism

        Critical optimism is central to a community of inquiry. The concept is centered

on the notion that a collaborative effort to address a problematic situation with a scientific

attitude can be resolved by a group (community of inquiry). This approach bridges

optimism and pessimism by embracing uncertainty and change (Shields 2003, 515).

If the City of Austin uses critical optimism, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 3a (WH3a): City of Austin staff members, in
                                                conjunction with consultants and
                                                stakeholders, displayed "critical
                                                optimism" as they developed the four
                                                foundations of the downtown Austin plan
                                                phase one report.

        The early impetus for planning system reform related to the need to insulate

the public trust from forces working to advance narrow goals and objectives (Cohen

1969). The most basic element of critical optimism is ensuring an organized effort to

solve a problem achieves a result that serves the public good (Shields 2003). Moreover,

citizens and administrators must maintain clear channels of communication for the

collaborative process to be successful. The lack of clear goals and objectives fosters

resentment towards government. If a public initiative is to achieve a positive outcome

"action must be informed with vision, imagination, and reflection" (Dewey 1917/1981,

95).   Furthermore, if the City of Austin utilizes critical optimism one would expect the

following:

Working Hypothesis 3b (WH3b): City of Austin staff, consultants and
                                                  stakeholders developed a vision for
                                                the team by clearly and consistently
                                                expressing goals and objectives.

Critical optimism orients practitioners toward obligations and duties (Shields 2003). City planners, consultant teams, and stakeholders must believe the work they are attempting to accomplish will be successful. Identifying these characteristics in the leaders of the downtown Austin planning process is central to this research. Therefore, this research project will determine whether the following is applicable to the process:

Working Hypothesis 3c (WH3c): City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders believe the downtown Austin plan phase one report will represent community core values and succeed as a result of their involvement.

The potential success of the downtown Austin planning process rests on the belief that the collaborative effort will achieve desired results. Trust is the foundation of any mutual relationship between citizens and administrators (Howard-Watkins 2003) and has the potential to foster unity between conflicting parties. Despite the need for trust in the collaborative problem solving process, this characteristic is lacking in the broader planning community. Planners must see citizens as problem solvers, not clients or spectators (Botye 2005, 537).

Thus, if critical optimism is used, one would expect the following:

Working Hypothesis 3d (WH3d): Mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas about the downtown Austin plan.

The working hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are summarized in table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3

WORKING HYPOTHESIS 3: CRITICAL OPTIMISM

City of Austin staff members, in conjunction with consultants and stakeholders, displayed critical optimism as they developed an approach to phase one of the downtown Austin plan.

Working Hypothesis	Sources
WH 3a City of Austin staff members, in conjunction with consultants and stakeholders, displayed "critical optimism" as they developed the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan phase one report.	Shields (2003); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 3b City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed a vision for the team by clearly and consistently expressing goals and objectives.	Brown-Graham & Austin (2004); Evans (2000); Irvin & Stansbury (2004); Rosener (1978); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 3c City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders believe the downtown Austin plan phase one report will represent community core values and succeed as a result of their involvement.	Shields (2003); Kweit & Kweit (1981); Howard-Watkins (2006)
WH 3d Mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas about the downtown Austin plan.	Berman (1997); Yang (2005); Boyte (2005); Smith and Beazley (2000); Shields (2003); Howard-Watkins (2006)

Chapter 4

Methodology

Purpose

       This research project used the DAP as a case study to facilitate exploration of community of inquiry principles. This chapter describes the methodology used to determine if the City of Austin, ROMA Design Group, and HR&A Advisors, Inc. (the lead consultants for the City of Austin) utilized community of inquiry principles during the period of April 2007 to March 2008. This period begins with the date the Austin City Council approved a contractual agreement with consultants to begin work on the DAP and extends to the first month of plan preparation and approval of phase one. It is important to note this research explores DAP phase one only, due to time constraints.

Overview of Research Methodology

       This research project utilized document analysis, archival data analysis, and structured interview questions. Collecting evidence by using multiple methods is recommended for case study research because it enables an examiner to "address a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioral issues" (Yin 1994, 98). Multiple methods also allow data to be triangulated, which increases the validity of findings (Yin 1994).

       Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 demonstrate the operationalization of WH1, WH2, and WH3. Each table connects the data sources (structured interviews, document and archival data analysis) to the working hypothesis. A narrative discussion of each research method follows the operationalization tables.

Table 4.1
Operationalization of Working Hypothesis 1: Scientific Attitude

Working Hypothesis 1: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders created and utilized strategies with a scientific attitude to develop the four foundations of phase one in the downtown Austin plan.

Sub-hypotheses	Documents analyzed	Archival data analyzed	Evidence found
WH 1a: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous planning efforts and assumptions made about downtown Austin to formulate the four foundations of phase one.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Website analysis • Draft DAP phase one 2/14/08	• Departmental records • Joint Commission briefing 1/9/08 • R/UDAT Plans (1991, 1992, 1997, 2000) • City Council resolutions • Request for qualifications for planning services December 2005 • Downtown reports (September 1995 to October 2007)	• New or modified recommendations • Examinations of recommendation through the lens of data and reports recommendations.
WH 1b: City staff, consultants, and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine community core value issues currently affecting downtown Austin.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Downtown reports (September 1995 to October 2007) • Draft DAP phase one 2/14/08	• Departmental records • R/UDAT plans • Progress reports • Minutes from City Council meetings	• New or modified recommendations
WH 1c: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses in their effort to determine appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals of DAP phase one.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Documents directly pertaining to recommendations	• Departmental records • Relevant budgetary data • R/UDAT plans	• New or modified recommendation

Table 4.2
Working Hypothesis 2: Participatory Democracy
Working Hypothesis 2: Principals of participatory democracy are reflected in the planning process to identify the community's core values and develop the four foundations of the downtown Austin plan.

Sub-hypotheses	Documents Analyzed	Field Observation	Evidence found
WH 2a: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group leadership encouraged ideas and input from all team members.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Action plans • Progress reports • Documents directly pertaining to recommendations	• Notes from Town Hall meeting 1/12/08 • Notes from City Council meeting 2/14/08 • Notes from Downtown Commission meeting	• Discussion • Deliberation • Disagreement
WH 2b: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrate the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	• City Council minutes • Action plans • Progress reports • Documents pertaining to recommendations	• N/A	• Consistent participation from all parties involved.
WH 2c: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstration the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained during stakeholder meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Certified Austin City Council transcript • Final recommendation presentation to Austin City Council	• Review updates • Progress reports	• Discussion • Deliberation • Disagreement

Table 4.3
Working Hypothesis 3: Critical Optimism

Working Hypothesis 3: City of Austin staff members, in conjunction with consultants and stakeholders, displayed critical optimism as they developed an approach to phase one of the downtown Austin plan.

