

Deliberative Democracy in Action: Exploring the 2012 City of Austin Bond Development Process

By

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Applied Research Project



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Abstract

This applied research project aims to accomplish three things. First, this study identifies key components of an effective deliberative process. Second, it explores the City of Austin's efforts at public engagement by determining whether these key components were present in the 2012 Austin bond development process deliberations, and finally, this paper utilizes these findings to provide recommendations to better engage Austin citizens in meaningful future deliberations.

Scholarly deliberative democracy literature was reviewed to identify three key components of an effective deliberative exercise. These key features are an appropriate mix of participants, appropriate issue, and an appropriate deliberative structure. Interviews were conducted and documents were analyzed to determine whether these key elements were present in the City of Austin's 2012 bond development process. The research findings indicated that while the City's deliberative exercises exhibited some of the key elements of an effective deliberation, some elements were not evident.

This study makes several recommendations of ways to better engage citizens in future deliberations. The City of Austin is advised that it should work to engage a sample that is more representative of the community at large, should utilize a trained facilitator for future task force deliberations and technological connections to the deliberations should be made available for citizens.

I. Introduction & Purpose

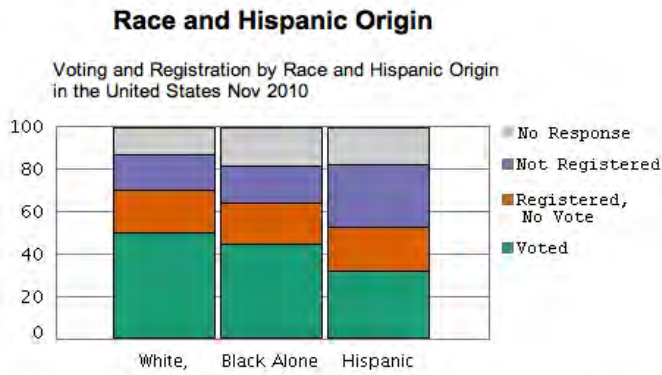
The Problem

In the United States, citizens like to believe that they have a government “by the people” but the United States may in fact really be a government by a few. Traditional means of expressing one’s political voice seem not to appeal to vast portions of the public, and as a result, many people opt not to engage in traditional methods of public political participation. Though there has been a slight increase in voter turnout in recent presidential elections, voter turnout rates are almost always low and not representative of the general public¹. Figure 1.1 illustrates that voting does not engage all segments of the population equally. The chart shows that in the 2010 presidential election, only thirty-one percent of Hispanics voted compared to forty-nine percent of Whites.

The trend of low participation levels is particularly evident in Texas, where extremely low turnout rates seem to indicate that residents are particularly disinterested in voting (Drake 2012). In the 2008 Presidential election, Texas had the second lowest voter turnout rate of all states with only 48.8% of adults voting (Drake 2012). This problem is magnified even more at the municipal level. In the 2012 Austin, Texas City Council elections, only 10.7% of registered voters turned up to cast their vote. As evident in Figure 1.2, 2012’s disappointing turnout is part of an unfortunate trend of declining participation in City Council elections over the past forty years (City of Austin 2012a). The dismal turnout levels at Council elections prompted the Austin Chronicle to remark on the “increasingly tattered fiction that City Council and its proceedings represent, for good or ill, the will of the entire community” (King 2011).

¹ Lijphart (1996), Ackerman and Fishkin (2003), Innes and Booher (2004), U.S. Census Bureau-Current Population Survey, (2012)

Figure 1.1 : U.S. Voting and Registration Rates by Race

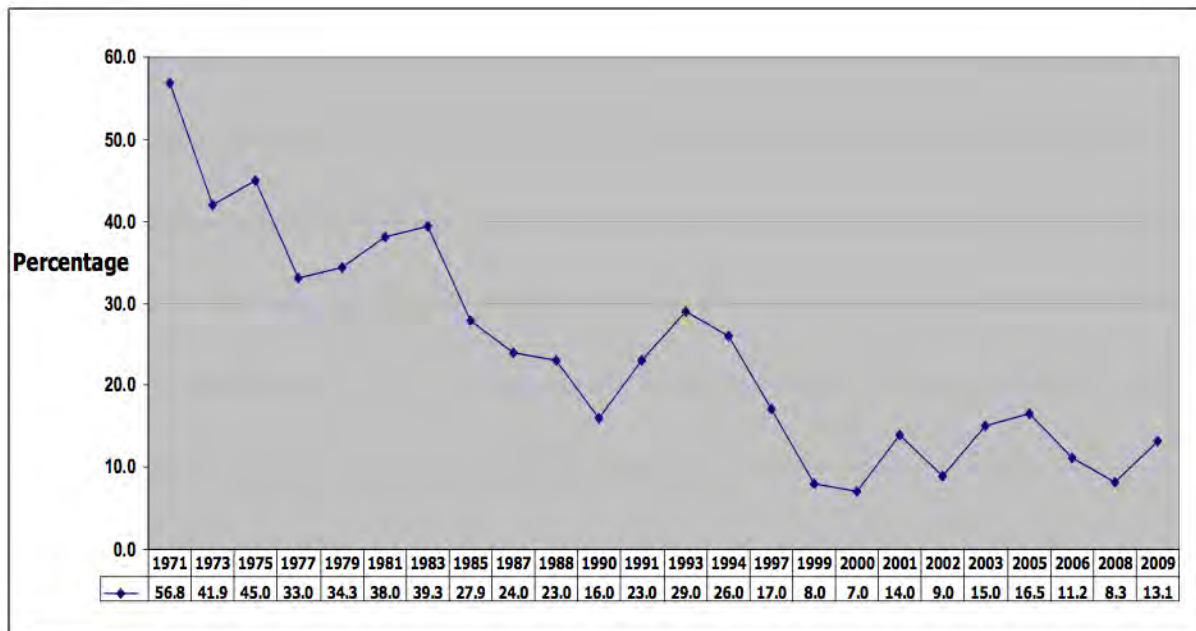


Note: Because the collection of race data changed in 2003, this graphic is only available from 2004 and on.

Source: U.S.Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

The likelihood of voting frequently differs between race groups and Hispanics. In the United States in 2010, non-Hispanic Whites voted at a higher rate (49 percent), than both Blacks (43 percent) and Hispanics (31 percent). Meanwhile, Blacks voted at a higher rate than Hispanics.

Figure 1.2 Voter Turnout in Austin City Council Elections, 1971-2009



Source: City of Austin, Election History, <http://malford.ci.austin.tx.us/election/search.cfm>

Likewise, around the country turnout at public meetings is usually very low and unrepresentative of the general population (Thomas 2012). Austin, Texas is no exception to this unfortunate trend. In August, KEYE TV reported that only a dozen people were in attendance at a City of Austin budget hearing and KXAN reported that only eight people showed up to a public hearing in July regarding a controversial Austin Independent School District policy (Kiley 2012, Cargile 2012).

This lack of political participation is troubling since it is through political participation that citizens communicate information about their preferences and needs to policymakers (Schlozman 2005, 2). In effect, those who do not utilize their political voice, sacrifice their ability to select the people that will claim to represent them and the ability to impact the laws under which they will live. If we wish for our government to truly represent all Americans, we must look for ways to ensure that more people, particularly those from segments of the population that are currently underrepresented in public political participation, begin to participate.

Public Distrust

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what influences have resulted in the disappointing levels of voter turnout, but one thing is clear - public trust of the government has definitely declined in recent decades. In the first few pages of his book, *Pragmatist Democracy: Evolutionary Learning as Public Philosophy*, Chris Ansell (2011) paints a rather disheartening picture of the current public view of government. Ansell explains that there is a growing public distrust of

government and that the public has come to view the bureaucracy as “out of control, hidebound, politicized, democratically unresponsive and morally vacuous” (3). Some scholars argue that this lack of trust is an important reason political participation is declining (Ansell 2011, Thomas 2012).

The theory of representative democracy suggests that governance should occur in a simple chain. Elections are held, representatives are elected, those representatives make policy decisions and public administrators then implement those policy decisions. While this simple chain may seem like an effective way to link popular sovereignty and governance, scholars have observed a growing public distrust of governance and considerable “slippage from the civic ideal” conceptualized in this traditional chain model (Ansell 2011, 3). It is this distrust of governance that some scholars suggest is a reason many people choose not to participate in the traditional methods of representative democracy (Thomas 2012).

While there is distrust surrounding all aspects of government, there is an especially high level of criticism surrounding public administrators and their role in serving as the linchpin between democracy and actual governance (Ansell 2011, 3-4). The concerns about the role of public administrators in carrying out democratic decisions often include concerns about administrators’ taking “matters into their own hands and turn[ing] their prerogatives into private gain,... subvert[ing] the public will with the cold and impersonal logic of faceless experts... and subvert[ing] good science and rational decision-making to partisan politics” (Ansell 2011, 3).

Though public administrators are at the end of the chain of representative democracy, they serve as the front line in actual day to day, close to the ground, public problem solving. Therefore, public distrust of the role of public administrators is quite problematic since these

administrators are the ones that often directly work to correct public problems (Ansell 2011). For example, if the City Council enacts a new noise level ordinance to try to limit noise after 10 PM, it is public administrators who must enforce this new rule. Police Officers will respond to noise complaints and issue tickets for those in violation of this new ordinance and city staff will deal with variance requests from live music venues. While City Council makes the decision to approve the ordinance, public administrators are the ones that really interact with the public to enforce the rule and deal with problems that may arise as a result of the rule. Since public administrators work so closely with the public, it is troubling that there is such distrust. Despite the current level of public distrust surrounding the administrative state, there is hope for restoring the public's faith. For many, participatory democracy is that hope.

A Possible Solution

Some scholars point to deliberative democracy and other forms of participatory democracy as tools that are increasingly beginning to reach these underrepresented individuals that have rejected traditional methods of political participation (Fishkin and Luskin 2005, Nebl et al 2010, Leighninger,4). In fact, John Clayton Thomas (2012) argues that it is this dissatisfaction with traditional forms of public political participation that has catalyzed efforts to develop new ways to better engage the public. Ansell (2011) too looks to participatory democracy as a means to better engage citizens and also build public trust in government. He hopes that through a process called “evolutionary learning” public administrators can develop more positive and productive relationships with the public. Ansell (2011) describes this process he calls “evolutionary learning” as one in which government officials are able to make

institutional changes, reflect on those changes, engage in deliberations about the changes, and continue to make more changes so as to work towards a more effective model of public service. Ansell (2011) argues that this process of evolutionary learning is a cumulative one. It allows public administrators to retain the lessons of the past, but still continue to progress.

Deliberative democracy is a form of participatory democracy based on the idea that legitimate lawmaking originates from the public deliberations of citizens (Bohman and Rehg 1997, ix). The University of Houston Center for Public Deliberation defines public deliberation as “the discussion and choice-making that is necessary before we can solve problems that affect our communities together. In other words, before we can choose where we want to build the road, we need to consider the various values and interests we have as people. We need to also consider the costs and the trade-offs we are willing to accept for our values” (UH Center for Public Deliberation 2010). Therefore, deliberative democracy occurs when real people meet, discuss an issue and give their reasons for or against various possible policy options. The opinions expressed in the deliberative process are then used to make decisions regarding policy formation or the implementation of policies (Fishkin and Laslett 2003). Participatory democracy practices, such as deliberative democracy, do not replace representative democracy. Instead these approaches provide yet another way for people to be involved in making decisions that will impact their community (Shields 2003, Hoppe 2011).

Higher voter turnout rates would increase the legitimacy of election outcomes, however even if voter turnout rates were significantly higher, it would still be advantageous to conduct participatory exercises in addition to elections. This is because participatory democracy allows citizens to become more involved in the formation or implementation of policy than simply casting a vote. FairVote (2013), a non-profit organization committed to promoting meaningful

political participation among diverse groups of Americans, argues that even if voter turnout rates were higher, there will still be shortcomings associated with voting. The “winner-take-all” nature of voting often results in the minority feeling that their opinions have not really been heard. Participatory approaches to democracy allow citizens to express their preferences in a more robust way, and while the ultimate decision may not exactly match what all members of the community want, it can allow decision-makers to better understand the will of the entire community.

