A Comparative Analysis of Participatory Governance: The City of Atlanta and Neighboring Cobb County, Georgia

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the experiences of citizens who regularly participate in the planning and zoning processes of their respective local governments. Atlanta has had a highly structured system of neighborhood government in place for over 35 years, called Neighborhood Planning Units. Enacted by Atlanta’s first African-American Mayor, NPUs were meant to facilitate the civic engagement of all neighborhoods, regardless of socioeconomic status. The role and boundaries of NPUs are codified in the City Charter. Unincorporated Cobb County, Georgia is a large, urbanizing-but-still-suburban county north of the city. Cobb does not officially recognize community boundaries nor is there a codified neighborhood government structure in place. By comparing the two systems of governance, this thesis will examine which best facilitates participation and whether respondents feel efficacious as they engage with their local government. The findings matter because citizen participation is generally deemed a desirable and even necessary element of modern, representative democracy.

INDEX WORDS: Participation, Civic engagement, Neighborhoods, NPU, Governance, Cobb County
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE: THE CITY OF ATLANTA
AND NEIGHBORING COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA

by

CAROL J. BROWN

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DEDICATION

To those in the community who believed in me and in our combined ability to make a difference.

Sincere thanks to friends who supported me through some very dark days, especially Beverly McMurray, Ken Dixon, Gabrielle Callahan, Linda Lane and Wendell Wood. I could not have gone the distance without their help.

And to the memory of colleagues

Hilda Ward Towery

Patricia Wegener
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I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to engage in community activism concurrent with a graduate program in urban geography. Our region would benefit greatly if many more had that chance.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The importance of citizen participation in the civic and political life of the democratic state was debated by Aristotle, Rousseau, by Thomas Jefferson and Madison and is still subject to debate in the present era. In Athens, considered the birthplace of democracy, participation by those considered citizens was seen as a duty and civic virtue (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E.). Jefferson, among the most radical of America’s founders (Hart 2002), pressed for a sharing of powers among the national, state, county and local levels at the end of his presidency. Jefferson’s later view of federal government embraced the idea of widespread participation: “And the whole is cemented by giving to every citizen, personally, a part in the administration of the public affairs” (Jefferson, 1816 ME 15:38). Self-government at the local level would take place in a “ward republic” (Barber 1984; Hart 2002). Today, the global value of civic engagement is recognized by the United Nations in a policy statement, part of the Agenda for Development: “Participation is an essential component of successful and lasting development. It contributes to equity by involving people living in poverty and other groups in planning and implementation.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, addressing the Community of Democracies in Krakow, Poland in 2010, focused on the role of civil society in strengthening democracy. “These three essential elements of a free nation -- representative government, a well-functioning market, and civil society -- work like three legs of a stool… Societies move forward when the citizens that make up these (civil society) groups are empowered to transform common interests into common actions that serve the common good.”

Participation by the public in civic life and political processes has been uneven over the course of American history. Contemporary social science author Robert D. Putnam addressed national concern at

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2 Remarks by Secretary Clinton, July 2010, at the Community of Democracies, Krakow, Poland “Civil Society: Supporting Democracy in the 21st Century”
the decline of social capital and involvement by citizens in American civil society, following the 1970’s (Putnam 2001). But during the period of social unrest of the late 1960s, a federal policy that mandated “widespread citizen participation” for poor, inner city residents in urban renewal planning, laid the framework for fundamental change in the power relations of citizens to their local government (Parlow 2008). The “maximum feasible participation” mandate sparked debate over the merits and challenges of increased participation. The validity of the policy was questioned by Daniel P. Moynihan who authored Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty, in 1969. Moynihan cited several reasons for his opposition to participation and community action: he felt that it was an idea imposed by bureaucrats who were not following the intent of Congress. He also felt that by raising expectations that could not be met, civil unrest and riots would be ignited. Perhaps his most controversial reason for opposing participation by low-income stakeholders is that he felt they lacked the capacity to participate in governance (Berry, et al 1985). The discourse on inclusive versus limited participation continued a thread reaching back to America’s founding, and to the ancient Greek city-states.

Since the early 1970s local governments have expanded opportunities for participation in large American cities and in other western industrialized countries (Schmid, H, 2001). One example of this is creation of government sub-structures known as neighborhood or community councils. Allowing residents to engage at the neighborhood level, this form of citizen participation has gradually become accepted as one of the components of urban governance (for a partial listing of neighborhood government structures in the U.S. see Appendix A page 60). The American Planning Association has recognized the importance of citizen participation, stating: “Planning is a collective activity and it involves issues in which citizens have a large emotional stake” (Levy 2000). If citizen participation in public affairs is deemed important, it is important to examine the processes that local governments have put in place to engage citizens. Why does it matter? We live in a representative democracy and local
government is closest to the people. If citizen participation is not welcomed or if the local government is unresponsive, then democracy at the local level is failing the people it is meant to represent. A study by Docherty, Goodlad and Paddison suggested: “Citizen Participation can be fostered as much by the creation of opportunity structures that build confidence in the efficacy of participation as by the intrinsic levels of civic culture” (Docherty et al, 2001 p 2246). They conclude that such efforts are not wasted. However, there is debate among academics as to the level of efficacy achieved by citizens trying to engage in the process. Arguing from the Left, some scholars have been critical of the procedural structures and questioned their utility in producing substantive and just outcomes for communities. Harvard professor and planner Susan Fainstein notes the differences between deliberative theorists Iris Marion Young (Inclusion and Democracy 2000) and Jurgen Habermas (Three Normative Models of Democracy 1994) who equate an open, deliberative and inclusive process with democracy, versus the just city theorists Edward Soja (Seeking Spatial Justice 2010) and Susan Fainstein (The Just City 2010) for whom an equitable outcome is the only valid result in urban planning (Fainstein 2010).

In the 1993 book *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*, Berry, Portney and Thomson report on their comprehensive study of five American cities with participatory structures in place. They conducted thousands of interviews in five core cities and ten comparison cities. It remains the largest research project to have closely examined the efficacy of neighborhood government structures in the U.S. In 1999, the voters of Los Angeles adopted a Neighborhood Council form of government along with the new City Charter and researchers at the University of Southern California Urban Initiative, led by Juliet Musso, PhD, are examining the composition and functionality of the councils. Drawing from an interdisciplinary body of knowledge, the literature review examines the philosophical and legal underpinnings of citizen participation; outlines the history of the neighborhood movement and explores

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3 A recent policy brief has been published and is included in the literature review presented in Chapter 2, subheading Critiques of Citizen Participation in Urban Governance, page 17
the critique of neighborhood government and participation some forty years after the federal mandate for “widespread citizen participation”. Against this framework the qualitative research project uses semi-structured interviews, a survey and archival data to compare two contiguous but very different local governments and their approach to governance. The thesis compares Atlanta’s Neighborhood Planning Unit system to the informal governance arrangements in Unincorporated Cobb County. My personal interest is that of an activist and academic, having spent eight years in community activism in Cobb County. That background facilitated interviews with others who engage in neighborhood issues. I have chosen to present the comments of the respondents in tabular form, allowing them to respond to questions in their own voice. While they are heard often by their respective local governments, their voices are largely silent in the academic literature on participation. Their responses can be found in text and in tabular form in Appendix B, page 62.

This thesis explores the degree to which neighborhood government structures are useful for the citizens who engage in community planning and zoning issues on a regular basis. I also examine whether the absence of a formal structure raises barriers to participation and whether the two groups of respondents feel efficacious in their civic engagement. The important questions of equity and just distribution are addressed only briefly and in a peripheral way in this thesis. More closely examined is the value and quality of process. This paper argues that for the relatively small group of citizens who make the time to get involved in neighborhood issues and engage on a regular basis, procedure and defined boundaries are important. While there is valid criticism about the extent of public participation in neighborhood councils, the tendency of some academics to dismiss them as NIMBYs or because many are middle class (Fainstein 2010 p 32), is shortsighted. Clarence Stone’s landmark study of Atlanta (Stone 1989) provided evidence that the needs of working class and poor neighborhoods were overlooked by the urban regime of elites and the local government. While neighborhood participation is not a panacea for all urban problems, the inclusion of average citizens in a governing coalition can
sometimes lead to beneficial outcomes for the entire community. Participant responses to this research as well as archival data document positive community impacts that have resulted from neighborhood-level participation.

CHAPTER 2 - CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Historical and Theoretical Underpinnings of Citizen Participation

We will ever strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many; We will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty; We will revere and obey the city’s laws; We will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us. - City of Athens Oath of Citizenship

Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet- Justinian’s Codex of 531

“Government of the people, by the people, for the people”

appears to be more symbolic than substantive. In America today, the government seems captured by rent-seeking interest groups (Parlow 2008) and the rites of citizenship are exercised by voting, often by only a minority of the population. The focus of our republic has become centered on individual rights and economic freedom (Dagger 1997, Sandel 1996, Barber 1984, Parlow 2008). In our representative form of government and in liberal democracy that is deemed to be enough (Habermas 1994, Carey 1989, Manin 1997) but some political theorists and philosophers believe that civic life and strong democracy requires more from its citizens. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and primary advocate for the Bill of Rights, believed along with Aristotle that individuals were not complete without participation in the civic life of the state (Hart G. 2002).

Differing iterations on the centrality of participation in a democracy continue to be heard from modern theorists including Benjamin Barber, Iris Marion Young, and Jurgen Habermas. What is the proper role of citizens in relation to their government? What are the duties and limits of citizenship in a democracy?

Lincoln, A., Gettysburg Address
The concept of participation is central to democracy, “demos” and “kratein” meaning rule by the people, or the people should rule. Democracy was born in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens and was a direct democracy; rule-making and voting were done by those citizens who were assembled at the Ekklesia. Citizenship, and therefore participation, was limited to males and also excluded children and slaves. In Principles of Representation, Bernard Manin points out that the Assembly was considered to be democratic because any citizen who wanted to attend or speak could do so, not because all citizens were present (Manin 1997). Leadership was achieved in an egalitarian way through use of the lot rather than elections to select citizens to serve as Magistrates. These posts were limited to one term of service (Manin 1997). Reflecting on the democracy around him, Aristotle felt that life within a city-state had a civilizing effect on individuals and that communities were established for the common good. He stated “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature and that man is by nature a political animal” (1253a2-7). Aristotle defined citizenship: “He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that state; and speaking generally a state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life” (Politics, Book III 350 B.C.E). Participation by many citizens seemed wise to Aristotle, “For each individual among the many has a share of virtue and prudence, and when they meet together, they become in a manner, one man” (ibid). Those who did participate fully in government were expected to balance the rights of citizenship with its duties and were expected to know how to rule and how to obey. These citizens were said to possess civic virtue.

Athens had a constitution. From part VII of Politics Book 3:

The words constitution and government have the same meaning, and the government, which is the supreme authority in states, must be in the hands of one, or of a few or of the many. The true forms of government, therefore, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, are
perversions. For the members of the state, if they are truly citizens ought to participate in its advantages.

For Aristotle however, government by citizens was ideally by a stable and educated middle class, rather than by many poor people. He felt that a polity, rather than democracy was the ideal form of government. Athenian democracy came to an end in 322 BC and while there were some small-scale instances of self-government in republics, the concept of democracy would not be debated until after the American Revolution nearly 2,000 years later (Manin 1997).

Like citizen participation, ‘consent of the governed’ is another concept that is central to democracy. It also has an ancient lineage, dating back to the Roman republic. “Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet”, which translates as “What touches all should be considered and approved by all” (Manin, p.87, 1997 citing Justinian’s Codex of 531). Manin traces the historical use of this concept from the early English Parliament to its currently understood role as the legitimating source of power, via the elections process.

Nearly 2,000 years after the fall of Athens, the founders of the new American republic began the process of building a legal and political framework for the new nation. It would take them into uncharted territory. The founders and framers of the constitution had different political and philosophical views but it was accepted by those supporting a national government that trying to govern under the Articles of Confederation was having limited success. The principal framers of the new Constitution, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, published a series of 85 white papers summarizing their collective rationale for the document they had written. The essays, published between October 1787 and May 1788 were known as the Federalist Papers, and the author was “Publius”, mostly the writing of Madison (Carey 1989). These are widely regarded as key to understanding the intent of the framers in drafting the Constitution.
Those supporting a strong national government, the Federalists, included Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. While they feared creation of a new monarchy, the Federalists had an equal fear of direct democracy and mob rule; particularly as it related to factions. In Federalist 9, Publius made negative reference to the “petty republic of Greece” and its unstable democratic rule (Carey 1989). Both Manin and Carey have referenced the negative effect that Shays Rebellion in Massachusetts, 1786 had on the framers as they contemplated democracy. The armed protest by farmers, angry at punitive fiscal policies, shut down the courts for several months to stop tax hearings (Manin 1997, Carey 1989). This reinforced the framer’s fears about the potential for mob rule that could occur in a direct democracy. Neither Madison nor Hamilton considered the new nation to be a democracy; it was called a republic by the founding citizens. The Representatives were to be elected by the people and decisions about governing would be made by this wise and virtuous group of men who were part of a “natural aristocracy” (Manin 1997). At the time the Constitution was being drafted, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and primary advocate for the Bill of Rights, was stationed in France as a Minister of the new government. His exposition of republicanism or democracy at the local level would come some quarter century after the Constitution was ratified; too late to be included as part of the federal structure (Hart, G 2002). The new Constitution was adopted September 17, 1787, after Jefferson and several states insisted on the inclusion of a Bill of Rights to protect state and individual liberties. The Constitution incorporated the new concept of representation, an extended republic, a strong national government, but with popular sovereignty residing with the people. A horizontal system of checks and balances included the separation of the powers of the executive, legislative and judicial branch, and the vertical allocation of power, known as federalism, that included sharing of power between the state and national government (Carey 1989). Madison had taken the historical definition of republicanism, which meant popular rule or democracy of the type found in small republics; and changed its meaning to define the new hybrid being created, an “extended republic” where elected
representatives expressed the will of the people. Jefferson did not fully develop his ward republic concept until he had completed his Presidency, when he was in his 70s (Hart 2002). His vision of participation at the local or ward level also included elected representation at higher levels of government. He felt that individual rights were best guaranteed by the duty of citizenship and participation. The townships of New England were a close match for his vision (Hart 2002). Jefferson in his own words: "There are two subjects, indeed, which I shall claim a right to further as long as I breathe: the public education, and the sub-division of counties into wards. I consider the continuance of republican government as absolutely hanging on these two hooks" (Thomas Jefferson to Joseph C. Cabell, 1814. ME 14:84). In other correspondence he elaborated further:

"Divide the counties into wards of such size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person. Ascribe to them the government of their wards in all things relating to themselves exclusively. A justice chosen by themselves, in each a constable, a military company, a patrol, a school, the care of their own poor, their own portion of the public roads, the choice of one or more jurors to serve in some court, and the delivery within their own wards of their own votes for all elective officers of higher sphere, will relieve the county administration of nearly all its business, will have it better done, and by making every citizen an acting member of the government, and in the offices nearest and most interesting to him, will attach him by his strongest feelings to the independence of his country and its republican Constitution." --Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, 1816. ME 15:37

While the rebirth of democracy had waited for nearly 2,000 years, the new constitution drafted by Madison and Hamilton ensured that it would wait another 150 years before its renewal in “Maximum Feasible Participation”. Other than voting, there is no prescribed role in the Constitution for
government by the people. This was partly the vision of Alexander Hamilton (Hart 2002; Carey 1989). The hybrid form of government with its Constitution, checks and balances and judicial system was meant to preserve liberty, while the concept of popular sovereignty was a nod to republican democracy. This duality has enabled a dialectical process of social and political change over the years, accompanied by swings between a focus on the common good and individual liberties.

Many threads of discourse can be seen in the fabric of American democracy as it exists today. Communitarians find that the narrow focus on individual rights and economic interests, characteristic of liberal democracy, has undermined citizenship and the commonweal (Sandel 1996). This thread is relatively modern, a response to the shortcomings of our representative democracy and increasing apathy of the public. Charles Tiebout (1956) saw citizens as consumers in a marketplace, seeking communities that would satisfy their individual needs. If citizens did not engage it reflected contentment with the status quo rather than apathy (Parlow 2008). Dagger and Parlow argue that the market-based view of citizens-as-consumers undermines citizenship in democracy by removing the need for citizens to engage in the civil or political sphere (Dagger 1997; Parlow 2008). While democracy has proven malleable enough over time to include women and other previously disenfranchised populations, our political system still seems to privilege the wealthy and well-educated (Manin 1997 p 133, 140, 144).

Inclusion is one proposal to remedy the democratic deficits of our aggregative election process (Young 2000). The aggregative model, synonymous with American politics, determines which policies and political figures appeal to the greatest number of people, and then through marketing and political campaigns, opposing political parties engage in competition to win elections and enact policy. The winner is deemed to have satisfied the largest percentage of the population (Young, pp 19-20, 2000). Iris Marion Young advances the model of deliberative democracy as the most feasible way to improve our representative form of government. The deliberative model proposes four criteria for stronger
democracy: wider inclusion, political equality, reasonableness and publicity (Young 2000). Young uses the historical precedent of Q.O.T. (Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet) to underscore the value of inclusion in decision-making processes: if a democracy fails to solicit the opinion of those affected by a given policy it lacks legitimacy (5, 6). Political equality ensures that all populations have equal opportunity to be included in decision making processes if they so desire and to be equally valued (Young 2000).

