Preserving Place: A Grounded Theory of Citizen Participation in Community-Based Planning

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Preserving Place: A Grounded Theory of
Citizen Participation in Community-Based Planning

by

Pamela Jo Hatley

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Joe, my son. You’re 14 years old and it seems like I have been in school your entire life. I hope I have set a good example to you for lifelong learning. I also dedicate this work to Steele, my life partner. Thank you both for being patient with me.
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Abstract

For this research project I used grounded theory methodology and qualitative research methods to examine how and why citizens participated in local community-based planning and land development entitlement processes, and learn about their experiences participating in those processes. I conceptualized the citizens’ main concern as preserving the character of the place they consider their community. This research demonstrates that citizens participate in community-based planning and land development entitlement processes out of a concern for preserving the character of their communities. They define the character of their communities in terms of their geographic boundaries, history, traditions, people, lifestyle, and qualitative features including land uses, architecture, terrain, and environmental attributes. “Preserving Place” refers to citizens’ efforts to maintain the character of their communities as they know and embrace them.

Citizens participate in collaborative community-based planning because they believe the process affords them an opportunity to set public policy that directly impacts their lives and their communities. Likewise, citizens participate in land development decision-making and entitlement processes in an effort to ensure that land use decisions are consistent with their community plan and preserve their community’s character. Citizens form networks, such as voluntary community organizations, through which they organize their efforts and mentor
each other to learn about complex local government land use processes and how to participate in them effectively. Through their network organizations citizens also marshal resources when necessary to mount formal legal actions in response to land development decisions they perceive as inconsistent with their community plan and their community’s character.

Citizens who participate in local government land use processes are often pejoratively called “activists” and accused of being “anti-growth” or “NIMBY” (Not-In-My-Back-Yard). However, this research shows the main concern of citizens who participate in the community-based planning and other land use processes is not to oppose growth and development in their communities; but rather to plan for growth and development and ensure they occur in a way that respects and preserves what the citizens know as the character of the places they consider their communities.

I collected data from public records of community-based planning workshops and other land use decision-making processes that affected three communities in Hillsborough County, Florida between 1998 and 2011. I analyzed public record archives and interviewed 22 citizens, all of whom had participated in community-based planning or plan review processes and land development entitlement processes. The model that emerged from the data in this research demonstrates how significant the character of a community is to the people who embrace the community and consider it their home, and how their concern for preserving the character of their community motivates people to get involved in land use policies that affect them. The model further demonstrates the capacity
of citizens to organize their efforts to defend and preserve their community’s character.

This research contributes to the literature on citizen participation by providing an explanatory model that demonstrates how and why citizens participate in local government land use processes. This research can also be applied to practice to improve collaborative processes and help local government land use policy makers and land developers understand the motivations behind citizen participation in land use processes, and thus how to approach the resolution of conflicts among citizens, planners, local governments, private landowners and land development interests.
Chapter One:

Introduction

“Progress can't be held back, and we’re not trying to turn back the clock, but we want the progress to be slow, and we want the progress to be effective, and we want the progress to keep our community rural.” – Keystone-Odessa research participant “Betty.”

This research used grounded theory methodology and qualitative research methods to examine how and why citizens participated in a collaborative community-based planning process aimed at formulating visions for the future growth and development of their communities. These visions were expressed in community-based plans, which became formal public policy when the local government adopted them as part of its overall comprehensive plan. This research examines how and why these citizens became involved in community-based planning and land development entitlement processes, how they understood these processes and their roles in them, the ways they found to marshal their resources and coordinate their efforts to participate in these processes, the many conflicts and challenges they encountered and continue to encounter in these processes, and how the citizens have organized to confront the conflicts and challenges.

The above quote by Betty, one of the citizens interviewed for this research, succinctly encapsulates the research participants’ main concern, which
I conceptualized in the form of an explanatory model. I named this model “Preserving Place” in reference to the meaning people assign to, and the bonds they develop with, the place they have come to think of as their community. The Preserving Place model explains how the research participants understood and attached meaning to their community’s character or personality, which in turn motivated them to embrace their community’s character, become active as members of their community, and to organize and act collectively in an effort to preserve their community’s character by participating in community planning and land development entitlement processes.

Figure 1.1 Diagram of Preserving Place model.

**Research Context**

The context of this research is a collaborative, community-based planning program in Hillsborough County, Florida. The county initiated the community-
based planning program in 1998, and adopted the first community plans in 2001. The program has been embraced by many residents of the affected communities; however the program has become the subject of increasing criticism and political attack. Its primary critics are property rights advocates, “Tea Party” activists, landowners, real estate and development industry interests, and even an appointed planning commissioner with ties to the real estate development industry. Moreover, these same sources also criticize the citizens who participated in and advocate for the program, calling them “activists” “anti-growth,” and “NIMBY.”

At the same time, the citizen participants who advocate for community-based planning assert that landowners and developers are greedy and self-serving, interested only in lining their pockets by raping the land and then leaving. This research asks why and how citizens participate in community planning and land development entitlement processes, and examines their experiences participating in such processes. In a fundamental way, this research is also aimed at the heart of the conflicts that arose during these planning and land use processes because it examines the interactions of citizen participants, local government policy makers, landowners, and developers.

The broader context of this study is the Florida growth management program, pursuant to which local comprehensive planning in Florida occurs. The state growth management program mandates that all Florida counties and municipalities must adopt comprehensive plans that guide their future development and growth. After some thirty years of growth management in
Florida, the program in recent years has been the focus of criticism and even legislative actions to reduce its regulatory reach. Moreover, the 2010 elections seated a governor and state legislators who were openly critical of the state land planning agency and the growth management program in general. As a result, the 2011 legislature made significant changes to the former Growth Management Act, now the “Community Planning Act.” These changes reduced state oversight and left local governments with greater procedural and substantive control over their own growth management and comprehensive planning options.

**Research Focus**

The focus of this research is citizen participation in public policy making processes, in particular collaborative community-based planning, and in land development entitlement processes. I embarked on this research path carrying two assumptions relevant to the review of literature in preparation for the project, and to my own professional experience and education. Those assumptions are: (1) citizen participation is “fundamental to democratic values, increases the accountability and responsiveness of public officials, encourages civic commitment” and directly impacts program outcomes (English, Peretz, & Manderschied, 2004, p. 184); and (2) in the context of a growth management program effective citizen participation fosters land development policies that are consistent with specific community concerns, and helps ensure local governments take these concerns seriously in implementing their comprehensive plans and land development regulations. In short, I believe citizen participation makes better government and yields more legitimate public policy.
This research applied grounded theory and qualitative research methods to analyze data gathered from interviews with citizens who participated in community-based planning workshops, open-house meetings, and public hearings, and also from public records, court dockets, archival documents from collaborative planning workshops, agenda documents and captioning transcripts of public hearings, and from local newspaper articles. Chapter one of this dissertation introduces the research project, context, and focus, presents the problem statement, and sets out the research questions. Chapter two discusses a review of literature on citizen participation, meaning of “place,” voluntary community organizations, and collaborative planning. Chapter three discusses the methodology and specific research methods used in this project. Chapters four through ten present the findings from this research by discussing the five core concepts that emerged from the data and the Preserving Place model, including the model’s relevancy to theory and practice.

Problem Statement

Since World War II, Florida has experienced explosive population growth. For many decades Florida has grappled with the problem of how to manage such rapid growth. Chinitz (1990, p. 3) defines growth as “the expansion of developed space,” typically driven by “increases in population and economic prosperity, which generate higher demands for housing, workplaces, service establishments, roads, and schools, and lead to the exploitation of land and natural resources.” If growth and land development are not planned and managed well, growth creates
environmental stresses and “depletes the capacity of nature to support economic activity, a high standard of living, and life itself” (Chinitz, 1990, p. 3).

The expectation of increased economic benefits drives local governments to pursue growth and development. But in their blind pursuit of economic benefits, local governments may overlook the negative impacts of growth, including environmental degradation, congestion, failure of services and infrastructure, and reduced quality of life in local communities. Citizens often express concern that new development in their communities will cause overcrowding, road congestion, inadequate public facilities, and loss of community cultural and historical characteristics. Thus, local governments must find ways to manage and accommodate the demands generated by growth without sacrificing the needs and interests of existing communities and the people who live in those communities (Nicholas & Steiner, 2001). Florida requires local governments to address these concerns by engaging in long-range comprehensive planning to guide the timing and location of future growth, and the provision of public facilities and infrastructure to serve growth as it occurs.

Comprehensive planning involves gathering and analyzing copious amounts of data on which to base public policy decisions concerning future growth and development. Since these policy decisions can result in substantial impacts to existing communities, local governments should look to citizens for input and afford them opportunities to participate in the planning and policy-making processes, particularly those that directly impact their immediate communities. But even where citizens are included in such processes, they may
find themselves struggling for an effective voice and competing with other stakeholders who appear to have more power and influence over policy-makers. Moreover, after consensus is reached among stakeholders and a comprehensive plan is adopted, citizens might find they must continue to be involved in subsequent land development entitlement processes in order to ensure the local government implements the plan consistent with the goals and policies that were arrived at through consensus and adopted into the plan.

This research examines why and how citizens in three communities located in unincorporated Hillsborough County, Florida participated in community-based planning and other land development entitlement processes that impacted their communities. Hillsborough County is located in a high-growth area of Florida, geographically situated on the central west coast of the Florida peninsula within the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater standard metropolitan statistical area. The total county area consists of 1,136 square miles; however, the unincorporated area of Hillsborough County encompasses 927 square miles, or more than 80 percent of the total county area ("Hillsborough Community Atlas," 2011).

I selected the communities of Keystone-Odessa, Lutz, and Thonotosassa for this research based on their similarities, which include the timing of community plan adoption, their mix of land uses, their locations outside of the county’s urban centers, and their history of development pressure. As for timing of community plan adoption, the county adopted the Keystone-Odessa and Lutz community plans in 2001, and the Thonotosassa plan in 2003. Since these
community plans were among the first to be formulated and adopted in Hillsborough County, they have a history of implementation and application.

In addition, these three communities have a history of similar land uses, including farming and agricultural, rural, semi-rural, and suburban. The communities rely heavily on well water and septic tank systems because the urban services area boundary extends into only a small portion of the Thonotosassa community planning area, into about half of the Lutz community planning area, and into a very small portion of the Keystone-Odessa community planning area. Finally, because all three communities have considerable open space and sizeable undeveloped land parcels they have experienced development pressure from private landowners and developers. The citizens in these communities have expressed a strong desire to preserve open space and a rural or semi-rural community character; however, the existence of undeveloped land in the path of growth in an increasingly urbanizing county has generated conflict among citizens, real estate development interests, and the local government.

The questions raised in this research are important for several reasons. Since community-based plans are formulated through a collaborative process, it is important that diverse stakeholders are invited to participate and that the process ensures all interests are afforded equal opportunity to participate effectively and meaningfully. Collaborative planning can be a messy, contentious process because stakeholders bring to the table competing interests and values, and an imbalance of knowledge, understandings, experiences, and power
(Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010). Citizens who are not landowners and have no professional connections with the development industry typically have limited knowledge of and experience with local government land use decision making processes. They also often have limited resources with which to hire legal or professional representation in such processes. As a result, the voices of such citizens may be overpowered by those of stakeholders who have greater experience with public processes, specialized expert or technical knowledge, and more substantial resources.

In addition, even after consensus is reached and the community-based plan is adopted through a collaborative process, the power struggle often does not end. Landowners and developers continue to submit requests for plan amendments, land development entitlements, and project approvals subsequent to community plan adoption. Thus, citizens find they must remain watchful and engaged in local land use decision making processes in an effort to ensure the vision, goals, and policies set out in their community plans are effectively implemented. For this reason, research is needed to track what happens in communities after the visioning and planning process in order to document policy implementation (Crawford, Kotval, Rauhe, & Kotval, 2008, p. 551).

In Hillsborough County, attempts to weaken or undermine the effectiveness of community plans have occurred behind the scenes outside the public process. In 2011 an internal email surfaced at the local planning commission that serves Hillsborough County, in which an appointed planning commissioner expressed his goal to promote policy changes that would remove
community plans from the comprehensive plan. If his goal were to succeed, community plans would be stripped of their legal effect and land development within community planning areas would no longer be required to be consistent with the community plan. This would leave citizens with no recourse to ensure implementation of their efforts in formulating a vision for the future development of their communities. Therefore, this research should be of interest to citizen participants and other stakeholders, and to communities and local governments considering initiating a community-based planning program that is effective to accomplish the visions and goals arrived at by the community stakeholders through their participation in a collaborative process.

The Preserving Place model should be of interest to collaborative planning practitioners, and to citizens who wish to preserve the place they have come to embrace and consider their community. Citizens participating in land use processes may be able to benefit from the experiences of the research participants and identify ways in which they may more effectively participate in public policy-making processes that shape their own communities and lives.

**Research Questions**

I began this research with a general supposition that a collaborative, community-based planning program might raise citizens’ awareness of the impacts of growth on their communities, help them learn about sustainable development options that might be available in their communities, and engage them to participate more fully with their local government both in community planning and in subsequent land development decisions that affect their
communities. By engaging and participating, citizens learn how to gain access to the public policy decision-making processes that affect their lives, and their participation becomes more effective through their learning. Additionally, by engaging and participating in these processes, citizens become better informed about local land use policies and development decisions that directly impact their communities. This learning motivates citizens to remain engaged in these processes in order to defend their community plan and compel their local government to effectively implement the vision and policies the citizens took part in formulating for the future development and growth of their community during the collaborative policy making process.

Thus, a community-based planning program not only results in land development plans that address the specific concerns and goals of the affected community, but also stimulates civic awareness and engagement in local land use and development decisions in an effort to defend the adopted plan in subsequent land development entitlement processes. This research examines the experiences of citizens before, during, and after their participation in collaborative planning processes through which three community plans were formulated and adopted as public policy in Hillsborough County. This research addressed the following specific research questions:

1. How do citizens participate in local government planning and land use processes?

1.1. How were citizens who participated in the community-based planning process engaged in land use policy decisions that affected their
community before the community-based planning process was initiated in
their community?

1.2. How were citizens who participated in the community-based
planning process engaged in land use policy decisions that affected their
community after the community-based planning process was initiated in
their community?

1.3. How did citizens who participated in the community-based
planning process perceive their experiences and the effectiveness of their
participation in the collaborative planning process?

2. How do citizens who participated in the collaborative community-
based planning process engage in local government land use decision processes
subsequent to adoption of their community plan?
Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Much scholarly literature has been written on the subject of citizen participation in public policy making. Citizen participation has been regarded as “the essence of democracy” and a “force for creating a sense of community and a sense of control over our lives and institutions” (Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann, & Meier, 1987, p. 534). Citizen participation has been defined as “a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them” (Florin & Wandersman, 1990, p. 43). This definition does not describe what kind of process is involved, how individuals participate in it, or how much influence citizens might have in the decision making. A broader view defines “public participation” as “forums for exchange that are organized for the purpose of facilitating communication between government, citizens, stakeholders and interest groups, and businesses regarding a specific decision or problem” (Renn, Webler, & Wiedemann, 1995). This broader definition suggests a collaborative process through which communication is exchanged and power is shared among diverse participants. How to facilitate this process of communication exchanging and power sharing presents public policy makers with a fundamental challenge of how best to involve citizens in decision-making processes that produce effective policy outputs and meet democratic expectations (Webler & Tuler, 2000).
The community-based planning program that is the focus of this research is a collaborative process that is intended to facilitate communication among diverse stakeholders. The program involves a process that is intricate and lengthy. Some of the citizens interviewed for this research worked for up to two years, volunteering their time and effort to participate in workshops, open house meetings, and public hearings to formulate a vision and plan for the future development of their own communities. They expected their participation to be meaningful and effective, and to have positive and perceptible impacts in their communities. Arnstein (1969) addressed the nature and effectiveness of citizen participation by using the visual image of a ladder on which each rung corresponded to the extent of citizens’ influence in formulating a public plan or program. With her metaphorical ladder, Arnstein (1969, p. 217) demonstrated that some processes reduce citizen participation to empty ritual that effectively amounts to “non-participation.”

Arnstein (1969, p. 216), contends that “citizen participation” is equivalent to “citizen power.” She explains that participation is the means by which “have-not” citizens can redistribute power and induce social reform, and a strategy that allows the “have-nots” to be deliberately included in sharing information, setting goals and policies, allocating tax resources, operating programs, and distributing benefits (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). Thus, citizen participation is beneficial to society because it affords citizens the opportunity to participate in formulating public policies that directly affect them, and produces policy outcomes that more closely resemble the broader public interest (Arnstein, 1969; Day, 1997). These arguments are relevant to this research because collaborative community-based planning affords citizens the opportunity to participate in policy making that directly impacts their lives and communities. Thus, collaborative community-based planning is beneficial because it produces policy outcomes that reflect the citizens’ visions for their communities.

Considerable contributions have been made to the literature on citizen participation since Arnstein’s seminal article. Connor (1988) pointed out that Arnstein herself acknowledged certain limitations to her scheme, including that citizen power is not so neatly distributed, significant road blocks to participation are not accounted for, and the range of citizen involvement is far more complex than the eight ladder rungs suggest. Connor (1988, p. 250) proposed a different ladder that, instead of illustrating levels of non-participation and participation, illustrated a procedural approach aimed at “preventing and resolving public controversy about specific policies, programs, and projects whether in urban,
suburban, or rural settings, and whether governmental or private sector in sponsorship.” This ladder metaphor accounts for the complexity of real-world controversies, and implies that (1) public participation programs must be designed and managed to reflect the specific situation, (2) successive approaches are cumulative and may be applied simultaneously, and (3) participation programs for complex policy proposals necessitate more than “a news release and a public meeting;” but rather require a process appropriate for the specific situation (Connor, 1988, pp. 256-257).

**Citizen Participation and Voluntary Community Organizations**

Of the 22 citizens who participated in this research project, all had participated in the Hillsborough County community-based planning process, and all but four were members of a voluntary community organization that existed in their community or neighborhood. Hence, a discussion is warranted of who participates in voluntary community organizations and why, and what role such organizations play in citizen participation and community-based initiatives. Wandersman et al. (1987) applied demographic, social psychological, and costs/benefits variables to investigate who does or does not participate in neighborhood improvement associations, and why. Based on a consideration of demographic variables, Wandersman, et al. (1987, p. 542) found that “females, married people, people who lived on the block longer, people who plan to live on the block longer, and people who are older” were more likely to be members of a block-level voluntary community organization in the U.S.
Based on a consideration of social psychological variables that included attitudes, perceptions, and personality, Wandersman et al. (1987, p. 543) found people who were members of a block-level voluntary community organization in the U.S. were more likely to have reported “involvement in other community activities, personal influence in changing the block, sense of community on the block, importance of sense of community, citizen duty, political efficacy, importance of the block, self-esteem, problems on the block.” They also found that members of voluntary community organizations tend to perceive more problems in their communities, attach more importance to the residential environment, and believe more strongly in their own political efficacy than do nonmembers.

Based on a consideration of costs and benefits, Wandersman et al. (1987, p. 546) found that the greatest benefits members reported were “sense of contribution and helpfulness, increased knowledge of the community, providing a useful service to the community, increased sense of responsibility, and friendship with other members.” They found the greatest costs members reported was “the need to give up personal and family matters” in order to participate in the organization, and “feeling frustration from lack of progress” (Wandersman, et al., 1987, p. 547). This finding is consistent with Baum (1997, p. 266), who explained that “belonging to a community is a matter of faith” because “people must identify collectively with something sufficiently uplifting to move them to give priority to community affairs over everyday business.” In this way people develop a sense of community, an understanding that community members are somehow
connected with each other, that their power is shared, and that their individual actions involve the whole (Baum, 1997).

Florin and Wandersmann (1990) analyzed community-based initiatives by examining the processes, structures, values, and domains involved in such efforts. In particular, they focused their analysis on the process of citizen participation, the structure of voluntary community organizations, the value of empowerment, and the domain of community development. Concerning the processes involved in community-based, they found that citizen participation has wide benefits that can strengthen the social fabric of communities and lead to feelings of personal and collective efficacy.

Concerning the structures involved in community-based initiatives, Florin and Wandersman (1990) found that voluntary community organizations typically have the following characteristics: (1) they are place-specific and built on individuals' commitment to their own communities; (2) they are driven by volunteer human resources and have only modest monetary resources; (3) they consist of local residents responding collectively to local conditions; (4) they are informal and influenced by direct, broad participation; (5) they are usually established to address specific problems, which the members define. Voluntary community organizations have the capacity to “transform isolated individuals into public citizens” and “provide a human-scale sense of place, purpose, and process that is rare in today’s mass society” (Florin & Wandersman, 1990, p. 44).

Concerning values involved in community-based initiatives, Florin and Wandersman (1990) found evidence that voluntary community organizations can
empower and can also be empowered. The organizations can empower their members with confidence, competence, and a sense of civic duty. The organizations can also be empowered themselves, and can influence power distribution and decision making within a community. Finally, concerning the domains involved in community-based initiatives, Florin and Wandersman (1990) found community development involves voluntary cooperation and the collective efforts of residents to improve conditions in their communities.

More recently, Kilburn and Maume (2000) analyzed voluntary community organizations by examining two dynamics: (1) their existence; and (2) their membership. Addressing their existence, Kilburn and Maume (2000, p. 329) found that because of the significant resources required to establish and maintain voluntary community organizations, such organizations were less likely to exist in areas of lower socioeconomic status than in areas of higher socioeconomic status. In particular, Kilburn and Maume (2000) found that affluent areas were more likely to organize even though less-affluent neighborhoods faced more significant problems. Paradoxically therefore, the areas that could most benefit from the empowerment associated with voluntary community organizations are the areas least likely to establish them.

Addressing membership in voluntary community organizations, Kilburn and Maume (2000, p. 338) found that homeownership was related to feelings of an increased stake in the community and efforts to improve it. However, they found that long-term residence in a community was not related to increased participation or membership in voluntary community organizations.
contrary, they found that newer residents were more likely to participate and be members of voluntary community organizations than were long-term residents. This, newer residents who move into urban areas might be more motivated than longer-term residents to improve their communities (Kilburn & Maume, 2000). As a result, Kilburn and Maume (2000) recommend researchers focus on community resources rather than community attachment in analyzing why some communities tend to organize and others do not.

The findings cited in the literature regarding who does or does not participate and why raise issues concerning whether a small group of citizens who participate in a community-based planning initiative can genuinely represent the interests of their community at large. Baum (1997) described this problem in his research on two Baltimore communities that engaged in community-based planning. Organizers in both communities selected participants from only certain sectors to represent their respective whole communities. Because the participants did not represent all sectors of the community, the interests of the non-participating sectors were left out and the policy outputs failed to include them. Baum (1997, pp. 277-278) explained that this failure resulted in some community voices being excluded, which caused planners to have difficulties in examining particular trends and responding to broader community needs.

The literature on voluntary community organizations is applicable to this research because such organizations were prominent and active in all three study areas, and all but four of the research participants said they were members of such organizations. Moreover, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters of
this dissertation, it is apparent that the voluntary community organizations at work in the study communities have both empowered their members and have become empowered themselves. These organizations and their members played significant roles in formulating and implementing their community plans, and have been prominent in subsequent land development entitlement decision making processes. However, the membership of these organizations is not representative of the respective whole communities in which they operate. Thus, it is apparent that the voluntary community organizations do not speak for all community segments, and some voices are underrepresented in these processes.

**The Meaning of “Place”**

From the data collected in this research an explanatory model emerged that demonstrates the main concern that motivated the actions of the research participants who participated in community planning and local land use decision making processes. I call this model “Preserving Place.” The term “place” carries broad and significant meaning. Tuan (1996) explains the term “place” in ordinary usage carries meaning related either to societal position, or to spatial location. Of these two ordinary meanings, Tuan believes the one connected to human relationships is basic; hence, spatial location derives from social status. As a result, one’s characteristic lifestyle, including where one lives and works, follows one’s relative position in society.

However, Tuan (1996) argues the term “place” carries meaning that is even broader than either societal position or spatial location. This broader
meaning of place is evident in the way people speak of having a “sense of place,” and in the way people describe a spatial location as having “spirit” or “personality” (Tuan, 1996, p. 445). To speak of a place as having “personality” suggests unique characteristics that are either naturally occurring or imparted over time by human interaction. Tuan (1996, p. 445) explains the personality of a place is a “composite of natural endowment (the physique of the land) and the modifications wrought by successive generations of human beings.”

A place represented by a feature that commands awe and is widely recognizable by outsiders has personality or character as a “public symbol” (Tuan, 1996, pp. 448-451). Examples of places that constitute public symbols include such manmade features as statues or monuments, and natural features such as buttes or canyons. On the other hand, a place that is embraced primarily by local people who have come to know and understand the place over time, but that lacks features widely recognizable by outsiders, might have personality or character as a “field of care” (Tuan, 1996, pp. 451-455).

A place might also consist of both a widely known feature that is a “public symbol” recognizable to outsiders, and a “field of care” known and embraced by locals in a different sense (Tuan, 1996). While a place may be said to have a unique “personality” or “character” only humans may be said to have a “sense of place” (Tuan, 1996, p. 446). One way humans establish a “sense of place” is through an “affective bond” that develops over time as a result of the functional patterns of their day to day lives (Tuan, 1996, p. 452)
The term “place” as used in the explanatory model “Preserving Place” refers to the “field of care” or “sense of place” the research participants have for their communities (Tuan, 1996), which they express as their community’s “character.” The data show the research participants’ main concern, which motivated and organized their actions, was to preserve the character, or personality, of their communities. The character of their communities consists of “fields of care,” which developed as affective bonds through the research participants’ daily routines and functional patterns of day to day life within their respective communities (Tuan, 1996).

The research participants describe the character of their communities in terms of “fields of care’ that can be known only from the inside by locals who have over time developed a sense of place connected to their communities; rather than as “public symbols” that could be widely known and recognizable to outsiders (Tuan, 1996). They speak of open space and rural, wetlands and lakes, wildlife, stars at night, crickets chirping, and frogs croaking. The affective bonds or attachment with their communities motivated the research participants to embrace a community vision, to become involved in formulating their community plan, and to participate in local government land use decision making that impacted their communities. These efforts were driven by a desire to preserve the character of the place they had come to consider their community.

**Place attachment and NIMBYism.** Citizens who participate in land use decision making processes that affect their communities, particularly in opposition to land development projects, are sometimes pejoratively labeled
“NIMBY.” The concept of “NIMBY” (Not In My Back Yard) has been defined as “the protectionist attitudes of and oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighborhood” (Dear, 1992, p. 288). The opposition is often aimed at land use proposals that are controversial, unsightly, or simply locally unpopular in the proposed host community. Local residents might concede it is necessary to locate such unwanted land uses somewhere; but they do not want them to be located in their own community (Dear, 1992).

The concept of “NIMBY,” particularly its use as a pejorative label, has been criticized as discrediting the objections and actions citizens take that might otherwise be understood as an effort to build sustainable communities (Devine-Wright, 2012). In the context of siting intensive technology-related land uses, academic researchers have argued that the NIMBY concept is not helpful, and an approach that broadly involves the public in decision making processes will more effectively enhance public acceptance of such land uses (Devine-Wright, 2012).

A more helpful approach to understanding the so-called “NIMBY response” is one based on the concept of place attachment, which has been defined as “positively experienced bonds, sometimes occurring without awareness, that are developed over time from the behavioral, affective, and cognitive ties between individuals and/or groups and their sociophysical environment” (Devine-Wright, 2012, p. 3). Such an approach conceives of citizen opposition to unwanted land uses as a “place-protective” action that arises
when the siting of certain land uses threatens to “disrupt preexisting emotional bonds and threaten place-related identities” (Devine-Wright, 2012, p. 3).

Research has shown that place attachment and place relationship are relevant to citizen participation in community planning and land use processes. For example, place attachment and a strong sense of community play a significant role in revitalizing neighborhoods and are a source of community power and collective action (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). But research has also shown that place attachment can result in romanticized ideals and generate conflicts among diverse community members. In order to foster cooperation it is essential to develop an understanding of what meaning people have assigned to a “place,” and what place attachments may be at work in a community (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

The Value of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is valuable and beneficial to society at the national, community, and personal levels because it has the capacity to bring about improvements in communities and neighborhoods, build relationships and strengthen the social fabric, and create feelings of personal and collective empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Meaningful citizen participation infuses policy making processes with the resources and insights of those who are most affected by the policy outputs, and promotes decisions that benefit average citizens (Crawford, et al., 2008). Both practitioners and academics recognize the value of citizen participation in planning decisions for theoretical and practical reasons (Laurian, 2004). Participation benefits democratic
processes because it increases government accountability to the public, infuses lay knowledge into decision making, and improves public support for policies. Participation also benefits the planning profession because it increases public awareness of and appreciation for planning (Laurian, 2004).

The need to involve citizens in a meaningful way in public policy-making has been reinforced by increased dialogue about the value of participatory planning and the necessity of understanding cultural dimensions in planning (Crawford, et al., 2008). This dialogue suggests that empowering citizens through meaningful participation in planning and designing their communities may result in more successful implementation because of citizen “buy-in,” which might actually enhance the “chances and speed of implementation of community projects” (Crawford, et al., 2008, p. 533).

Renn, et al. (1995, p. 1) contend that processes involving conflict resolution and citizen participation may “improve the effectiveness of environmental policies and enhance the potential for affected citizens to become part of the decision making process rather than being the victims of the decisions made by anonymous agencies or institutions.” Goldstein and Butler (2010, p. 239) agree that decades of research on collaborative planning has shown that plans formulated through stakeholder collaboration “enjoy broad support for implementation.” Likewise, English, et al. (2004, p. 184) found the literature supports an “empirical linkage between public participation and program achievements.” Finally, involving citizens in planning and designing their own
communities promotes a transparent, democratic public policy-making process (Crawford, et al., 2008).

Kilburn and Maume (2000, p. 328) noted that communities are increasingly encouraged to “identify and solve their own problems.” Neighborhood-based planning is crucial to this approach because of the access to local knowledge, which can more effectively address community needs, and because the process of organizing to address community problems is in itself beneficial for communities (Kilburn & Maume, 2000). Similarly, as will be discussed in later chapters of this dissertation, interviews with the participants in this research indicate there is broad support among citizens in Hillsborough County for collaborative community-based planning, and some believe fewer conflicts have arisen among citizens, developers, and the county government over land use decisions since adoption of the community plans.

On the other hand, English et al. (2004) call attention to a continuing debate among proponents of participatory democracy and proponents of representative democracy. Those who argue for a form of democracy that is more participatory contend that individuals should have greater control over the formulation of public policies that affect their lives. On the other hand, those who argue for a form of democracy that is more representative raise the concern that interest groups will tend to dominate the policy making process. English et al. (2004, p. 184) propose a centrist position that acknowledges the importance of allowing elected representatives to make policy decisions, but embraces citizen participation as vital to a representative democracy because it “builds civic
capacity and increases the likelihood of fairer, more broadly supported
decisions.”

Day (1997) points out a paradox that is inherent in complex and
sophisticated democratic societies. She identifies this paradox as the “tension
between bureaucracy and democracy” (Day, 1997, p. 428). The tension exists
because complex and sophisticated democratic societies require administrative
structures with sufficient technological expertise to inform and advise elected
officials, and to administer the government programs that are necessary to
sustain such societies. Yet, these same sophisticated democratic societies
demand government policy and decision making to be transparent, inclusive, and
open to citizen involvement (Day, 1997). This creates a paradox because
decisions made by officials who are elected to represent the public interest and
make policy decisions are informed and advised by administrative experts who
are not elected, and who operate within an organizational framework that is

This same paradox is represented in the central question examined by
Fischer (2000, p. 6), who asks “how can citizens participate in an age dominated
by complex technologies and expert decisions?” In fact, as Fischer (2000) points
out, the question is not new but was forcefully raised by Dewey (1927), who
questioned how a diffuse public could effectively participate in political decision
making in a complex modern society that is so driven by technology, where
problem solving requires the knowledge and skills of experts. To bridge the gap
between citizens and experts, Dewey argued for improved methods of
communication and debate, and for experts to share knowledge with the public by providing analyses and interpretations that enable citizens to better understand the increasingly complex technologies of their world and make more informed political judgments (Fischer, 2000).

Since Dewey’s time technological advances such as the Internet and World Wide Web have greatly increased the ease of access to information. Citizens literally have at their fingertips an endless supply of information on an boundless number of topics. But open access to information does not necessarily mean access to the kinds of knowledge, analyses, and interpretations that promote better understanding, problem solving, and decision making. This ease of access to information may help bridge the gap between experts and citizens in some instances; but may contribute to misinformation and misunderstanding in others. Thus, Dewey’s argument for improved methods of communication and debate remain very relevant today.

**Linking Local Knowledge and Public Policy**

Healey (2006) addresses questions of expert and local knowledge from a perspective of planning and governance styles. She contends that the representative model of democracy actually encourages the formation of hierarchical bureaucracies comprised of administrative officials with technical expertise. These unelected government officials advise and inform elected government officials and are directly accountable to them, rather than to the public. In this way, administrative and elected officials are subject to influences and processes that are not open to public scrutiny. Moreover, the structure of
bureaucratic hierarchies may shield administrative officials from public access and prevent them from learning about the concerns of people in the local communities. If administrative officials lack knowledge of local concerns, they cannot advise and inform elected officials effectively to enable them to make policy decisions that reflect such local concerns. Both elected and administrative officials would be better able to engage in competent reasoning and decision making if they had access to the resources of knowledge and understandings that are available from members of the local community (Healey, 2006).

This problem illustrates how crucial local knowledge is to the legitimacy of public decision making (Innes & Booher, 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that literature on planning theory published during the past decade shows communication is central to planning practice. In fact, research demonstrates that planners regularly engage in activities that can be understood as “communicative action,” which directly and indirectly influence both public and private actors (Innes, 1998, p. 53). Innes applies the term “communicative action” to the way formal knowledge enters into public policy decisions. She contends that in planning practice knowledge transfers into policy decisions by means of “communicative rationality,” which involves processes wherein participants collectively create meanings and share information that becomes gradually embedded within the participants’ understandings (Innes, 1998).

Innes (1998) contrasts “communicative rationality” with “instrumental rationality” in planning processes. Instrumental rationality involves a public choice model wherein decision-makers weigh alternatives and make choices
based on objective, quantitative data and analyses (Innes, 1998). Communicative rationality in planning involves processes that include not only planners and other experts, but members of the local community as well, and that present opportunities for the participants to communicate to each other many different kinds of knowledge and information in addition to technical data and formal reports. Through such communicative processes, participants’ understandings, meanings, actions, and reactions gradually evolve and are changed as new understandings and meanings are created. These complex processes of communication and interaction, along with the understandings and meanings created through them, ultimately become imbedded in public policy decisions (Innes, 1998).

Communicative processes facilitate the exchange of information among government, citizens, stakeholders and interest groups, and businesses. But facilitating communication among diverse participants who have opposing concerns and interests is a messy, contentious, and often lengthy process. For example, each community plan examined in this research took up to two years to formulate through a process of stakeholder workshops, open house meetings, and public hearings. Moreover, two of the community plans recently went through a review process that also spanned almost two years.

In pluralist forms of democracy where a diversity of interests exists, many different societal groups compete to define the agenda of government action in developing public policy (Healey, 2006). These diverse interests tend to adopt and defend fixed adversarial positions, and this tendency further complicates the
policy making process. Healey (2006, p. 223) observes that some governments have attempted to address this problem by employing strategic planning approaches that use consensus building practices in an effort to shift the focus of pluralistic argumentation away from the arena of discrete project permitting and toward one of broad plan formulating. Decisions about particular projects and land uses are then made within the confines of the policies that were formulated through a deliberative process and ultimately adopted into the plan (Healey, 2006).

Nevertheless, stakeholders participating in collaborative planning processes may still maintain adversarial positions and wish to advance their own interests (Goldstein & Butler, 2010). As a result, bargaining and positioning are at work to some extent even in participatory processes, regardless whether deliberations are focused on the application of policy to a specific project, or the formulation of policy to be incorporated into a plan (Healey, 2006, p. 263). Goldstein and Butler (2010, p. 239) recommend that collaborative processes should attempt to “reduce adversarial relationships and redress power and resource disparities among stakeholders.”

Institutional approach. Healey (2006, p. 263) advocates what she defines as an “institutional approach” that seeks to build new knowledge and understandings through collaborative social learning processes, or “strategy-making through inclusionary argumentation.” Healey (1999, pp. 112-113) defines the term "institutional" as the “embedding of specific practices in a wider context of social relations” and the “active processes by which individuals in social
contexts construct their ways of thinking and acting.” Thus, an “institution” in this sense is not an organization; but rather is a way people and societies deal with and address certain social issues (Healey, 1999, p. 113).

Healey (2006, pp. 263-266) contends an institutional approach for collaborative policy making processes should be based on five general propositions:

(1) collaboration involves power-sharing, which transforms the participants through consensus building and social learning strategies that produce real shifts in power, and that remove communicative distortions through which powerful groups had formerly maintained their positions;

(2) it is essential to recognize the importance of paying attention to practical local knowledge in addition to expert scientific and technical knowledge;

(3) it is essential to pay careful attention to communicative contexts and to routines and styles of dialogue because these carry the power to encourage and include, but also the power to discriminate and exclude;

(4) consensus-building is a powerful form of social mobilization that can build institutional capacity, transform local knowledge, and create new cultural communities; and

(5) it is essential to critique dialogical practices and communicative distortions because the transformative effort involves power
struggles in which access, routines, and style may be dominated by those with greater power.

These five propositions emphasize the transformational processes of collaboration, including communication and knowledge sharing, power shifting, and consensus building (Healey, 2006).