One might ask, would individuals who refuse to show up for a public meeting or to simply cast a vote on election day, really be willing to participate in deliberations? Deliberations would undoubtedly require additional effort on their part. However, while there is a troubling trend of declining voter participation and apathy towards forms of traditional representative democracy, this does not mean that people have necessarily stopped wishing to have a hand in influencing policy. In fact, Matt Leighninger, Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, states that over the course of the last few decades, regular citizens have begun to develop new civic attitudes and capacities. He claims that citizens have become more diverse, better educated, more tech-savvy, less apt to defer to the government or other authoritative bodies and are more willing to take productive roles in public decision-making (Leighninger 2009, 6). A 2010 study by Neblo et al further supported the idea that there is in fact a real interest in the deliberative process. This study found an astounding eighty-five percent of people surveyed expressed some willingness to participate in deliberations. Furthermore their findings indicated that younger people, racial minorities and lower-income individuals were significantly more willing to participate in a deliberative process (Neblo et al 2010). This is reassuring since Carcasson and Sprain (2010) argue that participation in such deliberations tends not only to

create better policy but also develop civic capacity and democratic habits in the citizenry (Carcasson and Sprain 2012). This means that by engaging people in deliberative democracy exercises, administrators might also foster citizen involvement in traditional representative forms of democracy (Gutman and Thompson 2004).

The City of Austin, Texas is one such city utilizing forms of participatory democracy in an effort to involve the public in decision-making. During the fall of 2012, citizens were invited to participate in a series of deliberations that were used to develop the 2012 Austin Bond program (City of Austin 2012b). Fifteen citizens made up a Bond Election Advisory Task Force which provided recommendations to the Austin City Council and an additional 141 Austin residents participated in community workshops which provided guidance to the task force (City of Austin, 2012c).

After considering the recommendations put forth by citizens during the deliberative process, City Council finalized seven bond propositions which appeared on the November ballot. On Nov 6, 2012, Austin voters approved six of the seven bond propositions, and the approval of the six propositions had a significant impact on the city since it allowed the City to issue nearly \$307 million in bonds to fund transportation and mobility improvements, preserve open space and renovate libraries and museums, among other projects (City of Austin 2012d).

Research Purpose

Based on its apparent appeal to underrepresented Americans and its ability to foster democratic habits, deliberative democracy definitely warrants additional study. Many of the broad questions surrounding the theory of deliberative democracy have been thoroughly

discussed over the past fifteen years. This discussion has provided much insight into those purely theoretical questions surrounding deliberations, however there is still much room to further explore deliberative democracy in its actual practice (Neblo et al 2010, 566). Considering the low participation rates in local elections and public meetings in Austin, TX, it makes sense to take a closer look at the city's efforts to engage citizens. The deliberative process used during the 2012 bond referenda development offers the opportunity to view and assess the City's practices. Therefore the purpose of this paper is threefold. First, this paper identifies key components of an effective deliberative process. Second, it explores the City of Austin's efforts at public engagement by determining whether these key components were present in the 2012 Austin bond development process deliberations, and finally, this paper utilizes these findings to provide recommendations to better engage Austin citizens in meaningful future deliberations.

Chapter Summaries

This paper consists of seven additional chapters, which together, identify key elements of an effective deliberative process, determine whether these key elements were present in the 2012 Austin bond development process, and finally provide recommendations for future deliberations of this nature. The next chapter sets the stage by examining the philosophical setting in which deliberative democracy is situated. Chapter III outlines the conceptual framework. This framework lists key elements of an effective deliberative process and links these elements to scholarly literature. Chapter IV provides information about the setting for this particular research, noting key features of the Austin community and the City's deliberative exercises. Chapter V is the Methodology chapter, which explains the process used to explore the deliberative exercises employed by the City of Austin to develop the 2012 Austin bond referenda. Chapter VI explains the steps taken to protect the human subjects who provided

information about the 2012 bond development process. Chapter VII is the findings chapter, which explains what the research yielded. Finally, Chapter VIII provides conclusions and recommendations on ways to improve future deliberations.

II. Philosophical Setting

Chapter Introduction

In order to better understand deliberative democracy and its place within the broader context of participatory governance, this section explores the philosophical setting in which deliberative democracy is rooted. This section begins by outlining both representative and participatory democracy and explains the differences between the two types of democracy. It then goes on to explain how deliberative democracy fits within the broader category of participatory democracy. This section also discusses deliberative democracy's connection with the ideals of pragmatism and finally examines the unique role of public administrators in facilitating deliberations. The deeper understanding of deliberative democracy developed in this chapter is necessary in order to more fully understand the key components of an effective deliberation that are discussed in later chapters.

Representative v. Participatory Democracy

“A simple and elegant logic defines the relationship between democracy and governance. Through fair and competitive elections, citizens signal how they would like to handle public concerns. Elected representatives then deliberate among themselves, crafting laws and programs to address those concerns, effectively managing public problems” (Ansell 2011, 3).

In the above quotation, Chris Ansell outlines the concept known as representative democracy. When citizens and practitioners think of the term “democracy” it is in fact representative democracy and its methods (voting) that most likely come to mind (Shields 2003, 522). In this form of democracy, citizens rely on elected representatives to do their deliberating for them, though they expect the representatives to consider their wishes and then hold these

representatives accountable for their decisions. This conception of democracy is appealing since elected officials are (at least in theory) experienced and well-informed about the issues on which they are making decisions. Furthermore, representative democracy frees citizens from having to constantly consider and weigh in on each matter of public concern (Gutman and Thompson 2004, 30). However, while it undoubtedly has significant value, some scholars believe representative democracy alone is insufficient as a method to enhance legitimate governmental action in the mind of many citizens (Ackerman and Fishkin 2003, Thomas 2012, Valdez 2001). As a result of this dissatisfaction with representative democracy, participatory democracy began to emerge as an additional way for citizens to more effectively shape the governmental actions (Thomas 2012). Participatory democracy allows citizens to go beyond the annual exercise of selecting politicians that will represent their interests, and transforms citizens into active participants in governmental decision-making.

As participatory democracy has gained traction in the United States, it has taken many forms (public hearings, public comment periods, citizen surveys, deliberations, etc.) (Thomas 2012). Regardless of its form, each type of participatory approach encourages citizens to express their views on an issue and have those views influence the government's course of action in dealing with that issue. While it does not eliminate the need for representative democracy, participatory democracy serves as an extremely beneficial complement to representative democracy and has the potential to produce outcomes which the public views as legitimate and beneficial to the community (Thomas 2012, Ackerman and Fishkin 2005).

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is a form of participatory democracy that calls for members of the public to openly discuss an issue and give their reasons for or against various possible solutions to a public problem. The views expressed in the deliberations are then used to make decisions regarding the government's course of action to mitigate the problematic situation. This form of participatory democracy stands out because it more extensively involves the public than many other approaches to participatory democracy. In this form of participatory democracy, citizens do more than state their preferences to decision makers. The ultimate course of action is selected not by just aggregating all of the participants' pre-existing desires about the best course of action and selecting the option with the most supporters (Valdez 2001, 5). Instead, real discussion shapes decision-making.

The open public discussion of an issue is one of the key features of deliberative democracy. Unlike representative democracy where citizens cast secret ballots, or even citizen surveys that allow for people to privately submit their preferences and have them become part of an indistinguishable aggregation of opinions, deliberative democracy involves open discussion. It removes the veil of anonymity by forcing people to state their views in a public forum. Renowned political and social theorist, John Stuart Mill, warned that private voting would likely result in each person merely selecting the candidate that caters to their own personal interest. He instead argued that opinions should be stated publicly, because this would lead to increased accountability, and would encourage sensitivity to the public interest. (Ackerman and Fishkin 2003, 7).

Deliberative democracy requires that people publicly state their views. In public forums citizens shape the opinions of one another through dialogue in which they cordially examine and critique the positions expressed by other participants, while explaining the reasons behind their own views (Valdez 2001, 5). This multi-way dialog helps build a shared understanding of the social problem, which reduces conflict within the community. Furthermore, it has been shown to result in enhanced legitimacy of the ultimate governmental action, a greater sense of efficacy among participants and ultimately more effective solutions to public problems (Thomas 2012). Deliberative democracy's extensive involvement of the public, its exceptional ability to build a shared understanding of a social problem, and the accountability it creates through the public expression of views, is the reason this form of participatory democracy has been selected as the focus of this study.

One of deliberative democracy's chief advantages is its potential to narrow the gap between opposing viewpoints through public dialogue and the respectful consideration of the viewpoints of others. Empirical analysis of deliberative democracy demonstrates its potential to influence participant opinions. James Fishkin has been involved in a research process he calls "deliberative polling". In deliberative polling a random sample of citizens is given a survey on a topic. Those same citizens are then invited to attend a deliberative session to discuss the topic with other citizens who also took the survey. After deliberating, the citizens are again given the same survey. According to Fishkin "the resulting changes are often dramatic", giving credence to the idea that deliberative democracy, might not always result in consensus, but it can help narrow the gap between opposing viewpoints (Fishkin and Ackerman 2003, 12).

While deliberations have a number of advantages, such as increased accountability and the creation of a shared understanding of a public problem, Fishkin and Ackerman (2003) do

acknowledge that the public nature of deliberations could be problematic. While John Stuart Mill was a big proponent of public political discussions, his own father, James Mill, instead supported the use of secret ballots. Fishkin and Ackerman (2003) argue that James Mill's preference for representative democracy is based on the fear that powerful individuals might use their clout to pressure others to express similar views. As the U.S. franchise widened to include the poor, James Mill argued that if political preferences were publicly discussed, wealthy employers would use their influence to unfairly influence the votes of their employees. If decisions were made solely based on public deliberations, the employees would not be able to afford to deviate from the political opinions of their powerful employer lest their job be negatively impacted (Ackerman and Fishkin 2003).

The 2012 Austin bond development process did involve the public discussion of opinions, however Austin residents also cast secret ballots. In addition to the opportunity to deliberate to determine the makeup of the 2012 bond package, residents secretly voted on the approval or rejection of the final bond proposals. All registered Austin voters were able to vote secretly on the approval or rejection of each bond proposal in the November 6, 2012 election. This means that if unfair political pressure resulted in a bond proposal that was not agreeable to the general public, citizens could secretly vote against it without fear of retribution from more powerful individuals.

Pragmatism

The idea that regular citizens can and ought to be involved in governmental decision-making is not a new concept. The ideals of inclusion and the building of a shared social

understanding which characterize today's conception of deliberative democracy can be traced back to the works of early American pragmatists. Classical pragmatism traces back to the late 1800s, roughly the same time period that American public administration began to develop. However, it wasn't until recent years that scholars have begun to fully recognize the important linkage that exists between the two (Shield 2008).

In the late 1890s, classical pragmatists John Dewey and Jane Addams were social activists working in Chicago (Shields 2003). Both developed similar theories of democracy that emphasized the role of lived human experience in shaping politics and social reforms (Shields 2006). As a public administrator herself, Jane Addams recognized that most of the municipal reformers at the time were disconnected from the citizens and their experiences. To connect citizens and municipal reform, Addams argued in favor of a bottom up form of participatory democracy in which political programs would be directly linked to and influenced by citizens (Shields 2006). She firmly held that political reforms should include a "social expression of democracy" (Addams 1902, 224). She claimed that democracy could and ought to have a "social ethic" at its core (Shields 2006, 418).

Their work led both Dewey and Addams to claim that each person's perception of the world is shaped by their lived experiences. Dewey and Addams both called for the development of communities in which "opportunities and resources are available for every individual to realize fully his or her particular capacities and power through participation in political, social and cultural life" (Westbrook 1991, xv). They argued a wide variety of people with different perceptions should be involved in solving public problems so that this variety of perceptions could combine to paint a more complete picture of the problem and its potential solutions (Shields 2006). Addams also argued that this sharing of perspectives would lead to an increased

understanding of others' burdens and the creation of programs that take into account those burdens (Shields 2006). While unfortunately Dewey and Addams' ideas about engaging citizens in developing understanding and possible solutions to public problems were not immediately recognized and internalized by public institutions, public administrators of late have begun to recognize the value of their work (Shields 2003). Today the idea that the process of democratic inquiry and decision-making should include the citizenry is central to deliberative democracy and all other forms of participatory democracy.

Patricia Shields draws on the ideas of early pragmatist in her discussion of the formation of "communities of inquiry" as a way to resolve public problems (Shields 2003). These communities of inquiry utilize a participatory approach that allows individuals to share their unique perception of a problem and discuss possible resolutions in a reasonable and systematic way. This approach to public problem solving is one "in which the community is involved in shaping or characterizing the problematic situation, developing approaches to resolve the problem, defining and refining the end-in-view, and potentially, being transformed in the process" (Shields 2008). When citizens convene for a deliberative exercise, they can form a community of inquiry.

The influence of these pragmatic predecessors is also evident in the work of modern scholar Chris Ansell. He argues that individuals and communities today can improve their problem-solving capacity through a process he calls "evolutionary learning". Evolutionary learning is an ongoing process of inquiry, reflection, deliberation and experimentation (Ansell 2011). He argues that the use of pragmatism calls for a process of inquiry involving crucial reasoning and empirical investigation as a means for solving public issues. Chris Ansell (2011), along with modern scholar Patricia Shields (2008), echoes the beliefs of early pragmatists in

arguing that representative democratic institutions are valuable, but not sufficient in establishing democratic consent. Pragmatists argue that the chain of representative democracy should be coupled with more direct participatory approaches in order to better serve the public and regain their trust.