Increasing opportunities for participation by citizens is proposed by Benjamin Barber as a way to bolster our thin democracy (Barber 1984). Barber argues that “from the perspective of strong democracy, participation and community are aspects of one single mode of social being: citizenship” (Barber 1984 p 155). The moral and redemptive nature of participation is implied in the term civic virtue; a state of personal enrichment resulting from the exercise of duty, responsibility and consideration of community (Dagger 1997). Participation is seen as transformative for citizens; in group deliberations the individual moves beyond purely personal objectives to understand the needs of others (Hart D. 1972; Dagger 1997; Young 2000). A recurring question is whether broad participation is realistic or desirable (Sandel 1996, Fainstein 2010). Even if more opportunities are made available for participation, not everyone will choose to get involved (Taylor 2000). Those advocating for and against greater participation acknowledge that not all citizens will want to spend leisure time attending civic or political meetings (Young 2000; Fainstein 2010; Hart D. 1972). Participation is also viewed as a way to improve our representative form of democracy by reshaping the power relations between average citizens, elites and the government (Parlow 2008; Hart, D. 1972).

**Participation as a Check and Balance on Urban Regimes and Growth Machines**

Clarence Stone and Harvey Molotch address regime theory and governing coalitions in Urban Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1988 (Stone 1989) and City as a Growth Machine (Molotch 1976). For Molotch, urban areas represented the “expression of the interests of some land-based elite”
(Molotch 1976 p 309). These elites constantly seek to increase the value of their properties by working with local government and local institutions (media and universities) to promote growth. Elites develop land to increase its exchange value, which can cause conflict with those who occupy land and appreciate it for its use value (Molotch 1976). The power relations between land-based elites and the local government are such that the profits from development are privatized, but the costs to attract and support development are socialized. Molotch saw a counter-coalition in the anti-growth sentiment that began to emerge in the 1970s, but he felt its best chance for success would occur “with a leisured and sophisticated middle class with a tradition of broad-based activism” (Molotch 1976 p 327). Those citizens tended to value their community for its quality of life and not as “an exploitable resource”.

Without the countervailing balance of citizen coalitions, the dynamic of power relations between land-based elites and government leads to the kind of investor prerogative and spatial injustice Stone describes (Stone 1989). A pattern of negotiated settlements and reciprocity was established prior and subsequent to WWII between middle and upper class blacks, Atlanta City Hall and the business elite. The losers in Atlanta’s urban regime were Atlanta’s poor and the white working class. As Stone describes it, the black elite ignored the process of urban renewal as it displaced low income residents while the business elite was able to pursue their goal of downtown redevelopment. Atlanta’s privileging of “Investor Prerogative” or unbridled capitalism, resulted in neglect of historic preservation, displacement of viable low-income neighborhoods and a jobs-housing mismatch for the region’s inner city poor (Stone 1989 p 204).

Stone also outlines the creation of Atlanta’s Neighborhood Planning Units during the Jackson administration. He critiques the NPU efficacy in a contestation with the Department of Transportation over two major roads and other development issues and concluded that they were not effective. At the time the book was published, neighborhood-based coalitions had been unsuccessful in stopping the Stone Mountain Freeway. Ultimately the neighborhoods did prevail and the planned Stone Mountain
Freeway became Freedom Parkway, an at-grade roadway with bike lanes and multi-use trails. The parkway leads to the Carter Center and leaves historic neighborhoods intact which would not have been the case if the freeways had been built as planned. Jackson’s effort to empower citizens at the neighborhood level appeared to require time for the system to mature. Today they are an accepted part of Atlanta’s urban governance (Interview with City planners).

**Legal Underpinning for Citizen Participation**

The historical precedent, *Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* or “That which touches all must be considered and approved by all”, can be seen in the practice and procedures of planners and the state to solicit community input on issues that will affect them, their property or their “quiet enjoyment” of the same. The influence of the QOT concept can be seen in the participation requirements in Model Cities, described below.

The legal underpinning for citizen participation in planning initiatives began during the Lyndon Johnson administration and was linked to the Model Cities program. The federal mandate addressed more completely in the following section, was designed to create opportunities for residents of low income neighborhoods to participate in discussion of plans that would impact their community (Berry et al 1993). Even though Model Cities ended in 1974, the Department of Housing and Urban Development still requires local and municipal governments who receive federal funds through HUD, to file a Citizen Participation Plan.

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 established the requirement for municipalities to engage in periodic development of a Comprehensive Plan. In Georgia, the mandate for citizen participation in planning is enumerated in the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Rules/ Chapter 110-12-1, Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning. Chapter 110-12-1-04; Community Participation Program: “The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to ensure that the
local comprehensive plan reflects the full range of community values and desires by involving a
diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the Community Agenda.”

Further basis for citizen participation is implied in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, 36-66-4, Zoning Procedures; Hearings on proposed zoning decisions and notice of hearing. These procedures guarantee the public the right to give input on a decision that may affect their property or the community. Local Planning Commissions and elected officials will have Zoning and Land Use Hearing Procedures that address rules for public participation at Board Meetings. These standards can be minimal, but if they are violated, it deprives the public of due process, a constitutional right. Atlanta’s Neighborhood Planning Units, codified in the City Charter, goes well beyond the minimal guarantees listed above, and the purely voluntary opportunities for participation available in most other Georgia counties and municipalities. Atlanta’s NPU system is discussed in Chapter 3.

A Brief History of the Neighborhood Participation Movement

The discourse on citizen participation was renewed in the era of social change in the 1960’s. Protest movements called on government to extend opportunity to women and minorities, to respect diversity and to expand democracy. The impetus for “maximum feasible” or “widespread citizen participation” originated in Lyndon Johnson’s Model Cities Program (1966-1974) and the Community Action Program, components of the administration’s Great Society legislation (Leighninger, 2008, Parlow 2008, Cunningham, 1972, Berry et al 1993). Urban Renewal had been underway in the nation’s cities for years, enabled by the Housing Act of 1949 and Title 1 Funds. America’s large cities were steadily losing their middle class citizens to new suburban development; it was hoped that urban renewal would make the city competitive and a more attractive place to live. The residents of poor, inner city neighborhoods were displaced and traumatized by the government program created to revitalize cities and improve the quality of low income housing. In many cases, urban renewal was so sweeping in its effect it was referred to as “Negro Removal” (Domhoff, G.W, 2005). The high rise
structures that replaced shabby but thriving poor neighborhoods were modernist designs inspired by European architect “Le Corbusier”. They lacked the appeal of the old neighborhoods and many of the previous residents never returned to occupy the new housing. Urban renewal proceeded quickly, due to the approach of New York’s Robert Moses, Director of the Committee on Slum Clearance. Residents in the path of redevelopment were given eviction notices with only 90 days to move (Flint, A. 2009). Accordingly, the new directive of the Model Cities Program was to give residents of these communities the opportunity to give input on the pending developments (Kloman, 1972, Boone 1972). While the dialog of participation was meant to include a range of issues, at core it was tied to planning and redevelopment. Ultimately, the participation plan was deemed less than successful in low income areas (Aleshire 1972, Berry et al 1993, Parlow 2008). The hoped for levels of participation by the poor did not materialize; but recognition by the state of the importance of “neighborhood” to residents, and the desirability of engaging them as stakeholders in decisions that would directly affect them, would lay the foundation for neighborhood governance.

Four decades later, opportunities for citizens to engage in the planning and decision making processes of their local government have expanded into varied and complex governance structures across the United States (Berry et al, 1993, Parlow 2008, Box & Musso 1994, Leighninger 2008). Various types of formalized governance structures are also present in Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Japan, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Norway and Israel. (Schmid, H., 2001)⁵

**Defining Community through Scale and Boundaries**

"As Cato, then concluded every speech with the words, 'Cathago delenda est,' so do I every opinion with the injunction, 'divide the counties into wards.'" --Thomas Jefferson to Joseph C. Cabell, 1816 ME 14:423

Since the inception of federal mandates for “maximum feasible participation” American cities have created a framework for citizen participation with a system of neighborhood councils. Decentralization

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⁵ A partial listing of neighborhood government structures in the US can be seen in Appendix A page 60.
has been a necessary step in the process of enabling greater citizen input. A criticism made of city planners in the era of urban renewal was that their claimed neutrality and technical competence, permitting them to make unbiased decisions about distribution of facilities and infrastructure was not accurate. In fact, they usually worked on behalf of elites (Fainstein & Fainstein 1976). In large cities like New York, moving planners and other administrators from the central city to the neighborhoods was intended to make the bureaucracy more effective, responsive and accountable. The delegation of authority to local agencies enabled them to receive input from citizens on issues affecting the community, this was believed to create a more just and participatory process (Hart D 1972; Fainstein & Fainstein 1976). Delegation of power to a substructure of government is also consistent with American Federalism (Parlow 2008).

The optimum scale of civic and political jurisdictions is a related discourse dating back to the ancients. A theme common to proponents of participation is that smaller communities tend to be more effective in fostering civic engagement; research by Putnam and others supports this claim (Putnam 2001).

Thomas Jefferson envisioned a division of government that would permit full participation by all citizens:

"We should thus marshal our government into, 1. the general federal republic, for all concerns foreign and federal; 2. that of the State, for what relates to our own citizens exclusively; 3. the county republics, for the duties and concerns of the county; and 4. the ward republics, for the small and yet numerous and interesting concerns of the neighborhood; and in government, as well as in every other business of life, it is by division and subdivision of duties alone, that all matters, great and small, can be managed to perfection. And the whole is cemented by giving to every citizen, personally, a part in the administration of the public affairs." --Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, 1816 ME 15:38
"These wards, called townships in New England, are the vital principle of their governments and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government and for its preservation." -- Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, 1816 ME 15:38

Contemporary discourse on the scale best suited to foster civic engagement makes the following observations: Groups of people who form neighborhoods are likely to share a history, similar values and concerns and these communal bonds will increase the chances that these citizens will care about local policies (Parlow 2008). The size of a metropolitan area tends to increase anonymity and pursuit of purely personal, rather than community interests (Dagger 1997). The problematic of regional government versus local municipalities is summarized briefly: Regional governments can more effectively address the overarching concerns of transportation, air quality, water and distribution of facilities. However, citizens feel “lost” and irrelevant in a government of this size; and feel that their participation would be pointless (Fainstein & Fainstein 1976). Dagger (1997) cites research suggesting that the optimal size of a polity is 25,000 people or less. This size could be replicated in a metropolis through adoption of neighborhood and community scale substructures, designed to foster citizen participation.

A feature common to most of the neighborhood governance structures is that boundaries are defined, often by the neighborhoods with assistance from planners, and they are recognized by the state. Geographers, planners and other public administrators recognize the importance of maps and districts for many applications. In the modern administrative state, use of districts includes voting precincts, police precincts, watershed districts, and school districts, to name the most important. Efficient delivery of services would not be possible without boundaries, and the public would experience confusion as
well. Critical Cartography has explored the power relations implicit in maps (Crampton 2001). If a local government recognizes the “area” of one neighborhood organization at the expense of another or if claimed boundaries overlap, the result is likely to be confusing and disempowering for the marginalized neighborhoods.

Critiques of Citizen Participation in Urban Governance

Urban Geographers including Roy, Martin, Elwood and Swyngedouw have examined civil society and participation within the context of neoliberal urban governance. The devolution of power to third sector agencies and public-private partnerships has often been characterized in a negative light, specifically regarding the shift of responsibility for service provision from the state to non-profit organizations. The focus of this thesis is on the participation of citizens in community/neighborhood based associations, acting in the public sphere. Therefore, literature examining other facets of civil society will not be reviewed in this thesis.

Critical assessments have been made of participatory processes by geographers arguing from the Left. In his account of the New Century visioning collaborative in Lexington Kentucky, McCann concluded that the process was little more than a pro forma exercise designed by elites to achieve a desired outcome and get buy-in from an unsuspecting public (McCann 2001). Swyngedouw (2004) argues that new forms of governance-beyond-the-state, billed as inclusive and empowering, actually add up to a democratic deficit, due to the eroding forces of the market, which is the controlling factor. Part of the problematic with studies like these is that they focus on an isolated event and are not examining the functionality or strength of community associations over a period of months or years.

In her research on community associations in the UK, Marilyn Taylor found that “the consensus of successive studies of community involvement is that communities have, by and large, remained on
the margins of power in most partnership programmes” (Taylor 2000 p 1022). She noted that “widespread involvement is needed to put issues on the agenda” “to generate the ideas that can achieve change”, “But the core work of partnership is likely to be confined to the few” (1028). Even with the challenges posed by facilitating community involvement, Taylor notes that those “excluded communities” who often rely on public service provision should have opportunities to engage. “Their only route to influence is to have a say” (1029). Taylor cites another important reason for the local government to bring communities into the planning process: “Local people know most about local conditions” (1029). A study by Docherty and Goodlad et al, notes: “citizen participation can be fostered as much by the creation of opportunity structures that build confidence in the efficacy of participation as by the intrinsic levels of civic culture” (2246). They conclude that such efforts are not wasted (Docherty et al, 2001).

Harvard University planning professor Susan Fainstein's openness to decentralization and participation has shifted dramatically since an article written with Norman Fainstein in 1976; Local Control as Social Reform: Planning for Big Cities in the Seventies (Fainstein; Fainstein 2010, JAPA 42:3, 275). In her recent book The Just City (2010), her focus is on justice as equity and on implementing outcomes, rather than focusing on procedure. The utility of deliberation as a means to equitable outcomes is discounted, and Fainstein is quite negative about the usefulness of citizen participation structures. Her characterization is that participation is rarely transformative, is limited to small-scale improvement programs, offers recognition but not redistribution, and is primarily a vehicle for middle-class interests. Fainstein’s remedy for equity and justice in the city appears to return to Davidoff’s concept of Advocacy Planning and state intervention in the deliberative process when needed. Her wish is to change the discourse of planners from economic development to social equity. Fainstein grudgingly concedes that participation has increased the democracy of decision-making
through recognition and inclusion but unlike deliberative or participatory political theorists, does not place a premium on their utility in creating a just city.

A more positive account of citizen engagement is related by Martin (2004). The article examines a land use controversy in Athens-Clark County, Georgia and tracks the progress of negotiations between a neighborhood organization (CHN), the local government and the Athens Regional Medical Center (ARMC) authority, a quasi-public entity. The author frames the dispute as a typical use value (neighborhoods) versus exchange value (corporate entity) conflict. By waging a skillful media campaign, the neighborhood group was able to force a compromise with the hospital authority, mitigate the impact of the planned expansion on the neighborhood and secure seats on a new advisory committee created by the ARMC. It should be noted that this successful outcome was coordinated by a group of middle-income professionals.

The failure of a public process for low income residents was documented by Larry Keating in his account of the demolition of the Techwood/Clark Howell Housing projects, prior to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta (Keating, JAPA, 66:4). Three planning processes by the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) under Hope VI eventually resulted in the desired outcome, demolition of public housing and construction of Centennial Place. Public participation was adequate in the first process, but the plan was denied by HUD. In the second process, fewer residents participated because they had already begun to relocate and by completion of the third planning process all of the original residents had been displaced. Data suggests that the AHA had been encouraging the relocation. The relative lack of success with participation programs for low income constituencies is a recurring theme in literature dating back to Model Cities. One of Keating’s recommendations was that the requirement for public participation be strengthened (Keating, JAPA, 66:4; Keating, Atlanta: Race Class and Urban Expansion, 2001).

Unlike a number of articles by urban geographers that have focused on single events to study citizen
participation, Roy's (2010) account of the Walnut Way Conservation Group in Milwaukee, focuses on empowerment as a result of ongoing engagement by a civic organization. Her critique of the current discourse is that it regards empowerment as resulting from a specific outcome or event. She argues that empowerment should be studied “as a process of relation-building and assessment along the past-present-future continuum” (Roy 2010 p 11).

Clarence Stone's *Regime Politics* cited previously and in Chapter 3, documents the early years of Atlanta's Neighborhood Movement and concluded prematurely that the movement was ineffective. Writing his book in the late 80s during the neoliberal Reagan Administration, Stone characterized the Neighborhood Movement as ineffective, citing a string of defeats. He argued that unlike the elites of the governing coalition, neighborhoods were unable to solve the collective action problem and had no way to leverage their strength citywide, although they “enjoyed autonomy in their segmented world” (133). They also did not have the resources of business to offer local government. As such, Stone implies that the NPUs were not a real partner in Atlanta’s governance and lacked the cohesion of the business elites (Stone 1989). His assessment was premature, as outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The longitudinal study by Berry, Portney and Thomson in 1985, roughly the same time as Stone's research, (Rebirth of Urban Democracy, Brookings1993) examined the participatory structures in five American cities, San Antonio, Birmingham, Portland Oregon, Dayton and St. Paul. Neighborhood structures were in effect in four of the cities and open to all citizens (Berry et al 1993). San Antonio was not completely organized and the local advocacy group was not part of city government. Ten comparison cities were also selected and a combination of surveys and interviews were used. The findings of the study, still the largest effort to examine neighborhood government structures in the US, suggest that the neighborhood structures did have “substantial authority” over local issues that affect their community (Berry et al 1993). While these structures do not increase the overall level of participation by citizens, they are respected by local residents as an important force in city politics.
Even though these associations are open to all residents, low-income residents are still less likely to get involved. The authors suggest that the “daily burdens of low income people are powerful forces” that are likely to inhibit participation (285). The findings are that the participation generated by citywide structures “channeled into neighborhood-based activity, changes the balance of power in the city” (286). The study also focused on responsiveness by the cities and found that when the cities “solved the collective action problem” and had institutionalized the neighborhood structures, “Businessmen have little choice but to negotiate in good faith with the neighborhoods” (287). This also changes the balance of power. A related finding was that neighborhood associations have influence at the very local, rather than citywide level (287). In summary, the authors found that recognizing the neighborhood structures did empower citizens and thereby does help to strengthen democracy in the city. They conclude “Cities ought not to take a laissez-faire attitude towards the development of communities within their borders” (299).

