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THE TEA PARTY VERSUS PLANNING: A STUDY OF TEA PARTY ACTIVISM AND ITS
IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban
and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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August 1, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work would have never come to fruition without the support of my professors, colleagues, friends, and family. To everyone who supported me in this endeavor, I offer my sincerest thanks and appreciation. I also hold the utmost gratitude toward my advisors who offered their time, patience, and expertise in regards to my work, including all my professors at the Virginia Commonwealth University, but especially Dr. Avrum J. Shriar, Dr. Alexandra Reckendorf, and Aubrey Fountain III, Esq.

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ABSTRACT

THE TEA PARTY VERSUS PLANNING: A STUDY OF TEA PARTY ACTIVISM AND ITS IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING

By Spencer A. Norman, Master of Urban & Regional Planning

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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017

Major Director: Dr. Avrum J. Shriar
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The Tea Party movement's effect on local and regional planning in Virginia has received little study. This work identifies how conservative political activism has impacted planning in the Commonwealth and how planners have responded. The study relies on a qualitative approach involving 22 semi-structured interviews with activists, planners, and citizens, as well as textual analyses of planning documents, local and regional news reports, and Tea Party social media. The resultant findings show that Tea Party activism is rooted in deep seated ideals about private property rights and individualism. It also reveals that planning processes that increased the amount of public input had the effect of mitigating the impact of activism. The study concludes by suggesting that strategies based in the communicative style of planning offer an effective way to overcome such opposition while enhancing the many benefits of having significant citizen input in the planning process.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Since the summer of 2009, the Tea Party has commanded a powerful influence on American politics. At its outset, the movement represented a culmination of grievances predominantly held by white, middle class conservative voters toward the national government. While focused on the economic and political agenda of President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party, the Tea Party also represented a continuation of many past conservative populist movements (Berlet, 2011). Like these past movements, the Tea Party and similar groups directed attention toward governments of all types, including those at the state and local levels. In this arena, Tea Party activists have been successful at influencing state legislation and government action (Frick, 2013). Blending grassroots activism and protest, Tea Party groups have continued the work of recent conservative causes such as the property rights movement, while also bringing their own novelties to public debate as well.

One sphere of local government that has received a great amount of Tea Party attention is planning. In dealing with a complex set of issues, from land use, economic development, environmental protection, to public welfare, sustainability and fighting inequality, local government planning can easily create situations of immense political hazard and spark much public debate and criticism. The role of the public in planning processes can represent a double-edged sword for many local governments. Sometimes, public input functions as the primary guide for planning action. Such an approach is commonly known as the communicative style of planning. Other times, planners have sought participation merely to support decisions that were decided long before they are brought to public attention. This approach is characteristic of a “rational approach”, involving a more ‘top-down’, bureaucratically driven process (Brooks, 2002). Input from the public can also be an unwanted interjection into the planning process.

Public participation of this third type has derailed entire projects in the past, including ones perceived favorably by a majority of the general public. Small, energetic groups of individuals have rallied enough citizen support to stop plan implementation in its tracks (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000; Jacobs, 2010; Frick, 2013). In recent years, the Tea Party has exhibited this third kind of participation through its opposition to local government planning.

New trends within the planning profession itself can also incite public backlash. Many local planning departments are currently implementing programs involving sustainability, clean energy, and smart growth (Dierwechter, 2008; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). These trends have allowed planners to expand their work into new, diverse policy arenas, winning allies and enemies along the way. As modern planning efforts increasingly focus on a wider range of issues, the number of targets for activists to attack has increased accordingly. Tea Party activists have opposed the full spectrum of planning activities.

Current research shows that Tea Party involvement in planning efforts is deemed by planner and activist alike as divisive and useless. On the one hand, planners regularly find Tea Party participation needlessly hindering, harmful of other legitimate sources of public input, and based in fantastical ideas gathered from far-right, conspiracy-laden sources of media. A cursory glance at the existent literature does not reveal instances of where a planner felt Tea Parties significantly assisted in a constructive, participatory planning process (Frick, 2013). Simultaneously, in interviews with researchers, Tea Party members claimed planners were overly dismissive of their views and did not care about gaining meaningful public input. According to recent research, both claims hold weight to an extent (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). The truth likely resides somewhere in the middle.

The effects of Tea Party involvement can vary according to a local planning department's method of public participation. The methods for participation mirror the larger decision-making processes used by planners which theory helps explain (Brooks, 2002). A rational model of planning relies less upon broad public involvement. Planners operating under this model incorporate public input into decisions only when it is deemed useful or relevant (Hoch, 1996). However, the communicative theory favors an approach that seeks to correct this lack of special regard for public input within a rational model. Planners operating by a communicative approach favor gathering public input for its own sake. The process of collecting and analyzing input, and promoting discussion among various members of the public is done to reach better planning outcomes (Innes and Booher, 2003). Yet modern planners rarely adhere exclusively to the principles of any single theory, instead relying on a blend of approaches (Allmendinger, 2002; Brooks, 2002). Planning practice is therefore influenced by a hodgepodge of planning theory (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000; Brooks, 2002). Understanding how planners make use of public input is important to identifying the extent and nature of the impact Tea Party groups have on planning.

Virginia has seen a substantial level of Tea Party activity since 2010. Following trends nationally, Tea Partiers have increasingly turned their attention toward the policies and actions of local Virginia governments. In Chesterfield County, an effort to update the comprehensive plan met staunch Tea Party resistance. Activists flooded public hearings and vehemently objected to nearly every aspect of the proposed plan. This first attempt to draft an updated version failed (Reid, 2012). In the Middle Peninsula, Tea Party affiliated activists painted regional planning as an unaccountable, malevolent actor that deprived them of their private property rights (Fears, 2011). Similar scenes occurred in localities throughout the Commonwealth. Much of this

activism was linked to concern over the United Nations Agenda - 21, a non-binding resolution that gives localities general ideas regarding sustainable development. Tea Party members instead saw it as an internationally led conspiracy aimed at outlawing cars, taking away rights to private property, and forcing denser, more urban forms of development unto fearful suburbanites (Fears, 2011; Hamilton, 2011). It is important to note that the Tea Party is not the first to claim such things, as similar fears propelled past conservative movements to take opposition to local government actions (Jacobs, 2010). Today, the Tea Party draws on the same ideals that motivated past movements in its opposition to Agenda-21, sustainability, and the entire breadth of activity performed by local government planning.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Very little academic research has addressed the Tea Party's impact on local government planning. Even at the national or regional level, only a few efforts have been made to understand the motivations and effects of Tea Party involvement (Frick, 2013; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Frick (2013) detailed the role of Tea Party input on regional planning in case studies of efforts in California and Georgia. A later study described the demographic makeup of states that adopted anti-Agenda 21 language in their state legislatures (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). The vast majority of academic efforts have looked at the movement's overall demographic makeup, or its impact on national politics and the Republican Party (Katel, 2010; Thompson, 2012). Therefore, many aspects of the Tea Party movement have not been addressed through academic research.

In Virginia, this dearth of academic attention is even more pronounced. Most available information consists of newspaper accounts of the Tea Party's actions in relation to specific planning efforts (Bacon, 2011; Fears, 2011; Springston 2012). Though descriptive and highly

informative, these accounts offer little understanding of how and why Tea Party members focused their attention toward the planning activities of local government. A more detailed study is needed to properly form an understanding of the impetus and strategies employed by Virginia's Tea Party groups.

To fully form this understanding, knowing how planners respond to Tea Party involvement is essential. Their methods to do so may provoke or prevent an even more energetic tea party response. More constructive efforts to include and create dialogue among conflicting actors have stymied similar conservative movements in the recent past (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Forester, 2012). Frick's (2013) analysis highlights the combative nature of Tea Party and planner interactions. Her case studies and research also show that Tea Party claims about planning's methods for public participation are sometimes valid in that they are ineffective or even disingenuous (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Though several studies have looked at how planners and related organizations conduct public participation in Virginia, no studies address how participatory methods have related to Tea Party activism (Forester, 2012; Dabney, 2013).

In the context of Virginia, there are two large gaps in the current literature on the Tea Party movement. First, no academic research has addressed the root causes of and methods used by the Tea Party to affect planning outcomes in the state. Second, there is little comprehensive knowledge of how planners have dealt with Tea Party input. A better understanding of these two issues can shed light on possible methods planners can use to gain more constructive, informative, and effective public input.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central questions this study seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What are the primary motivations urging Tea Party members to engage in local planning processes?
2. What methods are used by Tea Party members to influence the planning process?
3. How have planners responded to Tea Party activism?
4. How can local governments effectively handle opposition while providing for inclusive, collaborative, and successful planning efforts?

METHODOLOGY

This study is comprised of eight case studies focused on Virginia localities, regional planning districts, and state legislation supported by Tea Party activists that has impacted planning. The cases were chosen based primarily upon suggestions by practicing planners, newspaper reporters, and political activists. One case study also looks at the role played by activists in pushing legislation at the state level that impacted local planning. The study relies on a qualitative research design that uses textual analyses and semi-structured interviews as its primary research methods. This methodological approach draws inspiration from Karen Trapenberg Frick's case studies of the Tea Party's influence on regional planning efforts in Atlanta and San Francisco (Frick, 2013). These case studies relied on a similar qualitative design that used interviews and document review. Through these techniques, Frick's research identified several overarching themes that gave practitioners better knowledge of how the Tea Party had impacted their efforts (Frick, 2013). This study provides a similar result at the level of local planning in Virginia.

Textual analysis of planning documents, Tea Party websites and social media, and pertinent news sources are important components of this study. Textual analysis provides many benefits, including understanding how individuals and groups frame positions in an overarching story. This is especially applicable to a study of the Tea Party, which has espoused narratives similar to past conservative movements while also pushing their own, unique view of American history (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). A narrative analysis of textual sources helps make clear the overarching themes of Tea Party activism. Ideas or themes identified in multiple cases are then synthesized into generalized forms, thereby highlighting its major findings (Bernard, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews also provide a nuanced level of understanding. Interviews are a versatile technique that can provide a depth of information, eliciting both details and larger thematic knowledge (Bernard, 2011). Also, the data attained from textual sources were discussed in interviews with greater detail (Bernard, 2011). In total, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with planners, activists, attorneys, government officials, newspaper reporters, and one local legislator. The interviews were based on a general outline (See Appendix). Though guided in subject matter, the outline still allowed interviewees the freedom to bring up any topic they felt was relevant. When permitted to deliberate freely, interviewees discussed issues previously unaddressed. This helped to evince knowledge that was nuanced and highly informative (Bernard, 2011). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also ensured their usefulness in discussing sensitive issues (Bernard, 2011). The immensely political and emotional nature of interactions between planners, legislators, citizens, and Tea Partiers ensured the usefulness of this approach.

Together, textual analysis and semi-structured interviews provide a foundation of information upon which a series of case studies was crafted. Defined as a detailed examination of a particular class, entity, or phenomenon, the case study strengthens the validity of research in several ways (Flyvberg, 2002; Stake, 2006).

First, case studies produce a kind of knowledge that is concrete, intimate, and context-dependent. Research has shown that in any given field, this kind of knowledge is essential during the learning process for one to rise from novice to expert. This is because an expert operates on the basis of intimate knowledge gained from thousands of small, concrete cases, or in other words, experience. Case studies allow readers to gain a modicum of experience too by allowing them to study and reflect upon the actions, occurrences, and events discussed in the study. They also can see things from the perspective of participants, an ideal often lauded but rarely seen in social science research (Flyvberg, 2002). This study hopes to achieve a similar result. Semi-structured interviews with actual participants, supplemented by firsthand accounts of events found in local media, provide an effective way to gain this kind of knowledge.

Second, case studies are useful generalizing about overarching trends or theories. The presence of similar variables and results across a range of comparable cases can lead to a level of generalizability typically seen in more quantitative studies (Flyvberg, 2002; Stake, 2006). This can be also termed “triangulation.” The appearance of a similar variable in at least three different cases is generally considered to be evidence that an idea or theme is not unique, but is an integral part of a phenomenon (Stake, 2006). This research identifies several themes among cases about why and how activists opposed planning and how planners responded. This was required in order to posit meaningful answers to the research questions posed.

Finally, a case study can be presented as a story. As such, it can have a distinct beginning, middle, and end. The study can start with the presentation of a problem, include a middle that discusses all the issues and who is involved, and conclude with an ending that resolves the conflict, or at least explains it, as is appropriate for a piece of social science research. Thus, the case study is an especially unique research approach in that it feeds the human predisposition toward being a “story-telling animal” (Flyvberg, 2002). And as a piece of storytelling, a case study may impart lessons far greater than “factual findings.” Instead, the study may reveal the full complexity and nuances of human life. As explained by Flyvberg (2002):

“Case studies written like this can neither be briefly represented nor summarized in a few main results. The case study is itself the result. It is a ‘virtual reality,’ so to speak. For the reader willing to enter this reality and explore it inside and out, the payback is meant to be a sensitivity to the issues at hand that cannot be obtained from theory.”

The following case studies of Tea Party activism are presented as narrative stories. They built upon the knowledge gained from firsthand accounts and semi-structured interviews, thereby hopefully letting readers enter a ‘virtual reality’ that allows them to see the issues from the perspective of participants. There they will see what caused the Tea Party to oppose the work of local governments and what their tactics to do so were, how planners and legislators reacted, and what steps were taken to mitigate opposition. By the end, hopefully readers will possess a better understanding of how to effectively react to such activism. And of course, this also answers the research questions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study hopes to provide constructive steps that planners may take to either incorporate Tea Party input more usefully, or else mitigate its more negative impacts. Planning ideally aims to serve the public interest (Brooks, 2002). Though this term is ambiguous, maintaining a truthful line of communication with the general public is a necessary component of truly representative democracy (Brooks, 2002). Groups that co-opt the public interest or seek to forcefully implement an agenda not shared by a majority of voters, threatens these ideals and disables the power of government (Innes and Booher, 2003).

Understanding the motivations underlying Tea Party efforts and how planners have reacted will be useful in prescribing corrective models aimed at fostering more constructive participation. A large body of literature exists describing different actions planners may take to manage participation on particularly contentious issues (Forester, 1987; Forester, 2012). However, understanding the specific problems existing in Virginia is necessary in order to prescribe the best practices to fix them.

Broadly, this study hopes to help bridge the divide that exists between the public and government today. Today, many in the general public see government overall and those in public service as distrustful, ignorant, or elitist. Fear and anger have grown in people from all political inclinations, which has affected their dealings with government at all levels (Berlet, 2011). But planning holds a special place in communities, as it is one of the most active parts of local government that literally can change the face of neighborhoods. A planning process more in tune with the desires of the public can help repair the damaged relationship between citizens and their representative institutions.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PLANNING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Americans demand that their voices will be heard in the public policymaking process now more than ever. Planners have responded by giving citizens a much more direct role in planning efforts. Across the United States today, many modern planners employ a wide range of tools to gather input from citizens, including community charrettes, public forums, social media and interactive online systems (Pateman, 2012). These methods are the result of changes in the planning profession that allow for a much more inclusive, collaborative approach, unlike the centralized, technocratic model of the past. Yet despite these new advancements, vestiges of the old ways persist in many of today's planning efforts. This combination of different approaches makes it difficult to comprehensively understand how public participation influences planning practice today (Brooks, 2002; Whittemore, 2012). A brief review of the academic literature of on this topic is useful in navigating this complexity.

The main strands of planning theory reflect how past and modern planners have approached their work. It highlights the key issues in planning practice, including both its processes and intentions (Hutchinson, 2010). Theory also displays different ways modern planning uses public participation (Hutchinson, 2010). Yet theory, like the practice of planning itself, takes many forms and is difficult to conceptualize. A brief review of the main theories of planning helps navigate this complexity while also illuminating how planners have dealt with public participation throughout the profession's history.

THE RATIONAL MODEL

The rational model has been the primary guide and descriptor of modern planning. Its influence has led to both reaction and emulation by subsequent theories (Allmendinger, 2002).

Though many versions of rationalism exist, each maintains a belief that a scientifically driven, technical, and apolitical approach can deliver an objectively valid, or ‘rational’, outcome (Faludi, 1973, Brooks, 2002; Allmendinger, 2002; Whitemore, 2012).

Until the 1960s, rational planning was the dominant theory guiding practice. It remains a heavy influence upon the profession today. Faludi (1973) provided one of the clearest definitions of rational planning. Under his definition, Planners operated by collecting objective truths from technical processes, such as cost-benefit analyses, zero-base budgeting, and computer modeling (Faludi, 1973; Brooks, 2002). These measures would ideally identify every possible alternative for action. The purely rational approach also eschewed any role for politics or for widespread public participation. The result of such a process would provide a comprehensive, value-less solution (Klosterman, 2013). The task of planning was left to the experts; the planners.

Subsequent theories critiqued rational planning and gained support in practice and academia. However, these first critiques still did not consider public involvement. Lindblom (1959), in his seminal article on incrementalism, rejected rational planning’s supposed ability to comprehensively identify every alternative action. Incremental steps based on what was most pragmatic were deemed the best choice (Lindblom, 1965). Yet centralized decision-makers were still the ones who would guide policy without any public involvement (Lindblom, 1965). Etzioni’s (1967) combination of rationalism and incrementalism followed this line of thought. Though Etzioni’s ‘mixed-scanning’ approach critiqued rational and incremental planning’s lack of special consideration for public participation, his approach provided little procedural knowledge of how to redress this issue. Etzioni (1967) felt that ‘social actors’ should only be given evaluative considerations, not any decision-making power. Like incrementalism, it provides nothing about who those those ‘social actors’ were, nor of what values should guide the

process (Brooks, 2002). Thus, public participation remained largely outside the thoughts of planning theorists and practitioners, despite making theoretical inroads.

Pragmatic rationality built off these theories, becoming a functioning model for many practicing planners (Verma, 1996). Pragmatism, a philosophical perspective reflecting the complexities of a 'postmodern' world, has been applied to several areas of social theory. Overall, such theories seek to help decision-makers comprehend a world of increasing complexity (Healey, 2009). Taking cues from this pragmatist philosophy, theorists like Hoch (1996) and Verma (1996) described a planning process existing squarely within the political system.

Hoch (1987, 1996, 2007, 2013) provided a substantial amount of literature describing the influence of pragmatism on planning theory and practice. Pragmatic rational planning uses values to guide action and rejects the belief of pure rationalism that knowledge can be comprehensively attained (Hoch, 1987). Pre-determined objectives are reached through a variety of means, not just technical analysis conducted by 'expert' planners (Throgmorton, 2013). Planners make sense of the flood of information facing them and it's accompanying contradictions by relying on practical experience (Healey, 2009; Hoch and Wang, 2013). An inherent flexibility thus exists in both the theory of pragmatic rationality and actual practice that uses it as a guide (Verma, 1996; Hoch, 1996). The modern practice of planning in the United States today can be described as being heavily influenced by the pragmatic rational model (Verma, 1996; Allmendinger, 2002; Hoch and Wang, 2013).

A consistent theme in the literature on pragmatic rationality is its recognition of public participation (Healey, 2009; Hoch, 2007). Verma (1996) stated pragmatic rationality does not preclude non-technical forms of knowledge. Instead, knowledge can be gained from a variety of sources, including the wider public (Verma, 1996). However, pragmatic rationality does not

consider participation essential. Planners remain the final decision-makers in the process, and can disregard the public's input if they wish.

Hoch and Wang's (2013) comparative analysis of rational planning in Shanghai and Chicago showed how a purely rational model and a more pragmatic one each incorporates public participation. In Shanghai, planners espoused a much more top-down, bureaucratically led decision making model, leading to plans aimed at benefitting the city's economic position on a global scale. Professional knowledge and formal authority were balanced with best practices attained from similar projects elsewhere. Yet Chinese planners were aware of public interests. In some instances, they acted upon them, such as when planners worked to preserve several residential communities and historic districts. However, little meaningful effort was paid toward recognizing public input, as it was government officials who decided that some neighborhoods should be retained, not the communities themselves (Hoch and Wang, 2013).

In Chicago, planners used a more pragmatic approach that gave the public more of a role. However, the result was largely the same as in Shanghai. Political decisions regarding development, influenced by city leaders, ward alderman, and business elites, often thwarted the impact of planners working with the public. Planners paid close attention to community input while performing the technical work in crafting plans that addressed the public's concerns. However, political interests largely thwarted their efforts and shaped final outcomes to a much greater extent (Hoch and Wang, 2013).

The lack of the public's ability to influence outcomes in both Shanghai and Chicago evince the problems of a pragmatic rational approach to participation. In Chicago, planners acted as a conduit for the public interest in the decision-making process (Hoch and Wang, 2013). However, political realities constrained the ability of planners and the public to leave a

meaningful impact. In Shanghai, planners acted primarily as agents for business and political elites (Hoch and Wang, 2013). Many theorists state that this is common under planning with a more rational bent (Verma, 1996; Healey, 2009, Hoch, 2007; Hoch and Wang, 2013). Rather than a bottom-up, community led planning effort, where individual citizens create and drive the process, pragmatic rational planners act as collectors of public knowledge. They then combine this data with the technical data derived by a more 'rational' approach (Hoch, 2007). Depending upon circumstances, planners operating under a mindset of pragmatic rationalism may find public involvement to be vital or simply not needed (Hoch, 1996).

The literature on pragmatic rationalism also provides no tangible, actionable steps for incorporating public input (Innes and Booher, 2003; Hoch and Wang, 2013). This is similar to a long line of criticism about rational style of planning. Planners operating with a strictly rational approach have been cited as being less responsive to citizen input (Brooks, 2002; Hoch, 2007; Healey, 2009). Even the more realistic, flexible approach of pragmatic rationalism has been called into question for being unreflective of the public interest and for giving planners an undue level of control (Allmendinger, 2002). Sandercock (1998) neatly sums up the critiques of this current form of rationalistic planning and its treatment of public participation, mirroring Hoch and Wang's criticisms of Shanghai's planners. She states that current planning is concerned with making political decisions. Planners then use the scientific stance of rationalism to justify these decisions. And while planners supposedly work with the public interest in mind, planners themselves get to define this public interest, who gets to participate, and to what extent the public has a genuine role in the process (Sandercock, 1998).