The Role of Public Administrators

This pragmatic approach to public problem solving has huge implications for public administration practitioners. Since public administrators serve as the front line in public problem solving, they are uniquely positioned in a way that provides them opportunities to foster the focused and organized civic engagement of citizens (Ansell 2011, 18). It is clear that bureaucracies are places where conversations are already occurring between administrators and the public (Shield 2003, 522). Public administrators therefore are able to organize these conversations into participatory events such as deliberations, to bolster civic engagement, gain valuable insight into the public problem, and work to restore public trust in governance. The opinions and preferences expressed by citizens during deliberations can then be reported by the administrators to policy-makers to help guide them in policy formation or it can be used by administrators themselves to improve the implementation of programs and policies.

III. Conceptual Framework

Chapter Introduction

As stated in the earlier chapters of this paper, this study focuses on a form of participatory democracy known as deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy literature points to three key features of an effective deliberative process. While not codified into one single conceptual framework previously, examination of deliberative democracy literature highlighted three key features consistently. This chapter examines these three key features. Careful selection of an appropriate mix of participants, issue, and deliberative structure are key elements of an effective deliberative process and serve as working hypotheses for this study. These three working hypotheses are further developed through the use of sub-hypotheses to define what an appropriate participant mix, structure and issue would be. The working hypotheses and their sub-hypotheses are subsequently used to assess the quality of Austin's 2012 bond referenda development process. These working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses are explained throughout the conceptual framework chapter and are summarized and linked to relevant literature in the conceptual framework table (Table 3.1) at the end of this chapter.

Appropriate Mix of Participants

When public officials set about conceptualizing a deliberative process, they should be especially mindful when selecting those individuals that will be involved (Button and Ryfe 2005, 23). The choice of people included greatly influences the effectiveness of any given deliberation. The appropriate mix of citizens, a variety of subject experts and trained facilitators, enable meaningful deliberation and foster a process that is smooth with a legitimate outcome (Carcasson and Sprain 2010, Button and Ryfe 2005). As Carcasson and Sprain (2010, 3) point out, the

importance of involving the appropriate mix of people “places a heavy burden on the conveners of deliberative events”. This means not only taking great care when selecting members of the public to participate in deliberations, but also taking care when selecting those that will be assisting those citizens during the deliberative process.

WH1: An effective deliberative democracy process should include an appropriate mix of participants.

Representative Sample

Deliberative democracy is an attractive supplement to traditional representative democracy, because its participatory approach can politically engage groups of individuals that have historically not utilized their political voice (Neblo et al 2010). However, this is not a simple process. Much care must be taken when selecting which citizens to invite to participate in deliberations. In order for the deliberation to be seen as legitimate, the selection of citizen participants must be centered on the principle of equality, meaning ideally the deliberations include the perspectives of all citizens affected by a public problem. Since designing a deliberation that would include all people affected by a problem is usually impossible, instead public administrators can involve a diverse group of people with different backgrounds that have shaped their perspective of the public problem. When assembling citizen participants to deliberate on an issue, scholars advise that those participating should mirror the broader community affected by that issue so the solution will more likely benefit the community at large². This is not an easy thing to achieve. While they may not be able to always achieve the

² Carcasson and Sprain (2010), Leighninger (2009), Thomas (2012), Rowe et al (2004), Hartz-Karp (2005)

ideal mix of participants that represent every segment of the population, conveners of a deliberative event should be mindful that the goal is a representative sample, and therefore are most effective when they cast a wide net and try to get a sample that is as representative as possible.

If a wide net is not cast, and the group engaged in deliberation is not representative of those people affected by a problem, “then there are strong grounds to questions why others should be interested in its views” (Fishkin, 2010, 612). This means that public administrators may need to look closely to determine which citizens are affected by a problem so that they can try to engage members of that group. If that group is not included, decisions might be made that do not take into account their needs. Not all members of the community are going to be affected the same way by a problem, it is important to try to be as inclusive as possible (Fishkin 2010).

When designing a deliberative exercise, it is important to not only involve the most advantaged segments of the population. Political involvement generally increases with socioeconomic status, and as a result, many efforts to involve the public have an overrepresentation of people with more education and higher incomes than the average citizen (Thomas 2012, 145). Grant (1994) warns against this in her paper *The Drama of Democracy*. She fears that if only the most privileged in society participate, then no one will promote the interests of the disadvantaged, since people tend to believe that the community’s interests align with their own personal interests. By involving a sample of citizens that reflects the true makeup of the population, a wide range of perspectives is more likely. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood that the views expressed during deliberations will represent the views held by the community at large. While deliberative citizen groups generally do not directly create policy, they often influence the formation and implementation of policy, so exclusion of segments of the

population from deliberative exercises can result in policies that portions of the population feel lack legitimacy.

Some cities have made the mistake of not making enough of an effort to involve all segments of the population in their public deliberations. The first *Community Congress*, an exercise in deliberative democracy held in New Orleans to plan post-Katrina redevelopment, was widely viewed as a failure because it lacked a representative sample of citizens. The deliberative process included 300 participants who were more white and affluent and from less-flood damaged areas than city residents on average. Since the group did not mirror the New Orleans community as a whole, they could not reasonably speak for the city as a whole (Thomas 2012, 165). As a result the deliberation was considered to be a failure by both organizers and the general public. A more successful deliberation which was representative of the makeup of the city was held roughly a month later (Thomas 2012, 165). The failure of the first *Community Congress* highlights the importance of involving a representative sample of citizens in such deliberations.

In order for deliberations to be legitimate, they must be inclusive and represent the community as a whole (Carcasson and Sprain 2010) and therefore researchers should take care to involve a sample of citizens that is representative of all citizens that will be affected by the issue.

Therefore, one would expect that:

WH1a: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should consist of a representative sample of citizens.

Engaging Relevant Authorities

When planning a deliberative event it is not only important to carefully consider the citizens who will be involved in deliberations, organizers should also involve those community leaders who will ultimately be making policy decisions or implementing existing policy. It is best to involve such authority figures because it increases the likelihood that the deliberations will ultimately affect policy formation and implementation (Thomas 2012, Bonner et al 2005). Citizens are more motivated to participate if they believe the process will have a meaningful impact on policy (Neblo et al 2010).

The aim of deliberation is to impact policy decisions or policy implementation and ultimately improve the lives of those in the community (Leighninger, 2009, 4). This is more likely to be achieved if the ultimate decision makers are engaged in the deliberations (Thomas 2012, 186, Bonner et al 2005, 147). Thomas (2012) stresses that the relevant authority figures who will create or implement policy should see public deliberation as desirable and embrace the sharing of decision-making authority with the citizens. If policymakers or policy implementers are engaged in the process of deliberation (without dominating the conversation) and listen to the arguments brought forth by citizens during deliberations, they are much more likely to seriously consider the results of the deliberation when they ultimately make policy (Thomas 2012).

Further support for the idea that it is important to engage relevant authority figures can be found in a 2010 study conducted by Neblo et al. In the study the researchers found that there was a significant increase in people's interest in participating in deliberations when they were told that they would be able to talk with a high-ranking government official (Neblo et al, 2010

575). Therefore, based on these findings, one would expect that :

WH1b: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities.

Trained Facilitator

It is also important to consider who will be aiding citizens by guiding them through the deliberative democracy exercise. Gastil and Richards (2012) suggest that it is prudent to involve a trained facilitator to guide the discussion. The term “facilitator” describes a person that has the responsibility of leading discussions and continuously interacts with other participants in the course of discourse (Moore 2011, 3). The role of facilitator is a tricky one and for that reason it is best to have a facilitator who is experienced and well-versed in how to properly interact with citizens during deliberations. The facilitator occupies an unusual role in which they act as a leader within the deliberation, yet must follow the group as it comes to its own conclusions through the course of the discussions.

Facilitators have a duty to maintain a sense of equality and inclusion within the group (often by encouraging people to speak up, and by intervening should there be any verbal attacks on a participant for expressing an unpopular viewpoint, or curtail off topic discussion) (Moore 2011, 12). At the same time, however, they should not interfere too much in the discussion. A facilitator must walk a fine line between helping the group towards clarity and ensuring a process where participants maintain ownership over the deliberations (Moore 2011, 14). This can be tricky for even the most skilled facilitators (Gastil and Richards 2012). Therefore, due to the

important and delicate nature of deliberation facilitation, one would expect that:

WH1c: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should include a trained facilitator.

Issue Selection

While deliberative democracy has been successfully used to consider a wide range of issues, there are some types of issues that are not well suited for deliberation (Innes & Boore 2004, 431). When administrators are faced with an issue, they need to take a critical look at the issue at hand to be sure it is a candidate for successful deliberation. Deliberations must be able to realistically influence policy outcomes (Thomas 2012, Rowe et al 2004), must have a high enough impact to justify the cost, and must have an appropriate level of urgency in order to justify the convening of a deliberation (Thomas 2012).

WH2: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an appropriate issue.

Policy Influence

The views expressed during deliberations should be considered when policy on the issue is created or implemented; otherwise the deliberations seem to be a waste of citizens' time and citizens' trust in the process will be eroded (Rowe et al 2004, Hartz-Karp 2005). Effective deliberative exercises are designed with a focus on action (Thomas 2012, 186). Allowing people to express their views on an issue can create a sense of efficacy amongst members of the public but "their ultimate judgment may not remain positive unless they see their ideas impacting public action" (Thomas 2012, 192). For example, the 2000 Washington D.C. Citizen Summit was

created to guide strategic planning priorities within the District of Columbia. The summit was considered to be an effective public deliberation because it was responsive to citizen deliberations. Following the summit, citizens were able to observe “tangible changes in city programming reflective of the public’s input and preferences” (Thomas 2012, 192). The City even organized a second forum to follow up and report on the impacts of the first summit. Citizen satisfaction with the summit was reflected in a survey sent to participants following the event. In the survey more than ninety percent of respondents rated the summit as “good” or “excellent” (Thomas 2012, 192). Based on the importance that deliberations actually affect the lives of citizens, one would expect that:

WH2a: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an issue that can realistically influence policy.

High Impact

As useful as deliberative democracy is in helping to craft legitimate and effective policy, it is not prudent to attempt a deliberative exercise for every issue that may arise. Critics of deliberative democracy have argued that it is often too costly and the benefits gained are not worth the money spent on the deliberations (Hartz-Karp 2005). In some cases these critics are correct. There are significant costs associated with convening a deliberative exercise including, the necessary staff time and money needed to plan the event, recruit participants, secure the services of a trained facilitator, and follow up with citizens and public officials following the deliberations (Thomas 2012 189, Innes & Boore 2004). Administrators must also take note of how interested people are in participating in a deliberation on a particular issue. As a result of the amount of time, energy and money needed to coordinate these deliberative exercises,

administrators must be judicious when determining whether or not to convene a deliberation. If an issue has a high impact on the community, then a deliberation might be worth the effort and costs, however if the issue will have a relatively minor impact, it is unlikely that a deliberation should be held.

When determining whether or not to convene a deliberative forum, Thomas (2012) and Innes and Booher (2004) advise administrators to consider the costs of deliberation in relation to the foreseen impact associated with potential litigation, delays and conflict that might arise should a deliberative approach not be employed (Thomas 2012, 190, Innes and Booher 2004, 432). According to Innes and Booher (2004), a lack of opportunity or poor quality opportunities for the public to express their opinion on high impact issues can lead to a myriad of problems including “lawsuits, wars at the ballot box and stalemates” (425). Innes and Booher point out that it is very common for environmental groups to rely on the opportunity to file lawsuits as a way to stall public projects they feel are damaging to the environment. However, environmental groups are not the only ones using this tactic to stall public projects they oppose. Farming interests in California’s Central Valley have slowed government effort in conservation planning and water management through lawsuits because they did not feel their voices had been heard during the planning stages of these efforts (Innes and Booher 2004). In these instances, an effective deliberation prior to undertaking these initiatives may have successfully avoided these lawsuits and costly project delays.

In the wake of September 11th, New York City recognized the level of contention surrounding how the World Trade Center site would be redeveloped. Because of the emotional nature of this topic and the level of interest surrounding the topic, New York City hosted a 4,000 person deliberative workshop in order for citizens to weigh in on plans for the World Trade

Center site. The cost for recruiting an appropriate mix of participants, preparing balanced information for participants, technological equipment for recording the discussions and networking the groups, and staffing came to a staggering total of \$400 per participant (Innes & Boore 2004, 432). Despite the high cost, the city determined that the deliberative workshop was worth the expense since developers were planning investments of many millions of dollars and those investments were being delayed over the conflict among citizens about how the site should be used. Though this deliberative exercise was particularly pricey, due to the high impact nature of this issue, it was deemed worthwhile by the city. Had the issue not had so high an impact, the city would not have been able to justify spending that money for a deliberative event (Innes & Boore 2004 431-432).