The most recent large study of Neighborhood Councils is being tracked in Los Angeles by the University of Southern California’s School of Policy, Planning, and Development, and the USC Urban Initiative, led by Juliet Musso PhD. A policy brief published in 2004 collected data from 45 elected LA Neighborhood Councils. These councils were approved by Los Angeles voters in 1999 as part of the new city charter. The findings of the study are as follows: that while the councils have brought together diverse stakeholders, they are not fully representative of the diversity of the area. Participants tend to be homeowners, white, educated, long term residents, and Councils under-represent low income residents. However, minority representation is higher in areas that have a higher concentration of minority residents. The brief notes that over 50% of Los Angeles residents have lived in their community for less than five years. Over 73% of Council board members have lived in their respective communities for over ten years. The city charter requires inclusive representation and the findings of the survey recommend that the Councils improve stakeholder diversity, improve descriptive diversity
and expand participatory opportunities such as creation of ad hoc committees for specific projects (Juliet Musso, Christopher Weare, Kyu-Nahm Jun, Alicia Kitsuse, 2004).

Summary

Citizen participation in the affairs of the state dates back to the ancient Greek city-states. The concept of participation is as old as democracy which derives its meaning from the Greek, _demos_ and _kratein_, rule by the people. The concept of voluntary consent dates back to the Roman Empire. Citizen participation was not born in the neoliberal era following the Reagan administration. It was not formally implemented in the new American republic although Jefferson argued for the concept in 1816. The concept in modern times was first mandated in the mid 1960s in the Lyndon Johnson administration as a way to engage and empower low income communities affected by urban renewal. Neighborhood government as a substructure of our federal system of sharing power has only been implemented for some forty years, a brief span in the long discourse on democracy. The success of these local structures is still being debated although academics who critique them from the Left feel that they are not adequate to ensure spatial justice to disadvantaged communities. It begs the question as to whether it is fair to charge an unfunded volunteer group with a task of this magnitude. This characterization is also dismissive of process, as though citizens cannot know what is in their best interests or effect change within the current system. Overlooked is the fact that the US is a procedural republic (Sandel 1996). It is worth remembering that the mandate for participation grew out of the negative effects of the Keynesian welfare state, and that urban renewal era housing projects were rejected by the displaced people they were intended to house.

The City of Atlanta implemented NPUs in the mid 1970s and they are still functioning. This thesis takes advantage of the unique opportunity to do a side by side comparison of Atlanta with its populous
neighbor, unincorporated Cobb County. I document the participants’ assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of their local governance structure.

CHAPTER 3 - AN OVERVIEW OF ATLANTA AND COBB COUNTY

Atlanta was one of the American cities in which low and moderate income neighborhoods were devastated by urban renewal in the 1960’s. “Since the urban renewal and expressway programs did not require accurate counting, no one really knows how many Atlantans were displaced. Estimates by knowledgeable local planners are that 68,000 people were forced to move” (Keating 2001 p 93). The affected neighborhoods included Buttermilk Bottoms, Mechanicsville, Summerhill, Peoplestown, Vine City and Old Fourth Ward (Keating 2001 p 92). The period of social unrest in the late 60s and early 70s coincided with Atlanta's transition to a majority black city. Gentrification of inner city neighborhoods, starting with Inman Park, created an articulate and assertive middle class who had the organizational skills to contest several DOT-planned roads through their neighborhoods. A young Atlanta lawyer, Maynard Jackson was an ally of the neighborhood movement and young, black, student activists. He entered politics and was elected Vice Mayor. In 1973, with the help of neighborhood groups and Atlanta’s new black electoral majority, he became Atlanta’s first black Mayor. His intention was to create a new and more inclusive governing coalition and he directed his staff to create a forum for citizen participation in the new city charter (Stone 1989). Planning Leon Eplan helped to create the Neighborhood Planning Unit system which at the time, was constituted by 24 segments in the city, each of which included several neighborhoods. The NPU were meant to empower all citizens by giving them a voice in the planning and zoning decisions that would affect them in their own communities.

The neighborhood movement exerted considerable influence with the Jackson administration, and antagonism towards the neighborhoods arose quickly between Central Atlanta Progress and other downtown elites who were unused to being ignored. By the end of his first term Jackson realized that
he needed to rely on the support and resources that the business community offered. He moved to include them in a governing coalition (Stone 1989). When Andrew Young became Mayor, he was elected with neighborhood support but quickly moved to undercut the funding for the NPU system that Jackson had established. Young reestablished the traditional close ties between city hall and the downtown business elite (Stone 1989; Keating 2001). As noted in Chapter 2, Stone felt that the NPU were not true partners in Atlanta's governing coalition since they lacked the ability to organize on a citywide basis and lacked the financial resources of the business community. As Regime Politics went to press, Stone expected that the Presidential Parkway (to Stone Mountain) would be built because CAUTION (Coalition Against Unnecessary Thoroughfares in Older Neighborhoods) had not been successful in stopping it in the courts and the Department Of Transportation wanted to go ahead (Stone 1989). Ultimately, CAUTION and the neighborhoods did prevail after planner Leon Eplan offered an at-grade parkway including walking trails and bike paths to the Carter Presidential Library (interview with Atlanta city planner). This victory led to the preservation of many viable intown communities. Gentrification has since continued in many of Atlanta’s older neighborhoods in spite of setbacks in the 1980s.

The NPU system is in the Atlanta City Charter and divides the city into 25 units. Each NPU consists of several neighborhoods and a board that creates its own by-laws. The NPU board meets monthly and meetings are open to the public. The City designates a planner to represent each NPU; City staff and police also make presentations at the monthly NPU meetings. The NPU engages with the City in development of the Comprehensive Plan. The NPU board reviews rezoning, business and liquor license applications. Each NPU also elects a delegate and alternate to the Atlanta Planning Advisory Board. Atlanta’s NPU system has now had some 35 years to mature and at least four Atlanta City Council members are former NPU representatives.

While Atlanta was codifying its NPU system into the City Charter, white flight to the northern suburb of Cobb County was in high gear. In the early seventies Cobb was mostly rural and had only one commissioner. Gradually it moved to eastern and western district commissioners and a chairman. The population was mostly white. Platted subdivisions were primarily on lots 20,000 sq ft. and larger. At the time I-75 had not been built and US 41, the Dixie Hwy, was the main road to Chattanooga. The majority of Cobb residents could safely be described as social conservatives. It was home to Representative Larry McDonald, a John Birch Society member. It was home to segregationist Governor Lester Maddox of Pickrick fame.\footnote{http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/atlanta/obituary.aspx?n=lester-g-maddox&pid=1114520}

Four decades later Cobb is an urbanizing-but-still-suburban county of 688,000 residents (2010 Census). In 2002 Cobb elected its first Jewish Commission Chairman and has steadily grown more diverse. The local government has also become more inclusive in hiring practices and appointments after the national headline-grabbing Anti-Gay Resolution that led to the Olympic boycott of Cobb County in 1996. The demographics of Cobb are changing as well; according to the 2010 census data, Cobb’s African-American population has risen to 24.4%. In 2000 African Americans represented 14% of registered voters and in 2010 that number was over 23%. It is in short, a very different world from the rural county of the early seventies. While it is still conservative the conservatism is less overtly bigoted, more nuanced and tends to be more focused on fiscal conservatism. Without question that fiscal conservatism reflects the prevailing neoliberalism and is manifest in Cobb’s philosophy of low taxes, small government and a highly pro-business outlook. This is practiced by outsourcing and privatizing functions traditionally performed by government, administration of Community Development Block Grants and Solid Waste are two examples.

Cobb County experienced rapid growth beginning in the mid 1980s and that trend continued until 2007. That trajectory launched the career of a number of citizen activists who became alarmed by the
rapid and apparently senseless destruction of trees; farmland and environmentally-sensitive lands to make way for endless retail malls, industrial sites and countless new subdivisions. Prior to the collapse of the real estate market, Cobb was substantially overbuilt on retail space, according to a Cobb County Community Development market analysis.8

The difficulties experienced by Cobb’s neighborhood activists as they tried to engage in planning and zoning process during the height of the real estate bubble finally led to discussion by activists about what could be done to change the system. The business-friendly government streamlined the process for developers but did little to make the system more accessible to neighborhood activists. Finally, small steps were taken by the county to make the process more user-friendly for the public by making zoning information available on the county website in late 2006.

Currently, unincorporated Cobb County has 4 District Commissioners and a Chairman. Each Commissioner represents approximately 172,000 residents. The Chairman is the only full-time position in this county of 688,000. Each District has a Planning Commissioner, appointed by the elected Commissioners and the Resident Participation Plan posted on the County website lists the Boards, Authorities and Committees in Cobb. The individuals on these committees are generally appointed by their District Commissioner. Typically they will have expertise relevant to the Committee or they will be elites, known to the Commissioner. In this regard, Cobb County's governance arrangements are top-down.9 Unlike Atlanta, there is no codified neighborhood government structure in place, nor are there any formally recognized boundaries for the various community groups. While citizens do form neighborhood organizations, recognition of them is at the discretion of the Commissioner. County staff is available to discuss issues of concern. Currently three Cobb Commissioners and the Chairman were active in neighborhood and community groups before their election to office.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

Research Question

This qualitative study will compare the participatory governance of City of Atlanta and Cobb County, Georgia. The purpose of this study is to learn the answer to these two questions:

Which of the two systems of governance best facilitates citizen participation and provides communities a meaningful opportunity to guide neighborhood development and changes?

Do these engaged citizens feel empowered or disempowered as they participate in the community processes of their local government?

Positionality

The experience of citizens who engage in community planning is a personal interest; my own positionality is that of an activist, engaged for the past eight years in the planning and zoning processes of unincorporated Cobb County. The efficacy of my colleagues in Cobb and Atlanta matters from a research and personal point of view. I have shared in the highs, frustration and dialog common to those with shared passion for healthy, engaged neighborhoods, quality development and responsive local government. It is clear that some types of governance are more inclusive than others. My research questions are informed in part by existing literature, field observation and by my own experiences.

Methods and Data

This is a qualitative study that used a combination of interview, survey, mapping exercise and archival data. The main criteria for participation in this study was that subjects regularly engage in the planning and zoning processes of their community as part of a neighborhood or civic group.

The subjects came from two populations: nine from City of Atlanta NPU and 15 from Cobb County, Georgia. Identifiable information included: name, age, gender, race, address, neighborhood/community based organization and other civic organization memberships. The study included both genders and was open to ages 18 and older. This research was for adults only and was not appropriate for minors. Typically minors would not be expected to participate in community planning and zoning issues on a consistent basis. No race or ethnicity was excluded from the study. No vulnerable populations were
involved. The nine respondents from the City represented 6 of the 25 NPU, but 3 of the respondents were also members of the Atlanta Planning Advisory Board (APAB) with long term experience in the community and were able to address those issues knowledgeably. There were also two interviews with City Planning staff whose perspective confirmed and added to the discourse on participation in this study. The 15 Cobb respondents represented 13 of 17 known community organizations; two respondents were active in environmental and historic preservation organizations. One respondent participated in the mapping exercise only. The interviews were augmented by an extended interview with a County staff person.

The nature of the research did not lend itself to a positivist approach. Rather, an interpretive approach was used to determine, through interviews and surveys, whether citizens engaging in the processes of their local government felt empowered by the experience, and felt that their input mattered. Interpretive methods have become the norm in qualitative research (Ley and Mountz, 2001). Objections about the subjectivity of the process are countered by assertions that the quantitative researcher makes subjective judgment calls about which variables are to be used in testing (Ley and Mountz, 2001). It is the position of Ley and Mountz that all research is interpretive; which requires the researcher to engage in reflexivity and maintain rigorous scientific standards. It is important to document methods and processes so that the validity of a qualitative research project not be open to questions. A study by Baxter and Eyles in 1997, of 31 qualitative projects in human geography, found poor documentation processes regarding selection of subjects (Hogart, Lees & Davies 2002; Ley and Mountz 2001).

In the interest of stating my positionality, I am known to most of the Cobb County respondents as a colleague active in community issues. That collegial acquaintance facilitated their willingness to participate in the research study. Many also wanted to voice their concerns about county processes in what was hoped to be a useful or meaningful record of their narrative. The participants from the City
were contacted through referrals provided, and from the contact list posted on Atlanta’s NPU web page.

The choice of interview location, raised by Elwood and Martin (2000), suggests that the micro-geographies of the interview are important. Giving the respondent the choice of setting can be empowering, conducting the interview in the respondent’s own community has several advantages. The respondent may feel more comfortable in familiar settings and the researcher has the opportunity to engage in participant observation. On the other hand, if the setting for an interview is in the offices of the researcher, the PI might seem like a more powerful figure and somewhat intimidating to the respondent (Elwood and Martin 2000). The Cobb interviews were primarily conducted in an office that I leased for that purpose but I was flexible enough to conduct several interviews at a location preferred by and convenient to the participants. The fact that most of the Cobb interviews took place in an office setting perhaps gave the research a more professional tone since most of the respondents were aware of my activism in the county or had some type of collegial acquaintance with me. The Atlanta interviews were mainly conducted in the respondent’s own community. In addition to the interview and survey a mapping exercise was given to all Cobb County respondents. The purpose of the map exercise was to ascertain the extent of uneven spatial and bounded differences of community in Cobb County versus the clearly defined communities of Atlanta. One respondent from Cobb consented to participate in the map exercise but declined the survey and interview.

Archival research was used to augment the interview and survey. Much information about Neighborhood Planning Units is available on the City website and in the bylaws of the various NPU which are posted online. Additional information on neighborhood government structures in the US can be accessed on the web. Finally, I attended several NPU meetings, and have been a participant observer as neighborhood activist in Cobb County for the past eight years.
CHAPTER 5- FINDINGS

A Profile of the Citizen-Activists of Atlanta and Cobb County

The most striking thing about both groups of respondents has been the degree to which Cobb and Atlanta neighborhood activists are alike. They share similar concerns for safety, code enforcement, and a desire for quality development and managed growth, opposition to business applications deemed undesirable for the community, a wish for more parks and for pedestrian friendly neighborhoods.

The activists in the city and county are middle-aged, although the average age in Cobb is 59 years and the average age of Atlanta respondents is 49 (Table 2). The respondents in both groups were equally divided between men and women, while previous studies (Putnam 2000, Taylor 2000) found that women were most often involved in community issues.

Confirming the findings of previous research (Musso 2004, Putnam 2001, Taylor 2000, Docherty et al 2001), those who engage in civic issues tend to have a college education. The city and county respondents in this study have had at least some college and the majority has a 4 year degree (Table 2). Many had attended graduate school. Minorities are underrepresented in both samples, but are generally underrepresented in neighborhood leadership in Cobb County. There are fewer neighborhood associations in the southwestern part of the county, which has a higher concentration of minorities. The majority of the respondents attend church infrequently, so their activism in the community would not seem to be a function of religious beliefs. For the most part, the household income reported suggests that this group is mostly middle to upper-middle income. This finding also seems in line with previously cited research. Asked whether they experienced problems with burnout, the majority answered in the affirmative.
Table 1: Activist Burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you experience problems with burnout?</th>
<th>Unincorporated Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 7</td>
<td>Yes 5 (“Always”; Yes! This is the hardest part”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes 2</td>
<td>Sometimes 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 3</td>
<td>No 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A 2</td>
<td>N/A “some yes, some seem tireless”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A point of interest was to note the stated political affiliations of the respondents. Particularly in Cobb, it was striking that only three affiliated with the Republican Party. Most identified as Independents or Democrats (Table 2 p. 33). Data from the 587 Los Angeles Neighborhood Council respondents in the USC study found council members to be “relatively centrist in their politics, about 80% characterizing themselves as being somewhat liberal, middle of the road, or somewhat conservative” (Musso 2004 p 7).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile of Respondents (Neighborhood Activists)</th>
<th>14 Unincorporated Cobb County</th>
<th>9 City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>7 M 7 F</td>
<td>5 M 4 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>13 C 1 B</td>
<td>6 C 3 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>35 – 73</td>
<td>24 – 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Graduate 4; Bachelors 6; Assoc 2; Some college 1; N/A 1</td>
<td>Graduate 4; Bachelors 3; Assoc 1; N/A 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>(100+) 2 (51-100) 5 (26-50) 2 (10-25) 1 (N/A) 4</td>
<td>(100+) 3 (51-100) 2 (26-50) 1 (10-25) 2 (N/A) 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/Attendance</td>
<td>Y 5 No or Rarely 7 N/A 2</td>
<td>Y 2 No or Rarely 5 N/A 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Civic Affiliations</td>
<td>None = 5</td>
<td>None = 3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1 org = 5</td>
<td>1 org = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 or more = 2</td>
<td>2 or more = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A = 2</td>
<td>N/A = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Affiliation</td>
<td>D 5, R 3, I 5, N/A 1</td>
<td>D 4, R0, I 3, N/A 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years involved in neighborhood</td>
<td>1-5 = 7</td>
<td>1-5 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>6-11 = 4</td>
<td>6-11 = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 - 20 = 1</td>
<td>12 - 20 = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 + =</td>
<td>20 + = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A= 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source NPU Coordinator

When asked “Do you think your time as an engaged citizen is well spent?” all felt that their participation was important in spite of experiencing occasional burnout. The complete table, A-1 can be seen on page 65. A sampling of responses from Cobb and Atlanta activists follows:

“Yes, particularly on the planning and zoning side when you see a development get built that went from metal to brick. That's a concrete example of what we can do.”