For many, rationalistic planning has never worked to the ideal. Critics point to multiple reasons. Political decision-makers disregard objective analysis and pursue politically expedient

outcomes instead. Planners work for rational, objective outcomes, but are often forced into defending politically expedient decisions with technical data. And the need for vigorous, widespread public participation is largely absent. Even when it is a part of a rational planning process, participation is given an informative role, not a decision-making one (Innes and Gruber, 2005). Such criticisms led many practitioners and theorists to come up with new ways of thinking about planning and public participation.

THE COMMUNICATIVE MODEL

The communicative theory of planning attempted to address these criticisms. Emerging from the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, the ‘communicative turn’ in theory challenged the assumption that modernistic, rational actors could create effective plans solely through their actions as experts (Allmendinger, 2002). The approach has left a large impact upon the profession, and is one that continues to resonate.

Primarily drawing influence from Habermas’ theory of ‘communicative rationality’, communicative theorists sought to open up political debate to a wider audience. This would create a diverse and inherently better body of knowledge. Habermas believed that the rationality of the modern age, with its focus on technical, ‘expert’ knowledge, precluded other types of knowledge. For Habermas, a wide variety of public stakeholders, including those from traditionally marginalized groups, were needed to create more consensual, informed, and essentially better planning outcome (Brooks, 2002; Throgmorton, 2013). Such information would be more diverse, democratic, and effective for making decisions (Allmendinger, 2002). Planning theorists responded to these ideas by crafting theories that prescribed practice as more receptive of diverse sources of knowledge (Brooks, 2002).

Beginning in the 1980s, a wide body of literature defining the communicative approach developed. This body of literature is quite large and includes many similar styles for planning. Labels describing a communicative approach include communicative rational planning (Forester, 1989; Healey, 1998), communicative pragmatic planning (Hoch, 2007), collaborative planning (Healey, 1998), discursive planning (Forester, 2012), and argumentative planning (Forester, 1989), and an array of other terms (Allmendinger, 2002). Though all subtly different, each label describes a style that promotes a more participatory form of planning.

Innes (1995, 1998) provides the most well rounded description of the approach. She states that planning must be a bottom-up, interactive activity that uses direct public input as the main guide in determining objectives. Planners should act as facilitators who shepherd meetings among stakeholders, politicians, and members of the public, in order to foster agreement on information. In turn, this information is then used to create goals, objectives, and processes that create successful outcomes (Innes, 1995, 1998).

Healey (1998, 2003) describes the tangible components of communicative theory in actual practice. These include a respect for a diversity of opinions, recognition of different power relationships, an interpretive process that allows for self-evaluation and re-evaluation, and the participation of individuals from the public at all stages of the process (Healey, 1998). To realize these components, practical heuristics as simple as listening, inclusion, and respectful dialogue and deliberation have been cited as useful measures (Forester, 1989; Forester, 2012). During the 1980s and 1990s, the adoption of these measures led some theorists to believe that the communicative approach was fast becoming the dominant paradigm in the field (Innes, 1995).

Although the communicative approach gained in popularity, in practice the rational model still heavily influences planning (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Brooks, 2002; Hutchinson,

2010; Hoch and Wang, 2013). The result is a muddled planning practice (Brooks, 2002). Nevertheless, according to Huxley and Yiftachel (2000), communicative theory has still left a strong impact upon the profession. Institutional behaviors have changed to accommodate more public input, and planners have actively adopted practical heuristics espoused by communicative theorists (Healey, 1998; Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000, Innes and Gruber, 2005). The “APA Ethical Principles of Planning”, adopted in 1992, is a set of statements clearly informed by the communicative approach (American Planning Association, 2015). However, many local planning departments continue to rely on technical expertise to achieve politically feasible ends. But when public participation is needed, methods are employed that are based on communicative theory (Innes and Booher, 2015).

Nevertheless, public participation is playing an increasingly influential role in planning processes. The result of this shift in theory and practice is that planners must now face an unprecedented amount of public involvement. For communicative theorists, this is an inherently positive outcome. Increased levels of participation lead to better information being available (Innes and Booher, 2015; Innes and Gruber, 2005). But in reality, the hopes of many such theorists are never completely realized. The blending of theoretical stances into actual planning practice, though helpful in accommodating participation, muddies the process between one of a more rational and technical style, and a more participatory, communicative approach (Innes and Gruber, 2005; Hoch and Wang, 2013).

This serves as a detriment to the entire process, as Innes and Gruber’s (2005) case study on conflicting styles of regional planning in the San Francisco Bay Area reveals. In this case, planners trying to achieve a communicative consensus among stakeholders and the public were repeatedly stymied in their efforts by the actions of politicians and technical planners.

Simultaneously, technical transportation planners, despite residing within the same organization, believed the same thing about those involved in collaborative efforts. Overall, collaborative dialogue was relegated a minor role in overall decision-making, as political elites forced outcomes to their liking. As a result, stakeholders and members of the public involved became more distrustful of planners and the entire process (Innes and Gruber, 2005). Literature critical of communicative theory often cites issues such as these in arguing that the perspective is too ‘idealistic’ (Fainstein, 2000; Healey, 2009).

Fainstein (2000) claims there is an assumption that if only people were given an opportunity to participate, then deep structural conflicts would vanish. But as she points out, such participation may exacerbate conflict between groups. Civility and rational argument remain rare characteristics among participants, even when practical steps linked to the communicative ideal are instituted (Forester, 2012; Innes and Booher, 2015). As displayed by Innes and Gruber’s study, the power relationship between elites and others is not reversed either (Innes and Gruber, 2005). Instead, the approach can simply retrench views rather than ameliorate differences (Fainstein, 2000).

In addition to simple ineffectualness, others claim that communicative planning can lead to more nefarious outcomes (Yiftachel, 1998; Flyvberg and Richardson, 2002). Many public participants in U.S. planning processes voice similar criticisms, including the Tea Party (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Aptly named ‘dark side’ theory, literature focusing on planning’s malevolent side describes it as a tool for the state to exercise power over its citizens.

Yiftachel (1998) posits that although planning is done with a progressive, reformist mindset, the profession has advanced regressive goals throughout its history. In the United States, this has been most clearly evident in the infamous urban renewal programs of the late

1950s and 1960s, which systematically sequestered the poor from ‘desirable’ areas, while shifting material and political resources to the wealthy (Yiftachel, 1998). More recently, conservative activists claim that land use planning has deprived private property owners of their constitutional rights. Government is at fault due to either its obliviousness to such concerns or because of outright maliciousness (Jacobs, 2010). ‘Dark side’ critics believe that the central purpose of government planning is for asserting the power of the state. In their minds, planning disproportionately harms some while benefitting others (Van Assche, Beunen, and Duineveld, 2014).

Public participation itself has been identified as a mechanism for exercising power (McLoughlin, 1994; Yiftachel, 1998; Forester, 2012). Interest groups given exclusive access to a participatory system may lobby for policies that negatively impact other groups. Based on interviews with planners on public participation, Forester (2012) states that the traditional public forums favored by planners, such as public hearings and town halls, give ample opportunity for individual interest groups to show up en masse and steer the dialogue to match their ends. One of Forester’s interviewees claims, “Too often as organizers, we’re just sounding the loon call – and we wonder why only the loons show up to our meetings!” (Forester, 2012). When the ‘loons’ are the only one that show up, planners and politicians are faced with mounting pressure to promulgate policy that may be against the majority of public sentiment (McLoughlin, 1994; Forester, 2012). Instead, policy is enacted that benefits a small, albeit politically active, segment of the population.

Flyvberg’s (1998) case study of planning in Aalborg, Denmark also highlights how planners can use participation in nefarious ways. He found that policymakers combined rationality and communicative theory into an approach that malleably served the interests of

political elites. In Aalborg, embedded political structures altered the practices used to gather public input in the planning process. Although mechanisms for increased participation were employed, planners and politicians were found to, “engage in deception to achieve their ends, manipulating public debates and technical analyses” (Flyvberg, 1998). Flyvberg makes the damning statement that such actions can be found anywhere in European and American planning (Flyvberg and Richardson, 2002).

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

Whether or not planning and its approach to public participation act as a repressive force upon citizens is debated (Brooks, 2002). The impact of the communicative turn on practice is also a matter of academic contention (Fainstein, 2000; Innes and Booher, 2015). However, it is clear that public participation currently plays a much more prominent role in planning efforts than in years past (Hoch and Wang, 2014; Innes and Booher, 2015). Citizens now hold the expectation that planners will consider their views. When this expectation is not met, it can produce substantial criticism from the public.

Hurley and Walker’s (2004) case study of land use planning efforts in Nevada County, California, clearly displays the problematic nature of public participation when it involves groups extremely opposed to planning activities. Conspiracy minded, property rights activists effectively lobbied against the passage of NH 2020, a growth management plan that aimed to mitigate the environmental impacts of rapid suburban growth (Hurley and Walker, 2004). In Nevada County, the methods used to gather public input enabled property rights activists to derail plan objectives.

NH 2020 was developed for the purposes of “identifying, managing, and protecting the natural habitats, the diversity of plant and animal species, as well as the open space resources

found in the County.” The plan was touted as the result of a collaborative effort between political leaders, planning staff, technical experts, environmental groups, and the general public. Planners reveled in the supposed blending of the science-based, rationalistic approach used in environmental planning with more communicative strategies (Hurley and Walker, 2004).

Yet from the very outset of NH2020’s formulation, staunch opposition arose from those concerned with limits on personal property rights. Activists identified the plan’s promise to dedicate open space land to public authorities as a UN led, conspiratorial effort to deprive Americans of one of their most fundamental constitutional rights. Even before sessions to gather public input had begun, activists had organized a large resistance movement that flooded local newspapers, officials’ inboxes, and residents’ mailboxes with messages advocated stopping NH 2020 (Hurley and Walker, 2004). When planner led visioning sessions and public forums were held, property rights activists descended upon them, often shouting down local officials and their neighbors who disagreed.

Though representing a small minority in Nevada County, the group against NH 2020 was able to galvanize opposition by painting planners and government officials as agents of a UN plot to take private property. Opponents seized on the novelty of the plan, its reliance on scientific jargon, and application of international ‘universal’ principles, to tap into the population’s deeply rooted, politically conservative beliefs. Eventually, even those who supported the aims of NH 2020 saw it as an attempt by an overly active local government to protect the environment over the interests of its citizens (Hurley and Walker, 2004). When planners refused to drop the NH 2020 issue, activists got enough widespread support to elect a new board of supervisors, who nixed the plan on the public’s behalf (Hurley and Walker, 2004).

The case of NH 2020 supports the ideas of Burby (2003), who claimed that the methods planners use to get involvement is significant in determining whether or not plan implementation is difficult. Burby suggests that broader stakeholder involvement can stymie the impact of any one obstructive interest group. Though planners in Nevada claimed that the participation strategy was a collaborative one, citizen involvement was largely structured around what Burby (2003) terms the ‘iron triangle’ of political leaders, business elites, and neighborhood organizations (Hurley and Walker, 2004). Where planning efforts are dominated by these stakeholders, planning efforts are more susceptible to being harmed by passionate opposition (Burby, 2003). Consensus, a fundamental goal of the communicative approach, is also difficult to achieve under such circumstances (Burby, 2003; Innes and Booher, 2015).

NH 2020’s reliance on technical data to back up its stated objectives weakened the overall process, and left participants feeling as if they were there only to be educated, rather than to give meaningful input (Hurley and Walker, 2004). Often, science-based arguments do not resonate well with citizens, leading to distrust of planners’ motives (Innes and Booher, 2015). In Nevada County, property rights activists seized on widespread community distrust to propel their agenda forward (Hurley and Walker, 2004). Eventually, enough support was gathered to stop NH 2020’s implementation completely.

In Nevada County, property rights activists succeeded in ways that recent Tea Party groups have as well. Similar to the property rights movement, Tea Partiers often see planning activities as excessive, even unconstitutional, exercises of government power or part of larger conspiratorial efforts (Frick, 2013). Like those who opposed NH 2020, Tea Party members have combatively engaged with planners and officials in participatory sessions, often shouting over and lambasting their opponents (Innes and Booher, 2015). Their involvement challenges the

participatory approaches favored by planners today. Successful planning can be jeopardized when the Tea Party becomes involved.

THE TEA PARTY MOVEMENT

The popular adage, “a mile wide and an inch thick”, is a perfect descriptor of the current literature on the Tea Party movement. Research is scattered across several fields of social science, including planning, political science, psychology, and economics (Berlet, 2011; Kumar, 2011; Skocpol and Williamson et al., 2012). Within planning, this research has not yet been truly comprehensive (Frick, 2013). In general though, most studies on the Tea Party have focused on the causes and effects of the movement’s creation, with particular attention being paid to the effects on national politics. Despite this focus, literature discussing the movement at a national level sheds light on the motivations pushing Tea Partiers to engage in debates with local governments. The following brief review of the literature on the Tea Party movement is helpful for understanding its impact on local government planning.

In early 2009, political commentators were left bewildered at the sudden rise of the Tea Party. Academicians quickly became interested in identifying what caused the movement’s birth. That year, Republicans were still reeling from the November elections and a string of Democratic congressional victories. However, by the end of 2009, the Tea Party had established itself as a major presence in the U.S. political landscape (Katel et al., 2010). Dissatisfied to the point of anger, the Tea Party formed first as a response to the federal bailouts of ailing banks, the 2009 stimulus package, and above all the effort to provide universal health care. Etzioni (2011) contends that the underlying causes of the Tea Party’s emergence and their frustrations toward government were shared by large sectors of the U.S. population. In particular, many individuals were worried about the state of their personal finances during the ‘Great Recession’.

Dissatisfaction with their individual situations, the government, and financial institutions created for many a fearful atmosphere (Etzioni, 2011). The Tea Party movement capitalized on these resentments, while simultaneously pushing for a political conservative and libertarian agenda.

At the heart of the Tea Party movement is a unique vision of America. This perception is one based in socially conservative values, limited government, and economic liberty (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). A belief that a past version of the country has been lost is also a key aspect of the movement (Berlet, 2011). These themes are not particular solely to this current manifestation of conservatism populism as they have been prevalent throughout the history of right wing movements (Hofstadter, 1964; Denison, 2014). Through his landmark study, Hofstadter found that an allegiance to a bygone American era is an elemental and unifying theme of conservative populism (Hofstadter, 1964).

Alarm that this version of America is being lost due to government activism, social trends, and demographic changes, has driven Tea Party activism (Denison, 2014). Similar to past right wing populist movements, the Tea Party frames these issues as part of a near apocalyptic struggle. Even when opponents frame arguments in a reasonable manner, Tea Partiers are known for responding in extreme terms (Berlet, 2011; Denison, 2014). Although reactive politics is not exclusive to those of a politically conservative inclination, Tea Partiers do see their primary challenge as returning to an idealized time in the America's history. Without significant and immediate action to redirect the country's course, their preferred vision of America will be lost (Rosenthal and Trost, 2012). This is why, as pointed out by Hofstadter (1964), far-right wing conservatives rely on vigorous political activism. For Tea Partiers, the stakes of not doing so are simply too high.

Another striking similarity shared by the Tea Party and past far-right movements are their anti-elitist beliefs. Jacobs (2012) links the Tea Party with populist movements based on the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment, which holds that the public is more capable in discerning truth, respectability, and what is right and wrong than are political, scientific, or economic elites (Jacobs, 2012). In particular, those in leadership roles in government bear the brunt of Tea Party resentment. At the movement's outset, this stemmed from the federal bailouts of the financial institutions following the economic collapse of 2008 (Berlet, 2011). However, a whole host of 'elites' also have drawn Tea Party ire. The elite 'lamestream' media is a frequent target of derision (Rosenthal and Trost, 2012). Academic elites are disparaged as well. Foremost among these are scientists and experts in fields of study contested by conservative ideology. Climate change as a matter of scientific fact is hotly contested by most Tea Partiers (Rosenthal and Trost, 2012).

Hofstadter (1964), as well as a range of other contemporary observers, point to several factors to explain far-right elite resentment. First, woven deeply in these resentments is the belief that elites work against the common people (Berlet, 2011; Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). Without substantial pushback from the general public, elites are able to maintain power. Thus, Tea Partiers believe one of their primary duties is to combat controlling elites through political activism. Also, Berlet (2011) claims that an inexplicit 'us vs. them' ideology pervades Tea Party groups. However, other commentators have stated that this might just be a defining characteristic of Americans from all political camps (Perlstein, 2009). Finally, Tea Partiers feed off the traditional conservative view of those who are more economically disadvantaged. Under this assumption, conservatives believe government elites pursue policies that undeservedly benefit those of lower incomes, primarily for political purposes (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012).

Probably the most important characteristic of the Tea Party movement is its unquestioning faith in the ideal of small, limited government. A hallmark of traditional conservative thought, the ideal of limited government has been an essential ingredient of past far-right populist movements (Hofstadter, 1964; Horwitz, 2013). Tea Partiers readily oppose many actions that can be termed ‘big government’ at any level of federal, state, or local authority (Rosenthal and Trost, 2012). Tea Partiers also generally adhere to a strict construction view of the U.S. Constitution, as many believe that any government action not expressly authorized is unconstitutional (Katel, 2010). Thus, Tea Partiers see a range of government action as impermissible, including the planning function of local government (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Jacobs, 2010; Throgmorton, 2013).

Tea Party organizations form no national consensus and pursue a range of activities (Rosenthal and Trost, 2012). However, four core key ideas, a vision of a past America, as well as strong inclinations toward political activism, anti-elitism, and limited government, inform Tea Party efforts in response to the workings of government at all levels. After 2010, activists expressed these themes increasingly in confrontations with local government, particularly over planning matters (Jacobs, 2012; Frick, 2013).

THE TEA PARTY AND PLANNING

Scholars of conservative movements have always identified a strong willingness among activists to address issues involving local government (Jacobs, 2012; Denison, 2014). Land use and its impact on personal property rights, in particular, have been typical points of concern (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009). Tea Partiers see unabridged personal property rights as essential to American democracy. This naturally conflicts with the elemental purposes of planning, which are fundamentally about the allocation, distribution, and alteration of property rights (Jacobs and

Paulsen, 2009). This contention has led to many confrontations between planners and Tea Partiers in recent years (Bacon, 2011; Fears, 2011; Reid, 2012).

Literature discussing Tea Party involvement in planning is scarce. This is due in part to the movement's high visibility in national politics and its relative novelty (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). But despite the dearth of research, Tea Party groups have greatly affected the planning functions of local government across America. From conservative states like Texas to liberal enclaves such as San Francisco, Tea Partiers have been equally aggressive in pursuing their agenda at the local level (Frick, 2013; Whittimore, 2013). Though specific literature on the Tea Party is limited, a large body of research focuses on the movement's immediate predecessor, the property rights movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. In disputes with planners, Tea Partiers commonly express quite similar arguments to those put forth by property rights activists. Jacobs (2012) goes so far as to state that many active Tea Partiers are only members of the property rights movement who have since reclassified themselves. Indeed, a review of the literature describing the property rights movement delineates many of the positions put forth by Tea Partiers at the level of local government.

Jacobs (2009, 2010, 2012) has provided substantial research on the property rights movement. He also discusses how planning has addressed personal property over the course of U.S. history. The underlying thesis of his work bodes ill for planners who hope that conservative activists eventually will find planning an acceptable use of state power. Jacobs argues that the debate over personal property rights is a deep-rooted characteristic of America. The Tea Party movement is only a continuation of this debate (Jacobs, 2010).

One reason why this debate is long lasting is that for many conservative activists, the United States was founded primarily for the protection of property rights. Jacobs (2009) points

out that this is true to an extent. However, Jacob argues that property rights and now Tea Party activists take this to an extreme, thereby ignoring important historical fact (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009). Colonial era leaders like Hamilton, Madison, and Jefferson, men who disagreed vigorously about many things, shared a common concern for the protection of personal property. However, Jacobs (2010) explains that they also had a complex view regarding property. For them, ownership of land was important in guaranteeing personal freedom and security, yet left unregulated it could reduce the public welfare. Jacobs says that property rights and Tea Party activists ignore the fact that early American government often regulated property to a great extent (Jacobs, 2010; Jacobs, 2012). In addition, the U.S. Constitution says literally nothing about protecting personal property. It was not until the Bill of Rights and the Fifth Amendment that personal property was mentioned. The amendment gave permission for the government to take property for public use, albeit with just compensation (Jacobs, 2010). For many observers, Tea Party activists have largely ignored these nuances surrounding the history of property rights (Jacobs, 2009).

In spite of this, property rights activists and current Tea Partiers have pursued an energetic strategy to reduce government's ability to impact property rights (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009). For the property rights movement, this effort dates back to the 1970s when activists began to target state and local laws created due to growing environmentalism (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009). By the mid-1980s, a nationwide coalition of activists had emerged that focused on repealing regulations on environmental protection, smart growth, and urban development, as well as pushing litigation that favored strong private property rights (Jacobs, 2010). These efforts continued until the Tea Party movement became the preeminent conservative grassroots effort

around 2010. Current activists have made use of many of the same ideas and strategies employed by the property rights movement while pursuing similar goals.

Frick (2013) provides the most informed work detailing the Tea Party's impact on planning. In her case studies of regional planning efforts in San Francisco and Atlanta, Frick describes how Tea Party activists confronted planners over a number of issues, including property rights. However, unlike the property rights movement, Tea Partiers are not just concerned with government's impact on individual property rights. Instead, Tea Party activists are focused on a broad penumbra of issues across all levels of government. In San Francisco, activists saw regional planning as unaccountable, coercive, and part of a larger government conspiracy, along with being a threat to property rights. Also, planners' public outreach and participation activities were seen as disingenuous and only aimed at gathering support for a predetermined outcome. Planners were also seen as unconstitutional actors because of their unelected position (Frick, 2013). As a response, San Francisco activists severely hampered the planning and public outreach processes through actions specifically designed to block plan adoption. For example, Tea Partiers flooded public meetings, interrupted planners and fellow citizens, and criticized the effort through various local media outlets. Activists in Atlanta worked in similar ways and also formed alliances with the NAACP and the Sierra Club to enforce greater accountability on the government (Frick, 2013).