Based on the high costs associated with deliberations, one would expect that:

WH2b: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of a high impact issue.

Level of Urgency

In addition to considering the level of impact an issue might have and the potential for deliberations to influencing policy, administrators must also consider an issue's level of urgency. According to Thomas (2012) a deliberative exercise requires extensive planning, which of course takes time. A location must be secured for the deliberations, a trained facilitator and relevant authority figures must be selected and engaged in the process, citizens must be recruited to participate, and the structural aspects of the exercise must be carefully selected and laid out so as to garner meaningful input from citizen participants (Gastil and Levine 2005, Hoppe 2011). Due to the amount of time necessary to accomplish all of this planning, extremely time-sensitive

issues are not a good match for a deliberative approach. If an issue requires swift action and an immediate resolution, such as in the case of public health emergencies and other time-sensitive crises, there would not be enough time to organize and properly conduct a deliberation with citizens. In these instances it is only possible to engage a small group of experts (often these experts are the public administrators themselves) and take swift action to mitigate the effects of the urgent problem (Shields 2008, 213).

Based on the time necessary to properly organize a deliberation, one would expect that:

WH2c: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an issue with an appropriate level of urgency.

Deliberative Structure

In addition to engaging an appropriate mix of participants and selecting an issue that is appropriate for deliberation, administrators must also be sure to utilize an appropriate deliberative design. There are several key aspects that should be present in a deliberation to promote high quality discussion that will assist in the creation of legitimate and effective policy. First, administrators should make an effort to ensure that balanced information is provided to participants (Carcasson and Sprain 2010, Hartz Karp 2005). Second, the deliberation should be structured so as to encourage serious consideration of a variety of viewpoints (Hartz-Karp 2005). Finally, participants should be provided with multiple ways to participate (Thomas 2012).

WH3: An effective deliberative democracy process should utilize an appropriate deliberative structure.

Balanced Information

Most issues worth deliberating are complex and in order to effectively discuss the issues, it is helpful for deliberative participants to have a good understanding of the issue on which they are deliberating. Unfortunately, “if six decades of modern public opinion research establish anything, it is that the public’s most basic political knowledge is appalling by any normative standard” (Ackerman and Fishkin 2003,11). Since many participants may not have much knowledge about the topic being deliberated, conveners of deliberations often provide participants with background information so they can provide well-informed input during the deliberative exercise. According to Carcasson and Sprain (2010) much thought should go into creating the information that will be disseminated to participants.

Written educational materials and expert speakers can greatly influence deliberative participants. According to Neblo (2012), this is especially true when participants have limited knowledge of the topic prior to the deliberative exercise. Balanced and accurate information is helpful since it creates a well-informed participant. However, a serious problem becomes apparent when administrators recognize that these deliberations can create powerful incentives for interest groups and partisan elites to try to use background information to manipulate participants. This kind of sly manipulation can lead to the creation of policy that best serves the expert providing the information but not the community (Neblo 2012, 412).

According to Carcasson and Sprain (2010) conveners of deliberations are to avoid this type of manipulation by striving for “passionate impartiality”. This is not a dull detachment from the proceedings during a deliberation, but rather a passionate support of for the ideals of inclusion, factual accuracy, equality and mutual respect of differing viewpoints (Carcasson and

Sprain 2010). Hartz-Karp (2005) also advises that impartiality be evident in the background information given to citizen participants. This balanced information does not exclude a certain perspective nor does it slant in support of the convener's personal biases. Instead it is purely factual information that clearly explains the information necessary for citizens to seriously consider all viewpoints (Hartz-Karp 2005).

Perth, Australia's Minister of Planning and Infrastructure organized *Dialogue with the City*, to determine the future plan for the city's growth. *Dialogue* became the largest deliberative forum ever conducted in the Southern Hemisphere with 1,100 citizens participating in the initial forum. Subsequent deliberations where specifics of the community planning strategy were hammered out contained smaller groups of around 100 citizens (Hartz-Karp 2005, 3). Participants in the deliberations were sent background briefing packs prior to the deliberation containing information that had been collected by the Western Australia Planning Commission (Hartz-Karp 2005). Participants also learned about sustainable growth through presentations made by featured speakers.

While it was a good idea to provide participants with background information and presentations by experts during the event, the conveners received some negative feedback following the deliberations. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction, complaining that the information given to them was not comprehensive enough and did not highlight all viewpoints held within the community. Critics of the deliberation noted that there were no expert speakers invited that supported the current urban sprawl or who advocated for a free-market approach. Instead all the presentations coordinated by the conveners focused on "sustainability and the implications of government action and inaction" (Hartz-Karp 2005, 10). While city planners still received valuable input during *Dialog*, this lack of balanced information was indicative of the

conveners' personal biases towards an agenda of government–supported sustainability, which led to some dissatisfaction among participants.

The *Dialogue* example demonstrated that participants in a deliberative exercise are sensitive to convener bias. The complaints from citizens regarding the unbalanced information seem to indicate that participants want balanced information. Hence, one would expect:

WH3a: An effective deliberative democracy process should provide participants with balanced information.

Consideration of Various Viewpoints

Deliberative democracy is quite different from the nature of traditional representative democracy and even some other forms of participatory democracy. Unlike many other forms of democracy, deliberative democracy according to Innes and Booher (2004) can and should promote serious consideration of a variety of viewpoints by each person in attendance. These exercises should be collaborative and “intentionally interactive rather than testimonial” (Thomas 2012, 187). By creating an exercise in which open dialogue is encouraged between participants, deeper understandings can be achieved. It is when this understanding of other viewpoints is achieved, that deliberations are truly effective in creating solutions that effectively address public problems (Hartz-Karp 2005).

Renowned political and social theorist, John Stuart Mill recognized the importance of discussing and considering different political opinions long ago. In his landmark 1859 paper *On Liberty*, he commented that a lack of contact with opposing viewpoints was detrimental to the public sphere stating; “If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and

livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error”. Effective deliberations today heed the words of John Stuart Mill and seek to allow for the serious consideration of differing viewpoints.

Early Pragmatists also recognized the importance of understanding various viewpoints in order to resolve public issues. In her article, “Rediscovering the Taproot”, Shields (2008) notes that pragmatists believed social problems should be approached from a “pluralistic perspective—one that draws from science and takes into account human complexities and values”. Even in the late 1800s, pragmatist recognized that in order to solve problems in a diverse society people needed to gain an understanding of other people’s unique perspectives. Public officials attempting to resolve public concerns without consulting the public, often lack the understanding necessary to select the best course of action. As Shields (2008) points out, “although the shoemaker may know how to fix the shoe, only the one wearing it knows where it pinches” (206).

While beneficial for building a more complete understanding of social and political issues, considering different viewpoints can be uncomfortable. According to Diana C. Mutz (2006), discussing one’s political views with someone who has different political opinions, is not something people tend to naturally do. She explains that most of the time, people choose to expose themselves to people that do not challenge their worldview. Simply put, “likes talk to likes” (Mutz 2006, 9). Deliberative forums are a unique chance to break people’s natural tendencies to discuss politics only with those who reinforce their view of the world. This is important because “no individual person thinking in isolation can foresee the variety of perspectives from which political issues may be perceived” (Mutz 2006, 9). Deliberations teach people to understand different perspectives that they could not conceive of on their own.

The consideration of differing viewpoints is helpful in enabling participants to better understand the perspectives of others. While this new understanding might not result in a consensus among all members, it does make the final decision more legitimate in the eyes of dissenting participants (Mutz 2006, 9). The idea of reciprocity plays an important role in deliberative democracy. Reciprocity holds that citizens owe one another justifications for the ultimate decision made as a result of the discussion (Gutman and Thompson 2003, 33). While some participants may still prefer a different course of action, knowing the reasoning behind that particular choice makes them realize that the decision was not arbitrary and did have a justification to support it (Mutz 2006, 9).

Based on the fact that discussions of various viewpoints can lead to a shared understanding of a social problem, and increased legitimacy for the ultimate course of action, one would expect that:

WH3b: An effective deliberative democracy process should allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.

Technical Connections

There is evidence people wish to participate in policy formation through deliberation. Unfortunately busy schedules can sometimes be a barrier to participation. Difficulty finding child-care, unusual work schedules, lack of transportation, and sheer distance can all act as barriers that can prevent people from being able to participate in public deliberations. Since effective deliberations need a variety of viewpoints and seek to be representative of the community at large, it is important to provide multiple ways by which one might participate in a deliberation (Gastil and Levine, 2005). It is possible to offer multiple deliberative sessions in

different locations at different times of the day to try to hear from as many people as possible. Unfortunately this could lead to the problem of having a representative overall sample, but not having high quality discussions because the groups at each meeting are homogenous. Online deliberations allow people from a wide variety of areas to deliberate on an issue and prevents the homogeneity that can occur with localized deliberative efforts.

With the advent of the internet and improved telecommunications technology, new avenues for participation in participatory democracy are emerging (Thomas 2012, Dahlberg 2001). Such technologies were utilized successfully in a post-Katrina planning process in New Orleans. Through the use of such technologies, the organizers were able to hold deliberations that included displaced former city residents who were currently living outside New Orleans following the flood (Thomas 2012, 165). These residents were an important segment of the population, but due to their displacement to areas outside the city, would have been excluded from the deliberative process had online participation not been an option. (Thomas 2012, 165).

Online deliberations provide a number of benefits to participants. The use of online technology allows those who cannot attend a deliberation in person to still participate. It removes the barrier of distance, and allows participants to participate in a nonthreatening environment such as their home or office (Bonner et al 2005). However, there are also some drawbacks to online deliberation. Face-to-face communication can be important for building trust amongst participants, so the largest challenge to online deliberations are difficulties in attempting to approximate the feelings of a face-to-face discussion in an online forum (Thomas 2012). Yet, deliberative scholars have high hopes for the potential of future online deliberations. John Clayton Thomas expressed his high hopes for technologically aided deliberations saying that, “if

online innovations continue to progress...their promise for facilitating public deliberation and other forms of public involvement could prove almost unlimited.” (Thomas 2012, 193).

Based on the physical barriers to participation, one would expect that:

WH3c: An effective deliberative democracy should provide participants with technological connections to the deliberative process.

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

The key components of an effective deliberative process are summarized and linked to the literature in a conceptual framework table (see Table 2.1). The framework identified 1) an appropriate mix of participants 2) careful selection of an issue and 3) a well-crafted deliberative structure as key components of an effective deliberation. These important key components of an effective deliberation, serve as working hypotheses throughout this study. The working hypotheses have then been further narrowed into sub-hypotheses to further illustrate why these key components are important. The assumptions made in both the working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses in this section have been supported by empirical literature. The working hypotheses and their sub-hypotheses will serve as a conceptual map for the sections that follow. In subsequent chapters the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses outlined in the conceptual framework will be operationalized and the City of Austin bond development will be explored with the main purpose of identifying whether these key components were present.

Table 3.1- Conceptual Framework Linked to the Literature

Working Hypotheses and Sub-hypotheses	Literature
WH1: An effective deliberative democracy process should include an appropriate mix of participants.	Carcasson and Sprain (2010), Button and Ryfe (2005)
WH1a: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should consist of a representative sample of citizens.	Carcasson and Sprain (2010), Neblo et al (2010), Leighninger (2009), Thomas (2012), Rowe et al (2004), Hartz-Karp (2005), Fishkin (2011) Grant (1994)
WH1b: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities.	Thomas (2012), Bonner et al (2005), Neblo et al (2010), Leighninger (2009)
WH1c: An appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should include a trained and experienced facilitator.	Moore (2011), Gastil and Richards (2012)
WH2: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an appropriate issue.	Thomas (2012), Rowe et al (2004)
WH2a: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an issue that can realistically influence policy.	Rowe et al (2004), Thomas (2012), Hartz-Karp (2005)
WH2b: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of a high-impact issue.	Thomas (2012), Hartz-Karp (2005), Innes & Booher (2004)
WH2c: An effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an issue with an appropriate level of urgency.	Thomas (2012), Shields (2008), Gastil and Levine (2005), Hoppe (2011)
WH3: An effective deliberative democracy process should utilize an appropriate deliberative structure.	Carcasson and Sprain (2010), Hartz-Karp (2005), Thomas (2012)
WH3a: An effective deliberative democracy process should provide participants with balanced information.	Carcasson and Sprain (2010), Hartz-Karp (2005) Thomas (2012), Neblo (2012)
WH3b: An effective deliberative democracy process should allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.	Fishkin and Laslett (2003), Innes and Booher (2004), Thomas (2012), Hartz-Karp (2005) Mutz (2006) (Shieds 2006)
WH3c: An effective deliberative democracy process should provide technological connections to the deliberative process.	Thomas (2012), Dahlberg (2001), Gastil and Levine (2005), Bonner et al (2005)

Chapter Summary

The conceptual framework chapter outlined key elements of an effective deliberation and linked them with relevant literature. This conceptual framework will be utilized throughout this study as a means by which to assess the City of Austin's 2012 bond development process.