“Yes. Somebody has to speak up for the community and keep it from crumbling.”

“Yes. If I make no attempt than nothing is ever subject to change, if I am uninvolved there is no potential for change”

“Yes very much so. I like working with publicly oriented people and have been reasonably successful in personnel selection and policy development.”

“I must or I wouldn't do it- I think most do it because they believe in it and because they think they can make some kind of difference.”
“Yes, absolutely” (cited defeat of Stone Mountain toll road that would have destroyed historic neighborhoods)

“Yes I do cause the review boards and committees take our words into consideration when deciding.”

“When its upholding the land use by not allowing something to go in that would potentially take away from the character of our area.”

“(laughs) Yeah—because nobody does it unless they have some intrinsic reward. I love doing it- I make a difference- I enjoy being a leader- people turn to me; I can make things happen.”

Some of the replies were more qualified, however they still affirmed participation.

“Difficult to say-I do it out of a sense of duty and sometimes frustration; that I am doing a lot of legwork that others could also be doing because it would benefit them.”

“Generally yes, but there have been occasions when I might not have felt so.”

“Sometimes I think it takes too much energy to accomplish things, but if nobody does, nothing happens- so . . .”

The length of time these respondents had been involved with a neighborhood organization varied from 2 years to over two decades. Half of the Cobb respondents had spent five years or less, while the majority of Atlanta respondents had invested over six years in their neighborhood associations or NPU. Like the Neighborhood Council respondents in Musso’s USC Urban Initiative study, these respondents are long term residents.

Individuals who are willing to commit to community work for the long term are not typical. The following question elicited similar responses from the activists: “Do you think the majority of people in your area care about planning and zoning issues?” See Table A-1 in Appendix B page 65.

The answers are qualified; respondents feel that most people do not care unless it affects them directly. This seems to be the norm whether in Cobb or Atlanta; however levels of participation and numbers of citizens engaging in neighborhood issues are not the same for both localities. The comments of respondents seem to confirm the observations of Fainstein (2010) and Berry et al (1993) who suggest that a relatively small percentage of the population will engage in this type of community activity. This
was also noted in the 2004 USC research of LA Neighborhood Councils. Marilyn Taylor found that “the core work of partnership is likely to be confined to the few” (Taylor 2001).

Figure 1 Cobb group adopts-a-highway

Figure 2 Neighborhood Planning Unit meeting    Figure 3 Cobb group meets with Developer

Comparison of Neighborhood Group Organization and Processes

The striking difference between the neighborhood activists in Atlanta and those in Cobb County is that the City has created a codified structure for participation by their citizens, so that they have a framework and formal channels for dialog with the local government. In fact, the City recognizes the NPU as the official voice of the community. If a NPU experiences difficulties or falters, the structure
itself will remain; and new leadership can be found to continue the function. In Cobb County, while the
established leaders of civic groups enjoy access to Commissioners and County staff, there are no
officially recognized jurisdictions or organizations, and if the leadership of an established group is
unable to continue or the organization falters, it will simply cease to exist. This is of critical
importance with regards to the community having a voice before the Board of Commissioners that is
established, experienced and has a degree of credibility with the elected officials. In a presentation to
the Board of Commissioners on a zoning case, one of Cobb's few minority neighborhood leaders made
this point:

“As you might know, SWAN is on the south side of Cobb and we're speaking, basically
for this   community because it doesn't always have someone to stand up for itself. This
particular portion is the gateway to our part of Cobb and we'd like to see it as beautified
as any other neighborhood”.
-Clarice Barber-Page, SW Austell Neighborhoods (SWAN) October 18, 2011

In Cobb County, the leadership of an organization tends to be synonymous with that organization.
Bells Ferry Civic Association, a corridor based group in north Cobb founded in the mid 1970s ceased to
function this year after the passing of several leaders. When an organization ceases to exist a
replacement will not be facilitated by the county because there is no legal basis to do so. This
effectively renders a large swath of the county without an experienced voice on community issues.

Individual NPUs are free to create their own bylaws and enjoy autonomy as to how their groups are
structured. They must hold elections, however and hold monthly meetings that are open to the public.\(^\text{11}\)
Cobb County's neighborhood/community based groups seem to operate in much the same way as those
in the city. This is driven in part by the similar issues that such groups must routinely address: planning
initiatives, zoning applications, liquor and package license applications near to schools or churches and
the ever present issues of crime and code enforcement. The differences between the city and county

\(^\text{10}\) http://view.liveindexer.com/ViewIndexSessionSLMQ.aspx?indexSessionSKU=NZsn6KZA/snsRHD109O5QA%3D%3D

\(^\text{11}\) http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/npu_system.aspx
groups emerge in responses to the following questions about process. The complete set of responses can be seen in Appendix B, Table A-2 p 66.

**Table 3 Survey responses about group functions and processes**
(two Cobb respondents are in conservation-related orgs rather than neighborhood orgs and did not answer most of the questions below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the County/City come to you with planning/zoning issues or do you always take the initiative to find out information?</strong></td>
<td>1. Rarely, county contacts us; mostly our own initiative</td>
<td>1. City ordinance requires the city to come to the neighborhoods for most zoning, liquor license and city ordinance changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I find out info</td>
<td>2. Yes city comes to us for recommendation to NPU then NPU recommendation taken to ZRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. depends on the zoning or issue</td>
<td>3. They come to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4. Through the NPU, though we also follow most large issues closely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5. Both!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. both</td>
<td>6. They join our meetings on a monthly basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. depends on the staff member, we have good relationships with some who bring issues to us.</td>
<td>7. They send to me as NPU chair each month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. we pick up information from the gov’t center on Austell road and don’t have to go into the city of Marietta</td>
<td>8. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. They email me.</td>
<td>9. So far every time we have had to take the initiative and follow up and follow through with things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. yes, they come to our president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. I take initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The county groups have asked us to join study groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. County publishes issues online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Is it difficult for you/members to get to planning meetings or zoning meetings?</em></td>
<td>1. No, they are held in the neighborhood.</td>
<td>2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>NPU responses reflect that NPU meetings are held in the evenings usually, when the City staff attends NPU meetings to make presentations and record NPU issues and votes.</em></td>
<td><em>Cobb respondents read this as a County hearing, (no official or county-sanctioned neighborhood meetings)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the functions of the two groups are the same, the real differences become visible in the responses by Cobb respondents that indicate challenges not faced by activists in Atlanta. If a neighborhood in Cobb wants to check on monthly zoning applications they may do so on the County website, however they must take the initiative to contact the applicant or zoning attorney. There is no guarantee that the applicant will want to meet with the Cobb neighborhood. On cases handled by zoning attorneys within the stated jurisdiction of an established Cobb group, the attorney will have developed a relationship with the group leader. If the relationship is positive the attorney will usually contact the neighborhood group leader but it is voluntary. By comparison, the NPU respondents can rely on the City sending all applicants to meet with them and the affected neighborhood. Some Cobb groups or group leaders who do not have a good relationship with the Commissioner or a staff member may be at a disadvantage if they need access to information or wish to meet with a recalcitrant applicant. In Atlanta there is certainty for the neighborhoods in the codified process.

Another significant area of difference between the two groups is in the convenience of attending
planning meetings. The question on page 37, “Is it difficult for you/members to get to planning meetings or zoning meetings?” shows two very different sets of responses. Eight of the nine NPU respondents answer “No” while 12 of 14 Cobb respondents answer mostly in the affirmative. The NPU responses reflect that NPU meetings are held in the evenings usually, when the City staff attends NPU meetings to make presentations and record NPU issues and votes. The meetings are also held in the community of the NPU. The Cobb respondents read this as a County hearing, since there are no official or county-sanctioned neighborhood meetings. The two respondents who had no difficulty attending daytime meetings are retired.

Both groups seem to lack a standardized way to train new members in the complex issues of zoning and land use. They must learn the ropes by attending meetings and being mentored (Appendix B Table A-2 p 66-89). That was my experience. An Atlanta respondent who is also an APAB delegate discussed development of an increased role for APAB in training new NPU members in planning and zoning issues. This will strengthen or enhance procedural skills for those NPU board members who lack experience. When queried on how they made decisions on zoning issues, there was more variability among Cobb respondents on polling neighborhoods versus making an “executive” decision without neighborhood input. Most NPU had a formal decision making process in place. It will always include the opinion of the affected neighborhood. Since many Cobb respondents stated difficulties in communicating with older neighborhoods, their statement that neighborhoods “accepted” their leadership has to be rather tentative, compared to the NPU responses (Appendix B Table A-2 p 66). Recruitment and retention of members are problems common to many civic organizations. About half of the respondents in both groups acknowledged challenges in retaining members and electing new leadership, confirmation of the relatively low rate of citizen participation by the general public (Appendix B Table A-3 p 72).
Defining Community through Scale and Boundaries: Comparing Maps

"As Cato, then concluded every speech with the words, 'Cathago delenda est,' so do I every opinion with the injunction, 'divide the counties into wards.'" --Thomas Jefferson to Joseph C. Cabell, 1816 ME 14:423

The mapping exercise given to Cobb respondents highlights the problems that arise when a local government has left it to community or neighborhood groups to draw the boundaries of their stated jurisdiction. The City of Atlanta's NPU and the officially recognized neighborhoods within them were drawn by a city planner after a public planning process (Figure 4 p 45). Cobb County's community group boundaries, sketched on a GIS map by respondents, overlap in a number of cases, and leave large areas without representation at all in other sections of the county (Figure 5 p 46). The following questions were asked of Cobb respondents to gauge whether poorly defined boundaries might cause problems in representation.

Table 4 Cobb respondents on boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did your organization decide on its boundaries?</th>
<th>Do you feel that County Staff, Planning Commissioners and Commissioners respect your jurisdiction?</th>
<th>Do they ever make exceptions or ignore your jurisdiction?</th>
<th>Do your boundaries overlap with the area “covered” by other groups?</th>
<th>Does this cause confusion or problems of representation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. not known</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. based on land lots that contain Civil War earthworks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 based on citizens who shared the same core ideas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not to my knowledge</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Community interest/need</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No not to my knowledge</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>I don't believe so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 We used the US Postal zip code of 301</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We set it by the residents who attended and needed to be included. We eliminated areas that showed no interest—especially because of distance.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Yes, where we touch some areas in _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rd has many subdivisions with no associations. They needed representation.</td>
<td>Yes to a degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>the Board</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We were frustrated that the ____development plan was inadequate and wanted to add architectural guidelines and monitor progress.</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Community is an approximate 2 mile radius adjacent to Lake ____</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ignore-no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

City and county groups were asked if they knew of any areas that were not represented by a community organization.
Table 5  Do you know of any areas not represented by a neighborhood group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you know of any areas in your commission district /NPU that are not covered or represented by an organization?</th>
<th>Unincorporated Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Technically no, some areas under represented</td>
<td>1. All areas within the City of Atlanta are covered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Don't know</td>
<td>2. No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yes</td>
<td>3. NONE (By city charter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. N/A</td>
<td>4. No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. unknown</td>
<td>5. Most NPUs have served an area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No not if you include our group</td>
<td>6. Some neighborhoods seem to be in a “gray zone” where no neighborhood association claims them within their boundaries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Yes</td>
<td>7. We have some neighborhood clubs that are not functioning at this time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Yes</td>
<td>8. No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No</td>
<td>9. This is interesting because my community association doesn’t align itself with ___ and is not recognized by the city—I don’t really know why not. I think it is a power issue and a tension between the presidents of both organizations—but I think there are other neighborhood groups in the area that have the same problem and find the NPU system too political and just prefer doing their own thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I think there are pockets but I am not certain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses from most of the NPU leadership indicate certainty about the extent of representation, while the Cobb respondents are more tentative. Based on personal observation, the lack of officially drawn boundaries for Cobb community groups has sometimes led to friction between the groups and at times, allowed the situation to be exploited by elites with a vested interest. The representation of lower income areas with a large minority population in District 4, SW Cobb is thin, while the middle and upper-middle class neighborhoods in District 3, NE Cobb have groups whose boundaries overlap; see Figure 5 p 46.
Regarding scale, the area taken on by Cobb activists is generally much larger than the area covered by Atlanta's NPU. There are also typically fewer active members in Cobb groups. An additional challenge for Cobb activists is uncertainty about the number of neighborhoods in the area they are trying to represent. The following table illustrates the differences between City and County.

Table 6 How many neighborhoods do you represent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unincorporated Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many neighborhoods do you represent?</td>
<td>How many members on your board/active members?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 + subdivisions</td>
<td>5 to 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@ 60</td>
<td>4-Depends on the issue- we have quadrants established with contacts- who have other contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Many” 25-30 HOAs</td>
<td>3 + many “associates”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown, all of 301_zip code</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-1,200*</td>
<td>11/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 10 subdivisions and 15 apartment complexes</td>
<td>7/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 subdivisions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is a very inaccurate guess; Cobb GIS dept. estimated 900 neighborhoods county-wide.
A description of the methodology regarding creation of the two maps shown in Figures 4 and 5, p 45-46 follows. Figure 4 is the codified map of Atlanta's Neighborhoods within the Neighborhood Planning Unit boundaries. These were drawn in the mid-1970s by City Planner Leon Eplan at the time that the City was adopting a new charter and incorporating the NPU system. The map of Cobb County was used in this research project to illustrate the uneven spatial coverage of neighborhood participation. The respondents were asked to draw the outlines of their group's area, as part of the interview process. None of the respondents were prompted beyond my general direction of the geographic area in which their group was based. They were asked to create a small logo for their group as part of the map legend on the side. This legend was covered so that as the map received more jurisdictions, the respondents could only guess which group leader had drawn their own boundaries. The legend is not shown in this thesis to protect the privacy of the respondents.

Several of the respondents expressed surprise and some hesitated to draw their own boundaries after seeing part of “their area” with lines already drawn. Another respondent did not hesitate to draw the boundaries of “their area” so that it overlapped with three other groups. Only two of Cobb County's 17 known groups at the time were not included in the map drawing exercise. They were SWAN and North Cobb Coalition; SWAN had time constraints and the latter group does not seem to be functioning at this time. East Cobb Civic Association, Cobb's largest and oldest organizations was invited to participate, but time did not permit. By referring to information available on the ECCA website, I was able to draw the stated border of that group, all area east of I-75, and to obtain data about group membership, board members and neighborhoods represented.
Figure 4 Neighborhood Planning Units of Atlanta
Figure 5 Cobb Research Map. Boundaries drawn by individual respondents at time of interview
Another comparison between Cobb and Atlanta follows. The city's well organized NPU structure, now in place for 35 years, has enabled documentation of its many neighborhoods. A list of the 247 officially recognized neighborhoods and contact information for the president of the neighborhood association is posted on the city website.\(^\text{12}\)

My inquiry this year to the Cobb Planning department about the exact number of neighborhoods in the county necessitated a request by the county to the GIS department for an estimate. The information was not readily available. The GIS department had to estimate the number of neighborhoods based on platted subdivisions; the estimate was over 900. The county could probably obtain an approximate number of neighborhoods through perusal of tax digest data and GIS information as well as checking HOA registration through the Secretary of State. It still would not have contact information for individuals in leadership positions for most of Cobb's neighborhoods, assuming such organization existed. From the standpoint of governance, this lack of information has made it difficult for county leaders who wish to engage more citizens in neighborhood watch programs, litter patrol and other civic functions that are dependent on volunteers.