**Critiques of Communicative Planning**

Some scholars have criticized communicative planning theory and collaborative planning practice, arguing they narrowly focus on process and naively promote ideal speech and undistorted communication, but overlook issues of social conflict and power positions inherent in the communication process (Booher & Innes, 2002; Fainstein, 2007; Healey, 2003; Huxley, 2000; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000). Booher and Innes (2002) contend the field of planning theory needs to focus on developing a sense of the power that planners themselves can have in shaping policy and places by facilitating and participating in collaborative planning. In contrast, Fainstein (2007) criticizes communicative planning theorists for placing primary emphasis on the role of the planner at the expense of the more substantive concerns of cities and regions. Fainstein (2007) also asserts that communicative theorists fail to address the fact that open processes sometimes produce unjust results, or that bureaucratic top-down decision-making sometimes produces desirable results.

Huxley (2000) and Huxley and Yiftachel (2000) argue that communicative planning theorists privilege communication at the expense of wider considerations of power, including that of the private development interests and
governmental entities involved in the communicative processes with the planners. Other critics contend collaborative planning proponents focus too narrowly on the goal of simply encouraging more communicative practices in planning (Healey, 2003). Similarly, Fischler (2000) asserts that communicative planning theorists propose the principal concern of planning practice is merely to facilitate the deliberation process. However, Healey (2003) contends it is essential to analyze the quality of communicative action and collaborative processes in order to recognize whether the life conditions of the affected groups and communities are being improved; or whether old power relations are simply becoming more entrenched.

Allen (1996) explains that the reciprocal power of a government over its citizens and of citizens over their government is based on the forms of knowledge that each provides to the other. She describes participation as an activity of knowledge exchange between a government and its citizens (Allen, 1996, pp. 328-329). Thus, for knowledge exchange to be effective and communication to be undistorted in a collaborative planning process, attention must be paid to the power relations that exist among the various stakeholders, including the governmental entities involved (Allen, 1996). Moreover, Forester (2000) contends that the ability to engage in such analysis of the potential manipulation of information is a powerful attribute of communicative action.

**Underlying social theories.** Some scholars have criticized communicative planning theory for lacking an underlying explanatory or social theory, asserting that it merely reflects a liberal pluralist position (Healey, 2003).
However, Healey (2003, 2006) demonstrates that communicative planning theory and collaborative planning practice are informed by the social theories of Anthony Giddens and Jürgen Habermas. Healey (2006, pp. 45-49) explains that Giddens’ structuration theory maintains that our sense of ourselves is constructed through interactions with our day to day world and our history. These structural elements of our worlds are active forces that carry with them implications of power over our behavior and resources. We both create these culturally bound structural forces and are embedded within them. Because we create them, we are agents with the power to make choices to change them and to transform the structures within which we are constrained (Healey, 2006).

Thus, the structural elements of our worlds result from our own actions and practices over time and space (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 9). For communicative planning and collaborative policy making in general, Giddens’ structuration theory implies that planners, as well as ordinary citizens and other participants, are situated in certain relative positions of power, but that they also have the choice to engage in deliberate efforts to change the rules and transform the power structures, and thus impact policy decisions. Healey (2006, p. 49) explores how the effort to “invent structure” through the process of “interactive culture-building” takes place, and how it can draw on the diversity of knowledge and understandings that are available without allowing particular ideas or power positions to dominate and limit that diversity.

Healey (1999, 2006) also shows that Habermas’ work on communicative action has transformed conceptions of planning processes. For example, Healey
(1999, p. 117) discusses the dualistic concept in which Habermas describes bureaucratic and economic orders as the “system world,” and our personal, social existences as the “life world.” Habermas contends that the system world, with its scientific and technical reasoning, tends to dominate public discourse and invade life worlds by crowding out other reasoning modes, resulting in a separation of public policy from the life world (Healey, 1999). This is problematic particularly in a multi-cultural society where various spheres of reasoning exist. Habermas desires the public realm to become a vehicle for transformation of the system world so that it is more sensitive to the life world. But in order for this to happen, individuals must be able to engage in open debate where they freely explore their relative concerns and acknowledge competing claims. Thus, collaborative processes have the potential of bringing these two worlds together. But in order to do this effectively, collaborative processes must allow participants to work out ways of assigning validity and priority to competing claims, and to resolve questions of collective action through interaction (Healey, 2006).

The theories of both Habermas and Giddens highlight the possibilities for learning, developing, and transforming through communicative action. Healey (2006, pp. 52-53) explains Habermas rejects approaches in which individual “knowing subjects” seek to maximize their own interests through confrontation with other such “knowing subjects.” Instead, Habermas presents the concept of collective action based on an “intersubjective consciousness” that emerges through interaction and exchange of ideas (Healey, 2006, p. 52).
In addition, Habermas’ theory of communicative action with communicative ethics encourages a normative potential of governance that is built around a “public conversation,” in which all affected parties have a voice and are heard (Healey, 1999, p. 117). Habermas emphasizes the significance of communicative efforts for cultural and structural formation and transformation. He seeks ways to avoid communication distortions and to develop more open, inclusive governance (Healey, 1999). Moreover, Healey (2006) contends that greater reflexivity through intersubjective communications in dialogues about local planning issues should lead to more informed policy making.

**Designing a Collaborative Process**

Collaborative policy making processes address two criticisms that are frequently leveled at bureaucratic, top-down approaches (Renn, et al., 1995). The first criticism is that bureaucratic top-down policy making lacks popular acceptance because it fails to consider the broader affected interests and tends to focus narrowly on scientific objectivity. The second criticism is that the top-down approach tends to render outcomes that are incompetent and unworkable because they neglect to heed the knowledge of local people who are most familiar with the problem (Renn, et al., 1995). To adequately address these criticisms, participatory processes must be carefully designed to successfully render effective policy outputs and meet democratic expectations (Webler & Tuler, 2000). Webler and Tuler (2000, p. 567) contend that in order to design effective participatory processes, public policy makers must confront such complex questions as “What form should the process take? Who should be
involved and in what manner? How can technical expertise and local knowledge be best integrated into the process? Can deliberation be fostered that is respectful, effective, and rewarding?"

Webler (1995, p. 38) contends that a “procedural normative model of public participation" is needed in order to address questions about how best to design a participatory policy making process. Seeking to demonstrate how such a model might inform the design and implementation of participatory processes, Renn, et al. (1995) embraced a discourse perspective. They argued that better decision making can result from discourse among citizens who are informed and equal partners. In seeking to define a consistent set of normative criteria against which to measure the quality of the participants’ discourse, Renn et al. (1995, p. 9) begin with fairness and competency as “meta criteria.” Application of these criteria requires the process to be open, with clear and consistent rules aimed at producing a quality outcome that is “more favorable to the plurality of interests” than if only one interest group were to have dominated (Renn, et al., 1995, p. 10).

**Emerging trends in policy making processes.** In more recent work, Innes and Booher (2010, p. 6) blend planning theory and practice in their discussion of emerging trends that emphasize the participants, the types of knowledge, and the ways of reasoning involved. First, they observed that nonlinear socially constructed processes that engage both experts and non-expert stakeholders are replacing traditional linear processes that rely primarily on formal experts. Traditional methods of decision making involve elected
officials who provide policy goals, and non-elected officials with technical expertise who engage in data collection, analysis, and formulation of plans and policies to implement the policy goals set by the elected officials. In contrast, emerging collaborative decision making methods involve diverse participants, including technical experts, elected and non-elected government officials, members of the lay public, and other stakeholders, all of whom engage jointly to deliberate on planning and policy problems (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 5).

Innes and Booher (2010) explain that participants in these nonlinear processes may begin with some shared interests and concerns, but do not necessarily begin with shared goals. Together they collect information, share knowledge and meanings, formulate options, and consider consequences. Implementation is adaptive in that it does not proceed in a linear way from a decision; but rather is contingent and evolving as new information is communicated and learned. Although new facts and understandings may be constantly reexamined and revised, eventually the participants together create a “shared understanding of reality that can be a basis for action” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 5).

The second trend Innes and Booher (2010) observed is that ideas are changing about the kinds of knowledge that are accepted as appropriate and necessary for planning and policy-making. They explain that in traditional planning practice expert scientific knowledge dominates over lay knowledge. In contrast, collaborative planning and policy-making relies on many kinds of knowledge to understand problems, including that of experts, lay people, and
local persons with unique local knowledge. Together these participants develop a shared sense of the validity and relevance of information and how to apply it in their actions (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 5-6).

The third trend Innes and Booher (2010) observed is that collaborative processes rely on new forms of reasoning and persuasion that are gaining recognition and legitimacy. They explain that traditional policy and decision making processes rely on formal argumentation and instrumental reasoning, which proceeds from ends to means based on logical steps and objective evidence. In contrast, collaborative processes rely on a variety of deliberative methods of persuasion and making sense. These methods include forms of storytelling and roleplaying as well as forms of arguing. Some participants might tell personal stories to convey their experiences, or play roles to illustrate and anticipate the results of various options. The participants’ varied experiences and diverse knowledge become components that are assembled together to develop options and strategies in what Innes and Booher (2010, p. 6) describe as “intellectual bricolage.”

The trends Innes and Booher (2010) recognized are evident in the Hillsborough County community-based planning program. Instead of a traditional top-down policy making approach to the problem of how growth and development should proceed in the county’s diverse communities, community-based planning represents a collaborative approach through which technical experts, citizens, businesses, landowners, and government officials are able to deliberate jointly. The community-based plans were formulated through a
process in which many kinds of knowledge were relied upon to understand the problem, including the knowledge of experts, lay people, and local persons with unique local knowledge. The participants shared their varied experiences and diverse knowledge, and assembled these together to develop each community’s vision, goals, and strategies set forth in the policy document that was eventually adopted as the community plan.

**Collaborative rationality.** Innes and Booher (2010, p. 6) maintain the trends they have observed represent the emergence of a new form of planning and policy making that presents an alternative to the traditional form of linear decision making, with its emphasis on expert knowledge and argumentation. Innes and Booher developed a theoretical model of this new planning and policy making form, which they named “collaborative rationality.” Their model provides a lens through which to examine collaborative policy making processes such as the Hillsborough County community-based planning program.

Innes and Booher (2010) explain their collaborative rationality model focuses on the deliberation process, and is grounded in Habermas’ notion of communicative rationality and in the experiences of practitioners in collaborative processes. They contend a deliberative process is “collaboratively rational to the extent that all the affected interests jointly engage in face to face dialogue, bringing their various perspectives to the table to deliberate on problems they face together,” and all participants are “fully informed and able to express their views and be listened to, whether they are powerful or not” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 6). The participants must be free to speak openly, with no topic “off the
table;” however, it is essential to apply techniques that “mutually assure the legitimacy, comprehensibility, sincerity, and accuracy” of what the participants say during the process (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 6).

Innes and Booher (2010, p. 6) acknowledge these principles are ideals that can never be perfectly and completely achieved since in most processes it is infeasible to include every affected person, and may be impossible to reach complete consensus. However, they contend that the results of a deliberative process can be regarded as collaboratively rational where representatives of all basic interests are brought together, “substantial agreement is reached among a supermajority,” and “all efforts are made to find creative ways to satisfy all participants before reaching closure” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 6). Innes and Booher (2010) also explain that the rationality of a process depends on the participants having agreed in advance on how they will define “consensus.” They argue this requirement parallels the scientific method, in which the accuracy and rationality of the results depends on procedures for data gathering and analysis being set out in advance and followed throughout the research process. Finally, they contend that, although the model may not be perfectly achieved, processes that approximate collaborative rationality are legitimate and their results are rational “in the sense of being well informed and in the spirit of democracy,” and because “they represent a collective form of knowing and deciding” (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Innes and Booher (2010, p. 7) caution that collaborative processes are not appropriate or feasible for all planning or policy decisions; but for complex
“wicked” problems, they assert “collaborative planning is more likely to generate feasible and legitimate decisions than traditional decision making.” This is true because with such “wicked problems” conditions are constantly changing, causality cannot be identified, and an optimal solution cannot be found. Thus, the challenge is to find an approach through which affected persons may work jointly to improve their situation (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 9-10).

Innes and Booher (2010, pp. 9-10) set out three elements of their argument for collaborative rationality. These are: (1) “collaborative processes that are designed and managed to generate collaborative rationality are likely to produce…effective options for how actors can move forward together to deal with their problems,” and also produce “individual and collective learning that will make the community more adaptive and resilient;” (2) collaborative processes that are designed so as to meet the essential conditions of collaborative rationality will generate optimal policy approaches; and (3) participants’ experiences with collaboratively rational processes lead them to extend collaboration to other contexts, making institutions more effective and adaptive, and making the larger societal system more resilient. Innes and Booher (2010, p. 10) caution that the adequacy of a given process cannot be determined by broad brush; on the contrary, a process must be “unpacked” and examined in detail to see whether it meets the conditions of collaborative rationality.

**Conditions necessary for collaborative rationality.** Innes and Booher (2010, p. 35) developed a diagram to help explore what collaborative policy making processes are capable of accomplishing, and what conditions must exist
for successful outcomes. They call this diagram “DIAD” for the component conditions of “diversity,” “interdependence,” and “authentic dialogue,” which provide a basis for the design and implementation of collaborative processes that are capable of producing significant and socially valuable outcomes (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35).

Figure 2.2  DIAD network dynamics. Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2010). *Planning with Complexity: An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy*. New York: Routledge, fig. 2.1, p. 35. Used by permission.

According to Innes and Booher (2010) for a collaborative process to be considered collaboratively rational, capable of producing socially valuable outcomes, and able to adapt to the opportunities and challenges of its unique and changing context, three conditions are critical. Those conditions are: (1) “full diversity of interests among participants;” (2) “interdependence of the participants, who cannot get their interests met independently;” and (3) “engagement of all in a face to face authentic dialogue meeting Habermas’ basic
speech conditions” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35). They contend both theory and practice demonstrate that where participants engage under these conditions, collectively seeking a successful way to address shared concerns and problems, the resulting dialogue can yield “innovations that lead to an adaptive policy system in a context of complexity and uncertainty” (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 35-36). Thus, Innes and Booher argue that collaborative processes are capable not only of producing specific outcomes; but also of changing the very system within which they operate.

First, Innes and Booher (2010) explain that in order to be collaboratively rational, a process must include a diversity of agents. Just as a natural ecological system depends on diversity to thrive, a social system likewise requires variety in order to be adaptable and resilient. Processes in which powerful agents manage to exclude certain affected interests or perspectives that are less powerful are not collaboratively rational, and lack information that would otherwise contribute to their feasibility and legitimacy (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36). In contrast, a collaboratively rational process includes not only agents who are powerful deal makers, but also less powerful agents whose interests are affected, and who have necessary information. The condition of diversity is consistent with Habermas’ idea of communicative rationality in that it requires inclusion of all perspectives. The contribution of a variety of “values, interests, perspectives, skills, and types and sources of knowledge” must be included for a process to develop robust ideas that in turn infuse into a system the capacity to adapt to changes over time (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36).
Second, Innes and Booher (2010, p. 36) explain the condition of interdependency requires that the participants must mutually depend on each other to a significant degree and in a reciprocal manner. Where the participants lack interdependency of interests, the process can neither be collaboratively rational, nor produce high quality outcomes. This condition induces the participants to remain engaged in the process, sustains their interest and energy, and motivates them to reach agreement. Because of their interdependent interests, the participants are better able to achieve their objectives collectively than individually. As a group they may be able to agree on an approach that allows each agent to achieve more of what they value most without reducing the ability for others to achieve their objectives. Innes and Booher (2010, p. 36) point out that this condition of interdependence is consistent with negotiation theory, which holds that “interdependence among interests is key to moving past zero sum games to creative mutual gain agreements.” They also note the link to complexity science, which “views agents as linked together in a loosely integrated network, where interdependence is the nature of things,” and cite scholarly works demonstrating that “instrumentally rational, self-interested players cooperate with each other when they are interdependent and need each other to accomplish their purposes” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36).

Third, Innes and Booher (2010, pp. 36-37) explain the condition of authentic dialogue requires that participants engage with each other to address a shared problem or concern by deliberating in a manner consistent with Habermas’ ideal speech conditions. Engagement in such deliberations assures
the participants that each other’s claims are legitimate, accurate, comprehensible, sincere, and inclusive of all major interests and knowledge. All participants must have equal access to information, equal opportunity to speak and be heard, and equal right to challenge assumptions and assertions. Deliberations must be permitted to “take a natural course without constraints or direction by external control” (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 36-37). Authentic dialogue is not dependent solely on specialized scientific expertise; but also relies on what participants know based on their everyday lives. Knowledge is jointly constructed through interaction and learning. In this way authentic dialogue is consistent with a phenomenological view of knowledge and pragmatist style. It is also consistent with the view from complexity science that the most important points of inquiry for understanding system behavior are the interactions among agents (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37).

If the conditions of diversity, interdependence, and authentic dialogue are met in a collaborative process, Innes and Booher (2010) contend that four key results typically emerge. First, the participants discover the reciprocal nature of their interests and begin to understand that they can better achieve their own goals when the goals of others are also met. They then begin collectively to explore approaches that address their multiple interests, and are able to explain the interests of others along with their own. Second, the participants form new relationships with each other and begin to build trust among former adversaries. Third, the participants learn and discover new means to achieve their interests, and begin to reexamine and reframe their interests. Finally, as participants work
together to solve problems that impact shared resources, they develop new ways of approaching problem solving that they carry into other situations. This leads to system adaptations and structural alterations that can result in more sustainable and resilient communities and institutions (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 37-38)

**DIAD and Community-Based Planning.** As noted above, the collaborative rationality model that Innes and Booher (2010) present provides a lens through which to examine collaborative processes such as the community-based planning program in Hillsborough County. I did not embark on this dissertation research with the purpose of evaluating the community-based planning program through the lens of the collaborative rationality model. Nevertheless, in the context of this dissertation research, the model helps explain the research participants’ experiences in the collaborative community-based planning process. In addition, the model also raises relevant questions, some of which I hope to address in future research, and others of which I have addressed to a limited extent in chapters seven through ten of this dissertation. These questions are as follows:

1. Does the Hillsborough County community planning program represent a deliberative process that is collaboratively rational?
   a. Are representatives of all basic interests brought together?
   b. Was substantial agreement reached among a supermajority of the representatives of the basic interests?
   c. Were all efforts made to find creative ways to satisfy all participants before reaching closure?
d. Were the participants well informed during the process, and did their deliberations represent a collective form of knowing and deciding?

2. Does the Hillsborough County community planning process meet the necessary conditions of collaborative rationality?
   a. Was there full diversity of stakeholders represented in the process?
   b. Were the stakeholders’ diverse interests interdependent?
   c. Was there authentic dialogue in the deliberations among the participants?

3. To what extent has the Hillsborough County community planning process resulted in the following:
   a. Policy options that represent mutual gains?
   b. New relationships among the participants?
   c. Transformation of interests?
   d. System adaptations and structural alterations?

Summary

The literature shows that participation is valuable because it provides citizens with opportunities to influence public policy making in ways that improve conditions in their lives and communities. Participation can improve the quality and legitimacy of public policy making by imbedding the knowledge and experiences of local citizens within the policy outputs. But imbalances in power relations and resources can render citizen participation less effective.

Collaborative processes can help address power and resource...
imbalances (Goldstein & Butler, 2010) in policy making and transform institutions (Healey, 2006). Collaborative processes are transformational because they focus on communication and knowledge sharing, power shifting, and consensus building (Healey, 2006). The collaborative rationality model provides a lens through which to evaluate the design, dynamics, and outputs of collaborative processes (Innes & Booher, 2010). In order for a process to generate collaborative rationality and produce optimal results it must meet the essential conditions of diversity, interdependence of interests, and authentic dialogue. If those conditions are met, a collaborative process can lead to mutual gain options, new relationships and broader trust, transformed understandings, and system innovation and adaptation (Innes & Booher, 2010). In later chapters of this dissertation I will discuss collaborative rationality and its essential conditions in the context of the Hillsborough County community-based planning process.
Chapter Three:
Methodology and Methods

I used grounded theory and qualitative research methods in this project to examine how and why citizens participate in community-based planning and land development entitlement processes. From the data I derived a model that explains the main concern of the research participants was to preserve the character of their communities, and illustrates how the research participants’ main concern motivated and organized their actions to become involved and participate in local government land use processes. I refer to this model as “Preserving Place.”

Land regulation and policy making require the application of complex processes to compile technical data and elicit public input in multiple layers of political, legal, and social contexts. These layers of context and processes frequently spark sharp contrasts of actions, interactions, and emotions, generating a wealth of data for which qualitative research methods are effective tools of examination and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I have aimed in this research project to capture the complexity of the participants’ experiences within the context of the processes being examined.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a methodology, or strategy of inquiry, in which a researcher applies systematic research methods to derive a conceptual
explanation of processes, actions, and interactions that are grounded in and emerged from data obtained from the participants who were involved in the processes, actions, and interactions (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003). The methodology was originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) as a strategy for building theories from research grounded in data, in contrast to strategies that deduce hypotheses from existing theories (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory methodology provides a systematic process for developing theory where no theory relevant to the specific topic already exists, and aims to allow the participants’ main concern to emerge from the data (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006; Pergert, 2009). Thus, grounded theory applies systematic research methods to develop theory from research grounded in the data, rather than to deduce testable hypotheses from existing theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Emergence of theory is central to grounded theory methodology. Theory emerges through a process as the researcher identifies latent patterns of behavior that reveal the research participants’ main concern (Pergert, 2009). The purpose of grounded theory is not to describe and convey the research participants’ stories; but rather to identify their main concern and then explain conceptually the ongoing behaviors through which the research participants seek to resolve their main concern (Breckenridge, Jones, Elliott, & Nichol, 2012). The participants’ focus on resolving their main concern is what motivates and organizes their behavior in the substantive context (Glaser, 2002). Thus, in order
to identify the participants’ main concern, the researcher must recognize and analyze the motivations behind the participants’ behaviors.

Bringer et al. (2006, pp. 246, citing Glaser and Strauss, 1967) explain that the term “theory” in “grounded theory” is not intended to mean an “all-encompassing grand theory” but rather a “methodology to assist in the development of an explanatory model grounded in empirical data.” Grounded theory methods emphasize an open-ended approach in which the researcher moves back and forth between the data and analysis, and often returns to the field to gather additional data in order to refine the theoretical framework emerging from the study (Charmaz, 2006). The grounded theory researcher engages in data collection and data analysis simultaneously, and performs constant comparison among different pieces of data for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

**Epistemology of grounded theory methodology.** Research “methodologies” are general ways of thinking about and studying phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). Methodologies rest on assumptions and understandings of “the nature of knowledge and knowing” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 3), or epistemologies and ontologies. The epistemology of grounded theory methodology evolved from two traditions; Chicago Interactionism and the Pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey and George Mead (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Blumer (1969, pp. 1-2), who was a student of Mead, coined the term “symbolic interactionism” and defined it based on three fundamental premises:
1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them.

2. The meanings humans assign to things derives from, or arises out of, social interactions.

3. Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by persons in dealing with things they encounter.

Thus, humans do not simply react to the actions of others; rather they interpret those actions and define them. Moreover, humans do not respond directly to actions they encounter, but instead respond to the meaning they have attached to those actions. In this way, humans mediate their interactions with each other by means of symbols and interpretations they assign to each other’s actions (Blumer, 1969).

The Pragmatist writings that influenced grounded theory methodology were published primarily by John Dewey and George Mead during the first three decades of the twentieth century (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These writers assumed that “knowledge is created through action and interaction,” and they believed in the “accumulation of collective knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 2-3). The experiences of the inquirer are vital to the inquiry and the implied thought processes because “reality” cannot be separated from the “perspective of the knower” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 4). The validity of ideas is tested by the consequences to which the ideas lead (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Thus, methodologies are influenced by the researcher’s experiences, general assumptions, and understandings (Baum, 1997).
Qualitative Research Methods

Methodologies inform research “methods,” which are the specific techniques and procedures used for gathering and analyzing data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). The specific methods to be employed in a research project are dictated by the research problem, questions, and purpose (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative methods can be used to develop an “overarching explanatory concept,” or theoretical framework, for the purpose of explaining some phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 55). For example, a qualitative researcher might aim to develop a substantive theory to address a delimited problem in a specific substantive area. Or she may wish to develop more formal theory by refining concepts derived from the data to more abstract levels and specifying relationships between them in order to understand problems in multiple substantive areas (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8). In this research I have sought to develop a substantive theory to explain the main concern of citizens who actively participate in collaborative community-based planning and land development entitlement processes.

Qualitative research emphasizes context and process. “Context” refers to the existing conditions that gave rise to the problem or circumstances to which people respond by means of their actions, interactions, and emotions. “Process” refers to the ongoing responses to the problems and circumstances that arise out of the context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 229). Qualitative data yield rich descriptions of complex contexts, processes, actions and interactions (Crawford, et al., 2008). Thus, qualitative methods are appropriate when one seeks to
understand and explain phenomena (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993) or the experience of the research participants in order to explore how culture guides the formation of meanings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

**Qualitative approaches in planning research.** Researchers have applied a number of qualitative research methods, including case studies, ethnographies, and grounded theory methodology to study planning and land use processes. For example, Baum (1997) conducted field research that involved immersing himself in community-based planning processes by attending meetings as an observer, reading and analyzing planning documents, meeting minutes, and archival documents, and conducting interviews with numerous participants. Baum’s research demonstrates the application of ethnographic methods to develop conceptual renderings and theoretical explanations grounded in the data (Baum, 1997, 1998). Baum (1997, pp. 275-282) constructed an abstract theory to explain the tensions people experience while participating in planning processes that require them to envision their community’s future, even though that future looks very different from their community’s past that they long to preserve.

Crawford *et al.* (2008) used a different approach in their application of qualitative methods to examine planning processes. First they conducted a thorough review of literature on public participation in planning efforts. They then observed and documented proceedings as they were taking place at community meetings and design workshops where participants were asked to state their goals for the community visioning process. From these data Crawford *et al.*
developed a coding system to organize the participants’ goal statements into categories of descriptive types. They developed a coding system using a type of conceptual ordering (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to establish the properties and dimensions of each goal statement category. The goal statement categories were then integrated into more abstract central categories, which represented the main theme of the research: “bonding and bridging social capital” (Crawford, et al., 2008, p. 544). Through integration and analysis of the categories that emerged from their data, Crawford et al. (2008) derived a main theme. Their main theme represented a substantive theory of the relationship of community size and social capital development in participatory community planning, which would be useful as a facilitation guide in subsequent community planning processes (Crawford, et al., 2008).

Goldstein and Butler (2010, p. 244) applied grounded theory methodology in a case study approach to develop a substantive theory that explains how linking two different types of collaborative processes can result in nurturing expertise, sustaining collaborative networks, and amplifying potential for change. The substantive theories that emerged from the approaches of Goldstein and Butler (2010) and Crawford et al. (2008) were less abstract and general than that which resulted from the approach of Baum (1997) to explain tensions people struggle with when they envision the future their communities in the process of change; but each produced theories that emerged from and were grounded in the data.
**Case study approach.** I applied a case study approach in this project to explore the research participants’ experiences in the context of community-based planning and land development entitlement processes. The case study approach is particularly helpful where the researcher desires to apply qualitative methods in exploring complex processes in a real-life context. Researchers use case studies to examine programs, processes, and actors' experiences in contexts that are bounded by time, place, and activities, and may collect data using a variety of techniques and procedures over a specified period of time (Creswell, 2003). The case study constitutes a powerful, descriptive approach for gaining direct understandings of the way processes are defined and understood by the actors (Crawford, et al., 2008). These understandings may then be explained by applying existing theoretical models (Hamel, et al., 1993), or by constructing new theoretical models from concepts derived directly from the data (Charmaz, 2006).

The case study approach has been commonly applied in the field of community planning (Yin, 2003). Catlin (1997) used the case study approach to conduct studies of four planning projects in which he applied specific qualitative methods that included participant and non-participant observation, key informant interviews, document review, and archival research. Catlin applied the participant observation method by participating in the processes as a member of a site task force and as a member of the local land planning commission. He provided a historical backdrop by drawing on published literature describing the geographical, environmental, and political histories of the case study.
communities. He also conducted interviews, reviewed planning documents, and conducted archival research.

The result of Catlin’s research was a rich, descriptive narrative of the planning processes of the four case studies, and an analysis of each process based on his observations, participation, experiences, and professional expertise. His research also provided a critique of the efforts of planning officials to apply various theoretical planning approaches, such as rational comprehensive planning, transactional planning, and incremental planning (Catlin, 1997). Catlin’s research represents a qualitative study of planning processes based on the evaluation and interpretation from his own perspective as a planning professional analyzing the data he gathered.

A researcher may select study cases based on specified criteria and research goals. For example, Baum (1997) conducted three years of field research involving planning processes in two Baltimore communities. Baum (1997) selected his two case study communities purposefully based on his research objectives and the projects in which the communities were involved. His research objective was to “reveal something about how people think about community” (1997, p. 8). The culmination of his field work and analyses described in rich detail the stories of the two communities in the process of planning for their futures, and the dynamics of the participants involved in the community planning projects.

**Ethnographic methods.** I also applied ethnographic methods in this research through extensive interviews with citizens who participated in the
community-based planning and land development entitlement processes. Ethnographic methods seek to describe phenomena from the meanings given by the participants themselves (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The thick descriptive data that ethnographic methods generate is very suitable for grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ethnographic studies require extensive interaction with participants in order to accurately reflect the participants’ own perspectives. Such studies frame human behavior within a socio-political and historical context, interpreted through the concept of culture. Ethnographic study methods gather data from multiple sources and apply analytic strategies that seek to construct theory from inductive, interactive, and recursive data (Agar, 1996; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Ethnographic research applies abductive reasoning to develop new theoretical propositions that emerge directly out of the research data. The term “abductive” was coined by Charles Peirce to describe a research logic that constructs new theoretical propositions to account for data onto which existing propositions do not map (Agar, 1996). Agar (1996, pp. 39-41) explains the differences in deductive, inductive, and abductive research:

With deductive research, one starts with concepts, derives hypotheses, and then measures the variables in that hypothesis to test it. With inductive research, one gathers some data, then asks what the data tell us about the prior system of concepts…Both of these approaches are closed with reference to the original system of concepts…[Ethnographers] see data as containing their own patterns, their own concepts, and they view
analysis as a long-term effort to figure out what those concepts might be…

The new concepts bring you closer to the world of the people you worked with than available theoretical concepts ever could have. That is how *abduction* works. Instead of, from \( p \) we derive \( q \), or from \( q \) we derive \( p \), the logic changes to, what kind of \( p \) do I need to invent such that this new and interesting \( q \) makes some kind of sense.

**Grounded theory ethnography.** The ethnographic methods I applied in this research follow what Charmaz (2006, pp. 21-23) described and labeled “grounded theory ethnography.” Generally, an ethnographic approach would seek detailed knowledge of multiple dimensions in order to cover the “round of life” that occurs within a particular group (Charmaz, 2006, p. 21). In contrast, a grounded theory ethnography focuses on a process being studied rather than on a setting, and the researcher may move across settings in order to gain a more complete knowledge of the process (Charmaz, 2006). Applying grounded theory methodology to an ethnographic approach moves the data analysis from description to explanation through the interpretation of abstract categories and development of theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Ethnographers may apply grounded theory analysis in order to develop abstract categories and construct theoretical explanations from descriptive data (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory ethnographic methods are useful in studying community planning and land development entitlement decisions because of the focus on process. Such methods allow a researcher to move across settings in order to compare and gain more knowledge of the activities involved in a
process, and to develop conceptual renderings of those activities (Charmaz, 2006).

**My Role in this Research**

Qualitative research is interpretative, and requires the researcher to be involved with participants in a sustained and intensive study experience. This raises certain strategic, ethical, and personal considerations (Creswell, 2003, p. 184). Therefore, researchers are encouraged to disclose their biases, values, and personal interests about the research topic, as well as procedures for gaining entry to the research site and any ethical issues that might arise (Creswell, 2003). In addition, when conducting grounded theory research, a researcher's bias is considered to be yet another variable if it becomes relevant (Glaser, 2002).

With these considerations in mind, my interest in the topic and processes involved in this research arose from my experiences as a citizen of Hillsborough County for some thirty years and from my professional experiences as an attorney. As a long-time resident of Hillsborough County, I have watched the county grow and have observed that despite Florida’s comprehensive planning and growth management laws, urban and suburban development continues to encroach into rural, agricultural, and environmentally sensitive areas. I interpret this development pattern as “sprawl,” and do not believe it is consistent with state growth management goals. I also believe it is neither economically nor environmentally sustainable. Moreover, I am concerned about negative impacts to water supply and quality, loss of wetlands along with their valuable functions.
and services, loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and loss of rural communities and agricultural lands.

Since land development decisions are made locally, I believe the sprawling development patterns in Hillsborough County represent a failure of the local government to make land use decisions that effectively implement state and local growth management policies. Therefore, my personal interest in this research involves the hope that community-based planning and effective citizen participation in local government land use processes might help foster land use policies and land development entitlement decisions that result in more sustainable development patterns.

Additionally, in my legal practice I have represented citizens and voluntary community organizations in matters involving land use and environmental issues. Most often these representations are in opposition to discrete land development projects that private actors have proposed and the local government is considering whether to approve or deny. It has been my experience in these cases that citizens and community-based organizations often have limited knowledge, experience, and resources with which to effectively participate or challenge land development proposals they oppose. As a result, they often try to navigate the process on their own without the help of professional legal, environmental, or planning expertise.

It has also been my experience that professionals and experts, including attorneys, environmental consultants, planning consultants, and engineers, often decline to represent “opposition” clients. This is because (1) conflicts might arise
with their existing or potential development or real estate industry clients, and (2) “opposition” clients, who are usually citizens and voluntary community organizations, have limited resources to pay legal or professional fees. Simply stated, real estate and development industry clients have deeper pockets. As a result, even though state and local growth management policies require public processes that include citizen participation in planning and land development decision making, in reality the efforts of citizens and voluntary community organizations are often rendered futile because these actors do not have access to the professional representation necessary to effectively present their cases.

I believe my personal and professional experiences with the people, organizations, contexts, and processes involved in this research project serve to heighten my awareness and sensitivity to the issues and challenges faced by many of the research participants. However, because of my experiences working closely with clients in opposition to land development proposals, I bring to this research certain personal concerns and biases. I have made every effort to ensure objectivity; however, my personal concerns and biases have no doubt shaped the way I have viewed and understood the data in this research. Because my personal concerns and biases are relevant, they represent in this research yet another variable (Glaser, 2002).

I have brought to this research the perspective that planning, growth management, and land use regulation are desirable and essential public policies, particularly in rapidly growing states like Florida. I have also brought the perspective that planning should be a collaborative policy making effort that
recognizes the voices of ordinary lay citizens and respects the kinds of local knowledge and understandings they bring to the table. I believe citizen participation is beneficial to society and essential for democracy, and I believe citizens should be afforded opportunities to participate meaningfully and effectively in decisions that affect them. Finally, I have brought to this research the perspective that existing local government land use decision-making processes tend to favor development and real estate industry interests and marginalize ordinary citizens.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this research I applied grounded theory methodology, as set out in Glaser and Strauss (1967), and further developed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Charmaz (2006). I used a case study approach to gather ethnographic and other qualitative data related to land use processes, and applied grounded theory analysis to identify and explain the main concern of citizens who became involved and participated in the land use processes. Corbin and Strauss (2008) set out a clear and comprehensive process for qualitative data collection and analysis for researchers applying grounded theory methodology. They summarize the process as “generating, developing, and verifying concepts [that] builds over time with the acquisition of data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 57). Thus, analysis begins with the initial data collection and continues sequentially throughout the research process. This approach allows the researcher to identify concepts, generate questions about those concepts, and then follow through with more data gathering aimed at addressing those questions.
Researchers using grounded theory methodology conduct initial sampling purposively, based on the subject area of the research. This initial sampling is followed by theoretical sampling (Pergert, 2009). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 45) described theoretical sampling as a process in which the researcher “collects, codes, and analyzes” the initial data and then “decides what data to collect next and where to find them.” Thus, through application of theoretical sampling the researcher allows the emerging theory to control the process of ongoing data collection (Pergert, 2009).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain that during the process of theoretical sampling, a researcher frequently returns to the data or gathers additional data in order to fill in categories and finally saturate them toward completion of the study. In this manner, the researcher is constantly comparing the analysis against actual data, and making modifications based on these comparisons. Moreover, throughout the process of theoretical sampling and data analysis, the researcher is continually validating or negating the interpretations derived from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Initial data collection procedures. I conducted initial sampling purposively based on the specific subject area of citizen participation in collaborative community-based planning processes. I selected the communities based on their similarities, which include their locations outside the county’s urban centers, history of agriculture and farming, current mix of agricultural, rural, and suburban land uses, community visions that emphasize open space and rural character as expressed in their adopted community plans, and the timing of
adoption of their community plans. I selected communities located outside the county’s urban centers because these tend to have significant undeveloped land areas, including lands currently or formerly in agricultural use, which are attractive for potential development. Because of this, these communities have experienced pressure to allow more dense and intense development, allow the extension of public water and sewer services, and widen their roads. Landowners are tempted sell their farm and agricultural lands for suburban development. The three study communities were also among the first in Hillsborough County to adopt community plans, and I because of this I believed they would have more implementation history.

The initial data included the adopted community plans and public record archives from the community planning workshops for each community. From Hillsborough County and the City-County Planning Commission I obtained public records compiled during the community plan formulation, approval, and adoption processes, and from subsequent plan amendment and land development entitlement processes. The plan formulation, approval, and adoption records included community planning workshop agendas, minutes, participant sign-in sheets, committee rosters, plan documents, public hearing agendas, hearing captions, staff reports, the state land planning agency review report, other agency review comments, and citizens’ public comments. Records for each subsequent plan amendment or land development entitlement process included public hearing agendas, minutes, participant sign-in sheets, hearing captions, plan documents, staff reports, the state land planning agency review report, other
agency review comments, citizens’ public comments, and the application package.

The public records contained names of citizens who participated in the planning workshops and public hearings. From these records I researched online real estate records from the county property appraiser’s and clerk of court’s websites to compile a list of potential research participants. I selected the potential research participants purposively based on two criteria: (1) owning real property located within the community planning area boundaries; and (2) participating in the community-based plan formulation or review process. I included property ownership as a criterion because I wanted to capture community planning participants who are invested in the case study area by owning a part of it, and because I believed property owners would be more sensitive to land regulation policies than renters would be since land regulation directly impacts property use, value, and development options.