Sub-hypotheses	Documents analyzed	Archival data analyzed	Evidence found
WH 3a: City of Austin staff members and ROMA Design Group developed a vision for the team by clearly and consistently expressing goals and objectives.	• Meeting agendas and minutes • Action plans • Documents directly pertaining to recommendations	• Email exchanges • Progress reports • Certified City Council transcripts	• Formally adopted mission statement/vision • Consistent appraisal of goals and objectives
WH 3b: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders believe the process to create the DAP will achieve the communities core values and succeed as a result of their involvement in the creation of DAP phase one.	• City Council presentations • Action plans • Progress reports • Documents directly pertaining to recommendation	• Departmental records • Organizational charts; relevant budgetary data, R/UDAT plans	• Optimism over feasibility of recommendations
WH 3c: Mutual trust between city staff, ROMA Design Group and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas about the downtown Austin plan.	• City Council transcript • Final phase 1 Recommendation presentation to City Council	• Departmental records, i.e., affordable housing reports, reports on the impact of past planning efforts. • Organizational charts; relevant budgetary data, • R/UDAT plans	• Co-management • Information exchanges • Website analysis

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Document Analysis

Details of the process that resulted in phase one of the DAP were largely unavailable to the public. The sensitive nature of staff and consultants' deliberations created difficulty for this researcher when attempting to explore this stage of the plan. Document analysis techniques, such as capturing and comparing the information available on the DAP web site offered insight into aspects of the DAP that were otherwise unavailable to the public. Analyzing documents, as Yin (1994, 87) notes, "can provide other specific details to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources." Moreover, as Howard-Watkins (2006, 58) explains, "Document analysis reveals details about an event that provides precise accounts of what occurred; it may also reveal how the problematic situation evolved."

For example, utilizing a draft copy of DAP phase one and comparing it to the final version adopted by the Austin City Council one month later allowed the researcher to test WH1a. Analyzing versions of the same document throughout the completion of DAP phase one led to identification of modifications proposed by staff and consultants and signaled that those recommendations had been questioned or changed based on internal deliberations.

Archival Data Analysis

Archival data analysis was the second evidence collection method used to solidify this research effort. Archival information was helpful because it may have been produced for other purposes (Yin 2003, 89). In relation to the DAP, archival data such as

reports on affordable housing or impact statements from previous planning efforts may have been used by City of Austin staff and consultants to formulate recommendations for DAP phase one or two. As Howard-Watkins (2006) notes, data collection is central to developing working hypotheses and fostering a scientific attitude. The likelihood that this documentation was tailored to support staff and consultant recommendations in DAP is minimal, because archival data has "a specific purpose and a specific audience" (Yin 2003, 89).

For example, reviewing reports on affordable housing in downtown Austin or impact statements from previous planning efforts may lend support to or weaken WH1 (scientific attitude). Determining whether this information was used by staff and consultant teams during the formulation of DAP phase one will confirm or deny support for WH1 (recommendations from previous efforts were questioned). Furthermore, reviewing progress reports and certified public meeting transcripts may support or refute WH 3 (critical optimism). By analyzing this archival data, evidence to confirm or refute WH3a (vision through clearly stated goals and objectives) can be gathered.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews were the third technique used for this research project. Interviewing City of Austin planning staff team leaders, consultants directly involved in DAP and elected or appointed officials representing constituencies affected by proposals presents an opportunity to harness individual perspectives (Yin, 1994). Yin (2003, 86) explains that interviews are insightful because they "provide perceived casual inferences." In her earlier research, Howard-Watkins (2006, 60) noted that "interviews clarified and reinforced documents and archival data used throughout Implementation

Team work sessions." Archival data, document analysis, and meeting minutes combined inadequately connected the working hypotheses (Howard-Watkins, 2006). Structured interviews were expected to provide the final piece and to connect evidence derived from document analysis and archival data analysis.

For example, establishing whether internal deliberations furthered the clearly defined goals and objectives would supplement document analysis to confirm or refute WH3 (critical optimism). Structured interviews would provide insight on the internal nature of staff, consultant, and stakeholder interactions. Considering that the details of these interactions were largely unavailable to the public, information from the interviews was deemed critical to this research effort.

To obtain the information described above, individuals who were present during stakeholder meetings were interviewed. Those interviewed, specific structured interview questions, and the information gathered are discussed in chapter 5.

II.   Human Subject Protection

This research project was granted exemption status on January 30, 2008 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University. A community of inquiry primer and informed consent statement were sent to each interview participant to introduce the subjects to the research project. Additional information was requested by, and provided to, Mr. Jeff Jack, due to his interest in my research. A digital recording device was used during interviews only with the consent of participants.

Chapter 5

Results

Purpose

This applied research project explored each of the four foundations (physical form and place, sustainability and mobility, economic viability, affordability, and diversity) in the DAP phase one report dated February 14, 2008 for evidence of community of inquiry principles. By testing three working hypotheses – scientific attitude (WH1), participatory democracy (WH2), and critical optimism (WH3) – research objectives were achieved.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research findings by discussing document and archival data analysis and the structured interviews that took place. These processes reveal support for or against the subhypotheses and primary working hypotheses. This chapter also presents summary tables which correlate structured interview questions to subhypotheses and provides concise detail about the results of this project. As previously described, the documents and archival were obtained from a web site maintained by the City of Austin. No records were available from the meetings between stakeholders, city staff, and ROMA Design Group personnel; information was obtained by interviewing staff, consultants, and stakeholders who were directly involved in the creation of phase one of the DAP.

The evidence obtained was used to determine the level of support for the working hypotheses and subhypotheses. Levels of support ranged from weak to very

strong. Problems with insufficient evidence made a determination of any kind impossible in some cases.

Structured Interviews

Jim Robertson with City of Austin Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department was interviewed for this research project. Mr. Robertson is the co-lead, managing the project budget and progress of consultants, as well as contributing his expertise in Urban Design to the Downtown Austin Plan. Mr. Michael Knox with City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office is the second co-lead for the City of Austin. ROMA Design Group's managing partner in the Austin Office Ms. Jana McCann was also interviewed for this project. Ms. McCann is the primary point of contact for Austin staff members and conveys information to the main ROMA office in San Francisco, Ca. An interview with Mr. Jim McAdams, managing partner with ROMA based in San Francisco, was requested but scheduling conflicts prevented the interview. Mr. Jeff Jack, Vice President of the Austin Neighborhoods Council, was interviewed, along with Ms. Jacqui Schraad of the Heritage Society of Austin, and Mr. Bill McCann, Urban Planning Chair for the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA). Table 5.1 to 5.3 summarize structured interview questions and correlate them to hypotheses and sub-hypotheses.