A high profile community planning exercise, the Mableton Form Based Code, exposed the conflict created by lack of codified jurisdictions for community groups. The Mableton Improvement Coalition (MIC) had worked for over a year with Cobb County Planning Division and the design firm of Duany-Plater Zyberk to create a plan for revitalization of the old city of Mableton, which has fallen into decline. MIC is known as a progressive community group in an otherwise fairly conservative county. They embraced the new urbanist concepts of density, transit oriented development, walkable communities and affordable housing. The Board of Commissioners held two public hearings in 2011 prior to adopting the code, and vocal opposition to the plan from individuals and groups not based in Mableton quickly emerged. Much of the opposition was to the possibility of transit in Cobb, the

perceived end to a public input process on zonings and new urbanism in general. Ultimately, the Commission split the proposed code into two sections; the Intent and enabling language was adopted into the code, and the technical specifications and guidelines were adopted into Cobb Development Standards. While in the past this type of interference in local planning by those not living in the community has not been the norm in Cobb, the recent emergence of conservative Tea Party activism indicates that this may occur more often. See Appendix B Table A-2 p 66, “Do you weigh in on zoning cases or planning issues that are not regional, but that are outside your boundaries?” This points out the political difficulties faced by a local community when outsiders show up to oppose their plans. None of those opposed had attended any of the well publicized planning meetings in the year prior.13

Comparison of Neighborhood Group Concerns, Sense of Efficacy and Suggestions for Changes to Process

Table 7: Survey responses on satisfaction with local government (average score) Rank from 1 to 5; with 1 being not satisfied and 5 being very satisfied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cobb</th>
<th>Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the representation and attention paid to your group/area/neighborhood by: City/County Staff: planning, zoning, DOT, Code Enforcement Planning Commissioner</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner/Council member</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following set of questions was designed to give a side by side comparison of the respondents’ issues and concerns. Respondents' feelings of efficacy can also be gleaned from the responses. (The complete set of 6 questions and responses can be seen in Appendix B Table A-4 p 73)

13 Link to public hearing; select Tab 7, Community Development view.liveindexer.com/ViewIndexSessionSLMQ.aspx?indexSessionSKU=q6UW65WwhMPyRMLDdID09Q==&preview Link to Mableton Planning: http://comdev.cobbcountyga.gov/mableton-charette/
I also asked for their recommendations on how to change the system to make it easier for citizens to participate.

Four of the questions asked specifically about the feelings of efficacy of the group:

✓ Do you feel that your group, as representatives for your community, has a reasonable amount of input and control over the direction of growth in your area?
✓ Do you feel that your elected officials favor developers over neighborhoods in zoning issues?
✓ When you have been a participant in a planning initiative or large zoning case, have you ever felt that the City or County had a desired outcome, regardless of citizen input?

The responses to the fourth question about feelings of group efficacy should mirror the previous three:

✓ Do you feel that your group is a respected partner in the governance of Cobb County/City of Atlanta?

This was designed to get at the answer by hearing consistent responses to the same general theme.

Cobb’s positive responses to the fourth question seemed to contradict their answers to the first three questions. Eleven of the 14 Cobb respondents answered in a way that indicated some sense of disempowerment although they engaged in county processes on a regular basis. Two responses follow: “Well I think that it goes without saying there are many examples when the county BOC or staff regard the citizens and input as an inconvenience” (Cobb respondent 4 Table A-4 p 79). Another stated: “I always felt that the outcome was predetermined and citizen input was just window dressing” (Cobb respondent 5 Table A- 4 p 79). Most Cobb respondents said that they were respected partners in governance, but may have interpreted the phrase “respected partners in governance” to mean respectful or courteous treatment by the county staff and Commissioner.
The City respondents were more measured or realistic about being partners in governance, however their responses seem to indicate that they have a reasonable amount of input and control over the direction of growth in their community and a good record of success in dealing with zoning cases. One response was striking:” The city council approves 94% of NPU proposals up or down” (Table A-4 p 77).

This reinforces the findings of Docherty et al in which they state “citizen participation can be fostered as much by the creation of opportunity structures that build confidence in the efficacy of participation as by the underlying compositional factor of high education” (Docherty, Goodlad, Paddison 2001). While the majority of Cobb respondents are college-educated, middle-class citizens most are less confident about their prospects in zoning cases than their peers in Atlanta.

The findings of Berry et al (1993) were that in general strong participation including those cities with participatory structures does build efficacy, increase confidence in the local government and increase a sense of community. That sense of community increases empowerment (Berry, Portney, Thomson 1993). Roy takes issue with the “event based or end-product-based assessment of empowerment” in which geographers critique a single planning exercise. Instead, she argues that empowerment for community groups, including a seat at the table of decision-makers, is facilitated by a past-present-future continuum of engagement (Roy 2010). This response from # 6 in Cobb County to the question of “proudest achievement” substantiates Roy’s argument that empowerment has to be viewed as an ongoing process: “I think the relationship that our group has with the county, particularly Planning, is due to the fact that we are 7 years old and finally getting to point where staff will call us because we are respected as a group” (Cobb respondent 6, A-5 p 89). The neighborhood planning unit structures have been part of the city charter since the mid-1970s; that stability and longevity has probably contributed to the empowerment of the groups and their leadership.
These two questions were asked to Cobb respondents only.

**Table 8 Have you ever heard of Atlanta's NPU system?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you familiar with Atlanta’s NPU system?</th>
<th>If so, do you think it might be advantageous for Cobb to have a similar system? Why or Why Not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vaguely familiar I know someone who exposed me to the concept :-)</td>
<td>I think it would be advantageous, main reason is that it would better level the playing field between community activist organizations and developers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Interviewer explains)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have a fair knowledge of that. (Interviewer explains)</td>
<td>Yes it would be because it would provide good outreach to local neighborhoods; it would give the county a constant interaction at a local level. I think there would be better quality development with citizen interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 NO (Interviewer explains)</td>
<td>Not familiar with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Yes</td>
<td>Yes I think it would; our current system with the Planning Commission is pretty useless. We tend to get appointees based not on capabilities but on contribution to the commissioner who appoints them. It would give us an avenue which we lack, to contribute to planning process in a more effective way, earlier in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Yes</td>
<td>I think the only reason the NPU works in Atlanta is because the city has bought into the idea so it would be futile to put an NPU in Cobb without the total operational support of County government. Is it a good idea to organize in a more formal way? Yes absolutely I think it is a good idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Very limited I got some exposure to it with Atlantic Station but beyond that I don’t have any knowledge or familiarity with it, no (Interviewer explains)</td>
<td>I don’t have enough familiarity with it to suggest; I do think the Cobb system works pretty well when everyone is doing their job properly. I have seen staff and planning commission and BOC including each are doing their job properly. I have seen cases break down where less than sincere interests have moved a commission to move in a direction that was not best for the community- then the whole thing breaks down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Not really, no (Interviewer explains)</td>
<td>With a couple differences it would be useful. In district 4 there are only about 2 groups that get involved, which leaves a huge portion of Dist 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
uncovered. It would be useful to include us as a defined part of the process and make sure that every part of the County is covered.

8 No not very. (Interviewer explains) Oh yes, the more you can get people involved in their community, the more you can get them empowered to shape their community, there is no negative to that, its all positive.

9. Somewhat (Interviewer explains) I definitely think it would be an advantage the only disadvantage I see is right now we are in a recession and the cost would be hard to put in the budget.

10 A little not that much. (Interviewer explains) Well It could be. My biggest concern would be the cost and overhead just to make it happen, not just for staff but for homeowner groups and builders you are looking at another added cost in the whole zoning process. Some places they have it- not that hopeful that anything new will happen.

11. Partially. (Interviewer explains) I think it would be a definite advantage to dividing the county up into divisions where people say I represent that district and another. I like the fact that they have some degree of clout- that means that developers have to work with them and mitigate their concerns. I do have a concern about the people who get in there, and would there be a way to facilitate their removal? (if the situation arose)

12 No. (Interviewer explains) Absolutely.

13 No. (Interviewer explains) Oh very much so. I had a hard time selling it to a corridor called __ Rd. they didn’t get the concept of “we gotta be together to influence zoning”. More mature communities like Pinellas County FL learned their lesson 34 years ago and now they’re organized.

14 No. (Interviewer explains.) I think it would be very desirable because it would establish a system that would be much more community oriented and would encourage more participation on the part of the people within those communities.

The respondents in Cobb suggested many of the reforms now enjoyed by Atlanta’s NPU: Meetings in the evening, county staff to come to the community with information; more local town hall meetings in
the evening, require developers to meet with neighborhood groups prior to zonings, create divisions of
the county so that all areas could have representation by some group, rather than none, or multiple
competing organizations, overall better notification of all types of local issues. Cobb respondents also
wanted zoning applications to comply with the land use map before the zoning hearing. When asked if
they felt that Atlanta's NPU system would be beneficial in Cobb for citizens who are active in the
community, 11 of 14 respondents said it would be a good idea.

The respondents in Atlanta, already empowered with a neighborhood government structure, asked
for increased access to City planning and zoning agendas on the City website; they also wanted better
promotion and information about the NPU to the general public. Lack of prompt and adequate code
enforcement seems to be an issue for those NPU leaders interviewed. Some of this is due to the high
number of vacancies and foreclosures in the current economy. The complete set of responses can be
seen in Table A-4 page 78.

**Individual Achievements and Sense of Efficacy**

The questions found in Table A-5 p 86-7 complete the survey of Cobb and Atlanta neighborhood
activists. They offer a personal glimpse into the experiences of the individuals who hold leadership
positions in their community organizations. Answers to the second question “What is your
greatest/proudest achievement as an activist?” gives insight into the cumulative positive impact that
these citizens can bring to the quality of life in an urban area.
The contributions of these activists range from historic neighborhood preservation in Atlanta to major environmental legislation for the Chattahoochee in Cobb. They have successfully campaigned for conservation of green space and brought hope to a neglected minority neighborhood in Atlanta. They have used the zoning process to prevent yet another liquor license in a food desert in southwest Cobb and educated citizens about how to engage with City Hall in Atlanta. In aggregate they have made the Atlanta region a better place to live. Referring to Table 2 on page 33, the majority of the respondents in this research have accrued years of community service. The accomplishments cited above could not have come about unless these individuals had credibility with their local governments. I have personal knowledge of the land conservation effort cited by Cobb respondents (Appendix B Table A-5 pages 86-7). The initiative came from the ground-up and was presented to Cobb’s Chairman Olens who agreed to place it before the public as an agenda item and later on the ballot. As the result of a grassroots effort hundreds of acres of land were preserved in a county that was 90% developed at the time of the vote in 2006. http://prca.cobbcountyga.gov/parks-bond-info.htm

CHAPTER 6- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
This thesis builds from the proposition that citizen participation is an intrinsic good and a necessary component of democracy. Participation would be justified in and of itself stemming from the basic concept and definition of democracy: rule by the people. If we are to evaluate the usefulness of that
participation to citizens on an empirical basis, we can read the responses of Cobb and Atlanta activists (p 33) to the question, “Do you think your time as an engaged citizen is well spent?” All of them answered in the affirmative in spite of experiencing burnout, frustration with the process at times, unresponsive elected officials, and barriers to full participation. When communities struggle to engage in the processes of their local government and when the elected officials choose to ignore that struggle, the quality of democracy at the local is not well served.

**To summarize the findings of the research questions:**

To compare two systems of governance to see which best facilitates citizen participation and provides communities a meaningful opportunity to guide neighborhood development and changes:

- The NPU system is more accessible to citizens with City attendance at monthly neighborhood meetings on weekday evenings.
- Zoning and Business license applicants are required by the City to meet with NPUs
- Atlanta officially recognizes the boundaries of NPUs and the neighborhoods within each of them
- Atlanta views the NPUs as the official voice of the neighborhoods on planning and zoning issues
- The lack of official boundaries or officially recognized neighborhood governance structures in Cobb makes it more difficult for the existing groups to communicate with community residents

Atlanta’s NPU system does a better job of facilitating citizen participation by a codified program of outreach to neighborhoods and formal recognition of neighborhood planning unit leadership and boundaries. Cobb participants can still shape development and growth, although participation is more of a challenge due to the informal governance arrangements. There are far fewer participants in Cobb
and they are trying to represent a much larger geographic area than NPU leadership. Using the narrative of the engaged citizens, determine whether they feel empowered or disempowered as they participate in the community processes of their local government.

- Most respondents felt that their time spent engaging was worthwhile.
- Most felt that they could make a difference.
- Cobb respondents were more skeptical than NPU respondents about the weight given by the local government to their opinion.
- In spite of similar education and income levels, Cobb respondents appear to feel less empowered than NPU due to the unpredictability of process and informal governance arrangements.
- NPU responses seem to indicate that they have a reasonable amount of input and control over the direction of growth in their community and a good record of success in dealing with zoning cases. One response was striking: “The city council approves 94% of NPU proposals up or down”.
- Most Cobb respondents believed that adoption of a neighborhood council system would be beneficial.
- Referring to Table 7 and the level of satisfaction with local government, there was no appreciable difference between Cobb and Atlanta respondents.

The neighborhood planning unit structures have been part of the city charter since the mid-1970s and that stability and longevity has probably contributed to the empowerment of the groups and their leadership.

The participatory procedures and structures put in place in the mid 1970s and later in the neoliberal era, have received less than favorable reviews from urban geographers and planners who focus on
equity and spatial justice. While it may be true that procedure in and of itself does not guarantee a just outcome, without procedure, without a structure for participation, there is no recognition and the chances for redress and redistribution are diminished. Those geographers and planners who advocate state intervention in the planning process as a way to achieve spatial justice would do well to revisit history to evaluate how well central planning has provided for all citizens. The displacement of low-income neighborhoods in NY by urban renewal is one example (Flint, A. 2009). In Atlanta, another example of attempted neighborhood displacement occurred in the mid 1980s with the DOT-planned Stone Mountain toll road and Presidential Parkway to the Jimmy Carter Center. The initial plans would have destroyed many vibrant intown communities (Stone 1989) but ultimately the neighborhood movement and citizen group CAUTION prevailed. Several of the respondents in this thesis were active in contesting that road and through their combined efforts they preserved many neighborhoods and enhanced the pedestrian-friendly environment. There are very recent examples of NPU/activist contributions to the community. The new Historic 4th Ward Park water feature was originally planned to be a utilitarian storm water mitigation facility, but through the collaborative efforts of the City, NPU M, N, E and F, a water feature was incorporated into the design of the park, which created an amenity and saved the city millions of dollars (Brown, Historic 4th Ward Park, 2010). These examples are given to counter the assertions of Fainstein that neighborhood participation consists mainly of NIMBY-ism and is only a vehicle for middle-class interests (Fainstein, p 32, 66, 2010).

Observations by City and County staff vary in their assessments. The NPUs have been established in Atlanta for over three decades and are accepted as an institution. City planners view the neighborhoods as full partners in the governance of the city. One of the few suggestions for improvement to the NPU system was that their bylaws and procedures should be more uniform system-wide. The Cobb interviewee expressed concern that a structured process for citizen participation slowed the time frame for developers and added cost to the project. However, the citizens who
regularly engage in Cobb's planning and zoning processes understood the procedural benefits of the NPU system (Table 8, p 51).

To the issue of which system makes it easier for its citizens to engage in the process, Atlanta's NPU has much in its favor. There are monthly neighborhood planning meetings, held in the evening and attended by City staff. This was one of the suggestions for change made by Cobb respondents. The NPU system requires that developers meet with the NPU on zoning cases. In Cobb, that procedure is uncertain. The lack of defined boundaries in Cobb County, as shown on the map drawn by respondents on page 45 illustrates the uneven spatial coverage of representation/participation by community organizations. The comparison with Atlanta's map of neighborhoods and NPU is very telling. The task of trying to provide representation for Cobb's many neighborhoods is exacerbated by the poorly defined boundaries, uncertainty about how to communicate with neighborhood residents, and the sheer numbers of subdivisions relative to small number of citizens engaging on a regular basis in Cobb County (Table 6, p 43).

The observations of Fainstein, Berry et al, Taylor and the respondents in this study note that large numbers of the population will not engage, even when participatory structures exist. But those citizens who do make the time for neighborhood activism on a regular basis can press the local government for land conservation, spatial justice for lower income communities, better access and more inclusive governance. All of the respondents felt that the time they spent was worthwhile and this is a hopeful indicator of the value of participation. In that regard, today's neighborhood activists are fulfilling the role envisioned by Thomas Jefferson in the early 1800s and by modern political theorists Barber and Young, advocating for increased participation and inclusion.