In Atlanta and San Francisco, public participation suffered as a result of Tea Party involvement. Frick discussed how planners attempted to mitigate the impact of activists by reducing in-person participation and instead shifting to more indirect means, such as interactive websites. However, planners readily admitted this was a mistake. Although heralded as a collaborative process, the public participation strategies used did not achieve any kind of true

consensus. Tea Partiers also voiced resentment toward rationalistic aspects of the process, including the technical aspect of plans (Frick, 2013). Such critiques mirror common arguments against both communicative and rationalistic styles of planning (Innes and Booher, 2015).

Frick calls for more research into the Tea Party's involvement in planning at the local government level and in different geographies. Peculiarities specific to the Tea Party also warrant discussion, such as the movement's intense focus on Agenda-21. For many activists, Agenda 21 represents an embodiment of their concerns (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015).

In 1992, the United Nations drafted Agenda-21 as a non-binding action plan that may be adopted by local governments to guide sustainable development. Its main purposes are to fight overpopulation, pollution, poverty and the depletion of natural resources by providing an established set of principles (Lenz, 2012). In 2015, 528 local U.S. municipalities had adopted Agenda-21 to help guide development (ICLEI, 2015).

The work of Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer (2015), describes the Tea Party movement's strategy for repealing Agenda-21 language in the local governments of 26 U.S. states. Through elections of supportive candidates and aggressive campaigns to convince sympathetic politicians, Tea Party activists sought to undermine planning initiatives through the enactment of state legislation. In the states where activists were successful, bills restricted local municipalities' use of Agenda-21 as a guide for development (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). The study looks at key demographics in the states where repeal efforts have been made and discusses the motivations for activists. However, little is stated about the overall impact on the actual practice of planning, especially at the local level.

Frick also details reasons why activists oppose Agenda 21. The international origin of the resolution and its reliance upon unfamiliar terms like ‘sustainability’ and ‘globalism’, allow activists to see conspiracy within its language (Berlet, 2011; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Tea Partiers also see the goals of sustainable development as contrary to their own beliefs, as they see it as a government attempt to restrict private property behind a veil of environmentalism. Some activists even claim that Agenda 21 is precursor to the destruction of U.S. sovereignty by the United Nations. As a result, rural residents will be corralled into “human settlement zones” where cars are outlawed and burdensome restrictions will end consumptive practices (Springston, 2012). These views, based on little empirical evidence, are extreme manifestations of the core ideas espoused by the Tea Party and other conservative movements.

Frick and her associates have conducted the most substantive research on how the Tea Party impacts planning. However, other studies focus on related attributes of the movement. Thompson (2012) explores the spatial dimensions of the Tea Party, arguing that because activists generally reside in predominantly rural and suburban areas, they are more likely to develop a dogmatic moral worldview that lends itself to conservative activism. Without much interaction with diverse people and cultures, suburbanites are predisposed to developing opinions that eschew compromise or complexity (Thompson, 2012).

Drawing upon the work of Forester (1989, 2012), Throgmorton (2013) observes that the Tea Party wants to define and control the spatial dimensions of their communities, from physical characteristics to the composition and identity of the people who live within them. Furthermore, Throgmorton claims that Tea Partiers actively challenge those they see as not belonging within their community (Throgmorton, 2013). The key trait of their participation in planning processes is their uncompromising stance.

Throgmorton (2013) then recognizes the unavoidable political aspect of planning and articulates the need to develop better strategies that can successfully manage participation from groups like the Tea Party. Essential to such strategies are a rejection of the dogmatic worldviews of some groups, while simultaneously providing democratic space from which multicultural ideas can flourish (Throgmorton, 2013). In practice, this rationale aims to allow communities to define themselves while giving all peoples the opportunity to participate in democratic deliberation.

While Throgmorton suggests that more deliberation is needed among a diverse group of citizens, Whittemore (2013) argues that planners should pragmatically tailor the language of plans to mitigate impact from groups like the Tea Party. Conservative activists are prone see terms like ‘sustainability’ and ‘New Urbanism’, unknown to many in the general public, as masks for ulterior motives. Sometimes, planners claim sensitivity to local concerns but then use ‘cookie-cutter’ plans and scientific jargon, allowing conspiratorial ideas to fester among activists (Whittemore, 2013). In response, Whittemore argues that planners in conservative contexts must tailor their plans to sound acceptable to local residents. Less jargon and more politically aware planners can pursue many of the ideals of sustainability, without calling it sustainability (Whittemore, 2013).

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

To successfully answer the research questions, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of exactly what political activism is and how its can impact be measured. Almond (1964) defines activism as the ways that citizens participate, the processes that they do so by, and the consequences of their actions. This broad definition encompasses a wide range of activities, from voting to acts of terror (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). In the context of the United States, the

activities that constitute activism have generally been divided into two types. First are traditional forms of activism, which are mostly accomplished within established customs, norms, and legalities. These include voting, campaigning, community organizing, and targeted contacting of government personnel, politicians, or influential actors within a decision-making institution (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Second are alternative forms of activism, including Internet networking, street protests, consumer boycotts, and direct-action campaigns, all of which may blur the line between “social” and “political” acts (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Some alternative forms are not legal as well.

The Tea Party movement is defined by political activism. Its brand of activism, despite aggressive style and dogmatic beliefs, has generally relied on traditional forms of political engagement. Promoting supportive candidates, political campaigning, and contacting representatives and bureaucrats have been key activities of Tea Partiers at both the grassroots and national level (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). However, the movement has also incorporated alternative forms, including Internet networking and street protests. Internet networking in particular has been an important tool for Tea Party activists (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). Like the national movement, Tea Party groups operating at the local level in Virginia have relied on traditional methods while also using alternative ones.

How to measure the impact of activism presents a more difficult task. This is primarily because broad movements like the Tea Party, unlike individual actors or organizations, are external to institutionalized decision-making processes. It is politicians, executives, legislators, judges, and bureaucrats who actually pull the levers of power and turn ideas into laws (Amenta et. al, 2010). Measuring the impact of a group outside these formal mechanisms means measuring its influence, an inherently arbitrary concept. What constitutes ‘influence’ may be

different among differing political and social movements. Identifying causal relationships between the work of activists and political change is also hard to pin down, as the input from activists can be only one of a nearly innumerable set of factors that influence political decision-making processes (Andrews and Edwards, 2004).

For many scholars, the clearest and strongest basis for analyzing the influence of activist movements is by dividing the process of creating new laws into the stages of (a) agenda setting, (b) access to decision-making arenas, (c) policy enactment, (d) implementation, and (e) setting the long-term strategies and resources of political institutions (Amenta et. al, 2010; Andrews and Edwards, 2004). At each stage, a number of indicators can be identified that show how much of an impact an activist group has had. Traditional and/or alternative forms of activism may play a role in each stage as well.

Agenda Setting

Many scholars suggest that activists have the greatest impact in the agenda setting stage. Before policymaking or decision-making occurs, a diverse array of forces work to move issues from the political or intellectual extremes to the center of debate. Pop culture, political and economic institutions, as well as electoral outcomes, are just a few examples of the forces at work in promulgating issues. It is here that activists can bring their chosen issues greater attention, raise group awareness, and make their concerns a part of broader public debate (Andrews and Edwards, 2004). Several indicators can be identified to determine impact in the agenda setting stage, including:

- Issues being moved from the “public agenda” (reflected in media, public opinion polls, activist websites) to the “formal agenda” of political decision-makers
- The amount of media attention given to activist efforts
- Creation of legislation promoted by legislators sympathetic to activist aims

(Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Amenta et. al, 2010)

Access to decision-making arenas

Though agenda setting is important, activists can also have a substantial impact by simply gaining access to those who make decisions. Indicators of influence at this stage show if the activist effort is recognized and deemed legitimate by political decision-makers. Indicators here include:

- The amount and type of contact between government personnel and activists (e.g., number of emails, meetings, telephone discussions, etc.)
- Opportunities for direct engagement with activists (e.g., incidences of protests, public meetings, forums, town halls, etc.) (Andrews and Edwards, 2004)

Policy Enactment

The most visible and recognized indicator of influence is seen when activists achieve policy victories which would not have occurred otherwise. The civil rights movement and the landmark social justice legislation of the 1960s is a prime example (Andrews and Edwards, 2004).

Indicators may show multiple causal mechanisms at work that display the ways activists influence legislators. These include:

- Political leaders verbally expressing support for activist goals, when they previously had not before activists became involved
- Changed electoral outcomes based on activist campaigning and organizing (E.g., the political ‘outsider’ being elected and sponsoring activist legislation)
- The amount and type of policy enacted (or in the Tea Party’s case, blocked from enactment or repealed) explicitly supported by activists (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Norris, 2007)

Implementation

Although securing legislative victories are clear achievements, activists also can impact the ongoing implementation of policy. Challenging set policy is difficult, thus activist organizations must act in ways that are sufficiently disruptive. One method is to construct professionalized organizations that are capable of monitoring government agencies and those responsible for implementation (Andrews and Edwards, 2004). Protest and other alternative forms of activism are also popular for their disruptive qualities (Norris, 2007). Indicators of these kinds of activities include:

- The occurrence of protests and the type of response from government decision-makers (Direct response via public messaging, change in policy, no response)
- The kind of changes in implemented policy post-disruption, if any (Amenta et. al, 2010)

Setting of long-term strategies and resources for political institutions

Identifying indicators of influence at this stage is the most difficult. The long-term influence of activist movements on the resources and priorities of political institutions blends into the cumulative influence on the policy creation process (Andrews and Edwards, 2004). Discerning how much impact any one activist group has left on certain political institutions is a nearly impossible task. Influence is also correlated with the larger political trends. For example, if activists are a part of larger political or social movement, their impact will be accordingly greater as well.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE STUDIES

NEW KENT COUNTY

On January 12th, 2009, the New Kent County Board of Supervisors passed O-15-08 (R2), an ordinance to amend Chapter 98 of the New Kent County Code. Passage of the ordinance represented the end of a four-year effort to update the County's zoning (New Kent County Board of Supervisors, 2009a). It was also the end of a difficult struggle for County staff, who had had to navigate serious public hostility to the effort. Although the entire process also was completed before the first Tea Party organizations were ever created, residents in New Kent County voiced arguments that were nearly identical to many of those espoused by future activists. In doing so, New Kent citizens displayed how deeply rooted the ideas that propelled Tea Party activists at the local level were. Among of the most notable of such ideas was a strong suspicion of 'change' in traditional communities and a wariness of energetic government action (Hathaway, 2016). This ideological foundation, firmly established in past generations, was common in rural Virginia counties like New Kent (Thompson, 2012; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015; Hathaway, 2016). Beginning in 2011, the Tea Party movement was merely the latest conduit for these ideas to enter into public debate.

The opposition to New Kent's proposed zoning changes was underpinned by these deep-rooted ideas. Though occurring before the Tea Party movement erupted in the spring of 2009, the debate in New Kent displayed the lasting nature of the ideological wellsprings that drove the movement. These ideas existed before Tea Party activism and almost undoubtedly will outlast it (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015).

The response by New Kent County staff also foreshadowed the methods used to curtail the impact of the Tea Party on planning efforts in Virginia. Though primarily relying on a more

traditional strategy of public participation, County planners were able to adjust or create techniques that effectively mitigated opposition (Hathaway, 2016). The steps taken were also quite simple. By the time the new zoning ordinances were adopted in January of 2009, many who had previously been opposed accepted the revisions. Most importantly, the County had established several ways to build trust with some of its more politically active citizens.

Rural, politically conservative counties with a large mix of suburban developments, especially those in the South, have been strongholds for Tea Party groups (Thompson, 2012; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Such communities disperse living residences onto individual lots far removed from others. Residents in such places cannot as easily interact with their neighbors as those living in more developed areas can. Suburban development also encourages this individualistic living pattern. Modern subdivision developments often employ the “gated community” concept by providing only one entrance and exit. Streets are designed to accommodate cars and not pedestrians. As a result, opportunities for diverse social interactions are limited. Residents do not have to interact with those holding opposite cultural and political opinions due to close proximity. Instead, residents chose to associate with individuals like them, or retreat into their homes and themselves (Thompson, 2012). Homogeneous social interactions through traditional outlets are strengthened, such as through religious groups. In such an atmosphere, dogmatic political opinions can easily flourish (Thompson, 2012; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). In politically conservative areas, this includes strong beliefs in private property rights and less active local government.

New Kent largely fit the description of such communities. In 2005, the County was home to just 15,885 residents, most of whom lived on single-family lots or in subdivisions spread out

across 212 square miles (“Comprehensive Plan”, 2012). The County’s voting record also displayed its political conservative nature. As part of the 7th Congressional District, New Kent residents were among those who ousted sitting House Majority leader Eric Cantor in the primary elections prior to the 2014 midterms. Tea Party favorite David Brat succeeded Cantor, being only the second time in American history where a Majority Leader had been ousted in a primary (Ballotpedia, 2016).

The political, social, and spatial characteristics of New Kent undoubtedly played a part in opposition to the County’s zoning changes. These characteristics, and the ideas produced by them, interweaved the positions taken by citizens. County staff also considered New Kent’s defining qualities, and implemented strategies that mitigated the opposition based on them.

In late 2005, New Kent planners requested a series of public hearings to provide the public an opportunity to comment on a comprehensive re-write of the County’s zoning ordinances. Numerous reasons accounted for the need of an update. First, the existing ordinances were written in the 1960s and were largely unaltered. Internal inconsistencies, such as contradictory definitions and uses, pervaded the ordinances as well, heightening risk of litigation. And the code was difficult to read, as it was laden with legal jargon, causing further confusion (Board of Supervisors, 2005).

For these reasons, New Kent’s Director of Community Development completed a systematic re-write of the entire ordinance. In quite a personal feat, he did so largely by himself. The new ordinances would create a zoning matrix, contain easily readable diagrams, provide the necessary updates to comply with state law, and give the recently adopted County Comprehensive Plan a legal path toward implementation (Board of Supervisors, 2005;

Hathaway, 2016). The reworked ordinances signified a substantial leap into the realm of modern planning for New Kent. It gave tools for growth management to the County and encouraged communities to use New Urbanist communities and design standards specifically for rural settings (Board of Supervisors, 2005).

However, the first version of the proposed ordinances was written without any input from the public (Board of Supervisors, 2005; Hathaway, 2016). At a special joint session of the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, officials and citizens expressed their concern. Although the Community Development Director iterated that this draft was just the start of the process and that the public would have an ample opportunity to become involved, members of both governing bodies lamented the lack of public's influence in this first draft. County staff responded that a series of six public hearings, to be included within meetings of the local governing bodies, would provide sufficient feedback (Board of Supervisors, 2005).

However, vocal members of the public did not agree. At a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on January 17, 2006, 25 residents spoke out against the proposed changes, listing a litany of problems. For many, the document had a "lack of clarity" and proved incapable of being easily understood. Its impact on economic development and private residences was also questioned. In particular, the use categories of "Village" and "Economic Opportunity" were criticized for their perceived threat to property rights and businesses. Citizens also expressed wonderment as to why the County felt that an updated version was needed, when the existing zoning ordinances had been in effect since the 1960s (Board of Supervisors, 2006a).

Nearly every speaker questioned the intentions of the County government. Citizens believed that County staff had drafted the ordinances to help "political interests" and not the

public at large. Critics claimed the fast timetable for adoption set by planners supposedly proved this, stating that it purposely left no time for the public to understand the new regulations. For one speaker, this lack of public input symbolized the County's hope to take the proposal and "shove it down the throats" of citizens. Another, who had spoken directly to the Director of Community Development, claimed that neither he nor the Director had a true understanding of what the proposed ordinances changes actually entailed, so the local government was acting solely out of self-interest (Board of Supervisors, 2006a).

On January 19th, a mere two days after the previous meeting, at a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors, board members created a committee comprised entirely of private citizens to draft an new set of zoning ordinances. County staff would merely provide administrative assistance (Board of Supervisors, 2006b). The Zoning Ordinance Re-Write Committee was born, becoming known to many in New Kent infamously as 'ZORC' (Hathaway, 2016). ZORC consisted of 15 total members, including three residents from each County voting district, one of who was a prior member of the board of supervisors, and another an environmental engineer (Hathaway, 2016). For two years, ZORC meet monthly to discuss the ordinances and make changes. They largely eschewed the assistance of the Director of Community Development, though other County staff did contribute.

ZORC was the first group of its kind in New Kent. Never before had the County given the right to citizens to draft local code. Some of its members were those who had voiced opposition in the past (Hathaway, 2016). Yet, as the process unfolded over a numerous amount of meetings, personal agendas of members were shunned for the sake of "doing it right" (Board of Supervisors, 2008). Each section of the proposed ordinances received a significant amount of time and attention, and members learned to have a "countywide focus" (Board of Supervisors,

2008). Previously controversial measures, such as the use category of “village”, became understood by members to be useful tools to contain growth (Board of Supervisors, 2008). They also understood that citizen input was now the primary guide for the re-write process.

After two years of discussion, the ZORC created zoning ordinances were given unanimous approval by the Board of Supervisors. Ironically, the finished product also resembled the one written solely by the Director of Community Development three years prior. After learning the challenges facing the County, and the tools offered by zoning to combat them, ZORC members came to similar conclusions as the Director had (Hathaway, 2016). Increased input from the public through ZORC’s activities also strengthened citizens understanding of planning.

Throughout ZORC’s existence, a significant amount of opposition was aimed at its activities, despite the increased public input. The principal source of such opposition was the New Kent County Citizens Coalition (NKCCC), a group resembling future Tea Party organizations. Consisting only of ten people on average, the NKCCC regularly attended public meetings, published letters in local newspapers, and contacted ZORC members directly (Hathaway, 2016). At issue were the same criticisms leveled at the ordinances when first proposed by the Director of Community Development, displaying the intractability of some citizens. Opposition again focused on a concern for property rights, government overreach, and threats to local businesses (Chamberlain, 2008a). Some citizens continued voicing disapproval of the new zoning right up until its time of adoption (Board of Supervisors, 2009a).

At the heights of its activism, the NKCCC targeted the County’s method of determining property assessments. The group sought to change real estate tax rates due to a belief that methodology used to determine property values showed a “lack of uniformity and not meeting

requirements of fair market value” (Chamberlain, 2008b). The NKCCC then drafted a petition that received over 400 signatures to formally appeal the assessments. With the petition receiving a sufficient number of signatures to legally require an appeal, the County was left with three options; reduce the assessment values and raise other taxes for to find revenue, reduce services altogether, or find a legal remedy. Luckily for County staff, the third option came through, as the County Attorney successfully argued that the group’s petition lacked legal basis before the New Kent Circuit Court (Chamberlain, 2008b). However, the NKCCC had almost forced the County into making decisions that staff believed was unwarranted and detrimental to the public. Ways to mitigate this active opposition were needed.

County staff then formulated several methods to engage and educate citizens about the functions of local government. Based on the success of ZORC, such methods would also mitigate opposition. First, a town hall forum was held in May of 2009. The meeting consisted of an hour for elected officials statements and then another for answering questions from citizens. Assessments, budgeting, and schools, were frequent topics, and citizens and officials maintained a substantial dialogue. Overall, the meeting produced an educational experience for citizens, as officials had ample time to explain the thought processes behind their decision-making (Board of Supervisors, 2009b). Subsequent town halls were held over the next few years as well, furthering the success of the first. In addition, County staff also promised to increase citizen participation on committees and operations (Chamberlain, 2008c).

The most significant way the County engaged citizens was through ‘New Kent University.’ The program allowed groups of New Kent residents to get an immersive look into how county government functioned through an eight-session curriculum. Each session focused on a different aspect of government, from economic development, planning, finance, law

enforcement, to parks and recreation (Chamberlain, 2008d). At the end of curriculum, participants highly praised the program, claiming it brought a whole new level of understanding about local government.

New Kent University also gave several members of the NKCCC an opportunity to learn. After finishing the program, some even became “advocates” for government initiatives (Hathaway, 2016). The effort made by ZORC was one such initiative. After focusing continued criticism at the committee throughout its two year effort, members of the NKCCC who participated in New Kent University were effectively “won over” as proponents of the new zoning (Hathaway, 2016). County staff had effectively minimized vocal opposition by giving detractors an inside view of the decision-making procedures employed by officials.

The success of subsequent town halls and the New Kent University program helped explain why a strong Tea Party group did not form in the County. During the Tea Party’s heyday of 2011 and 2012, no activism occurred in New Kent. County staff attributed this to the County’s tightly run budget, which contained no “fluff” as compared to other localities that had suffered Tea Party attacks. Also, major planning initiatives were not undertaken in the time that the concern over Agenda-21 was at its height. And New Kent’s focus on inclusionary participatory strategies in the years prior to the Tea Party likely minimized such opposition before it could begin (Hathaway, 2016). The town halls and New Kent University had targeted the most vocal citizens in the community, ones who would have likely started their own Tea Party groups in 2009. Yet before such activism could begin, these citizens possessed a much greater knowledge of the actual functioning of their local government than the Tea Partiers of nearby localities.

The methods used by New Kent staff to increase citizen participation were as simple as they were effective. The use of town halls, unseen in New Kent before 2008, was a traditional

method to hear the voice of the public (Forester, 1999). ZORC was also a typical approach to give citizens greater influence as well. Governments had effectively used citizen-led committees to organize support and mitigate opposition since the 1960s (Arnstein, 1969). New Kent University, which simply let citizens who were interested observe and learn about New Kent's government, also cost taxpayers almost no expense. New Kent staff proved that small steps taken to minimize opposition could go a long way in helping citizens see the positives of planning.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Beginning in the spring of 2011, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) found itself in a vigorous debate with members of the local Tea Party. Aptly titled the Jefferson Area Tea Party, the group focused on the issues of sustainability and the role of local government. Policies that were seen as even slightly related to Agenda-21 drew intense criticism from Tea Party activists. Because of their opposition, Albemarle County ended its membership with ICLEI and 'Cool Counties', which were nationwide programs advocating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and providing technical support to localities (Richardson, 2011; Tubbs, 2011; Tubbs, 2017).

However, the Jefferson Area Tea Party achieved only mixed overall results. The target of its strongest opposition was a \$999,000 federal grant for a regional planning effort, which included financial support for the long-range planning efforts by Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia. These plans explicitly supported regionalism, environmental stewardship, and sustainability, a trifecta of Tea Party bogeymen ("Albemarle", 2015; Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Yet the TJPDC and the localities involved overcame significant opposition primarily due to an inclusive, long lasting, and hard-fought process of gaining meaningful public input.