Table 5.1
Structured Interview Questions Correlated to Working Hypotheses

Sub-hypotheses	Structured Interview Questions	
	Staff & Consultants	**Stakeholders**
WH 1a: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous planning efforts and assumptions made about downtown Austin to formulate the four foundations of phase one.	**1.** Did any new evidence emerge in data or reports that challenged the feasibility of any of the four core foundations in phase one, if so, provide an example? **2.** Did consultants and staff members have a fixed perspective about the core recommendations in phase one, if so, provide an example of this? **3.** Were consultants and staff willing to accept evidence that contradicted core recommendations, and if so, was a core recommendation changed of modified as a result?	**1.** During stakeholder meeting(s), did new evidence emerge in data or reports that challenged the feasibility of any of the four core foundations in phase one, if so, provide an example? **2**. During stakeholder meeting(s) did consultants, COA staff, or other stakeholders have a fixed perspective about the core recommendations in phase one, if so, provide as example of this? **3**. Were consultants, COA staff, or stakeholders willing to accept evidence that contradicted core recommendations, and if so, was a core recommendation changed of modified as a result?
WH 1b: City staff, consultants, and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine community core value issues currently affecting downtown Austin.	**4.** Did the consultants and staff use data and reports to determine the community's core values before creating the four foundations of DAP and if so, what data and reports were used?	**4.** Did staff present data or reports during stakeholder interviews to indicate the community's core values and if so, can you provide an example?
WH 1c: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses in their effort to determine appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals of DAP phase one.	**5.** Did staff and consultants investigate proposed recommendations with expectations? **6.** Did the consultants and staff use data to test expectations About the four foundations of DAP during deliberations on Phase one?	**5.** Were recommendations during stakeholder meetings presented with expectations? **6.** Was any indication given during stakeholders meeting(s) that COA staff or consultants were using data to test expectations about the four foundations of DAP phase one?

Table 5.2
Structured Interview Correlated to Working Hypotheses

Sub-hypotheses	Structured Interview Questions	
	Staff & Consultants	**Stakeholders**
WH 2a: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group leadership encouraged ideas and input from all team members.	**7.** Did all consultants, staff, or stakeholders have the opportunity to offer ideas and opinions about the four foundations of DAP and if so, please explain an example to demonstrate this aspect of the process? **8.** Did consultants and staff members with divergent points of view continuously offer their opinions?	**7.** During stakeholder meeting(s) did consultants or COA staff provide the opportunity for all members of the discussion to offer ideas and opinions about the DAP and if so, can you explain an example? **8.** During stakeholder meeting(s) did consultants and COA staff share the same ideas or offer divergent points of view and if so, provide an example?
WH 2b: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrate the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	**9.** Did citizen or stakeholder input determine the identification of core community values and if so, can you pinpoint a specific example? **10.** Did citizen or stakeholder input contribute to or modify any of the four foundations of DAP and if so, please provide an example?	**9.** After reviewing the phase one report, can you point to an example where an idea from a public hearing or the town hall meeting was incorporated into DAP phase one?
WH 2c: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstration the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained during stakeholder meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	**11.** What type of format was utilized during meetings with stakeholders? **10.** Were these meetings similar to the town hall style meeting during initial citizen comment on phase one? **12.** Did stakeholders input determine the identification of core community values, if so, provide a specific example? **13.** Did stakeholder input contribute to or modify any of the four foundations of DAP phase one and if so, provide an example?	**10.** After reviewing the phase one draft, can you pinpoint an area where it is apparent that your group or individual idea / input from stakeholder meeting(s) was incorporated into DAP and if so, where would that information be found?

Table 5.3
Structured Interview Correlated to Working Hypotheses

Sub-hypotheses	Structured Interview Questions	
	Staff & Consultants	**Stakeholders**
WH 3a: City of Austin staff members and ROMA Design Group developed a vision for the team by clearly and consistently expressing goals and objectives.	**14.** Did each external public meeting/ work session operate under a set of goals and objectives? **15.** Did internal meetings between consultants and staff operate under a set of goals and objectives?	**11.** Did your stakeholder meeting(s) operate under a clear set of goals and objectives and if so, can you highlight an example such as agenda or some other mechanism?
WH 3b: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders believe the process to create the DAP will achieve the communities core values and succeed as a result of their involvement in the creation of DAP phase one.	**16.** Do you believe that as a result of your (or the teams / groups) involvement in the creation of DAP, that the community's values will be represented and that the plan will achieve stated goals, please explain?	
WH 3c: Mutual trust between city staff, ROMA Design Group and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas about the downtown Austin plan.	**17.** Did COA staff, consultants and stakeholders work collaboratively to develop ideas within the four foundations of DAP phase one, and if so, can you provide an example? **19.** Did community representatives have access to resources pertaining to the recommendations that led to the conceptualization of the communities core values and the four foundations of DAP phase one, if so, provide example?	

A discussion of each working hypothesis and subhypotheses follows with

consideration given to research methods used to measure support for or against research

goals of this project.

Downtown Austin Plan: Phase One Report – Issues and Opportunities

Working Hypothesis 1: Scientific Attitude

WH 1a: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous planning efforts and assumptions made about Downtown Austin to formulate the Four Foundations of Phase One.

Level of Support: WEAK

Document Analysis & Archival Data Analysis

Document and archival data analysis were not possible to determine whether evidence supported or refuted WH 1a. Public records, meeting transcripts, and public testimony were not taken during meetings between stakeholders, City of Austin staff, and ROMA Design Group consultants working to develop the phase one report.

Structured Interviews[87]

Structured interview questions were the primary technique utilized to obtain information from staff, consultants, and stakeholders about these meetings. Obtaining data that showed support or lack of support for WH 1a was difficult.

According to an interview held on March 21, 2008 with Mr. Jim Robertson (NPZD), "Staff had a sense of the issues in Downtown and wanted to get to work, but ROMA came into the process without a clear idea about the form the plan would eventually take. After listening to input from stakeholders and identifying their issues the plan began to take shape." Mr. Robertson did not indicate whether staff or consultants questioned recommendations made in past planning efforts for downtown Austin to formulate the four foundations of DAP phase one report prior to stakeholder meetings.

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[87] Document analysis nor archival data analysis available to test this sub-working hypothesis

On March 26, 2008 an interview with Ms. Jana McCann, ROMA Design Group's lead consultant in ROMA's Austin office, revealed the four foundations indentified in DAP phase one report were perceived by consultants to be "the four structuring elements of any city or downtown." As Ms. McCann explained, consultants identified what they believed were major issues for Downtown Austin, but evidence or data from past planning efforts[88] failed to challenge the four foundations of the DAP phase one report. Evidence obtained during structured interviews with City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group lead consultant reveals weak support for WH 1a (questioning past recommendations) during the formulation of the four foundations of the DAP phase one report.

To obtain stakeholder perspectives with regard to WH 1a (questioning past recommendations), structured interviews were held with Mr. Jeff Jack, Vice President of the Austin Neighborhoods Council, and Mr. Bill McCann, Urban Planning Chair of the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA). Both Mr. Jack and Mr. McCann had participated in meetings with City of Austin staff and ROMA consultants developing the DAP phase one report.[89]

During a March 26, 2008 interview with Mr. McCann, the format for stakeholder meetings became clear. City of Austin staff and ROMA consultants presented the four foundations of the DAP phase one report during the first portion of their presentation to stakeholders. After the initial presentation was complete, staff and consultants engaged attending stakeholders for comments related to specific issues within the report, not the

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[88] R/UDAT 1991, 1992, 1997, 2000

[89] Lack of meeting minutes and public record documentation made indentifying exact dates and times these meetings took place indeterminable.

four foundations identified by staff and consultants.[90] On March 21, 2008, Mr. Jack,

speaking in general terms about the Four Foundations within DAP Phase One Report,

indicated that he believed city staff and consultants already knew the direction they were

going with the plan. Stakeholder comments about DAP had little bearing on the final

product (Phase One).[91]

Stakeholders' perspectives, as reflected by Mr. Jack and Mr. McCann, in

conjunction with city staff and consultant perspectives reveal City of Austin staff,

consultants and stakeholders did not clearly question recommendations made in previous

planning efforts to develop the Four Foundations within DAP Phase One Report. As

such, data obtained from structured interviews fails to support WH 1a (staff, consultants

and stakeholders questioned past recommendations). Evidentiary support for WH 1a is

weak.