There is tangible evidence that the activists in Cobb and Atlanta have been instrumental in shaping the built environment and preserving green space to a significant extent. Through consistent volunteer effort, these citizens have helped to make the region a better place to live. The suggestions made by
activists in Atlanta and Cobb County for improved access to government, better recognition and lower barriers to participation are consistent with our understanding of a responsive, representative democracy and merit serious consideration by local decision-makers.
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APPENDIX A: Partial Listing of Neighborhood Structures and Neighborhoods Recognized by Local Government in U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>City website listing neighborhood organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td><a href="www.birminghamal.gov/neighborhood-associations.aspx">www.birminghamal.gov/neighborhood-associations.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Fayetteville</td>
<td><a href="www.accessfayetteville.org">www.accessfayetteville.org</a> (fayetteville council of neighborhoods)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| California| Los Angeles     | [www.ci.la.ca.us/DONE/map.htm](www.ci.la.ca.us/DONE/map.htm)
| Delaware  | Wilmington      | [http://www.wilmingtonde.gov/residents/neighborhoodcoun cils](http://www.wilmingtonde.gov/residents/neighborhoodcouns cils) |
| Georgia   | Atlanta         | [www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/npu_system.aspx](www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/npu_system.aspx) |
| Hawaii    | Honolulu        | [http://www1.honolulu.gov/nco/boards.htm](http://www1.honolulu.gov/nco/boards.htm)
<p>| Idaho     | N/A             |                                                  |
| Illinois  | Springfield     | <a href="http://www.springfield.il.us/Neighborhoods/associations.htm">http://www.springfield.il.us/Neighborhoods/associations.ht m</a> |
| Iowa      | Iowa City       | <a href="www.icgov.org/default/?id=1489">www.icgov.org/default/?id=1489</a> |
| Louisiana | N/A             |                                                  |
| Maine     | Portland        | [<a href="http://www.livinginportland.org/neighborhoodforums.htm#">http://www.livinginportland.org/neighborhoodforums.htm#</a> Neighborhood_Forums](<a href="http://www.livinginportland.org/neighborhoodforums.htm#">http://www.livinginportland.org/neighborhoodforums.htm#</a> Neighborhood_Forums) |
| Maryland  | Not clear       |                                                  |
| Massachusetts | Not clear   |                                                  |
| Michigan  | Lansing         | <a href="http://lansingmi.gov/live/get_involved.jsp">http://lansingmi.gov/live/get_involved.jsp</a> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/comdev/NHPrograms.aspx">www.ci.independence.mo.us/comdev/NHPrograms.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td><a href="http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/comdev/neighborhoods.htm">http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/comdev/neighborhoods.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cabq.gov/planning/nbrcord/neighassociations.html">www.cabq.gov/planning/nbrcord/neighassociations.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Raleigh</td>
<td><a href="http://www.raleighnc.gov/neighbors/content/CommServices/Articles/CitizensAdvisoryCouncil.html">www.raleighnc.gov/neighbors/content/CommServices/Articles/CitizensAdvisoryCouncil.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Not clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td><a href="http://www.charlestoncity.info/dept/content.aspx?id=191">www.charlestoncity.info/dept/content.aspx?id=191</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td><a href="http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/SN/abt_sn.html">www.houstontx.gov/planning/SN/abt_sn.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Roanoke</td>
<td><a href="http://www.roanokeva.gov/WebMgmt/ywbase61b.nsf/vwContentByKey/N258WKAZ060SNIIEEN">http://www.roanokeva.gov/WebMgmt/ywbase61b.nsf/vwContentByKey/N258WKAZ060SNIIEEN</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A-1. Do you think the majority of people in your area care about planning and zoning issues?

Do you think the majority of people in your area care about planning and zoning issues?

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. Yes, when it affects what's next to them
2. I think they do, yes
3. They care when it affects them directly, very few concern themselves from a broad county wide perspective
4. I think they care but they feel helpless in fighting local government, they don't believe they have a voice and they feel absolutely helpless to make any changes.

**City of Atlanta**

1. Yes, if it is near to them, otherwise I don’t think that they are very aware of the issues. I think there is a level of awareness in NPU; we have newsletters, pretty much each of the neighborhoods has a newsletter. I think there's an awareness, there's maybe a level of trust- they don’t have time to be involved.
2. Yes they care when it matters
3. Majority-no, but a significant portion care enough to be heard
4. I think that they do, but feel like government is going to do what it wants and it doesn't matter what our voice is
5. Yes I do because people care about what's happening around them.

I 1. Majority no, unless in their backyard, and if they are mostly unaware of process
2. No- busy with everyday lives and not in tune with government
3. No unless very direct impact/little time to research issues/
4. No, I don't think so—most people see it as something that doesn't affect them, or they can't affect the process, or don't know enough
5. NO- the majority of them do not. We have a lot of apartments and they're not really interested; about half of the homeowners may, many of them are struggling too much so that is not on their priority list.
6. I think that most of the people in my area don’t care until something comes up and it affects them
7. I think the vast majority of people in the area do not pay attention to issues like planning and zoning. The number of people I find participating is very few. I think they don't want to be bothered; don't
want to take the time to think about much of anything.
8. I don’t think they care and don’t realize the importance they think its mundane They don’t realize how much it can affect their day to day life.
9. No I don’t think they do until its right on top of them because they have got so many other things they are concerned with.
10. No they are not oriented toward interest beyond their own half or 5 acre plot of land. Only if it immediately threatens them are they going to take the time to see what is going on.

Table A-2 Survey responses about group functions and processes
(two Cobb respondents are in conservation-related orgs rather than neighborhood orgs and did not answer most of the questions below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the County/City come to you with planning/zoning issues or do you always take the initiative to find out information?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rarely, county contacts us; mostly our own initiative</td>
<td>1. City ordinance requires the city to come to the neighborhoods for most zoning, liquor license and city ordinance changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I find out info</td>
<td>2. Yes city comes to us for recommendation to NPU then NPU recommendation taken to ZRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. depends on the zoning or issue</td>
<td>3. They come to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4. Through the NPU, though we also follow most large issues closely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5. Both!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. both</td>
<td>6. They join our meetings on a monthly basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. depends on the staff member, we have good relationships with some who bring issues to us.</td>
<td>7. They send to me as NPU chair each month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. we pick up information from the gov’t center on Austell road and don’t have to go into the city of Marietta</td>
<td>8. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. They email me.</td>
<td>9. So far every time we have had to take the initiative and follow up and follow through with things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. yes, they come to our president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I take initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The county groups have asked us to join study groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. County publishes issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do zoning attorneys and applicants come to you with new applications or do you approach them?

1. 50% either
2. I approach them
3. some approach __prior to filing the application
4. 
5. 
6. both
7. both
8. we approach them
9. They come to us.
10. yes
11. yes, they come to our president
12. 2 applicants in 10 years; attys/applicants ignore us.
13. We approach them
14. We contact them

1. They are sent to us by the City
2. They come to us with filed applications
3. They come to us.
4. To us, on referral from the NPU.
5. Both
6. They approach us through our land use meetings.
7. They come to NPU as a requirement of the City
8. yes
9. We approach them, but Kevin Banks the new zoning director has been very helpful and I think there may be some changes.

Any notable exceptions to the two questions above?

1. no
2. (a nearby larger group) is on the “inside” for zonings, so that keeps up my awareness
3. involvement with applicant seems to be based on appropriateness of information. If not to landuse- they do not come prior to filing.
4. 
5. 
6. no
7. no
8. no
9. no
10. no
11. Sidewalks were removed from the SPLOST work in the northern and southern ends and we found out when it was presented to a business group.
12. 1 applicant came to me; we discussed his project; he withdrew application; county very helpful when WalMart rezoning.

1. no
2. Not unusual for NPU to be approached in advance of filing to “feel out” the neighborhood on prospective development.
3. None (by city charter)
4. no
5. no
6. no
7. n/a
8. no
9. I don’t think so, but it is likely in the future because of the new head of zoning.
Do you weigh in on zoning cases or planning issues that are not regional, but that are outside your boundaries?

1. rarely, much less often than before
2. rarely
3. not in the past
4. 
5. 
6. occasionally
7. yes—large developments close by
8. sometimes if they are close to our boundaries.
9. yes
10. yes
11. yes if large enough impact
12. if it involves water, land use compliance, yes
13. yes
14. no

Occasionally the city asks the opinion of an adjacent NPU on an issue that is a major change or might have an impact.

1. yes
2. yes
3. all within 100 yards (by city charter)
4. Not typically unless requested to by an impacted group.
5. not usually
6. no
7. Yes, if the case is one that will impact city design and environment. Also, if the issues involve a change in process used in a zoning case that could be used in other cases or communities.
8. no
9. Sometimes, i.e. open aired stadium, the closing of the Publix, these are technically not in my area…but this is confusing because some people think it is part of our neighborhood and others don’t think that it should be.

*Is it difficult for you/members to get to planning meetings or zoning meetings?

1. yes
2. working members, yes
3. Yes, especially for hand count
4. Yes
5. N/A
6. Sometimes
7. Difficult for members, not leadership (generally)
8. Yes, we have one member who’s fairly consistent. Others are working.
9. Yes
10. yes
11. Sometimes but we do fairly well.
12. no answer
13. No
14. No

1. No, they are held in the neighborhood.
2. No
3. No
4. Not to our own or the NPU. The BZA meets at 1 on Thursday and that is sometimes a challenge.
5. Not usually
6. No
7. No
8. No
9. Yes, very much—it is hard to know when they are and when you go you often feel like what is the point. Like the last thing I want to do is sit and listen to a gazillion planning and zoning meetings when I don’t really know what they are about.

*NPU responses reflect that NPU meetings are usually, when the City staff attends NPU meetings to make presentations and record NPU issues and votes.

1. No, they are held in the neighborhood.
2. No
3. No
4. Not to our own or the NPU. The BZA meets at 1 on Thursday and that is sometimes a challenge.
5. Not usually
6. No
7. No
8. No
9. Yes, very much—it is hard to know when they are and when you go you often feel like what is the point. Like the last thing I want to do is sit and listen to a gazillion planning and zoning meetings when I don’t really know what they are about.

*Cobb respondents read this as a County hearing, (no official or county-sanctioned neighborhood meetings)
| Do you attend zoning hearings held by the City/County? | 1. Yes when relevant case is up | 1. Yes, City of Atlanta |
| 2. Not unless I'm involved in a case | 2. Yes |
| 3. when necessary | 4. As needed, the NPU sends a rep to the BZA to argue and explain its decision- which are almost always our decisions- and they are almost always upheld, sometimes over the disagreement of the City Planning staff |
| 4. Yes | 5. Yes |
| 5. N/A | 6. Yes |
| 6. Occasionally | 7. Yes |
| 7. Yes, I'm the “alternate” so I attend irregularly | 8. Yes |
| 8. No | 9. No |
| 9. Yes, when necessary | 10. Yes |
| 10 yes | 11. Sometimes, our president tries to attend most. |
| 11. Sometimes, our president tries to attend most. | 12. Yes |
| 12 Yes | 13 Yes |
| 14. Yes | 15. Yes |

| Is it difficult for you to attend those meetings? | 1. yes | 1. Sometimes yes. Several meetings are during the work week so we have to take off work to attend. |
| 2. It was when I was working but not anymore. | 2. yes | 3. no |
| 3. yes | 4. As above (sometimes a challenge) |
| 4. Yes | 5. No |
| 5. N/A | 6. Yes |
| 6. Not usually | 7. No, they are held in the evenings after 5:00pm which makes it hard to get there on time. |
| 7. No- if I had to do it all the time, then yes. | 8. No |
| 8. Yes | 9. Yes |
| 9. Yes | 10. yes |
| 10. yes | 11. Yes, many county meetings are during a weekday when most residents are at work. |
| 11. Yes, many county meetings are during a weekday when most residents are at work. | 12 yes |
| 12 yes | 13. no |
| 13. no | 14. No |

| How do you train new members about Planning Zoning issues? | 1. By example- their zoning case | 1. There is no formal training: people learn the ropes by attending meetings. |
| 2. I don’t. I work through (nearby larger group). | 2. via land use committee |
| 3. Educate them on Robert’s Rules, where to find info from formal annual training, and much one-on-one training. | 3. we do not |
| 4. They volunteer for a period, followed by a county, future land use, comp | 4. They volunteer for a period, followed by a county, future land use, comp |
plan
6. work sessions
7. mentoring
8. talk to them at community development meetings
9. I don’t
10. attend zonings and Cobb leadership meetings
11. Our president provides guidance at meetings and via email and plans to write a manual.
12. n/a
13. small group briefings on specific cases
14. no training provided in our group; (larger group) by working with case managers and attending zoning committee meetings

Do you poll residents on a zoning near their neighborhood? Or do you just decide and make your opinion known to the City/County?

1. Poll neighborhood HOAs leadership or other representative; often multiple HOAs affected
2. no
3. Discuss w/residents if they want to take action. We have to have community support.
4. 
5. 
6. We educate them and then represent their position.
7. No- we generally make our own decision, we will solicit input if we know people in the area.
8. We do bi annual surveys of the residents.
9. yes; poll
10. yes poll
11. Sometimes we poll residents. We try to have representatives from most neighborhoods on our Neighborhood Advisory Committee and would start with them before deciding if a get you deferred at the BZA level every time,

1. All issues are voted on, sometimes at multiple meetings. The majority rules. For example, if there is a rezoning issue, the application will go to the Land Use and Zoning Committee for review and in深度讨论. The committee members take a vote which is a recommendation to the full NPU. Each neighborhood within the NPU also has a monthly meeting at which the application will be voted upon. So if an application is within Grant Park, the Grant Park Neighborhood will vote on it at its monthly meeting. This is also a recommendation to the full NPU. When the full NPU meets it takes into account the recommendations from the other 2 groups when it votes.
2. There is a codified process followed.
3. Yes (by city charter).
4. The meetings are scheduled and open; the immediate neighbors are solicited, and signs are posted. When those criteria are met=we strive to see that they are-then (barring unusual circumstances) we have only minor sympathy for “I didn't know” arguments. If you want to be engaged in civic issues, you have to pay attention. Not posting signs will
poll was needed.
12. if my immediate neighborhood I involve several others.
13. We attend HOA meeting and determine a consensus from each specific assoc.
14. We interface with residents and resident organizations.
   an outcome that when documented we support.
5. We let the NPUs deal with individual issues. APAB deals with city-wide issues unless asked.
6. yes poll residents; not- just decide
7. We poll near by neighborhoods and take a collective vote at NPU meeting. There have been times when we have given the City the opinion of both group if there were differences in opinion.
8. Yes-poll; we get input
9. Usually we talk about it as a neighborhood association and make a list, so I guess that would be polling in a sense—but that is just 12 people not the whole neighborhood.

### Do you have difficulty communicating with older neighborhoods that don't have a mandatory HOA?

1. yes
2. n/a
3. more difficult due to changing 3rd party management
4. no
5. yes
6. Somewhat- but they generally meet even without official HOAs
7. Yes, yes, yes!
8. no
9. Yes, as there is no “key” contact but we’re trying to get on in our Neighborhood Advisory Committee.
10. n/a
11. n/a
12. n/a
13. yes
14. no

### Do neighborhood residents and or HOAs accept your leadership?

1. yes
2. yes
3. yes
4. yes
5. usally
6. yes- when they realize we’re there.
7. They accept ___ and ___ (groups) not any individuals.
8. Some do, some don’t there are lots of small
9. yes
10. most times
11. Often they do, especially if
they agree with our plan. factions and groups in the community. And we
12. I think so; no one else has taken the initiative to keep people informed.
13. yes
14. yes

Table A-3 Group recruitment and retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you recruit new members?</th>
<th>1. working on that</th>
<th>1. Attendance at meetings is entirely voluntary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. ___public meetings and outreach to other nonprofits</td>
<td>2. n/a</td>
<td>3. Since we are a complete democracy, all new members come at will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. word of mouth</td>
<td>4. Observation; word of mouth; challenges to participate to rational unsatisfied citizens.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5. We have not. We depend upon the NPUs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>6. Via neighborhood associations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. we don't recruit</td>
<td>7. Word of Mouth, Calling Post, Internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. word of mouth, website, email newsletter, roadside signs</td>
<td>8. neighborhood assoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. We have chat and chew meetings; we get some involved at large events as well.</td>
<td>9. E-mail, try to invite people, neighborhood night out in August</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. email</td>
<td>10. word of mouth and web site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. word of mouth and website</td>
<td>11. Usually when an issue of concern comes up, we call a meeting in the affected area and publicize it. We invite the developer to meet with residents. At that meeting we encourage them to join.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Usually when an issue of concern comes up, we call a meeting in the affected area and publicize it. We invite the developer to meet with residents. At that meeting we encourage them to join.</td>
<td>12. website provides information re _____</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. website provides information re _____</td>
<td>13. Contact presidents of HOAs to get their appointed reps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Contact presidents of HOAs to get their appointed reps.</td>
<td>14. brochures; word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do you have difficulty replacing members or electing new leadership? | 1. yes | 1. Sometimes |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. turnover not a problem</td>
<td>2. no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. yes- when no 'threats' or development encroaching</td>
<td>3. no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4. yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A-4: Set of questions on group concerns, efficacy, changes needed in process

Do you feel that your community has adequate facilities? Parks, sidewalks, a community center? Are you hopeful that you will get these in the near to mid-term?

Unincorporated Cobb County

1. In the near term we ain’t getting squat given economic conditions; but we have community centers at least in our vicinity- we don’t have nearly enough parks and we don’t have sidewalks.
2. I think that could be improved: all of those items- we don’t have gathering spaces and when our committee has meetings its difficult to come up with a place for community meetings.
3. Parks yes, our community has an abundance of parks based on recent park purchases but our community is also along Kennesaw Battlefield (National Park). Lost Mountain could be considered a community center, but its more geared to sports and rec.
4. No I don’t think that we have adequate facilities. I wish that the county would learn to include a bit of ROW for bike lanes when they do construction, we could all use more sidewalks, we are getting older and even at this late date there are still some very interesting natural resources that ought to be

City of Atlanta

1. There are some areas we have: Grant Park and Brownwood Park; more than a lot of areas in the city but I would say no- people would like more green space I think we would like to have sidewalks everywhere and now when a developer comes in they have to put in sidewalks so if you have 40 acres then you have to; they aren’t everywhere- recreation facility- people would like to see more as well.
We have some but the word adequate- most people would say it is not adequate. Especially now, under budget crunch, quite a few closed, (Mayor) Reed is trying to open them back up.
2. n/a
3. n/a
4. The answer is NO and NO. We do stuff in the community park Summerfest generates money; so we took out a loan and bought an ex library site for parkland. A developer financed it- we have done a combo of grants but we still need a lot more- we have Piedmont, we don’t have enough but bought a little and have Inman School which has some rec space. But not enough coming any time soon. We have good sidewalks but
protected for our future.