I applied for and received approval for this research project from the University of South Florida, Division of Research Integrity & Compliance, Institutional Review Board (eIRB). After receiving eIRB approval to proceed, I mailed letters to citizens who both participated in the community planning efforts and own property within the community plan boundaries, inviting them to voluntarily participate in this research. A total of 146 invitation letters were sent: 68 letters to citizens in Keystone-Odessa; 35 to citizens in Lutz; and 43 to citizens in Thonotosassa. Of those invited, there were 15 citizens from Keystone-Odessa who agreed to participate, five from Lutz, and two from
Thonotosassa. The research participation rate was 22 percent from Keystone-Odessa, 14 percent from Lutz, and four percent from Thonotosassa, for an overall participation rate of 15 percent.

I believe the relatively low participation rate from Thonotosassa compared to that of Keystone-Odessa and Lutz may be related to differences in the voluntary community organizations that exist in those communities, including the leadership, membership, and nature of the associations’ activities during the research period from 1998 through 2010. The Lutz and Keystone civic association had several leading “activist” members during the research period who were very vocal and involved in county land use processes. In addition, the Keystone Civic Association holds monthly meetings and regularly sponsors activities that include roadside clean-ups and an annual “Family Fun Day” at a local park. These activities provide opportunities for the voluntary community organization members to become acquainted with each other, form bonds, and work together on community concerns. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, the data showed the voluntary community organizations were instrumental in organizing their members to participate in community-based planning and other land use processes that impacted their communities.

I believe it is also possible that socio-economic factors may have played a role in the relatively low rate of research participation from Thonotosassa. Laurian (2004) shows that people with higher household incomes are more likely to participate in public policy decision making than people with lower incomes.
As will be discussed in a subsequent section of this dissertation, Thonotosassa has a lower per capita income and higher poverty rate than the other study communities or overall unincorporated Hillsborough County.

The public records and participant interviews that were obtained in this research generated a wealth of data. The public hearing transcripts contained statements made on the record by citizen participants, applicants seeking land development entitlements, applicants’ representatives, public administrative officials, and members of the local governing body. These public records revealed the actions and interactions of the actors involved in the processes. For example, the records of public hearings where community plans were being considered for adoption or amendment revealed how public officials reacted to citizens who appeared at the hearings to comment on the community plans. In addition, the participant interviews provided first-hand accounts of the participants’ experiences in formulating their community plans and in defending their plans against subsequent amendments or land development entitlement requests they deemed inconsistent with their community plan.

**Theoretical sampling.** I began theoretical sampling while in the process of conducting interviews with the research participants. Analysis of the community-based plans and other public records data had suggested emergent concepts and themes related to the citizens’ visions for their communities as expressed in their community plans, written comments submitted during the community planning process, and statements made during public hearings. As I began the interviews, these concepts and themes became more filled in and
clear. As the interviews proceeded the initial concepts became saturated, new concepts emerged, and relationships among the concepts started to become evident.

Grounded theory research focuses on process. Thus, a researcher applying grounded theory methodology frames interview questions to study process, with an emphasis on the participants’ own views of the experience. For research that concerns an organizational or social process, Charmaz (2006) recommends directing questions first to the collective practices in the process, and later to the individual’s own experiences and views of the process. Accordingly, in the research participants’ interviews I focused first on the collaborative community-based planning workshops and plan adoption processes in general, then moved on to the participants’ own experiences and their role in formulating their community plans, implementing their community plans, and participating in subsequent land development entitlement processes. Several of the research participants provided me with access to their own archive collections, which included photographs, newspaper clippings, court documents, and research. This additional information contributed to round out the participant interviews and provide rich, descriptive detail to their personal accounts.

Beginning in October 2011 and continuing through May 2012, I conducted informal, open-ended interviews with each of the respondents in order to gain an intimate understanding of their experiences within the contexts and processes in which they were involved as described in Charmaz (2006). I followed Charmaz’ (2006) recommendation for intensive interviewing that is open-ended, flexible,
and in-depth. As the interviews proceeded, I directed and narrowed the range of interview topics in order to gather specific data for development of the theoretical framework, while taking care to avoid forcing data into preconceived categories. I provided each participant with a disclosure of the research objectives and procedures, and obtained from each a written agreement to proceed with the interview. I personally transcribed the interviews, and assigned pseudonyms to each participant in order to keep their identities confidential.

**Coding and deriving core concepts.** Following the process set out by Corbin and Strauss (2008, pp. 195, 198), I began analysis of the data collected during this research by conducting “open coding.” The open coding procedure involved a “brainstorming” approach in which I sought to open the data up to all possibilities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160). After open coding the community plans and interview transcripts using ATLAS-ti qualitative data analysis software, I integrated the initial open codes to create “code families,” each of which consisted of several of the initial codes that I found to have overlapping and recurring meanings. From these code families I derived conceptual categories that represented the ideas contained in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As I gathered additional data and derived new concepts, I began the process of comparing the concepts emerging from each new data set collected, identifying similarities and differences among them. Thus, new concepts were added as additional data were obtained, and new properties and value dimensions were added to expand or revise existing concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
With my research questions in mind, I identified relationships among the concepts in order to develop more abstract categories. The process of relating concepts to each other has been referred to as “axial coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 195, 198-199). Data coding requires the researcher to interact with the raw data by using analytical techniques such as asking questions of the data and making comparisons between data in order to raise the raw data to a conceptual level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In addition to coding data I began early in the analytical process to create memos and diagrams to question and discuss the data and reflect my thoughts. Memos provide a running log of the data analysis and are “storehouses of ideas generated through interaction with the data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 108).

Through this process of constant comparison, linking, and filling in of the initial codes with details from the data, five core concepts emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 103). These five core concepts and their descriptions are shown in the following table:

Table 3.1 Core concepts and descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Embracing community character and vision.</td>
<td>How the citizens define and describe their community, including its character, geographical boundaries, history, historical events, and its future, as expressed in the community plans and by the research participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Being a community actor.</td>
<td>How the research participants become actively involved with others in their community who are intent on preserving their community’s character and vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How the research participants learned about planning and land use decision making processes, how to navigate them, and how to effectively participate in them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participating in land use processes.</td>
<td>How the research participants describe their experiences participating in planning workshops and other land use processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The process of formulating the community plan, including activities that were carried out in the planning workshops, open-house meetings, and public hearings during the plan formulation, adoption, and review processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where the planning workshops and public hearings were held, whether they were conveniently located and scheduled, whether the citizens received adequate notice of each scheduled workshop, open house, and public hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whether all stakeholders were invited, had equal opportunity to participate, attend workshops, set agenda, make assertions, challenge assertions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicts that arose during the community planning process and land development entitlement processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Implementing the community plan</td>
<td>How well the research participants believe the community plan has &quot;held up&quot; since it was adopted, including how the county has applied the plan, how closely developers have followed the plan, and how effective the plan has been to preserve the community vision and character;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How the research participants:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participated in processes to formulate land development regulations to implement the community plan policies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participated in land development entitlement processes subsequent to adoption of the community plan;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were able to influence project design decisions made by developers, or how they cooperated with developers to adjust a project design to be consistent with the community plan;

• took formal legal action against development proposals they believed were not consistent with their community plan;

• participated in land use processes to influence land use decisions made by local government;

• participated in public hearing processes and lobbied local government officials to implement the community plan effectively.

Validation of findings. Validation of the findings in qualitative research occurs throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2003). However, “validity” in qualitative research does not imply the same meanings as it does in quantitative research, and it is not synonymous with “reliability” or “generalizability” as those terms are applied to consistency of responses or application of results to different settings or people (Creswell, 2003, p. 195). Creswell (2003, pp. 195-196) explains that “validity” in qualitative research is equivalent to “trustworthiness,” “authenticity,” or “credibility,” which suggests a determination of “whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account.”

I have insured validity and credibility of this research by applying several strategies, including:

1. Triangulation of data sources. Data was collected from and compared across multiple sources, which included public records, hearing transcripts, comprehensive plan and community plan
documents, plan amendment documents, participant interviews, participants’ photos and other records, newspaper articles, and court dockets.

2. Member checking. During the interview process I checked my preliminary findings with subsequent research participants to determine whether they believed my interpretations were consistent with their own realities and meanings.

3. Rich, thick description of the findings. My findings have been conveyed through a descriptive and detailed narrative intended to “transport readers to the setting” and give “an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). For this reason I have also included in this dissertation extensive direct quotes from the research participants’ interviews.

4. Clarification of bias. My personal concerns and biases have been set out openly and frankly in this narrative.
Chapter Four:
Community-Based Planning in Hillsborough County

Community-based plans in Hillsborough County are intended to be "extensions and refinements" of the county’s overall comprehensive plan ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, p. 1). The county’s overall comprehensive plan provides general guidance on issues county-wide; however, the community plans are more detailed than the comprehensive plan and provide specific guidance on issues applicable to the particular community. Each community plan describes the respective planning area’s history and unique characteristics and sets out a vision for the community’s future growth and development. Community plans are adopted as part of the county’s comprehensive plan and are organized into a plan element entitled the “Livable Communities Element.” ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008).

Each community plan consists of the following components: (1) “comprehensive plan amendments to incorporate appropriate sections” of the community plan; (2) land development regulations to address specific development issues; and (3) capital improvements program to address infrastructure issues ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for..."
Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element", 2008, p. 2). The below map of Hillsborough County depicts the areas with community plans that had been adopted as of 2008.

Figure 4.1 Community planning areas. Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element, 2008, p. 3. Public record of Hillsborough County.

Community-based planning in Hillsborough County is accomplished through a collaborative process that engages diverse participants, including technical experts, government officials, members of the lay public, and other stakeholders, all of whom attend a series of workshops in which they deliberate jointly to formulate a vision for the future growth and development of the affected community. Many kinds of knowledge are brought into the process, including
that of experts, lay people, and local persons with unique local knowledge. Participants share their diverse knowledge and unique experiences, which become components assembled together as “intellectual bricolage” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 6) to develop options and strategies aimed at addressing problems the participants face together. In these ways, community-based planning in Hillsborough County corresponds with the emerging trends of non-linear, collaborative planning and policy making that Innes and Booher (2010) described.

The process through which community plans are formulated and adopted in Hillsborough County is designed to involve extensive citizen participation. The general steps the county undertakes to prepare a community plan are as follows: (1) define community area boundaries; (2) prepare citizen participation plan; (3) collect data; (4) analyze data; (5) extract and prioritize issues; and (6) recommend and present solutions through a public process ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, p. 1).

The process for engaging citizens in the community planning process has evolved since 2001 when the first community plans were adopted, but the general framework remains the same. Public notices are mailed, emailed, and posted throughout the affected community announcing the initial open house meeting, each subsequent planning workshop, and the final open house meeting. The open house meetings and planning workshops are open to the public, and anyone may attend and participate. The workshops are facilitated by
professional planners who are employees of the county or planning commission. After the community plan is formulated, two public hearings are held before the county commissioners, who make the final adoption decision.

There are efforts to engage broad public participation in plan formulation; however, there is no mechanism to ensure consistent representation of all affected stakeholders. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, some research participants complained that there was very little representation of certain segments of the community, including businesses and landowners, and that “activists” dominated the deliberation process. However, other research participants complained that landowners, developers, land use attorneys, and other development and real estate industry professionals attempted to use their power unfairly to influence community plan provisions, even working outside the public process. The lack of consistent representation of diverse stakeholders throughout the plan formulation workshops led to suspicion and distrust among the participants. Landowners, developers, business representatives, and real estate industry professionals felt their interests were overlooked because they were outnumbered by “activists.” In contrast, homeowners, residents, and other lay citizens felt their interests were overshadowed by those of stakeholders with more power and influence.

The failure of the process to address power and resource imbalances exacerbated the problem. Stakeholders became divided into two factions, with landowners, developers, and industry professionals on one side and homeowners on the other. Both sides suspected the other of working outside the
process to influence decision making. Suspicion and distrust undermined the deliberation process and prevented the stakeholders from recognizing the interdependence and reciprocity of their diverse interests. They remained entrenched in their positions and were unable to move from zero sum games to mutual gain agreement. Distrust constrained consensus building. Some research participants whose interests were represented by the majority of participants in the community planning workshops believed consensus was reached. Others of this same stakeholder group said they preferred simple majority vote instead of working toward consensus because they believed stakeholders sharing their interests could outnumber stakeholders with opposing interests and could carry the vote. One research participant said there could be no real consensus in the process because the planning workshops and open house meetings were always dominated by activists.

The community-based plan formulation process could be improved by defining who the stakeholders in each community are, and providing a mechanism to ensure consistent representation of each segment of the community throughout the planning workshops and open house meetings. Although the meetings and workshops must remain open to the public, a balanced number of individuals from each stakeholder group could be appointed to represent their group on a steering committee that is responsible for negotiating and formulating the final plan recommendations. The process could also be improved if the facilitators were trained in negotiation and mediation skills and applied techniques to address power and resource imbalances among
participants. These and other process issues will be discussed further in a subsequent chapter of this dissertation.

**The Study Communities**

In this research I examined the community-based planning processes of three communities in unincorporated Hillsborough County: (1) Keystone-Odessa; (2) Lutz; and (3) Thonotosassa. The Keystone-Odessa and Lutz communities are situated in the northwest quadrant of Hillsborough County. Keystone-Odessa is bordered by Pinellas County on the west, Pasco County on the north, the Lutz community on the east, and the Citrus Park community on the south. Lutz is bordered by Pasco County on the north, Interstate 75 on the east, the Carrollwood community on the south, and the Keystone-Odessa community on the west. Thonotosassa is situated in the northeast quadrant of Hillsborough County, and is bordered by U.S. 301 on the north, McIntosh Road on the east, Interstate 4 on the south, Interstate 75 on the west.

The Keystone-Odessa community covers an area of 23 square miles, Lutz covers 41 square miles, and Thonotosassa covers 25 square miles. The 2010 population of unincorporated Hillsborough County was 840,438, which represented an increase of about 31 percent from 2000. Compared with the unincorporated county, the 2010 population of Keystone-Odessa was 9,714, Lutz was 37,754, and Thonotosassa was 11,787, representing increases of 18 percent, 20 percent, and 13 percent from 2000, respectively. The 2010 population density per square mile in unincorporated Hillsborough County was 907 persons, and in Keystone-Odessa was 429, in Lutz was 927, and in
Thonotosassa was 474 ("Hillsborough Community Atlas," 2011). Lutz has approximately twice the densely per square mile than the other two study communities. This is likely because of several large planned residential communities located west of Dale Mabry Highway, and an older planned residential community located west of Livingston Avenue. Lutz also has more land use in medium density housing than either Keystone-Odessa or Thonotosassa, which have more low density housing. All three study communities have significant water resources. Water and wetlands make up 31.58 percent of the land area in Keystone-Odessa, 36.93 percent of the land area in Lutz, and 22.73 of the land area in Thonotosassa ("Hillsborough Community Atlas," 2011).¹

The 1999 per capita income in unincorporated Hillsborough County was $21,805. Compared with the unincorporated county, 1999 per capita income was significantly higher in Keystone-Odessa at $34,809, and Lutz at $29,397, but lower in Thonotosassa at $16,915. Ten percent of the 1999 population in unincorporated Hillsborough County was below the poverty level, compared with two percent in Keystone-Odessa, six percent in Lutz, and sixteen percent in Thonotosassa. The 2010 population of unincorporated Hillsborough County was 75 percent white and 13 percent black, compared with Keystone-Odessa, which was 90 percent white and three percent black, with Lutz, which was 85 percent white, and six percent black, and with Thonotosassa, which was 79 percent white and 14 percent black ("Hillsborough Community Atlas," 2011). Thus, the

¹ The community boundaries of the Hillsborough Community Atlas do not coincide perfectly with those of the community plans; however they are close enough for reasonable comparison.
population of both Keystone-Odessa and Lutz is generally more wealthy and white than unincorporated Hillsborough County. However, the population of Thonotosassa is generally less wealthy and more black than the unincorporated county or the other two study communities. The following tables contain geographic, demographic, and land use data on the three study communities.

Table 4.1 Study communities’ area and population. Data from Hillsborough Community Atlas, [http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu](http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Area Sq. Miles</th>
<th>Population 2000</th>
<th>Population 2010</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated County</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>643,936</td>
<td>840,438</td>
<td>+31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone-Odessa</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8,521</td>
<td>9,714</td>
<td>+18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutz</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31,483</td>
<td>37,754</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10,417</td>
<td>11,787</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Study communities’ income, race, and ethnicity. Data from Hillsborough Community Atlas, [http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu](http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated County</td>
<td>$21,805</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>White 75% Black 13% Other 12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone-Odessa</td>
<td>$34,809</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>White 90% Black 3% Other 7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutz</td>
<td>$29,397</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>White 85% Black 6% Other 9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>$16,915</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>White 79% Black 14% Other 7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 Study communities’ land use density and intensity. Data from Hillsborough Community Atlas, [http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu](http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated County</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>Change +31%</td>
<td>Low 11.03% Med 6.23% High 7.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone-Odessa</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>Change +18%</td>
<td>Low 22.85% Med 11.68% High 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutz</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>Change +20%</td>
<td>Low 9.73% Med 19.04% High 6.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>Change +13%</td>
<td>Low 25.19% Med 6.63% High 1.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Study communities’ built up and natural areas. Data from Hillsborough Community Atlas, [http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu](http://www.hillsborough.communityatlas.usf.edu)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Urban or built up</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Water and Wetlands</th>
<th>Upland forest and open land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated County</td>
<td>42.62%</td>
<td>22.42%</td>
<td>Water 4.15%</td>
<td>Forest 7.79% Open 2.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone-Odessa</td>
<td>36.86%</td>
<td>22.64%</td>
<td>Water 12.55%</td>
<td>Forest 6.23% Open 1.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutz</td>
<td>46.22%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
<td>Water 8.96%</td>
<td>Forest 6.81% Open 5.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>41.94%</td>
<td>25.38%</td>
<td>Water 7.17%</td>
<td>Forest 8.00% Open 5.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens of Keystone-Odessa, Lutz, and Thonotosassa have formed voluntary community organizations through which they actively network and marshal their resources to participate in land use processes, and sometimes mount formal opposition to development proposals they perceive as inconsistent with their community plans. I will refer to these organizations throughout this dissertation as the KCA (Keystone Civic Association), the LCA (Lutz Civic...
Association), and the GTCA (Greater Thonotosassa Civic Association). The voluntary community organizations played a prominent role in the community plan formulation process. By organizing themselves through these networks, lay citizens were able to concentrate their power and increase their influence, effectively lifting themselves up to a higher rung on the ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969). However, for citizens to wield this kind of power was alarming for landowners, developers, and industry stakeholders, who were unaccustomed to sparring with citizens on this level, and who feared erosion of their property rights. Nevertheless, having discovered their own power through networking and organizing, citizens in the study communities have claimed their power and do not intend to abandon it. As subsequent chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, the voluntary community organizations and their members continue to be actively involved in community plan implementation and land development entitlement processes.

The Research Participants

I interviewed 22 citizens for this research; 15 from Keystone-Odessa, five from Lutz, and two from Thonotosassa. Appendix A lists all of the persons interviewed, their relationships, communities, roles in their communities, approximate age, and race. Twenty-one of the research participants own homes and live within their respective community plan boundary areas. Only Elliott, one of the Lutz research participants, does not own a home and live within a community plan boundary. However, Elliott is a businessman who conducts his business operations from a commercial property he owns that is located within
the boundaries of the Lutz community plan area. All of the persons interviewed participated in the community-based planning program during the original plan formulation or the recent review of the Lutz and Keystone-Odessa plans. All except one of the research participants are white Caucasian. The single non-white research participant is an Asian immigrant. The research participants range in age from in their 40s to in their 80s.

Several of the research participants are successful business or professional people who are well known in the county, and one is a prominent philanthropic business owner. Based on my conversations with them, it is apparent that most of the research participants have college degrees, and some have masters or doctoral degrees. Four of the 22 research participants have a direct professional or business relationship with the development or real estate industries. These four were: Craig, who is a homeowner and resident of Thonotosassa and also a commercial developer; James, who is a homeowner and resident of Lutz and also a professional engineer and land development consultant; Ben, who is a homeowner and resident of Lutz and also a professional planner, real estate industry consultant, and active member of a local building industry trade association; and Alfred, who is a homeowner and resident of Keystone-Odessa and also an interior design professional.

It is evident the individuals who participated in this research project are not fully representative of their whole communities. This is particularly true of Thonotosassa, from which community only two individuals participated in this research. In order to include in this dissertation a broader range of voices than
the 22 persons interviewed, I have drawn from comments of citizens at public hearings and planning workshops. But even with those additional voices, not every segment of the study communities is represented because not every segment participated in the land use processes this research examined. As discussed by Baum (1997) community planning typically suffers from underrepresentation or a complete lack of representation of certain community sectors. The aim of this research project was to examine the experiences of citizens who did participate in community planning and land use processes; rather than to explore why some citizens did not participate. Nevertheless, the fact that certain sectors of the study communities likely did not participate in the processes and were thus not included in this research project is acknowledged as a limitation of this research and its findings.

The next five chapters of this dissertation will discuss the core concepts that emerged from the data. These core concepts are: (1) Embracing Community Character and Vision; (2) Being a Community Actor; (3) Getting Involved in Land Use Processes; (4) Participating in Land Use Processes; and (5) Implementing the Community Plan. In these five chapters I have quoted the research participants extensively in order to convey their experiences through their own voices.
Chapter Five:

Embracing Community Character and Vision

The concept of Embracing Community Character and Vision refers to the research participants’ descriptions and understandings of their communities of memory. A “community of memory” is one that does not forget its past because it is involved in constantly retelling its story, or its “constitutive narrative” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, pp. 153, cited in Baum, 1997, p. 1266). Baum (1997, p. 275) explained that people live in “communities of memory;” yet planning calls on them to create “communities of hope.” Communities of memory exist in the way people understand and embrace the origins and history of their community, while communities of hope are created when people collectively envision the future of their community with possibilities that differ from the past and present. The activity of community planning arouses anxiety because it requires people to imagine leaving what is familiar to them, their community of memory, and creating something they do not yet know, a community of hope. This anxiety sometimes causes people to invoke an idealized image of their community, which they project onto the future (Baum, 1997).

The concept of Embracing Community Character and Vision includes how the research participants understand and describe their communities’ geographical boundaries and physical attributes, their origins, history, and future,
and day to day way of life. The concept dimensions also include how the community vision statements are expressed in the adopted community plans. The community vision statements expressed in the community plans were formulated through the collaborative community-based planning process, and ostensibly represent the consensus of those citizens who participated in the process.

The concept of Embracing the Community Character and Vision emerged early in the data analysis, and is fundamental to the explanatory model of Preserving Place. The actions taken by the research participants in an effort to resolve their main concern of preserving their communities’ character depends on whether they have defined and embraced their communities’ character in the first place. Thus, the Preserving Place model explains the motivations behind the actions of those citizens who have established a “sense of place” through “affective bonds,” which they developed over time as a result of the functional patterns of their daily lives in their communities (Tuan, 1996, pp. 446, 452). This chapter will discuss the concept of Embracing Community Character and Vision as expressed by the research participants and the respective community plans in each community.

**The Keystone-Odessa Community**

Keystone-Odessa is located in the northwest quadrant of Hillsborough County. The map below depicts the Keystone-Odessa community planning area boundaries:
The Keystone-Odessa Community Plan incorporates the following vision statement:

The Keystone-Odessa community will continue to be a rural community, embracing its agricultural past. Its continuing desire is to be an open area that: values nature above commercialism; dark, star-filled skies at night above the glare of urban lights; and, the sound of crickets and frogs above traffic noise.

Blessed with many lakes, wetlands and rivers; and dependent on water wells for survival, these will be supported to ensure their continued health. Protection of water resources will be paramount.
Rural roads that transect the Keystone-Odessa community will remain in their present form (two-lane local and collector roadway connections for movement without entering major arterial highways), freely used by community residents. Urban design standards and/or traffic generated by surrounding high population centers are not to degrade the community’s country roads.


The Keystone-Odessa Community Plan further states the “community desires to retain its predominant rural residential character as an area of lakes, agricultural activities, and homes built on varied lot sizes and in a scattered development pattern” (“Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element”, 2008, p. 16). The Keystone-Odessa Community Plan (p. 18) states that the community desires to support existing agricultural uses, and accommodate new agricultural uses, including “citrus, farming, ranching, and equestrian facilities,” and it calls for rural design guidelines to be adopted into the county’s land development regulations to implement the plan’s goals and vision.

A May 27, 1999 community plan public forum record showed citizen participants selected photographs depicting “likes” and “dislikes” indicating a preference for open space and rural character as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wetlands/Open Space</td>
<td>Open space on lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wetlands/Open Space</td>
<td>Rural look including native plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>House and lot sizes scaled appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Streetscapes/Roads</td>
<td>Rural roads, no sidewalks, no curbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Wide open spacing, open fencing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 5 “Disliked” Photos:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wetlands/Open Space</td>
<td>Land clearing – scrape and fill operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Crossroads development. Too much paving, no landscaping, not safe for pedestrians, incompatible architecture and terrible signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Cookie cutter layout. Too dense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Crossroads development. Excessive development in a small area, incompatible architecture and minimum setbacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Apartments, multi-family dwellings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens’ written responses to questionnaires were mixed. Two comments indicated a need for more consideration to “working with developers” and “shaping growth,” three comments mentioned “recreation,” and four comments mentioned “water quality, lake health, and other environmental concerns” (Keystone Public Forum 1 May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning...
A question requesting citizens to predict what Keystone-Odessa would be like in 2020 if no community plan were adopted yielded ten comments that “the area would suffer from sprawl-like conditions,” six comments that the area “would resemble other areas of Hillsborough County that have sprawling suburban development,” and other comments predicting “congestion, environmental degradation, crime, lower quality of life, loss of community, and loss of rural character” (Keystone Public Forum 1notes, May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 18). On the other hand, the majority of citizens predicted that if the community plan were adopted Keystone-Odessa in 2020 would be a “well planned community integrated with the natural environment, and the area would remain rural;” one citizen commented there would be “tradeoff’s,” and two citizens predicted the “community plan would not be successful” (Keystone Public Forum 1notes, May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 18).

The Keystone-Odessa Community Plan vision statement reflects a preference for maintaining most roadways as two-lane ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, p. 16). Several of the Keystone-Odessa research participants said they believe limiting roads to two-lanes will help preserve the rural character of their community because if roads are widened to four lanes, capacity will be created for more dense development. The citizens argue that widening the roads will encourage development, which will bring more traffic and congestion and more road widening, all of which will change the character of
their community. Roger explained the Keystone-Odessa community is “bisected, dissected and trisected by these roads…out on rush hour you can’t breathe out there…after rush hour goes away and it’s…nothing out there almost…the damn developers know if you widen the roads everything else is built out along the roads.” In addition, Betty said bluntly, “not widening Gunn Highway…is key to keeping us rural.”

![Two rural residents of Keystone-Odessa. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.](image)

The Keystone-Odessa research participants all described their community as “rural,” and expressed a strong desire to preserve their community’s rural character. They said they understand their community will change, but prefer the change to come incrementally, and in a way that preserves their community’s rural character. They also said they do not oppose growth; but they fear growth and development that they believe would bring radical change, and they actively
oppose development projects that they believe threaten their rural way of life. Jennifer said of Keystone-Odessa, “…it’s supposed to be rural, but after that ’83 freeze, it was 17 degrees for 3 days, and all the orange groves went. And now the orange groves are growing houses.”

Figure 5.3 Farmer’s market at the corner of Gunn and Van Dyke. Photo by “Betty.” Used by permission.

Each of the Keystone-Odessa research participants described their community of memory by referring to specific attributes, which for them define their community’s rural character. Roger described the rural character of Keystone Odessa as “literally a lifestyle.” He enumerated some of the community attributes he considers representative of that lifestyle:

…people have lots of property, they have farms, they have ranches…you couldn’t throw a rock and hit the closest neighbor. Widely spaced

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properties, homes, when you ride out into our rural area…it’s obviously…
you’re not in the subdivision. You’re not downtown and you’re not in a subdivision…It just so happens that our style of rural also includes estate homes…and they’re widely spaced. It just so happens that our version of rural also has 56 named lakes in…the Keystone planning area. What that really means is that we have a significant aquifer underlying our area out here. Yes. Absolutely so. And, it is a big issue for Keystone…

Although much of Keystone-Odessa consists of undeveloped land, small farms, and homes on parcels of five or more acres, many of the Keystone-Odessa research participants either ignored or preferred not to acknowledge that some areas of the community have been developed in suburban-style residential subdivisions. In describing how he views the character of Keystone-Odessa, Alfred said, “…this community is all rural. It’s all where you have to have five acres to build a house or be on the lake front with… something like 95 feet lake front. And the majority of the rest of it is horse farms and cattle…” When Ginger described the character of Keystone-Odessa, she acknowledged the suburban areas, but excused them by explaining that they were developed before the community plan was adopted. She said Keystone-Odessa is:

…open spaces…one home to five acres, and no smaller than that, even though we do have scattered development at one acre lots, but that was done prior to our plan being implemented…having the open spaces and having the…water be able to recharge. We need the open spaces and not being paved over in concrete. So that is…a key part to the Keystone
area. Rural also means…not a lot of commercialism. No strip centers, big boxes…to not have it look like Dale Mabry or Brandon, and to keep its quaint character, the tree-lined streets, the open sky so you can only see the stars at night. And that’s a big key element out here. And really being able to…have chickens running around, cattle, cats, horses…big horse country out here.

Figure 5.4 Bales of hay in field at corner of Gunn and N. Mobley, 1999. Photo by “Betty.” Used by permission.

The Keystone-Odesssa research participants embrace their community of memory and wish to preserve it. But Keystone-Odesssa is literally sandwiched between densely populated Pinellas County, rapidly growing Pasco County, and urbanizing areas of Hillsborough County. As a result of the rapid growth in surrounding areas, the Keystone-Odesssa community has struggled with growth pressure as landowners have sought approval for development proposals. Tony described this situation:
…after most of Hillsborough built out, Pinellas built out long before us, so when you start looking at maps…it was just a quiet little spot that people would come to for these lakes…but then once everything got developed out, all of Pinellas and all of…we were one of the few places that they could find a large parcel of land to do something with.

In response to these development pressures, some Keystone-Odessa residents turned to the KCA as a mechanism to organize and marshal resources for opposition. In fact, all of the Keystone-Odessa research participants said they were or had been KCA members. Several of the research participants expressed deep distrust of “developers,” who they believe are interested only in exploiting land for profit. Tony observed that at the time the community-based plan was being formulated, “everything was hot…for being developed…people were coming out here and wanting to develop subdivisions,” which he opposed. Tony was president of the KCA at the time the Keystone-Odessa community plan was adopted, and he recalled that KCA members had frequently organized opposition to rezoning requests for planned developments that would permit projects such as suburban-style residential subdivisions or commercial centers. He explained that KCA members hoped the community plan would establish a “standard” for development in the Keystone-Odessa community so that the citizens would not have to “fight every individual property owner that has five acres that wants to put a hundred houses on it and make money.”

To the Keystone-Odessa research participants, their community of memory is defined not only by its rural character, but also by its abundant water,
wetland, fish, and wildlife resources. Several Keystone-Odessa research
participants talked about the many lakes located within the community. Some
people who in the past used the lakes for weekend getaways and fishing
eventually moved into the area as permanent residents. Betty and her husband
moved to the community from Tampa in the mid-1990s after owning a weekend
lake home for several years. Betty, who is now in her eighties, explained what
the community was like to her, “We’ve had a lake place in Odessa from the ’60s,
but we built this house in ’94. So…we bought a pasture and decided to retire out
here.”

Betty recalled what the Keystone-Odessa community was like at the time
she and her husband owned their lake home: “…we would come out and spend
the whole summer and…at that time we had no grocery stores. The last place
you could shop was the Publix in Carrollwood on your way out…it has grown
quite a bit because now [a grocery store is] just right there.” Betty also described
what she knew of the Keystone-Odessa community when she was a child,
“…when I was a child, this was all orange groves, and if you came out here in the
spring you could smell those orange blossoms all over the place and it was just
wonderful. And…and what I’m saying is that I realized the beauty, and what this
place was. At that point I realized that this was a special [place].”

Asked what she perceived as “special” about Keystone-Odessa, Betty
described wildlife, peaceful quiet surroundings, and family:

The wildlife…I visited with a friend…yesterday and…when I drove through
there on my way to come home…there was somebody’s yard there were 6
or 8 little deer in the yard. Of course they were eating that person’s plants, but that’s what you give up for these things. And…what’s special about it…I keep chickens. I have two chickens and I have had as many as 20. And…what’s special about it, it’s very quiet. Do you hear the quiet? I have friends who’ll come out here and they’ll say “Why do you live out here?” and I’ll say “listen!” And they’ll say “Well I don’t hear anything,” and I say “No, you won’t.” It’s just…it’s just nice, and quiet…I thoroughly enjoy the wildlife…I had two huge owls that were nesting up here…And my son and his wife, they have horses. And so, when they were looking for a place…they came out here…

The Keystone-Odessa research participants all expressed an appreciation for the natural environmental attributes of their community. Luke and Christine, a couple in their eighties who both retired from academic careers, said that prior to moving to Keystone-Odessa permanently in 1978, they would often bring their camper and camp out beside the lake where their property is located. Even after building their home they continued to maintain their land in its natural, wooded condition. Christine explained, “…this particular property…was woods, strictly woods. It had never been developed. So, we’ve tried to keep it as natural as we could.”

Likewise, Alfred and Gertrude, a middle-aged professional couple who moved to their Keystone-Odessa lake-front home in 1994, expressed appreciation for the natural environmental attributes of the community. Gertrude described why they chose to move to Keystone-Odessa:
We could just see ourselves being here. At that time...I had a stressful job, so it was nice to be able to come home and this is what you've got. …You can hear some cars far away, but it’s mainly birds and little animals, and kind of rural pastoral setting. So it’s relaxing…less traffic. You’re not hearing other peoples’ kids…Your next neighbor, you can’t see him, which is just fine…Once you get used to being out here at night it’s pitch black. And you can see stars and you can hear frogs and…it’s a piece of mind that you get…less intense, less urban…

The Keystone-Odessa research participants acknowledge their community is changing; but they embrace and wish to preserve its rural character, open-space, and natural environmental features. Dylan and his partner, Janis, live in a cozy manufactured home nestled among trees on two wooded acres in Keystone-Odessa. Dylan has lived in the community for twenty-four years. Dylan and Janis described their community as predominantly rural; however they acknowledged it is less so now than in times past. Dylan said, “25 years ago it was RURAL.” His partner, Janis, added, “This is our farmstead, our hold-out here. We’re gonna stay here until we’re dead.”

Likewise, Jennifer, who has owned and lived in a lakefront home in Keystone-Odessa since 1975, described the community as “horsey” and “rural;” yet she admitted it actually has become more “suburban” as a result of several residential subdivisions that were developed prior to adoption of the community plan. She explained:
…these sections over here on Boy Scout [Road] that…had to be developed at one house per ten acres. So you more or less had to have a little farm or a little orange grove or whatever when you got 10 acres. So a lot of it’s just horse barns and fancy houses and a bunch of riding rings and stuff like that. It’s…very horsey community, which is fine. That’s what we’d like to push is…a more rural…But it’s not rural, it’s suburban because we’ve got so many subdivisions out here now. I mean Van Dyke Farms was a huge orange grove, and it’s got a…maybe a thousand…houses are in it. I don’t even want to think about it. There’s Canterbury, and every little strip that had 10 acres, it was platted…and…people are still building these mega-mansions…

Tony grew up in Keystone-Odessa, and he and most of his family still live in the community. He observed that most Keystone-Odessa residents prefer “country” rather than “stores.” He said, “…we can have suburbia from here to Orlando. It’s all there if you want it.” But Tony said he said he knows some other Keystone-Odessa residents who feel differently. He explained:

…there’s people that move out here who can pack their house up and move in two months. They could easily be in Houston or somewhere else. And there’s the other people who…they’re here and they’re rooted and they’re not moving. And, the people that are more transient, they are more accustomed to having town. They’re used to the sidewalks and things, and they don’t quite understand why we don’t have those things out here…so you have people that, I think come out here and…they like
the idea of being in the country, as long as there’s still [a drugstore] two minutes down the road, and a movie theater within three minutes, and a couple of good restaurants. But you can’t really have both. You know, you’re gonna have to drive if you live out here…if you want something you have to drive somewhere… When I grew up out here we would drive to Waters and Armenia. That was the closest grocery store…But the one thing that’s common about everyone that stayed is that they all love it the way it is. And they understand that any change is gonna make it more like town and less like what it is…I don’t ever worry about the transient side taking over and saying ‘let’s change Keystone-Odessa’ because there’s just not enough places for people to move into to have that much of a change…the majority of the people who live here that are going to stay here all have a very common goal of wanting it to stay as it is.

Tony described what he loves about Keystone-Odessa, and why he fears change coming to the community:

…I like the natural environment of it. I like that I have peacocks. Oh, there’s 15 of them that will wonder up into this yard. And rabbits. And we’ve had bobcats up here trying to eat the animals. And I like that the guy behind me has cows and donkeys…and that they can come right up to the edge of my fence and that he has every right to have cows and donkeys. And that I don’t have any standing to tell him he can’t have those animals…I’m afraid of it becoming more urban. …We’ve had some of these places come…there’s a bunch of little Mac-mansions just down
the street here. They moved in and surrounded a [family-owned] property that’s been there since I was a kid... And the Mac-mansions came in all around it, and then they went downtown to force the…family to get rid of their pigs. They only had one or two. And one or two pigs don’t even smell. And the big Mac-mansion next door was throwing lawyers, money, and everything else at them trying to get rid of their animals. There are things we have to fight out here. It’s like you can be living this lifestyle all these years and all the sudden someone else comes in and just wants to change the rules, and you find out that the rules were all downtown and you’re not real sure what they are. You say ‘well yeah, I’ve had pigs all my life, but can I have pigs?’ And...yes you can. I don’t want to see those things change...