The next chapter describes the setting of this research project. It provides background information about the City of Austin and also outlines the deliberative and non-deliberative exercises the City organized in order to develop the 2012 Bond referenda.³

³ This exploratory study utilizes the working hypothesis conceptual framework developed and outlined in Shields and Rangarajan (2013) and Shields and Tajalli (2006).

IV. Setting

Chapter Introduction

This setting chapter provides necessary context by describing the City of Austin, which organized the deliberations, and by describing the deliberative events themselves. Understanding the deliberative events will be useful in later chapters when these deliberative events are assessed using the key components of an effective deliberation described in the conceptual framework. This chapter will begin by providing basic information about Austin, Texas. The setting chapter will then describe the task force and the community workshops convened by the City of Austin. Finally, this chapter will briefly discuss the non-deliberative processes also utilized by the city. The reasons that these process do not qualify as deliberative are highlighted and discussed, thus explaining their exclusion in later assessments of the City's deliberative processes.

About Austin

The deliberative democracy exercises examined in the following chapters were organized by the City of Austin, Texas. Located in central Texas, Austin, serves as the state capital (as seen in figure 5.1) and is home to roughly 820,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). It is a rapidly growing and changing community with a diverse group of citizens.

Figure 5.1 –Map of Texas- Identifying the Capital City of Austin



(Source: http://www.coedu.usf.edu/culture/story/story_texas.htm)

According to the Austin Chamber of Commerce, Austin ranked first among the fifty largest U.S. metropolitan areas based on net migration as a percent of total population in 2011. Furthermore, in 2011, seven percent of Austin residents reported that they lived elsewhere one year earlier. (Austin Chamber of Commerce 2013). Many of these new Austin residents are members of ethnic minority groups. According to the Austin Chamber of Commerce (2013), the Hispanic population makes up thirty-two percent of the Austin area population and grew sixty-four percent between 2000 and 2010. The Asian population experienced even greater growth, increasing by eighty-seven percent in that same period.

In addition to its unusually fast growth rate, Austin is remarkable in that it has a highly educated population. As home to the University of Texas, Saint Thomas University, and Huston-Tillotson University, it is not surprising that forty-five percent of Austin residents over twenty-five years old hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This is quite a bit higher than the state average of only twenty-six percent.

Austin was a particularly interesting location for this particular study because according to Granicus.com, “community engagement has always been a top priority for the City of Austin, TX.” The city places a great deal of value in engaging the community because this engagement supports their vision to become the most livable and best-managed community in the country. Austin is already achieving impressive results in these areas, successfully achieving citizen satisfaction ratings that are higher than the national average (Granicus 2013).

Task Force and Community Workshops

The City of Austin employed several different strategies to capture public input for the 2012 bond referenda. The first was creating a citizen task force that would deliberate amongst themselves and create a recommendation for Council. On October 6, 2011, the Austin City Council, appointed fifteen citizens to the Bond Election Advisory Task Force, which was given the responsibility of developing a recommended set of bond propositions for Council to consider. These bond propositions outlined the capital improvement projects that would make up Propositions 12 through 18 on the November 6, 2012 ballot (City of Austin 2012c). While this task force crafted the recommendations that ultimately were presented to City Council for their consideration, the task force members were not the only citizens participating in the creation of these recommendations.

Recognizing the need to involve a wider set of participants in the development of the recommendations to City Council regarding the future bond package, the City also held four community workshops in different locations around the city that were open to all members of the public. At these four community workshops, citizens were able to participate in two exercises in which they indicated the projects that were most important to them and how they would like to

see funding allocated. These four community workshop deliberations and the task force meetings are the deliberative processes that this study is assessing. The dates and number of participants for the task force and four community workshop sessions can be seen in table 4.1.

Table 4.1- Dates and Participation Levels of Deliberative Exercises

Deliberative Exercise	Date	Number of Participants
<u>Task Force</u>	December 2011-May 2012	15
<u>Community Workshop 1</u> (Located in Southwest Austin)	March 20, 2012	11
<u>Community Workshop 2</u> (Located in Northeast Austin)	March 21, 2012	60
<u>Community Workshop 3</u> (Located in Southeast Austin)	March 26, 2012	47
<u>Community Workshop 4</u> (Located in Northwest Austin)	March 31, 2012	23

Workshop Exercises

At the workshops, citizens participated in two different exercises. These exercises were designed to gauge their opinions about which projects should be included in the bond package and how funding should be allocated. The first exercise asked participants to allocate funding across four different categories: affordable housing, city facilities, parks/open space and transportation/mobility. Participants were asked to allocate \$400 million in potential future bond

funding, then \$300 million, and then \$200 million. At the workshops, participants worked in small groups to discuss the best way to allocate the funding and came to a decision. Each small group then presented their allocations to the entire group and explained the reasoning behind their allocation choices.

The second exercise provided citizens with a list of projects the city identified in the city's needs assessment as projects potentially important for the city. To create the needs assessment, City departments were asked to identify capital improvement project needs that could be implemented within a five to seven year timeframe. Those projects and the reason why they were needed were compiled to form the needs assessment. Participants at the community workshops were given background information on the projects in the needs assessment and were then asked to discuss the various projects amongst themselves. After discussing the value of the various projects with others, they were then given ten stickers each. They were asked to place their stickers next to the ten projects they felt were most important. (City of Austin 2012c).

Non-Deliberative Citizen Participation

In addition to the community workshops, city staff also created an online survey that was open to all members of the public to capture additional input (City of Austin 2012c). This survey was however, not a deliberative process. It did not allow for discussion amongst citizen participants. Instead participants independently recorded their preferences and submitted them to the city. It was an exercise in democracy, but not deliberative democracy. While the survey itself was not deliberative, the aggregated results of the online survey were used by the task force in their deliberations.

Another example of a non-deliberative citizen engagement activity was the Citizen's Communication period of the task force meetings. Citizens that were not members of the task force could attend the task force meetings and address the members during the Citizen's Communication period of the meeting. This was not a deliberative process however, because it did not involve back and forth communication. Citizens had three minutes to address the task force and express their opinions regarding the development of the bond referenda, but this was a one-way channel of communication from the citizen to the task force members. Since it was not a multi-directional discussion, it does not qualify as an exercise in deliberative democracy. Since neither the online survey nor the Citizen's Communication period of the task force meetings qualify as deliberations, they will not be considered in later assessments of the bond development deliberations.

Task Force Recommendations

Finally, after much deliberation and extensive consideration of the opinions expressed by other citizens, the task force drafted a proposed bond package and hosted two open community meetings. In these community meetings the task force members explained the reasons behind recommendations and broke into smaller groups to discuss the proposed recommendations with the attendees. Finally, after considering the additional feedback from the last two meetings, the task force presented their recommendations to City Council on June 26, 2012 (City of Austin 2012b). City Council reviewed the recommendations developed by the deliberative processes and ultimately crafted a final bond package which appeared on the ballot in November 2012.

Chapter Summary

The settings chapter provided context by providing details about the City of Austin and the various deliberative exercises that made up the 2012 bond development process.

Understanding the deliberative exercises is helpful when discussing the findings and recommendations related to these exercises in later chapters. This chapter also discussed several engagement activities employed by the City that did not qualify as deliberative democracy exercises, which explains their exclusion from the assessment in subsequent chapters. The next chapter is the methodology chapter. This chapter discusses the methodology used to assess the 2012 Austin bond development process.

V. Methodology

Chapter Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology employed to assess the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations. The key components of an effective deliberation previously outlined in the conceptual framework chapter form the basis of the assessment. The conceptual framework is operationalized into interview questions, which are displayed in Table 5.1 and serve as the main method of inquiry for this study. Two documents were also analyzed to further assess some aspects of the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations. Their usage is also illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1- Operationalization Table

Working Hypotheses and Sub-hypotheses	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<p>WH1: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should include an appropriate mix of participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Can you please describe the participants involved in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations? 	
<p>WH1a: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should consist of a representative sample of citizens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (organizers only) What steps were taken to ensure that citizen participants in the Austin bond development process were representative of the public at large? • (all respondents) To what extent do you feel the citizen participants mirrored the Austin community at large? • (all respondents) Do you believe that it is important that citizen participants in deliberations are representative of the public at large? Why or why not? 	<p>Analyze <i>Community Workshops & Online Survey Results March/April 2012</i> to determine if participants in the community workshops mirrored the citizens in the community at large.</p>
<p>WH1b: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (organizers only) Who ultimately made the decision regarding which issues were placed on the 2012 bond referendum? • (all respondents) Were <u>(insert name(s)/titles indicated in the above question)</u> participants in the deliberative exercise? If so can you describe their involvement? 	

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<p>WH1c: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include a trained and experienced facilitator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Was there anyone facilitating the deliberation? • (facilitator only) Can you please describe your educational background/ training in facilitation? • (facilitator only) Prior to this deliberation, had you successfully facilitated a meeting of this scope before? 	
<p>WH2: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be carefully selected and an appropriate issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Do you believe this issue was well suited for deliberation? Why or why not? 	
<p>WH2a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue that can realistically influence policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (organizers only) Can you please articulate the reasons you selected the bond development process as an issue for deliberation? • (all respondents) How closely did the actual 2012 bond referendum match what was suggested by participants during the deliberative process? • (all respondents) To what extent do you think the deliberations influenced the bond referendum? 	
<p>WH2b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected, high impact issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Please describe the impact of bond development on the Austin community. • (all respondents) Do you believe that the time and money spend to coordinate this event was worthwhile? Why or why not? 	
<p>WH2c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue with an appropriate level of urgency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) When were the deliberative sessions held? 	<p>Analyze both documents to determine when the deliberations began and when recommendations were made.</p>

<p>WH3: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should utilize an appropriate deliberative structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Can you please describe the structure and process of the deliberative exercise? 	
<p>WH3a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide participants with balanced information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (citizen participants only) Can you please describe the background information provided to you at the deliberation? • (organizers only) What steps were taken to ensure that the information provided to citizen participants was balanced? 	
<p>WH3b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Can you describe any examples of some differing views expressed during the deliberations? 	
<p>WH3c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide technological connections to the deliberative process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (all respondents) Can you describe the way or ways that citizens were able to participate in the deliberative process? • (all respondents) if there were ways to participate online, can you describe them? 	<p>Analyze <i>Community Workshops & Online Survey Results March/April 2012</i> to determine if the online survey provided a connection to the deliberative process.</p>

Interviews and Document Analysis

This study uses a case study methodology⁴, which primarily utilizes in person semi-structured interviews to analyze the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations. Program documents were also analyzed to further assess some aspects of the deliberative process. A case

⁴ For other Texas State Applied Research Projects that utilize a case study methodology and examine the City of Austin, see: Aleman (2004), Howard-Watkins (2006), Johnson (2008), Kim (2008) and Alexander (2009).

study is the most appropriate research method for this particular study because “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events....”(Yin 2009, 4). In this instance, a case study allowed an in-depth look at participants’ experiences during the 2012 Austin Bond Development deliberations.

There were a number of reasons that interviews were selected as the primary means to explore these deliberations. Qualitative interviews are well suited for this type of research because, unlike surveys in which the questions are set in stone and cannot be adapted based on participant responses, qualitative interviews are less structured and allow researchers to adapt their questions in order to get the best possible information (Babbie 2007, 305). In this case questions were developed prior to the interview process. The questions were designed to encourage interview subjects to reveal if the key elements of an effective deliberation outlined in the conceptual framework were present in the 2012 Austin Bond development deliberations. Not all of the questions pertained to all interview subjects. The center column of Table 5.1 not only indicates the questions related to each working hypothesis, it also includes an indication of who was asked that question.

While a general plan of inquiry was established prior to the interview process, the interviewer was able to ask follow up questions and request clarification in order to achieve the best possible understanding. Interviews also have the advantage of having a high level of validity, which was another reason they were selected as the main method of inquiry. Though they have high levels of validity, interviews can be criticized for having lower levels of reliability than some other methods of inquiry (Babbie 2007, 313-314).