5. We do not have adequate community facilities; not adequate sidewalks; not parks. We certainly don’t have community centers.

6. I think there are plenty in Cobb where they are well positioned with sidewalks and facilities for their subdivisions. I think there are plenty places in the more rural areas where they imposed sidewalks where they had not business doing so. There are places severely lacking in infrastructure where they don’t have parks available conveniently to the people who need to use them; many youngsters don’t have the luxury of stay at home parents to get them to parks, so they stay home. I am not happy with what has happened to date with some of the Parks property selection process and I am not happy with the arbitrary imposition of curb sidewalks and gutter because I don’t think it is appropriate; it is poor or no judgment exercised in those areas.

7. We have a lot of facilities; the Silver Comet runs thru, we have a brand new library, in general some of the parks haven’t got the attention that other places have. There is new stuff but there is a huge gap between stuff in the past 15 to 20 years. I’m not convinced about the near to mid term; in my opinion in the last SPLOST I felt like our part of the County wasn’t getting an equal share to other parts of the County. I think that’s a matter of getting involved with the planning process- even then getting those projects on the ground is a long way out.

8. We do have a community center, it has been a blessing, unfortunately its not enough. There is very little in our area for the children to do, (developers) are so busy building that they are not putting a park where children can play. We have an overwhelming number of apartment complexes and very little recreational or after school activity places, we have a boys and girls club but there too – its still not enough. I don’t see it right now- we have gotten an extra sidewalk because of SPLOST, I know that there is a passive park somewhere; no one knows how to get to it, some are in bad shape because of tree growth- legally the homeowners are responsible for sidewalks. many are unwalkable because of tree roots.

7. People want sidewalks; ours is more suburban. outside 295 where we have no sidewalks. Our council member he said, “Are you sure? You can also end up with people you don’t want with sidewalks.” We need to walk our neighborhoods without being endangered: walking in the street or wet muddy yards. We had to really push him on our main thoroughfares

8. No mam- the inner city community- some streets have no sidewalks. Hard to believe- lighting is not appropriate for pedestrian walkways; we have a few parks but lighting is something that is a safety issue.

Q Won't the Beltline help?
They are causing a lot to change; the area will be well lighted, some businesses are being remodeled, and we will have a 1 historic nature trail.
we could use a new playground, maybe baseball, soccer, track, football . . .

9. We don’t have enough parks; we are the least served of any area in Cobb county. We don’t have enough community centers, we don’t have enough facilities for recreation period -and we certainly don’t have enough sidewalks. I’m hopeful that the parks bond will include the parkland we have at Bells Ferry and 575 but I don’t believe that we are going to get anything else.

10. Some places they have it- not that hopeful that anything new will happen.

11. We need sidewalks on Canton Road we did get them on Sandy Plains we do have a community center but its way up Mt View.

12. I think we are very blessed we are getting a brand new one the West Cobb facility and the new park we are getting there. Bullard? That’s going to be alright.

13. Adequate; we have none. Why would we want to protect the land around the watershed that would be absolutely brilliant to do but its never been a priority to the county, they appear to be doing business as usual because there aren’t enough people out here worth saving, so no, it would make too much sense. Instead we’re going to allow almost 1 million sq feet of retail commercial within 1,600 feet of our drinking water supply/And a variance into stream buffers for an underground parking garage.

14. No. Possibly. There is not much green space and no sidewalks; there has been some interest in developing some

Do you feel that your group, as representatives for your community, has a reasonable amount of input and control over the direction of growth in your area?

Unincorporated Cobb County

1. The thing about our area is that there is not a great deal of growth occurring and those situations where we have voiced an opinion I feel that our input did matter. Reasonable is a subjective term; when larger issues #1 being transportation, I don’t think we have that much control.

City of Atlanta

1. Yes a reasonable amount usually

2. Proud of our first completed neighborhood Master Plan. The City Council approved and it will go into the CDP of the city. All 50 pages is now codified and developers now have a road map; everyone now has the vision. We have a progressive neighborhood and recognize the value of growth and community
2. N/A
3. It depends on what the growth is- our area was hit very hard with RSL (residential senior living) and while we understand the need for RSL, it also takes LDR and VLDR and turns it into MDR so we gave a lot of pushback as far as putting MDR next to LDR. It is viewed as a way of urbanizing suburban areas. Even though we heard a lot of things that made you think that it would not be a burden, people are working past 55 and not retiring.
4. My initial experience in Cobb County was when I became aware of changes near the Chattahoochee, seeing a zoning sign. I went to the county commission and attempted to get plans for a sewer line on Rottenwood Creek. I spoke for 15 seconds before Barrett interrupted me and said, “We aren’t going to change our plans to save a tree”, but I wasn't discouraged, and I must accent that.
5. Those aren’t the types of issues that my neighborhood typically addresses so we don’t address growth, planned or unplanned.
6. I believe _____ has a reasonable amount of input and influence; I would not suggest that we have any control over it. There is a five person Planning Commission and five person BOC that has control.
7. In ___ so much of the development is going to be redevelopment which will be densification- we try to use the county land use map.
8. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, you win a few you lose a few.
9. Not at all; we need more meetings, more emails, more DOT interest.
10. Most of the time it depends on who is our commissioner. (laughs)
11. I don’t think we have been challenged enough yet in that area to know how successful we will be but my gut level feeling is if somebody with a lot of money and power came in it would be real difficult.
12. NO. The county does not consider us. The county has decided what is going to go in this area and we are an area that can be sacrificed for more limited development in other areas.

development. We are not afraid of it.

3. Absolutely. NPU _ was the only one to turn down the BeltLine Master Plan.
4. We have some influence we don’t have the capital so we are usually reactive. We have some- the city has some tools in place that allows citizens to shape things in a future way; you are better off trying to hold something to its plan.

We pay a ton of attention to our comprehensive development plan and to zoning and land use reflected in the CDP. Its a 3 legged stool between government and community and capital. We’re not without the ability to have some influence- we can at least shape the direction if not control it.
5. Sigh, NO. Basically because of the fact that we have not been fully engaged in seeking resources for the kind of growth that we may want and we are just now beginning to get to that point. Not really seeking so that we ended up with the kind of growth that we were not really pleased with and sometimes not at all.
6. C_y yes, because R_ is involved. He is the biggest property owner and we have good leadership now.
7. N/A
of the county because we are small in number and in area. But what happens here impacts everyone in Cobb county, Paulding county and Bartow county and actually Cherokee county too.

13. Well we have not been tested, I can’t put it that way- I can’t give you a firm yes or no. Most of the land in our immediate area has already been zoned and approved for subdivision development. Undecided because we lack data to support any position. We are still country..

14. No, I don't think we have reasonable control, I think we have very little if any control.

Do you feel that your elected officials favor developers over neighborhoods in zoning issues?

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. Yes. It does seem that the developer has the upper hand when it comes to development.

2. Absolutely, not much else to say- I will qualify I feel that for a number of reasons developers have the upper hand- I believe that developers being a business entity pay staff and attorneys as part of cost of doing business and developers not having to pay the long term cost of their development inherently are at an advantage there- if over all costs are low even when you consider the resources they expend to lobby county officials on their behalf. Volunteer organizations are “staffed” by people who have to make a living doing other things, by people who do other things and don’t have the resources that developers do. I think it only natural that the govt. would favor developers.

3. Absolutely, no question. Yes, (laughs),

4. Its pretty clear that they do so.

5. Our commissioner is fairly newly elected so the jury is still out. But generally most of the commissioners including the chairman favor developers over neighborhoods.

6. No I believe for the most part the elected officials in Cobb County are in support of the

**City of Atlanta**

1. No not usually. Even if it is large like the Edgewood development- we were asked for our opinion on it. The neighborhood was able to give a lot of input into design I think that would have happened regardless partly because of zoning; it was zoned in a way (former GA Power site) that the developers could have done anything they wanted. The City did send developers into neighborhoods to get input- but yes, something was going to happen there regardless. Because of our structure the city said: you have to go find out what neighborhood thinks

A rezoning has to be voted on by the neighborhood; they are pretty good about it (the city)

2. We can still influence the outcome and have the voice to get conditions that make it livable.

3. It depends on what part of the city. As long as it is on Peachtree, developers know its OK. The city council approves 94% of NPU proposals up or down.

4. Well by and large certainly- they give them money, arrange for other money right now I don't feel that way about (our council person) who is a tremendously principled person. They (other council members) are showboating idiots- (Our council member) is a straight ahead person. He comes to 2/3rds of our meetings.

5. For the most part, it depends on who the developer is and what the development is.

6. That's a hard one. ah, I think that is changing just a little but I feel like yeah in the long run because they are
neighborhoods and homeowners.
7. Probably yes, we have a new commissioner, he has a developer background. Everyone is always willing to listen to us.
8. I do.
9. Yes absolutely don’t ask me why.
10. Yes in most cases. Why do I feel that is the case? I can tell you why—one county commissioner said in particular, “Voters do not get you elected, business owners get you elected.” Although other commissioners in Cobb do feel that voters elect them.
11. Absolutely they do, or ours does.
12. Yes. Well depends on the developer. Um, there is definitely developers who are preferred by Cobb county and are given a pass, especially in this area, and there are those that the County uses our opposition to fight the battle for them. Example: the decision regarding WalMart being denied, and the same parcel being approved for a higher density much more intense commercial use than a WalMart would have been.
13. If I were to assess the comments that I have documented for 4 years; the comments were “when is enough enough”. The answer is yes, some councilmen have a reputation of loving a developer and his proposed subdivision. I feel that is unfair, very much so. Keep in mind that our economy locally, very much financed by growth and the construction trades.

When you have been a participant in a planning initiative or large zoning case, have you ever felt that the City or County had a desired outcome, regardless of citizen input?

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. I guess the real big cases that we have had have come out to our favor, and the county did uphold the land use plan. Most recent case that was big and drew support; we were questioning if they would uphold, but the always conscious of tax base and revenue and their stance is to always work with the developer as long as what they are doing is not too outlandish.
7. I feel if the neighborhood doesn’t have a voice the elected official will side with who is present.

**City of Atlanta**

1. Uummm yes but it hasn’t been to the extent where the entire neighborhood didn’t want it. We have had situations where the neighborhood voted and put in certain specs for development and the city allowed the developer to do something different. The city has what's
applicant ended up withdrawing.

2. Yes; the county has opinion/policy makers- humans have opinions about what should and should not go thru and that’s fine. However, the interests of the community in addition to those of developer need to be served by elected officials or policy makers as I like to call them.

3. Yes, um hmm (off the record example given).

4. Well I think that goes without saying there are many examples when the county BOC or staff regard the citizens and input as an inconvenience.

5. Always I always felt that the outcome was predetermined and citizen input was just window dressing.

6. Generally the county tries to do what’s right for the majority- but individual commissioners may take a position in opposition.

7. Yes I think just like us, a lot of BOC and PC have an opinion, I think they use us to get those improvements made, have a desired outcome to not get sued after case goes thru.

8. I would say pretty much all of them sound like a done deal but in final analysis if we can make it more palatable we go for that. That’s the only way I can put it.

9. Well when it came to the Big Shanty /Hidden Forest subdivision they definitely had an agenda; they didn’t care what we thought, it was all big money and power.

10. Yes. WalMart. (laughs)

11. Yes most of the time.

12. Absolutely, laughs. I’ve got 2.5 years of litigation to prove it. Laughs. Oh gosh.

People don’t think that this kind of thing could happen to them in Cobb County. That’s a real issue.

13. No. Because they listen and responded.

14. I think we just saw one situation that falls into that category; they listened but didn’t hear. A motion was made to put it off- and when it came back, it was obvious that a decision had been made.
Do you feel that your group is a respected partner in the governance of Cobb City of Atlanta?

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. Yes I feel ___ is very respected within the County- in many instances the County will send an applicant before they even file to talk with us to see if we will have reservations.
2. I think our group when it does exercise its engagement is reasonably respected.
3. Yes. We have been received well any time we have talked to our commissioner or the Chairman, the staff always treats us very respectfully and professionally.
4. Ah . . . we suffer from a perception that a group such as ours interested in the quality of life must be a bunch of nuts, but we have earned respect by managing our efforts in several elections and producing results.
5. I think that my input is received, I am not sure that I am a partner or that my level of involvement rises to the level of participation in governance.
6. Yes I think ___ is well respected by those who govern both from a Commission level and staff level.
7. Yes we have very good relationships with Community Development staff; with our Commissioner, Planning Commissioner, code enforcement staff. When we go meet with them they tell us they appreciate our input and tell us we are reasonable participants in the process.
8. Yes, I think so.
9. Somewhat .Well I've been writing with _ on the issue of the road on Bells Ferry with widening and turn lanes and he puts me off and puts me off and puts me off and I've asked him for a meeting and he says I will call and doesn't; he's non responsive.
10. With most of Cobb county staff but there again the commissioner could be the issue.
11. Yes I think I've seen a lot of respect largely due to our president.
12. Not by county officials no.
13. Yes, in that we have met with county

**City of Atlanta**

1. laughs Usually yes we have some members that have reputations; well known reputations with the city of being difficult or unruly even, I think we have some individuals that are not well respected, but I think the group as a whole is, yes.
2. Yes, we like to think it (the city) respects the whole neighborhood. Not all of them are- if your neighborhood is out of control and gets sideways-its not unheard of to lose that level of respect.
3. For the most part the City looks at NPU_ as NIMBYs.
4. We certainly respect ourselves. That's variable- our colleagues respect us. We are obviously viewed by some people as a big pain in the butt like other community groups. At the same time there are some developers who actually do try to work with the community and try to plan with them and anticipate. We appreciate that a lot
5. Not yes or no. Rating it on a 1 to 10 scale, rate it 4; it varies with issue to issue. (Cited street name changes by City).
6. Yes we built the partnership with the executive council in each neighborhood. We set up meetings and Council knows where we are coming from to let them know we are being proactive.
7. When it comes to governance the City doesn't inform us on any issues related to governance they just kind of do until we complain. At that point we ask. In terms of planning they include us more in the overall process of planning. In terms of the governance and day to day services- no we are not included in decisions.
commissioners, with state DOT leadership and they have listened to us and responded.

14. Probably not. Our association was founded not because there was a demand by residents, but it was born by the planning commissioner and county commissioner for District __; because it serves his purposes and because he wants a foil against ____.

If you could change the system to make it easier for citizens to be active, what changes would you make for neighborhood groups?

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. **Survey:** Stricter vetting of zoning applications to reduce the number of “unreasonable” requests and/or call for more stipps before application is accepted.

**Interview:** Stricter vetting of applications. A lot of what happens in applications has to do with interacting with the developer to come up with an acceptable set of stipps. The neighborhood groups have to be the only ones getting those stipps onto an application. It seems like most are common sense, that an entity other than neighborhood activists should be able to come up with reasonable stipulations. It's just a negotiation so the developer comes in with unreasonable stipulations, understanding that they will have to give up, but they start up in a position that is unreasonable and community activists will require them to give up; it should be up to county to do this.

2. **Survey:** Haven't given it much thought. It would be nice to have information readily available and have a system to learn how cases proceed, for people who want to be involved.

**Interview:** Well pretty obvious; if we could have NPUs like Atlanta, ideally that would be to our advantage.

3. **Survey:** Set specific time for case to be heard; allow electronic opinion to count as “present” or take this portion away.

**City of Atlanta**

1. **Survey:** I would like the City of Atlanta to have a better website describing the agendas for the city's Zoning Review Board and Board of Zoning Adjustment meetings.

**Interview:** I would make it easier to um find or to locate agendas for the BZA and ZRB. I would like to have access to upcoming agendas and have them set further in advance and better access and that's about it.

2. **Survey:** no answer given

**Interview:** I would like the system (City IT and GIS) to be as inclusive technology-wise as the political process.

Everybody that needs access should be able to log in and add comments, upload photos.

3. **Survey** I would start the meetings earlier, ½ hour to 6:30 pm
Interview: Every NPU gets to write their own charter; I would make the NPUs uniform.

Interview: Things aren’t going to get easier for neighborhood groups because people aren’t educated about things; we have all become more educated because of the time spent. It’s almost as if they have made the process too difficult so that the average citizen won’t or can’t get involved. The general public isn’t going to take the time to learn the ins and outs—guidelines and complaints are too much info for the average citizen to really care about. There has been a shift in our society—like not what's best for the county, it’s what’s best for me.

4. Survey: Evening meetings (BOC, PC) Town Hall meetings

Interview: Evening meetings would be very helpful; more town hall meetings would be helpful. The basis of the problem is we need more people involved in electoral politics, the parties that get attention when decisions get made already have a supporting relationship to the parties making the decision.


Interview: Change communications and require decision-makers to respond (in writing) why or why not decisions are made. Publish explanations if the decision doesn’t make sense, but this can have political consequences.

5. Survey: Better communications

Interview: The change I would make in the city would have code enforce their own buildings. We can barely get them to enforce when we have physical evidence and have to follow and push. The process works great for us but doesn’t work for a lot of people. Do-it-yourself govt. is great if you make 120K and have college grads who can write grants; but (that is not the case in) SE Atlanta. NPU doesn’t always work for poor neighborhoods: unresponsive city staff and the NPU needs competent caring council members. Cynthia McKinney wrote of the irony of black citizens complaining about no trash pickup, to black council members, in a black city—when whites in Buckhead get better trash pickup.