Like Tony, several other Keystone-Odessa research participants were long-time residents of the community, and embraced a vivid and vibrant community of memory. Suzanne and John both were born in and grew up in the City of Tampa. After they married they moved to Keystone-Odessa, and have lived in the community for some fifty years. Suzanne explained that she and John were both “city people,” but they rented a home on Lake Keystone when they were first married, and they liked the quiet and openness of the community. Suzanne recalled at that time the interstate highway was being built through downtown Tampa. Properties were being condemned throughout the city to make room for the new highway, and Suzanne said she and John “bought three houses in different areas, and moved them out here [to Keystone-Odessa].”
Suzanne explained it did not bother her and John that they had to travel outside of their immediate community to find a grocery store. She recalled:

…I would go into Forest Hills to Land and Sea up by Linebaugh and Florida …Or…there was an old Publix in downtown Tarpon Springs. There was a hotdog place up on [US Highway] 19 for a quick snack… And up at Keystone Corners was a gas station, and he had bread, and cold drinks, and beer was about all he had. Oh they would buy their fishing worms because…there were a lot of weekend houses on the lakes at the time. People didn’t live out here permanently.

John described an account that happened shortly after he and Suzanne moved to Keystone-Oddessa:

It was three old houses on this road when we moved out here. And nobody was living in any of them. Wasn’t even shell [road] then; it was just dirt. We put the shell in after we moved. There was…nobody out here. Well the reason they built that road is because, [the man] that this road is named after lives right up back over there before we moved out here, and when I fenced in my place I didn’t fence him off, but he was cutting through this property to get home. He didn’t have a way to get home. So…I went down to the county commissioners and asked them to make [him] a road, and that’s what they did right here, so I could fence my place. I didn’t want to keep him from going home. And…before we fenced, and this was an odd thing, I got a call one day that…he didn’t know how to reach me so he called the county and said that…he was
blocked up some way by water. It had rained a lot. We had a lot of rain, and the water table was way higher then because there was no pumping of the well fields. So I came out here one night and I worked 'till 'bout midnight digging a ditch so [he] could keep on getting home. And I dug up an Indian arrowhead about that long. I still have it back there…and that was about 18 inches deep. So, you see this is old…country back here, Indians and everything else.

John explained that many people who live in Keystone-Odessa often travel to Pinellas County for daily necessities. He said:

…the people…that live in this area, any time they think anything it’s Pinellas County. If they go to the hospital it’s over there. If they go to get their car worked on it’s over there. They don’t even think about Hillsborough County. They act like they still live in Pinellas County. They moved out here to get away from the…same reason we did, to get away from the congestion over there, because that is a very congested county. And they really like this out here. Some of them have horses, and some of them just like the openness.

Some of the Keystone-Odessa research participants moved to the community in more recent years. However, they still consider the community to be predominantly rural, and they have embraced the rural lifestyle the longer-term residents described. For example, Leigh moved to Keystone-Odessa in 2002. She described her perception of the community, "It’s the equestrian; it’s the Future Farmers of America…it’s the bonfires, it’s the parks or picnics; not
organized sports. The pick-up games…a hangout, get-together kind of place…a mixture of old and new…a consignment shop of designer and homemade goods.”

Leigh also described some of the wildlife and environmental attributes of Keystone-Odessa that she appreciates:

I have a great shot of the bald eagle out there while we have our flag at the end of the dock. And the bald eagle sitting there…the ospreys will come by, sandhill cranes are here about 3:00 every day…Lot of wildlife…Brooker Creek is right across here. And the…Hillsborough County kind of non-boardwalk walk…you can just walk all the way back there and it’s…an area that they’re redoing, taking out non-native plants, putting in native, and it’s just a lovely little walk back there. There’s no facility or anything like that…you know there’s armadillos, there’s coyotes out here…a lot of deer, a lot of different birds, great owls…you walk out at night and you’ll hear the owl, I mean it’s pretty neat.

Likewise, George moved to Keystone-Odessa in 2002. In addition to his residence, he owns a business, commercial property, and a few acres of residentially-zoned land that he intends to develop someday. Although his home is located in a suburban-style residential subdivision, he also thinks of Keystone-Odessa as rural. He described what he likes about the community, “I kind of like the rural area. I like the cows across the street.” George said he believes property owners should be allowed to develop their land, but cautions, “we don’t
want developers to come and just rape the land and bulldoze and put the highest amount then leave, don’t even live here…”

All of the Keystone-Odessa citizens interviewed for this research said they do not want their community to become more suburban or commercial. They are concerned about protecting the area’s lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and other natural environmental features. They believe the community plan has helped to preserve the community’s rural character, and they have all been involved to some extent with the KCA. These citizens embrace the rural character of Keystone-Odessa and, although they acknowledge the area is changing, they hope the change will be respectful of their community’s character.

Baum (1997) explained that when envisioning the future of their community provokes too much anxiety, people tend to cling to the notion that the future will mirror the past. They may admit that current problems call for new approaches, but they cannot imagine any approach that differs from the present one. This tendency was evident in certain provisions of the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan, and in the way the research participants talked about their community’s future. The research participants expressed both an awareness that their community is changing, and a hope for it to remain rural. This is apparent in a statement Betty made in which she said she understands the Keystone-Odessa community will continue to change over time, just as it has changed from the way it was when she was a child, but she clings to the hope that the community will retain the rural character that exists in her community of memory. She explained, “Progress can’t be held back, and we’re not trying to
turn back the clock, but we want the progress to be slow, and we want the progress to be effective, and we want the progress to keep our community rural."

The Lutz Community

The Lutz community is located in northwest Hillsborough County east of Keystone-Odessa. The map below depicts the Lutz community plan boundaries:

Figure 5.5 Lutz community planning area. Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element, 2008, p. 4. Public record of Hillsborough County.

The Lutz Community Plan incorporates the following vision statement:

The Lutz community appreciates and welcomes things that create the “feeling” or “image” of openness. Residents have a strong sense of their heritage and history, and want to remain in touch with natural systems, wildlife and the environment.
Lutz will continue to be a community whose citizens treasure open spaces over urban or suburban form. We appreciate and welcome things that create the “feeling” or “image” of openness. We have a strong sense of our heritage and history, and will remain in touch with natural systems, wildlife and the environment.

We also have a strong sense of independence and individuality, and will work hard to preserve our lifestyle with less dependence on governmental control and regulations.

We will also work to support more local, small businesses, while accepting the trade-off of traveling beyond Lutz for major goods and services. Lutz architecture will be diverse within a broad theme, and residential development will not be accomplished with conventional subdivisions.


The Lutz community planning area is bisected from north to south by two major roadways; Dale Mabry and U.S. Highway 41. The Lutz Community Plan describes the community as having two distinct sections; one east of Dale Mabry that includes the historic downtown and has a more predominant semi-rural character, and another west of Dale Mabry that includes several large planned residential developments and has a more predominant suburban character
Figure 5.6 “Welcome to Lutz” sign at the “Apex” on U.S. 41. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.

The Lutz Community Plan recognizes and protects the continuation of the existing large planned residential developments in Lutz west of Dale Mabry; but discourages new projects of that style. The plan recognizes a preference for maintaining the Lutz community “as a low density, semi-rural, single family community offering a variety of housing styles, lot sizes, configurations, and setbacks; while ensuring quality of life and sustainability” ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, pp. 5-6).
A May 27, 1999 community plan public forum record showed citizen participants selected photographs depicting “likes” and “dislikes” indicating a preference for trees and natural environmental features, as well as some well-designed commercial uses as follows:

Table 5.2 Likes and dislikes-Lutz. Lutz Public Forum 1 notes, May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Natural riverine systems, the lifeblood of lakes and rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Good example of commercial design for more urban type of setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Large canopy trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Forested areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Roadways</td>
<td>Canopy roads and brick paving add to character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Butchered live oak trees for signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Poorly designed and maintained drainage retention areas with chain link fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Strip malls with impervious surfaces, no landscaping, and bars on windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Put overhead lines underground when possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fences/Walls</td>
<td>Ugly 10’ wall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens’ written responses to questionnaires indicated concerns about “community design standards, environmental degradation, wildlife and open
space protection, traffic and transportation, and rural character” (Lutz Public Forum 1 May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 5). A question requesting citizens to predict what the future Lutz would be like if no community plan were adopted yielded thirteen comments that “there would be a widespread presence of sprawl and sprawl-like development,” five comments that “congestion and environmental degradation will be common,” three comments that “there would be no progress or positive direction,” and other comments predicting the quality of life and public services would suffer (Lutz Public Forum 1 notes, May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 5). Citizens were “wearily hopeful” but skeptical about the future of Lutz if the community plan were to be adopted, with eight predicting “a well-planned and successful community,” seven predicting Lutz “would maintain its rural character and preserve the environment and open space,” and other responses predicting “good schools, mixed income housing, a true downtown area, and healthy local businesses” (Lutz Public Forum 1 notes, May 27, 1999, public record of The Planning Commission, p. 5).

In addition to the Lutz Community Plan, development along north Dale Mabry is controlled by the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan, which the county adopted in 1989, and the North Dale Mabry Overlay, which is a set of area-specific zoning regulations. The North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan provides for several commercial activity centers to be located along North Dale Mabry. Other commercial land uses in Lutz are allowed in designated “activity nodes” located along U.S. Highway 41. ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for
Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, pp. 7-9). The Lutz Community Plan provides that local two-lane roads within the community will remain in their “present form” ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, p. 11)

Similar to Keystone-Odessa, Lutz has in the past two decades experienced development pressure and a loss of lands that were formerly in agricultural uses. Most prominently, as acknowledged in the community plan, Lutz has experienced growth and development in the form of several large planned residential subdivisions. Although the community plan’s vision statement claims that Lutz residents have a strong sense of their community’s history and that they prefer open space, wildlife, and the natural environment, of the five Lutz research participants only Sherry and Ed described the Lutz community as having “open space,” or being “rural” or “country.” In fact, of the five Lutz research participants, only Sherry and Ed described their community’s history, how they understood its overall character, and how they felt about its particular attributes. Moreover, only Sherry and Ed described any specific attributes of the community’s character that they wanted to preserve. The other three research participants, James, Ben, and Elliott, did not talk about the history of Lutz or how they understood the community’s character, and they did not describe any of the community’s particular attributes.

Sherry is a Lutz resident who built her home in the community in 1978. Sherry describes herself as a community activist, and she has been a very vocal
and active member of the LCA. Sherry said in the 1990s she and other Lutz residents noticed the character of their community was beginning to change and become more suburban as residential subdivisions and other development projects began replacing orange groves and family farms. Sherry described her perception of the Lutz community and recalled her and other citizens’ concerns:

We didn’t want all the Seven-Elevens and the fast food stuff in Lutz…we are rural, kind of farming, orange grove, train depot, kind of place…that was our character as Lutz. That’s the pieces of it we wanted to make sure we maintained…in the 90s there were orange groves everywhere around here…right across the street over there, I mean all up and down Livingston [Road] there was nothing but orange groves. So you had still a large farming community but we were beginning to see the subdivisions like this. Late 70s, two houses to the acre and then it went to four houses to the acre. And they were heading to six. And we went “wait a minute; we’re not going to have…” And there are still no apartments in rural Lutz. Suburban Lutz on the other side of Dale Mabry there is. We have no apartments in the Lutz Community Planning area in the rural section here. And we didn’t want it…Our whole goal if you read our plan is open space, trying to create this feeling…to keep that…rural feel to it…we’re a reasonable community, not digging in on pure principle…allowing people to develop their property with some…a lot of latitude. But …ask anybody who lives out here. People who live in Lutz love Lutz…there’s something about the character that draws you here…it’s neat because it’s a mentality
that’s been pervasive for 50 years in this community. It, I don’t know how you get it, but I guess owning land here’s one way.

Figure 5.7 Lutz historic school house building on U.S. 41. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley

Sherry explained that the Lutz residents prefer to maintain their community’s roads as two-lane to help preserve the community’s rural character. Sherry explained:

…we realized big time, transportation controls your densities…So we’ve said “all our two-lane roads are to stay two-lane roads. Period…you do not touch them. Now you can put a left turn lane in somewhere if you need to, you can maybe add shoulders, you do not, you will not, and it is not on the books, Livingston is not to be 4-laned.” People think adding concrete solves the transportation problem. All it does is add to it because now you just opened…level of service. The way we look at our
transportation, the level of service is there; all the development goes

“Whoosh!”

Figure 5.8 Lutz historic train depot at railroad tracks along U.S. 41. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.

Figure 5.9 Lutz Junction. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
Even though Sherry clings to a rural Lutz in her community of memory, she admits that Lutz today is not strictly rural. Nevertheless, she explained that the overarching goal for the Lutz residents in formulating their community plan was to create a “feeling” of open space or a “feeling” of rural. She said the community does not “want to stop progress,” because, for example, “you still need grocery stores…” But she said the community wants to avoid being “stripped out” with “non-stop in your face commercial…” Baum (1997, p. 275) explained that, while people live in communities of memory, planning requires them to step out of the past and the present to create communities of hope. For Sherry, the anxiety caused by planning for her community of hope, which is likely to be very different from her community of memory, was apparent in her following statement: “…as you’re growing there’s growing pains and how do you not just get steamrolled over when you’re out here in the country in the rural areas, you don’t want it to be [like] City of Tampa.”

Figure 5.10 The Lutz Community Center. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
Like Sherry, Ed also embraces a vision of Lutz that is bound to the community’s more rural past, and recent changes related to growth have caused him concern. Ed is a Lutz homeowner and resident who bought his lakefront home and moved to Lutz in 1995 because he wanted to live “out in the country.” He explained:

…I moved out to the country because I like a country style of living. I didn’t move out here because I want to live next door to convenient shopping, or a dentist office, or a bank, or anything like that. I moved out here for starry nights, quiet, and few people. I don’t mind that…I have to drive to get those amenities…or to work. I do this by choice. I did not expect the development to follow so quickly, and so intensely.

Figure 5.11 Grand entrance to “Cheval,” a planned community in Lutz. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
In contrast to Sherry and Ed, James did not describe the character or vision of Lutz at all. James is a Lutz resident who in 1995 bought his home in a large planned residential subdivision of the type the Lutz Community Plan acknowledges but discourages. James is an engineer who works as a consultant for land developers. Likewise Elliott, who owns a business property in Lutz but does not reside in the community, did not describe Lutz as having any particular character or vision. But Elliott did say Lutz is “…a large portion of Hillsborough County [with] no…municipality or anything like that …with various residential communities within this large area without any direct control or organization.” Elliott also expressed dismay that some Lutz residents wish to maintain very low density development. He said, “…they wanted like five acres minimum…and I said ‘how can we build a community with those kind of rules?’”

Also in contrast with Sherry and Ed, Ben did not describe a character or vision of Lutz, but did describe from a technical perspective the community’s prevailing land use patterns. Ben, who is a professional planner and development consultant, said Lutz is, “not rural…it is suburban. Clearly suburban. There are pockets of vacant land, but you’ll have that anywhere including the City of Tampa…but it’s clearly suburban in nature. There’s no question about that…” Like Elliott, Ben also criticized the community planning participants who argued for low density development and preservation of Lutz’s “rural” character. He said, “These people talk about Lutz being rural…I was vacationing in Pennsylvania and at one point I brought back pictures of what rural looked like…that’s rural.” Further, as a professional planner Ben expressed
awareness of the conservative impulses at play when people engage in community planning. He observed:

…most people in communities and in established neighborhoods don’t want change. They don’t like change. They don’t want anything to change from what they know it to be. So any new development is change. So they’re all…objecting to any new development, unless it’s compatible with their development, which means “same as.”

Ben also argued that what some Lutz residents believe they want for their community is not consistent with what they say they want. For example, he recalled during the community planning workshops:

…Some of the discussions that were held about what some of the people’s goals were that got…in the [community] plan were contrary to the reality of what they wanted to see happen…Nothing happens, there’s no new commercial development, no new hospitals…unless there are rooftops to support them. When you…intentionally limit the number of rooftops that can be accommodated in an area, you’re limiting the potential market in the market area for whatever support that you need, whether it’s shopping facilities, whether it’s medical facility, whatever it happens to be. And some of the people on the [community planning] committee took a very hard line about the type of commercial that they wanted…To say ‘well we want to have…ice cream shops, we want to have a bookstore, we want to have all these things, with some good restaurants’…there aren’t the rooftops there to attract them because your
plan officially pulls…down the number of future rooftops. And so businesses aren’t going to come in because there’s no potential for growth…

Baum (1997, p. 276) explained that community planning “proceeds against powerful conservative impulses” because “loyalty to the community of memory affects planning for a community of hope.” Expressions by Sherry and Ed demonstrated such conservative impulses to cling to their communities of memory, and to project an idealized image of Lutz’s past onto its future (Baum, 1997). James, Ben, and Elliott were puzzled and even frustrated with other community planning participants who demonstrated such conservative ideals. As will be discussed in later chapters of this dissertation, the process and outcome of community planning is significantly influenced by the dynamics at work among the participants (Baum, 1997).

Figure 5.12 Banner on business building. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
The Thonotosassa Community

Thonotosassa is located in the northeast quadrant of Hillsborough County.

The map below depicts the Thonotosassa community planning area:

![Map of Thonotosassa community planning area](image)

Figure 5.13 Thonotosassa community planning area. Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element, 2008, p. 63. Public record of Hillsborough County.

The “Vision, Culture and Values Statement” of the Thonotosassa Community Plan states:

In the Thonotosassa community residents are actively involved in government and civic affairs. Growth has been directed in ways that have enhanced the community’s character and quality of life. The Main Street downtown area is the traditional center of community life and a commercial success. Many families here lived in the community for multiple generations and residents continue to enjoy rolling terrain with
vistas, open spaces and trees. Agriculture and the tradition of keeping
domesticated farm animals such as horses, chickens, pigs, goats, cattle
and quail is still a part of the community’s landscape and economy. It’s a
diversified, self-supporting community with a mix of uses and housing
types varying from mobile home parks to large estates. Residents don’t
have to travel out of the area for shopping and there are good paying jobs
available locally. Among the residents, there is a sense of belonging to
one community and being close to and enjoying nature. Clean air and
water, wildlife and especially the recreational opportunities centered
around Lake Thonotosassa, such as boating and fishing in addition to
biking, running, horseback riding and hunting, is a cherished part
of the Thonotosassa lifestyle.

(“Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough
County Florida: Livable Communities Element”, 2008, p. 64).

In addition, the Thonotosassa Community Plan enumerates several goals
and strategies to support the Vision, Culture and Values Statement. The plan’s
goals include (1) community empowerment, (2) sense of community, (3) preserve
rural character, open space, and agriculture, (4) diversity of housing types and
styles, (5) environmental protection, and (6) enhance the community’s reputation
and civic pride. Strategies to achieve those goals include forming an advisory
committee to be a voice for the community, designating Main Street as a
downtown and central gathering place, establishing community boundaries and
gateways, setting minimum lot sizes of one acre in specific land use categories,
protecting the rural character, supporting agricultural uses, not extending the Urban Services Area boundary, and situating commercial uses along State Road 579 south of Pruett Road to Interstate 4 ("Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ", 2008, pp. 65-66). The figure below depicts some of the “likes” and “dislikes” from citizen comments during the planning workshops for the Thonotosassa Main Street Plan:

Figure 5.14 Likes and dislikes-Thonotosassa Main Street. Public record of The Planning Commission.

At the December 18, 2003 public hearing before the county commissioner to adopt the Thonotosassa Community Plan, 24 citizens made public comments. They all spoke of Thonotosassa as being rural, and the majority supported
residential development at densities of one unit per acre. Some citizens who commented at the public hearing were owners of former citrus lands or other agricultural lands who were interested in developing their properties. Several spoke about fear of urban sprawl and environmental degradation (Captioning for the December 18, 2003 BOCC Public Hearing, Adoption of 2nd Round Plan Amendments, public record of Hillsborough County).

Only two Thonotosassa citizens responded to my letter inviting citizens to participate in this research. Of those two, Craig and Ethel, only Ethel described attributes of the character or vision of the Thonotosassa community. Ethel is a Thonotosassa homeowner who has lived in the community since the early 1980s and has been active with the GTCA. Ethel described how she understood the character of the Thonotosassa community to be:

… the idea is to have large or acreage development or large lot development…We have…a palm nursery. We have some people with cattle. We raise exotic fruits…different types of citrus and other trees. We have…aquatic plant nurseries and fish farms…and there’s a couple of landscape businesses where they have their trucks, and they go out and they do their jobs during the day. Those are the kinds of things you expect to see in a rural community… Cows and goats, and peacocks walking across the road; we have to stop for them. Some people have horses…the kind of community where no two houses are alike because it’s not a development. The kind of community where you may not see
your neighbors for a while because they’re so far away. But you know, you say ‘hello’ when you see ‘em.

Craig is a commercial developer who built his home in 2001 on several acres abutting Lake Thonotosassa. Craig did not identify himself as being a member of, or having any affiliation with, a voluntary community organization or neighborhood association. Craig also did not talk about the character or vision of Thonotosassa, or describe any particular attributes defining the community. On the other hand, like Ben, James, and Elliott in Lutz, Craig criticized community planning participants who resisted any changes in Thonotosassa.

Figure 5.15 Thonotosassa Post Office, located on Main Street. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
Figure 5.16 Thonotosassa Park, located on Main Street. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.

Figure 5.17 Beautiful oaks adjacent to Thonotosassa Park. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.
Conclusions

The concept of Embracing Community Character and Vision involves the issue of how the research participants understand their communities of memory and their desire to preserve them. The community plan vision statements, as well as all of the Keystone-Odessa research participants, two of the five Lutz research participants, and one of the two Thonotosassa research participants described the study communities as rural, “out in the country,” or at least as preferring open space or having the “character” of a rural community. In addition, public records from community plan workshops and a plan adoption hearing demonstrate that community members other than the research participants embraced the rural character of their communities. Several of the research participants said that they chose to live in their respective community because of
its rural character or open space. Only Elliott, James, and Ben of Lutz and Craig of Thonotosassa did not express communities of memory, and did not describe their communities in some way as “rural” or having a rural character. James, Craig, and Elliott did not describe any attributes of their communities’ character. Ben, who is a planning professional, argued that the Lutz community is not technically rural; but rather is “clearly suburban.”

Ben is correct that much of Lutz is not “rural” in a strictly technical sense. Nevertheless, the concept of Embracing Community Character and Vision refers to how the research participants understood their communities to be rather than whether they applied a technically correct designation. The main concern of the research participants except Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott was to preserve their communities’ character. In order to be concerned with preserving their community’s character, the research participants must first know and understand that character in some way. All of the research participants except Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott described specific attributes that they identified as contributing to their community’s character. They expressed a connection with and affection for their communities and said they wished to preserve the unique character of their respective communities and prevent them from becoming more commercial, suburban, or urban.

The ways Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott talked about their communities were strikingly different from the ways the other research participants did. Thus, Embracing Community Character and Vision emerged as the most significant variable explaining the differences in how Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott
approached the community planning process compared to how the other research participants did. The differences in the research participants’ perspectives and approaches were related to how they understood their communities’ past, present, and future, or their communities of memory and their communities of hope. Baum (1997, p. 276) explained that “the community of memory affects planning for a community of hope,” because of the community dynamics involved, which significantly influence the community planning process and outcome. These dynamics were evident in the conflicts that arose during the community planning process and subsequent land development entitlement processes in Hillsborough County.

Baum (1997, p. 276) analyzed the challenges that community dynamics raise in community planning by considering three issues: (1) whether the participants represented the whole community; (2) whether the participants recognized the community’s diversity; and (3) whether the participants planned for a community that diverged from tradition. These issues are relevant to Innes and Booher’s (2010) collaborative rationality model of planning and policy making because they involve whether the process included a full diversity of stakeholders who recognized the interdependent nature of their interests, and whether they engaged in authentic dialogue during their deliberations. Subsequent chapters of this dissertation will discuss how the community dynamics at play in the study communities brought these issues to the surface during the community-based planning process in Hillsborough County.
Chapter Six:

Being a Community Actor

The concept of Being a Community Actor refers to how the research participants became actively involved with others in their communities who share a similar community of memory, and who embrace and are intent on preserving their community’s character and vision. The dimensions of the concept of Being a Community Actor include how the research participants formed communities of shared interests, and how they defined who is or is not a member of their community. Baum (1997) examined how individuals’ perceptions of each other induce them to identify deeply and interact with certain other individuals who share interests and other similarities. In this way, people form communities of individuals with like mindsets and similar interests.

The three study communities represent places defined by their geographic boundaries. However, these are not the only communities at work in the processes being examined in this research. The voluntary community organizations that are active in each of the study communities and figure prominently in this research are examples of “communities” formed by people who share similar interests in embracing and preserving their community’s character. Thus, the concept of “Being a Community Actor” refers as much to the research participants’ being actors in the shared-interest communities they
have formed as it does to their being actors in the geographically-defined communities in which they live.

**The Keystone-Odessa Community**

Early in this research it became apparent that voluntary community organizations play a crucial role in organizing and educating citizens to participate in community planning and land development entitlement processes. In Keystone-Odessa the KCA is the mechanism that many residents use to organize activities within their community. But it has not always been that way. Roger and Ginger said the KCA was established over sixty years ago as a social organization, but then “morphed into something else fierce…bulldogs fighting over land use…and Water Wars.” Some five years ago, however, the KCA leadership decided to change the focus of the organization and they began hosting community improvement projects and social events. Roger explained that these new initiatives “raised the visibility of the KCA tremendously…it’s no longer viewed as somebody that goes down and nags downtown about land use crap… now KCA’s involved in a wide range of things.”

This change apparently made a tremendous difference in KCA’s profile in the community. Roger said now “KCA has an outreach far beyond its membership” so that the organization has become almost synonymous with the community. Roger explained now “it’s very difficult to separate KCA from Keystone[-Odessa].” He said there are many more people who participate in the KCA activities than there are dues-paying KCA members. For example, the KCA organizes community cleanup events, and sponsors a “Family Fun Day” each
October that draws scores of people to attend. Roger explained in this way the KCA goes to “the fabric of the community” to help the community “solidify itself.”

All of the Keystone-Odessa research participants either said they considered themselves members of KCA or said they had attended its meetings and other sponsored events. In fact, all except George used the pronoun “we” when describing their participation in the community plan and other land use processes; and by “we” it was clear they meant KCA. Thus, all but George deeply identified with KCA as a community, and considered their participation in the community plan and other land use processes to be aligned with KCA’s purpose and work. George said he has paid membership dues to KCA, received its newsletter, and attended some KCA meetings. Although George does not agree with everything KCA does, he embraces the rural aspects of Keystone-Odessa and supports KCA’s efforts to preserve the community’s rural character. Although George sympathizes with landowners and said he would not want some “activist” or “housewife” dictating what he could do with his property, he explained that he likes the fact that other KCA members fight to preserve the community’s rural character, and he perceives himself as benefitting from their work.

Betty said she got involved with the KCA after she and her husband moved to Keystone-Odessa from Tampa and she wanted to get involved with her new community. She said, “Somebody invited me to the KCA, and… I went and I liked what I heard.” After that, Betty began participating in community cleanup and “covered dish” events. Through KCA Betty became acquainted with many other Keystone-Odessa residents. From her involvement with KCA, Betty
eventually participated in the community planning workshops and played an active role along with other KCA members in opposing and ultimately defeating a proposed large mixed-use development project.

Tony became involved with KCA and started attending its meetings soon after he bought his home in Keystone-Odessa in 1998. He sought KCA’s help to learn about land use processes after experiencing a problem with an adjacent property owner. Tony said of KCA, “I really liked the people there. I liked meeting the neighbors…I saw people that I knew and had lost touch with…I liked that there was all of these different people there and that they all seemed to have the same kind of mindset as me…” Tony described the “mindset” as an appreciation for the community’s rural character and a desire to preserve it.

Leigh described how she grew up with a sense of community and had always considered citizen participation as something akin to a family tradition or duty. She said “I was kind of bred into it, I believe in taking ownership of your community.” Because of this tradition, when she bought her home and moved to Keystone-Odessa in 2002 she sought to become part of her new community by joining KCA and making a conscious decision to be active and become involved. Although Leigh is relatively new to Keystone-Odessa, she has embraced the community and adopted it as her own. Nevertheless, she said some of the more long-term Keystone-Odessa residents refer to the more recent residents like her as the “Lake People.” She explained the Lake People are relatively affluent and live in large homes surrounding the lakes. Despite their differences, Leigh said
the longer-term residents tolerate the more recent residents well as long as they embrace the rural character of Keystone-Odessa and support its preservation.

Tony, who is not one of the Lake People, believes the relative affluence of the Lake People and other Keystone-Odessa residents has been instrumental in supporting KCA and allowing it to mount legal challenges against land use proposals that threaten the community’s rural character. He explained, “The people that came out here and moved around these lakes, they wanted to be on the lakes, and they wanted the quiet of it, and they like seeing the cow pastures as they drive up, and they like seeing the orange groves. And that’s why we got to keep them.” Tony believes that this is why Keystone-Odessa has fared better than less affluent communities in resisting growth and development the residents perceive as threatening to their community’s character. He explained, “You go into some place that has any bit of money and there’s some preservation to what they…would like about it. You go into a place that is really poor, low income, and …everything and anything goes in. Strip malls, Wal-Mart, you name it. Those people have no say.”

Common concerns perceived as threats to a community’s character are often the catalyst that brings citizens together in their efforts to confront these threats. The Keystone-Odessa research participants expressed concern that land developers and even county government officials do not respect or understand their desire to preserve their community’s unique character. Luke explained “we all participated …together, and it’s been amazing how much we all think alike…and we’ve had some ridiculous things that people have tried to
propose...that just seem absurd to us.” Sidewalks, street lights, public water and sewer, conventional residential subdivisions, and shopping centers are among the proposals for development projects that seemed absurd to the Keystone-Odessa research participants because these things did not fit their vision of the community’s rural character.

Some of these development projects, such as sidewalks and streetlights, were proposed not by private developers; but by the county. As Luke explained:

One of my pet peeves that I always bring up with the people downtown is, they say, “well, here’s what we’ve looked at, what we’ve done, and here’s why we think this way.” And I say “well, now what did your rural planners say?” And they look at each other…everything’s “urban” planning and we’re the exact opposite…We’ve had to really fight to keep big developments [out of] here.

In addition to the community’s rural character, another aspect of the community of memory shared by many Keystone-Odessa residents is a particular concern and interest in the water resources of their area, including the many lakes, wetlands, and groundwater resources. The Keystone-Odessa Community Plan reflects this concern and recognizes that protecting and improving the water resources within the plan boundary area “is...a high priority needed to ensure healthy ground and surface water resources for humans and the environment” (“Future of Hillsborough Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Hillsborough County Florida: Livable Communities Element ”, 2008, p. 23). The community has a history of conflicts, which the local residents
call the “Water Wars,” that help explain why Keystone-Odessa residents share such strong concern for their water resources.

A number of large public water wells are located within the geographic boundaries of the Keystone-Odessa community. Some of these wells are owned by and supply water to Pinellas County. In the 1990s excessive groundwater pumping from the public water wells in Keystone-Odessa caused nearby wetlands and lakes to go dry and contributed to subsidence that threatened building foundations. This situation led to highly publicized controversy and years of litigation, which many Keystone-Odessa citizens personally experienced and vividly recall. Jennifer had personal experience with the Water Wars. She was named a defendant in a lawsuit after she complained to state regulators that
Pinellas County was causing damage to property and water resources by excessive pumping from its groundwater wells in the 1990s.

Tony recalled events that occurred during the 1990s Water Wars and described the lingering effect these events have had in the Keystone-Odessa community:

I think out here with the Keystone crowd you just have so many of them that, when the Water Wars were going on it really concreted some people together, and it…made people have to fight so hard to keep them from just destroying this, that I think that they created a bond when they did that out here that, it’s never gone away. It’s always made the people out here feel a little bit like this whole region will stomp on us to take what’s under us if we let them, and for no good reason. And, we’ll fight for it…they used to drop dynamite down the wells out here…so I’m glad we’ve got community plans now, because I don’t want to do any midnight dynamite, right…But that was one way that they dealt with [government agencies] back then. They would dynamite the wells… People here…yes, would dynamite the public wells…They were pumping everywhere and you could see the swamps dying. You could see them dying. The water would go out, and, when a cypress swamp dies you know something unnatural is going on. And…to have the experts running around saying “oh no that’s not doing anything,” they were like, “okay, well it’s not doing anything but we’re going to stop it anyway since no one’s listening.” And that’s kind of…I feel like it’s always kind of been that way up here a little bit. It’s like…you can
tell us that you’re going to do it, or you’ll control it, but if you don’t, the
people out here…will do something to make it stop.

Prior to the 1990s controversy, Suzanne and John were involved in years
of devastating litigation in the 1980s involving their own personal Water War with
Pinellas County. But Suzanne also told about Water Wars of an earlier time.
She said, “…the first Water Wars that we were aware of were before we even
moved out here. Old timers could see damage long before we noticed it…”
Many Keystone-Odessa residents are keenly aware of the adverse impacts that
growth and excessive groundwater consumption have had on the community’s
wetlands and lakes based on personal experiences, stories they have heard from
others, and news reports they have heard or read. In this way the Water Wars
controversies have become embedded in Keystone-Odessa’s history and
constitutive narrative, and helped galvanize some citizens’ resolve to fight to
protect their community from encroaching urban and suburban development.

In an effort to prohibit more dense residential development, Keystone-
Odessa residents have resisted expansion of the urban services area boundary.
Expansion of the urban services area boundary would permit water and sewer
utilities to be extended into the Keystone-Odessa community planning area,
which in turn would allow more dense development to occur. The residents fear
denser development would result in more storm water runoff, which carries
pollutants and nutrients and would negatively impact the lakes.
Thus, many Keystone-Odessa residents understand there is a connection between maintaining the rural character of their community, and protecting their water resources. Luke recalled, “I have spent at least half of my time out here when I mow the lawn mowing under my dock as well as around it because they were sucking all the water out and then sending it to Pinellas County, Tampa downtown, whatever.” Those who had personal experiences fighting the Water Wars consider more recent land development conflicts to be a continuation of the battle to preserve their community’s character. For example, Luke said, “It’s a constant. The Water Wars are pretty well settled now. But we have to keep looking. The big thing for the future is Gunn Highway, a divided 8-lane roar through Keystone problem.”
The Lutz Community

Like Keystone-Odessa, citizens in the Lutz community also have formed a voluntary community organization that has played a role in organizing Lutz residents to be involved in their community. However, of the five Lutz research participants I interviewed, only Sherry claimed to be a member of LCA. Sherry said the LCA was formed in 1954 or earlier and is the oldest voluntary community organization in Hillsborough County. Sherry further explained that by the 1990s the LCA had virtually no members and been dormant for several years. When Lutz residents learned of a proposal to build a large high school on Livingston road, they revived the LCA to organize opposition efforts. Sherry recalled:

Back in the mid-90s they tried to put a high school where Cordoba Ranch is…They wanted to put a 3000-kid school there with no water, no sewer,
and on two-lane roads. You can imagine the community rallied big time against that. The Lutz Civic Association had lied dormant for 10 years. Nobody wanted to come to the helm as President. [Another Lutz resident] was the treasurer, the secretary, she kept the books going, every year she filed the report, made sure the civic association legally kept alive but there was no real bodies in it for a while. That school issue activated…the civic association. We went from dormant to 400 members the first month.

Sherry recalled that soon after the Lutz residents successfully defeated the proposed high school, they and several Keystone-Odessa residents were instrumental in persuading the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners to adopt the community-based planning program. She described this effort:

Along with [other residents of Keystone-Odessa and Lutz] and I lobbied the county commission for three years to start community planning to allow each community’s character to be identified instead of the one brush fits all approach to how the county was growing. We didn’t want all the [convenience stores] and the fast food stuff in Lutz or in Keystone. And at that time in the mid-90s we were the hotbed of development up here. Okay, this is when we were just being beat to death with development…it took us a few years and finally late 90s…the commission said ‘okay Lutz, you and Keystone go first. Let’s give this a shot.’ And we did. And so then by…January 1, 2001 is when our community plan actually went into
effect. It took us two years of work. From '99 I think we started late '98, and then...going through the process.

The LCA is not the only voluntary community organization that exists in Lutz. Like the Keystone-Odessa community, the Lutz community is dotted with many lakes. The homeowners who live around some of these lakes have formed their own voluntary “Lake Associations.” Ed, who bought his home and moved into the Lutz community in 1995, said he is not a member of the LCA but is a member of the Lake Association formed by individuals who own homes surrounding the lake where his property is located. Through their Lake Association, Ed and his neighbors organize community cleanups, fishing tournaments and picnics, and also monitor lake water conditions and share information on land development activities and community services.

Ed and other Lake Association members participated in a process in which the county proposed revising the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan and overlay zoning district to add more commercial development entitlements in certain development nodes called “activity centers.” Ed described how members of several Lake Associations in the Lutz community organized citizens to participate in this process. He recalled, “…folks all up and down Dale Mabry, all the way up to the County Line Road... went back to their associations...to have folks come in...find out about the North Dale Mabry overlay district, and to find out what we were specifically concerned with in this meeting.” Thus, the Lake Associations are a mechanism like the LCA and KCA, which citizens use to recruit people to become involved, organize, share information, and marshal their
efforts to address challenges that confront their communities. But more than mechanisms to organize action, the LCA and Lake Associations represent people who have collectively chosen to see in each other similarities and shared interests sufficient to constitute communities.

In contrast to Sherry and Ed, James, Ben, and Elliott did not describe themselves as members of the LCA or any other voluntary community association. When talking about their participation in the community planning workshops, both Ben and Elliott criticized the LCA members as “activist” citizens who just wanted to limit growth. James complained that community planning workshops were dominated by a certain few citizens. It was clear that James, Ben, and Elliott did not see themselves as sharing collective interests with or being members of the LCA or Lake Association communities.