WH 1b: City staff, consultants and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine the community's core value issues affecting downtown Austin.

Level of Support: WEAK

The City developed and administered a web-based citizen survey that attempted

to identify the communities' core values. Values identified by the community included

livability, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, engaging sense of place, beautiful

environment, and respect for history and culture. The complete results for this on-line

survey have not been made available to the public. Moreover, web-based access to the

survey form was not available for review.

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[90] Not direct quotes from the interview.
[91] Not direct quotes

Document Analysis[92]

Documentary data supporting or failing to support WH 1b (staff, consultants, and stakeholders collected data to determine core community values) was only available in a draft of DAP phase one which outlined issues and opportunities, dated February 14, 2008. This draft document was presented to the Austin City Council on the same date, as verified by certified council transcripts (February 14, 2008).

The introduction to DAP phase one's draft of issues and opportunities cites survey data collected from the downtown Austin plan community survey, October 2007. This data attempts to establish that citizens feel positively about downtown Austin. Subsequent language on the following page identifies the "Community's Core Values: Livable, Sustainable, Diverse and Inclusive, Engaging, Beautiful, Respectful of History and Culture" (DAP 2008, 7). However, supporting documentation to show how these values were derived during the planning for DAP phase one is not available to the public. The only reference to data derived from the online community survey is a pie chart in the plan showing that 74% of individuals participating in the survey feel, "positive / very positive" about Austin's downtown.[93]

Structured Interviews

To uncover additional data supporting or failing to support WH 1b (staff, consultants and stakeholders collected data to determine core community values), structured interviews were used to ascertain details about the community's core values identified in the community survey. Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead city staff member

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[92] Archival data not used to test this sub-hypothesis
[93] See: "Why Prepare a Downtown Plan?" DAP, 2008

indicated the survey used methodology that reduced the ability to generalize and validate findings.

A portion of the interview held March 21, 2008 with Mr. Jim Robertson focused on survey methodology in relation to the subhypothesis. Mr. Robertson confirmed the community survey was not sufficiently "scientific" due to budget and time constraints associated with meeting City Council time-tables.[94] Moreover, Mr. Robertson confirmed that he initially questioned the merit of using an online survey that was not based in good scientific methods. After further investigation, he concluded that project budget and time-tables would not support more advanced survey methodology.

The March 26, 2008 interview with Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin supported the notion that identifying core values of the community began many years before the initiation of the downtown Austin plan. Ms. McCann explained that over the years, various boards and commissions have continually attempted to identify core community values. Her experience working with these organizations confirms that previous efforts contributed to core value representations made in DAP phase one. Ms. McCann's professional experience working with these boards and commissions appears to have contributed more to the identification of core community values than a web-based community survey intended for the same purpose.

Based on the unavailability of online community survey information, Ms. McCann's reliance on professional experience and Mr. Robertson's own admission that the web-based methods used were decidedly unscientific, support for (WH 1b) is weak.

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[94] Not a direct quote from our interview 3/21/08

WH 1c: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses in their effort to determine appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals of DAP phase one.

Level of Support: N/A

Public inaccessibility of stakeholder meetings, staff and consultant meetings made obtaining information that supports or fails to support WH 1c (staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses) difficult to obtain. Moreover, meeting transcripts and documentation related to stakeholder, staff, and consultant meetings were not made available to the public.

Document Analysis[95]

During the City Council presentation of DAP phase one held on February 14, 2008 certified transcripts revealed that consultants did formulate working hypotheses with regard to affordable housing issues developed in the plan.[96] Documentary evidence showing support for the broad use of working hypotheses was unavailable.

Structured Interviews

The March 26, 2008 interview with Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin provided insight into the process by which the four foundations were developed for DAP phase one. Ms. McCann explained that consultants first examined existing conditions in downtown Austin to identify challenges and opportunities. The information obtained during this process was then presented to multiple stakeholder groups to test if consultants were on the right tract. Following the first round of

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[95] Archival data analysis to show support for or against this sub-working hypothesis was not available
[96] Mr. Jim McAdams uses "hypothesis" when discussing affordable housing components during presentation.

stakeholder meetings, consultants began professionally assimilating gathered information to create the DAP phase one draft.

Evidence that clearly demonstrated the creation and use of working hypotheses was unattainable, but Ms. McCann's explanation of the planning process when asked structured interview question (SQ 6), revealed moderate support for WH 1c. Data gathered during consultants' initial examination of downtown Austin was tested before stakeholder groups for input and direction. Consultants subsequently used this guidance in further steps of the creation of DAP phase one report. Despite evidence that shows indirect support for WH 1c (staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses), lack of public access to stakeholder, city staff, and consultant meetings makes obtaining evidence supporting or failing to support WH 1c unattainable (N/A).

Table 6.1 below summarizes results for WH 1 (scientific attitude).

Table 5.4
Results for WH 1: Scientific Attitude

Sub-Hypothesis	Document Analysis	Interview Response S/C ----	SH[97]	Evidence
WH 1a: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders questioned recommendations made in previous planning efforts and assumptions made about downtown Austin to formulate the four foundations of phase one.	Documentation unavailable to the public.	**Robertson** Q2. Yes **McCann** Q2. Yes	**Jack** Q2. Yes **B. McCann** Q1. No Q2. Yes Q3. Yes	New or modified recommendations in the four foundations of DAP. Examination of recommendations through previous data and reports.
Level of Support				**WEAK**
WH 1b: City staff, consultants and stakeholders collected data to examine and determine community core value issues currently affecting downtown Austin.	DAP phase one report presented to Austin City Council 2/14/08 Certified Austin City Council transcripts 2/14/08	**Robertson** Q4. No **McCann** Q4. Yes		New or modified recommendations in the four foundations of DAP.
Level of Support				**WEAK**
WH1c: City of Austin staff, consultants and stakeholders developed working hypotheses in their effort to determine appropriate planning measures to achieve stated goals of DAP phase one.	City Council minutes 2/14/08	**McCann** Q6. Yes		New or modified recommendations in the four foundations of DAP.
Level of Support				**N/A**
Overall Support				**WEAK**

[97] S/C represents Staff / Consultants Interviewed while SH represents Stakeholders Interviewed

Working Hypothesis 2: Participatory Democracy

WH 2a: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group encouraged ideas and input from all team members.