In Charlottesville and in other cases, a notable aspect of activism was its opposition to regional planning bodies. Although activists opposed such organizations in part for ideological reasons, planners claimed they also lacked an understanding of the roles and purpose, as well as the lengthy history, of regional planning in Virginia (Lawrence, 2016). First formed in 1968 as creatures of state government, PDCs were tasked with helping local governments address issues that crossed multi-jurisdictional boundaries. In a modern age where local economies, transportation systems, and physical communities exist with little relation to the legal boundaries of localities, regional planning bodies have become instrumental in organizing solutions at the proper geographic scale (Carbonell and Seltzer, 2011). Problems associated with environmental degradation, the negative impacts of growth and land use, and incentivizing quality economic development, all have required an approach at the regional level.

During the height of activism between 2010 and 2013, 21 PDCs across the state were performing a number of tasks that local governments were not been able to pursue financially or legally. Specifically, these included measures like building infrastructure for high-speed internet, obtaining federal and state grants, and promoting opportunities for regional economic development (“History of Virginia PDCs”, 2016). In pursuit of these goals, PDCs did not have the authority to on their own. Instead, PDCs assisted decision-makers in local and state government by providing research and recommendations on matters of regional importance (“History of Virginia PDCs”, 2016). As creatures of the state, PDCs were not autonomous regional governments that could decide policy on their own.

For most of their history, PDCs have allowed public participation only through formal measures. While participation has always been considered an important part of the planning process, citizens were relegated to participating in ways like speaking at public meetings or

forums or by writing PDC members. As regional planners with the TJPDC discovered, when conservative activists began to target PDCs, such formal modes of participation were not conducive in attracting a broad level of public input that could overwhelm Tea Party opposition. This was why TJDC planners adopted innovative measures to broaden the public's ability to engage in the planning process (Frederick, 2016).

TJPDC planners relied on a strategy for participation that was described by one participant as “very hard, definitely not easy” (Frederick, 2016). No one group dominated the process. Instead a diverse body of the regional population remained steadfastly engaged throughout its entirety (Frederick, 2016). Unlike other localities, the impact of Tea Party activism was minimized due to three primary factors. The demographics of the region, a long history of community work toward sustainability, and the method of participation used by the TJPDC, all helped stymie Tea Party opposition to Livability Grant project.

A major factor that prevented the Tea Party from dominating public meetings was the diverse makeup of groups participating (Frederick, 2016). Charlottesville, by far the largest population center in the area, is decidedly more liberal than the localities surrounding it. For instance, Charlottesville voters gave Barack Obama 78.6 percent of the popular vote in the 2012 presidential election, much higher than the Virginia average of 50.8 percent (“Election”, 2012). Residents of Charlottesville also have higher average levels of educational attainment than the state average. In 2014, 49.3 percent of Charlottesville residents possessed a Bachelors degree or higher. In Albemarle County, this figure was 35.7 percent, nearly equal to the state average of 35.8 percent (American Factfinder, 2014). Tea Party members are generally much more politically conservative and less formally educated (Thompson, 2012; Horwitz, 2013). Thus, the Jefferson Area Tea Party is a political minority. The group had to fight to have its voice heard

over the pluralistic assembly of groups and individuals who each brought their own perspectives regarding the Livability Grant (Frederick, 2016).

Another dampening effect on Tea Party activism was the region's strong familiarity with sustainability and environmental stewardship. Sustainability first became an issue in 1994, when the TJPDC created the Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council. This advisory committee was made up of 34 members representing the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson, along with the City of Charlottesville. Four years later, the group had produced the 1998 Sustainability Accords, a list of measures to promote sustainability goals in the activities of citizens, businesses, and local governments. The Accords were incorporated in the long-range plans of several localities, including the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County (Charlottesville, 2013; Albemarle, 2015). Stating thirteen years prior to the fight surrounding ICLEI, "Cool Counties", and the Livability Grant, the Sustainability Accords provided a set of principles for local governments to follow.

In late 2007, these localities also joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which was partially redundant for Charlottesville and Albemarle (Wheeler, 2011). ICLEI's primary objective was for local governments to create and adopt a plan for climate change, environmental stewardship, or sustainability. The TJPDC's 1998 Sustainability Accords had already accomplished this objective (Wheeler, 2011). The most tangible benefits of membership was gaining access to a network of member communities, obtaining software, and receiving technical support (Wheeler, 2011). In Albemarle County, ICLEI software helped government staff pursue a goal of 80 percent reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. An annual reduction of 2 percent was set to meet this objective. The proposed reduction corresponded with membership in "Cool Counties", a nationwide, non-

binding agreement among local governments that aimed at reducing carbon emissions (Richardson, 2011).

The progressive stance of Albemarle and Charlottesville was evident in adoption of these measures. Yet legislative actions were only a part of the community wide push for sustainability. The Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), organized by the TJPDC, was a program funded by a \$500,000 grant from the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance. The program facilitated home energy audits and retrofits for energy-saving improvements. By early 2013, LEAP had audited over 1,000 homes in Albemarle and Charlottesville (Wheeler, 2013). WaterSense, a voluntary program designed by the Environmental Protection Agency, also had a powerful impact on the area. Administered by a local organization called the James River Green Building Council, the program provided methods for participating businesses to curtail their water usage (Lamb, 2012). WaterSense also certified water usage of private residences, primarily related to the use of toilet water. If residents made sufficient reductions, they were entitled to a rebate offered by local government (Lamb, 2012). Community members in the region participated widely in efforts promoting sustainability as well, such as farmer Dave Norford, who was recognized by the Albemarle Boards of Supervisors as an outstanding conservation farmer. His nearly 170 acres of farmland in northern Albemarle was an exceptional example for the use of best practices related to sustainability and environmental stewardship (Shea, 2012). Unlike other localities that faced an onslaught of citizens who claimed sustainability was merely a code word for a governmental takeover, residents of Charlottesville and the TJPDC's other service areas had ample experience with the concept of sustainability and with measures to support it. This familiarity likely hampered the Jefferson Area Tea Party's ability to frame sustainability in a negative manner and control the debate over its use.

The TJPDC's successful strategy for public participation was aided by the demographics of the area and familiarity with sustainability. The inclusive approach was taken in part due to conditions of the \$999,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Planning Grants program. The grant established six livability principles designed to help localities comprehensively address transportation, affordable housing, economic development, and infrastructure. The sixth principle emphasized the need to accommodate extensive public participation into planning processes. Nontraditional partnerships were to be included, involving representatives from arts, business, recreation, public health, and government ("Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants", 2016). Upon acceptance of the grant in November 2010 and the first inklings of Tea Party opposition, the TJPDC crafted a model for public participation that favored an inclusive, diverse dialogue providing ample opportunities for citizens to have their ideas heard (Frederick, 2016).

To accomplish regional public participation, TJPDC planners created a system of public participation divided into four levels of meetings (Frederick, 2016). The first and most informal were 'Open Houses', consisting of six different meetings at various venues. Open to anyone, each gathering was focused on a different issue related to the overall planning effort. Citizens could engage with planners in informal conversations and ask questions on a variety of subjects (Frederick, 2016). Tea Party members attempted to disrupt these events by pummeling planners with questions and concerns, thereby monopolizing their time and preventing others from having an opportunity to speak. The TJPDC responded by overstaffing the events in an effort to simply outnumber Tea Partiers (Frederick, 2016). Overall, TJPDC planners felt that the 'Open Houses' were effective at connecting the ideas of the public with the goals of the plans (Shea, 2012).

At the local level, formal planning commission meetings were another important component of public participation. In contrast their actions in other Virginia localities, in Charlottesville and the surrounding counties Tea Party members largely followed the strict formalities of such events. Though public comment often highlighted great differences between activists and planning proponents, few instances of unruly or disruptive behavior emerged (Frederick, 2016).

Another form of participation involved TJPDC planners sending out a survey to residents in Charlottesville and Albemarle. It was also distributed at public gatherings, such as farmers' markets and neighborhood meetings. The questionnaire allowed participants to choose ten issues from a list of 55 that reflected their priorities for planning. The 55 items included priorities such as limiting rural development, increasing connectivity of transportation networks, and protecting private property rights. The goal most widely chosen was limiting rural development (Shea, 2012). An in-depth analysis of survey results was then performed and taken before local planning commissions.

The fourth level of public participation occurred through the "Livability Partnership", an organization of advisers representing community groups that periodically met to discuss the project's goals and implementation (Frederick, 2016). The Tea Party, alongside a diverse variety of other groups, participated. During meetings, the partnership's 75 members broke apart into informal, small group discussions that TJPDC planners hoped would spark consensus on how to move the project forward (Frederick, 2016). Instead, various members often pursued their own agendas. Dave Redding for example, of the group Transition Charlottesville/Albemarle, stated, "We want to convince people to live sustainably" (Tubbs, 2011). Others did not share Redding's views. Carol Thorpe, representative of the Jefferson Area Tea Party, had a different task in mind.

“Obviously the title [of partnership] would imply to someone that everyone is in favor of this, but what I am in favor of is getting first-hand information and providing that to Jefferson Area Tea Party members,” Thorpe said (Tubbs, 2011). The Tea Party’s primary motive was thus to have an insider account of the project’s implementation. This resulted in tense exchanges between proponents of the plan and Tea Party representatives. At one meeting, the discussions got so heated that the event was canceled. Maintaining discipline and focus was a tiring task that fell upon the TJPDC planners facilitating the event (Frederick, 2016).

Thought difficult, the ‘Livability Partnership’ largely succeeded due to the presence of a strong grassroots movement in favor of the sustainability grant. Quite simply, the Tea Party’s impact was mitigated by an overwhelming wave of support for the project. As a result, the sustainability grant and TJPDC efforts largely succeeded in helping Charlottesville, Albemarle, and UVa draft plans addressing regional goals and sustainability (Frederick, 2016).

At the same time as planning efforts were undertaken as part of the Livability Grant project, the Tea Party achieved a modicum of success with Albemarle County’s decision to repeal its memberships from ICLEI and the ‘Cool Counties’ initiative. In Albemarle, Tea Party successes followed the trends seen elsewhere in Virginia and the country in 2011. Its attacks on ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties’ focused on their supposed connection to Agenda-21 and a UN takeover of local governance. In a March 2011 “Sustainability Forum”, the Jefferson Area Tea Party stressed each of these themes as causes for opposition to ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties’ (Wheeler, 2011).

A notable feature of Tea Party opposition to sustainability measures in the Charlottesville area was not its resistance to environmental goals in general, but specifically to ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties.’ Along with the Livability Grant, these policies were perceived by Tea Partiers as

existential threats to the autonomy of local governments. And although Tea Party members questioned the authenticity of policies related to sustainability, many also expressed their support for local government action to protect the environment (Wheeler, 2011). In each case, Tea Party members and sympathetic elected officials believed that ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties’ worked to undermine the authority of local governments and deprive citizens of property rights (Richardson, 2011). The Jefferson Area Tea Party led the opposition through social media and attendance at public meetings. At a meeting of the Albemarle Board of Supervisors in early June 2011, 300 citizens attended who nearly uniformly supported repeal of the County’s ICLEI membership (Wheeler, 2011). One Tea Party member summed up their positions by stating,

“I am here because I am concerned about the relationship between ICLEI and the United Nations ... and some of the positions taken by some of these board members. I don’t want ICLEI in Charlottesville — if people in the community want to protect our natural resources, we can do it without the help of the UN” (Wheeler, 2011).

By a vote of four to two, the Board chose repeal (Wheeler, 2011). Surprisingly however, the vote came immediately after one that continued the County’s participation in the Livability Grant project (Tubbs, 2011). In 2011 the Board also voted to end Albemarle’s involvement in the ‘Cool Counties’ initiative, although they retained the County’s goals of reducing in carbon emissions (Richardson, 2011). Nevertheless, they had consciously chosen to get rid of a useful tool to help them achieve reductions.

The success of the Livability Grant project and the simultaneous repeal of ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties’ highlighted the competing factors at play in Charlottesville. Neither ICLEI nor ‘Cool Counties’ had strong grassroots proponents on their side. At public meetings in which the policies were discussed, most representatives of the public were activists who opposed them.

ICLEI and ‘Cool Counties’ were also preexisting policies. Planners did not create well organized, thought out strategies to energize public support for them like they had for the Livability Grant. For many in government, these were policies that had been debated and decided upon a long time ago. However, this lack of vigorous public support allowed activists to fill the void. With no public pushback, Tea Party activists were free to control the debate.

THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

Located in Southwest Virginia, the New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC) serves the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski and the cities of Radford and Blacksburg. At the same time as planners in Charlottesville faced activist opposition, so too did the regional planners of the New River Valley Regional Commission. And as in Charlottesville, it was the implementation of a federal grant for sustainability that was again the target of activists. Overall, the NRVRC’s goals, participatory methods, and Tea Party objections shared many similarities with events in Charlottesville. Yet there were also differences. In the New River Valley, activists maintained a more hardline approach. They spurned entirely any engagement in the regional commission’s planning process. Local Tea Party groups were also divided on certain issues, displaying the nuances present within the movement (Brown, 2015; Anonymous, 2016). However, as in Charlottesville, the defining impact of activism was not one intended by Tea Partiers themselves. In response to activism, regional planners set up a robust public participation process that overwhelmed activist antagonism.

Activism in area surrounding Blacksburg and Roanoke began in the fall of 2011, when the New River Valley Regional Commission received a federal grant of \$1,000,000 through HUD’s Sustainable Community Planning Grant program. The regional commission partnered with 14 other local entities to administer the funds, all collectively choosing to use the grant

money to enhance livability in the region. Regional planners quickly identified nine general focus areas; economic development, housing for low-income families, transportation, energy, arts and culture, water infrastructure, agriculture, natural resources, and technology (“New River Valley News & Views”, 2011). But planners also stressed an explicit “blank slate for outcomes” in public messaging related to the project. With ample public participation, the desired outcomes of the project would be identified continuously during the planning process (Anonymous, 2016). This versatility highlighted the great flexibility of the grant program. The New River Valley community had the power to create plans to fit their own needs. The federal government only supplied the funds.

Sustainability became an organizing concept for the NRVRC’s effort as well. Again, like Charlottesville, the New River Valley’s initiative built on many previous efforts for enhancing environmental stewardship and sustainability in the region. The City of Roanoke had led the way in this respect, adopting an array of environmental policies and regulations in 2006. In September of that year, the city also joined ICLEI (Cramer, 2006). By 2010, Roanoke and Blacksburg were participating in the ICLEI sponsored ‘Go Green Community Challenge’ which incentivized communities to develop plans combating climate change, start environmental education programs, and promote renewable energy use (Skeen, 2010). By the time the regional commission’s Livability Project commenced, many individuals and businesses in the region were aware of and involved in efforts focusing on sustainability.

The Livability Initiative also focused on strengthening interconnectivity between rural and urban areas. Branded as ‘sustainability hubs’, existing cities and towns were the focus areas for such efforts. Planning efforts were aimed at strengthening transportation networks and connectivity, employment opportunities, and community services within the hubs. With better

access, rural residents along with their urban counterparts would benefit from higher quality jobs, health care access, and cultural amenities in the hubs (“New River Valley News & Views”, 2011). However, the concept of “sustainability hubs” also drew the first criticisms from the Tea Party (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011a).

Opposition against the Livability Project “snowballed” throughout the summer of 2011. At the July 25th meeting of the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors, it came to a head. A large crowd of 200 people attended, many of who yelled at and jeered elected officials and planners who were present (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011a; Anonymous, 2016). The 20 individuals who spoke against the project recited a common list of Tea Party grievances. They included claims about Agenda 21, as well as concerns over property rights, communism, and the supposed unconstitutionality of regional planning commissions (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011a; “Pulaski County Board of Supervisors”, 2011). Throughout the region, Tea Partiers began an intense letter writing campaign in regional newspapers aimed at elected officials. Opposition became so heated that threats were directed at planners and others involved in the Livability Initiative. However, activists’ principal tactic was to attend local government meetings and verbally harangue officials who had lent their support to the planning effort (Anonymous, 2016).

With resistance peaking at the same time as the initiative began its community engagement process, regional planners were left “scrambling to learn” about the opposition. As a direct result of Tea Party involvement, planners created an inclusive strategy to get widespread participation from the public (Anonymous, 2016). This strategy blended a traditional approach of public meetings with more unique methods that gave participants a meaningful and even fun role to play in the process.

Over the course of three years, numerous public meetings were held throughout the region that gave public participants direct access to learning about and contributing to the initiative. Though public meetings were reflective of a more traditional approach to public engagement, regional planners facilitated meetings that used many diverse and unique methods to help people engage with the effort. Starting with a ‘Kickoff Summit’ on August 11th, 2011, the event came a mere two weeks after the public outcry in Pulaski County. Roughly 150 people attended the ‘Summit’, so many that planners had to split participants into small groups for discussion. Citizens were asked to share the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their community and region. They were also asked to describe what they wanted to see happen in the area in 20 or 30 years. Though the issues identified were mixed, opposition to the plan was muted (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011b). Some of the participants attended out of concerns about Agenda-21. However, the participatory strategy was already proving effective at mitigating opposition. One individual who attended out of concern about Agenda 21 found his worries to be unfounded. After listening to planners and fellow citizens, the gentleman stated, “We aren’t working toward some predetermined outcome. As long as we all participate, and are a part of the process, I think we’ll have a good result.” (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011b).

Public meetings varied in their topics, attendees, and methods. Many of these gatherings were focused on including populations not normally involved in planning efforts. Throughout the fall of 2011, various non-profits and community organizations conducted a series of focus groups that gathered input from approximately 500 low-income citizens (Anonymous, 2016; “New River Valley Livability Initiative”, 2016). In December of 2012, two community meetings were held with citizens of the Spanish-speaking community.

A rather unique component of the participatory strategy was the work accomplished by the 'Building Home' team. The team consisted of a group of student actors and musicians from Virginia Tech's Performing Arts program, who conducted a series of interactive music and theatre events. In 26 gatherings throughout the New River Valley, students blended performance arts and planning to give public participants a refreshing way to see their community's future and analyze its strength and weaknesses (Anonymous, 2016; "New River Valley Livability Initiative", 2016). After receiving a large amount of input from citizens, members of the 'Building Home' team put on two interactive theatre performances, "Whether System: A Town Hall Nation Event" and "Behind a Stranger's Face." A total of 637 people attended and were invited to share their thoughts after each performance ("New River Valley Livability Initiative", 2016). The performances made a lasting impression upon audiences, who were able to learn about planning concepts through entertaining ways.

Seven working groups were also formed with members from various organizations involved in the initiative. Each group met monthly in 2012 and was tasked with developing strategies and scenarios pertaining to an assigned topic area. Each group included experts in the field of the assigned focus area, thereby giving the participatory process a significant source of expert knowledge. In October of 2012 and then again in April of next year, the working groups came together at a single meeting to review public comments and formulate priorities ("New River Valley Livability Initiative", 2016).

In addition to meetings and public performances, a number of innovative efforts were created that gave participants a hands-on way to engage in the process. 'Built NRV' was one such method. Developed by a Virginia Tech graduate student, 'Built NRV' was an interactive board game that made participants choose 'land uses' and rank planning preferences. The game

was also designed to force players to make tradeoffs when every decision was made. This allowed the 249 participants who played ‘Built NRV’ an opportunity to realize the challenges inherent in any real-life planning process (Anonymous, 2016; ‘New River Valley Livability Initiative’, 2016). At public meetings and informal gatherings throughout the process, citizens had the opportunity to play ‘Built NRV’. As players learned more about the actual practice of planning, a much more informed dialogue grew among engaged community members (Anonymous, 2016).

Online surveys also gathered public input through interactive means. One such effort was the Community Priority Survey, which sought feedback on proposals developed by the seven working groups. This survey got 660 respondents to list their priorities concerning proposals. The geographic locations of respondents were indexed, giving project members a spatial representation of community concerns. Project members analyzed the results and used them to refine their strategies and proposals (‘New River Valley Livability Initiative’, 2016). The Community Survey proved useful for elected officials as well, as planners brought maps to local government meetings. Local politicians could then see their constituents concerns mapped by physical location (Anonymous, 2016).

A similar method was the NRV Tomorrow Survey. Similar to but more open-ended than the Community Survey, respondents were asked to rank their priorities from a list of 20 options (‘New River Valley Livability Initiative’, 2016). The options were weighted in importance, so that selecting one as a priority minimized the assigned ‘weight’ of importance in another (Anonymous, 2016). It also included a section in which users had to perform a ‘mock government budgeting’ exercise. Approximately 750 responded to the survey, further informing project members of public wants, and giving citizens an ample degree of influence and

knowledge about the Livability Initiative (Anonymous, 2016; “New River Valley Livability Initiative”, 2016). It also gave citizens another opportunity to learn about the complexities and challenges inherent in the planmaking process.

As a result of these measures, approximately 6,000 residents of the New River Valley were a part of the planning effort. Local Tea Party members were not among them. From the outset, Tea Party activists eschewed any role in the process, fearing that doing so would be tacit approval (Anonymous, 2016). However, they were not disinterested in the effort. Instead, activists worked to subvert the process indirectly. In lieu of engaging alongside fellow citizens, activists focused on removing the political support for the initiative. In Pulaski County, local activists organized the “Sustain Authentic Values in the New River Valley”, otherwise known as “SAV-NRV”. This organization wanted to oust Pulaski County Administrator Peter Huber, who had been tasked by the County’s Board of Supervisors to collaborate with the Livability Initiative (Anonymous, 2016; “Petitiontoremove.com”, 2016).