The Thonotosassa Community

Like Keystone-Odessa and Lutz, citizens in the Thonotosassa community have formed voluntary community associations through which they organize and marshal resources. At the public hearing to adopt the Thonotosassa Community Plan, three of the 24 citizens who offered public comments identified themselves as representatives of volunteer community organizations: one as president of GTCA; a second as president of the Thonotosassa-Seffner-Mango Civic Association, and a third as a representative of the Taylor Road Civic Association (Captioning for the December 18, 2003 BOCC Public Hearing, Adoption of 2nd Round Plan Amendments, County).
But voluntary community organizations sometimes exist passively for the most part unless some controversy or challenge emerges to activate the citizens. Ethel described how the GTCA mobilized around a proposed development project:

…a mega church…a few thousand people…wanted to go in at the end of our 2-lane undivided road. We fought that and won…so our community gets together when we need to…I’ve been president of the [Greater Thonotosassa] Civic Association…Things have been very quiet since the downturn in the economy. So we haven’t had to do much of anything except say hello to each other…But we’ve all worked together in the past on different issues that have come up.

Ethel also described how citizens in Thonotosassa have taken collective action to resist certain road improvement projects they perceive will threaten their community’s rural character:

…our community has vigorously fought the Sligh Avenue extension, which they wanted to double this road right through the center of the community, whose only job is to move traffic from [US] 301 to [SR] 579, and to get people into Thonotosassa. “Fix Hillsborough Avenue,” we kept saying. “Don’t destroy our community when all you have to do is double-lane [SR] 92…”

Ethel participated in the community-based planning workshops to formulate the Thonotosassa Community Plan, and she has participated in several land development entitlement processes when she felt a proposed
project was not consistent with their community’s vision. She described her role in solidarity with other members of GTCA who were concerned with preserving the unique rural character of Thonotosassa. On the other hand, Craig did not describe himself as a member of GTCA or any volunteer community association, and also did not describe his role in the community. Craig participated in the Thonotosassa Main Street planning workshops for a while, but became frustrated with the process and quit because he felt it was a waste of time. Craig said the planning workshops were dominated by outspoken individuals who were resistant to suggestions for any change or improvement in Thonotosassa. He felt these individuals’ expectations and demands were unreasonable, and their presence contributed to his frustration, which ultimately led to his decision to quit participating.

**Conclusions**

The concept of Being a Community Actor describes how the research participants became actively involved with others in their communities who share similar interests, and who embrace and are intent on preserving their community’s character and vision. The concept includes what the research participants do as members of the geographically-defined communities in which they live, and as members of the shared-interest communities they have formed. Baum (1997) explained that being a member of a community is a matter of faith because people must collectively identify with their shared interests strongly enough to give priority to community affairs over their other day to day affairs. In this way people develop a sense of community, an understanding that
community members are somehow connected with each other, that their power is shared, and that their individual actions involve the whole (Baum, 1997).

All of the research participants except Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott considered themselves members of a voluntary community organization or neighborhood association. These associations have played a prominent role in the three study communities by providing a mechanism through which residents organize and take collective action to preserve their communities of memory. But more than mechanisms for organizing action, the associations represent communities that people have formed with each other because they recognized similarities and shared interests. The voluntary community organizations that are active in the study communities are consistent with the following characteristics enumerated by Florin and Wandersman (1990, pp. 43-44):

1. They are geographically based in that they emerge in particular places and build on citizens' loyalty and commitment to their own neighborhoods. In this way they "translate the abstract concept of community into concrete reality."

2. They are volunteer-driven in that their human capital, or their membership, is their primary resource.

3. They are locally initiated in that they are formed by local residents who come together to respond to mutual concerns about local conditions, with the belief that collectively they can accomplish positive changes in their communities.
4. They form and operate on a human-scale, with their activities being addressed by broad, direct participation.

5. They are aimed at problem solving in that they are typically formed or activated for the purpose of addressing critical problems.

Florin and Wandersman (1990, p. 44) explain that voluntary community associations with the above characteristics have the ability to “transform isolated individuals into public citizens” and provide them with a “sense of place, purpose, and process.” Such a “sense of place, purpose, and process” (Florin & Wandersman, 1990, p. 44) was evident in the way the research participants discussed aspects of their communities that constitute the community character they wish to preserve. That the voluntary community organizations active in the study communities have the capacity to transform individuals into public citizens was evident in the ways the research participants described their experiences with land use processes that affect their communities. Several of them talked about how, by connecting with others through the voluntary community organizations, they were transformed from knowing virtually nothing about planning and land development regulations or how to participate in the processes involved, to understanding how to navigate these processes, actually participating in them, and even mentoring others to participate effectively.

The concept Being a Community Actor is the second most significant variable that sets Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott apart from the other research participants, after the concept of Embracing Community Vision and Character. Later chapters of this dissertation will discuss conflicts that arose during
community planning and land use entitlement processes among members of the study communities who identified with voluntary community associations and those who did not. As discussed in this chapter, Ben, James, Elliott and Paul criticized other members of the study communities for being “activists,” and dominating the community planning process. Florin and Wandersman (1990, p. 45) point out that voluntary community associations can empower citizens by increasing competence, confidence, and a sense of duty, and by reducing feelings of helplessness. It is clear that by forming communities of shared interests and taking collective action through their voluntary community organizations, the research participants who identified with those organizations were able to enhance their competence, confidence, and influence in planning and land use entitlement processes, and ascend to a higher rung of empowerment on the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969).
Chapter Seven:
Getting Involved in Land Use Processes

When people are confronted with changes in their communities that they
demean problematic, they may either accept the changed circumstances, move to a
different community, or stay put and try to do something about the problems
(Orbell & Uno, 1972). The previous two chapters discussed how the research
participants embraced their respective community’s character and vision,
became actors in their communities, and organized themselves for collective
action through voluntary community organizations. This chapter discusses how,
when confronted with changes in their communities that they deemed
problematic, the research participants stayed put and tried to do something about
the problems.

The concept “Getting Involved in Land Use Processes” refers to how the
research participants took action to address problems in their communities by
becoming involved in community-based planning and other land use processes.
The concept dimensions include how the research participants learned about
these processes and what prompted them to get involved.

The Keystone-Odessa Community

Many of the Keystone-Odessa research participants became involved in
land use planning and entitlement processes in response to actual or proposed
land use changes in their community that they did not like. For Ginger it was a rezoning for a proposed project on land near her home that first prompted her to get involved. From that experience, she realized that in order to have a voice in land use decisions she needed to learn about the processes and mechanisms at play in local land use regulation and decision making. Likewise, Tony first became involved in land use processes out of concern about land development activities taking place on property adjacent to his home. Through that experience Tony began learning about land use regulations and decision processes, only to discover they were complex and difficult to understand.

Both Ginger and Tony tried at first to confront the problematic land use issues on their own. When they realized they needed help they turned to the local voluntary community organization, the KCA. After Ginger's experience with the rezoning near her property, she became a member of KCA and began working actively in other causes related to land development activities that affected the Keystone-Odessa community. When the county initiated community-based planning, Ginger decided to take an active role participating in that process because she wanted to “…preserve [Keystone-Odessa] and maintain it as being rural…without having all the big boxes…”

Similarly, after Tony's experience with the land development activities adjacent to his property he became frustrated trying to decipher the local land use regulations and navigate the public processes. He explained, “through my aggravation I ended up at the civic association…” After Tony joined the KCA he decided to get involved in the community-based planning process. He recalled,
“I found it quite fascinating that they were going to let us put all of this stuff into the code; that they were going to give us some protections. And I didn’t see how they’d enforce it, but I was all for it.”

As discussed in the previous two chapters, voluntary community organizations provide citizens with mechanisms through which they are able to create relationship bonds, devise strategies, marshal resources, and focus collective action. Sometimes these efforts involve coordinating to get people to public meetings. In Hillsborough County, public hearings that involve land use decisions are held at the county government center in downtown Tampa, which is a considerable distance away from the communities selected for this research. Luke described the effort it takes for Keystone-Odessa residents to participate in public hearings involving land use decisions that affect them. He said, “To get somebody to…work in this they’ve got to be willing to go all the way down to the county center all the time.”

The citizens coordinate their involvement strategies by means of the networks they have created through their voluntary community organization. Christine described the coordination process as a sort of “telephone tree” except via email instead of telephone. Leigh also explained how this works for her:

…when I would see something I would reach out to the [Keystone] Civic Association in particular and say…‘what’s going on with the…like the borrow pit…or the…when they were going to purchase the property and turn it [into a sports park]…off Gunn Highway… So my involvement would
be reaching out to other community members, trying to make sure that I
got a good perspective on it, and then participating in the public hearings.

Some Keystone-Odessa research participants, such as Ginger and Tony, said they got involved with the KCA after discovering how difficult and confusing it was to navigate land use processes on their own. Others said they were members of the KCA first, and then became interested in participating in community planning and land use processes through their KCA membership activities. Dylan and Janis said they became involved in the community-based planning program and other land use processes through their connection with KCA because they preferred their community’s rural character and wanted to protect it from encroaching suburban development. Betty recalled when she moved to Keystone-Odessa she was just “looking for something to do” and wanted to get involved with her new community, when someone invited her to a KCA meeting. After becoming involved with KCA she learned about the growth pressure and land development proposals affecting her community, and participated in the community-based planning workshops to formulate the Keystone-Odessa Community plan.

Similar to Betty, Leigh desired to become involved as a member of her new community after moving to Keystone-Odessa in 2002. She said, “you know as we moved in to Keystone we got involved in…the civic association, we got to know some of the people, not just around our lake but…around in the community.” At KCA meetings Leigh learned about the community plan and land development issues affecting Keystone-Odessa. Leigh actively participated in
the recent community plan update and review process. Leigh explained, “I’m one to believe that if you’re going to gripe about it afterwards you at least have to have had some sort of input.”

Some of the Keystone-Odessa research participants said they had been members of KCA for a while, but did not participate in its activities on a regular basis. However, when problems confront their community, KCA members respond with collective action. Luke explained, “…we were involved in [KCA] prior to the time that they discussed having community plans, but it was on an as-need basis. Something came up and we wanted to make sure we kept our rural area rural.” Likewise, Alfred and Gertrude said they are members of KCA, but are not usually very active in KCA activities. Nevertheless, they became involved with KCA in a land use process by conducting research and compiling data to present as evidence in opposition to a grocery store shopping center development. Alfred explained, “Well we used to attend the meetings of the [KCA] to keep current on what was going on in the community... I was a member…and when this project came up it was kind of a red flag for everybody so we all got involved in it…”

Voluntary community organization members who are experienced in navigating planning and land use processes often mentor other members who are new to these processes. Tony explained how the more experienced KCA members work with less experienced ones to help them learn about land use processes and how to participate effectively. Explaining his role in KCA and how the information-sharing process works, Tony said:
the [development proposal] applications would come in, and we would have a board meeting and ask...if we were gonna...be dealing with it, if it was something in our community. We would have the [development] applicant come to the board meeting and talk to us. And then from there we would get people that lived around it and say 'okay, what do you want to do?' And more or less we kind of worked...in that we would try to help them understand what the codes were, what their options were, what these people with the application, what they had rights to...

Going further, Tony described how KCA helps educate people to participate in an effective way. He said:

...trying to get the neighbors to understand...that people had the right to ask [for a land development approval], that was very difficult. They wanted to get angry with you and get angry with the county, and it was like..."you don't have that option now. It's moving forward. They're in this process, and this is the set of rules that you have to play by." Working with those people...at the first few meetings they would just fight with me, I mean they would just fight...with whoever was with the civic association trying to explain to them what they were going to have to do. And they didn't want to go to all these meetings. But...the first time you have 20 of them; the next time you have 15. By the time you get downtown...there's 4 of them you've been working with. But they would get 20 of their neighbors to show up for those meetings if you told them this is what influences them downtown, seeing the neighborhood...
The Keystone-Odessa research participants said they distrust developers and government officials who make land development decisions. But their distrust does not discourage them from being involved. On the contrary, it motivates them to be actively involved in community planning and land development entitlement processes. Some of the research participants recalled when three county commissioners in the 1980s were convicted of accepting bribes to approve rezoning requests. Others recalled more recent county commissioners who made public statements that seemed to reveal a bias against certain segments of their constituency. Leigh recalled a public meeting during which a county commissioner referred to the Keystone-Odessa citizens as “Not-In-My-Back Yard” (NIMBY) people. Leigh also described a public hearing where an elected official tried to slip onto the “consent agenda” an item involving creation of a skate board park in the Keystone-Odessa community, a land use she perceived as completely out of character for the community, and for which the residents would have no use. She called such behavior “atrocious;” but said such “bullying” by government officials energizes her to get even more involved.

Similarly, Betty described a public hearing in which an elected official openly criticized the Keystone-Odessa community plan as being exclusionary and designed to keep out the poor. Betty recalled, “…[county commissioner] informed everyone at one of the county commission meetings where I was there…that ‘all those people out there are so rich and everybody that moves out there can’t be rich and can’t put a tin roof on their house and buy a two-acre lot,’…so she was gonna vote against…the things we were asking.” Betty said
government officials underestimate the Keystone-Odessa residents, and consider them to be just “a bunch of farmers” who “didn’t know what was going on.” She also believes landowners and developers have the upper hand with the elected officials. She explained, “…when you get involved with the political side of it, the developers have deeper pockets than we do, and…literally elect their own county commissioners… I have been very disappointed in the county commission, and, and how they have reacted.”

The Keystone-Odessa research participants were clear about their understanding of the political nature of land use, and their distrust of landowners, developers, and local government officials. Betty associated efforts to keep the Keystone-Odessa community “safe” and “rural” with the concept that “developers started moving in.” Roger, in describing certain landowners and developers in Keystone-Odessa, said, “…their agendas, their property, their…what they want…they will line their own pockets at anybody’s expense. They don’t give a damn.” Janis also asserted “they [developers] just don’t want … the community-based plan in effect. They’d rather have…as many houses as they can get on an acre as they possibly can; the strip-mall city.”

Leigh said she believes developers have a “substantial say” with the county commissioners. She complained the elected officials listen to developers much more than to the citizens. Roger suggested certain landowners and developers even conspire with elected officials when controversial land use issues arise. He said, “they’re schmoozing with commissioners they think they can sway…they want to…stick us with hot pokers…They take any opportunity at
all to irritate us.” Tony also suggested forces outside public scrutiny were behind his broad distrust of all county government officials, “I don’t have any doubts that this is one of the just crookedest counties around when it comes... to officials. But I mean I know it’s everywhere. But sometimes it just became so evident that something was being pushed for some reason other than what we were being told. And that they had to get there somehow.”

Tony’s distrust stems from the political nature of land use policy and decision making processes. He said:

I think anything that went through the Planning and Growth Management department, even the Planning Commission... becomes extremely political. Sometimes you feel like... they’re paying attention and they’re going along with what they say, but then there’s other times when you realize they’re just... they’ve gotten a directive from someone else, and they have to find a way to make that happen without saying that. And the only way to avoid it is to fight them, and it’s very difficult... they just keep working their way around it.

Tony told of an experience where a county commissioner, in a public meeting, referred to the Keystone- Odessa residents as “just farmers and a bunch of rich lawyers.” Tony acknowledged that there indeed are some wealthy people who live in Keystone- Odessa, usually in large lake homes, and he believes that it is in part because of the financial help from more affluent Keystone- Odessa citizens that the KCA has had the resources to mount legal challenges against certain unwanted land development projects. He admitted, “…we needed the
rich people to be able to fight it because they know they can throw lawyers back at them and get what they want.”

On the other hand, Tony argued, there are many Keystone-Odessa residents like him who are not rich. Nevertheless, he believes most Keystone-Odessa residents agree on how they feel about preserving the rural character of their community. He explained:

…there’s a lot of people like me that grew up on farm parcels of 10 acres here and there that do not fall into the rich lawyer section whatsoever. And there’s as many of us as there are weekend on-the-lake types. But the one thing that’s common about everyone that stayed is that they all love it the way it is. And they understand that any change is gonna make it more like town and less like what it is.

The Lutz Community

Three of the five Lutz research participants said they were motivated to get involved in community-based planning and land use processes because of changes they did not like, or because of the negative impacts of growth and development in their communities. For Elliott it was the problem of transportation and the lack of public transit that motivated him to participate in the community planning process. Elliott said he believes both state and local governments in Florida have failed to adequately address transportation issues. He hoped to make some progress on these issues at least in his local community; but was disappointed because he felt the Lutz Community Plan ultimately failed to address the community’s own transportation problems.
Sherry explained that she was motivated to become involved in planning and land use processes because of the development pressures her community was facing. As residential subdivisions began replacing orange groves, Sherry said she and her neighbors feared Lutz was losing the “feeling of open space” that represented the community character they loved. Sherry was already an LCA member, and she learned about the idea of community-based planning from an LCA member who had previously served on the Planning Commission. Sherry and others lobbied Hillsborough County officials to adopt a community-based planning program. She participated in the community-based planning workshops to formulate the Lutz Community Plan, and since that time has remained very active as a community leader, a member of the LCA, and has often participated in planning and land use entitlement processes that affected her community. Sherry has been instrumental in organizing and encouraging other citizens in her community to become active in land use processes that affect them.

Ed also was concerned about changes taking place in his community that he did not like. Ed moved to Lutz because he wanted to be “out in the country;” but he feared the commercial land uses that were slowly encroaching further along North Dale Mabry would destroy the quiet, serene character of his neighborhood. He was concerned about the impact of certain zoning changes and commercial development projects that were being considered for approval on nearby land parcels.
Ed was prompted to participate in planning and land use entitlement processes when he received written notice inviting citizens to attend public hearings on zoning changes. Because of his concerns, Ed also became very involved in a community planning process to consider changes to the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan and overlay zoning district. Ed said at first he participated in the planning process because he wanted to meet people in his community who had similar interests and concerns, and he worked hard to organize and encourage his neighbors to get involved in the process. He organized through his neighborhood association and through other associations representing nearby neighborhoods. He said “I put forth a lot of time and effort not only into that, but into the zoning that occurred immediately next door to us, and some of the zoning of the commercial area here at Lutz Lake Fern [Road].”

Ed and his neighbors participated extensively in the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan and overlay zoning district amendment process because they were concerned about the impact that expanding the commercial development areas would have on their “out in the country” lifestyle. Ed explained how he feels about participating in land use processes after that experience, “I think everybody should participate at some point in time or at some level in the development of their area if they’re at all concerned with it…just to be aware of it…for the best or for the worst, being forewarned is forearmed.”

In contrast with Elliott, Sherry, and Ed, Ben and James became involved in planning and land use processes as a result of their professional and business interests. James is a professional engineer who works with developers in
designing their projects. Through his professional connections James has been involved in many local planning and land use processes, and in the past he served as a member of the Planning Commission. James explained that his expertise as a professional engineer, and his experience with local land use processes in general motivated him to seek appointment to the Planning Commission because he believed he could offer fresh ideas.

Although James is a homeowner and resident of Lutz, he participated in community planning workshops for several other communities, including Keystone-Odessa, Carrollwood, and Brandon. The community planning workshops are open to the public, and anyone may attend. James explained he attended planning workshops for communities other than his own in order to observe the process. As a member of the Planning Commission, he said he wanted to see how planning staff members interacted with the citizens, and how they treated the process in general. However, he described his participation as watching the process from “both sides of the aisle,” and added that occasionally he would remove his “Planning Commission hat” and offer his “two-cents” as a private citizen as well.

Similarly, Ben is a professional planner and member of a building industry trade organization. Like James, Ben also works with developers and other real estate professionals, and has been involved in many local planning and land use processes. In connection with these activities, Ben explained “…I attended a lot of the zoning hearings and things like that…and when they were doing a plan amendment I would sometimes attend just to hear the discussion or even
participate as a member of the public.” Ben also has served on several local government advisory committees related to growth and development.

Ben said he participated in the Lutz and Keystone-Odessa community-based planning workshops after being personally invited by a county official because of his experience and expertise as a planning professional. Ben explained, “…I was used…as somewhat of a resource for the community with my urban planning background…and I have a historical perspective of how things occurred in Hillsborough County and Pasco and the region here, with all of the influences that come into play.” Ben added:

I’m often viewed of course as representing the building industry, and [county officials] wanted to make sure the building industry was represented in the community planning function, so I was appointed to the committees in that respect…plus…they thought I might have some technical assistance that I could provide…

The Thonotosassa Community

Ethel said she became involved in land use processes after she bought a home near a local general aviation airport in Thonotosassa. She spent several years making improvements on her home, and then she received a notice that the airport was going to be expanded. She describes her experience:

I went to my first community meeting about that, which is where I met people from Thonotosassa. And I read the entire plan and they had absolutely no ecosystem protections…the one thing they said…was “we’re gonna keep the grass mowed so the birds won’t fly into the airplane
propellers,” or something like that. So...we went through this for a number of months. They did what they were going to do, but there was a little more protection on it.

Once citizens become involved in land use processes affecting their communities, they often remain involved and are quite actively involved. As Ethel said, “…once you get involved in this it’s hard to stop.” After being involved in the airport expansion plan, Ethel said she continued participating in land use processes affecting her community. She explained:

…then I got involved with the Year 2000 plan. And then…when I-75 corridor went in we woke up one day and found we were in a twelve-unit-per-acre zone… And so...our community got up in arms and was down at county commission a lot. And...when they were reviewing...the I-75 plan, we had put it on plan amendment to keep us the way we were, one-acre home sites minimum...we had been there fighting the good fight and the county commission agreed, and the next night at 11:00 I got a call saying “you’re gonna have to come down tomorrow because they changed their mind after their developers talked today.” So we showed up all again the next night. That gets you pretty riled up.

Another issue that got Ethel and other Thonotosassa citizens “riled up” was what she described as “an obscenity” of a gas plant. The project was a gas transfer station, which was built in 2003 in an area that Ethel described as “…one of the high ridges in the center of Thonotosassa.” Ethel said she and other Thonotosassa residents had hoped for that location to have a “future
development of beautiful homes.” But Ethel said construction of the gas plant in
that location “essentially ruined the place around it for classy development.” The
Thonotosassa citizens organized their efforts and fought hard; but ultimately
were not successful in preventing development of the gas transfer station. Ethel
recalled:

…we had people from the entire place came out against that…[including a
member of the state legislature]…he couldn’t do a darn thing. Nobody
could do a darn thing. They could have put it in a slightly different place
and shielded it better. The arrogance of the individuals involved, they
weren’t going to do that. They were going to do what they wanted to do.

Ethel describes the gas transfer station as an “absolute nightmare” for
Thonotosassa, and a “horrible community eyesore.” As a result of this
experience, Ethel distrusts local elected officials and believes that land
developers have more power with the local government than do ordinary citizens.
Ethel recalled a land use map change she had been unaware of that affected the
Thonotosassa community. She explained, “…we woke up one day and someone
had changed the map. This was prior to the community plan…they do that so
often…that you lose trust in the way they do things.” She and other GTCA
members then approached the county and requested a community-based plan
for Thonotosassa because, as Ethel said, “…we knew the potential was there for
doing good for the community.”

In contrast with Ethel, Craig did not become involved in land use
processes because of changes taking place in his community. Rather, like Ben
and James in Lutz, Craig was motivated to participate in the Thonotosassa community planning process because of his professional experience as a commercial developer. He was initially prompted to get involved because he received a notice from the Planning Commission inviting Thonotosassa residents to participate in planning workshops to formulate the Thonotosassa Main Street overlay plan. Since his career had been in commercial development, Craig decided to participate in the planning workshops because, as he explained, “I have some small background in this type of thing so I…volunteered to do that.” But Craig did not participate for long. He grew frustrated with the process and with certain other participants who he believed were not interested in planning; but were only interested in limiting growth. Craig quit participating before formulation of the plan was finished.

Conclusions

The concept “Getting Involved in Land Use Processes” refers to how the research participants learned about land use processes affecting their communities, and what motivated them to participate. Most of the research participants learned about land use processes and were motivated to participate in response to changes taking place in their communities that they did not like. Instead of accepting these changes or leaving the community altogether, the research participants stayed put and took action.

The previous two chapters of this dissertation discussed concepts that were related to how the research participants embraced their “communities of memory” (Baum, 1997), and became actors intent on preserving their
communities’ character. Because they were deeply attached to their communities, they responded to undesired changes with determination and confronted the problems rather than move away. Moreover, they were empowered through their voluntary community organizations, which increased their competence and confidence to participate in complex processes with which they were not familiar. Thus, the first two core concepts, “Embracing Community Character and Vision” and “Being a Community Actor” lead up to a pivotal point in the Preserving Place model, which is represented by the third core concept, “Getting Involved in Land Use Processes.” It is at this pivotal point that the once-isolated individuals, who have been transformed into public citizens, begin to take action towards preserving the places they consider their communities (Florin & Wandersman, 1990).

Florin and Wandersman (1990) point out that citizen participation has the capacity to improve conditions in communities and neighborhoods, build personal relationships and strengthen the social fabric, and create feelings of individual and collective empowerment. This research demonstrates that people have the capacity not only to improve conditions in their own communities; but to influence fundamental policy decisions and transform institutions. Citizens in Keystone-Odessa and Lutz were instrumental in bringing community-based planning to Hillsborough County in the first place by persuading their elected officials to adopt the program. Subsequently, citizens in Thonotosassa approached county officials and requested their own community plan. In this way, citizens in the study communities transformed their local government institution in a way that
enabled them to affect changes in their own communities, and also helped set in place a mechanism, community-based planning, whereby citizens throughout Hillsborough County could affect changes in their own communities.
Chapter Eight:
Participating in Land Use Processes

This chapter discusses the concept of “Participating in Land Use Processes,” which refers to the research participants’ experiences actually participating in community planning and other land use processes. The concept dimensions include how the research participants viewed their roles and the roles of the other participants in these processes, how they described the power struggles and competing interests that contributed to conflicts among the individuals participating in the processes, how the facilitators and participants managed these conflicts, and whether the research participants perceived the processes as fair and effective. The previous chapter discussed the core concept of “Getting Involved in Land Use Processes,” which described the pivotal point at which once-isolated individuals, who have been transformed into public citizens, learn about and begin to get involved in land use processes in an effort to preserve the places they consider their communities. The concept of “Participating in Land Use Processes” describes their experiences once they are immersed in these processes.

As noted in the literature review in chapter two of this dissertation, collaborative processes have the capacity to transform individuals, institutions, and societies. This is because (1) such processes enable the exchange of
information and knowledge among diverse participants, including citizens, industry and interest groups, businesses, and government; (2) such processes involve power shifting and consensus building; and (3) the experience leads participants to extend collaboration to other contexts, resulting in adaptations and resiliency in the larger societal system (Goldstein & Butler, 2010; Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010). But collaborative processes are usually contentious, messy, and lengthy because the diverse participants have competing interests and often maintain adversarial positions. As this chapter will demonstrate, bargaining and positioning are always at work; thus it is essential to focus on the deliberative process to constantly analyze and address power imbalances and communication distortions (Healey, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2010).

The Keystone-Odessa Community

The process of formulating the Keystone-Odessa and Lutz community-based plans began in 1999 with stakeholders from the two communities working together as a single group. As the planning workshops continued, the stakeholders defined geographical boundaries dividing their communities into two separate planning areas. The process of defining community area boundaries involved considerations of jurisdictional boundaries, natural and human-made features such as lakes, roads, and expressways, community history, predominant land use patterns, and lifestyles. Ginger described the process of defining the community area boundaries:

…for the original Keystone plan, Lutz and Keystone always seem to start out doing stuff together, and then break apart. But…when…
both communities sat at the table to define what was gonna be Keystone’s and what was going to be Lutz, and where... the dividing lines were going to be... Keystone is pretty easy because we… have Pinellas west and Pasco north. It was... the southern boundary and then the eastern boundary that became a little difficult because we decided to use the Suncoast Expressway...
you could use a manmade line. So we thought that was defensible to do that. And then this area all from Van Dyke to Lake Park and all around here was considered the Black Hole because Lutz didn’t claim it, Keystone really didn’t claim it, and where was it going to go. And... so we had to gather the people around in here...[and ask] “...which one do you want to be a part of?” ...and they all decided... the lifestyle back in here was small horse farms, and tiny farms, and some houses scattered, so they decided the Back Hole would go into the Keystone. And Cheval would go into Lutz, and …the key between us is Lake Park. So we both claim Lake Park. But that’s the crossover where we meet there. And then the southern boundary went along... South Mobley. And then jags up and comes around and then that’s... Northwest and Citrus Park kind of butt up against Keystone plan.

The community planning workshops were typically held at a location within the community plan boundaries, which was more convenient for the participants than traveling to the county government building in downtown Tampa. All of the
Keystone-Odessa research participants said they believed the community-based planning process was designed to be fair and inclusive, was open to diverse stakeholders, afforded equal voice to the participants, and provided the community with adequate notice of meeting times and places. Jennifer said she was impressed with the diverse interests represented by the stakeholders present during the Keystone-Odessa community planning workshops, and with the consensus building process. She explained:

…there was participation from…the ones that were…farmers, people that just cared about the wildlife…the environment, water, people that were into development, people that owned land and wanted …to be able to have their land developed, whether they were gonna develop it now or later, they could see in the future if the County…planned it too strictly they wouldn’t be able to develop their property. So they, of course they fought for those issues. And the ones that wanted…the road through, the ones that didn’t want…Gunn Highway to be widened…and then we had to come to consensus. That was the main thing. It wasn’t like you voted yes or you voted no, you had to…figure out how to integrate each thing so that…everybody in the end would say “okay…I can live with that.”

Nevertheless, Jennifer recalled that conflict arose during the Keystone-Odessa community planning workshops. In particular, she described the “hashing and haranguing” among the participants over whether to widen Gunn Highway. She said, “[the meetings] were heated now because some…people that…want to develop things were here. And there’s a faction of…of the
community that wants Gunn Highway four-laned, and…a BIG faction that doesn’t want it four-laned because that old baseball thing…you do it and then they will come, remember?” But Jennifer said the stakeholders worked through these conflicts, and she felt that the group managed to come to consensus in formulating their community plan. Jennifer recalled, “There were the extremes, and then…you got them to finally agree to…‘okay, alright I’ll go along with that.’ Yeah…they needed to come to some consensus.”

Likewise, Betty said she appreciated the process of consensus building among the diverse stakeholders who worked to formulate the Keystone-Odessa community plan. Betty recalled, “…it was open to anybody that wanted to come… Now the developers would come…and they would use their input, but it was all very civil and nicely done. Some of the developers would send their lawyers because they didn’t wanna get mixed up in that.” Betty described how a certain Keystone-Odessa citizen was instrumental in encouraging the homeowner stakeholders to work with the landowner and developer stakeholders. Betty recalled this person saying “‘we’ve got to give a little to get, we’ve got to give to get. Compromise is the name of the game.’” Betty agreed with that approach and said, “you can’t just barrel in and, and demand.”

Although the Keystone-Odessa research participants felt the community planning process was fair and open to all stakeholders, they acknowledged the workshops were not without contention and disagreement. They described the conflicts as being primarily between the group of stakeholders who own homes and live in the community (homeowner-resident stakeholders), and the group
who own land that they want to develop, but who may or may not live in the community (landowner-developer stakeholders). Their descriptions revealed an apparent long-running conflict among certain Keystone-Odessa landowner-developers and certain homeowner-residents. Suzanne explained:

…two developers that attended the [community plan] meetings…they’re not happy with [the community plan] because they have personal interests…money to gain if they’re able to do what they want with their property. And, of course everybody likes money, [but] if you live there and it’s your lifestyle that something’s gonna change, you’re gonna seriously look at it and say “can I live with that?”

The state growth management program requires an “evaluation and appraisal review” (EAR) of the entire local comprehensive plan to be performed every five to seven years. However, Hillsborough County elected officials adopted a policy to review each community plan every ten years from its adoption date in an additional process separate from the EAR. The Lutz and Keystone-Odessa community plans underwent a review process beginning in 2010, and ending in 2012, which resulted in very few substantive changes to the plans. Tony described how he felt the community plan review policy was politically motivated and related to the underlying conflict among Keystone-Odessa landowner-developers and homeowner-residents:

…oh I’m frustrated with the county all the time, you know. But I was very frustrated that we had to go through this [review] process …But [an elected county commissioner] pushed for this to be put
through because there’s [a landowner] out here…that supports him heavily…a few of the large landowners. And they wanted to change the plan because it doesn’t allow them to develop their properties in subdivisions. And…I understood that they would do that, and I wasn’t shocked. But I was shocked that the county let it get pushed through because we have other areas in the county that still do not have their plans. And I would have been so mad if I had been one of those other communities. And it’s like “you’re gonna take my tax dollars and put over there and give these guys what they already have, yeah, a review on what they already had for ten years, and we’re still waiting on one.” I just couldn’t believe the county would do that. I thought that was so unfair to the other citizens, and to the whole process. It’s like this is again being manipulated by a couple of people. And it’s over money.

The review process for the Keystone-Odessa and Lutz community plans took almost two years, and the process was similar to the plan formulation process. Ginger described the review process, “…[It] really felt like we were doing the plan all over again. With meeting for...two years on it. …Did we…the people who liked the plan think it needed two years? NO! The people who were trying to change it…? Yes. They wanted to do something.” Ginger identified the “people who were trying to change” as several citizens who own substantial tracts of land within the Keystone-Odessa community plan boundaries, and who want to develop their land. Ginger recalled that one of these landowner-
developer stakeholders sent a representative to a workshop early in the community plan review process to announce “my client doesn’t want anything to do with this plan, and wants to opt out.” After that incident neither the landowner nor the representative attended any further community plan review workshops.

Ginger recalled two other landowner-developer stakeholders who attended almost every plan review workshop but rarely ever spoke up on the issues being discussed. Ginger said she believed all stakeholders in the Keystone-Odessa community were given adequate notice and opportunity to participate in the community plan review process, but for some reason most of the landowner-developer stakeholders chose not to participate. She said, “…with 21 meetings, two open houses, there was ample opportunity. And they could email, write, and call throughout this whole time period. There was ample opportunity for them to be heard. Whether they chose not to be was their decision. And I don’t think they all did.”

Likewise, Leigh said, “I think everybody had the opportunity to participate” in the plan review workshops. Suzanne also said:

…the whole process I think was very clear. I cannot imagine anybody going before a board and saying “we didn’t know what was going on…we weren’t notified, we didn’t have a clue…” because it was, there was so much…advertising…the staff…posted…bright red-orange signs…whether it was a workshop or a meeting, and then they took everybody’s email, hard address…if you didn’t have the email they would mail you notices…they couldn’t have done any more than they did.
Gertrude recalled conflict and consensus-building efforts during the Keystone-Odessa community plan review process. She described the dynamics among the diverse stakeholders, “There was major histrionics of allowing anything to be developed. And reasonable voices tried to say ‘we don’t want to say…“don’t build anything...” but we want to have a voice in what you’re doing so everybody can live together.’ So it’s been an interesting compromise.”

Dylan and Janis said workshops held early in the plan review process were particularly contentious. Janis recalled:

At the beginning [we] had some rabble rousers in there that had no business being in there...They were just argumentative. Everything [the facilitator] tried to go forward with they would just argue with him. And they would be deliberate with that...they were actually belligerent with him...to one point he said “well we’ll break up the meeting and we’ll all go and we’ll come back next month.” I think he did at one time.

Dylan identified the “rabble rousers...that had no business being in there” as “developer interests.” Janis agreed, “…they were...landowners that are speculators...they bought the land in order to...sell it for a profit. And one even bought his parcel of land after the community-based plan went into effect... But that was the only hard part about it...the first few meetings where they thought they were gonna change something.”

Like Dylan and Janis, several other Keystone-Odessa research participants said they felt certain individuals who participated in the community planning process were not genuine community “stakeholders.” In particular, the
Keystone-Odessa research participants expressed resentment that certain landowner-developers do not even live in the community, and did not regularly participate in the community-based planning process, thus had no right to complain about the community plan’s provisions. Suzanne said about one of these landowners, “…I mean you don’t see him except to complain about…he wants water and sewer brought across Gunn Highway to his side of the road where his property is, and he wants the road widened, and he wants that intersection there to become…a town center. He doesn’t want it at Fox’s Corner where it’s been forever…”

Figure 8.1 Fox’s Corner on Gunn Highway in Keystone-Odessa. Photo by “Betty.” Used by permission.

Several of the research participants also expressed distrust of land use lawyers who represent development industry clients, and they particularly did not appreciate it when these lawyers participated in the community planning.
workshops. The landowner-developers would often not attend the Keystone-Odessa planning meetings themselves; but rather would send representatives who often were prominent land use attorneys. Tony expressed how he perceived these lawyers and their clients, “We have a couple of big landowners out here [in Keystone-Odessa] that are always wanting to change their use, and they always have land use attorneys, I mean at everything…”

The practice of landowner-developers sending their legal representatives to the community planning workshops did not sit well with the homeowner-residents. Moreover, the presence and participation of attorneys at the community planning workshops might have felt threatening to the lay citizens and escalated the deliberations to more adversarial tone. Tony explained the situation during the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan review process:

…people didn’t like that too much. It’s like if you live out here and you really want a change, you come and show up like we’re having to. They didn’t like the idea that they could just pay someone to show up and they didn’t even attend these things. And then they were even, you know the attorneys frequently seemed to push for more tension, and more, and you really had to…if it was a normal lay person, it wouldn’t be so contentious. But I think with the attorneys they frequently…pushed it right to the edge of land use law all the time, and it’s like “you’re talking to citizens.” And it’s just pushed to be a…we’re just reviewing a plan and these guys are down to the specifics of road design and engineering and…you know it would
just go on these tangents that were ridiculous...for a...review of a community plan.

Leigh also said the landowner-developers sent attorneys and professional consultants to the plan review workshops, and their advocacy for their clients’ interests created tension among the stakeholders. She described the effect this had on the workshop discussions:

…I mean some people, especially at the beginning, there were people who just wanted to speak louder and louder, and say it over and over again...bullying us into some sort of decision when we weren’t coming to any decision; we were just trying to learn...They were...representing some of the developers...mainly they are attorneys, but they participate and...then they’ll just say things, and then say it again and again...I remember one in particular I think it was like the third or fourth meeting, I got really mad because...he just kept saying the same thing over and over, “Just because you don’t want development, that community center shouldn’t be Fox’s Corner. It needs to be at Vann Dyke and Gunn Highway.” And it just was his mantra.