Level of Support: WEAK

Obtaining evidence supporting or failing to support WH 2a (city staff and ROMA encouraged ideas and input from all team members) was affected by the fact that the public was totally excluded from work sessions with consultants and City of Austin staff members. Furthermore, public records were not kept detailing conversations that transpired between staff and consultants.

Document & Archival Data Analysis

Public document and archival data was not maintained with regard to city staff meetings or consultant staff meetings during the creation of the DAP phase one report. If this information was gathered by city staff or consultants it was not made available to the public.

Structured Interviews[98]

Reliance on structured interview questions was necessary due to the unavailability of documentation reflecting staff or consultant deliberations during the creation of the DAP phase one report.

During the March 21, 2008 interview with Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead City of Austin staff member stated that staff level discussions were not like the "President's Cabinet" where experts argue and debate while the chief executive takes in everything to make a decision. Responding to (Q7), Mr. Robertson concluded that budget and time

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[98] Document and archival data not available to test (WH 2a)

limitations prevented long engaging discussion sessions during formulation of the DAP phase one report.

The March 26, 2008 interview with Ms. Jana McCann, Lead consultant for ROMA Austin, responding to (Q7) stated that internal consultant deliberations centered on the technical aspects of implementing districts within downtown Austin. Ms. McCann pointed out that many of the over-arching issues did not warrant internal deliberation because generalities were already understood by the consultant team. Responding to (Q8) Ms. McCann believed that consultants and staff members with divergent points of view continuously offered their opinions, but did not provide an example to underscore this point.

Mr. Bill McCann, Urban Planning Chair Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA), interviewed on March 26, 2008 agreed that stakeholders were given an opportunity to offer ideas and opinions. Specifically, Mr. McCann identified a consultant-stakeholder discussion related to over-stated perceptions about downtown Austin being an exclusive place for the rich. Despite this exchange of ideas during the DANA stakeholder meeting with city staff and consultants, Mr. McCann confirmed that consultants presented the four foundations and community core values at the beginning of the meeting and only entertained discussion on specific points within the DAP phase one report. Mr. McCann concluded that stakeholder input did not contribute to identifying the community's core values or the four foundations of the DAP phase one report before consultants and city staff made their presentation to DANA stakeholders.

Based on the unavailability of public documentation demonstrating evidence which supports WH 2a (city staff and ROMA encouraged ideas and input from all team members) support for WH 2a is weak.

WH 2b: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrate the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.

Level of Support: WEAK

Evidence supporting WH 2b (the incorporation of input and ideas from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings) during the creation of the DAP phase one report was unidentifiable. A clear distinction is made between the incorporation of stakeholder ideas and the incorporation of citizen input. Evidence suggests that stakeholder suggestions were incorporated, while citizen ideas were not.

Field Observation

On January 12, 2008 a town hall meeting was held at the Austin Convention Center to present the DAP phase one report draft to citizens in attendance. This was the only town hall meeting convened by City of Austin staff and consultants to gather citizen input before the DAP phase one report was presented to the Austin City Council. Over five hundred[99] interested members of the community participated in a presentation of the phase one report, followed by three individual breakout sessions related to specific aspects of the downtown Austin plan. Affordable housing, transportation, and capital view corridors represented topics in each breakout session.

Research observations included examination of the initial presentation to the entire group and examination of each breakout session. Lead consultant ROMA Design

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[99] Information observed from the sign in sheet for the town hall meeting

presented the DAP phase one report draft to the entire group, followed by city staff and consultants leading breakout session discussions. Citizen suggestions during breakout sessions were written by hand on large presentation tablets. Evidence supporting the incorporation of citizen input was unattainable.

Document & Archival Data Analysis

Two versions of the DAP phase one report were compared to examine evidence supporting or failing to support WH 2b (the incorporation of citizen input) after the town hall meeting. No evidence emerged comparing the DAP phase one report presented at the town hall meeting dated January 9, 2008 with the DAP phase one report presented to the Austin City Council dated February 14, 2008 to support WH 2b.

Structured Interviews

Further research aimed at identifying evidence supporting or failing to support WH 2b (the incorporation of citizen input) was gathered via structured interview questions posed to City of Austin staff members and consultants. The March 21, 2008 interview with Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department staff member confirmed that stakeholder input was incorporated into the DAP phase one report dated February 14, 2008. Mr. Robertson, responding to (Q9 and Q10) did not provide an example of citizen input incorporated into the DAP phase one report presented to the Austin City Council.

During the March 26, 2008 interview with Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin, past planning efforts such as the work of R/UDAT and ECT was the predominant basis for obtaining citizen input regarding core community values. According to Ms. McCann, consultants determined so much information had already

been gathered their team did not need expend finite resources to obtain further citizen input for the DAP phase one report. Responding to (Q10), Ms. McCann also pointed out that citizen input through the on-line community survey and stakeholder input obtained during presentation meetings helped the consultant team prioritize the DAP phase one report. According to community survey results, Ms. McCann confirmed citizens expressed desire to have a street car system and more affordable housing in downtown Austin. These ideas had already been incorporated into DAP phase one report. It was not clear from this line of questioning whether or not new ideas emerged from citizen input that were eventually incorporated in the DAP phase one report presented to the City Council.

WH 2c: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrated the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained during stakeholder meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.

Level of Support: MODERATE

Evidence supporting the incorporation of stakeholder input into the DAP phase one report presented to the Austin City Council on February 14, 2008 was revealed through document analysis and structured interview research techniques. Stakeholders represented live music, real estate, preservation, government, educational, convention center and neighborhood organizations with vested interests in the future of downtown Austin. While evidence obtained from city staff and consultants showed strong support for WH 2c (the incorporation of stakeholder input), evidence gathered reflecting stakeholder perspective on this working hypothesis moderate.

<u>**Document Analysis**</u>

Comparing the DAP phase one report dated January 9, 2008 with the subsequent version dated February 14, 2008 revealed specific examples to show the incorporation of stakeholder input. The most prominent example related to economic viability and the failure of the DAP phase one report dated January 9, 2008 to acknowledge tourism as one of the major economic anchors in downtown Austin. Within the DAP phase one report dated February 14, 2008 tourism was added.

Review of certified Austin City Council transcripts dated February 14, 2008 revealed discontent from the Heritage Society of Austin, a participating stakeholder organization represented in DAP phase one report presented to the City Council. Mr. Julian Reed, President-Elect of the Heritage Society expressed disappointment regarding the poor level of engagement the organization received from city staff and consultants. Mr. Reed expressed concern on behalf of Heritage Society regarding staff and consultants' failure to fully consider the preservation of Capitol View Corridors (CVC) in downtown Austin. Moreover, the Heritage Society was not solicited for input with regard to development within CVC requirements, originally recommended by staff and consultants in the DAP phase one report.