Throughout the region, Tea Partiers pursued similar actions. They regularly attended local government meetings to voice disapproval and threaten elected officials with ouster from office. Some political leaders boosted Tea Party efforts, either explicitly or indirectly. In Pulaski County, some members of the Board of Supervisors declined to comment on the claims made by Tea Partiers. Instead, board members sidestepped opposition by not engaging with Tea Party speakers at public meetings. Verbal attacks on the initiative went unanswered. When the accounts of meetings were reported in local media, so too was what activists had stated. Therefore, their ideas became common knowledge in the community. The result was a striking dichotomy in public views toward the initiative. Many who had been directly involved in the Livability Initiative thought it was a great success. Others who had heard only the Tea Party side

believed it a failure or an example of bad intentions. Criticism at public meetings continued for each of the first three years of the Livability Initiative's existence (Gregory, 2012; Anonymous, 2016). Some Tea Partiers even announced their own candidacies for seats in government. Their platforms were based entirely on opposition to the effort (Gangloff, 2011). However, even in Pulaski County, a hotbed of opposition, Tea Party candidates failed to take win a single seat.

Though constituting a sizeable block of opposition, activists did not solely focus on the Livability Initiative. In Roanoke, the local Tea Party group joined efforts across the Commonwealth aimed at getting municipalities to withdraw from their membership with ICLEI. At multiple meetings of the city's Board of Supervisors, activists took advantage of the regular time slot for public comments and berated elected officials for their endorsement of the international organization (Lowe, 2011). In Roanoke, Tea Partiers continuously attended meetings for two years in the hopes of removing ICLEI, despite the absence of the subject on the Board's consent agenda. In 2014, supervisors finally relented to demands and voted to end Roanoke's ICLEI membership (Purdy, 2014).

Activists also targeted a local music and arts organization. "The Crooked Road", an organization that worked to preserve historically significant sites associated with bluegrass, blues, and folk music, had attempted to gain a federal designation for one of their sites. Federal designation would also have come with funding for staffing, building renovations, and other improvements (Owens, 2013). However, through social media, letters-to-the-editor, and calls to local officials, activists produced enough of an outcry that "The Crooked Road" withdrew its request (Bunch, 2013; Owens, 2013). Tea Partiers had first criticized "Crooked Road" officials for not including them in private meetings where federal designation was discussed (Bunch,

2013). Tea Partiers also tied the organization with those of “leftist roots”, including the Sierra Club, US Climate Action Network, and ICLEI (Gregory, 2013).

Efforts like the one to end Roanoke’s ICLEI membership and opposition to “The Crooked Road” activities, exemplified the local focus of the Roanoke Tea Party. Activists spread this message through social media and by attending events, such as local farmers markets. They also increased their activity in local elections, promoting several candidates for elected positions ranging from school board to board of supervisors (Brown, 2015).

This intense focus on local matters ran counter to the goals expressed by state and national Tea Party organizations. Focused more on winning races at the state and federal level, national organizations saw groups like the Roanoke Tea Party primarily as sources for fundraising. And despite having close ties at the outset of movement, national groups and their local counterparts diverged in their policy goals as early as 2011. For the Roanoke Tea Party, this ideological split became clear that year when the group was voted out of a federation of Virginia Tea Party groups. Though the Roanoke group did not break any of the specific by-laws governing dismissal from the federation, Roanoke activists believed it was their primary focus on local affairs than national politics that truly caused the break (Brown, 2015).

Tea Party groups in the New River Valley experienced divisions within their own ranks as well. The Pulaski County Tea Party, once leading opponent to the Livability Initiative, fragmented from infighting. After the primary leader of the group moved away, activists became less organized and vocal. Only the ‘purest’ remained active; those who were the most ardent believers in the conspiracies supposedly involving Agenda-21 (Anonymous, 2016). By 2015, with limited supporters and funds, the few remaining activists ran for local office. Yet in this arena many met mixed results. Most were defeated with only a few gaining seats, mostly on

school boards and planning commissions (Casey, 2015). After this, the Pulaski Tea Party did not significantly impact the Livability Initiative.

The Livability Initiative's overall strategy for public participation was a resounding success with over 6,000 people participating. Citizens had numerous ways to influence the process and planners placed a high value on their input. For participants, this gave project an heir of legitimacy (Anonymous, 2016). The "blank slate" for outcomes also allowed projects to continue indefinitely into the future. The Livability Initiative continues as an ongoing program, and will likely last in the region for decades to come.

A number of projects completed in 2015 displayed how the initiative benefitted the New River Valley. One project retrofitted Prices Fork Elementary School in Radford, Virginia. With support from several organizations, the school was transformed into housing for low-income elderly tenants. A local food initiative provided fresh produce for an on-site commercial kitchen as well. A similar project took place in the community of Rich Creek, where an artist collective renovated a supportive living facility. Artists painted colorful murals on the previously empty walls and gave residents a visually stunning place to call home ("Livability in Action", 2015). In Giles County, local government and small businesses together created a marketing strategy to advertise the County's 37 miles of public access along the New River. In Floyd County, people from local businesses participated in a six-week economic development course. After a series of classes and mentoring sessions, participants were given the opportunity to competitively pitch their business ideas, with the winner receiving a \$5,000 reward ("Livability in Action", 2015). Each of these projects hinged on efforts undertaken as part of the Livability Initiative.

A project that was very successful was 'Solarize Blacksburg'. This program incentivized the use of solar power by lowering installation costs for homeowners. The state government

funded the program with a \$1.5 million grant, which was repaid almost immediately due to explosive consumer demand (Anonymous, 2016). And the direct economic benefit to Blacksburg was estimated to be \$440,000, produced mainly in wages to installers. Yet savings from avoided energy costs would likely be even greater and last for decades (“Livability in Action”, 2016). Similar programs were quickly created in municipalities throughout the region, giving residents the opportunity to enjoy energy savings from solar power throughout the New River Valley.

Finally, the adept political maneuvering of regional planners contributed to the overall success of the initiative. During the project’s first few months, NRVRC planners correctly foresaw the dangerous potential for Tea Party activists to take over the conversation about livability. However, instead of working to sidestep participation altogether, planners encouraged more of it, and gathered broad community support through a wide range of inclusive, innovative methods. Tea Party opposition was effectively overwhelmed by a wave of involvement and support from their fellow citizens with different perspectives (Anonymous, 2016). NRVRC planners also showed skillful political acumen by not asking involved localities to formally adopt the initiative. This helped elected officials avoid more confrontations playing out in their public meetings, a favorite haunt for activists (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012; Anonymous, 2016). Nevertheless, local governments still benefitted. One significant advantage came from access to the large amount of useful data produced by the initiative (Anonymous, 2016). Finally, citizens from the various municipalities in which the project was active also benefitted.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

The Tea Party and like-minded activists have not always been purely obstructive towards planning. Though similar in broad ideology, various groups have played different roles in debates on planning efforts throughout the Commonwealth. From 2010 to 2014, the evolution of

Tea Party positions was on full display in Chesterfield County. An assortment of activist groups went from attacking the County's update of its comprehensive plan in the harsh terms typical of the anti-Agenda 21 movement, to eventually supporting the final plan. Chesterfield's Tea Partiers also focused scrutiny on a whole range of government activities besides planning. Issues related to property taxes, school funding, and even national politics have all been points of focus for local groups.

Tea Party activism in Chesterfield County evolved over time. Groups began as they did elsewhere by vocally opposing a single piece of policy. Yet over time activists played an increasing role in actual policymaking. The increased Tea Party role impacted lengthy efforts to update the County's Comprehensive Plan. By the end of the process, activists, who had first simply opposed the plan, had become so well organized that they strongly influenced the final document. Chesterfield's Planning Department partly helped strengthen Tea Party influence by gradually becoming more reliant on an inclusive, collaborative model for public engagement. This also strengthened the influence of the broader public as well. Chesterfield planners worked diligently to provide ample opportunities for citizens to give meaningful input (Turner, 2016). The result was a model for participation that gave equal weight to a multitude of opinions within Chesterfield.

Yet Chesterfield's effort to update its comprehensive plan was troubled long before the rise of the local Tea Party. Beginning in 2007, the process was first slated for completion by September 2010 (Pearson, 2008a). Yet almost immediately, the process ran into difficulties due to the political atmosphere and demographics of the County. It would not be until October 2012 that Chesterfield County would adopt a comprehensive plan.

During the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st, Chesterfield developed from a rural county into one defined by its suburban character. Since the 1970s, the County government, Board of Supervisors, and Planning Commission had generally maintained a stance very favorable to almost any form of development. Strip malls, large lot subdivisions, and other forms of suburban development became commonplace. The results were increased strain on public services and greatly reduced amounts of open space. Chesterfield's politically conservative local government and populace favored low tax rates. The combination often hampered funding for public infrastructure and services. By 2006, 85.6 percent of Chesterfield homes were single family residential with relatively large lots (Pearson, 2007; Bacon, 2011).

By 2007, the Planning Commission and Planning Department recognized that this rate of development was untenable (Pearson, 2007). They also determined that a new Comprehensive Plan was required. In years prior, the county government had relied on twenty-two separate community area plans, each with little relation to one another, as the primary documents to guide development. The updated plan included provisions related to growth management, sustainability, and New Urbanism (Pearson, 2008a). They were also provisions without precedent in Chesterfield's previous planning efforts.

The immense challenge posed by creating a new comprehensive plan for a locality the size of Chesterfield convinced the Planning Commission to hire an outside consultant. In March of 2009, the Charlottesville based firm Renaissance Planning Group (RPG) was hired to develop a plan at the cost of \$870,000 to the County (Pearson, 2009c). That spring, RPG began planning for Chesterfield in ways never before seen in the County. First, the plan envisioned Chesterfield in its 'built out' stage roughly 80 to 100 years in the future. The first draft discussed how by 2100, Chesterfield would have 304,000 homes and a maximum population of 759,000, up from

123,000 homes and 319,000 people in 2010 (Pearson, 2011a; “Chesterfield County”, 2013). The document also envisioned a mixed-use, high density, urban community than many citizens anticipated (Turner, 2016). Finally, the plan was laden with jargon discussing sustainability and New Urbanist principles with which many Chesterfield residents were unfamiliar (Gregory, 2011).

Concerns simultaneously arose about the public’s impact on the process. RPG relied on a traditional mix of outreach methods, including public meetings, the County’s website, and print media. Yet Board of Supervisor members questioned the effectiveness of these strategies and the ability of RPG to encourage more people to become involved. County officials acknowledged such problems, stating, "that the bugs are still being worked out" (Pearson, 2009a). The plan was also advertised primarily in local newspapers and through civic groups. So only the most active members of a community became aware of the effort (Pearson, 2009a). Limited community involvement would dog the process throughout its entirety.

The primary method to get public input was a 32-member steering committee comprised of representatives of different interests in Chesterfield. Armed with the slogan “Today, Tomorrow, Together”, participants were to help RPG and County planners in developing a plan that integrated land-use, environmental considerations, transportation, economic development, and public services in a way unprecedented in Chesterfield. However, much of the actual work was done by RPG and the County (Pearson, 2009b). In keeping with this, consultants urged the steering committee to “not get held up by not resolving the smaller issues. Consensus is the goal. We'll have to let some things go. Ask yourselves not 'Do I love this outcome,' but 'Can I live with it?'" (Pearson, 2009b). Later in the process, steering committee members would complain that RPG consultants and County staff did not heed their input (Pearson, 2011a).

Nearing the end of 2010, RPG, the steering committee, and the County began to finalize a draft plan. The 216-page plan endorsed high-density development along major roadways, increased numbers of multifamily, affordable homes, and created new ‘countryside zoning’. The new zoning category sparked a strong outcry due to its requirement that single-family lots be at least 25 acres before building on them. The plan’s vagueness was also cited as problematic (Pearson, 2011a). Concerns about the lack of substantial public input also remained. Yet despite the many criticisms, it appeared that the plan was still on track for approval. Its adoption date was set for fall 2011, just in time for Supervisors to claim success right before an election (Pearson, 2010).

Throughout 2010, several grassroots organizations became active in the County, including the ‘Virginia Campaign for Liberty’ and the ‘Chester Patriots’ (Pearson, 2010; Bacon, 2011). Drawing inspiration from the national Tea Party movement, Chesterfield activists began to focus attention on the County’s government. Almost immediately, the effort to update the Comprehensive Plan came under attack. Tea Party groups initially criticized the plan’s ‘countryside’ and ‘countryside residential’ zoning classifications, which limited single-family development to lots of at least 25 or 5 acres, respectively. Prominent developers and vocal members of the public expressed similar criticisms (Pearson, 2010). By January of 2011, activists began to speak about Agenda-21, signaling a substantive shift in the debate.

It was no coincidence that Chesterfield activists began bringing up Agenda-21, UN conspiracy, and destruction of private property rights at the same time as similar events were unfolding throughout the Commonwealth. Like other groups across the U.S. in 2011, Chesterfield activists relied on an assortment of social media, conservative literature, and

Agenda-21 “experts” to frame their argument (McConnell, 2015). Thus, as elsewhere, local activists had little concern for empirical evidence that countered their views.

Tea Party opposition in Chesterfield displayed several traits unique within the statewide anti Agenda-21 movement. One such characteristic related to the plan’s multiple provisions related to Smart Growth and New Urbanism. Tea Party activists strongly opposed such measures and painted them as government tools to destroy property rights (Gregory, 2011). These state-of-the-art planning practices were unheard of in Chesterfield, and the plan’s reliance upon them greatly animated opposition (Turner, 2016). Donna Holt of the Virginia Campaign for Liberty summed up the opposition by stating, “We are considering something that's very new to us that we have not experimented with before.” Holt claimed that smart growth plans in California had led to ‘major problems’ and dangerously overactive governments (Hester, 2011). In their opposition, activists aligned with wealthy developers in denouncing the plan’s future restrictions on single-family development. In other circumstances, activists might have loathed such interests as the business ‘elites’ at which the national Tea Party movement had directed so much anger (Berlet, 2011).

Similar to the debates in Charlottesville, Blacksburg, and the Middle Peninsula, local activists spread their ideas by attending many public meetings, warning that planners were malevolent agents working on behalf the United Nations. Here, activists likened the anti-sprawl, Smart Growth language permeating the Chesterfield’s draft comprehensive plan with documents published by the United Nations (Dovi, 2012). Planners, Board of Supervisors members, and others involved in the process dismissed the most egregious claims. But some did express sympathy with the concerns of activists. Board Chairman Dan Gecker stated, “At its core, [the proposed plan] doesn’t recognize what we are” (Dovi, 2012). Some observers pointed out that

the timing of the plan's proposed adoption, right before an election, posed a political problem to Board members. Writing in local newspapers, local media pundits said that the Supervisors had given too much attention to the concerns of an active minority of citizens in order to remain in power (McConnell, 2015).

Whether politically motivated or not, one area of agreement between County officials and activists was the plan's vagueness. One activist said, "The language is very, very vague and leaves the door open to some very nefarious ordinances and regulations" (Hester, 2011). Planners responded by stating that comprehensive plans, as only blueprints for future growth, had no legal standing and thus no means to realize the plan's intentions (Hester, 2011; Turner, 2016) Ordinances and policies would be adopted in the future to implement the plan with additional public input (Hester, 2011). Nevertheless, the Board of Supervisors agreed that the vagueness of the draft plan was a major problem.

Another issue activists and politicians agreed on was the lack of an effective strategy for public participation. RPG's traditional method of public engagement, as described above, fell short in gathering sufficient input from citizens. Activists also felt that the Steering committee's contributions went unheeded (Hester, 2011). Some members of the committee felt the same, with one member stating, "When I look at this draft, I don't see the work of the steering committee." RPG planners admitted as much, stating that they and not the committee had developed most of the document. Nevertheless, 80 percent of the steering committee approved the draft plan when it was finally submitted to the Planning Commission in January of 2011 (Pearson, 2011b).

Activists also criticized the Renaissance Planning Group. First, they focused on the \$870,000 bill paid to the consulting firm. They claimed that this egregious cost typified wasteful spending on the part of local government (Hester, 2011). Also, activists cited RPG's work in

Florida on sustainable development as evidence that the organization was implementing Agenda-21 in Chesterfield (Gregory, 2011). In the eyes of activists, the ‘cookie-cutter’ draft plan heavily favored the kind of sustainable development that would herd Chesterfield residents into “dense, urban settlement zones”, and deprive them of their of the property and personal freedom (Reid, 2012).

Criticism mounted against the proposed plan for most of 2011. Even after the Planning Commission requested substantial revisions, the Board of Supervisors unanimously chose to completely return the document back to the drawing board in January of 2012. They cited reasons similar to Tea Party concerns. The plan focused too intently on urban development, was laden with unclear jargon, and left citizens bewildered as to its intent (Buettner, 2012a; Dovi, 2012). With the rejection of the completed draft plan, the Board voted to end RPG’s contract.

The County planning staff was now charged with writing an entirely new plan by the end of the year. Both Board members and planners cited the need for a document that was clear, understandable, and usable (Buettner, 2012a). For example, land use categories were written so that they could be understood without any assistance from professional planners or attorneys (Simmelink and Turner, 2016). Even the County library staff assisted writing the new plan to ensure clarity (Buettner, 2012b) The new plan would also closely rely on the existing 22 community plans, something that RPG’s draft did not (Buettner, 2012a).

New strategies were implemented to meaningfully obtain public input while activists continued their involvement (Dovi, 2012). Channeling the increased attention to the plans, County planners set up a series of community meetings throughout the summer of 2012 (Buettner, 2012c). Activists often were in attendance. However, many other citizens attended as well, thereby creating a broader dialogue (Simmelink, 2016). An online comment forum was

created to give citizens an opportunity to voice their concern or approval of any section of the draft (Buettner, 2012c; Turner, 2016).

The result of these efforts was a “lean, clear, practical document” that garnered approval from County staff, citizens, Tea Party groups and activists (Buettner, 2012c). Activists saw little to worry about in its concise language and lauded the explicit language protective of property rights (McConnell, 2015). The revised plan was adopted in October of 2012, finally ending a highly contentious and costly planmaking effort begun nearly five years before.

The influence activists had on the Comprehensive Plan was simply the beginning of their efforts to impact a wide range of government initiatives. Next up for scrutiny was a proposed meals tax that would bring in much needed revenue (Buettner, 2013). In a May 2013 meeting with the Board of Supervisors, a group entitled the ‘Chesterfield Taxpayer Alliance Against the Meals Tax’ showed up armed with an actual pitchfork. The group included members from the Chester Patriots who had been heavily involved with the debate over the Comprehensive Plan (Buettner, 2013). Activists began a public relations campaign reminiscent of recent anti-Agenda 21 efforts. An intense letter writing campaign was begun, along with mailings and activists attending numerous public forums (Buettner, 2013).

Because of substantial interest from the public, the meals tax proposal was added to the 2013 local elections as a public referendum. Voters rejected it with 56 percent of the vote. Along with it, Chesterfield residents refused what was described by one County official as the “smartest and most efficient way” to fund an annual bond debt service of \$353 million for schools and public safety projects (McConnell, 2013). They then convinced the Board of Supervisors to not raise property tax rates to cover the cost.

Activists continued to play an increased role in local politics, acting on the newfound realization that they could produce significant change in their community. Tea Party organizations sent ‘representatives’ to government meetings to observe, report, and speak out against policy they opposed. One member of the Richmond Tea Party summed up this shift, stating,

"As we grew and matured as a movement, we learned that the federal government often mandates to the states and the states mandate to the local governments.

Therefore, it is at the local level that we both have the duty and opportunity to stop imposed laws and edicts. We also found that local governments have long been free of scrutiny and are deservedly in need of attention" (Shulleeta, 2011).

Activity at the local level also greatly impacted national politics. In the 2014 Republican primary for the 7th Congressional District, the insurgent candidacy of David Brat, a Tea Party favorite, defeated sitting House Majority Leader Eric Cantor 55.5 percent to 44.5 percent (McConnell, 2015a). The upset showed off the impressive organizational skills of Chesterfield’s Tea Party groups. Local activists acted like a national campaign, knocking on doors and calling voters by the thousands (McConnell, 2015a). The result was the first primary defeat of a sitting House Majority Leader since 1899.

In 2015, Tea Partiers returned their focus to matters related to planning. However, Chesterfield’s planners were prepared for opposition this time, and had instituted an inclusive model of participation to gather public opinion on a plan designed to increase the use of non-motorized modes of transportation in the County. Much of the plan centered around promoting the opportunity to use bicycles. The County’s effort to adopt a countywide bike plan relied heavily on an inclusive, thought-out, and sincere model of

public participation (Simmelink, 2016). The plan itself was designed to set a framework for the creation of a system of trails and on-road bicycle routes, thereby promoting health, safety, and accessibility for the community. Planners sought public opinion on the plan, facilitating a total of 18 community meetings. In total, roughly 1,000 people attended to discuss and offer their thoughts (“Narrative Synopsis”, 2015; Turner, 2016). An online survey was distributed to residents, of which 1,045 were completed (“Narrative Synopsis, 2015). Finally, planners created an online webpage that allowed citizens to comment on any parts of the plan during their own time (Simmelink, 2016).

The Chesterfield Tea Party and Chester Patriots opposed the Bike Plan and voiced their concerns at several meetings. Central to their criticism was the high cost of the plan, at \$360 million. They also took issue with Sport Backers RVA Bike Walk initiative, a Richmond area organization dedicated to promoting active, healthy living in the region (McConnell, 2015b; Simmelink, 2016). The organization both helped planners design the Bike Plan and recruited support for it. For instance, the initiative compiled the signatures of roughly 1,000 county residents in support of the plan and sent them to the Board of Supervisors (McConnell, 2015b). Local activists took umbrage to Bike Walk’s role as a lobbyist, yet seemed ignorant of the fact that Bike Walk’s methods mirrored their own.

In November 2015, the Bike Plan was adopted over Tea Party objections. The final Board meeting discussing its passage had over 300 citizen attendees, yet a substantial number spoke in favor (McConnell, 2015b). Many had been informed of its benefits through the 18 community meetings facilitated by planners (Simmelink and Turner, 2016). A mere handful of 16 citizens spoke out against the plan, with their central concerns being cost and the impact on property rights (McConnell, 2015b). Although this may have constituted

serious opposition to a county proposal in the past, opposition was now diluted due to broader public support.

HENRICO COUNTY

One of the first criticisms leveled at the Tea Party movement was its supposed “astro-turf” construction. In its first months of existence, critics charged that the movement was no more than an illusion financed by the Koch Brothers and perpetuated by conservative talk radio and Fox News. This has certainly been true to an extent, as right-wing media and a small cadre of Republican elites have played a significant role in mobilizing the Tea Party movement (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). Conservative media, especially, has proven to be influential by creating an “echo chamber” in which audiences heard messages confirming conservative viewpoints while never offering rebuttals (Jamieson, 2008). Such influences undeniably left a large impression upon members of local Tea Party groups (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012).