The issue of landowner-developers and land use attorneys participating in the community plan workshops is related to the issue of defining community stakeholders. How to define who is a stakeholder became a very contentious issue during the Keystone-Odessa community plan review process. Roger recalled “…stakeholders—that was another hot button. How [are] stakeholders going to be defined? And who’s gonna, literally, who we were gonna physically
allow…in the meeting room. And there was…strong language. If you don’t live here, you don’t belong here, get the hell out, don’t come in.”

How to define who is a stakeholder is a difficult issue for the Hillsborough County community-based planning process because the workshops, open house meetings, and public hearings are open to the public, and anyone may attend and participate. Tony said at some meetings there were land use attorneys who attended and participated but it was not clear what property owner or resident of the Keystone-Odessa community, if any, they represented. Tony explained:

…frequently those land use attorneys will just show up because it’s in their best interests, because…they want it to be favorable towards development. And that helps their business. So they are looking out for I think a broad range of clients when they go. And for their own abilities to not have to deal with all of these little details that we wanted.

Tony described the scene at a typical planning workshop, “Yeah, I mean if we only had about 20 people, then you could see the split. You know, where half of them over here, half of them over here. It’s like there’s all the regulars from the civic association. There’s all the guys that we normally see downtown that are looking for changes to the land use…” Tony further explained why he felt the issue of who is a stakeholder was so contentious:

… the [large landowners] themselves don’t show up for the meetings, but the land use attorneys did…so we even had arguments over who can be here to represent. “Who can be here saying that they’re from this community? These…are attorneys. They don’t live here. They might be
representing someone, but...how many attorneys can we have in a room?" We frequently would have half the room was attorneys and developers.

Roger argued that landowners who do not live in the Keystone-Odessa community should not be considered stakeholders, and should not be allowed to participate in the community planning process. He described why he felt this way:

If you own property, you never show up, you don't do anything but own property, you don't live here. Now if you live here it's different. If you own property, that's a different animal. And if you own property thinking you're gonna live there, well you're acceptable. But if you own it as an investment, well you're a big question mark. Because now, what are you gonna use it for? Your...return on investment is gonna be realized how? ...you gonna do harm to us, the community, or not? So that was...the real struggle...those are the types of outliers that cause the angst. Most of them don't have...a residence in Keystone but they own property. So the question then is what are they gonna do with the property? And, so each one of them wanted to be exempted from this owners' community plan ...and...they put everybody through hoops, they scream the loudest of course...in hopes of disrupting things and distracting the decision...

Several of the Keystone-Odessa research participants said they believed neither the landowner-developers nor the attorneys representing them were proper stakeholders in the community planning process. Most of the Keystone-
Odessa research participants said they distrust the landowner-developers and their attorneys, and are suspicious of their motives. They believe the landowner-developers and their attorneys do not have the community’s interests in mind; but rather are seeking their own gain at the expense of the existing homeowner-residents.

The only Keystone-Odessa research participant who had a different view was George, who said he believes it is the KCA that has an unfair amount of control over development options for landowners. George argued it is the landowners who pay taxes on their land; thus, they should have more control. George said he is uncomfortable with the amount of power he believes the “activists” have. He explained:

…the activist group, the Keystone Civic Association…I don’t think a lot of them are landowners, large landowners. So…they’re like an overlay of government. But wouldn’t you think the people that pay the taxes would have a lot more say about what they can do with their land too? …I mean here you are this lady just…rents, or has a house, one acre, and this guy has like a 100 acres or 50 acres [and] he can’t do anything…

Nevertheless, George said he considers himself “sitting on the fence” because he enjoys the rural aspects of Keystone-Odessa and appreciates KCA’s efforts to preserve the community’s rural character and water resources.

Despite the conflict and contention, most of the Keystone-Odessa research participants said they felt the community planning workshops were very informative and well organized. Leigh recalled:
…the meetings were always very organized, which I really appreciated. [The facilitators] …were very organized, they were very together, they were very good at bringing in experts. I like to volunteer and participate in things when I know my time’s not being wasted…when I volunteer I want to make sure it’s time well spent…the two [meetings] I missed I could listen to online, I could see the Power Points…

Similarly, Suzanne recalled, “…anything you asked for at these meetings they would, the next meeting …have the speaker for it. And I was really impressed with that because there were a lot of county staff people that they would bring in…I don’t think we could have had any better…kind of communication.” Betty recalled, “[The facilitator] did a nice job of getting together, and bringing in people to talk with us and explain things to us.” Leigh described how she felt when the facilitator arranged to bring in experts to discuss various issues:

And then when you get somebody like [facilitator], who is so authentic in his group, who says “Okay well if we’re gonna talk about Gunn Highway let’s bring in the highway people. If we’re gonna talk about well water…let’s talk about what that means. Let’s…bring well water people in, let’s talk about the…septic…” I have to admit meeting with some of the experts around the 21 meetings gave me a sense of knowing we’ve got some really good experts in the community. We’ve got some very passionate people. I think it was really good about getting them out here so they could see that we aren’t activists, we’re active.
Several research participants talked about situations that demonstrate the importance of having an effective facilitator in a collaborative process. Roger described what happened during one particular plan review workshop:

…[a certain landowner-developer stakeholder] came in couple of times and…he was demanding. He wanted to know why…why we didn’t do what he wanted us to do. And…it got to the point where I screamed…I shouted, he was shouting and I shouted him down. [Facilitator] jumped into it, and ever since, not ever since, before and after…quite frankly, [facilitator] controls the atmospherics. He is very, very good at that.

Roger recalled there were certain substantive areas of disagreement, which he called “hot buttons,” around which conflict arose among stakeholders during the Keystone-Odessa community plan review process. When these conflict areas became apparent, the facilitator arranged to have persons with specific expertise in each substantive area come to the planning workshops to present objective data and address questions. The presentation of objective technical data helped to diffuse the conflict. Roger explained:

…there were certain core issues…hot buttons. Roads is one, water and sewer across the boundary lines is another, and some commercial somewhere, community or activity center, those were the four major points of contention. Well, when we started talking all those came to the surface and then [facilitator]...asked us “…who do you want out here to talk about those things? …We can get any…expert, or staff, or technical body…to come out and talk
about those.” And the idea behind it was that the people would bring data. It wasn’t going to be speculative stuff, it was going to be hard-nosed and, [facilitator said] “look if the…data shows something that you don’t want, what are you community going to do about it? …you’re going to have to live with it…it can be a double edged sword. The data can help you or hurt you.” So, no one really dwelled on that. He just started bringing…the data out. And so we walked through all sorts of different graphics, actuarial stuff, modeling. He had people come out from MPO [Metropolitan Planning Organization] and a couple of other places that have models that they use to project stuff. All that was done. And I remember by the fourth month of this kind of stuff, and [another homeowner-resident stakeholder] started complaining about it. He [said] “why are we…wasting our time looking at all this stuff? We have gone over all this and we have told you what we…don’t want, or want.” And I said…“please, this helps our case. Shut up. Let it play out.” So…as it turns out, everything that that has been decided as an end product through this review is backed up by data. And…you can say “well I don’t like it,”…if you’re on the losing side, “well I don’t like it” obviously, but the facts are the facts. And fortunately it broke out…on the community’s side.

Ginger described a dispute that arose among stakeholders over one of these substantive areas during the Keystone-Odessa community plan review
process. The dispute involved whether to widen Gunn Highway. Ginger recalled:

…anytime somebody had a comment, especially those four [landowner-developers], the comment…was “we need to four-lane Gunn Highway…you have to do it and you won’t get more commercial because…” Well [facilitator] gets the MPO and they do every type of study to known mankind about…what would happen if, the scenarios, what would happen if you four-laned Gunn Highway… Well [they concluded] you take traffic off the Suncoast [Expressway]. You increase traffic on Gunn Highway by, I think it was 71 percent.

Ginger also recalled a dispute over whether to amend the urban services area boundary in order to extend public water and sewer services into Keystone-Odessa. Ginger and several other homeowner-resident participants feared the extension of public water and sewer utilities would increase the capacity to develop land in Keystone-Odessa at greater densities. Ginger recalled:

…one of the questions…they [landowner-developer participants] brought up was, “we really need to bring water and sewer out to…Keystone because environmentally it’s better to have water and sewer than well and septic.” Well we had the health department come out. And the health department came out and said “you know it’s…[density] as low as it is, we’re fine.”

Collaboration requires time for the participants to debate issues and work toward consensus. Moreover, Innes and Booher (2010) explained that the
rationality of a collaborative process depends on the participants having agreed in advance on how they will define “consensus.” But defining consensus became another source of conflict among stakeholders during the Keystone-Odessa plan review process. Roger said the homeowner-resident stakeholders considered working toward consensus too risky, and preferred a simple majority vote instead because they felt they could outnumber the landowner-developer stakeholders and carry the vote. Roger recalled:

…the whole concept of consensus initially was something that none of us [homeowner-resident stakeholders] wanted. We wanted majority vote because consensus is a very convoluted process of arriving at something, and everything’s fair game in consensus. Where a majority is a majority vote, damn it, that’s it. Consensus, one person—one outlier can…can screw the whole thing up. And…that was our concern from the…first meeting we ever had. We…fought fiercely over the definition of consensus the first two meetings.

Dylan and Janis also expressed misgivings, and even misunderstandings, about the concept of consensus. Dylan explained:

I was worried in the beginning because you know—consensus—when this is all done...we come to a consensus that’ll be law…alright, just what, what exactly is consensus? [Janis: Who’s interpretation of consensus?] Who gets to vote on it? You know if it’s voting time, and this developer gets ten of his cronies to come in and fill out stuff…and in some cases they don’t even live in the county, to fill out this stuff…
But a “pack-the-house” strategy to win at the majority rule game undermines collaboration and trust, and can deteriorate into a contest of which side can produce the largest number of constituents for the final vote. For example, the Keystone-Odessa homeowner-resident stakeholders thought they had lost their majority when the plan review was up for participant vote at the final open house meeting. Roger recalled:

…we were on pins and needles because we didn’t know at…the last open house we had a hundred and twenty-six more people there than we ever had before. All the sudden they popped up. So everybody’s looking around the room going “who the hell are these people?” We checked…we looked…I’ve got the damn [attendance] list…a whole bunch of us sat down and went through that list. “Who the hell are these people? Are they friends or foe?” And we literally identified each one of them as a friend or foe. And then…we came up with some kind of an analysis strategy over “oh shit…is it good, bad, or indifferent?”

Dylan also recalled the incident, “we looked for moles in all those names…cause we were scared to death they were gonna…load the vote.”

The Keystone-Odessa research participants said that at the conclusion of the community plan review process they felt they had successfully avoided major changes to the community plan. As Tony said, “They [landowner-developer stakeholders] did not get what they wanted. And it’s because I showed up 25 percent of the time and other people showed up 25 percent of the time, and a bunch of them showed up for every single meeting. And, had we not they would
have altered [the community plan].” Dylan also thought the review process was successful. He said, “...what input we had, was accepted and understood. We were kind of just watching out for the ‘snakes,’ and to shut them down or to be able to, you know… developer interests.”

At the May 17, 2012 public hearing to adopt the minor revisions to the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan that resulted from the review process, 14 citizens offered public comment. Nine citizens spoke in opposition to the community plan, and five spoke in favor of it. Those who expressed opposition cited general concerns about community plans, including that they constitute unfair and burdensome regulation on developers and property owners. Particular concerns with the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan included that it creates hazardous roadway conditions by prohibiting road widening, that it is intended to inhibit growth, and that it imposes unreasonable design standards and constraints. Those who expressed support for the community plan pointed out that most of the citizens who stood in opposition had not participated in the plan review workshops, and 7 of the 9 citizens in opposition did not live in the Keystone-Odessa community.

Supporters also spoke of the rural character of their community, described what they embraced about their community, and implored county commissioners to approve the minor plan revisions the citizens had worked to formulate over a period of almost two years. After citizen comment the commissioners voted 6 to 1 to adopt the revisions (Draft minutes from May 17, 2012 Board of County
Land development entitlement processes. The Keystone-Odessa research participants thought the community-based planning process in general was fair and open; however, they did not think the same of land development entitlement processes. The community planning workshops involved a collaborative process where the homeowner stakeholders felt they had some real power to control policy outputs. As such, the community-based planning process might be described as being located on one of the upper rungs of Arnstein’s (1969) metaphorical ladder of citizen participation. However, community-based planning processes are very different from rezoning and other land development entitlement processes, and opportunities for citizen participation are also very different. Rezoning, special use permits, and other land development entitlement proposals are decided in quasi-judicial processes, with proponents and opponents making arguments and presenting evidence to persuade fact-finders and decision-makers.

A typical rezoning or other land development entitlement process begins when the applicant submits to the county an application package that includes site plans and other project proposal information. County department and agency officials review and comment on the entitlement request, then county staff prepare a report stating whether the request is considered approvable, and upon what conditions. Public hearings are scheduled, notices are mailed to surrounding property owners, and signs are posted at the proposed development
site. Citizens may submit written comments into the record and may also appear at the public hearings to comment and present evidence in support or opposition to the entitlement request. The public hearings are held at the county government building in downtown Tampa. Depending on the nature of the entitlement request, a decision to approve or deny is rendered by either the governing body or a single hearing officer based on the evidence and testimony submitted by the applicant and affected parties of record.

The Keystone-Odessa research participants did not describe their experiences with the quasi-judicial land development entitlement processes in the same terms of fairness and equal voice as they described the community planning process. On the contrary, Leigh described the land development entitlement processes as biased and unfair. She recalled, “when something would come up before the county commission, a zoning change or something that seemed to be inconsistent with our plan, there was already a preconceived notion of what that vote was going to be from the county commissioners. They were very clear where they stood.” In addition, Leigh asserted:

…there are people who don’t like the community plan, who are on the county commission; I mean they’ve said that. We know there are people who just don’t like us…because we are vocal. I think there are people unfortunately in government who just want to go out and be government people, and ignore the citizens…they’re immune to all these lowly people who are citizens making comments.
Luke described how he and other Keystone-Odessa citizens participated along with the KCA in public hearings for land use proposals affecting their community:

…we went to those various hearings …and we always had a crowd there …and one of the tactics that was used is “we think such and such and for this reason…” And the person would turn around and look at the group and say “all that agree with this raise your hand.” And all the hands would go up. So…it was pretty obvious that the crowd that was there was favoring what the Keystone Civic Association was relaying. We had t-shirts that we wore, and they said “KCA” on them, and that kind of thing.

Tony described a particular controversy that arose in Keystone-Odessa over a proposed development project in which a religious institution requested entitlements to build a new school campus and gymnasium. He recalled:

We fought a church that wanted to put a school campus right out here. And that was very difficult because nobody wants to fight a church…it’s like what’s next, kicking small children and grandmothers, you know? But…nothing worked for the amount of numbers that they wanted. It was just the large parcel thing. And…they were going to put a big septic system right on top of the Brooker Creek watershed. And people out here are not mainly heathens, you know. You’ve got a whole mix of people, but a good majority of people I know at the civic association also attend some sort of church…but they all stood up to this church, and we had to fight them with money. We had to fight them with lawyers…they adamantly did
not want to see someone come…even if it was a church, and build something that was not the right scale…but …they wanted to do it right there on top of our Brooker Creek watershed. And the preserve backed up to it, but they wanted a septic system set on it for 900 people.

The proposed church and school development entitlement process was initiated in 2000, before the Keystone-Odessa community plan was adopted in 2001. However, the dispute turned into a long running battle among the applicant, an adjacent property owner, and the KCA. After some five years of denials, reversals, lawsuits, and appeals, the adjacent property owner and KCA finally prevailed against the church and defeated the project. However, it must be noted that such protracted legal wrangling over land development entitlements are not always feasible for citizens. In this case the lengthy battle was possible in part because the adjacent property owner opposing the project happened to be a wealthy and prominent individual, and also because the KCA had broad and well-funded support. Thus, in land development entitlement processes, the height to which citizens are able to climb on the ladder of participation might depend on the depth to which they are able to reach into their pockets to fund their efforts.

**The Lutz Community**

As stated in the previous subsection, the process of formulating the Keystone-Odessa and Lutz community-based plans began with stakeholders from the two communities working together as a single group. Sherry, who is
active in the LCA and is considered by many to be a leading community actor, described how the planning process got underway:

I think there was 25 people on the steering committee. They were actually chosen, named people. The home builders were there, realtors were there, and a lot of mostly the community people. They started us with a blank piece of paper at a table, all the way around so there was no power feeling to it. We were all in a big square, and they gave us each a camera and said “go out in your community, your first assignment, and come back in two weeks. Half your film has gotta be things you like in your community…or in other communities you would like to see in your community. And the other half should be things you don’t want to see anymore.” And that’s where we started. Everything was visual for the first few meetings…it was amazing how in tune the community people were. I mean we were all taking basically the same “don’t like” pictures and the same “like” pictures, which really helped a lot.

Likewise Ben, who is homeowner and resident in Lutz and also a planning professional who works for builders and developers, described the process:

…at one point they had you go out and would give you a disposable camera, and go out and take pictures of what you thought were the best things of the community, and the worst things about the community and those were all assimilated, with the pictures on big boards, and that sort of thing. They went through the processes of, “what are your top issues, what are your need to…important issues,” and they did all that and had a
big presentation on the boards, and the community leader would just try to boil it all down and try to get everybody into a particular direction that they wanted to go. And people were given a chance to express off the top of their head opinions, what they thought the community ought to look like...

Sherry said the Lutz community planning process had participation by diverse stakeholders with competing interests. She recalled there was “…an input of different perspectives from the farmer to the businessman to…the civic association, and we just stuck it out through all these years.” Sherry felt the planning workshops were fair, and all stakeholders’ voices were heard. She said, “…even all the dissenters were heard loud and clear. We talked about it, we talked it all out.” But the final decision on the community plan provisions was made by majority vote rather than pure consensus agreement, and stakeholders who were homeowners outnumbered the stakeholders who were landowners, developers, and business owners. Sherry said a vote of the stakeholders was taken at the end of the Lutz plan formulation process, and she recalled precisely, “We had two ‘no’ votes…overall, and they were both development community [stakeholders].”

Elliott, who is a prominent businessman and owns a commercial property in the Lutz planning area, agreed that all stakeholders’ voices were heard and each had an equal opportunity to participate in the Lutz community planning process. He said, “I thought they did a very good job of listening, and trying to facilitate proper dialogue, and people being heard. I think if you wanted to be heard I think you could be heard…I thought the facilitator did a good job…was
very competent. Trying to get views and trying to listen.” He also felt the process was meaningful to the community because, as he said, “…we can say ‘well at least we talked about it before somebody did something.’”

In contrast, Ben did not believe the process was fair and inclusive of all stakeholders. He said, “Well no there are 25 activists there, and there’s me. What kind of consensus is that going to be? …how can you build consensus when there’s only one or two people who have an opposing view from the rest of the group? And the rest of the group has a very closed mind.” Ben felt that the community planning process was so dominated by people who he called “activists” and “anti-growth,” that the voices of landowners, developers, and business owners were not heard. For example, Ben recalled:

…some found it educational. They had an open mind. But others just sat there and went through the process because they already had made their mind made up about what they wanted the plan to look like, and they were just being there to go through the motions, and they came in with a preconceived notion about what they wanted to do, period. And whatever anybody else said to them their mind was closed to anything…and they pounded their fist on tables maybe louder than some of those that were a little bit more objective. It’s just a matter of the number…the world is run by those that show up. And the anti-growth people, their community activists made sure their people were there, and they usually outnumber everybody else. They shouted louder, pounded their fists on the table louder, and you know tried to prevail just…by sheer numbers.
In addition, Ben said the landowner-developer stakeholders were unfairly portrayed by those who he considered to be “activists.” Ben recalled:

…they always portrayed the land owner…the developer, the builder, as being the greedy, out-of-town developers coming in town to rape and pillage the land and then be gone. When in fact, a lot of the people who are in the building industry have lived here a lot longer than they have, and have a lot more financial stake in the community than…they have.

As a homeowner and resident of Lutz, and also a building industry professional, Ben felt his presence at the community planning workshops was tolerated by the “activists,” who knew him and acknowledged his right to participate but almost never agreed with him on any point. Ben recalled:

…I was able to get some points made simply because I knew the people for years, I’ve worked with them on both sides of the issues, and I became a working member of the committee. And so at least in that regard they gave me that due; that I earned a right to be there. And some of them ended up agreeing with me on certain points. And there were some people that…[were] just diametrically opposed on any point… But…come the birthday [we] had a birthday cake for them, sang happy birthday to them…it was interesting dynamics to watch it all come down.

While Ben did not believe all stakeholders were adequately represented in the community planning process, he did believe the process was at least designed to be fair in giving voice to all who participated. He said, “…they tried to run the meetings in an even-handed way, the county staff, the consultant,
were doing a pretty good job doing that, making sure everyone perhaps has a
chance to speak to the issue. They didn’t cut off debate or run roughshod over
anybody.” James, who is a homeowner-resident in Lutz, and also an engineer
and consultant who works with land developers, agreed, “…the process overall is
a good concept…you invite the stakeholders, you invite citizens in the community
to participate in the planning. That is a good process.”

Like Ben, however, James did have some criticisms of the process. For
one thing, he criticized the length of time it took to formulate each community
plan. James explained, "in my opinion the process…takes too long because
each… community plan I participated in…takes at least 18 months and
sometimes…over two years. That is too long...” James was concerned that
some stakeholders might have been discouraged from participating in community
planning because the process was so lengthy and time demanding. He
suggested the community planning process should be condensed to only about
six months. One way to do this, he said, would be to combine discussions about
several substantive topics into each workshop meeting. James also said the
process could be more efficient if sub-committees were formed to simultaneously
work on different plan components such as transportation, land use, zoning, and
the community’s cultural vision. James also criticized the practice of taking time
to have experts give presentations on the various topic areas such as roads,
water, and sewer.

However, other research participants felt the practice of bringing in expert
presentations helped to educate them about their community’s needs and
options. Moreover, as discussed previously in this dissertation, collaborative processes require adequate time for the participants to deliberate on their diverse interests, recognize their interdependencies, and build consensus. Thus, it is doubtful that placing strict arbitrary time limits on community planning, as James suggested, would benefit the process.

Both James and Ben said they do not believe the community plans represent the preferences of the whole community; but rather those of only a few people. James said the planning workshops were not well attended, particularly by the business community. He complained, “…we only get very small participation…the open house…I count it’s about thirty, maybe…thirty-two at that time. But the regular participation, you can count…maybe…ten. They are typically…the same ten people.” James felt the public notice mailings and sign-posting were not effective to engage a broad and diverse range of stakeholders. He suggested that individual letters or email notifications should be sent to every property owner within the community plan boundaries in an effort to solicit broader stakeholder participation.

Additionally, both James and Ben complained that the voices of the “activist” citizens were heard over those of the landowners, developers, and business stakeholders. James said that during the community planning workshops, many of the comments and suggestions made by certain minority stakeholders representing landowners, developers, and businesses did not find their way into the adopted community plan because they were “carried away” by comments of those in the majority. Likewise, Ben felt that most ideas put forth by
the landowners and developers did not make it into the final community plan. He said, “There’s some of em, a few of em etched their way out, either that was because of the graciousness of the people [who] said ‘oh let them have a couple of these points,’ or that they finally said ‘yeah, that does make some sense.’”

Ben said landowners who have substantial tracts of undeveloped land should be better represented in the community planning process “…Because they’re the ones who are probably going to realize the downside or the upside of whatever is decided by the community plan.”

Ben said at the community plan workshops he was “one of the few people there who represent the building industry or the landowners.” He said he identified with the “landowners” who, he observed “just weren’t there…they just weren’t there” to participate in the planning process. But Ben could not say why major land owners did not participate in the community planning workshops. He speculated that “They were not invited to the meeting, or if they were invited, they didn’t show up. Draw your own conclusions, I don’t know.”

Ben discussed what he considered shortcomings in the county’s efforts to notify the public and engage stakeholders in the community planning process:

From what I can gather…attempt was probably made to get everyone there. Everyone in the community. They would have articles in the newspaper, there might have been some phone calls made by the planning staff to contact some people, to make sure the activists were there, to make sure they were really…on top of all that. But there were to my knowledge…no legal notices sent out to each of the property owners
as you might get a tax bill…it was just some general information that was put out there. Now some property owners may not read the articles in the newspaper, they may not subscribe to the newspapers where the articles were running. They just may not have been at that information loop. But if you are a person who owns 500 or 600 acres, and you’re right smack in the path of growth and development, it would seem to me specific effort should have been made from a legal standpoint, to notify those people of what’s going on to forestall any perhaps lawsuits down the road that they were not duly notified of any change in land use, or any change in zoning…they just weren’t specifically notified, and at all of the meetings, most of the meetings, they were not represented at all.

Instead, Ben believes the community planning workshops became dominated by people he considers to be anti-growth “activists.” He said:

…you just can’t take the…board of directors of [a local citizens’ advocacy organization] and put them on the planning committee and say ‘this is our planning committee’ …Plans have been developed and implemented for years without these kinds of vigilante groups…it just might be a little more difficult, or require a stronger will by the governing body, some thicker skin by the governing body, and more fairness on the part of the planners, that are not dominated by the citizen groups. And the citizen groups tend to drive the planning process in Hillsborough County… Well the developers say “we’re getting killed by these citizens. They’re killing us. We can’t do anything without costing twice as much.” And of course some of [the
citizens] say “if it costs three times as much is good. The more costs the better because then it’s not feasible and it’s not going to happen…so we’ve won.” …The neighborhood planning process is not bad; it’s just the way it’s morphed into what we have today. And it’s essentially dominated by anti-growth people that don’t want to have anything else happen. They’ll deny that, but that’s a fact, the long and short of it.

Likewise, Elliott recalled during the Lutz community planning workshops, “…some activists that had some ideas of what they wanted things to be, and most of us said ‘why?’… Unfortunately so many activists are negative about things rather than positive. What we had there in the activists, they wanted to keep everything the way it was. And they argued for those points continually.” Elliott also recalled that a particular point of conflict among stakeholders during the Lutz community planning process was the density of residential development. He said, “…they wanted like five acres minimum or something like that. And I said ‘how can we build a community with those kind of rules?’”

Ben also recalled the issue of residential density created a conflict among stakeholders during the Lutz community planning process. He said “the facilitator had a planning background, and he clearly understood the dynamics of the economics of urban development. But you had a lot of the other citizens there who didn’t care about that. They just didn’t want anything else to happen.” He recalled several homeowner-resident stakeholders wanted to limit density in order to protect the rural character of their community, but at the same time they
wished for amenities such as an ice cream parlor, restaurants, and specialty shops. He explained:

They wanted to have the little old-town flavor of the type of commercial, the ice cream parlor and things. They don’t have enough people to support an ice cream parlor! They don’t have enough people to support an art gallery! There’s just not enough density there to support that sort of thing. In fact…they were lamenting over the lack of good restaurants in downtown Lutz. And I know a restaurateur himself who came to the meeting, who…has been in this town a long, long time. And he said “let me tell you something people, I am struggling to survive myself. I’ve talked to other restaurateurs, I’ve talked to other businesses about locating in Lutz and they just all laughed at me. They said ‘there’s just not enough business there.’” And how are you going to have these uses without population to support them? It’s…just not going to happen. He said “I have looked and studied this thing for a long time,” and he says he talked to a lot of people, a lot of businesses. And he says “it just ain’t gonna happen, not like you’ve got your plan.”

James complained that the community plans in general contain regulatory provisions that are inappropriate for a plan and should instead be included in the land development regulations. In addition, James explained that some of the concepts included in the community plans simply are not feasible. He suggested this happens because the community planning workshop facilitators fail to properly advise the stakeholders when they express desires that are not
workable. For example, James said some community plans call for more code enforcement action, a provision that he labeled an “unfunded mandate” and not an appropriate provision for a land use plan. James also noted a provision in the Riverview Community Plan that calls for a town center along U.S. 301, which James referred to as “six lane, DOT 55-mile per hour minimum” roadway. James believes provisions that he considers infeasible and inappropriate find their way into community plans because the facilitators, who are professional planners themselves, fail to adequately advise and educate lay citizen stakeholders during the plan formulation process.

Likewise, Ben said the community planning process generates poor policy outputs because the majority of stakeholders who formulate the plans are lay citizens who have no planning expertise, and the facilitators fail to thoroughly advise them. Ben said:

…here’s where the…neighborhood planning process falls apart…the ideas proposed…by residents, by the committee…[are not] necessarily technically sound planning. They’ll talk about “well, this is what I want here and this is what I want there.” That may not make the best land use pattern. That may not be good planning. But the facilitator isn’t in a position to say “that’s good planning,” or not, so it’s whatever the majority of the group wants in the plan goes into the plan.

Ben said that during the community planning workshops he tried to advise the other stakeholders as to what was or was not a good planning policy because he recognized that the facilitator failed to provide such guidance. He recalled, "I
said, ‘I mean you can’t do that, that’s ridiculous, that’s not feasible…’” But, he said the more strident “activist” stakeholders disagreed with him, and he felt his voice was not heard over theirs. He explained, “…the overall volume of people, the overall volume of voices, just ran roughshod over top of everybody, and they didn’t mean to do it, but that’s the net effect of it. And there would maybe be a couple of the others that just kind of got shouted down, or just got outnumbered.”

Ben said further, “…by the time it gets to the Planning Commission for a hearing that stuff’s already been…in the activists mind, cast in stone. And any change to that is going to be pulling the rug out from underneath the plan, pulling the rug out from underneath what the activists think this community should look like.” Ben said the community planning process fails to produce feasible plans because “between the discussion of the committee, the citizens group, and adoption [of the plan]…there is no solid way for the planners to sit down and say ‘this sucks,’ or ‘this is really good.’”

Sherry admitted that infeasible provisions have been included in some of the community plans, but not in the Lutz Community Plan. Sherry also contended that such provisions started finding their way into the community plans after the county changed the community plan formulation process in two ways. First, the county discontinued contracting with independent consultants to serve as workshop facilitators, and instead began using planners who were employees of the Planning Commission or county planning department. Second, the practice of assigning a core group of stakeholders to serve as an advisory committee and participate consistently throughout the process was discontinued.
Sherry said the nature of the process was altered as a result of these two changes, which led to a lack of consistency in stakeholder participation and education. As the nature of the process changed, so did the quality and nature of the policy outputs. She explained:

After that well, then you started having a planner from the Planning Commission either running it or a planner from PGM [county Planning and Growth Management department] which is now Development Services, run it. You have an animosity between the two planning organizations anyway. PGM should never have done community planning—that is not in their purview. But we’ve had too much politics. Until [new county administrator] took over, the whole planning process has been 100 percent political. And it has been a nightmare for citizens, and anybody who gets into that sees the same thing immediately. This is all…it’s set up wrong…it’s set up for development to win. It’s set up for the property rights issue to overtake and overwhelm any common sense that any commissioner will have when you scream property rights, and that’s a bogus issue… The process I think made the difference…the process is everything…the process changed. And when it did you now changed the character of the community plans… When they changed the process they didn’t have assigned stakeholders anymore so you didn’t have that uniformity of education. “I want to do this…here’s the vision we have,” alright, well “let’s bring in the sewer guys, let’s bring in the public works, let’s see if this will work.” Practically talk it out. See if it can be enforced.
Or can you create code to make this happen. Or are we just talking pie in the sky stuff? A lot of the community plans became pie in the sky. Riverview will never see its community plan in act because there’s no market to make it happen. And the safety issue of putting buildings 10 feet away from 55-mile an hour traveling commerce is a no-no.

Sherry believes Lutz took a more reasonable planning approach in contrast with certain other community plans that were more recently formulated and adopted after the process changed. Comparing the Lutz Community Plan with the Riverview Community Plan, Sherry said:

…we have highway 41 going right smack down the middle of downtown Lutz. Well, we’ve got some development nodes, we didn’t want it to strip out all up and down Dale Mabry and it hasn’t. We assigned nodes where we’re gonna put our commercial stuff. But…if you look up and down that street, our downtown area is actually a 2-lane road coming off the [US] 41. That is where our historic downtown plan is. We pulled it off of that 6-lane road, put it on 2 lane walkable type community so when they build they can….actually build the vision.

Sherry said in order for the community planning process to produce feasible policy outputs it is essential to have consistent stakeholder participation, skilled facilitators, and access to knowledgeable technical experts who are available during the planning workshops “because invariably the conversation might touch over here, but it’s touching something over here you’re not even realizing yet.” The county employs many individuals with various areas of
expertise, and Sherry believes the community planning process should take more advantage of that expertise. She explained:

…an impartial facilitator and all the planning people…who touch a community need to be in the room listening to whether the idea is going to work or not…You cannot talk about traffic issues without having the transportation people in there saying what are the basics that have to go into a road. You gotta have your public works people there, your sidewalk issues…your right of way issues.

Sherry also said she felt the use of an independent consultant to facilitate the planning workshops works better than using county or Planning Commission employees. She said of the professional facilitator the county engaged to guide the Lutz and Keystone-Odessa community planning processes, “He had no dog in the fight other than his paycheck came from the county… But other than that he was autonomous. And that went a long way.”

Like the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan, the Lutz Community Plan recently underwent a review process. Of the five Lutz research participants, only Sherry and James said they participated in the Lutz Community Plan review process. Sherry said the stakeholders proposed only a few minor adjustments during the review, including an amendment to the urban services area boundary and clarification of a fence design provision. From Sherry’s perspective the review was a success, measured by the fact that no Lutz residents or landowners showed up at the adoption hearings with substantive objections to the plan. She recalled:
[At the public hearings] …nobody showed up but a bunch of Tea Party people just claiming the community plans take away property rights, blah blah blah… [During the review workshops] we had people coming and going. They realized what we were doing and they weren’t interested. They just took off so there was basically a handful of people that… participated, fixed the little bit of problems that were in it and just said “that’s it, don’t touch it anymore; it’s working.” And by no one showing up at the hearings in front of those commissioners, that tells me loud and clear the plan works. If it was property rights, cost prohibitive, trust me the community would be out screaming bloody murder…they would have been down there just screaming.

**Land development entitlement processes.** Of the five Lutz research participants, only Ed described an experience with a land development entitlement process. Like the Keystone-Odessa research participants, Ed did not describe the entitlement process as fair and unbiased. Since 1995 Ed has owned and lived in a lakefront home that is situated at the end of a very long and heavily wooded private driveway leading off Dale Mabry. Ed explained his purpose in having such a long and tree-secluded driveway is “…to maintain this…wonderful little piece of rural that we live in.”

In 1989-90, over ten years prior to adoption of the Lutz Community Plan, the county adopted the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan and Overlay District zoning regulations. The North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan and Overlay District zoning regulations designated three commercial “activity center” nodes for the
purpose of clustering commercial development and discouraging sprawl and commercial strip development along North Dale Mabry. These commercial nodes were designated a (1) neighborhood activity center; (2) a community activity center; and (3) a major activity center. During 2007-2008, Ed and several of his neighbors participated in a process to review the North Dale Mabry Overlay plan and zoning regulations to consider increasing the land area and development entitlements for the neighborhood activity center and the community activity center. These changes were ostensibly initiated by the county commissioners rather than by a private applicant.

Ed said during the North Dale Mabry Overlay plan review workshops, the stakeholders were provided information and technical expertise on several substantive topics. He recalled, “…we got presentations from the county, by the DOT [Florida Department of Transportation]…we got presentations for information from probably five or six different segments of government having to do with development and the environment.” Ed described how the workshops were typically organized:

…there was a sign-in sheet, they passed out the minutes from the prior meetings, and they had stand-up easels with the proposals, they had the stand-up blank easels toward the end where you would vote. So folks would come in, there would be a particular agenda item, and then you would mark whether you wanted it or you were against it.

Ed felt the workshop process was designed to be fair because every stakeholder had equal opportunity to speak and form the agenda. He explained,
“Everybody had an equal voice. If there was one individual there that said ‘I want to do this,’ or ‘I would like to discuss this,’ or ‘find out more about this…’ that became an agenda item.” On the other hand, Ed said he was disappointed in the process overall because it seemed the decision to increase the land area and development entitlements for the commercial activity centers had been predetermined outside the public process, and the citizens were helpless to stop it. He said:

…along the few miles stretch here of remaining undeveloped Dale Mabry Highway, they set aside three commercial areas: one at Lutz Lake Fern; one right [at Sunlake]; and …a gigantic one at the corner of Van Dyke and Dale Mabry. And even with those large tracts of lands that were set aside, some have been developed, some not even developed at all, the developers are speaking to it to increase those sizes, to provide even more intensive…commercial development, not even residential.

In addition, Ed was shocked to learn that there were people serving on the working committee and participating in the workshop process who were not Lutz residents or even landowners. He felt this was unfair to those who were Lutz residents and more directly affected by the land use policies under consideration. Ed recalled:

The way the meeting was originally presented was they wanted input from the folks that actually lived in the area. It almost seemed like they wanted to inform us what the plans were for any resident that was new to the area, like this was what would be coming because these are our plans.
But very quickly after that, we were informed that…it would be changed. And I thought that I was at the meeting with…residents…throughout the neighborhood…but about half way through the first meeting it became apparent that there was folks there who weren’t residents. They were professional developers. And I stood up and I said that “I think it would be nice if the folks that were here…to introduce themselves [and] say whether or not they were residents, or if they were somehow connected to the development community and not a resident…they were here for professional reasons.” And [it]…then became quite evident that they were seeking to further develop the areas that we had already set aside for development.