<u>**Structured Interviews**</u>

To obtain evidence supporting or failing to support WH 2c (the incorporation of stakeholder input) structured interview questions were utilized to gain city staff, consultant and stakeholder perspectives. Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead City of Austin staff member confirmed in the interview held March 21, 2008 that stakeholder input was taken into account identifying core community values and during the development of the four

foundations of the DAP phase one report presented to City Council in February. Responding to (Q13), Mr. Robertson used the example of input obtained by staff and consultants from the Austin Visitors Bureau and representatives of the Austin Convention Center. This stakeholder input related to the fact that the DAP phase one report dated January 9, 2008 failed to mention the valuable economic impact tourism has in downtown Austin. Mr. Robertson confirmed in the March interview that tourism had been added to the DAP phase one report dated February 14, 2008.

Responding to (Q12), Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin added that stakeholder input contributed to the DAP phase one report identifying diversity and affordability as a core community value during the interview held on March 26, 2008. Ms. McCann also used the example of adding the economic impact of tourism as cited by Mr. Robertson.

Structured interviews held with stakeholders to obtain evidence supporting or failing to support WH 2c (incorporation of stakeholder input) revealed less positive attitudes about staff and consultant willingness to incorporate suggestions. During a March 21, 2008 interview with Mr. Jeff Jack, Vice President of Austin Neighborhoods Council discontent with the stakeholder process was registered. Mr. Jack explained in response to (Q10) that stakeholder input motivated slight changes in the wording of the DAP phase one report, but that staff and consultants had a clear idea about what their agenda was during these meetings and during the formulation of the plan. Mr. Jack intimated that staff and consultant agendas may have been in conflict with stakeholder ideas, input, or concerns. Moreover, Mr. Jack suggested the downtown Austin plan could be a road map for future development projects and that pressure from the development

community could be the real motivating factor for this downtown planning process. Mr.

Jack also suggested that the DAP was more an attempt to satisfy powerful interests in the

city then to incorporate the concerns of some stakeholder groups.

Ms. Jaqui Schraad, Executive Director of Heritage Austin expressed concern that

city staff and consultants were not incorporating input regarding the preserving Capitol

View Corridors (CVC) in the DAP phase one report (Q10). Ms. Schraad confirmed that

several members of the Heritage Society expressed their concerns to city staff and

consultants and received tacit response.

Conflict between the perceptions of city staff, consultants, and stakeholders with

regard to WH 2c (incorporation of stakeholder input) shows moderate evidentiary support

for this working hypothesis. Table 6.2 below summarizes results for WH 2 (participatory

democracy).

Table 5.5
Results for WH 2: Participatory Democracy

Sub-Hypothesis	Document Analysis	Interview Response S/C ---- SH[100]		Evidence
WH 2a: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group encouraged ideas and input from all team members.	No document or archival data provided evidence.	**Robertson** Q7. No **McCann** Q7. Yes Q8. Yes	**B. McCann** Q7. Yes	Discussion Deliberation Disagreement
Level of Support				**WEAK**
WH 2b: City staff, and ROMA Design Group demonstrate the incorporation of ideas and input from citizens obtained during public hearings and town hall meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	DAP phase one report draft 1/9/08 DAP phase one report presented to Austin City Council 2/14/08	**Robertson** Q9. N/A Q10. N/A **McCann** Q9. Yes Q10. Yes		Consistent participation from all parties involved.
Level of Support				**WEAK**
WH2c: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group demonstrate the incorporation of ideas and input from stakeholders obtained during stakeholder meetings during the creation of DAP phase one.	City Council minutes 2/14/08 DAP phase one report draft 1/9/08 DAP phase one report presented to Austin City Council 2/14/08	**Robertson** Q12. Yes **McCann** Q13. Yes	**Jack** Q10. No **Schraad** Q10. No	Discussion Deliberation Disagreement
Level of Support				**MODERATE**
Overall Support				**WEAK**

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[100] S/C represents Staff / Consultants Interviewed while SH represents Stakeholders Interviewed

Working Hypothesis 3: Critical Optimism

WH 3a: City of Austin staff members and ROMA Design Group developed a vision for the team by clearly and consistently expressing goals and objectives.

Level of Support: STRONG

Evidence supporting or failing to support WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing goals and objectives) was obtained by archival data analysis, document analysis and structured interview questions. Some difficulty persisted during this effort due to lack of transcripts or any other public record detailing internal city staff and consultant deliberations during the formulation of the DAP phase one report.

Archival Data Analysis

On December 12, 2005 the Austin City Council adopted a resolution initiating the downtown Austin plan. Review of resolution #20051215-056 identified priorities, such as modernizing city development codes, increasing investment in infrastructure, planning for public transit, redeveloping state owned land within downtown Austin, increasing affordable housing in downtown, and working with a broad range of stakeholders.

In conjunction with the Council resolution on December 12, 2005 the Austin City Council issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) to obtain professional planning services. This document was also reviewed to identify information supporting or failing to support WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing

goals and objectives). The RFQ further outlined desired goals and objectives for the downtown Austin plan.

Document Analysis

Document analysis research techniques were utilized to corroborate evidence supporting or failing to support information gathered by archival data analysis to generate results for WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing goals and objectives). Review of the City of Austin downtown plan website[101] revealed connectivity between the Council resolution, request for qualifications document, and city staff and consultant expressed objectives for the planning process. Moreover, upon review comparing the DAP phase one report dated January 9, 2008 with DAP phase one report dated February 14, 2008 (as presented to the Austin City Council) evidence suggested the presence of clearly expressed goals and objectives.

Furthermore, a meeting agenda was obtained during field observation at the DAP town hall meeting held by city staff and consultants on January 12, 2008. This document outlined the objectives of the meeting and provided specific information about discussion breakout sessions planned for that day. Evidence obtained through document analysis techniques revealed support for WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing goals and objectives).

Structured Interviews

Structured interview questions posed to city staff, consultants, and stakeholders provided additional evidence into the aspects of internal deliberations unavailable to the public. During the March 21, 2008 interview with Mr. Jim Robertson, an affirmative answer to (Q15) presented evidence supporting the assertion that internal staff meetings

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[101] www.downtownaustinplan.com

operated under clear goals and objectives. Mr. Robertson explained that each team member participating in staff deliberations clearly understood what was to be accomplished. Mr. Robertson's conclusions were supported by evidence obtained during the March 26, 2008 interview with Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin. Ms. McCann answered affirmatively to both (Q14) and (Q15) explaining that internal meetings consisting of consultants, stakeholders, and the public operated with clear goals and objectives.

Moreover, the stakeholders interviewed for this project confirmed that the meetings they attended with city staff and consultants operated with clear objectives. During the interview held March 26, 2008, Mr. Bill McCann, Urban Planning Chair of DANA, confirmed that consultants and staff made DANA aware of goals and objectives for the stakeholder meeting. Evidence supporting WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing goals and objectives) was also obtained through an interview in March with Ms. Jaqui Schraad, Executive Director of Heritage Society of Austin.

The general consensus between city staff, consultants and stakeholders, coupled with archival and documentary evidence, demonstrated strong support for WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a team vision by clearly expressing goals and objectives).

WH 3b: City of Austin staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe the process to create the DAP will achieve the communities core values and succeed as a result of their involvement in the creation of DAP phase one.