5. Survey: Generally, notification of issues regardless of type (zoning, DOT, local projects, etc) is very poor. Meetings should be after normal business hours.

Interview: I’m not totally informed about the whole process from county's eyes. I would institute more formal and public notice being required of any meetings; I would encourage the county to prohibit putting anything that affects neighborhoods on the Consent Agenda;
I would require advance notice of meetings by some method other than posting on the website.
I would recommend that county publish a list of projects to the community well in advance of the project.
I would require that public meetings be held at hours and locations where the majority of citizens could attend.
All this should happen before the foregone conclusion that the project go forward.

6. **Survey**: Schedule zoning meetings in the evening.

**Interview**: The 2 things that I would do; I would cause the BOC zoning meetings to occur in the evening as opposed to mornings so to minimize the impact on people having to leave work in order to represent themselves. Second, I think there are ways today with today's public technologies where the communications between BOC and staff and PC and citizens could be done much more completely and effectively prior to the public hearing rather than trying to squeeze a bunch of information into a short time at the Commission meeting.
I don’t like time limitations that are placed on each side in the hearings because I think that sometimes it is extremely constraining for those that are trying to protect the community; also to attorneys trying to present a case. Sometimes they have to abbreviate important parts of presentation. They attempt to squeeze 10 pounds of info into a 5 lb bag.
Also a lot of misunderstanding that occurs on public side, is a result of receiving insufficient information from staff or BOC.

7. **Survey**: Require zoning applicants to hold informational meetings regarding their zonings, not just send out letters; and include community groups in this process.

**Interview**: Similar to what Atlanta requires

6. **Survey** Automate the City on the web, making zoning/regulations/processes easier to find and explicit.

**Interview**: no interview given

7. **Survey**: Have documents (zoning, ordinances, text amendments) mailed to each resident prior to the meetings to allow for adequate review.

Allow more time for citizen review of ordinances before Council Votes.
for NPUs to hold a public meeting; don’t just send out a letter, include “we will have people here to answer questions”. Have it close, I think invite community groups that were active so that they know; that’s how I found MIC by the way. A lot of developers aren’t going to do that- they would give out presentations when they were wrong. Being collaborative helps you while it gets the community more involved and helps for advertising the groups.

More education to citizens about ordinance amendments and language.

City needs to mail notices to all residents reminding them of NPU meetings. Currently on 500 mailings each month is allow for each NPU. The city should provide a marketing information piece about the NPU system and mail to each city address annually. Many residents in Atlanta are unaware of the NPU system.

Interview: Somehow to build up trust between govt and its citizens; there is a lack of trust. Govt doesn’t trust citizens with certain information to make intelligent decisions.

Our biggest problem is not city hall but we have to get tighter ordinances when it comes to development-developers need to stop the practice of clearing a street; they have to be financially solvent (before they are allowed to begin).

Infill is an issue; developers just put put up a shell and walked away.

8. Survey: Honestly, I don't know what kind of change would get our members more involved. If they feel threatened, they'll take off to come to a meeting. If not, they know the one representative who goes to the meetings will be their voice

Interview: I would like to see the county go into the communities more; I know they have their town hall meetings and that’s good, but they’re very general. But if something very specific is coming that would help, plus we do have some transportation issues in our area as well. Then it would have to be in the evening, and then we would need babysitting as well.

8. Survey: I would have more people informed; a lot of people have no idea about NPUs.

Interview: I would ask the city to take part in informing citizens that neighborhoods (have access to NPU).

People aren’t sure what NPU they live in, that’s. really sad because some of them have been around longer than I have been alive. Kind of sad. . . Some residents know .

Yes; code enforcement is a major problem. The code enforcement people in the city are scared of doing anything. (getting shot, etc) (without a police escort)

There are 10 houses open and vacant and all burned out from squatters lighting candles. Half a block has to be demolished because of the lack of response. I took it a step further (and contacted) my council person and the code supervisor.

The excuse I got (was that the city couldn't find the owners). (So we are getting) a real estate person to find the owners.

We are meeting with Mayor Reed, Code enforcement and also police. Code Enforcement officers have fear
because they don’t know what they are walking into-there needs to be a better system in place.

10. **Survey**: No Answer given

**Interview**: Be able to have a vote of no confidence against the current commissioner and have it be public record.

11. **Survey**: A coordinated county-wide division so that all residents were covered by one group instead of either no group or several groups. County support for organization and meeting would also help.

**Interview**: One thing they could do: the meetings in the evening instead of the workday so that more people could come- at least they can do a headcount and let you leave.

12. **Survey**: Most people are only willing to sign petitions unless its WalMart.

**Interview**: #1 County ordinances have to be changed NO rezoning application should be permissible that is not in compliance with the Comp Land use plan, and until the comp plan is changed. After extensive input from the community, then and only then should an applicant be allowed to submit an application.

#2 Adjacent property owners should not be restricted from making comments during the plan review process. Watershed protection should be taken seriously, not allowing politics to give developers a pass to the extent that environmental protection at any cost has to be accomplished rather than them not being required to do anything other than county minimums. For instance we need stream bank restoration-I don’t want them to walk away because its too expensive- bottom line, if you don’t have the money to do over and above what the county minimums are for the county drinking water, don’t come. There have to be better practices around watersheds, is what it amounts too.
13. Survey: Within Cobb County we have not had difficulty in getting an audience for our point of view. Department Heads have been available to us.

Interview: Wee hard to answer that. There is a lot of material presented to the public in the daily paper and Cobb. I don’t think the system is flawed enough that you would want to push a reform platform. I say there is an apathy; the public has bought into Reagan-omics: governments are too big, got to dismantle. I don’t buy that.

14 Survey: No answer given

Interview: I'm not sure because frankly, I haven't had that much experience in neighborhood and community issues.

Table A-5 Which experiences in the community stand out for you?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Survey/Interview</th>
<th>Unincorporated Cobb County</th>
<th>City of Atlanta</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any episodes such as a zoning or encounter with an elected official that stand out in your experience, for better or worse?</td>
<td>1. That stands out? Not sure what you are wanting to know; they all do . . . The one that required a lot of my time and involvement (the zoning), I didn’t agree with the decision and I bird dogged that property to make sure that the developer met every single stipulation and qualification so that I could feel like that property could be treated the best that it could be under the system. 2. It could be anything from being told to sit down to having that Commissioner Barrett, when asked what he thought about that fellow ____, threw his hat down and stomped on it Gosh. 3. Probably the worst have been with the Chairman who on numerous different projects has told me that I am pushing too hard and being obnoxious by my opposition to his plan.</td>
<td>1. We lost big-time on the parking structure at Piedmont Park, at the Botanical Garden. It cost A F. The BeltLine issue is an ongoing issue. 2. I guess the answer is no- a lot of mid-level moments- botanical garden yes, but otherwise generally speaking no. 3. They changed/ renamed the streets- without consulting the neighbors We came together as a NPU to show its not fair to business and residents; and to show that there are ways to honor people besides slapping a street name.. They had a ceremony and didn’t invite the community – kind of insulting- 4. So I tried in the city to work on a master plan. I had started harassing K H from the day he was elected- that we needed a comprehensive plan and he actually helped Old 4th Ward get updated and he paid for it. Laughs- he was scared I was going to run against him.</td>
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4. I was once reprimanded when I was speaking in a public hearing before the BOC; I was reprimanded by one of Commissioners. I thought it was to be disruptive to my presentation rather than having any legal merit, to break my stride I don’t think I will ever forget that.

5. Was when ex -commissioner had a big argument with us at one of our meetings because she wanted an apt. complex, a new one, to be built and we had established a moratorium on new apt complexes, and she was rude and insisted that this was what we needed and we reached an impasse. Prior to that we had a fairly good relationship.

6. Hidden Forest one is the biggest negative I’ve seen. When it came to the Big Shanty /Hidden Forest subdivision they definitely had an agenda; they didn’t care what we thought- it was all big money and power.

7. Laughs, But I don’t think you’ve got enough time. Z 164 was contested and went to GA Supreme Ct. Z 164, the litigation- obviously all cases go to Cobb Superior Court- the dismissal by Cobb Superior is what prompted us to file an appeal that was accepted by the Supreme Ct, but the SC issue was not about zoning it was about due process. Zoning cases are a discretionary appeal, they can accept or reject, the appeal was based on lack of process afforded us by Cobb Superior Ct as a result the SC ruled in our favor unanimously forcing Cobb Superior Ct to hear our case. The remand order is because the applicants refused to settle . It becomes a consent order but is not a settlement agreement. I never would have dreamed that folks
would go to the lengths to get what they wanted as these folks have done.
8. That would be one thing for better when J K called me in relation to a zoning, I was able to honestly tell him what I thought. T L has never done that. There is the time when we went down to talk to A K and she really didn’t seem to understand. She truly didn’t understand the whole lot.
9. In this county no.
10. Yeah the day that Gordon Wysong told us; me and a whole group of 15 standing there that we might as well get used to it because that’s the way it is- and there wasn’t anything we could do about it- I told him yes there was that actually we stood behind who stood the best chance in the next election and we were going to kick his ass.
11. I know there’s been times when it feels like its been difficult to communicate with our district commissioner. Its not always prompt. As far as staff, they are always willing to provide info and guidance and let us know where to find additional info; they return emails fairly quickly. Our planning commissioner is very prompt in responding to questions.
12. Our old commissioner: I got called to a meeting that she was having, applicants and attorneys; after several years on the job she didn’t have any idea of process.
13. Haven’t had any that I would say; for worse. The chairman of the planning commission goes out of his way to be understanding and helpful.
14. Not in that many zonings or land use plans, but the first one was major, trial by fire. In the end the planning commission voted twice
5-0 in our favor and commission voted 5-0 in our favor, but it was such a huge effort in terms of our time and cost.

**Responses to Survey/Interview**

**Unincorporated Cobb County**

1. That first zoning case we did; pulling together a lot of information and presenting it in a way that was persuasive. And another one when the district commissioner was hellbent on getting the thing approved, and the vast majority of community opposed. We prevailed.

2. Hoping that I have done something good for the community that will preserve what we have for future generations and to let people know that they do have a voice and a say in their community for things that transpire through development or preservation.

3. Getting the Metro River Protection Act passed.

4. Most proud of the current commitment of Cobb voters to procure green space for the county's future, be it Hyde Farm or other places.

5. I suppose the biggest achievement was the role I played in preventing the Bullard property from being commercially developed.

6. I think the relationship that our group has with the county, particularly Planning; the fact that we are _ years old and finally getting to point where staff will call us, because we are respected as a group.

7. When we could not stop a convenience store/gas station from coming into the community but we were able to stop them from getting a beer and wine license; that was a happy moment like ha ha ha ha.

**City of Atlanta**

1. Proudest? Grant Park Historic designation- that's an overlay zoning. That by far is the most beneficial that I was involved in.

2. Yeah- after 10 years of service in NPU_, relief- I don't have to be at every meeting now; feel liberated. It rests on everyone's shoulders now. I am off the hook.

3. Keeping highways and major developers at bay.

4. I don’t know- the joke about environmentalism your victories last 5 years your defeats last forever- we got Neighborhood Commercial in VAHI, that's an accomplishment.

5. Proudest of educating others about the process and building partnerships; education in terms of educating citizens in the role of departments of govt within the city and state and where it is that citizen engagement would be most effective.

6. As an activist - instilling pride in citizens in their property- some people had been there 30 or 40 years had lost hope- now they are in their yards planting flowers- they see how it can have a good effect on quality of life.

7. Longevity.
8. Well the one that stands out for better is when they didn’t widen Bells Ferry; the fact that we managed to prevent them from widening Bells Ferry Road, which would have impacted a lot of homeowners.

9. When I made a presentation to the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners, (they decided in our favor) I felt like I had made an important contribution that was in the best interests of the community.

10. Getting an elected official out of office that was patronizing condescending and smug towards you- you can make a difference-

11. I think for (group) I think the __ Architectural Guidelines stand out as something that we were able to spearhead and have made part of the development plan by the county.

12. No I cannot wave the flag and say this is a tremendous victory. We were able to get the DOT to spend money and listen but it was a subtle quiet thing.

13. I don’t consider myself an activist, I consider myself a concerned homeowner who is willing to make stands regardless of the opposition it doesn’t matter who the players are; it doesn’t matter how big they are how much money the have, how much political influence they have, right is right and wrong is wrong, the county is supposed to be representative of those who elect them and it is rarely those who they support.

14. So ultimately because I got in the way so many times, it made it difficult for them to follow thru with that development, it ended up
that the developer wanted to drop the project so it got nominated for Parks and Cobb County bought it.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Survey Questions
Please provide short answers to the questions. Try to answer as many of the questions as you can. If you are unsure about how to answer, you may leave the question blank. If you do not want to answer a question, you may also leave it blank.

Age        Race         Gender
Circle one:
Annual Household Income: $10-25K $26-50K
$51-100K over $100k

Education HS Some college 2 yr degree 4 year degree Some graduate school Graduate degree

Political Affiliation: D R Ind. Green Libertarian

Religious Affiliation Frequency of attendance

Civic Association memberships (Kiwanis, Sierra Club, Rotary, etc

Tell us about your Neighborhood group
Name of Community based/Neighborhood Organization:
When was it founded? Incorporated as GA Nonprofit? Tax Exempt?
When did you join?
How many neighborhoods do you represent?
How many households/homeowners or approximate number of people live within the boundaries of your neighborhood organization?
Do you have dues paying memberships?  Voluntary?  Other funding sources?

Is your group an “umbrella organization”?

How many subgroups or HOAs in your area?

Please provide short answers:

* **Cobb only**: How did your organization decide on its boundaries?

* **Cobb only**: Do you feel that County Staff, Planning Commissioners and Commissioners respect your jurisdiction?

* **Cobb only**: Do they ever make exceptions or ignore your jurisdiction?

* **Cobb only**: Do your boundaries overlap with the area “covered” by other groups?

* **Cobb only**: Does this cause confusion or problems of representation?

Does the County/City come to you with planning/zoning issues or do you always take the initiative to find out information?

Do zoning attorneys and zoning applicants come to you with new applications, or do you approach them?

Any notable exceptions to the two questions listed above?

Do you know of any areas in your commission district/NPU that are not covered or represented by an organization?

**Rank from 1 to 5 with 1 being not satisfied and 5 being very satisfied**

How satisfied are you with the representation and attention paid to your group/area/neighborhood by:

County/City staff; Planning, Zoning, DOT, Code Enforcement

Planning Commissioner

Commissioner/Council member
Please provide short answers to these questions about your group.

How many members on your Board?   Number of Committees?

How many ACTIVE members?

How do you recruit new members?

How do you train them in Planning/Zoning issues?

How long do they stay active?

Does your group have the necessary staff to represent all neighborhoods in your area?

Do you experience problems with burnout?

Do you have difficulty replacing members or electing new leadership?

How many men in your group?   How many women?

What age ranges?

What is the average age of your active members?

Is it difficult for you/members to get to planning meetings or zoning meetings?

Please answer Yes or No and add a brief comment if necessary.

Do you poll residents on a zoning near their neighborhood?  Or do you just decide and make your opinion known to The City of Atlanta/Cobb County?

Do you have difficulty communicating with older neighborhoods that don’t have mandatory HOAs?

Do neighborhood residents and/or HOAs accept your leadership?

Are you usually in agreement on planning/zoning issues?

Do you weigh in on zoning cases or planning issues that are not regional, but that are outside your boundaries?

Do you attend zoning hearings held by the City/County?

Is it difficult for you to attend those meetings?
If you could change the system to make participation easier for your members, what changes would you make?
Title: A comparative analysis of participatory governance: the City of Atlanta and neighboring Cobb County, Georgia

Principal Investigator: Parama Roy, Ph.D.
Student PI Carol J Brown

Purpose:
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of citizens who are active in community planning and zoning issues in Atlanta and Cobb County. We hope to find out which kinds of policies make it easy for citizens to be involved in planning and zoning issues in their community. You are invited to participate because you are active in planning and zoning issues in your community. A total of thirty participants will be recruited for this study.

Participation will take approximately thirty minutes of your time in a mapping exercise to be conducted between June 2009 and June 2010.

II. Procedure:
If you decide to participate, you will:
Be asked to draw the outline of your group’s area on a map.
There will be a brief explanation of the research at the beginning of the mapping exercise.
A summary of the results will be sent to all participants.
You will not be paid to participate in this research.

III. Risks:
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:
Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to find out which kinds of policies make it easy for citizens to be involved in planning and zoning issues in their community.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:
We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. We will use a study number rather than your name on study records. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). Only Carol Brown and Dr. Roy will have access to the information you provide. It will be stored at the residence of Carol Brown and on password- and firewall-protected computers. The study number will be stored separately from the data to protect privacy. The study number will be stored for possible future research purposes.

Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:
Contact Dr. Parama Roy at 404-413-5779, geoprr@langate.gsu.edu and Carol Brown at 678-797-O275, ebrown89@student.gsu.edu, if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:
We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research please sign below.

________________________________________
Participant Date

________________________________________
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Consent Form Approved by Georgia State University IRB February 03, 2010 - July 14, 2010