In addition to the interviews, the researcher also analyzed two documents. These documents entitled *Summary of Community Engagement For the Bond Development Process* and *Community Workshops & Online Survey Results March/April 2012* were both created by City staff members. The documents detail the process used to collect citizen input during the bond development process and outline the recommendations that were developed as a result of that citizen input. The documents are a useful complement to the interviews. They provide specific data that would be difficult for interview subjects to recall from memory (such as how many participants attended the community workshops), and they have a high level of reliability because they are static documents that can be reviewed multiple times and still yield the same information.

Sample

This study utilizes a nonprobability sampling technique known as snowball sampling as a means for selecting interview subjects. In this type of sampling the researcher reaches out to those few individuals within the group with the appropriate expertise, once they have collected information from those individuals, they ask them to provide the contact information of others in the group so that more subjects can be located for the study. In this case the researcher knew the city staff member that served as the deliberation facilitator at the community workshops. The researcher contacted the facilitator who was able to provide the names and contact information for the two other City staff members who helped coordinate the deliberative exercises. The facilitator was also able to provide the contact information for one citizen that spoke during the citizen communications portion of a task force meeting and one citizen that participated in

community workshops. One of the other city staff members who was interviewed was able to provide the contact information for all fifteen of the task force participants. In total, twenty potential interview subjects were located using snowball sampling.

All of the potential interview subjects were sent an email to request that they meet with the researcher for an interview. In total, three city staff members and four task force members, and one person who participated in the citizen communications portion of a task force meeting consented to an interview. Figure 5.1 illustrates the chain of contacts collected by using snowball sampling. The figure contains all potential interview subjects that were contacted. The eight contacts indicated in green are the contacts that consented to an interview. The twelve contacts indicated in red were contacted by email but did not respond to the interview request.

While the researcher requested the contact information of additional community workshop participants, she was only able to get the contact information for one. This is because that particular participant was a community leader who the facilitator knew well and who he felt would not mind being contacted. However, the staff members were hesitant to give out the contact information of other workshop participants who might not appreciate the City giving out their personal contact information.

It should be noted that the interview subjects only make up a fraction of all the participants involved in the bond deliberation process. By interviewing only a portion of participants, there is a chance that the researcher may not get a full range of perspectives. Since only a small subset of all participants were interviewed, it is possible that some of the participants that were not interviewed might feel quite differently than those ones that were interviewed. However, since this study includes interviews with organizers, citizen participants and the facilitator, an effort has been made to try to garner diverse perspectives.

In addition to interviews, the researcher also utilized two documents to gain additional understanding about City's bond development process. One city staff member provided the researcher with two documents created by the City. One document titled *Summary of Community Engagement For the Bond Development Process* summarizes the processes used by the Task Force and outlines their ultimate recommendations to the Austin City Council. The other document titled *Community Workshops & Online Survey Results March/April 2012* explains the way the City solicited citizen input at the community workshops and in their online survey and aggregates the opinions collected through those two methods of community engagement.

Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework

While the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses in the previous conceptual framework table (Table 3.1) applied to deliberative exercises in general, the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses in table 5.1 have taken those general hypotheses and applied them to the specific case being considered in this study - the 2012 Austin bond development process. For example, the first working sub-hypothesis states that an effective deliberative democracy process should include a representative sample of citizens. Since WH1a concerns the representativeness of participants, one interview question asks the participant to describe to what extent the deliberation participants mirrored the community at large. Asking this question helps reveal whether or not the deliberation participants were a representative sample of citizens.

The left column in Table 5.1 lists these working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses that make up the conceptual framework. The center column outlines the main interview question(s) that were asked relating to each hypothesis during the interviews and links them with their corresponding working hypothesis. In many cases additional questions were asked as needed in order to clarify statements made by the subjects or draw out more in depth answers from interview respondents. Not all of the questions are applicable to all interview respondents. Table 5.1 indicates whether the question was broached with all interview respondents, just the organizers of the deliberation, just the citizen participants, or just the facilitator. The right column in Table 5.1 indicates when document analysis was used. It links the document that was analyzed with the specific working hypothesis related to it.

Since this research did include interviews as one data source, human subjects were involved. The next chapter explains the steps that were taken to ensure that the human subjects were adequately protected from harm while exploring the deliberative process used to develop the 2012 bond referenda.

VI. Human Subjects Protections

Since this research project involved interviews with both city staff and members of the public, ethical considerations had to be taken into account to ensure that the human subjects were in no way mistreated. Earl Babbie identifies four important ethical considerations that should be taken into account when conducting research involving human subjects: voluntary participation, no harm to participants, anonymity/confidentiality, and deception (2007, 62-67). This project was carefully planned so as not to violate any of these important ethical principles.

All participation in interviews was completely voluntary and this was made very clear to potential interview subjects. Prior to beginning any interview, the researcher provided subjects with a consent form, which outlined the participants' rights, including the statement that "participating in an interview is entirely voluntary" and they "could withdraw at any time without penalty". It was also made clear in the consent form that the interview would be recorded only with their permission. A copy of the full consent form can be found in Appendix A.

The consent form also addressed the ethical principle regarding potential harm to participants. Since this study simply involved the discussion of their experiences during the public deliberations used to develop the City of Austin 2012 Bond referenda, a topic that is quite benign in nature, there was very little risk faced by participants that opted to participate in an interview. In the consent form, participants were told that the research would focus solely on the 2012 Austin bond development process and participants would therefore only be asked questions pertaining to the bond development process.

The third ethical consideration, confidentiality/anonymity, was also taken into account when planning this research. The consent form assured participants that, while their role in the deliberations might be mentioned in the research write up (either as an event organizer, citizen participant or facilitator), their exact identity would not be revealed without their express consent. In the discussion of the findings revealed through the interviews, the identities of all participants were kept confidential.

Finally, participants were in no way deceived during this research project. The consent form clearly outlined the purpose of this study (academic research on the 2012 City of Austin bond development process) and how the information they provided was to be used. The consent form explained that the information they provided in the interviews would be incorporated into a Texas State Applied Research Project as part of the researcher's Master's of Public Administration degree. This was an entirely accurate description of the research project and how the information they provided was used.

Prior to beginning any contact with any potential interview subjects, the research project and its proposed methodology was submitted to the Texas State Institutional Review Board with the request that it receive an exemption. The Institutional Review Board is a group of people that provide independent oversight of issues related to research involving human subjects. The Board considered the specifics of this particular research project and based on its benign subject matter and the consent form that was to be provided to participants, the Board concluded that no further review was necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of participants. On February 13, 2013, this project was deemed "exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board". A copy of the email from the Institutional Review Board granting the exemption can be seen in Appendix B.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the steps taken to ensure that human subjects were fully informed and were in no way mistreated. The next chapter explains the findings uncovered during the exploration of the Austin bond development process. The chapter discusses what was learned by using the methods of inquiry (interviews and document analysis) outlined in the methodology chapter. The findings chapter explores each of the working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses outlined in the previous conceptual framework chapter and to determine if the hypotheses are reflected in the actual 2012 development process. This close exploration of each of the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses will make it possible to determine if the key components of an effective deliberation outlined in the conceptual framework were in fact present in the City of Austin's 2012 bond development process.

VII. Findings

Chapter Introduction

This chapter discusses what was discovered through the process of inquiry. It identifies each of the working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses that make up the conceptual framework and discusses what was revealed about each through interviews and document analysis. The findings discussed in this chapter will enable conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of the 2012 Austin bond development process.

Appropriate Mix of Participants (WH1)

Working hypothesis 1 outlined in the conceptual framework chapter states that an effective deliberative democracy process should include an appropriate mix of participants. Three sub-hypotheses (WH1a, WH1b and WH1c) further defined an appropriate mix of participants to mean the inclusion of a representative sample of citizens, relevant authorities and a trained facilitator. Interviews and document analysis reveal that the City of Austin had limited success in achieving this appropriate mix of participants. Table 7.1 outlines the findings for each of the three WH1 sub-hypotheses.

Table 7.1- WH1 Findings

Working Sub-hypotheses	Findings
WH1a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should include representative sample of citizens.	There was <u>weak support</u> for WH1a. Efforts were made to try to get a representative sample of citizens for the community workshops, however they did not achieve it. The task force also was not representative.
WH1b: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities.	There was <u>strong support</u> for WH1b. Relevant authorities were engaged with the task force and in the community workshops.
WH1c: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include a trained and experienced facilitator.	There was <u>moderate support</u> for WH1c. The community workshop deliberations included a trained and experienced facilitator, but the task force deliberations did not.

Representative Sample (WH1a)

Since there were two ways for citizens to participate in deliberations (either as task force members or at the community workshops), there are two different groups that must be considered to determine if they are in fact representative of the Austin community at large. The task force consisted of fifteen people. Both men and women of a variety of racial backgrounds served on the task force (City of Austin 2012b). All four of the task force members that were interviewed expressed that they felt the task force membership was representative of the public at large in terms of gender, ethnic diversity and ideological beliefs. However, some members indicated that their group may not have mirrored the public in some ways.

One task force member indicated that the task force “wasn’t representative of the public at large, but it was representative of the engaged public”. The participant stated “it wasn’t going

to have true economic diversity...but I think the important thing is to have people that advocate for the needs of that part of the community...I think we had that. Our chair and co-chair both have a specific passion for low income housing, for example”, though they likely would not qualify for such housing. Another task force member stated “we probably had a shortage of people with no high school diploma or only a high school diploma, so in that regard [the task force] was probably not representative” in terms of education level. That same task force member stated that the task force membership “may not have been representative of the public at large, but it was probably representative of the voting public and it is the voters who ultimately approve or reject the bonds”. The fact that task force members differentiated between the public at large and the voting public, indicated that these task force members were aware that voter participation and public engagement is usually lower among certain segments of the population. However, the task force member’s justification of the exclusion of individuals with lower income levels or without advanced degrees from the task force showed the participant felt it was acceptable because those segments probably wouldn’t vote in the bond election anyway.

While it appears to be true that the task force members did advocate for the interests of groups to which they did not belong, the fact that the participant articulated that it was not a problem that some segments of the population were not engaged means that he likely does not understand the advantages that come from having a representative sample of citizens. Furthermore he seems to have overlooked the inclusive spirit, which is central to notion of deliberative democracy. Without the inclusion of certain segments of the Austin population the task force loses out on the situational knowledge that population could contribute. Furthermore, it is possible for Austin residents from portions of the population that were not included in the task force to view the task force’s recommendations as illegitimate because their voices were not

really heard during the deliberations that resulted in the recommendations. While several task force members indicated that the views of low-income residents and those with lower levels of education attainment were sufficiently championed by task force members, individuals from that group might question whether a person that has not had life experiences that are similar to their own, would really be in a position to advocate on their behalf.

The staff organized community workshops did show a commitment to the ideals of inclusion. They showed a conscious effort to encourage participation by all segments of the population. The four meetings were held in four different areas of town. The locations of the meetings were not only geographically diverse, they were located in neighborhoods that had demographic make ups that were different from one another (City of Austin 2012c). For example, one interview participant explained that the community meeting held on March 20, 2012 was located in the Westlake area, an area that is generally home to affluent individuals. The meeting on March 26th however was held in the Dove Springs neighborhood, which is generally populated by individuals with lower incomes. According to city staff, these locations were strategically selected to try to encourage participation among diverse groups. While figure 7.2 shows that men and women participated in the workshops in a way that was representative of the Austin community at large, figures 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5, show that despite city staff’s efforts to engage a group that is representative of the public at large, they did not manage to garner a sample that was truly representative.

Table 7.2- Gender Comparison

Gender	Workshop Participants	Austin, Texas
Female	50%	49.40%
Male	50%	50.60%

Table 7.3- Education Level Comparison

Education Level	Workshop Participants	Austin, Texas
Less than a Bachelor's Degree	29%	55.50%
Bachelor's Degree of Higher	71%	45.50%

Table 7.3- Race Comparison

Race/Ethnicity	Workshop Participants	Austin, Texas
White (non-Hispanic)	70%	48.70%
Hispanic	22%	35.10%
African-American	5%	8.10%
Asian-American	2%	6.30%

Table 7.4- Household Income Comparison⁵

	< \$24,999	\$25,000-\$49,000	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$149,000	>\$150,000
Workshop Participants	10%	25%	20%	35%	10%
Austin, TX	Median household income: \$51,596				

⁵ Sources for Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4: City of Austin (2012c) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2013).

Figure 7.3 illustrates the education attainment levels of the participants in the community workshops and in the City of Austin. As illustrated in the chart, seventy-one percent of the workshop participants had earned at least a bachelor's degree. While Austin is an unusually well-educated community, the education levels shown in the community workshops were not representative of Austin as a whole. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly forty-five percent of the adult Austin population holds a bachelor's degree or higher compared to seventy-one percent of workshop participants.