Level of Support: MODERATE

Obtaining evidence supporting or failing to support WH 3b (staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe the planning process will achieve core values and succeed as a result of their involvement) was completely reliant upon structured interview methodology. No document or archival data presented evidence supporting or failing to support WH 3b.

Structured Interviews[102]

During the March 21, 2008 interview with Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead City of Austin staff member, was asked (Q16). Mr. Robertson confirmed his belief that community core values were represented in the DAP phase one report and that the plan would succeed. Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin also confirmed her belief that community values were represented within the DAP phase one report (Q16). Ms. McCann added that the political conditions in the City of Austin would help the plan succeed as long as funding remained available.

Stakeholder interviews revealed evidence supporting WH 3b (staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe the planning process will achieve core values and succeed as a result of their involvement). Mr. Bill McCann, Urban Planning Chair for DANA, believed his organizations' involvement during the stakeholder meeting contributed to improvements in the DAP phase one report, but more could have been done to engage neighborhood stakeholders.

The lack of availability of document or archival data supporting or disproving WH 3b (staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe the planning process will achieve core values and succeed as a result of their involvement) resulted in moderate support for this working hypothesis.

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[102] Document and archival data analysis not available

WH 3c: Mutual trust between city staff, the ROMA Design Group, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas about the phase one of the downtown Austin plan.

Level of Support: WEAK

Document and archival data were not available to obtain evidence supporting or failing to support WH 3c (mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of conflicting ideas). Structured interview questions were utilized to gather evidence supporting or disproving WH 3c.

Structured Interviews[103]

During the interview with Mr. Jim Robertson, co-lead City of Austin staff member evidence emerged supporting mutual trust. Mr. Robertson explained that he believed city staff, consultants, and stakeholders worked collaboratively, though he admitted that stakeholder perspectives could vary widely (Q17). According to Mr. Robertson, city staff members did the best they could with limited time and financial resources. Furthermore, City Council deadlines prevented more meaningful collaboration with stakeholder groups frustrated by aspects of the DAP phase one report.

Ms. Jana McCann, lead consultant for ROMA Austin, revealed during the March 26, 2008 interview that stakeholder, city staff, and consultant collaboration was sufficient to achieve the creation of the DAP phase one report (Q17). Ms. McCann explained that complete satisfaction for every participant would be an unrealistic benchmark.

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[103] Document and archival data analysis not available for this sub-working hypothesis

Stakeholders interviewed to obtain evidence supporting or disproving WH 3c (mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of conflicting ideas) presented opinions that conflicted with staff and consultant perspectives. Mr. Jeff Jack, Vice President of Austin Neighborhoods Council, expressed the opinion that stakeholder meetings were intended to create the perception that staff and consultants were interested in collaboration, when, in actuality, they were not. Ms. Jaqui Shraad, Executive Director for Heritage Society of Austin (HSA) confirmed that timely response to correspondence sent by HSA to city staff or consultants was non-existent. Ms. Shraad also explained that several HSA members who participated in the stakeholder meeting felt as if city staff and consultants were not interested in their concerns regarding the preservation of Capitol View Corridors.

Evidence collected during structured interviews with city staff, consultants, and stakeholders revealed weak support for WH 3c (mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of conflicting ideas). Table 5.3 below summarizes results for WH 3 (critical optimism).

Table 5.6
Results for WH 3: Critical Optimism

Sub-Hypothesis	Document Analysis	Interview Response S/C ----	SH[104]	Evidence
WH 3a: City of Austin staff and ROMA Design Group developed a vision for the team by clearly and consistently expressing goals and objectives.	Austin City Council resolution adopted 12/12/05 Austin City Council request for qualifications 12/12/05 Top five priorities Town Hall meeting agenda 1/2/08 Downtown Austin plan website	**Robertson** Q14. Yes Q15. Yes **McCann** Q14. Yes Q15. Yes	**Schraad** Q11.Yes **B. McCann** Q11.Yes	Formally adopted mission statement & vision. Consistent appraisal of goals and objectives.
Level of Support				**STRONG**
WH 3b: City staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe the process of creating the DAP will achieve the community's core values and succeed, as a result of their involvement in the creation of DAP phase one.	No document or archival data analysis available.	**Robertson** Q16. Yes **McCann** Q16. Yes	**B. McCann** Q16. Yes	Optimism over feasibility of recommendations.
Level of Support				**MODERATE**
WH3c: Mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders facilitated resolution of varying or conflicting ideas during the creation of DAP phase one.	No document of archival data analysis available.	**Robertson** Q17. Yes **McCann** Q17. Yes	**Jack** Q17. No **Schraad** Q17. No	Co-management Information exchanges between staff consultants and stakeholders
Level of Support				**WEAK**
Overall Support				**MODERATE**

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[104] S/C represents Staff / Consultants Interviewed while SH represents Stakeholders Interviewed

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Purpose

   The purpose of this applied research project was to explore the DAP phase one report for community of inquiry principles. This chapter summarizes results ascertained from document and archival data analysis and from structured interviews. Suppositions were derived from the research findings to determine if community of inquiry principles were utilized.   Comments, recommendations, and conclusions follow.

Scientific Attitude (WH 1): Weak

   Insufficient evidence made determining levels of scientific attitude during the creation of the four foundations[105] of the DAP phase one report difficult to determine. The content of internal deliberations between city staff and consultants were completely unavailable to the public. Moreover, data collection and early conceptualization of the four foundations appear to have taken place before any citizen or stakeholder input was obtained by consultants and city staff. Evidence supporting the use of strategies with a scientific attitude to develop the four foundations of the DAP phase one report is nonexistent.

   Discussing the early stages of the DAP phase one report, Jana McCann of ROMA indicated that the four foundations would fit any metropolitan city. The four foundations of the DAP phase one report appear to have been developed by consultants without public input. Only after broad concepts were established did consultants present

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[105] Four Foundations represent the four parts of DAP Phase One Report – Physical Form and Place, Sustainability and Mobility, Economic Viability, and Diversity and Affordability.

information to stakeholders for input regarding specific issues within the phase one report.

Ample data in the form of past planning efforts and long-term studies were collected by staff members and consultants with professional knowledge of Austin history. Many aspects of this historical material were assimilated into the DAP phase one report, but evidence suggesting that staff members, consultants, and stakeholders questioned the recommendations of previous planning efforts WH 1a was weak because the public was not invited to participate.

Furthermore, the data collected to determine community core values WH 1b were unscientific. The effectiveness of the City of Austin web-based community survey was uncertain because complete survey results were not made public. Moreover, evidence supporting staff consultant, and stakeholder use of WH 1c could not be indentified because meetings did not occur in a public setting.

Participatory Democracy (WH 2): Weak

Many aspects of the planning process were marked by a need for greater public engagement. Evidence suggests that consultants utilized previous planning efforts to identify core community values in conjunction with an unscientific web-based survey. Moreover, the development of the four foundations within the phase one report appears to have been predetermined before citizen participation could influence staff and consultant ideas. The city staff and consultant teams went to great lengths to engage stakeholders, but often entertained suggestions related only to specific issues within the phase one report. Furthermore, only one town hall meeting was held to solicit input from the

general public prior to the presentation of the DAP phase one report to the Austin City Council on February 14, 2008.