Ed suspected that these “professional developers” were actually driving the agenda and decision making processes. He described the conflicting interests among members of the working committee and how he thought the presence of the developers and their participation in the process made the homeowner-residents feel:

…it felt like we were being set up…folks were asked what they felt would be of greatest benefit to the area that they were living in, and the residents of course were mostly interested in the environment, noise abatement, traffic control, things like that. And the developers were interested in more commercial development. So, very quickly, there was a spread and they got…the developers very quiet…other than…me asking that they identify themselves. …They
set up camp on one side of the road and then the residents took opposing side…and then we proceeded from there. But it was just striking that even though the board of county commissions, I mean from the letter that was sent to us, said…the residents would be in control of their future, or at least the land around them, that these folks who didn't live here or have anything to do with it would have…equal share in the outcome. It was just staggering to me…

Ed said there was no consensus among the participants, and “the developers evidently wanted increases in…the set-aside commercial areas, and the residents were interested in not increasing them anymore.” Ed described how, when he and his neighbors realized they were competing with a number of "professional developers" over the integrity of the North Dale Mabry Overlay District and the rural character of their community, they devised a strategy to gain control:

But apparently there was an agenda to it and…at the very end we had gotten enough…participation from the community…the folks that were in attendance, some of them were community leaders for their neighborhood associations. And they went back to their associations to tell them what was going on at the meeting, and it appeared that the outcome of the meeting,…to do one thing or the other, was on a straight up vote like a majority rule. So what we did was, once we found out that…then we countered by packing the meeting with people to come in at the time of voting for agenda
items. And we got the agenda items which were to be then presented to the Board of County Commission for ratification. And…it was enlightening to watch. I can’t remember the guy’s name for the board of county commissions who was the lead representative at these meetings. We’re in the chambers, and…we have all of our neighborhood associations packing the chamber, watching him present…and the board asks “well, are these people for all of these changes for increasing the sizes of these commercial areas?” And just having him stammer out with everyone behind him “no they’re really against it…violently.” But they [county commission] still voted…to ratify the changes that they wanted, which was to increase the size of the [commercial activity center] areas.

A review of the public records revealed Ed may have been correct in his suspicion that changes to the North Dale Mabry Overlay District zoning regulations had essentially been decided before the workshop process began. At a February 2007 Board of County Commission plan amendment workshop, a citizen who owned property in one of the commercial activity centers requested the county to revisit the North Dale Mabry Corridor Overlay District regulations (Captioning of the February 28, 2007 BOCC Workshop on E.A.R.-Based Comprehensive Plan Amendments). Discussions at subsequent public hearings showed that the amount of square footage available for commercial development in the neighborhood activity center on North Dale Mabry had been reduced when
the Florida Department of Transportation acquired land to expand the roadway. Of course the landowner had been compensated for the value of this taking (Captioning from the December 11, 2007 BOCC Land Use meeting, morning session).

The county learned through meetings with the community that area residents were very opposed to expanding the North Dale Mabry commercial activity areas. Ed and his neighbors were hopeful that their vocal and widespread opposition would persuade the county commissioners to abandon any idea of revisiting the North Dale Mabry Overlay regulations. However, despite community opposition, the Board of County Commissioners in December 2007 directed its Planning and Growth Management staff to initiate a neighborhood study to amend the overlay zoning regulations in order to expand the commercial activity centers on North Dale Mabry, and to restore the development entitlements back to the square footage approved before the roadway expansion. After that experience, Ed felt defeated and discouraged from participating in land use processes that affected his community. As he said, “…even with support from my neighbors, it was a challenge still to get them to show up, and then to be defeated, just so ardently, by the board of county commissioners where they could absolutely care less…about the residents’ concerns. I kind of saw that… it seems to be so futile on our part.”

When the county initiated the study and began conducting neighborhood meetings to gauge citizens’ response to the proposed increase in land area and
development entitlements in the commercial activity centers, Ed and his neighbors again got involved. As he recalled:

…[the landowner] wanted to increase the size of the area so…once again, [we] rallied support. Folks went up and spoke on the matter. The Planning Commission saw that this gentleman was not entitled to have any increase in the area. And we…at that time thought that we had won that battle. And…we were quite happy. Then of course, the Planning Commission’s decision was presented to the Board of County Commission, and we lost again!

Public records show that at the Planning Commission’s September 8, 2008 public hearing on the amendment to the North Dale Mabry Overlay District plan and zoning regulations, the Planning Commission chair expressed dismay when a county staff member admitted the county commissioners had directed the overlay zoning changes to be made. The Planning Commission chair said:

What all it distills to is the Department of Transportation came along through the eminent domain process, took from the…landowner who had the property adjacent…part of the roadway expansion… and they compensated that landowner for that which was taken, and now we’re going to give back to that landowner that which was taken. In essence, they were paid twice.

(Captioning from the September 8, 2008 Planning Commission meeting, p. 197).

At its September 2008 hearing the Planning Commission found expansion of the
commercial activity center was not consistent with the county’s comprehensive plan.

The Board of County Commissioners held two public hearings for the purpose of considering the amendment to the North Dale Mabry Overlay District plan and zoning regulations. At the first hearing, 16 citizens offered public comments: five in favor of the amendments, and 11 in opposition (Captioning from October 16, 2008 BOCC Public Hearing Land Development Code Text Amendments, Round 2, 2008). At the second public hearing, 31 citizens offered public comments: nine in favor of the amendments, and 22 in opposition (Captioning from November 13, 2008 BOCC Public Hearing Land Development Code Text Amendments, Round 2, 2008). In spite of the Planning Commission’s finding that expansion of the activity center was not consistent with the comprehensive plan, and in spite of overwhelming community opposition, the Board of County Commissioners in November 2008 voted to approve the amendments to the North Dale Mabry Overlay District zoning regulations, which amendments the board itself had initiated in the first place at the request of private landowners and developers.

Ed said he and his neighbors were disheartened and discouraged after their disappointing experience participating and working so hard to oppose changes to the North Dale Mabry Overlay District plan and land use regulations. To them it seemed the decision to enlarge the commercial nodes had been made before the process was initiated, and their participation had amounted to nothing more than empty ritual. He recalled:
...So it was at that point that I decided then that it really…just didn’t matter. Anything that was going to be suggested, no matter what it was, whether it was legal for the property, they would find a way to make it work out. The only thing that I can advise for anybody who moves out here is to buy as much property as you possibly can if you want a country lifestyle, and just hope for the best.

The Thonotosassa Community

The process of formulating the Thonotosassa Community Plan was lengthy and contentious. The community voted to appoint a steering committee of fifteen people to take the lead in the planning process, and workshops were held for over two years. Public records show that when the plan finally came before the county commissioners for adoption in December 2003, there were 24 citizens who submitted public comments. The public hearing transcripts revealed that citizens sharply disagreed on whether residential density in the community should be capped at one unit per one acre or one unit per five acres. However, they all wanted to protect the character of the Thonotosassa community, which they all agreed was rural. The county commissioners voted to adopt the text of the community plan, which requires minimum one acre lots for residential development in the community overall; but they voted not to adopt amendments to the land use map, which would have changed the density of specific land areas (Captioning from December 18, 2003 BOCC Public Hearing, Adoption of 2nd Round Plan Amendments).
Ethel, who is a Thonotosassa homeowner-resident and an active member of the GTCA, served on the community plan steering committee. Ethel recalled the community planning process in Thonotosassa as being “contentious.” She said there were two opposing sides, which she described as “Landowners who wanted to make… big bucks off their property” and “Residents who wanted to live a good life with peace and quiet, and without major traffic issues.” Ethel said citizens in Thonotosassa initially argued over the issue of who should be considered a “stakeholder” for the purpose of formulating the community plan. She recalled, “…initially… deciding who was or who was not a stakeholder was contentious. Do people who own land and don’t live there, are they stakeholders? Well in a way, but for some people they weren’t.” To Ethel, the question of who is a stakeholder became a question of defining the community itself. She said, “The definition of the community is where you get the contention. Is it the person who owns the land or the person who lives on it?”

Ethel said during the Thonotosassa community planning process some stakeholders felt the facilitator, who was a planning professional, was meddling when she tried to advise the citizens. Ethel recalled:

She was going to guide us to…end up doing what she thought was appropriate. This was one of those “urban planners” who wanted to plan urban-style. And she got a number of us very angry at times. She was not subtle in the way she tried to guide everyone into what she wanted the result to be. And, there was a lot of push back. Because she just irritated every one. “Stop telling me what I’m thinking,” …we know what we want
for our communities. And the planners seemed, at least this one, seemed
to feel that we were ignorant and did not know what we wanted.

Despite their disagreements, Ethel said she believed the citizens who
participated in the Thonotosassa planning process were successful in reaching
consensus. She recalled, “I think everyone was finally able to get some
understanding of the other’s need.” At the adoption hearing, Ethel testified in
support of the committee’s recommendation of one residential unit per one acre.
Although the process to adopt the Thonotosassa Community Plan was
contentious and lengthy, Ethel embraced the opportunity to exercise some
control over the future development of her community. She said “…I would go, if
need be, to do this again because I believe the community should determine its
fate. I don’t want someone sitting downtown telling me how close my neighbor
should, could be to me.”

Subsequent to adoption of the Thonotosassa Community Plan, the county
initiated a process to formulate a separate Thonotosassa Main Street Plan. Ethel
described her experience in that process, “…a couple of years later we had the
main street plan, which I was also on. That went very smoothly because there
were only about…six to eight people who showed up each week. And it included
things that nobody really was arguing about…That one went relatively smoothly.”

Craig, a Thonotosassa homeowner-resident who is also a commercial
developer, also participated in the process to formulate the Thonotosassa Main
Street Plan. Craig said the citizens who participated in the planning workshops
were split into two factions based on how they preferred the future development
of their community. He described one of these factions as people who wanted change, and the other as people wanted no change. He recalled:

They went through a great deal of time and effort to have everyone compose and then outline all the…things that people want. And…there were just multiples of things. People wanted Starbucks, people wanted McDonald’s, people wanted street signs, sidewalks, street lights. People wanted more security, more police coverage, a larger fire station, and…the list just went on. The other side of the coin is people wanted to have nothing changed…absolutely nothing. No, no change whatsoever…. so it really came down to “don’t change anything; it is the way it is” to the group who wanted to have growth and change. That was the primary difference …the group that wanted everything to remain the same were by far the more vocal.

Still, Craig thought the Thonotosassa Main Street community planning process was designed to be fair in the sense that all participants were able to speak freely and all voices were heard. He recalled, “…all parties’ opinions were heard…nobody was discriminated against. No group was told to shut up and sit down, basically. And so from that point of view, they made a point of it being…the term I use is ‘politically correct.’” Nevertheless, Craig grew frustrated with the workshops and decided to withdraw before the planning process was completed.

Craig described his observations of the Thonotosassa Main Street planning workshops:
...any group like that, you’ve always got the people who surface who are the most...the most demanding...the loudest...the one that will sit in the front seat and stand up all the time...so the facilitator...would pacify the louder group...She was taking the...the path of least resistance to get through the meeting and...finish it, and move on.

Although Craig believed the Thonotosassa Main Street planning workshops were designed to be fair, he felt they were a waste of time because it was not clear to him how any policy recommendations would be implemented. He explained, “the county personnel outlined the process that they were trying to accomplish, and there were initially...a number of people involved, I would say maybe as many as 30 or 40...participants at that time, or listeners, I don’t know if I’d call them participants...it became apparent to me that the process was non-productive.”

Craig said he viewed the Thonotosassa Main Street planning effort as a “county process to make the residents feel good that something’s going to happen, but without any teeth in it.” He felt everyone had equal opportunity to raise issues and discuss them; but he questioned what mechanisms would be available to ensure implementation of the citizens’ recommendations, and he felt his question was never adequately addressed. At a community planning workshop one evening Craig concluded that the process was a waste of his time. He walked out of the workshop and never went to another.

The county adopted the Thonotosassa Main Street Overlay District regulations into the land development code on November 2, 2006. The purpose of the overlay district regulations was to implement the Thonotosassa Main
Street plan and to “improve the appearance of Thonotosassa’s Main Street by enhancing landscaping, building and sign requirements, and requiring a rural form of development with the placement of new non-residential buildings along Main Street” (Hillsborough County Ordinance No. 06-34, § 2, 11-2-06). However, the design standards and district regulations apply primarily to new development, and there has been little if any new development activity in the Thonotosassa Main Street district since adoption of the main street plan. Thus, Ethel acknowledged the downtown area “…has stayed just the way it was…a very sleepy little community with a lot of potential.”

Conclusions

The concept of Participating in Land Use Processes is the fourth core concept in the Preserving Place model. This concept describes the research participants’ experiences in planning and land development entitlement processes that impact their communities. The first two core concepts described how individuals embrace their community, are transformed into public citizens and become actors intent on preserving their community’s character. The third core concept described the pivotal point at which once-isolated individuals, who have been transformed into public citizens, learn about and become involved in land use processes. The fourth core concept, Participating in Land Use Processes, describes the research participants’ experiences participating in planning and land development entitlement processes.

Community-based planning is a collaborative policy making approach. The literature shows that collaborative processes are transformative because
they focus on communication and knowledge sharing, power shifting, and consensus building, and also because the experience leads participants to extend collaboration to other contexts, resulting in adaptations and resiliency in the larger societal system (Goldstein & Butler, 2010; Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010). Collaborative processes can help address power and resource imbalances in policy making (Goldstein & Butler, 2010) and transform institutions (Healey, 2006). But the collaborative planning processes discussed in this chapter revealed that power imbalances were not consistently addressed, and tended to shift during the process. This failure resulted in conflicts among the stakeholders in each of the three study communities that surfaced and were unresolved during the collaborative planning processes, then resurfaced and persisted unresolved during subsequent land development entitlement processes.

Arnstein (1969, p. 216) illustrated that citizen participation is equal to citizen power and provides a means by which “have-not” citizens can redistribute power and induce social reform. The data from this research show that homeowner-resident citizens, organized through their voluntary community organizations, managed to redistribute power in their favor to the extent that new power imbalances were created, turning the tables on individuals formerly expected to wield power, and exacerbating long running conflicts among homeowner-resident stakeholders and landowner-developer stakeholders. In the context of the community-based planning process, power imbalances resulted in conflicts that were particularly evident in two fundamental areas: (1) identifying
and engaging diverse stakeholders; and (2) facilitating authentic dialogue among stakeholders.

**Identifying and engaging stakeholders.** One of the most contentious conflicts that arose during the community-based planning processes in all three study communities was the question of who should be considered a stakeholder. Some of the research participants felt people who were not legitimate stakeholders were improperly included in the process, and others felt that some essential stakeholders who should have been included were not adequately represented. Homeowner-residents questioned whether landowner-developers who did not live in the community should even be permitted to have a voice in the deliberations. They particularly did not like it when the landowner-developer stakeholders sent lawyers and other professionals to represent them instead of participating themselves. They suspected these individuals were not interested in the community; but rather were there solely for the purpose of influencing policy outputs in favor of their development interest clients. On the other hand, landowner-developers were suspicious of individuals they considered to be anti-growth activists and NIMBYs who packed the public meetings in an effort to sway policy decisions in their favor.

Homeowner-resident stakeholders far outnumbered landowner-developer, business, and industry stakeholders in the community planning process. The homeowner-residents recognized this fact and used it to their advantage. The homeowner-resident stakeholders understood they had power in numbers, and through their voluntary community organizations they organized to exert their
power when they felt it advantageous to do so. The landowner-developers may have tried to overcome the homeowner-residents’ numerical advantage by having prominent lawyers and consultants represent them in the process; reasoning that if they could not match the numbers they could still match the power by means of more powerful players. Since the community planning workshops, open house meetings, and public hearings were open to the public, anyone could attend and participate. This added to the problem because both camps were free to recruit attendees, even from other communities outside the plan boundaries, in an attempt to swing the vote.

Deeply held values were at the core of the disagreement over who should be considered a stakeholder in the community planning process. These values were evident in the way the research participants described their roles and concerns. The research participants who considered themselves to be aligned with the predominant voluntary community organization or neighborhood association in their community expressed their main concerns as preserving their way of life and their community’s rural character. Only Elliott, Ben, James, and Craig did not consider themselves aligned with a voluntary community organization or neighborhood association. These four expressed their main concerns as economic development, property rights, property values, and development entitlements.

The research participants described two opposing interest groups involved in the planning and land use processes in each of the study communities, but they couched them in different terms. To the research participants who identified
with the voluntary community organizations, the two groups were (1) community members like themselves; and (2) greedy landowners and developers. To the four research participants who did not identify with the voluntary community organizations, the two groups were (1) reasonable professional or business-minded people like themselves; and (2) anti-growth activists.

The literature on citizen participation shows that collaborative policy making processes are messy and contentious because diverse stakeholders have competing interests and values, and an imbalance of knowledge, understandings, experiences, and power (Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010). The concern is often that the voices of lay citizens who have limited resources, knowledge, and experience with public policy decision making processes may be overpowered by the voices of stakeholders who have greater experience with public processes and more substantial resources. However, the data from this research show that the citizens who aligned themselves with the voluntary community organizations were able to hold their own in the planning process with stakeholders who were developers, industry representatives, planning experts, and legal professionals.

The voluntary community organizations provided a mechanism through which citizens were able to organize, share knowledge, mentor one another, and marshal resources in order to participate effectively and make their voices heard. While this mechanism may have elevated the citizens’ power to a higher rung on the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969), it also created a power imbalance in favor of homeowner-residents who were voluntary community organization
members at the expense of other stakeholders. Lost in the process was the recognition of interdependency among diverse and competing interests. Without recognition of the interdependent nature of their interests, the stakeholders were unable to move from posturing and arguing to negotiating and deliberating. As a result, the first two necessary conditions for collaborative rationality, diversity of interests and interdependence, were not present (Innes & Booher, 2010).

**Facilitating authentic dialogue.** The skills of the facilitator play a significant role in the potential success of a collaborative effort. Where diverse, even opposing, interests are involved it is essential for facilitators to apply conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation skills and to use techniques that address power and resource imbalances among the participants. As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, in order to engage in authentic dialogue, the participants must be able to deliberate in a manner consistent with Habermas’ ideal speech conditions by having equal access to information, equal opportunity to speak and be heard, and equal right to challenge assumptions and assertions. In this way, the participants are assured that each other’s claims are legitimate, accurate, comprehensible, sincere, and inclusive of all major interests and knowledge (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 36-37). But in messy, contentious collaborative processes, a skilled facilitator is necessary in order for the process to even approach such ideal speech conditions (Innes & Booher, 2010).

The data from this research revealed that in each of the three study communities, there were unaddressed power imbalances that undermined trust, constrained dialogue, and negatively affected the collaborative rationality of the
process. The failure to apply effective techniques to facilitate authentic dialogue was evident in the research participants’ consistent descriptions of the stakeholders as being divided into two opposing factions during the community-based planning workshops and open house meetings, with these two factions engaging in constant power struggles instead of engaging in productive deliberations. In particular, Ben, James, and Craig contended that the voices of the homeowner-residents drowned out those of other stakeholders. As discussed above, because of their numbers and effective organizing, the homeowner-resident stakeholders held onto a competitive advantage in the community-based planning process. But this competitive advantage created a power imbalance that undermined the collaborative rationality of the process. Because the process was less than optimal, so was the result.

The unaddressed power imbalances during the community plan formulation stage negatively affected the final policy recommendations. This was most evident in the comments of Sherry, Ben, and James, who described certain community plan provisions as “pie-in-the-sky,” impracticable, infeasible, or simply poor planning. During the collaborative planning processes for each of the study communities the facilitators were professional planning experts. These professionals had the knowledge and expertise to recognize and challenge infeasible or impracticable policy recommendations, and should have been able to facilitate authentic dialogue among the participants. Authentic dialogue would have helped ensure equal access to information, equal opportunity to speak and
be heard, and equal right to challenge assumptions and assertions (Innes & Booher, 2010).

The collaborative rationality of the process was adversely impacted by the participants’ failure to engage in authentic dialogue. Impracticable and infeasible provisions found their way into the recommendations and ultimately into some of the community plans. Moreover, because issues of power were not addressed at the plan formulation stage, implementation has not proceeded smoothly, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Nine:
Implementing the Community Plan

Community plans are implemented through processes that are separate and different from the plan formulation process. The term “implementation” refers to the process of adopting land development regulations to execute the community plan provisions, and the application of the community plan provisions and land development regulations to subsequent land development entitlement requests. The land development regulations contain zoning and design criteria, or overlay zoning districts, which are unique to each community plan. The community plans and implementing land development regulations are intended to preserve the distinctive characteristics of each community, as expressed in the vision statement of each community plan. Ideally, the land development regulations are drafted and adopted soon after the community plan goes into effect so that implementation proceeds smoothly. This chapter discusses the concept of “Implementing the Community Plan,” which describes how effective the research participants believe their community plan has been to preserve their community character and how they participated in land use processes subsequent to plan adoption in an effort to ensure effective implementation.

The Keystone-Odessa Community

The literature on citizen participation shows that empowering citizens through meaningful participation in planning and designing their communities
may result in citizen “buy-in,” which might enhance the success of subsequent development projects (Crawford, et al., 2008, p. 533). Comments by several of the Keystone-Odessa research participants indicate this is true in their community. In general, the Keystone-Odessa citizens who participated in this research felt their community plan has helped reduce the number of conflicts with development projects.

Several Keystone-Odessa research participants talked about how, prior to the adoption of the community-based planning program in 2001, they participated in land use hearings that sometimes lasted until long after midnight. The lengthy public hearings were a result of protracted arguments among citizens and applicants seeking land development entitlements. The community-based planning program helped settle some of these disputes in advance. Roger explained:

…what was being kicked around back in ’97…8…and 99 is to do something to keep citizens from having to go down to the county and stay to the rezonings till 2 in the morning, which is an absolute reality that did occur, and to stop the fighting…before there was a recognized thing called community planning…all the things…that ripped our hearts out and guts out about all these protracted land use fights downtown. And we were there. I mean long time, and many, many, many times over, and it’s just a damn circus every time.

Likewise, Suzanne said the Keystone-Odessa community plan has helped to define what the residents wanted in their community, and has been effective in
preserving their community’s rural character. She added, “if [the community plan] hadn’t been there we’d be downtown fighting every week something.”

Roger also explained how the community plan provides predictability for citizens, landowners, and developers:

The…community plan is a map for development of a geographically defined area, so that there’s predictability at every level. Every level. So there’s no question, there’s no guessing, everybody knows, already agreed what is gonna happen. So we have had very few contentious hearings since then. Very few. Almost disappeared. The only ones we fought over are the ones that had been on the books prior to the adoption of the plan. But since then it’s been smooth sailing. So it has worked amazingly well as a planning tool for every damn body. All the developers know what’s allowed and what’s not allowed. And they do it within the confines and everybody’s happy.

Similarly, Tony, who is a past president of the KCA, said the community plan “gave some specificity… to the codes, allowed the Planning and Growth people to be able to say ‘yes’ and ‘no.’” Further, Tony explained that requests for “planned development district” project approvals dropped off sharply after the community plan was adopted. A “planned development district” project allows a developer more flexibility in project design than is allowed in a standard zoning district approval. But this flexibility also led to frequent objections and conflicts among citizens and developers. Tony explained:
…the planned developments quit coming in. They quit. They just quit.

…I used to have five of them running all the time. There would always be five different ones going. But that meant I was downtown every week at least twice. And once the community plan went through and the ones that were in the process went out, that was it. It was like vacation…you would just see the wildest requests out of these things. With a planned development you can ask for anything. You can ask…I mean, because the county would tell us that all the time…they have the right to ask for anything they want. And it’s like, so somebody’s got to go down and…deal with each one, even if they’re crazy. And that stopped. The community stopped that craziness, that constant attack. That’s what I felt like, like it was a constant attack against the community. They thought if we just keep doing this, keep doing this, sooner or later people will just quit showing up. But we’re rather tenacious out here. You know, it’s like there’s nowhere else to go. We don’t want to have to move that far away. We’ll fight for it.

Alfred also agreed that once the community plan and implementing land development regulations were in place there were definite guidelines that create certainty for someone interested in developing land. He said:

Well there are definitely guidelines that have been set down, and…Keystone Civic Association rears its old head is when somebody blatantly tries to do something other than what’s in that plan, such as what was
trying to be put down there…on Gunn and Tarpon Springs Road. That far exceeded the guidelines for the square footage and office space.

Likewise, Gertrude explained in Keystone-Odessa, “…when everybody came together and coalesced on what is our plan, and then once you see it in writing you understand that something…is out of sequence with our plan. And it’s not just your personal idea; this is the idea of everyone in the community who has come together.”

Nevertheless, all conflicts over land use do not simply end when the community plan is adopted. Ginger explained that after the county approves and adopts a community plan, citizens who participated in its formulation see their role as changing to one in which they defend the vision of their community as they expressed it during the plan formulation stage. Roger described the shift in the citizens’ role, “once it’s in place then our role shifts to birddogging the whole thing. Now that comes in many forms, but that’s the ultimate role.” Janis said the community plan is effective to preserve the community’s vision and character only “If somebody’s always watching it. If somebody ever falls asleep and doesn’t pay attention to what the county is doing, they’ll…mow you right over.”

Thus, after the adoption of their community plan, the Keystone-Odessa research participants saw their role shift to that of watchdogs with the purpose of defending the integrity of their community plan and ensuring its provisions were implemented in land development regulations and subsequent land development projects. But Ginger said the citizens did not at first understand they would have to remain engaged in land use processes to defend their community plan. She
explained that the Keystone-Odessa community plan had wide community support, and upon its adoption the citizens at first felt they could finally relax. She recalled:

…the day that the community plan was passed, that night, I can see it, the original one, we had 200 people in that audience…standing room only. Several of us who’d gone down and…fought the bitter wars just came out and went “Ah! Relax. We can finally relax because we have these rules in place to prevent this from happening…” And that was the wrong attitude to take because even though the bigger picture was taken care of it was then we got to deal with the details on when new things came up again. And there weren’t that many of them, but you then had to make sure that not only were our rules being followed, but that planning services and the building department would adhere and incorporate those into …whatever the plans were. And several times that did not occur

Roger described some of the issues Keystone-Odessa citizens became involved in after adoption of their community plan:

Rezonings, projects that came out of the ground…All those kinda good things, and that’s what we…WE…the Keystone Civic Association, those people on the land use subcommittee, would have to make sure that the applicant was doing what he was supposed to do. More times than not, getting the county building permit services to do what they were supposed to do as in READ the land development code, and…to follow our guidelines.
Ginger said after the Keystone-Odessa plan was adopted, “...it was not a year later that the design guidelines went right into effect...that’s the way it’s supposed to work. And I think Keystone was one of the first and the last to have it work that way.” Some stakeholders who participated in the community planning process also participated in the process to draft land development regulations to implement the plan. In Keystone-Odessa, conflicts arose during this process similar to those that arose during the plan formulation process. Tony described one experience when he and another KCA member met with other stakeholders and county officials to work on a matrix of design criteria to be included in the land development regulations to implement the Keystone-Odessa community plan:

It was so confrontational. And...the activist that I was with was slamming her hand on the table and just yelling ‘NO NO NO’ and pushing papers back at them. And basically that’s the only way that we were able to hold our ground. ...I felt very much like we were under attack by seven other people, and that there was two of us at the end of the table, and that they wanted to...take as much off of the matrix as they could. And she just was adamant that she would not budge on any of it. And that’s how we got it, the activists. And...I learned that’s what we had to do basically to get things. And that you...did not budge. And that you fought, and you slammed your hands and you talked over people, which I, it took me about two years to learn how to do...this is not the kind of thing
I was expecting. It was so different from the cookies and Cubans we had down at the little civic meetings here… And I remember leaving it thinking “I don’t know whether I’m gonna be able to do this.” But before long…I was.

Sometimes a dispute arises among the developer, citizens, and county staff over the interpretation of a plan or land development code provision. For example, Ginger noted two commercial developments that the county allowed to be built with roof designs and materials that the citizens believed their community plan and land development code design criteria did not allow. She recalled “…we don’t allow any tiled roof in commercial…[but] childcare [center] has one” and “the strip center [at the] corner of Van Dyke and Gunn…they put that stupid roof on there…the county let that one go through and then…we appealed it and all that good stuff, and county would not listen.”

In contrast, Alfred recalled a developer who approached the KCA to work out details in order to design and construct a commercial building that was consistent with the Keystone-Odessa rural design criteria. Alfred explained, “…there is another project that’s down there by Mobley…Fox’s Corner. Across the street on the northeast side is a little building that’s now the real estate office. And there was a tremendous amount of time spent on meetings about the look of the building, the size of it, and the location of it.”

Alfred said he believes implementation of the Keystone-Odessa community plan has been successful because the citizens, organized through the KCA, continue to be involved with proposed development projects that affect
their community. He explained, “the association [KCA] is strong and the county knows they’re going to stick to their guns.” He added, “that’s why this project [a grocery store shopping center] over here was turned down because it did not fit in with the rural plan of the community.” Likewise, Dylan said he believes implementation of the community plan has been effective “because there’s always somebody watching what they’re doing, and if they ‘F’ with us we go fight.” Betty also felt implementation of the community plan has been successful. After naming several projects that she believed were developed consistent with the plan, she explained, “…people have been following our community plan, and they’ve been thinking about it and taking us…into their confidence as to what they’re gonna build. So…that’s what the community plan has done.”

Gertrude said that she feels the strong involvement of the citizens in Keystone-Odessa has gained the recognition of county officials who, in turn, respect the citizens’ desire to retain the rural qualities of their community. She said:

The county is very supportive of this area. And they recognize that the area has a lot of potential. They recognize that this area has strong voter support because people will drive from Odessa all the way downtown to attend a meeting in force. So I think they recognize that we have a strong voice, we want to be heard and participate. They have supported buying the ELAPP [Environmental Lands Acquisition and Preservation Program] property nearby, which is a 16 thousand acre piece, to keep it rural and develop it for equine purposes. They have supported Quantum Leap
Farm, which is right up the road, which is a facility for disabled people to use equine therapy. So the county I think deserves a major pat on the back in regard to that.

Asked whether the plan would have been successful in the absence of continued strong citizen involvement, Gertrude answered, “It would have folded like a cheap tent.”

The fact that the citizens must remain involved and ever watchful against land use projects they believe are inconsistent with their community plan and threaten the rural character of their community seemed to bother Gertrude. She said:

Well it makes you suspicious. Are some voices being heard more clearly than the voices of the citizens? Is there perhaps some pressure or financial incentive? I mean I understand why [developers] are interested here. There’s open space, and if they have somebody saying “hey I want to be here, I want my building to be here,” they’re in that business. I’m not trying to impede their business. But I would just like to see that their business fits with what we’re doing.

When land development entitlement requests are brought before the local government for consideration in quasi-judicial processes, affected citizens may participate by submitting written comments, and presenting their own evidence and expert witnesses at the public hearings. But citizens are allowed very limited time to present their case at the public hearings before county officials, and they question the effectiveness of participating in this manner. Suzanne said, “…if
you go before the county commissioners you’re buzzed right out of there. So you have…a certain amount of time…and that’s it. So, it doesn’t matter what you have to say.”

As conflicts arose between homeowner-residents and landowner-developers in implementation of the community plan, Keystone-Odessa citizens on several occasions mobilized to oppose and ultimately defeat development proposals they perceived as inconsistent with their plan. At least two projects have resulted in the KCA and its members initiating lawsuits. One proposed project consisted of a school, residential subdivision, and commercial strip center located on a parcel with access via two-lane roads. The KCA and several of its members believed the project was inconsistent with the Keystone-Odessa community plan, would create traffic hazards, and would threaten water quality. They initiated a lawsuit and ultimately defeated the proposal.

Homeowner-residents in Keystone-Odessa also mobilized efforts to defeat a proposed development that consisted of a shopping center with a grocery store anchor tenant. Alfred described how citizens, organized through the KCA, conducted their own research to demonstrate there was no need in their community for an additional grocery store. Christine described the proposal and the community organizing efforts:

The [grocery store] would have been on that corner, and some other buildings too, small shops, and offices and things like that. And of course, there’s a lake…that it would…drainage would have gone into it. And so…they were also gonna put in a huge subdivision. And it really caught most
of us blindsided because we had no idea that something like this was
gonna happen… There were a number of us… once we found out what
was going to happen we decided to go door to door canvassing. And I
can’t remember now… how many signatures we got. And… most people
were very receptive and they had no idea that this had been proposed.
And so we went to hearings, and I can’t tell you how many hearings, and
how many meetings, but by golly it was denied.

The Keystone-Odessa citizens also became involved in another shopping
center proposal because they believed the developer failed to apply the rural
design guidelines adopted as part of the land development regulations
implementing their community plan. The developer at first presented a site plan
and elevations that the citizens thought were acceptable. However, when
construction got underway the citizens realized the building’s façade differed
from what the developer had presented to them. Dylan recalled, “they
[developer] showed all these pretty pictures of what it was gonna look like, and
then when they built it, it was totally different.” Roger also recalled, “we had a
little meeting down at County Center… it was a big furor over architectural detail.
And [developer] promised to do something they didn’t do, they put it in the
ground, and then everybody raised hell.”

The KCA and some of its individual members filed a lawsuit against the
developer, but dropped the suit when the developer agreed to make post-
construction changes to the building façade and lighting. Luke said the
landowner had even attended KCA meetings and should have known what the citizens expected. He explained:

[the landowner] used to come to our meetings…and sit and record all of our Keystone Association meetings… But then he went ahead and he hired this company…to build his shopping center, and they didn’t do it the way the community plan said to do. And so they eventually had to go back and change the lighting and change the roof designs, and so forth…

Several of the Keystone-Odessa research participants mentioned this particular shopping center project and said they were pleased the developer made architectural changes to the shopping center. They are proud of their role in achieving a design they perceived as consistent with the Keystone-Odessa rural design standards.

Of course, not all land development proposals create conflict. Sometimes developers meet with the community association seeking feedback in an effort to gain support for a proposed project, and the citizens appreciate this. As Dylan said, “the best luck that we have had with developers out here were developers who came out, and wanted to do something, and came directly to the KCA and sat down with this…this is what we want to do….” Other times developers make changes to a project to mollify citizens who raise objections during the land use approval process. For example, several Keystone-Odessa research participants talked about a utility building that Bright House Networks constructed. The building is situated prominently alongside a major road through the community. The developer originally proposed to build a plain cement block building with a
flat roof and no windows. However, Keystone-Odessa citizens objected that the appearance of the building did not fit with their community’s character. Eventually the citizens won concessions from Bright House to add a superficial tin roof and fake windows to the building to make it appear reminiscent of a rural farmhouse.

Figure 9.1 The Bright House building. Photo by Pamela Jo Hatley.

Several Keystone-Odessa research participants singled out the Bright House building as an example of a development project that reflects the rural design criteria their community plan requires. Ginger described her experience with this project:

…they [Bright House] went in for a variance to the community plan because of the roof line. They claimed that…they had to put this concrete cement flat roof because of all the electronical equipment,
and an…aluminum roof wasn’t safe enough. So I called down, and it was [county planner] at the county, and I said “…you gonna tell me aluminum roofs aren’t safe anymore?” And he goes “oh this is the silliest thing you’ve ever heard.” I said “look they can put the pitched roof over the concrete roof.” Well they didn’t want to do that. So they go into the variance [hearing], and the hearing master…threw it out. And she said “you have to adhere to the Keystone plan, I’m not even gonna hear this.” And Bright House was like, “what do you mean?” Well [KCA members] intervened and said “if we can work with Bright House…and they can…all they have to do is put the dummy roof, put the dummy windows, and make it look like a house. Bright House were they willing to do that?” And they said “yeah,” and the hearing master…allowed some extra time, and Bright House came back and put in. It looks like a house.

Residents who embrace a rural lifestyle are particularly concerned about preserving their community’s character from urban or suburban development. Several Keystone-Odessa research participants complained about the county’s efforts to install sidewalks, street lights, and intersection improvements that the citizens perceive as not “rural,” and therefore not consistent with their community’s character. Luke believes a procedural failure exists in the way the county approaches planning for areas that are rural or semi-rural. He complained, “…Everything’s ‘urban’ planning and we’re the exact
opposite... There’s not people to look after the rural areas... it’s a real fight for us to keep rural... And we have to fight some good lawyers.”

In contrast, George accused the KCA members of being “activists” and complained, “They actually don’t want growth. They want to keep it just the way it is.” George observed “there’s no growth out here [in Keystone-Odessa].” However, George said he also enjoys the rural character of Keystone-Odessa. He admitted, “I’m not necessarily... totally in agreement with [the ‘activists’], but I’m not an adversary to [the community plan] because I kind of like the rural area. I like the cows across the street. I like that.” Nevertheless, he said he believes the community plans have “made it harder for growth, for people to come out here.” He cited as an example his own commercial office building, which he built consistent with the Keystone-Odessa rural design criteria. But he felt the additional architectural features added unnecessary time and expense to his project, and he would have preferred not to include them.

Although George said he enjoys the rural character of Keystone-Odessa, and appreciates why KCA members are so active in trying to preserve it, he complained that community plans encroach on the freedom of property owners to develop their property the way they prefer. He explained, “I pay my taxes on my property and I want to have some say so. I don’t want some housewife telling me how it should be because it looks good when she drives by... I don’t want to be told what to do. I have a problem with that philosophically like not just here, but everywhere.” George said he believes development should not be required
to be consistent with the community plans. As he put it, community plans
“…should be like a suggestion, it should be like ‘this is how we’re looking to go.’”

But Roger pointed out that if community plans were only a suggestion, or a “vision,” not adopted as part of the comprehensive plan, and not enforceable as local law, development would not be required to be consistent with them. Thus, implementation would fail because the plans would lose their effectiveness. He said if this were the case, citizens would not be motivated to participate in the community-based planning process. Roger said, “Why do it? The first reaction is don’t waste the time doing it if there’s no teeth in the vision. How do you put teeth in vision? Now remember the only reason we came to the table to begin to do a community plan is to have something enforceable. So how do you enforce a vision?” Gertrude also argued that developers are “…trying to move into this community, and they need to fit within the confines of the community…the underlying part of it’s all…how involved is the community in general in maintaining a lifestyle…and it is involvement by the people who live in an area, and their association” that makes implementation of the community plan effective.