Figure 7.4 illustrates the racial/ethnic breakdown of participants in the bond development community workshops and in Austin. As evident in the chart, seventy percent of participants in the community workshops identified themselves as White. These numbers are quite high considering that census data indicates that only about forty-nine percent of Austin residents identify as White (non-Hispanic). Figure 7.4 also illustrates that only 22 percent of workshop participants were Hispanic. This number is quite a bit lower than the thirty-five percent of Austin residents that identified as a person of Hispanic or Latino origin in the 2010 census.

Figure 7.5 indicates the household incomes of participants at community workshops and the median income for the City of Austin. Sixty-five percent of the participants in the community workshops had a household income that exceeded \$50,000 annually. These percentages seem higher than what would be expected if the participants mirrored the community at large, since the 2010 census found the median household income in Austin to be \$51,596.

While city staff made an effort to encourage diverse participation at the community workshops that would mirror the community at large, it seems that they have not been able to

achieve a mix of participants that is representative of the Austin community. Furthermore, interviews revealed that while the Mayor and Council seem to have appointed an ideologically and ethnically diverse group of men and women to serve on the Bond Election Advisory Task Force, the group does not represent the educational and socioeconomic diversity that makes up the Austin general public. Analysis of the *Community Workshops & Online Survey Results March/April 2012* document and data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicated the workshops participants were on average wealthier and more educated than the community at large. There was also an under-representation of ethnic minorities at the community workshops. Therefore, it seems that the City of Austin's bond development process did not successfully involve an appropriate mix of participants.

Relevant Authorities (WH1b)

WH1b states that an appropriate mix of participants in a deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities. Deliberative democracy literature supports this claim stating that it positively impacts participation levels and leads to an increased likelihood that the deliberations will actually impact governmental decisions (Tomas 2012). In this case, City Council members ultimately made the decision regarding the makeup and funding allocation of bond package on the 2012 ballot, as a result, the task force members viewed the Council as the “relevant authorities”. City Council played an instrumental role in the task force because they established it and appointed the members that would serve on the task force. Some task force members indicated that Council was less involved once the task force was established. One task force member speculated that this was likely to prevent anyone from believing that the task force was

being directed by council on which projects to prioritize. One task force member however did indicate that he “checked in periodically with the council member that appointed [him]” and gave him “periodic updates” about how the process was going .

While council was involved in the task force, they were not directly involved in the community workshops. Their only exposure to the community workshops was when they were given the aggregated preferences along with the task force’s recommendations. However, in the case of community workshops, the most relevant authorities might not have been the city council members, but actually the task force members. This is because the public input from the community workshops was presented to the task force members who then used that information to influence their recommendations to council. Task force members also attended some of the community workshops. Several task force members that were interviewed indicated that they attended one of the four community workshops. According to a city staff member the task force was very involved in the community workshops. “I remember we first vetted the [community workshop] process with the task force”. The staff member indicated that some task force members were present at each of the community workshops - “ not all of them at all, but some of them at each”. Due to Council’s involvement in the task force and the task force’s involvement in community workshops, it seems that the City of Austin’s Bond development process did involve relevant authority figures.

Trained Facilitator (WH1c)

A city staff member indicated that the Task Force members opted not to have city staff act as a facilitator in their meetings, instead choosing to have the chair of the task force direct the meeting and its activities. A city staff member recalled “at one point we had talked about the

facilitator role and whether they wanted us to take on that role at the meetings. The chair and the rest of the task force felt that they could handle the facilitation of their meetings themselves and we would take on that role at the community workshops”. For this reason, a trained facilitator was not utilized during the task force meetings.

A facilitator was however utilized for the community workshops. This facilitator was interviewed and when asked about his training, indicated that he had a wealth of knowledge and experience both in and out of the classroom. “My training is a Master’s degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, [completion of] the University of Texas Law School’s mediation course, and [receipt of] the International Association of Public Participation training certificate. Plus sometimes I facilitate three public meetings a week and I’ve learned at least as much if not more from actually doing, as I have in the classroom”. Based on the facilitator’s extensive training and experience in the field, it is evident that a trained facilitator was involved in the community workshop deliberations; however this was not the case in the task force deliberations.

Issue Selection (WH2)

WH2 outlined in the conceptual framework chapter states that an effective deliberative exercise should involve careful selection of an appropriate issue. Three sub-hypotheses (WH2a, WH2b and WH2c) further clarified an appropriate issue to mean an issue that is high-impact, an issue that has an appropriate level of urgency and an issue that when deliberated, can realistically influence governmental actions. In comparing the bond development process to these three sub-hypotheses, it is apparent that bond development is an appropriate issue to use for a deliberative process. The interviews and the documents analyzed indicated that there was an appropriate level of urgency, that it was a high impact issue and that it could and did influence policy.

Table 7.5- WH2 Findings

Working Sub-hypotheses	Findings
<p>WH2a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue that can realistically influence policy.</p>	<p>There was strong support for WH2a. Interviews revealed that the community workshop deliberations greatly influenced the task force’s recommendations and the task force recommendations closely matched the final bond package put forth by the City Council.</p>
<p>WH2b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected, high impact issue.</p>	<p>There was strong support for WH2b. Interviews revealed that bond development is considered to be a high impact issue.</p>
<p>WH2c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue with an appropriate level of urgency.</p>	<p>There was strong support for WH2c. Interviews revealed there was an appropriate level of urgency for both the community workshop deliberations and the task force deliberations.</p>

Policy Influence (WH2a)

On June 26, 2012 the Bond Election Advisory Task Force provided their recommendations report to the Austin City Council. In their report they included two different recommendation packages: one recommendation package totaling \$575 million and one totaling \$400 million. The task force indicated in their report that in order to adequately address the needs of the City and its residents, a bond package totaling at least \$400 million in expenditures was necessary. Ultimately the City Council put forward a bond package totaling \$384,948,000 (City of Austin 2012d). In interviews some participants expressed their disappointment that a larger bond package was not put forward, but all participants felt that the task force’s recommendations played a large role in what ultimately ended up being the bond package that

City Council put forward for the November election. One task force participant stated “ I would say that we were able to get perhaps... in funding at least sixty percent of what we wanted, as far as the projects we recommended, I would say were able to get about ninety percent into what ultimately ended up on the ballot.” She provided the example of the Elisabeth Ney Museum renovations which were ultimately not funded in the amount that the task force indicated they felt was necessary, but it was a funded project.

One member of the task force however was neither surprised nor disappointed with the level of funding in the bond package council put forth for the November election. He stated “I didn’t think there was any question that the city would have had a serious problem if it tried to put out a bond package that increased taxes. We were just in that kind of [political and economic] environment”. He was pleased and felt that the task force’s \$400 million recommendation package quite closely matched what ended up on the ballot. Based on the similarities between the \$400 million recommended bond package and the bond package approved by council, it appears that the bond development process was able to and in fact did impact policy.

High Impact Issue (WH2b)

WH2b states that an effective deliberative process involves careful selection of a cost effective issue. Every person, be it a citizen participant or staff member, that was interviewed indicated that this issue was one that greatly impacted the Austin community. Ultimately the bond development process resulted in the allocation of almost \$307 million (one of the bond propositions was ultimately rejected by voters) to fund projects related to mobility and transportation improvements, provide the city with new and improved parks and libraries and

make improvements to public safety facilities throughout the community. These kinds of projects impact the quality of life for Austin residents. According to one task force member “the bond is the money we will spend on capital improvement projects over the next few years. This impacts our streets, community amenities...it has a very large impact on the community”. Based on the unanimous sentiment among interview participants that bond development greatly affects the community, it is apparent that the bond development process is in fact, a high impact issue.

Level of Urgency (WH2c)

WH2c states that an effective deliberative democracy process should involve careful selection of an issue with an appropriate level of urgency. Deliberative democracy literature indicates that a properly organized deliberative exercise takes a good deal of planning and coordination, therefore issues that require rapid resolution are not well suited for deliberation. This was a long deliberative process. The task force began meeting in December 2011 and continued to meet through May. Finally, in June the task force presented their recommendations to City Council.

The process was a long one, but it was one that most participants felt was appropriate considering the amount of discussion necessary to narrow the field of possible projects down to a realistic list and determine appropriate funding. Though the process was long, city staff began planning well in advance of the initial December meetings and therefore were able to start the deliberative process early enough to allow for a six month long deliberative process. All of the task force members that were interviewed indicated that they felt the time allotted was adequate for the task at hand. One task force member even mentioned that in the future she would recommend trying to develop the recommendations over a shorter period of time. She said, “the

process we used was good, but it was too long. I think if we have been told we had three to four months, we could have gotten it done in that amount of time”.

Since the bond development was a foreseen event and not a reaction to an unexpected urgent problem, planning in advance allowed this deliberation to be possible. Staff members were able to plan and coordinate the deliberations, council was able to recruit citizens to serve on the task force and the task force was able to meet many times and discuss their views on projects and funding allocation (City of Austin 2012 b and City of Austin 2012c). None of the interview respondents indicated that this was an issue that required an urgent response, and therefore a six month deliberative process was reasonable. The fact that an urgent response was not needed and all interview subjects indicated that they had sufficient time to deliberate indicates that the Austin Bond development process was an issue that had an appropriate level of urgency.

Deliberative Structure (WH3)

WH3 outlined in the conceptual framework chapter states that an effective deliberative exercise should utilize an appropriate deliberative structure. Three sub-hypotheses (WH3a, WH3b and WH3c) outline key components of an appropriate deliberative structure. One component is that balanced information is provided to participants. Another component is that the deliberative structure allow for consideration of various viewpoints. The third component of an effective deliberative structure is that it be structured to include technological connections to the deliberative process. As shown in Table 7.6, in this case, the information was balanced and various viewpoints were considered, however technological connections to the deliberative process should have been improved.

Table 7.6- WH3 Findings

Working Sub-hypotheses	Findings
WH3a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide participants with balanced information.	There was <u>strong support</u> for WH3a. Interview responses indicated that the background information provided to community workshop and task force participants was balanced.
WH3b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.	There was <u>strong support</u> for WH3b. It appears a variety of viewpoints were discussed and considered at the community workshops and during the task force deliberations.
WH3c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide technological connections to the deliberative process.	There was <u>weak support</u> for WH3c. While an online survey was available, it was not deliberative in nature.

Balanced Information (WH3a)

WH3a states that an effective deliberative democracy process should provide participants with balanced information. Background information was plentiful in this deliberative process. This extensive background information was necessary because the development of a recommended bond package not only requires that participants understand what a bond is, but they must also understand the specifics of the projects that could potentially be funded and how that project could affect the community. In order to gain that knowledge, participants had to consume a wealth of information provided by city staff. According to a City staff member, the citizen participants were initially provided with “more general information about what a capital improvement project is, what can be funded by the bond, what past bonds have funded, where are we in the process of implementing [previously funded projects]... basically the background

context”. City staff then provided additional information throughout the deliberations whenever participants requested it.

When asked about how they collected and phrased their background information City staff referred to section 255.003 of the Texas Election Code, which states:

“an officer or employee of a political subdivision may not spend or authorize the spending of public funds for political advertising. This section does not apply to a communication that factually describes the purposes of a measure if the communication does not advocate passage or defeat of the measure.”

According to one city staff member, the city’s legal department interpreted that section of the election code to mean that city staff cannot advocate for the passage or rejection of bond proposals or particular projects even in the bond development process. She stated “The City had to be very factual in all of our presentations to the task force... We simply stated the current conditions of the asset and the need that is there currently. It was then up to the task force to decide whether that was a priority”. Task force members agreed with this assessment of the background information stating that they felt that the information was helpful and that city staff were very neutral in the information they provided. Unlike the task force which met over the course of six months, workshop participants only met once. Therefore they received significantly less background information; however staff indicated that the same principles of neutrality were applied when developing those materials. It seems that in the Austin bond development process, participants were provided balanced information.

Consideration of Various Viewpoints (WH3b)

WH3b states that an effective deliberative democracy exercise allows for the consideration of various viewpoints. It appears that there was serious consideration of a variety

of viewpoints during the bond development deliberations. All task force participants that were interviewed indicated that they felt that there was a lot of healthy debate. They felt there were “many ideological differences amongst participants” and indicated that this was part of what made the process so time consuming. “We didn’t just show up and vote for what we thought was best, we had long discussions in which we tried to convince each other to see our point of view”.