However, despite the national rhetoric surrounding the Tea Party movement and conservative media, Virginia’s local groups displayed a surprising amount of diversity (Brown, 2015). Many Tea Party groups strictly focused on national politics while others addressed local matters. Different tactics and strategies were used to implement their respective agendas. In most states, including Virginia, organizations maintained only a loose statewide affiliation and hardly ever coordinated efforts (Brown, 2015).

This diversity was even apparent among groups operating in the greater Richmond area. Despite being equally active, groups in Chesterfield and Henrico differed in their focus. Henrico groups in particular have been much more interested in state and national politics. In 2014, groups such as the Henrico Tea Party, Richmond Tea Party, and Patrick Henry Patriots were instrumental in organizing for that effort that defeated Eric Cantor. Political observers claimed it

was the groups' "homegrown dynamic", and not a larger wave of Tea Party activism, that was most responsible for Cantor's defeat (Galuszka, 2014). Henrico groups also had visible leaders within the statewide confederation of Tea Party groups and often hosted conferences and rallies (McConnell, 2014). Their presence was readily apparent throughout Henrico County as well, with Tea Party signs dotting the County's roadsides. With all these factors, Henrico had the appearance and notoriety of being a Tea Party hotbed (Shulleeta, 2013).

Yet in contrast to Chesterfield, planners in Henrico's county government received little opposition from Tea Party activists (Shulleeta, 2013; Blankinship, 2016). Thus, the differences between Chesterfield's and Henrico's Tea Party groups highlighted the subtle complexities of the movement. They also pointed out the factors that lead to increased Tea Party opposition toward planning in certain localities, while displaying how similar localities did not experience similar activism.

Why the Tea Party movement did not oppose planning efforts in Henrico displayed why activists did so in other localities. Like every place that has been affected by Tea Party activists, Henrico's demographics and the actions taken by local government helped define Tea Party activism, or the lack thereof. The absence of activism in Henrico displayed how more urban, demographically diverse, and densely populated localities inhibited antagonism from any one politically active organization. But even though Tea Party activists in Henrico did not oppose any major planning efforts, planners and activists did not steer entirely clear of each other.

Since 2011, drivers throughout Henrico County had seen an increasing amount of Tea Party signage along major roadways. By 2013, roughly 200 signs were posted in Henrico, as well as the neighboring counties of Hanover and King William. Often constructed out of plywood and adorned with simple messages written in black paint, the signs gave off a homegrown, rustic feel.

Their messages included common conservative themes that focused on health care reform, President Obama, the federal deficit, and the merits of small government. Activists claim that the signs were part of a “guerrilla marketing strategy”, designed to give the appearance that the area was a hotbed of Tea Party support (Shulleeta, 2013).

They were also one of the few and perhaps most successful ways that local groups disseminated their ideas among the wider public. Drivers passing by signs could easily read them due to their brightness and clear language. Unlike the online content of Tea Party groups, of which most was read solely by sympathetic activists, the signs allowed local activists to communicate with a much wider audience (Good, 2010; Shulleeta, 2013; Brown, 2015).

However, by the spring of 2012, many Henrico residents began to complain to the County’s Zoning Department. Soon enough, the County became inundated with complaints from residents who criticized both the sign’s messages and their pervasiveness throughout the county. One particular sign, located near a major thoroughfare within a primarily residential area, attracted enough attention that the county planning department was forced to act (Blankinship, 2016). Henrico, like almost all Virginia localities, regulated signs to promote traffic safety and enhance the appearance of the community. Though unable to regulate the sign based on its content, planners did find that it violated Henrico’s sign ordinances due to its location within the public right-of-way and because of its permanent nature. No permit for its placement had been requested as well. So Henrico planners requested the sign’s removal as a matter of routine compliance with County Code (Blankinship, 2016).

However, the County’s action greatly angered the sign’s owner and members of the Henrico Tea Party. Despite the routine nature of the County’s request, activists quickly contended the action was a violation of their First Amendment rights. In doing so, they ignored

the many past legal decisions that established the right for localities to restrict signage based on their “time, place, and manner” (Blankinship, 2016). Activists spoke out on online forums, claiming that the County had decided “to toss the 1st Amendment to the US Constitution” (VA Right, 2016). In April 2012, members of the Henrico Tea Party decried the County’s sign ordinances at a meeting of the Board of Supervisors. In response, Board members simply stated the County did not enact or enforce ordinances that were unconstitutional (Henrico Board of Supervisors, 2012). With this relatively indifferent response from the Board and the County’s persistent requests to remove the sign, the sign’s owner did just that, paid the permit fee, and stopped attending public meetings (Blankinship, 2016).

This incident involving a single Tea Party sign had thus far represented the only real confrontation between planners and activists in Henrico. Unlike Chesterfield, where activists interjected in the planning process, Henrico planners did not see Tea Party opposition to their efforts. This was despite the fact that Chesterfield and Henrico have often been compared to one another and repeatedly called each other’s “doppelganger” (Galuzska, 2013). It was also surprising because the Henrico was home to some of the most active, passionate conservative grassroots organizations in the United States. These were the very groups President Bill Clinton criticized during his speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, claiming that it was because of groups like those in Henrico that the Republican Party had become so uncompromising. The former president stated that the conservative movement inhabited an “alternate universe” and had little tolerance for democratic dialogue (Clinton, 2012). For the Tea Party groups in Henrico, this rightward shift of the Republican Party represented a success and a culmination of their efforts (Brown, 2015).

Henrico County possessed three factors that inhibited Tea Party activism at the local level. These factors appeared to be largely absent in localities that experienced Tea Party opposition to planning. First, Henrico was home to a large, diverse population separated into urban, suburban, and rural development landscapes. The public that participated in local government matters displayed this diversity. Second, the County was known for being well managed with a pro-business, pro-development stance, indicating a more politically conservative government (Henrico County, 2009; Blankinship, 2016). Finally, Henrico never enacted plans or policies that energized activism the way it did in other localities.

First, Henrico's demographics included a more liberal and diverse populace than many other localities in which the Tea Party operated. Politically, Henrico had a mixed voting record, swinging between Democrats and Republicans. In 2008, President Obama won the County, signaling the first victory for Democrats there since the 1960s. In 2009, Bob McDonnell (R) won Henrico in the state gubernatorial race just a year later. In 2012, Obama won the County again (Hamby, 2012; "Election", 2012).

This back and forth was likely due in part to Henrico's mixed racial makeup and high educational attainment, characteristics generally more indicative of liberal voting patterns (Berlet, 2011). In 2014, Henrico's population was 59 percent white and 30 percent African-American. Such numbers were nearly identical to the Richmond region overall and the state's other more urban and liberal areas Norfolk and Northern Virginia (American Factfinder, 2014).

In comparison, Chesterfield's population is much less diverse, despite being part of the region. In 2014, Chesterfield's population was 70 percent white and only 22 percent African-American. Henrico citizens also had a higher level of educational attainment than those in Chesterfield, with 15.2 percent of the population holding a bachelors degree or higher compared

with 9.7 percent in Chesterfield. Finally, 64.6 percent of Henrico citizens owned their homes, compared with 77.5 percent in Chesterfield (American Factfinder, 2014). This number was especially significant, As Thompson (2012) has shown, in older, whiter, suburban communities, Tea Party activism is much more likely to arise.

Communities with varying development patterns, containing rural, suburban, and urban settings, also tend to have diverse politics (Dierwechter, 2008). Henrico fits this description, as the increasingly developed western portions of the County increasingly have transformed the suburban landscape into a more urban one. Meanwhile, the northern and eastern areas of the County have retained suburban and rural characteristics, but these are changing too (Henrico County, 2009).

Finally, when Henrico citizens have participated in planning efforts, their varied interests have been on display. The public input on a controversial plan for a Dominion substation in Varina was one example. At a public hearing conducted by Dominion to gain community input, many citizens voiced a myriad of concerns. Some spoke about potential negative impacts to the local environment. Others worried about locating industrial uses near their homes and development being drawn to the area. Others wanted the substation built in a way optimal for Dominion. Completely contrary to other residents, some citizens wanted it built to actually help facilitate development (Lappas, 2016). On this single issue, local citizens were divided in their interests. In such an environment, Tea Partiers would likely find some fellow residents supportive of their agenda but many others opposed.

Henrico County also never adopted policies and programs that became targets of Tea Party opposition elsewhere. Though the comprehensive plan spoke to sustainability and environmental protection, none of the major policies that excited Tea Party members across the

country were enacted (Henrico County, 2009; Blankinship, 2016). Henrico never became a member of ICLEI or adopted regulations that referenced Agenda-21. Thus, Henrico's Tea Partiers did not have these popular targets on which to mount opposition to local government and planning.

Perhaps most importantly, Henrico County's government has long been known for its efficient management and conservative tendencies. Its current and past County managers have abided by the principal "low taxes plus good education equal jobs, which equals low taxes" (Galuszka, 2013). Adherence to this principal appears to have been effective, as Henrico maintained a national reputation of providing quality jobs and low tax rates. By 2013, real estate taxes had not been increased in 35 years, and the County held AAA credit rating. However, tight fiscal policies did not detract from public services. Henrico's public education system, police and fire departments, and governmental operations were consistently been ranked highly by trade publications and U.S. News & World Report (Galuszka, 2013). For many residents and observers, Henrico's local government was emblematic of a highly functional, effective public administration.

Without the policies that invoked the conspiratorial edge of Tea Party activism, Henrico's Tea Partiers found little reason to energetically oppose a well-managed, fiscally conservative local government. Though they did speak out against a meals tax proposal in 2013, voters in the County instead approved the meals tax referendum. Money collected by the tax went entirely toward the education system (Galuszka, 2013). Schools in the eastern portion of the County, an area with lower incomes and challenged neighborhoods, benefitted in particular. The meals tax referendum put Henrico's diverse voting constituencies on display.

Therefore, the case of Henrico showed how existing conditions, including local politics, demographics, and local governance, impacted the public's perception of government. This perception can play a central role in defining how the public participates in local government matters. In Henrico, public participation appeared to be of a typical variety. Citizens voiced concerns when government action directly impacted their lives. When it did not, citizens remained relatively unengaged.

The impacts of Tea Party activism on Henrico's planning function were very limited. Only after the sign issue arose did activists become engaged at the municipal level of government (Shulleeta, 2013; Blankinship, 2016). When they did, they limited themselves to only attending meetings of the Board of Supervisors. However, unlike in other localities, here Tea Partiers did not sway Board members to their line of thinking. The politicians allied with Henrico's Zoning Enforcement, preventing activists from having any significant impact (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Henrico Board of Supervisors, 2012; Blankinship, 2016).

The Henrico case offers several important conclusions. First, the factors limiting Tea Party activism in Henrico were largely absent in other localities in which opposition affected planning. No other locality or region had as diverse or urban a population as Henrico (Blankinship, 2016). Well-managed local governance also proved effective at curtailing opposition before it could ever erupt. Widespread belief in the County's fiscal prowess provided a wellspring of public support (Galuszka, 2013). Finally, though Henrico's Tea Partiers often spoke against Agenda-21 on their online platforms, the absence of ICLEI or policies explicitly supporting sustainability gave them no reason to mount sustained and provocative attacks on County government. So although active Tea Party groups existed, activists spared Henrico planners and officials from the kind of vehement opposition seen elsewhere.

THE MIDDLE PENINSULA

In the summer of 2010, a number of letters were published in the Gloucester-Mathews Gazette-Journal that foreshadowed a raucous debate between planners of the Middle Peninsula District Planning Commission and activists. The letters echoed themes traditionally expressed by those of a politically conservative stance, including an admiration for small government, traditional Christian values, and free-market capitalism (Maggard, 2010; Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). Yet by 2011, many letters expressed serious concerns regarding socialism, the destruction of private property rights, and Agenda 21. The letters claimed that these threats did not only emanate from the Federal government, but also from local authorities (Hamilton, 2011; Lawrence, 2012). In the Middle Peninsula, regional planning in particular came under heavy written fire from conservative activists.

Activism here was unique in several ways. First, although the interactions statewide between activists and local government officials were often heated, perhaps none included confrontations that were so visceral and contentious as those in the Middle Peninsula. Also, the opposition that arose in this quiet rural area was not sparked by any single policy or government initiative. Instead, an abrupt groundswell of opinion formed that opposed almost all local government action, *of any kind*. Activists attacked existing policy, such as the Comprehensive Plan of Mathews County, while simultaneously opposing new programs proposed in the hopes of benefitting the region. Public opposition derailed one such proposal, an economic development program that would have incentivized local young adults to take up oyster harvesting, an occupation with deep roots in the community (Lawrence, 2016). Even more so than in other localities, the activism that formed throughout the counties of the Middle Peninsula expressed views based on little or no empirical evidence (Van Dyke, 2014; Lawrence, 2016).

The events on the Middle Peninsula illustrated how the Tea Party's online presence shaped the exchanges between activists and planners. These altercations sufficiently affected the ability of local governments to function so that actual programs were blocked from implementation. Once routine government actions became jeopardized and were accomplished only after lengthy, intractable efforts on the part of public servants (Lawrence, 2016). And finally, elected officials became increasingly wary of pursuing policies that were at risk of attracting intense opposition.

The Middle Peninsula case fully illustrated the wide range of consequences generated through activism. In some instances, activists succeeded in blocking the implementation of proposed policies or curtailing the execution of preexisting government policies (Lawrence, 2016). They were especially successful when opposing policies without receiving pushback from fellow citizens. However, activists were not successful in restraining local government action on every issue they opposed. On matters where there was significant public opposition to the position of Tea Partiers, planners were better able to achieve their desired outcomes (Ducey-Ortiz, 2017).

Activism in the Middle Peninsula drew upon regional characteristics favorable to conservative politics. First, the localities included in the Middle Peninsula Planning District's service area were all very rural. Their average density of 67.2 people per square mile was substantially less than the state average of 202 persons ("Mathews County", 2011). The region also experienced a decline in population and employment in the years prior to 2011. The level of educational attainment was lower than the Virginia average as well, with only 20 percent holding a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32 percent for the state ("Virginia Employment Commission", 2016).

Politically, the region predominantly voted for conservative candidates in local, state, and presidential elections (Virginia Public Access Project, 2016). In 2012, Mitt Romney (R) received 57 percent of the regional vote, compared with 41 percent for President Obama (“Election Results”, 2012). States with a politically conservative bent, were predominantly rural, and had populations that were generally older, less formally educated, and were in economic decline. Such places have been found to have a higher proportion of anti-Agenda 21 activities (Frick, Waddell, and Weinzimmer, 2015). Within the context of Virginia, this proved to be true in the Middle Peninsula as well.

In early 2009, Tom Robinson of Mathews County founded the Peninsula Patriots after hearing about the Tea Party as a way for citizens to “rise up.” Frustrated with the lack of principled politicians who favored “small government, low taxes, and religious freedom,” Robinson used the popular site Meetup.com to recruit new members. By the end of 2010, the Peninsula Patriots consisted of dozens of local residents who held rallies and organized lobbying efforts (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). For the first several months of its existence, the group’s active online presence made no mention of Agenda 21 (Peninsula Tea Party, 2016). Yet in February 2011, a blog post cited an article posted on the online edition of *The New American Magazine*, a publication owned by the John Birch Society (Jasper, 2011). The piece detailed the ‘stealth agenda’ of the United Nations that aimed to subvert the sovereignty of local governments. It also highlighted the perceived dangers of Agenda-21, stating, “Not even Stalin, Hitler, or Mao came close to proposing anything this all intrusive and all encompassing” (Jasper, 2011). Activists operating on the Middle Peninsula, only sometimes under the Tea Party moniker, began to use this kind of language to malign local government.

The first target of activists was the Mathews County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in February of 2011. In that same month, a letter to the editor in the *Gazette-Journal* was published that criticized the plan's policies that aimed to constrain development and protect the environment (Maggard, 2011). The comp plan stated that these policies were essential in order to preserve the County's rural character. Preserving the open landscape of Mathews had been identified by residents as the single most important goal of the plan throughout an extensive public engagement process ("Mathews County", 2011). Nevertheless, in complete opposition to the sentiments of the larger community, activists painted the plan as a Soviet style takeover of private property rights that had been created with no public input (Maggard, 2011). Drawing upon Agenda-21 literature, activists cited the plan's use of terms like "sustainable development" and "community visioning" as nebulous words veiling the actual threat (Lawrence, 2016).

The comprehensive plan's use of public participation also was targeted. Activists claimed that planners had been led by 'outside influences', notably the Richmond based consulting firm Floricane, which had facilitated public meetings. Yet activists argued that meaningful public input was entirely lacking, despite the fact that public meetings had been conducted since 2008 (Lawrence, 2012, 2016). Activists first complained of the lack of meaningful public input and then attended meetings to voice their concerns. Here, they would describe planners and elected officials as being unwitting accomplices of the United Nations in implementing a 'one-world', authoritarian government. Local officials concluded, rightfully so, that these claims were "shockingly unfounded", and proceeded with the business at hand (Hamilton, 2011, Ducey-Ortiz, 2017). Without their assertions being addressed, activists would claim that citizen input was being ignored.

Despite strong opposition, the Mathews County Board of Supervisors adopted the comprehensive plan in January 2011 (Ducey-Ortiz, 2017). Criticism continued in online editorials, on message boards, and in public forums for the rest of the year. However, the comprehensive plan was not the only target of activists.

Another target was the Mathews County Aquaculture Business Park and Incubator Program. Designed to strengthen the local oyster industry, the program would lease subaqueous lands for people to use them for oyster aquaculture. A publicly owned oyster processing facility was to be provided that included a dock, electricity, maintenance facilities, and possibly even a space for sorting and marketing activities (Hamilton, 2011). The Incubator Program component involved sending local college-aged adults to Rappahannock Community College to receive job training and certification in the work of oystering (Lawrence, 2016). Mathews County seemed to have found a feasible program to strengthen an industry with deep historic roots in the region.

However, funding for the aquaculture program was provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Lawrence, 2016). Activists seized upon this fact, claiming it was an attempt by, “all kinds of government types wanting to get involved so they can take credit for this success” (White, 2011). The MPPDC formed a committee consisting of oystermen to assess the feasibility of the program with hopes that local support would stymie opposition. But on March 2, 2011, after the *Gazette – Journal* published several more letters-to-the-editor, the committee gave the program a unanimous thumbs-down. Committee members stated that the free market, not government, was best for strengthening the local oyster industry. Strikingly, those in opposition largely ignored the results of a survey conducted by the MPPDC, in which 76.2 percent of respondents had supported the Aquaculture Park as a way to create local jobs. Some 52.4 percent expressed interest in growing clams and oysters themselves (Hamilton, 2011).

Yet emails, calls, and letters from activists had influenced the committee enough so that the views of a majority of Mathews County residents were ignored.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2011, the Mathews County Comprehensive Plan and the activities of the MPPDC came under increasing criticism (Lawrence, 2012). By the summer of 2011, activists were attacking planning efforts mandated by the state, such as a set of requirements for locality's or a region's water supply plan. These requirements included items such as existing water sources, their use, projected demand, and drought and emergency plans. Activists likened the requirements to those used in the UN's statement on Agenda 21 (Lawrence, 2012). The provisions were seen as a "Trojan horse for government control." In June of 2011, a number of activists harangued public officials at a MPPDC public meeting. This was now common at such public forums, where opponents often shouted down planners trying to explain plans (Fears, 2011; Lawrence, 2012). The result was the delay or derailment of programs. The adoption of Middlesex County's Water Conservation Plan, mandated by the state and serving an immensely important public interest, was delayed nearly three months.

By late summer, activists called for counties to withdraw from the regional planning commission itself. Opponents focused on the MPPDC's collection of fees from localities it serviced, claiming that they effectively taxed residents twice (Lawrence, 2012). Also, they argued that because regional planning bodies were not expressly authorized in the U.S. constitution, the MPPDC was obviously unconstitutional (Lawrence, 2016). The MPPDC's staff came under personal attack as well, including Director Lewis Lawrence, who was supposedly "paid \$98,650 for nothing" and had a "rude" assistant (Lawrence, 2012).

In the fall of 2011, the activists of the Middle Peninsula, incorporating Tea Party groups, anti-Agenda 21 people, and other concerned citizens, became much more organized in their

opposition (Lawrence, 2012). First, they began their own public outreach by directly contacting local churches. In their efforts, they attempted to reframe the public understanding of issues and gather more members to the movement (Lawrence, 2012). Second, ‘experts’ on Agenda 21 spoke at group meetings on the danger of the activities of regional planning, local government, and the United Nations (Lawrence, 2012; Peninsula Tea Party, 2016). These efforts masked the inconsistent and largely false positions of activists behind a veil of academic integrity, thereby twisting the information presented to the public.

Finally, activists adopted and subsequently employed a step-by-step guide to civil disobedience. Drawing directly from information provided by the American Policy Center, a nonprofit dedicated to anti-Agenda 21 activism, groups like the Middle Peninsula Patriots took steps to recruit followers, disseminate information, and disrupt public forums (Lawrence, 2012; “American Policy Center”, 2016; Lawrence, 2016). Activists researched policies and tied them to Agenda 21 literature. They also researched their local governments. This included finding out the “players in your community” and “stakeholders” involved. Identifying which citizens would be supposedly hurt by policies, and lobbying for their support, was vital as well. Coordinated letter writing campaigns were seen as another integral step, which Middle Peninsula activists had been doing from the start (Lawrence, 2012). Several letters-to-the-editor with similar views would bolster arguments and make it appear that opposition was widespread throughout the community (Lawrence, 2016). Middle Peninsula activists used each of these tactics throughout 2011.

The most consequential step was to actually disrupt public meetings for the express purpose of stopping policy from being implemented. This involved attending public forums in large numbers. Spreading out amongst a crowd in ‘triangle formation’ would help create the

impression that opposition was widespread. Incongruent and demanding questions were then to be asked repeatedly of public officials. One particularly important question to be asked multiple times was, “With the implementation of this policy, tell me a single right or action I have on my property that doesn’t require your approval or involvement. What are my rights as a property owner?” (Lawrence, 2012). The purpose was to put public officials on the defensive so much that meetings would have to be adjourned prior to the close of business.