The Lutz Community

Sherry believes the Lutz Community Plan has been implemented effectively to preserve the community’s character. She explained:

Our whole goal, if you read our plan, is open space, trying to create this feeling I’ve got back here [indicating her large back yard]. To keep…that rural feel to it. I mean you know I’m five minutes from the worst part of the
north part of Tampa…it is five miles down the road. But you come out here and you just you cross the bridge and you enter a whole other world out here. And our plan did this. I one-hundred percent credit the plan for doing this, keeping that open space. Always the green and the open.

Sherry also believes the Lutz Community Plan has permitted what she considers “healthful” growth. She said, “…We’ve grown very healthfully, but we haven’t been overgrown. We’ve had thoughtful development come in. We’ve had development and people that want to abide by our plan.”

Sherry said the process of adopting land development regulations took longer in Lutz than she had hoped it would, and she described how the lack of land development regulations affected implementation of the community plan:

Well for the first two years after the plan was in effect there was no code. So the county commission struggled. We all did. …How do you make this vision happen when there’s no implementation document over here? …It was really difficult because the plan supersedes code, but yet there was no way to tell staff how to get to the plan because there was nothing in writing yet. It was challenging. But our plan held up every time in those rezonings. Every time they’d have to write special conditions and codes. Once we had our code in effect in 2002 or 3…it made it a little easier because…it told everybody how to go about this.

Additionally, Sherry said in Lutz developers have also approached the LCA to gain the community’s support for their project proposals. Sherry explained, “We’ve had development and people that want to abide by our plan.
So it’s amazing how much time I’ve spent in the last five years talking to the development community before they file anything, and going from there you know…‘Here’s what we want, here’s what we’re trying to do’ ‘…well our plan says this and this and this.’ They want that meeting of the minds.”

On the other hand, Ed complained that the North Dale Mabry Corridor Plan in Lutz has not been implemented effectively. Ed complained, “…I just wish that [the plan] would be adhered to… Whatever is in the plan can be overcome if it’s some sort of hindrance to development. If a developer wants to do whatever he wants with whatever size property that he has, he can do it, it has been my experience.” Asked whether he knew of any development projects to which developers had made adjustments in order to be consistent with the community plan, Ed said on the contrary “… the plans change to suit the thing that’s being built”

Ben complained that the Lutz Community Plan is not “realistic” for developers, and has resulted in “stagnation” of growth in the community. He asked, “…When was the last time you saw anything positive happen in Lutz? …By positive, for nothing happening, to a lot of people that’s positive. ‘There’s nothing happening, nothing new coming out of the ground. That's positive, we did our job.’"

James asserted that the community plans should not be regulatory; but rather should be “visionary” and represent only a community’s vision statement. Likewise, Ben argued the community plans should not be adopted into the comprehensive plan, and should not have the force of local law. He explained,
“The big issue is…whether or not…the community plan should be adopted as part of the comprehensive plan, or whether it should sit off on the side strictly as an advisory guide. And, [there is] a big difference in how you use it for one versus the other.”

Ben sympathizes with the landowner-developer stakeholders and believes adopting community plans into the comprehensive plan makes them too rigid. He argues community plans should be regarded only as a “nice exercise” to advise the professional planners at the county, and to get some “feedback from the community.” Ben explained:

Neighborhood planning, community-based planning is a nice exercise. It’ll provide the professional planners and the county commission, and planning commission some general feelings from the community on how they perceive the community should look. But when you take those thoughts, and they’re very specific thoughts, and you adopt them as part of the plan and it has the force of law, takes on a whole different set of circumstances. When the process first started off it was to be a advisory type of document that the Planning Commission staff, the county commission would take it under advisement and say, this is kind of like what the public has in mind about how they view development, and how they want their community to look over the years, which is fine. But then once you’ve adopted it, it has the force of law, and you can’t do anything that’s inconsistent with the plan. That takes on a whole new,
different set of circumstances. It becomes a different document. It becomes a legal document. And...the...community based planning effort is fine, it kind of gets some feedback from the community as compared to try to load it all up into a particular zoning hearing where everybody has to turn out every time to say the same every time, at least you have the document that's on paper, and it's advisory in nature hopefully, and it gives everybody an idea of what the community was thinking generally. But to have everybody show up at every meeting and recite the same thing at every zoning hearing, it gets a bit monotonous and redundant...It...would help the county commission, it would help the Planning Commission to evaluate and...assimilate all that the community has in mind of what the community should look like in the long run, as compared to having to deal with that on a case by case basis every time a zoning hearing comes up, or a plan amendment comes up, and you gotta re-go go through all that process all over again. And the difference being that one is a, in my opinion, should be a loose document, it's advisory in nature, versus what the others say, it should be adopted into law, and is inflexible.

Ben said he believes the community-based planning program should permit citizens to have some input and to “…reflect some of the thinking in the community,” including the citizens' “broad goals” such as “…enhanced open space, …protect the trees if possible, …protect the water resources if possible,
…restrict, or mitigate any environmental impacts…those type of broad things.”

On the contrary, he said the plans have become something different. “When you get down to ‘this, this, and this has to be done,’ or ‘that can’t be done,’ and you build that into the plan, that now becomes adopted as part of the plan and it has the force of law, you just write a new set of regulations.”

Asked whether citizens would be motivated to volunteer their time to work on community plans that might not have any effectiveness, Ben admitted “Sure, [the community plans] could be ignored…” But he asserted, “…if in fact the governing body…goes to all the effort of having these groups meet and…ask them to…volunteer their time….and [the plan] is in fact advisory, they…better well make sure they’re at least taking it into account when they’re making their decisions. And how well they do that is a matter of gamesmanship.” In other words, Ben explained it becomes a political balancing act:

…an elected official saying ‘I’ve gotta get re-elected, and I’ve got all these screaming people out there, how can I bring this to some kind of successful conclusion to where we’re reflecting what the goals of the community are, and still allowing a development to occur that’s gonna have a positive impact on the tax base and the economy?

Ben explained some elected officials are better at this political “gamesmanship” than are others:

…some are better at it than others. Some are more subtle about it than others. It’s just that when you go to some of the zoning hearings, and you see all the hordes turn out, it becomes a numbers game. And the county
commissioner, they’re human, they look out there and say, “yeah okay they got 120 people out there, and only…this one guy here who wants to get it changed. You know I’m not going to throw myself under the bus. I gotta get re-elected in order to help with other things. And I just can’t shoot myself in the foot over this one project.” …That’s the bottom line. Now, if it’s in fact something that is clearly…important to the community, and all those people out there are all greedy, self-serving…people they just don’t want anything to happen, you have to decide, “okay this is truly good we need this facility here. And the rest of you I’m sorry, we just can’t…accommodate you on this particular one.”

Ben believes the community plans have been used to discourage economic development. He recalled a development proposal for what he referred to as a “convenience store type of facility.” He explained:

The citizens had several variations to the site plan that the developer…had submitted to them….It had gotten to the point where the…developer…wanted to work with the neighborhood …Well he’d go and meet with [the citizens], and…they would put forth their demands to the developer and the property owner about what they wanted to see. Well this would go on for several meetings and they would come back and things would go back and forth until one time I was at a meeting and a group of the citizens on the committee were bragging about how they really jammed it to this developer, how they made the demands so great, that the
developer just says “I can’t do that,” and walked away…And they were going through and bragging about how this is the way it started off, and this is what they did to him down at the end, and this is what the final plan is going to look like, and that’s when he decided “I can’t do it,” and he walked away from it.

Ben’s comments reflect the same conflicts between homeowner-residents and landowner-developers that were evident during the community plan formulation stage. Ben contends that the county elected officials often based land use decisions on the number of citizens who come out in support or opposition. However, he argued they should base land use decisions on the objective technical facts and application of the land development code. He explained,

The county commission will listen to the public, will listen to the technical report, will listen to the property owner…and they’ll form a conclusion. Well if they form the conclusion that they’re gonna support the applicant who wants the land use change, all the public says “We’re gonna remember you…at election time,” blah, blah, blah. And they’re there in all their yellow T-shirts and signs, and all that sort of things, just make this huge display of things, when in fact the proposal might be very well what the community might need. They just don’t want to see any change. And the county commission, as I’ve told them before, “you’ve gotta have the guts to say ‘yes’ or ‘no.’” It’s not a popularity contest…you’re there to
make a technical decision, what’s in the best interest of the community, what makes good sense from a planning standpoint.

In Ben’s perspective, the citizens involved in the KCA and LCA who worked on their community plans have been unreasonable in their demands, and as a result have stifled growth in their communities. Ben recalled another potential land development project:

…there was a piece of land, I had a call from a prospective developer, that wanted to really do something nice with the property. But he had heard about this Lutz or the Keystone group, and how difficult they were to work with, and said “well here’s what I had in mind for the property but after finding out about this sort of stuff,” he says “I’m not even gonna touch it.” He had an option on a property, he wanted to do a really neat open-space mall development, which is the almost exactly what the community would be looking for for that piece of land, but he’s just “I’m not about to throw myself under the bus and work with these people” he says “I’m just walking away. I don’t even want to do anything with these people, they’re just not worth working with.” And so they actually wind up losing what could have been a really cool community. It would have been maybe about 8 units, something like that, a small piece. It would have been a real niche little project, it would have been tailored for that site, it would have been beautiful. He says “I don’t even want to work with those people.”
So the reputation of how hard-nosed some of these people can be, and the roadblocks that they throw up in front of the property owner or developer scares developer, good developers away from trying to do something good.

Ben said in many cases developers work with citizens to adjust their development proposals to suit the community’s preferences. But he said often this is a difficult and expensive task for the developer. He explained:

…most of your projects in Hillsborough County have been changed to accommodate the wishes of the citizen groups, and finally they get approved. It’s just that to develop a project was either large enough or the developer had deep enough pockets to where they could grant the citizens a lot of what they wanted, and could still come out the other end and still make it feasible… But it’s just, it’s difficult to do.

In contrast, Sherry believes the LCA has a reputation for being reasonable and working well with developers. She explained:

And we…developed a reputation for [being] willing to sit down and talk with the development community. “Let’s talk about what you want to do. You’re welcome in the community, but you’re gonna play by the community’s rules.” And….if you look from 2004 until recently I think there’s been maybe one denial. Everything else we worked on has come to fruition, because they can come to us. We’ll talk to them. We’ll tell them what we want. We’re not anti-growth, we’re not anti-development. This is the way we want to grow. And we left enough latitude in our
community plan to allow people to come to the community with their vision incorporating our vision…which is a good combination. You know, people have to realize it isn’t the community that’s gonna build that community plan. They build the plan in their brains, on paper, the concept. It’s the development community; it’s the landowners that are going to build your community physically for you. So you’ve gotta make it as clear as you can without being as restrictive…as you can. I think we got carried away in the later plans; too much restrictions. Too much exactly what we want on the roof, exactly what we wanna see on the front, too much code…and that’s what your hearing everybody screaming about more than anything. And it is overregulated. It should not be.

Similarly, James believes the community plans should not contain provisions that are regulatory in nature. He explained, “…the Planning Commission put a lot of regulation in there…a lot of regulation. The regulation should not be in the community plan. It should be in the land development code… You shouldn’t put…strict…design standards or any other regulation in there.” But Sherry described the types of provisions the Lutz Community Plan contains not as regulatory; but as more general, “Concepts, ideals, the feeling of ‘open’…everything we want is that feeling of open space and openness and…we want this to be inherent in this, without telling you ‘A…B…C…’ how to get there.” Sherry said this balance in the Lutz Community Plan “…has allowed a really good relationship with our community.”
Compared to the Lutz Community Plan, Sherry said she believes the Keystone-Odessa Community Plan and overlay design regulations contain provisions that are too restrictive and regulatory in nature. She explained:

Keystone’s had a lot of issues. They’re very restrictive. They’re going to have tin roofs. “You will have this kind of façade. You will have this kind of signage. You will have this kind of…thing.” And if somebody comes in and wants to tweak that, it creates a battle. And…I’ve not been battling in this community, with that community plan as much… I mean, I still had to go through some battles because there’s still ambiguities. No matter what …there’s no such thing as…perfect… Because they allow and listen to our interpretation of our plan, because they know it’s been consistent.

Ben explained what happens when community plans contain “regulatory” provisions:

…you can define it to the point where it must look like this. That is to say, it should have a “rural character” to it. Okay, what’s “rural character?” Well some people view it as looking like a wild west town, with swinging doors and…watering troughs, and they like that rural, rustic… The building at the northeast corner of Gunn Highway and Mobley Road… Anyhow, there’s a building there that…it has a front porch. It has a very rustic look to it. And they insisted that that land, that building, look just like that. And then they’ve had a hard time getting lessees to stay in there. There was an art store in there at one time, really neat arts and crafts stuff, but the owner goes “we can’t make a living.”
Ben argued that community based plans have been misused. He said, “[Community-based planning] can be effective, but it has been used as an antigrowth tool period. It can be effective to show maybe local desires, local needs, that sort of thing, what kind of flavor you want, but it’s become more of a…weapon to shut down growth.” Ben said what would make community planning more effective would be, “Something to be more advisory. Something to have a committee that’s more balanced. Something that would better provide representation by some of the larger landowners. And I don’t mean the larger landowners to dominate the committee; I mean just give them a chance to have a voice on there, but more than one.” He added, “The neighborhood planning process is not bad; it’s just the way it’s morphed into what we have today. And it’s essentially dominated by anti-growth people that don’t want to have anything else happen. They’ll deny that, but that’s a fact…”

Similarly, Sherry said community plans should be analyzed before they are adopted as policy. She suggested questions should be asked such as, “Would this even work in the real world? Is this cost prohibitive to ask people to do this on their land? And…have we created a vision that cannot economically be [implemented]?” Sherry believes the failure to analyze community plan provisions in this way has resulted in the adoption of some community plan provisions that are infeasible and may never be effectively implemented. She explained, “there’s a lot of that in the community plans now that will never happen because it just won’t…economics or whatever, politics, whatever. So
that’s a lot of what the development community has been claiming, rightly so, that they can’t be implemented. We’re creating these pie-in-the-sky [plans]...”

The Thonotosassa Community

Craig said he does not believe the Thonotosassa Community Plan has been effective because he has seen no changes in the Thonotosassa area since the plan was adopted. He recalled one issue citizens discussed in the planning workshops was beautification of the Thonotosassa downtown. Craig said:

...beautification of the area, the clean up, is...the first thing that needs to be addressed. So how do you require property owners to clean up their property...specifically the easements adjacent to the roads? If you drive down Main Street you’re going to find trees falling over...overgrown areas, debris...none of that’s being cleaned up. Not now today, or then.

Craig went on to list a number of issues he recalled being discussed at the Thonotosassa Main Street planning workshops, “I’m going down through a mental list of things that were discussed as I remember...the extension of the sidewalks didn’t happen. Streetlights didn’t happen. A general cleanup by the county didn’t happen...or if it has happened it certainly has not been enforced.”

Craig became frustrated and discontinued participating in the community planning process because he believed that there would be no mechanism to enforce the plan. He said he inquired how the citizens’ recommendations would be implemented and was told that their plan would not become a regulation; but would be only recommendations. Craig explained how he felt and why he finally decided to discontinue participating in the community planning process:
When I finally made my decision to step away, it was based on the fact that it became apparent to me that under no circumstances were there going to be any way that any of these requests could be managed or enforced. Pretty much period…nothing was going to be done in that respect. It was being discussed to make people feel good, and to have an involvement. And I think the history over the last seven to eight years bears out my statement. Nothing has been done.

Actually, the county has adopted special overlay zoning regulations to implement the Thonotosassa Main Street Plan. The overlay zoning sets out design standards for commercial buildings in the Thonotosassa Main Street planning area. But the design standards apply to new construction only, and little or no new construction has occurred since the county adopted the Thonotosassa Community Plan and Thonotosassa Main Street overlay zoning regulations. Nevertheless, Craig felt the community planning process was a waste of his time, and because he has seen no changes in Thonotosassa since the plan was adopted, he believes he was right.

In contrast, Ethel is pleased with the Thonotosassa Community Plan. Asked whether she believes the plan has been implemented effectively, she said “so far, so good…” In particular, she added, “We haven’t had to run around screaming for the county commission too often…” Nevertheless, Ethel also acknowledged the plan has not yet made a difference in the appearance of the Thonotosassa Main Street area. She said, “It hasn’t changed. It has stayed just the way it was.” But Ethel believes the economic downturn is to blame for the
lack of visible changes in Thonotosassa. She explained, “…we have had this
downturn in development…you know just as people started to think about buying
and selling…” When asked about the planned improvements to the
Thonotosassa Main Street area, Ethel acknowledged, “There were a few things
we wanted to improve it [Main Street]…as far as I know everything has been on
hold and it’s still staying…a very sleepy little community with a lot of potential.”

Despite the lack of visible improvements or changes in Thonotosassa,
Ethel is pleased that her community has a community-based plan. Ethel is also
supportive of the community-based planning in general because she feels the
process empowers citizens of the diverse communities within Hillsborough
County to steer policies that preserve the distinctive characteristics and lifestyles
of their communities. She explained, “…the whole point of having different
communities, is to have different lifestyle options. I think that’s the best thing
about the community plans is it gives you the ability to develop the options that
you want to live in.”

Conclusions

The data show that the research participants who consider themselves
aligned with the voluntary community organizations believed their community
plans had helped to preserve the character of their communities, and felt their
plans were effectively implemented as long as citizens remained vigilant
“watchdogs” over land entitlement processes. They also felt that the community
plans had helped to reduce the number of conflicts among homeowner-residents
and landowner-developers. This is consistent with Crawford, et al. (2008, p.
533), who found that empowering citizens in the planning and designing of their communities may result in citizen “buy-in,” and also Goldstein and Butler (2010, p. 239), who contend that plans formulated through collaborative processes enjoy broad implementation support.

But the data also show community plans have not eliminated certain long-running conflicts. On the contrary, the disagreements and even court litigation over land use entitlements and discrete development projects still occur from time to time. Moreover, the underlying conflicts that persist between homeowner-resident stakeholders and landowner-developer stakeholders show no sign of moving toward resolution. In addition, opposition to community plans in general appears to be increasing among property rights and small government proponents and Tea Party advocates.

Ben, James, and George complained that community plans stifle growth and are burdensome to the development community. They felt community plans should be only “advisory,” and that development should not be required to be consistent with community plans. However, Roger argued that if plans were only advisory they would have no legal effect and would simply be ignored. If that were the case, citizens might feel like Craig did, that the community planning process was a waste of their time.

Ben and James contend, and Sherry even admitted, that some community plans contain provisions that are too restrictive for a land use plan, or so regulatory in nature that they belonged in the land development code rather than in the land use plan. Nevertheless, Sherry and other research participants said...
their community plans have been instrumental in preserving their communities’ character, and community-based planning generally is widely supported by Hillsborough County citizens.

As Healey (2006) explained, policy making approaches that use consensus building techniques to shift the focus of argumentation away from discrete project permitting toward broad plan formulating should help resolve conflicts among diverse interests. This is because once a plan is in place, particularly where the plan was formulated by diverse interests working together in a collaborative process, subsequent decisions about particular projects are made within the confines of the policies set out in the plan. However, several of the research participants complained that with certain land development projects the county failed to apply the policies set out in the community plans, or simply ignored them. These failures led to conflicts between citizens, the county, and developers over land development entitlements and even architectural design details. Such conflicts have occurred in each of the study communities since adoption of the community plans; but the most strident conflicts have occurred in Keystone-Odessa, where active and savvy KCA members carefully scrutinize every land development proposal.

The community-based planning program was initiated in Hillsborough County as a means to preserve the unique attributes and character of the county’s many diverse communities. The program has had broad citizen support, and many citizens have enthusiastically volunteered hours and years of their time to participate in their community plan’s formulation and implementation.
While the process could use improvement, it has produced not only community plans, but also the expectation among citizen participants that their plans will be effectively implemented and that their work will have made a difference in their communities. This demonstrates the potential power of collaborative policy making to resolve conflicts and produce results with broad ranging benefits. Collaboration is a powerful tool; but collaborative processes must be very carefully designed and facilitated in order to be collaboratively rational and produce optimal results (Innes & Booher, 2010). Moreover, where a government or other institution decides to use a collaborative policy making process, it must also be prepared to adopt and effectively implement the resulting policies, which should reflect the consensus of stakeholders who engaged in the process.
Chapter Ten:
Preserving Community Character and Vision

The previous five chapters of this dissertation discussed the core concepts that emerged from the research data. This chapter will discuss the resulting explanatory model. From an analysis of the five core concepts, I identified the main concern of citizen participants in community-based planning and other local government land use processes as the desire to preserve the character of their communities. I refer to this explanatory model as the grounded theory of Preserving Place. A diagram of the model is shown below.

![Diagram of Preserving Place model](image)

Figure 10.1 Diagram of Preserving Place model
As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, a grounded theory emerges through a process in which the researcher identifies latent patterns of behavior that reveal the research participants’ main concern (Pergert, 2009). The aim of the grounded theory approach is to identify the research participants’ main concern and then explain conceptually the ongoing behaviors through which they seek to resolve that concern (Breckenridge, et al., 2012). The participants’ focus on resolving their main concern is what motivates and organizes their behavior in the substantive context (Glaser, 2002). Thus, in order to identify the participants’ main concern, the researcher must identify and analyze the motivations behind the participants’ behaviors.

Through an analysis of the data in this research, I identified the main concern of citizen participants in local government land use processes as a desire to preserve the character of their communities. This main concern was revealed upon an analysis of the motivations and actions of the research participants as they described them, and those of other citizen participants as reflected in transcripts of public hearings involving land use processes. The diagram illustrates the explanatory model of Preserving Place, and depicts how the desire to preserve community character becomes the driving force that motivates the actions of citizens who participate in planning and land use processes.

The actions the research participants took in an effort to resolve their main concern are illustrated in the Preserving Place model as the five core concepts
discussed in chapters 5 through 9 of this dissertation. These five core concepts also address the research questions set out for this project, which were:

1. How do citizens participate in local government planning and land use processes?
   1.1. How were citizens who participated in the community-based planning process engaged in land use policy decisions that affected their community before the community-based planning process was initiated in their community?
   1.2. How were citizens who participated in the community-based planning process engaged in land use policy decisions that affected their community after the community-based planning process was initiated in their community?
   1.3. How did citizens who participated in the community-based planning process perceive their experiences and the effectiveness of their participation in the collaborative planning process?

2. How do citizens who participated in the collaborative community-based planning process engage in local government land use decision processes subsequent to adoption of their community plan?

The first core concept, “Embracing the Community Character and Vision,” involves the process through which people develop a sense of place or an awareness of the personality or character of their community (Tuan, 1996). People develop this awareness by means of affective bonds that form as a result of the functional patterns of their daily lives in their communities, and through
which they come to know the character of their community as a field of care (Tuan, 1996). The concept of “Embracing the Community Character and Vision” includes a person’s awareness of place attributes and characteristics that draw him or her to want to live there.

Several of the research participants offered very specific descriptions of their communities, including what attributes they considered important to their community’s character. These descriptions included “rural” and “open space,” but went beyond these general designations to more specific attributes such as lakes, wetlands, wildlife, farm animals, frogs croaking, and stars visible in the sky at night. To these research participants, such attributes combine with history, people, activities, and day to day way of life to define their community’s character. To them, the land, lakes, wetlands, and wildlife represent elements of their community rather than market commodities or natural resources to be used and manipulated by humans.

When people notice and embrace the attributes and conditions of a place, which combine to create their community of memory, they hope for these attributes and conditions to be perpetuated. They come to understand these attributes and conditions as their community’s character, and they seek ways to preserve their community’s character. The core concept of “Being a Community Actor” describes the process of citizens seeking to preserve their community’s character by becoming community actors. One way people become community actors is by forming networks of like-minded individuals with shared interests and organizing into voluntary community associations. The KCA, LCA, GTCA, and
Lake Associations are examples of voluntary community associations organized by citizens who embraced places and sought to preserve their character.

Being community actors means that individuals who are members of voluntary community associations like KCA, LCA, GTCA, and the Lake Associations collectively identify with their shared interests strongly enough to give time and effort to community concerns over their regular day to day activities (Baum, 1997). Through their voluntary community associations, they form relationship bonds and share information, knowledge, and experiences. Through their bonding and sharing they create a collective resolve and reinforce their individual resolve to preserve the character of the place they all know and embrace.

The voluntary community organization may engage in many different activities, such as community cleanups, festivals, and “family fun days,” but the consistent aim of these activities is to strengthen community and preserve community character through relationship building and knowledge sharing. In this way, the voluntary community organization members transform from isolated individuals with shared interests into public citizens with a common purpose (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Moreover, the voluntary community organization both empowers its members and becomes itself empowered as it transforms from being simply an organization of community members into an alliance of public citizens with a common purpose (Florin & Wandersman, 1990).

The Preserving Place model also includes the core concepts of Getting Involved in Land Use Processes, Participating in Land Use Processes, and
Implementing the Community Plan. The concept of Getting Involved in Land Use Processes describes the pivotal point at which once-isolated individuals, who have been transformed into public citizens, begin to take action towards preserving the places they consider their communities (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). When confronted with changes in their communities that they deem problematic, people who have taken the steps described in the first two core concepts stay put and try to do something to improve their communities rather than accept the unwanted changes or move away (Orbell & Uno, 1972).

The research data show citizens who embrace the vision and character of their communities and become community actors often are prompted to get involved in land use processes because of (1) a proposed land use change or development project that impacts them directly; (2) adverse impacts of growth and development they perceive as threatening their community character; and (3) distrust of government officials and land developers. Research participants in the three study communities described particular land development projects that prompted them to take action.

At first some of the research participants worked on their own to address challenges and problems in their communities; but eventually they turned to their voluntary community organization for help. Other research participants said they were already members of a voluntary community organization or neighborhood association, and described how they learned about community planning and land development entitlement processes through the organization, and then coordinated their efforts to take collective action. Either way, the voluntary
community associations were instrumental in fostering the competence and confidence of the research participants to participate in complex processes with which they were not familiar.

The concept of Participating in Land use Processes refers to how the research participants participated in the planning and land development entitlement processes that affected their communities. It is about the ways public citizens seize their power and climb to higher rungs on the participation ladder ( Arnstein, 1969 ). The research data show that citizens in the study communities managed to redistribute power to such an extent that they may have succeeded in overturning the ladder completely and creating new power imbalances. Their success, though hard fought and won, may be a pyrrhic victory if it proves only to have exacerbated underlying and long running conflicts among homeowner-resident stakeholders and landowner-developer stakeholders. Their success in influencing policy recommendations that were eventually adopted into the community plans has already resulted in criticisms of the community plans and push-back by development industry representatives and property rights proponents.

The concept of Implementing the Community Plan refers to how effective the research participants believe their community plans have been in preserving their community’s character, and how they have participated in land use processes subsequent to their community plan’s adoption. The data show that citizens aligned with the voluntary community organizations believe their community plans are working to preserve their community’s character. But they
believe their plans are effective only if they constantly scrutinize each land use entitlement and development project proposal, and continue to actively participate in land use processes. Some research participants complained the community plans stifle growth and economic development, and are burdensome to landowners and developers. Community plan opponents regularly echo these complaints in public hearings. Thus, the effectiveness of the community plans is precarious and survival of the program is in jeopardy. The preservation of each community’s character depends on the continued engagement of the community actors who have embraced the vision.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The five core concepts that emerged from the research data describe the research participants’ actions to resolve their main concern. An analysis of the five core concepts supports the conclusion that the main concern of citizen participants in land use processes is to preserve their community’s character. The Preserving Place model explains the main concern of citizens who participate in land use processes where those citizens embrace certain attributes and characteristics that they understand to be their community’s character, which they seek to preserve.

However, it is acknowledged that the research participants are not representative of their entire community. It is also acknowledged that some citizens who participate in planning and land use processes do so for concerns other than preserving the character of their communities. Ben, James, and Craig are homeowners and residents of their communities, but they did not talk about
attributes of their communities, or describe a desire to preserve their community’s character, and they were motivated to participate in the community-based planning program for reasons very different from most of the other research participants.

In particular, Ben and James participated in the community-based planning process because of their professional interests and business connections. Ben also participated because he was personally invited to do so in order to lend expertise and to represent the interests of building industry in the process. Craig at first participated in the community planning process because of the public invitation and his professional interests; but he was not motivated to see the planning effort to completion. Elliott participated in the original Lutz community planning process out of an interest in improving transportation. However, Elliott was not motivated to participate in any subsequent land development entitlement processes or the Lutz community plan review workshops. Ben, James, and Craig have been involved in many past land development entitlement processes; however, their role in these processes has been to represent landowners and developers, and to foster growth and development rather than to preserve the vision or character of the affected community.

I contend that what accounts for the differences in the motivations of Ben, James, Craig, and Elliott and the other research participants is that these four did not take the first step, which is the first core concept to emerge from the data in this research, that of Embracing the Community Character and Vision. Thus, the
explanatory model of Preserving Place applies only to those citizen participants who have a sense of place, which they have gained through affective bonds that developed over time through the functional patterns of their day to day lives in their communities (Tuan, 1996). These citizens have in turn embraced attributes of their community, have come to understand these as their community’s character, and in this way created a community of memory that they wish to perpetuate in planning for their community’s future, their community of hope (Baum, 1997). Only when individuals take this initial step will they take the next step in which they form voluntary community organizations or networks of likeminded individuals with shared interests, with a shared common goal of preserving their community character. Through their voluntary community associations they become community actors and are transformed into public citizens. Once isolated individuals become community actors and transform into public citizens, they get involved in planning and land use processes that affect their communities, and take collective action to preserve the community character they have embraced.

Application to Collaborative Planning Practice

Collaborative planning practice has not been driven by or built on theory; but rather has “emerged from the work of practitioners and citizens” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 15). However, theory is essential to practice in several ways. First, theory informs and improves practice by explaining why a particular practice works or does not work. Theory also provides a lens through which to identify and examine underlying assumptions, and a framework through which to
evaluate practice. Finally, theory provides insight, which leads to the generation of new ideas and direction (Innes & Booher, 2010). Innes and Booher (2010, p. 15) assert that theorizing about collaboration can advance social theory by helping “practitioners and academics understand why collaboration is proliferating at this moment in history, what its societal consequences are, whether it is just, how it addresses power, and whether or how it is changing our institutions.”

The explanatory model of Preserving Place can inform collaborative planning practice by explaining how and why some citizens become very active in land use processes. By understanding the main concerns of citizen participants, facilitators in collaborative processes will be better equipped to help stakeholders identify their mutual interests. Preserving Place can also inform practice by revealing motivations like place attachment and the strong sense of community that are likely to be at work behind collective actions taken by citizens who are otherwise considered NIMBYs (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Furthermore, the explanatory model of Preserving Place can help shed light on underlying assumptions that lead to conflict among stakeholders in community-based planning processes, and among citizens, landowners, and developers in land development entitlement processes. It can shed light on the value judgments and communication failures behind such pejorative labels as “activist,” “anti-growth,” “NIMBY,” and “greedy developer.” Identifying and explaining underlying assumptions and values can inform the efforts of facilitators in guiding diverse stakeholders to identify shared interests, engage in authentic
dialogue, and work through conflicts in collaborative policy making processes. In this way, the Preserving Place model can inform practice and promote the conditions for collaborative rationality.

**Preserving Place and Collaborative Rationality.** Innes and Booher’s (2010) theory of Collaborative Rationality explores what collaborative policy making processes can accomplish, and under what conditions. Their DIAD model illustrates the necessary conditions for collaborative rationality to result in significant policy outputs and system adaptations. Those necessary conditions are: (1) “full diversity of interests among the participants;” (2) “interdependence of the participants…”; and 3) engagement of all participants in face to face authentic dialogue that meets Habermas’ basic speech conditions. (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 35-36).

**Diversity of interests.** The condition of diversity of interests among participants in a collaborative process means that not only persons who are considered to be powerful will be present; but also persons who will be affected by the process outcome or who have information that is necessary in order to produce a socially significant outcome and promote system adaptations (Innes & Booher, 2010). Innes and Booher (2010) note that it is not uncommon for powerful persons to try to exclude persons with diverse interests but less power. However, when interests are excluded, the quality of the process outcome suffers because it is “likely to be infeasible, uninformed, or unjust” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36).
The data collected for this research show that there were struggles in each of the study communities over who should be allowed to participate as a stakeholder. The stakeholder question centered on whether landowners who did not live in the community, developers, and land use lawyers should be considered stakeholders for the purpose of participating in planning for the future growth and development of the community. Behind these struggles were actual or perceived power imbalances. Research participants who were concerned with preserving community character feared the landowners, developers, and land use attorneys had more power to affect the policy outcome, more persuasion with local government officials, and would promote land use policies detrimental to the community’s character. However, research participants who were not concerned with preserving community character believed the “activists” had an anti-growth agenda and more power to affect policy outcome because of their numbers and tactics.

Some of the research participants criticized community plan provisions they believed were infeasible or simply poor planning policy. Efforts by some stakeholders to exclude others from participating in the community-based planning process resulted in less than optimal policy outputs because the power imbalances behind the stakeholder struggle were not addressed. The planning workshops are public meetings, thus any member of the public may attend and participate. However, this led to a “pack the house” strategy at workshops, open house meetings, and public hearings where votes were to take place. For a process to approach collaborative rationality, it must be designed to ensure that a
diversity of interests are consistently represented and participate throughout. One way to ensure this condition exists would be to appoint a core steering committee representing the full diversity of interests. The steering committee would be responsible for setting the agenda and making the final policy recommendations; but the general public could still attend the workshops and provide input.

**Interdependence of interests.** The condition of interdependence of interests means that stakeholders must understand their diverse interests are to a large extent dependent on each other in a reciprocal way (Innes & Booher, 2010). Only by understanding that each has something the other needs will the stakeholders be able to move past positioning and arguing to negotiating, consensus building, and deliberating. The data collected for this research show that old power imbalances and underlying conflicts were at work and not addressed during the community planning process, and new power imbalances were created that were not addressed, and the result was a failure of the stakeholders to recognize the interdependent and reciprocal nature of their interests. Unable to recognize their interdependence, the stakeholders were also unable to see that they could not achieve their objectives independently. The diverse interests remained in opposing postures, each trying to accomplish independent objectives. Because of this failure, the process was not collaboratively rational, and the resulting policy recommendations were not optimal.
**Authentic dialogue.** The condition of authentic dialogue requires that participants in a collaborative process engage in deliberations that approach Habermas’ ideal speech conditions, having equal access to information, equal opportunity to speak and be heard, and equal right to challenge assumptions and assertions (Innes & Booher, 2010). By engaging in authentic dialogue in this way the participants can be reasonably assured that each other’s claims are legitimate, accurate, comprehensible, sincere, and inclusive of all major interests and knowledge (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36). As with the other two DIAD conditions, the research data reveal failures in the community-based planning process that undermined trust and led to communication distortions. Although stakeholders were provided with an abundance of data and technical information to assist their planning efforts, the opposing factions maintained fixed adversarial positions and used the information provided to support their own interests and goals. This situation could have been diffused by skilled application of conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation techniques to address power imbalances and communication distortions and promote authentic dialogue.

**Conclusion**

The model of Preserving Place explains how and why citizens participate in collaborative planning and land development entitlement processes. Preserving Place explains how and why isolated individuals transform into public citizens, and what actions they take as public citizens to preserve the place they understand as their community. The essential conditions for citizens to be motivated to get involved in local land use processes are first to embrace their
community character and vision, and second to become community actors within an effective network community through which to focus and organize their efforts. If these two conditions are not present, citizens will remain isolated individuals and will not participate consistently and effectively in land use processes even if such processes are designed to afford citizen participation opportunities. The Preserving Place model informs practice by explaining the motivations of citizen participants in land use processes, and the assumptions and value judgments that drive underlying conflicts among diverse stakeholders.
References Cited


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### Appendix A

Table A.1 List of Persons Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Relationship and community role</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>Race*</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dylan</td>
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<td>50-55</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10/6/11</td>
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<td>Janis</td>
<td>Homeowner, resident Dylan’s partner</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10/6/11</td>
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<td>Betty</td>
<td>Homeowner, resident</td>
<td>80-85</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10/7/11</td>
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<td>Luke</td>
<td>Homeowner, resident, Christine’s husband</td>
<td>75-80</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10/14/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
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<td>70-75</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10/14/11</td>
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<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Homeowner, resident</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11/11/11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>12/16/2011</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ginger</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Participant</td>
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<td>Race*</td>
<td>Interview date</td>
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<td>James</td>
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<th>Race*</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
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*The persons interviewed were not asked directly about age and race; thus the descriptors related to age and race listed in this table are based on the interviewer’s observations.*
Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter
July 7, 2011

Pamela Haley
Geography

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00003595
Title: Citizen Participation Matters: Formulating and Implementing Community-Based Plans in Hillsborough County, Florida

Dear Pamela Haley,

On 7/6/2011 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 7-6-12.

Approved Items:
Protocol Document(s)

[Attachment: Haley Dissertation Proposal]

Consent/Assent Documents:

Name: Haley informed consent form.pdf
Modified: 7/7/2011 8:36 AM
Version: 0.01

Please use only the watermarked/stamped consent forms found under the “Attachment Tab” in the recruitment of participants.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review
category.

(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note, the informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on the form. Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-3638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, Ph.D.
Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Co: Various Menzel, CCRP
USF IRB Professional Staff
Appendix C
Permissions
Dear Pamela

Re:  Planning with Complexity: An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy
Material requested:  Fig 2.1 DIAD network dynamics

Thank you for your email below.  Permission is granted for use of the above material in your forthcoming dissertation, 'Preserving Place: A Grounded Theory of Citizen Participation in Land Use Processes', subject to the following conditions:

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Yours sincerely

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Pamela Jo Hatley
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Dear Ms. Hatley:

We are in receipt of your request to reproduce Figure 2, Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation from the article

"A Ladder of Citizen Participation", Sherry R. Arnstein, 1969,
Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Volume 35, Issue 4,
pp. 216-224.

to be included as part of your doctoral thesis entitled Preserving Place: A Grounded Theory of Citizen Participation in Land Use Processes.

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About the Author

Pamela Jo Hatley is an attorney with a solo practice in Tampa, Florida. Her practice focus is on real estate, land use, environmental, and community association law.