A city staff member also commented on the consideration of various viewpoints that took place during the community workshops. The staff member stated, “we found that [during the funding allocation exercise]...people had to negotiate with their neighbors in terms of priorities. We felt that was really helpful in getting people to realize you can’t just stick with your one funding number for your project. The city has a whole breadth of projects, so hearing from those other people about their priorities was very helpful in ultimately getting to a consensus”. Since citizen participants and staff both indicated that they observed participants expressing many different views and priorities, there is an indication that the deliberative structure employed in the bond development process did allow for the consideration of various views.

Technological Connections (WH3c)

WH3c indicates that an effective deliberative democracy process should provide participants with technological connections to the deliberative process. As described earlier in the setting chapter, the City did create an online survey in which participants could indicate the areas they felt should receive the greatest allocation of funding and they could list the ten projects they felt were the most important. There was however, no deliberation occurring in this online process (City of Austin 2012c). The survey was participatory since it allowed citizens to provide their opinions and those opinions were considered by the task force as they created their

recommendations for City Council. However, since the online survey participants did not engage in discussions about their selections and justify their choices to others, they were not truly provided with a direct technological connection to the deliberative process.

The city also sent out e-blasts, which are emails that are sent to a mailing list of a large number of people, that told people about the bond development process. A city staff member stated “every e-blast we sent out, and we sent out many, drew people into the process”. The e-blasts contained links to a bond development webpage that gave background information and also advertised upcoming community workshops and ways that people could get involved. These e-blast utilized technology to promote in person deliberations, but did not provide for online deliberation. It does not seem however that any meaningful technological connections to the deliberative process were available to citizens.

Chapter Summary

Interviews of citizen participants and city staff about the deliberative process used to develop the 2012 bond package, along with document analysis revealed that the City of Austin had a deliberative process that exhibited most of the key components of an effectively deliberation that were identified in the conceptual framework chapter. However, interviews and document analysis also revealed there were some key aspects of an effective deliberation that were not evident in the City of Austin’s 2012 bond development process.

The City of Austin seems to have succeeded in some ways to involve an appropriate mix of participants, but in other ways have not. Though City staff indicated that an effort was made

to involve a sample that was reflective of the community, it appears they were ultimately not successful in involving a representative sample of citizens. The demographic makeup of participants in the deliberations appears not to mirror the demographic makeup of the city. In that sense, an appropriate mix of participants was not achieved. A trained facilitator was involved in the community workshop deliberations, but was not utilized in the task force deliberations. With regard to the task force meetings, the deliberation failed to involve an appropriate mix of participants, because a trained facilitator was not utilized in their deliberations. However, an experienced and trained facilitator was utilized for the community workshops. City Council did seem to be engaged in the task force's process and the task force in turn seemed to be very engaged in the community workshops. In terms of engaging relevant authorities, the City did succeed in involving an appropriate mix of participants in the deliberative process. It therefore seems that the Austin Bond development partially succeeded in including an appropriate mix of participants.

The City of Austin appears to have carefully selected an appropriate issue because the issue seems to possess the three characteristics of an appropriate issue outlined in WH2a, WH2b and WH2c. It is apparent that bond development is a high impact issue, appears to have had an appropriate level of urgency and the deliberations appear to have had a major impact on policy since the ultimate bond package on the ballot closely matched one of the task force's recommended packages. For these reasons, it seems that this deliberative democracy process did involve the careful selection of an appropriate issue.

For the most part, the city also appears to have employed an appropriate deliberative structure. The responses from interview subjects and the information in the two city documents analyzed indicate that participants were provided with balanced information and that there was

serious consideration of various viewpoints during the deliberative process. While it appears that the City did exhibit those two key components of an effective deliberative structure, the technological connections to the deliberative process could be improved. The online survey did not allow for deliberation and e-blasts only provided indirect connections to in-person deliberative sessions, rather than allowing for any actual online deliberation. Therefore, meaningful technological connections to deliberations were not provided. It seems that this deliberative process for the most part utilized an appropriate deliberative structure, but improvements could be made to allow for more meaningful technological connections to the deliberative process.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

Research Summary

This research sought to first identify key components of an effective deliberative process and second, explore the City of Austin's efforts at public engagement by determining whether these key components were present in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations. In the conceptual framework chapter of this study, three key features of an effective deliberative process were identified: an appropriate mix of participants, selection of an appropriate issue and the use of an effective deliberative structure. These three key features were the basis of the three working hypotheses used throughout this paper. Each of these working hypotheses was then further explained using sub-hypotheses. These working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses served as a conceptual map guiding the process of inquiry. Once the working hypotheses were identified and supported by relevant literature, they were then operationalized. Operationalizing the conceptual framework enabled the Austin Bond deliberations to be compared with the key component of an effective deliberations contained in the framework.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Figure 9.1 outlines the working hypothesis and sub-hypotheses used throughout this paper and indicates whether the research supported each working hypotheses and sub-hypotheses. In the figure you will see that recommendations are also offered, which suggest some ways that the key components of an effective deliberation could be better incorporated in future deliberations. You will see that many of the key components of an effective deliberation

were evident in the 2012 Austin Bond development process. However a few components were not evident or were not evident in all of the deliberative processes the City organized.

Figure 9.1- Summary Conceptual Framework Table

Working Hypotheses and Sub-hypotheses	Findings	Recommendations
WH1: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should include an appropriate mix of participants.	The Austin bond development process met some of the criteria of an appropriate mix of participants, but failed to meet others.	Garner a more representative sample of citizens and consider utilizing a facilitator not only for community workshops, but also for task force meetings.
WH1a: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should consist of a representative sample of citizens.	Participants in the deliberative exercise did not consist of a representative sample of citizens.	Try to engage a larger Hispanic population in future deliberations since that group seemed to be underrepresented in the community workshops and include people of different education and income levels in future task forces.
WH1b: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include relevant authorities.	Relevant authorities were included in the deliberative exercises.	Continue to involve relevant authorities.
WH1c: An appropriate mix of participants in the 2012 Austin bond development deliberative exercise should include a trained and experienced facilitator.	A trained and experienced facilitator was utilized in the community workshop deliberations but not in the task force deliberations.	Consider utilizing a trained and experienced facilitator in future task force deliberations.
WH2: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be carefully selected and an appropriate issue.	An appropriate issue was selected .	Continue to select appropriate issues for deliberation by ensuring that the issue can realistically influence policy, that the issue is a high impact issue, and that the issue has an appropriate level of urgency prior to selecting it for deliberation.

<p>WH2a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue that can realistically influence policy.</p>	<p>The deliberations could and did influence policy. The recommendations of the task force closely matched the bond package that was on the November 2012 ballot.</p>	<p>Consider whether an issue can realistically influence policy before selecting it for deliberations. Discussions with authorities about how they plan to use citizen input may provide insight into whether an issue can influence policy formation or implementation.</p>
<p>WH2b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected, high impact issue.</p>	<p>The Austin bond deliberation was a high impact issue that greatly affected the Austin community.</p>	<p>Consider how an issue will affect the community before selecting it for deliberations. If it will not greatly affect citizens, do not select it for deliberation.</p>
<p>WH2c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should be a carefully selected issue with an appropriate level of urgency.</p>	<p>The bond development process had an appropriate level of urgency.</p>	<p>Consider when action needs to be taken regarding an issue, and then consider how much time it will take to plan and execute a deliberation. If there is not enough time to properly plan and conduct the deliberation before action is needed, do not select that issue for deliberation.</p>
<p>WH3: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should utilize an appropriate deliberative structure.</p>	<p>In most ways the bond development process does utilize an appropriate deliberative structure, however it does not provide adequate technological connections to the deliberative process.</p>	<p>Continue to provide participants with balanced information at future deliberations and continue to ensure that various viewpoints are considered in deliberations. Also look into ways to improve technological connections to the deliberative process.</p>
<p>WH3a: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide participants with balanced information.</p>	<p>Balanced information was provided to participants.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that unbiased information is provided to deliberative participants.</p>
<p>WH3b: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.</p>	<p>The bond development process did allow for serious consideration of various viewpoints.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that participants are encouraged to express viewpoints that differ from others.</p>
<p>WH3c: As an effective deliberative democracy process, the 2012 Austin bond development process should provide technological connections to the deliberative process.</p>	<p>The bond development process did not provide direct connections to the deliberative process.</p>	<p>Create online spaces for public deliberation rather than simply providing an online surveys and information about in person deliberative exercises.</p>

Final Recommendations

The City of Austin conducted an extensive deliberative process and did so quite well. While their deliberative exercises might not have exemplified all of the identified components of an effective deliberation, many of the elements were present. Furthermore, while some participants indicated that they would recommend minor changes to the process in the future, all of the participants felt that the deliberations were effective and worthwhile. The positive feedback from participants is clear sign that the City of Austin did a good job in coordination these deliberations.

Though the City of Austin did well in the coordination of the 2012 Bond development deliberations, there are some areas in which they could improve. When coordinating deliberations in the future, Austin should look for ways to exemplify all of the elements of an effective deliberative process that were outlined in the conceptual framework. This study found that the 2012 Austin bond development deliberations did not include a representative sample of citizens. In the future the city staff would be advised to try to foster increased participation among Hispanic residents at future community workshops, since that group was underrepresented in the 2012 deliberations. City council should also try to include some participants in the task force that are low-income and that do not have advanced degrees in order to have a sample that more closely mirrors the public at large.

Future task forces should utilize the trained and experienced facilitator that facilitated the community workshops. The task force had access to a professional with extensive training and experience in the art of effectively facilitating public meetings of this nature and did not utilize his services. His involvement might have expedited process and led to a shorter more efficient

development process. Finally, future deliberations should include a technological connection to the deliberative process. Instead of simply offering an online survey, which does not allow for any meaningful deliberation amongst participants, an open public online forum should be created that can allow participants to discuss their viewpoints and justify their position. If the City of Austin is successful in implementing the recommended changes in future deliberations, they will have a deliberative process that exemplifies the key components of an effective deliberative democracy established in this study.

Appendix A

Consent Form

“City of Austin 2012 Bond Development Process”

My name is Kimberly Painter. I am a graduate student in the Public Administration program at Texas State University at San Marcos. This study is part of my Applied Research Project, which is required for the Master of Public Administration degree. The purpose of this phase of the research is to explore the deliberative process used to develop Austin’s 2012 Bond referenda. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your participation in that deliberative process. Should you have any questions, or if you wish to have a summary of the research findings upon completion of the study, I can be contacted at (713) 822-6848 or kp1369@txstate.edu.

Participation in an interview is entirely voluntary. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to discuss your experience during the public deliberations to develop Austin’s 2012 bond referenda. If participating, you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer. Interview times fluctuate, but the entire process is estimated to take 45 to 60 minutes.

The results of interviews will remain confidential. While your role in deliberations (organizer, facilitator or citizen participant) might be mentioned in the research write up, your identity will not be revealed without your express consent. The only individuals that will access to participants’ names will be the researcher (Kimberly Painter) and her Faculty Advisor (Dr. Patricia Shields).

If you consent, the audio from this session will be recorded. If you consent to audio recording of your participation in this session, please initial here _____. If you do not consent, please inform me, and the session will not be recorded. Recordings will be kept on the researcher’s computer for a period of one year, after which time, the recordings will be deleted.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Texas State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

This study is not funded. Participants will not receive any monetary or other compensation for their time. However recommendations on ways to improve future deliberations will be provided to the City of Austin, and therefore your participation has the potential benefit of positively impacting the City in the future.

This research focuses solely on the 2012 Austin bond development process and participants will only be asked their name and questions pertaining to the bond development process. Therefore, there is very little risk involved in participating in this study.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, you may

contact me at 713-822-6848. Additionally, you may contact my research advisor, Dr. Patricia Shields, at 512-245-3256. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Texas State Institutional Review Board. The Institutional Review Board is a group of people that provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may access the IRB website at <http://www.txstate.edu/research/orc/humans-in-research.html>.

This project [2013W6120] was approved by the Texas State IRB on February 14, 2013. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413-lasser@txstate.edu) and to Becky Northcut, Director, Research Integrity & Compliance (512-245-2314-bnorthcut@txstate.edu).

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form, should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B

Reply Reply All Forward 

Exemption Request EXP2013L4697 - Approval

AVPR IRB [ospirb@txstate.edu]

To: Painter, Kimberly N

Wednesday, February 13, 2013 2:31

- You forwarded this message on 2/14/2013 8:53 AM.

Based on the information in IRB Exemption Request EXP2013L4697 which you submitted on 01/25/13 22:12:47, your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

If you have questions, please submit an IRB Inquiry form:

http://www.txstate.edu/research/irb/irb_inquiry.html

Comments:
No comments.

=====

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research Compliance
Texas State University-San Marcos
(ph) 512/245-2314 / (fax) 512/245-3847 / ospirb@txstate.edu / JCK 489

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