At the MPPDC’s public meeting on January 25th, 2012, activists got into a more heated exchange than usual with the MPPDC chairperson. After one activist refused to stop discussing climate change, a subject not on the agenda for that night and thus not up for discussion, an intense verbal confrontation ensued between activists and planners. Shouting and physical altercations briefly ensued before order was restored when Middlesex County Sheriffs intervened (Chillemi, 2012). Though activists did not succeed in blocking that night’s agenda in one fell swoop, the incident did gain notoriety due the report on it done by an Al Jazeera America TV news crew, who were in attendance at the January meeting (Chillemi, 2012). The presence of a TV crew from Al Jazeera America likely provoked activists further (Lawrence, 2016). In response, regional planners reconfigured the seating in MPPDC’s meeting room, thereby preventing activists from fanning out in ‘triangle formation’ to attack (Lawrence, 2012).

The debate between activists and planners now became so rancorous that it began to attract national media attention. In addition to Al Jazeera America, The Washington Post published an article in December 2011 detailing the views driving activists and how planners in various municipalities had dealt with them. Lewis Lawrence of the MPPDC summed up its effect on planning, stating that activism was “driving public policy sideways. It’s not advancing it. It’s

not going backward. The voice of a minority is trying to assert itself as the voice of the majority” (Fears, 2011).

Policy continued to be impacted into 2012. Early that year, the MPPDC and local governments began to address the effects of sea level rise on the region (Lawrence, 2012). The work was undoubtedly vital, as it was expected Virginia’s Coast to see the highest rise of sea level on the entire east coast (Grannis and Sifton, 2013). A number of Middle Peninsula citizens believe in the great importance of the issue as well, and a substantial pushback occurred. Between November 2011 and June 2012, a total of 14 letters-to-the-editor of the *Gazette-Journal* were published that attacked those who denied climate induced sea level rise (*Gazette-Journal*, 2016). The great necessity of the work, and the increasing involvement of those opposing activist efforts, bolstered the ability of local governments to address the issue of sea level rise (Lawrence, 2016).

Though activists have remained a force in the region, the level of debate has not matched the intensity it had in 2011 and early 2012. Letters-to-the-editor still appear in the *Gazette-Journal* from time to time. Public meetings of the MPPDC and local governments still receive speakers denouncing Agenda 21 and certain policies. Yet these are not as numerous nor as organized (Lawrence, 2016). Nevertheless, activist efforts continue to affect lingered local government and the MPPDC.

The participation of Tea Party activists in the Middle Peninsula region was notable in that it was largely unopposed by other citizens. In public forums, planners often found themselves solely confronting activists with little or no support from other citizen groups (Lawrence, 2016). Though occasionally support would appear in print media, pro-planning letters were almost always met with a responding wave of written criticisms (Lawrence, 2012). In both media

sources and public meetings, planners largely faced activist opposition alone. This gave activists the belief that they were acting as the true mouthpiece for the public.

In the words of one regional planner, the most important impact caused by activism was that it acted “like an anchor on the business of local government” (Lawrence, 2016). Plans and policies were delayed due to meaningless debate. Comments that planners were actively “shipping body bags filled with water from the local water supply to Africa”, caused senseless alarm and helped delay adoption of state mandated regional water supply plans (Lawrence, 2016). Claims about the falsehood of sea level rise, despite clearly measurable metrics proving otherwise, could be frequently found in letters-to-the-editor (Lawrence, 2012). The Mathews County Comprehensive Plan was delayed due to its perceived reliance on Agenda 21, despite zero empirical evidence suggesting as such.

For planners, an overwhelming amount of time and resources went towards mitigating the impact of activists, which curtailed their ability to effectively do their day-to-day work (Lawrence, 2016). The result was a substantial loss of productivity for the MPPDC.

Yet the damage from policies not proposed might have outweighed the simple delay of plans and programs. As activism intensified, the Middle Peninsula’s elected officials became increasingly wary of considering policy proposals that might elicit pieces a strong citizen pushback. No longer would a program like the Aquaculture Business Park be considered, despite the many positive impacts that it might have brought (Lawrence, 2016). Progressive policy solutions to the very real issues facing the Middle Peninsula were dead before arrival.

Though never proposing policy ideas of their own and refusing to contribute anything substantive, activists succeeded in delaying, stopping, and simply scaring local governments from taking a variety of action. Nevertheless, the problems facing the Middle Peninsula

remained, including a declining population, a prevalence of lower paying jobs, and the serious threat of sea level rise (“Virginia Employment Commission”, 2016). Despite the potential to solve some these problems through regional planning, in their minds activists successfully defeated imagined problems only to help exacerbate actual ones.

FAUQUIER COUNTY

For many, Warrenton, Virginia, was a traditional Southern small town, places like known for their rural quietude and tranquility. But on August 2nd 2012, Pastor Earl Walker Jackson, a onetime Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, interrupted the usual quiet. Standing on the steps of Fauquier County’s government building, Jackson yelled into a megaphone to about 50 people gathered before him:

“You are all on the forefront of a battle not just over the particular issue in this community, but you are at the forefront of a battle over the very nature of our country! Whether we will remain a constitutional Republic that protects the rights of citizens and individual liberty, or we’re going to become something else. Fundamentally transformed into something else. Friends, we don’t need our country fundamentally transformed into something else” (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012a).

In his speech, Jackson had neatly summarized the outlook of many Tea Party activists. America was under threat of a fundamental transformation and local government was spearheading this change. In Fauquier, the incident that precipitated Jackson’s speech, with all its dark overtones, was the County’s requirement of a private property owner to obtain a special use permit in order to sell produce on her property. For Tea Partiers, this routine matter of zoning enforcement gave cause to protest.

The actions undertaken by activists in Fauquier County were similar to those of Tea Party groups elsewhere in Virginia. They organized protests, harangued public officials at meetings, published letters-to-editor in local newspapers, promoted candidates for local office, and maintained an active presence on social media. The themes presented through these mediums reflected the views of other Tea Party groups in Virginia as well as the overall movement.

However, Fauquier's activists achieved a level of success unmatched by any of their fellow Virginia activists. Though Tea Party efforts in other localities had perhaps influenced or blocked policy, these activists successfully lobbied for legislation from the General Assembly. Because of these efforts, Fauquier's Tea Partiers influenced the land-use policies of every locality in the state. Amendments to state law that regulated local control of agricultural uses were vigorously supported by conservative groups. For planners, many believed that the 2014 bill had effectively "tied their hands" when dealing with agriculture (Johnson, 2016). No other instance of Tea Party activism had such a wide-ranging, influential impact as those produced in Fauquier.

Just like in other places where Tea Party groups were present, several factors affected how much impact activists had. In Fauquier, these factors largely supported Tea Party opposition. First, local demographics and development patterns each had a major role in giving Tea Partiers a solid base of support. Also, actions taken by Fauquier's local government in past years helped incite opposition in 2012. Social media again played an important role in disseminating ideology. Finally, the County's failure to adequately respond to opposition likely had a major part in allowing activism to control the debate (Johnson, 2016). And Tea Partiers certainly did control the debate, to a highly effective degree.

Local Characteristics

As each case study has displayed, the demographics, political inclinations, and development patterns of localities play a large role in defining the extent of Tea Party activism. Fauquier County contained the trifecta of conditions that occur in localities with the strongest Tea Party presence. Rural, politically conservative, and predominantly white localities are where Tea Party groups are most active and impactful. Older populations also skew politically conservative (Thompson, 2012; Brown, 2015). Fauquier County is no exception, with 87.6 percent of its population classified as white and its median age of 41.3. Both numbers are well above statewide averages (American Community Survey, 2014).

Politically, Fauquier has long been a Republican stronghold. In 2008, 56.3 percent of the County voted for Republican John McCain for president. In 2012, they doubled down by voting 59.3 percent for Mitt Romney (“Election”, 2008; “Election”, 2012). Republicans also represent the County at the local, state, and federal levels of government (Ballotpedia, 2015). Since 2007, Republican Rob Wittman has represented Fauquier in Virginia’s 1st Congressional District. The 1st is known for its deep conservative roots and has been held by Republicans since 1977 (Ballotpedia, 2015).

Fauquier County is also very rural, informing its political inclinations and general outlook toward planning matters. Like New Kent, Chesterfield, and the counties of the Middle Peninsula, Fauquier residents largely live on individual lots far removed from their neighbors. In such communities, residents are much more likely to maintain homogenous social interactions, thereby reinforcing traditional political, social, and cultural attitudes (Thompson, 2012). Like similar places in Virginia where intense activism arose, such development patterns likely intensified Tea Party opposition in Fauquier County.

It was a combination of Fauquier's rural development patterns and citizens' political conservative views that led to a vociferous debate over the County's proposed ordinances governing wineries. Lasting from 2007 to 2012, this debate involving rural residents, farmers, and winery owners and patrons, was a precursor to later activism by the Tea Party (Svrluga, 2011). Not only were the legal parameters governing wineries at issue, but also the very nature of the community.

For years, Fauquier County's local government had required wineries to obtain special use permits in order to operate. Although seen as onerous by winery owners, many local residents supported such measures. For them, wineries were no more than "just loud bars smack in the middle of the country", and brought with them all of the problems associated with such places. Throughout the 2000s, more wineries were opened in the County and associated problems grew. Local residents cited loud bands, large crowds, and drunk drivers, some of whom would drive over neighboring resident's yards, as ample reasons for more restrictive ordinances beyond a special use permit. Many were alarmed at the rapid construction and operation of wineries and were angered at the increased traffic and congestion it caused (Svrluga, 2011a; Johnson, 2016). On the other hand, winery owners and patrons, often consisting of wealthy individuals visiting from outside the County, vigorously opposed the measures, claiming that they would destroy business and curtail personal property rights (Svrluga, 2011a). Further complicating the debate was a series of lawsuits between some residents and certain wineries. In some cases, wineries were shut down under court order when its operations were deemed as too intrusive upon neighbors. Yet other wineries were left open and unaffected (Svrluga, 2011b). For many winery operators, this added an element of unfairness to the debate, and further intensified opposition.

State legislation added another complicating factor. For years leading up to 2012, the General Assembly had approved more and more bills supportive of the winery industry. In effect, the legislation made it increasingly harder for localities to protect the interests of local residents by regulating wineries (Svrluga, 2011a). However, despite potential conflict with State Code, Fauquier officials continued their push for new, more restrictive ordinances. Six public hearings were held between 2007 and 2012, and a number of citizens' groups on both sides of the debate were formed (Svrluga, 2012; Johnson, 2016). Finally, in 2012 Fauquier's Board of Supervisors passed a new set of ordinances over objections from winery owners. The new ordinances regulated the commercial uses of winery operations, such as weddings and concerts (Svrluga, 2012). Though supported by many residents, winery owners argued that the County's action was overly burdensome of businesses. Winery owners claimed the government was acting unconstitutionally and detrimental to the free market ("Brief Story", 2016).

Though not entirely in agreement with winery owners, local Tea Partiers were alarmed by such claims, and put themselves on the lookout for government actions that overly restricted citizens (Johnson, 2016). Also contributing to the charged atmosphere were numerous residents now engaged in local affairs. Many were not supportive of the local government, as they believed the County had either waited too long to act on the winery issue or had not done enough (Svrluga, 2012). The combination of this charged atmosphere and Fauquier's conservative tendencies provided fertile ground for Tea Party activists.

In July 2012, a normally routine measure of zoning enforcement erupted into a firestorm of controversy. Several weeks after the winery vote, a complaint was filed with Fauquier's zoning enforcement officer of a farm selling produce on its premises. According to those who made the complaint, the farm was also holding special events. When notified via an official

complaint, State Code required the County to address zoning infractions. Thus, the zoning officer visited the farm and requested the property owner, Martha Boneta, to obtain administrative special use permit. The permit would allow for lawful operation of the several businesses located on Boneta's farm, known as the "Piedmont Agricultural Academy" (Bell – Wine, 2012; Johnson, 2016). The maximum penalty for refusing to get a permit was \$5,000 ("Staff", 2012). Nevertheless, Boneta refused to obtain one and instead filed a review with Board of Zoning Appeals.

Word of Boneta's case quickly got around Fauquier and proved to be the spark for Tea Partiers to descend upon County government. Almost overnight, an active campaign arose that called for the firing of the zoning enforcement officer and repeal of the ordinances restricting uses on agricultural land (Johnson, 2016). These efforts were led by the 'Fauquier County Citizens for Family Farms', a group formed to support Boneta (Johnson, 2016). Founded by several prominent local Tea Party members, the FCCFF vigorously defended Boneta. Part of Boneta's business was to provide a venue for children's birthday parties at her farm. Her supporters were aghast that the County would threaten her with a \$5,000 fine for having a children's birthday party (FCCFF, 2012; Johnson, 2016). Tea Partiers and members of the FCCFF were also convinced that State law superseded Fauquier's ordinances, and that the County had no right to regulate any land use occurring on agricultural land (FCCFF, 2012).

The FCCFF certainly held the upper hand, at least rhetorically. Local government restricting a local farmer from having a kid's birthday party, and threatening her with a massive fine, attracted both anti-government zealots and more moderate citizens who believed the County was overreacting. It also attracted the interest of Republican Senate candidate George Allen and other individuals from Tea Party groups across the Commonwealth. People from these various

backgrounds attended a rally outside of the County's BZA office for Boneta's appeal meeting on August 2nd, 2012. Pastor E.W. Jackson attended on behalf of the Allen campaign.

Interviews with those rallying captured the various beliefs held by Boneta's supporters. Some believed it was all a part of Agenda 21 (Property Right and Farming Alliance, 2012d). Others saw the County acting in favor of influential individuals who disliked Boneta (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012b). Many self-identified Tea Party members claimed that the County was just another example of an uncontrolled government increasing power over their lives. Asked what the debate meant to farmers, one Tea Partier said, "It means that their liberty is being taken away from them just like every other citizen in this country" (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012b). Another said succinctly, "The key here is that we have an out of control Board of Supervisor who is retroactively laying levies on people for the right use of their property to earn a living, and be self-reliant" (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012c). President Obama was a target as well, with several individuals comparing the president's executive orders with the County's actions (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012e). Nearly every interviewee expressed anger at the local government and that local officials 'had to go.'

Despite the uproar outside the BZA office, Boneta lost her case and the zoning enforcement officer remained in her position. In regards to their decision on the appeal and the protests, the County simply ignored activists. No formal response was ever given defending the government's action. Yet as a result, the opposition had full control the debate (Johnson, 2016). The policy of disregarding activists did not quiet their campaign either. In the subsequent months after Boneta's immediate appeal, farmers, property rights enthusiasts, and anti-government types banded together with Tea Party groups across Northern Virginia to push for state legislation that

went further in protecting land uses related to agriculture. Online platforms like the ‘Fauquier Free Citizen’ website energized grassroots supporters while an array of professional interest groups lobbied Virginia legislators. By the spring of 2014, Fauquier’s activists had state representatives ready to introduce legislation that would greatly restrict the ability of localities to regulate agriculture or land uses that were even slightly related.

STATE LEGISLATION

The activists in Fauquier reflected how Virginia’s Tea Party groups left their most significant impacts on planning. At the state level of policymaking activists achieved their most influential victories. This was in large part due to Virginia’s status as a Dillon Rule state. The Dillon Rule provides that local governments possess only those powers expressly granted or necessarily implied by the state legislature or constitution (Richardson, 1996). Therefore, legislation passed by the General Assembly has a huge impact on what local governments can or cannot do (Richardson, 1996). By influencing policy created at the state level, Tea Party activists helped curtail the planning function of local government in several significant ways.

It was not until 2011 that Virginia’s activists began to truly focus on the state level of policymaking. That year, groups worked together to produce an ambitious agenda of ten different bills, dubbed by activists as the “freedom bills” (Helderman and Kumar, 2011). In the years since, activists continued their efforts to influence state legislation. Although activists promoted a wide range of Tea Party goals, several pieces of legislation that they promoted significantly impacted planning. One of their first efforts resulted in legislation that limited the use of urban development areas.

Urban Development Areas

Cost-conscious Republican state legislators first promoted the concept of urban development areas (UDAs) in 2007 (Bacon, 2006; McGlennon, 2017). The idea was to concentrate development in a single area, thereby limiting the financial cost of providing public infrastructure and utilities by a locality. Developers were incentivized to build within a UDA due to less stringent zoning requirements, provided they build at the higher densities mandated by the State. UDAs were to be designed as walkable, connected, mixed use, mixed income and affordable. They were also required to be large enough to accommodate 10 to 20 years of anticipated growth in the community (Alpert, 2011). The area outside a UDA's boundary would be preserved as open space or agricultural land. The original UDA legislation allowed boundaries to be adjusted according to market conditions (Bacon, 2006).

In 2007, certain high growth localities were mandated to plan for UDAs within their comprehensive plan with the passage of House Bill 3202. In their beginning years, UDAs drew little attention outside of those involved in land use and development. Multiple localities amended their comprehensive plans to specify locations for UDAs (Nash, 2016; Jackson, 2017). However, with the rise of conservatism activism in 2010, Tea Partiers began to target UDAs as unconstitutional and as the cause of many problems stereotypically associated with urban areas ("Minutes", Town of Blacksburg, 2011; Alpert, 2011). When advocacy efforts began for legislation proposed to limit the use of UDAs, One Tea Party leader summed up their opposition in an email message to activists:

"This is a gross violation of property rights. The inalienable right to own and control the use of private property is perhaps the single most important principle responsible for growth and prosperity in Virginia...Eco-extremists are heavily funded for their lobby efforts to grab and preserve up to 90% of all the land that would be off limits to humans and move you into high-density feudalistic transit villages...If they have their way,

single family homes will be a thing of the past. We'd become mere lease holders of the homes we live in" (Alpert, 2011).

With such rhetoric becoming commonplace on Tea Party social media, activists made the repeal of UDA legislation one of their ten "freedom bills" in 2011. Delegate Bob Marshall, Republican of the 13th House District, then pushed a bill up on their behalf. Marshall, who had also voted against the original UDA legislation, introduced House Bill 1721 at the start of the 2011 session. Though not outright repealing the authority to create UDAs, the bill made their incorporation optional rather than mandatory. It also required localities that had previously adopted UDAs to reconsider such action if voters petitioned them to do so ("House Bill, 1721", 2011). In effect, the legislation aimed to curtail the ability of state government in requiring localities to curb costly suburban sprawl.

However, this first effort failed as House Bill 1721 shared the same fate as the majority of bills by dying in Senate committee. Activists responded by posting the names of the legislators who voted against the bill on their websites with instructions to members to contact their offices ("Post Mortem of HB1721-Recorded Senate Votes!", 2011). Despite the initial loss, House Bill 1721 was an important signifier of the impact that Tea Party activism could have on planning by promoting policy at the state level. For the first time, activists had successfully lobbied state legislators to take up their proposals and advance real legislation. They now had real influence in the policymaking process.

Activists renewed their efforts in 2012, again promoting legislation seeking to limit the use of UDAs. After coordinating with supportive legislators, bills were advanced in both the House and the Senate. This time however, they garnered support from both Democrats and Republicans. With such bipartisanship, Senate Bill 274 was advanced out of the legislature. On

April 4, 2012, Governor McDonnell signed the bill into law. Now any locality had the right to decide if UDAs optional for any locality (“Senate Bill, 274”, 2012).

Initially, the new law stopped many localities from designating new UDAs. In addition, 21 localities that had designated a UDA chose to “reclassify” them by removing their references in the locality’s code or dropping the requirements concerning higher densities. By 2016, many localities had designated high growth areas that mimicked the UDA concept (Nash, 2016).

However, government officials who were involved with UDAs noted that the overall impact was minor. This was mostly due to the fact that 2014’s House Bill 2, a significant piece of legislation that initiated the Virginia Department of Transportation’s SMART SCALE method of funding, incentivized localities to set up UDAs (Jackson, 2017). Ironically, the Tea Party backed legislators who had voted to make UDAs optional also voted en masse for this legislation that promoted them (“House Bill 2”, 2014).

After the initiation of SMART SCALE, multiple localities set up UDAs in an effort to gain state funding for transportation projects. In 2017, there were 77 UDAs designated in Virginia (“Grant Programs”, 2017). Also, local legislators increasingly saw the benefit of such places in terms of infrastructure savings, economic development, and in creating communities with improved quality of life (Jackson, 2017). Although activists successfully pushed for legislation that aimed to curtail their use, the eventual result for UDAs was opposite what activists intended.

Private Property Rights

Making UDAs optional was not the only item on Tea Partiers’ legislative agenda of 2012. They also lobbied for a statewide referendum to strengthen private property rights. That year, a majority of Virginians voted to amend the Virginia constitution, thereby strengthening private

property rights in four significant ways. First, the referendum restricted the use of eminent domain only to cases where it was to serve a distinct public use. It also could not be used to take private property for the purposes of economic development, job creation, or tax revenue generation. Third, the definition of just compensation was expanded to include the amount of lost profits resulting from eminent domain. Lastly, the amendment “enshrined” the right to private property as a fundamental one, akin to the rights of freedom of speech and due process (Gregory, 2012; Rodriguez, 2012).

Tea Party activists were among the most ardent supporters of the amendment. In fact, they were largely responsible for getting the legislature to put the referendum on the ballot in the first place. In 2011, one of the ten “freedom bills” proposed a resolution that began the process of amending the state constitution. The resolution received support from majorities in both the House and Senate (Helderman, 2011). For activists, the bill represented an important step in strengthening private property rights to an extent unsupported by law at the time. Legislation passed in 2007 had already restricted the use of eminent domain only for instances when it was used entirely for a public purpose. However, activists feared that the earlier reforms were subject to the whims of any future General Assembly. The only way to truly protect property rights was to have them written into the Virginia constitution (Gregory, 2012).