Evidence supporting WH 2a (staff and consultants encouraged ideas from all team members) was almost impossible to ascertain. These internal meetings occurred behind closed doors, concealing the intricacies of the planning process from public view. Only through structured interviews with staff, consultants, and stakeholders did evidence emerge showing low levels of discussion or debate between team members. City staff deemed this activity to be time-and cost-prohibitive, while consultants did not need to spend time debating because most of the issues were already understood.

The incorporation of citizen ideas into the DAP phase one report WH 2b could not be indentified. Consistent participation from citizens was not provided for by city staff or consultants; thus it was not possible to find examples of citizen input using document analysis or structured interviews. More opportunities for citizens to participate in the planning process would have legitimized the DAP phase one report and connected citizens to the end-in-view.

Conversely, stakeholders participated in several meetings to hear city staff and consultant presentations regarding specific issues. The general public was not invited to attend these meetings, and public records were not kept by participants. Document analysis and structured interviews supported WH 2c (the incorporation of stakeholder input). As evidenced by modifications made to subsequent versions of the DAP phase one report, the incorporation of stakeholder input was clearly demonstrated by city staff and consultants. According to structured interviews, recommendations incorporated by staff and consultants were specific and not broadly based.

Critical Optimism (WH 3): Moderate

Archival data, document analysis, and structured interviews revealed support for critical optimism in the development of the DAP phase one report. The City Council resolution described in chapter 5 identified clearly defined goals and objectives for the DAP. These guiding principles ensured the consistent establishment of staff, consultant, and stakeholder objectives during formulation of the report. Moreover, evidence supported the notion that city staff and consultants developed a team vision by consistently expressing goals and objectives. Support for WH 3a (staff and consultants developed a vision by expressing goals and objectives) was strong.

Measuring support for WH 3b (city staff, consultants, and stakeholders believe their involvement in the process will achieve community core values and succeed) relied upon structured interviews; document and archival data were not available. Structured interviews with city staff, consultants, and stakeholders revealed optimism over the feasibility of recommendations. Each group believed their involvement improved recommendations within the DAP phase one report.

Mutual trust between city staff, consultants, and stakeholders (WH 3c) was the most contentious aspect of this research project. Neighborhood association and preservation stakeholders were at odds with city staff, resulting in the inability to resolve conflict. Evidence from structured interviews with these stakeholder groups revealed concern that city staff and consultants were motivated by political pressure from the development community in Austin. One interview revealed the belief that, as land in downtown is consumed by redevelopment that is encouraged by DAP, growth will begin

to encroach into neighborhoods that boarder the central business district. This activity

could be fueled by proposals contained within the DAP and the degradation of central

neighborhoods would ensue. Moreover, the perception that public transit spreads

commercial development into parks and central neighborhoods, thereby increasing

property tax burdens for members of the community on a fixed income, were

unaddressed by the DAP phase one report.

Comments and Recommendations

More attention should be given to increasing citizen participation in staff,

consultant, and stakeholder deliberations. Citizens should be invited to attend those

deliberations and the meetings should be held in locations that accommodate video and

transcript recordation. Deliberation formats should be expanded so that citizens not

involved with particular stakeholder groups have the opportunity to offer ideas or

suggestions during the planning process. Additional town hall-style meetings would

provide an opportunity to increase citizen input, and video or audio transcripts should be

utilized to ensure all ideas can be considered.

Conclusions

Community of inquiry is a mechanism for administrators, elected officials, and

the public to solve complex problems. Public initiatives such as the DAP gain legitimacy

by encouraging public participation in a meaningful way. This applied research project

focuses on a small period of time (April 2007 to March 2008), and captures information

about the DAP in a nascent stage of development. Further research is needed to

determine if community of inquiry principles are incorporated into phase two of the plan.

Time constraints for completion of this applied research project did not permit a complete analysis of phase two of the DAP. In-depth focus group analysis with citizens interested in the plan was not possible for this research. Focus groups of citizens should be consulted to add a true fourth perspective to the process. City staff, consultants, and stakeholders are critical, but general citizen input would have provided a control group in which individualized interest or political agendas could have been minimized.

Stay Tuned

To find current information about the progress of the downtown Austin planning process, visit the Downtown Portal available on the City of Austin Web site at http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm or http://www.downtownaustinplan.com. Efforts are currently underway to begin planning for phase two.

Appendix 1

The Community of Inquiry in Action:

Applying the principles of Pragmatic Community of Inquiry to Examine the Downtown Austin Plan: An Exploratory Case Study

A Community of Inquiry is a pragmatically focused framework from which the field of public administration can benefit in its attempts to disentangle issues and arrive at resolution. On a daily basis, administrators confront challenges from discontent citizens and interest groups. Developing a community of inquiry is particularly useful in administrator citizen relations because it creates an atmosphere that invites input and encourages unity to address dilemmas.

Dr. Patricia Shields, Professor, Director of the MPA program at Texas State University and ARP advisor developed the community of inquiry through her avid study of Pragmatism as a valuable philosophy for public administration in practice. She authored an article in 2003 in *Public Administration Review* introducing it as a way for practitioners to rethink how problems are confronted and resolved. Specifically, a community of inquiry is defined by a problematic situation and reinforced by a "scientific or experimental attitude" and linked together by participatory democracy (Shields, 2003, 511). If you are interested in the article, I will be more than happy to provide a copy for you.

My applied research project (ARP) will focus on the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) as a case study for pinpointing evidence of community of inquiry principles throughout the first phase of the process (issues and opportunities). A chapter of the project will include background information on (DAP) and the methodology is as follows:

- A review of approved minutes and pertinent documentation from all (DAP) public meetings.

- An archival data analysis of official City Council transcripts on the Downtown Austin Plan.

- Structured interviews with lead City of Austin Planning Staff members, lead consultants (ROMA & HR&A) and community stakeholders involved in phase one.

These methods are commonly used in case studies and from this information, I will determine if City administrators and community stakeholders were able to create and sustain "critical optimism" (Shields 2003, 514), develop *working hypotheses* (Shields 2003, 518) and create avenues for differing points of view to be presented (Shields 2003, 519). I also examine the use of facilitation and mediation skills by City officials and consultants leading town hall meetings.

I will conduct my research from mid-February to the end of March 2008. A completed draft of the ARP is due March 25, 2008.

Thank you for your assistance.

Lee Johnson

Appendix 2

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this applied research project. Your responses to interview questions will be immensely helpful in determining how Phase One of the Downtown Austin Plan was developed or modified.

Your participation today is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty and you may discontinue participation at anytime.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 512.775.9572 or via email at txpol1036@gmail.com. You may also direct questions or concerns to Dr. Patricia Shields, Texas State University MPA Director and ARP advisor or Becky Northcut, Texas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Dr. Shields can be reached at (512) 245-2143 or via e-mail at ps07@txstate.edu. Please call (512) 245-2102 to speak with a representative at (IRB) or e-mail sn10@txstate.edu.

Thank you for your participation today.

Timothy Lee Johnson

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