Activists and supportive legislators stated that both measures were needed to thwart the effect of the Supreme Court’s 2005 decision in *Kelo v. New London* (Trompeter, 2011; Gregory, 2012). In a decision that one state delegate called “misguided”, the Court decided that a Connecticut town was acting within its rights when it took private property to give out to a private developer for the purpose of economic development (Trompeter, 2011). After the decision, however, state houses across the nation raced to pass legislation to mitigate its potential

impact. In Virginia, this effort gained newfound urgency after an event similar to *Kelo* occurred in Roanoke. In 2007, the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority took ownership of a family-run furniture store so that the property could be transferred to a private developer who wished to build a new medical facility. Although the property was condemned, it was not blighted. After the furniture store was demolished, the property was still sitting vacant in 2017 (“City of Roanoke GIS”, 2017). The event earned the nickname “Virginia’s Kelo” (Gregory, 2012; Hazard, 2012).

Such events ensured that the mood to strengthen Virginia’s property rights was strong in the years leading up to the referendum. Yet many legislators who had voted for stronger property rights in 2007 believed that a constitutional amendment was overkill. Eight state senators who had voted for the 2007 legislation voted against the 2012 amendment (“Senate Bill 1296”, 2007; “House Joint Resolution”, 2012). John Watkins, a Republican who represented parts of Chesterfield, was one of them. Watkins stated, “It’s an overreaction to [a Supreme Court case] that happened in Connecticut” (Gregory, 2012). Watkins and others who opposed the amendment further believed it would increase the already high cost of infrastructure improvements. With expanding populations and development, there would be times when state agencies had to take ownership of private property for public improvements like highways, schools, and drainage facilities. The higher financial cost required as “just compensation” to those impacted by eminent domain would force those costs onto taxpayers. Such reasons were why the Virginia Municipal League and Virginia Association of Counties came out strongly against the amendment (Gregory, 2012; Hazard, 2012; Rodriguez, 2012).

That the amendment was placed on the ballot was thus a testament to the influence of the Tea Party in the General Assembly. Politicians from both parties supported the measure, proving

that their influence was not restricted only to Republicans. In the election of November 2012, 74 percent of voters supported the measure, a substantial show of support (“Virginia Eminent Domain Amendment, Question 1”, 2012). The victory indicated that activists had impacted all the stages of policymaking as defined by Andrews and Edwards (2004), including agenda setting, access to decision-making arenas, policy enactment, and setting the long-term strategies and resources of political institutions. First, they impacted the agenda setting stage by resurrecting the issue of protecting private property rights after many legislators believed they had sufficiently addressed it in previous legislation. They also left an impression on the decision-making arena by flooding legislator’s offices with emails, phone calls, and in some cases, physical occupation (Helderman, 2011). Activists then impacted the policy enactment stage after successfully lobbying for the passage bill and subsequent amendment to the constitution.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, activists impacted the long-term strategy and resources of those state agencies that must use eminent domain to further the public interest (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Gregory, 2012; Hazard, 2012). However, by 2017, the worst fears of opponents to the amendment had not yet occurred. Localities and state agencies had not been overly affected by an increase in the costs of eminent domain. One partial reason for this was because the amendment passed when public budgets were already under serious financial strain due to the Great Recession, so localities could not perform substantial eminent domain actions anyway (McGlennon, 2017). However, the possibility remained that the cost of such action would be higher in the future.

The “Boneta Bill”

Tea Party activists also played a significant role in promoting legislation that limited the ability of local governments to regulate agricultural land uses. This stemmed directly from the

experience of activists in Fauquier County. After failing to reverse that locality's actions in regards to Martha Boneta's farm, activists had petitioned local politicians to pass state legislation that would preempt local action. Petitions, phone calls, emails, and editorials in local newspapers ensued, all of which persuaded state representatives to take up their cause (Bell-Wine, 2012; Duncan, 2014; Ward, 2014; Johnson, 2016).

During the 2013 session of the General Assembly, Delegate Scott Lingamfelter, a Republican representing Fauquier and Prince William counties, introduced House Bill 1430. The bill was a direct response to events in Fauquier and contained several measures that would prevent any locality from regulating agricultural uses the way Fauquier had. First, the bill proposed an expansion of the definition of agricultural uses to include farm-to-business and farm-to-consumer sales within the Virginia Right to Farm Act, the exact activities Ms. Boneta was engaged in. It would also create a legal presumption of compliance with a locality's zoning ordinance for any property under agricultural zoning. This meant that if a locality received a complaint regarding an activity on property zoned agricultural, it was the locality's responsibility to prove that the activity was not compliant. The property owner would not have to demonstrate compliance. Finally, the bill provided that any County official who violated the Virginia Right to Farm Act could be held personally liable ("House Bill 1430", 2013; Osborn, 2014).

Such restrictions drew the opposition of several industry groups to House Bill 1430, including the Virginia Farm Bureau, the Agribusiness Council, and the Independent Consumers and Farmers Association (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2013). The Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal were also firmly against the bill. An array of legislators opposed it too. Senator Phillip P. Puckett, a Democrat, believed the bill restricted local control beyond reason, stating, "If you don't like what's going on locally, you ought to be

sitting at your board of supervisors meeting" (Dalhberg, 2013). With such opposition firmly aligned against the legislation, the bill died in Senate committee.

However, like their efforts to strengthen property rights and curtail the use of urban development areas, activists did not give up after one session. The next year, legislators allied with activists introduced House Bill 268 and Senate Bill 51, a pair of identical bills. This time, the legislation was written with input from Virginia's agricultural interest groups. Both bills passed the House and Senate with bipartisan support. Although providing greater exceptions from land use control for small farmers, the legislation did not contain the punitive measures against County officials that Delegate Lingamfelter's bill possessed the previous year. Governor Terry McAuliffe signed a combined version dubbed the "Boneta Bill" on April 4, 2014 (Osborn, 2014).

The "Boneta Bill" contained many of the measures activists desired. The legislation prohibited the requirement of a special use permit for any activity defined as agricultural in nature, unless there was a demonstrable impact on public health, safety, and welfare. The law also prohibited local bans on activities that were customarily associated with agricultural operations, such as pumpkin patch picking, horse shows, or produce vending stands. In effect, these measures greatly restricted the ability for localities to regulate the use of agricultural land. For example, Fauquier County would now be unable to require Ms. Boneta to obtain a special use permit for holding special events on her farm. Localities could not regulate noise created by such uses in most circumstances ("House Bill 268", 2014).

Though the bill was the product of compromise between agricultural interest groups, legislators, and Tea Partiers, Fauquier's activists welcomed the law's passage, despite it not including everything they originally wanted. One of the bill's drafters, attorney Mark Fitzgibbon,

summed up their position, stating, “small farmers can claim victory . . . simply because they defeated Richmond special interests and Fauquier County” (Osborn, 2014).

Officials from Virginia’s counties took a more negative view of the ‘Boneta Bill.’ The Virginia Association of Counties and Virginia Municipal League had remained opposed the latest iteration of the legislation. A VML spokesperson maintained that the legislation “continues the trend toward more land-use decisions being made in Richmond, rather than localities, where land-use decisions are more appropriately worked out” (Ward, 2014).

In counties across Virginia, the bill left many impacts. In Fauquier, the County amended its ordinances that were even slightly related to agricultural uses. A whole range of uses became defined as “agricultural”, thereby gaining immunity to most land use regulations. For example, farmers holding events such as pumpkin patch picking, corn maze attractions, and horse shows, did not have to apply for any administrative permit (Johnson, 2016). Officials in Fauquier also found it much more difficult to address citizen complaints about farming practices and noise complaints (Johnson, 2016).

Localities across the state were limited in their ability to regulate farming practices. In New Kent County, individuals who held rodeos and horse shows on their property were exempted from the requirement to apply for permits. This is despite the fact that such events sometimes brought over 100 people onto a single parcel. Without requiring administrative permits, the County had no oversight of the events. Thus, the County also had no liability, so no ambulances, police, or other emergency personnel were provided as was typical for such large public gatherings (Vaughan, 2016). Although some citizens complained about such events, the Right to Farm Act precluded the County from responding.

Measuring the Impact on State Legislation

The victories Tea Party activists and the legislators who supported them achieved at the state level left much more significant impacts on planning than any one effort had been able to affect in a single locality. Because of Virginia's status as a Dillon Rule state, each piece of legislation advocated for by Tea Partiers and subsequently passed into law affected the policy of every Virginia local government. Measured by the indicators introduced by Andrews and Edwards (2004), activists were able to influence each stage of policymaking.

Agenda-Setting

In several instances, activists were able to put issues on the public's legislative agenda where they had otherwise been absent. This was especially true for legislation that made UDAs optional. In the years prior to activism, the UDA concept was one that was fairly well established and often implemented. Since UDAs were first promoted by Republican state legislators, no conservative backlash had formed that predated the Tea Party movement. However, once Tea Partiers began to use the same language in regards to UDAs as they had to Agenda 21, enough legislators from both sides of the aisle supported legislation advocated for by activists (Alpert, 2011).

The push to amend the Virginia constitution and "enshrine" private property rights was in the same vein. Before activism, many legislators believed that property rights were sufficiently protected by the law passed in 2007 to mitigate the impact of the *Kelo* decision (Gregory, 2012). But like the UDA issue, once activists began to promote legislation and work with like-minded politicians to further strengthen private property rights did the issue once again get back on the public agenda.

Access to decision-making arenas

Tea Party activists also left substantial impacts due to their deft advocacy efforts in the halls of the General Assembly. For nearly every day of the session in 2011, activists roamed the halls of the statehouse, vying for meetings with lawmakers and pushing their “freedom bills” (Helderman and Kumar, 2011). They also perfected the techniques of classic political activism by gathering petitions, making phone calls, and writing emails and letters to legislators (Helderman and Kumar, 2011). The success of several of their efforts showcased their abilities in this regard.

Policy Enactment and Policy Implementation

Virginia Tea Partiers were also successful within the policy enactment and policy implementation stages; those in which new policy is created or existing policies are amended. Within these stages, the efforts made by activists can prove decisive in affecting lasting impacts. At the height of the Tea Party’s efforts at the state level, between roughly 2011 and 2014, policies were created or amended that strengthened private property rights, curtailed the use of UDAs (albeit momentarily), and greatly restricted the ability of localities to regulate agricultural uses (Gregory, 2012; Johnson, 2016; Jackson, 2017). This last item profoundly impacted local governments in particular, as agricultural uses constituted a significant land use in many of Virginia’s localities, especially in the many rural ones. Not being permitted to apply even minor restrictions on those uses has been cited by many planners as a negative result of the changes to the Virginia Right to Farm Act (Johnson, 2016).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE IMPACTS OF ACTIVISM

THE PRIMARY MOTIVATIONS OF ACTIVISTS

1. What were the primary motivations urging conservative activists to oppose the efforts of local government planning?

One activist from the Middle Peninsula succinctly stated what motivated their efforts by stating:

“I would sum up our Tea Party efforts by saying exactly what we have strived for: more freedom, fewer restrictions. Unfortunately, that generally pits our interests against 'urban and regional planners' or others who would dictate how we must live. That is not to say we categorically oppose what such 'planners' might propose, but it is to say we want to be allowed to make informed decisions” (Anonymous, 2017).

This statement summed up the overarching motives that made activists oppose planning efforts. Although each case of local activism was unique in many respects, what this Tea Party member said was echoed in every locality. More specifically, activists were motivated by a strong belief in property rights and a preference for localism, and by the regulating forces on both that emanated from planning. Agenda 21 was also an animating issue, as this represented a culmination of all the things activists opposed.

Belief in Strong Property Rights

In every case, the concerns voiced by activists were based in the belief that individuals were entitled to strong private property rights and that such rights were under attack from government. In addition to the statewide effort to amend the Virginia constitution in favor of strengthening property rights, activists demonstrated this belief in every case. In New Kent, it

was the attempt to rewrite the zoning ordinance that caused concerned citizens to argue that the County was “throwing up roadblocks” to local businesses (Board of Supervisors, 2006a). Chesterfield’s activists targeted the proposed comprehensive plan’s limits on single-family development (Pearson, 2010). Efforts by the regional planning district commissions in Charlottesville and Blacksburg both drew criticisms that the policies proposed by planners would curtail private property rights (Anonymous, 2016; Frederick, 2016). In Fauquier County, the issue of property rights for farmers dominated the debate (Johnson, 2016).

Why was the issue of property rights so catalyzing a force? In interviews and on social media, Tea Party members repeatedly expressed the idea that the right to own and use private property was a fundamental and absolute right (Holt, 2011, Anonymous, 2017). Activists believed that individuals were entitled to use their property in as close to an unregulated manner as possible. Activists viewed efforts by Virginia planners that impacted property rights as burdensome at best and unconstitutional at worst (Property Rights & Farming Alliance, 2012b). In response, Tea Partiers framed their opposition as aimed at strengthening property rights, thereby reducing government regulation, and creating a legal system in which individuals could make their own decisions about their own land (Anonymous, 2017).

These ideas were not novel to the Tea Party, but have been present for a long time within the ranks of conservative activists. They closely mirror the arguments put forward by the property rights movement in the wake of the *Kelo* decision. Such arguments painted planning as the foremost arm of an increasingly oppressive government (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009; Jacobs, 2010).

A preference for localism, the belief that policymaking should be done almost exclusively at the local level, was also strongly expressed by Tea Party members. Policies

emanating from higher authorities were viewed with suspicion in many instances. Such skepticism has deep roots in Virginia, as historically strong local governments and conservative political dispositions left a lasting impact (Black and Black, 2008). In many of Virginia's rural communities, where local Tea Party groups had the most momentum, such thinking was common in local politics (Wilson, 2017).

This was especially true in the cases where regional planning commissions were at work. In Blacksburg and Charlottesville, activists saw planning initiatives funded by HUD grants as the first steps toward a federal takeover of localities (Gangloff, 2011). While attending meetings of the Albemarle Board of Supervisors, Jefferson Area Tea Partiers criticized the County for supposedly allowing the federal government to unconstitutionally intrude upon the rights of the state government, local government, and citizens (“Albemarle Board of Supervisors Minutes, June 8, 2011”, 2011). Similar statements were made in Blacksburg against the federally funded Livability Initiative (Anonymous, 2016; “Minutes”, Town of Blacksburg, 2011). Such opposition appeared rooted in the idea that regional planning bodies were unconstitutional and had no basis of legal authority (Lawrence, 2016).

A distrust of “outsiders” was also a part of a preference for localism. In Chesterfield, activists were suspicious of the role played by Renaissance Planning Group, the consulting agency hired by the County to assist in the update of the comprehensive plan. During the many public meetings where the plan was discussed, activists questioned why an outside group was allowed to influence such an important part of the locality's future (Hester, 2011; Reid, 2012; Turner, 2016). Activists expressed concern that RPG came from Charlottesville, a “breeding ground for progressive, liberal ideas” (Reid, 2012; McConnell, 2015a). Similar concerns were put forward in the Middle Peninsula, where activists there spoke out against the involvement of

Florricane, a Richmond based consulting firm, in the update of the Mathews County comp plan (Lawrence, 2012; Lawrence, 2016). Planners who “colluded” with these outside influences faced activist criticism.

Opposition to “outsiders” and to regional planning commissions stemmed from this preference for localism. Statements made by activists indicated this. For some, it was not that they were entirely opposed to planning, but that they were opposed entities and individuals from outside their communities making decisions that would impact them. One activist in the Middle Peninsula opposed regional planning commissions explained by stating:

“We’re saying why do we need these 23 planning district commissions [in Virginia]? Return the government back to the local people. Comprehensive planning has always been done at the local level of government that is closest to the people. They are the ones we should be talking to. We shouldn’t have to go through this regional government” (Chillemi, 2012).

The federal government was also criticized for similar reasons. Donna Holt of the ‘Virginia Campaign for Liberty’ stated, “The county government is not completely to blame. After all, they are only following the directives of the federal government” (Holt, 2011). Mandates from state government and their associated planning efforts also drew opposition, such as the water conservation planning process in the Middle Peninsula (Lawrence, 2012; Lawrence, 2016; Wilson, 2017).

Such criticisms seemed to fit neatly in line with the ideal of constitutionally limited government as espoused by the Tea Party movement. In Virginia, activists considered the federal government, regional planning bodies, and outside consultants as threats to this ideal, as they were entities that were unelected, unaccountable to local citizens, and did not have the expressed

authority to intervene in local policy by the U.S. Constitution (Frick, 2013; Lawrence, 2016; McGlennon, 2017). In their eyes, local planners were either unwitting or knowing accomplices of such entities, and those who were perceived as a threat to local autonomy.

Agenda 21

In Agenda 21, activists found a culmination of their fears. It was also a highly motivating factor. When activists began to speak against it in meetings, many planners were unaware of the UN action plan. However, for many Tea Party groups, it framed all of the issues that activism was focused on, including a defense of personal property rights and local autonomy.

In case after case, activists likened Agenda 21 to a threat to property rights. In Fauquier County, interviews with those who protested the Board of Zoning Appeal's decision regarding Martha Boneta's farm captured activists linking the County's action as a part of Agenda 21 (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012a; 2012b; 2012e). Opponents to Chesterfield's proposed comp plan believed it was that plan's use of terms similar to those in the United Nations document as the main reason why their property rights were threatened (Holt, 2011; Dovi, 2012). The sustainability hubs of the Livability Initiative in Blacksburg were claimed to be the first steps toward an erosion of property rights, and that citizens would be forcibly moved to urban areas (Matzke-Fawcett, 2011). Such criticism was common in many localities across the Commonwealth.

Activists also denounced Agenda 21 because it threatened local autonomy. This was partially why they opposed environmental programs like ICLEI and "Cool Counties." Many groups believed the policies mandated local governments to adopt measures that were either unconstitutional or anti-free enterprise, or both (Fitzgerald, 2011; Jasper, 2011). The environmental aspect of ICLEI, Cool Counties, and other policies related to sustainability were

also questioned by Tea Partiers, who generally doubted that government had any valid role to play in promoting environmentalism.

When conservative activists attacked Agenda 21, they were defending their particular conception of America. Within this vision, unfettered property rights and free enterprise were essential (Property Rights and Farming Alliance, 2012a). Agenda 21 threatened both of these ideas, especially because activists believed it was being implemented in secret by local governments (Holt, 2011; Jasper, 2011). This was why activists used such extreme terms to attack Agenda 21 and those whom they believed were its proponents. In all localities that experienced activism, Agenda 21 greatly magnified the intensity of opposition to planning.

THE INFLUENCE OF ACTIVISTS

2. How did conservative activists influence the planning process?

The strongest basis from which to measure the influence conservative activists had on planning is through the five categories of policymaking defined by Andrews and Edwards (2004). These include (a) agenda setting, (b) access to decision-making arenas, (c) achieving favorable policies, (d) monitoring and shaping implementation, and (e) shifting the long-term priorities and resources of political institutions (Andrews and Edwards, 2004).

Agenda Setting

This is the process where issues are moved from the “public agenda” onto the “formal agenda” of political decision-makers. Individual groups bring greater attention to issues that were previously unknown or given little attention by larger segments of the electorate. In Virginia, conservative activists achieved this in several cases.

Charlottesville

The Jefferson Area Tea Party successfully made the repeal of ICLEI and Cool Counties issues for the Albemarle Board of Supervisors took up. Prior to their involvement, both policies had attracted little public attention. However, by speaking out at public meetings and in local media, activists sparked great interest in repeal of these policies (Wheeler, 2011; Tubbs, 2017).

The New River Valley

As in the Charlottesville area, conservative activists here also put repeal of ICLEI and other environmental policies on the “formal agenda.” After the Roanoke Tea Party lobbied the city’s Board of Supervisors for nearly two years, legislators finally relented by placing its ICLEI membership up for a vote. In addition, activist groups promoted their own candidates in local elections, although each one who was explicitly representing a group failed to win (Purdy, 2014; Brown, 2015; Anonymous, 2016).

Fauquier County

Activists in Fauquier turned a routine matter of zoning enforcement at the local level into a statewide political fight to reduce regulation on small farmers. Although it began as a reaction to an act by the locality, activists turned it into a much larger issue that garnered legislative action at the state level (Johnson, 2016).

Access to Decision-Making Arenas

While agenda setting is important, participation in formal decision-making processes also affects how much influence activist organizations can achieve. Citizens can be particularly influential at the level of local government, where public meetings afford them the opportunity to speak about issues moments before legislators vote on them. They can also gain access to government staff with relative ease via phone calls, emails, or in person meetings (Andrews and

Edwards, 2004). Many of the same opportunities exist at the state level. Conservative activists took full advantage of the multiple avenues available for citizens to involve themselves in almost every locality they operated in.

New Kent County

When the New Kent County Citizen Coalition formed in opposition to the rewrite of the County's zoning ordinance, they regularly attended public meetings and contacted members of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Committee (Hathaway, 2016). The Coalition also compelled the County to defend its methodology of determining property values when they submitted a petition with over 400 signatures (Chamberlain, 2008b).

Charlottesville

The Jefferson Area Tea Party had ample access to decision-making arenas. They attended formal meetings of the Albemarle County's Board of Supervisors and events sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission to promote the Livability Grant (Wheeler, 2011; Frederick, 2016). For the latter, they participated in the TJPDC's 'Open House' events and the 'Livability Partnership', a group comprised of representatives from area interests (Frederick, 2016).

The New River Valley

Unlike Charlottesville, Tea Partiers here eschewed any involvement with the regional planning commission's implementation of its federal grant. They chose not to attend any meeting or event that was a part of the Initiative (Anonymous, 2016). Instead, activists sniped at the effort during public meetings of the Boards of Supervisors of counties working with regional planners. In Roanoke and Pulaski County, activists left a significant impression at Board meetings, as they were frequent attendants over a number of years (Purdy, 2014).

Chesterfield County

Again, activists here made the best possible use of Board of Supervisor meetings. Attending public meetings was the primary method they used to voice their opposition (Turner, 2016). They were often in attendance during the months that the comprehensive plan was being rewritten (Gregory, 2011; Dovi, 2012; McConnell, 2015). Activists also expressed their views in the many surveys and opinion polls put out by Chesterfield's planning department (Simmelink, 2016).

The Middle Peninsula

According to first hand participants, if there was a public meeting held by local or regional government, conservative activists were there (Fears, 2011; Lawrence, 2012). From 2010 to 2013, activists attended almost every meeting of the planning district commission (Lawrence, 2016). They also promoted their own candidate for the Board of Supervisors in Mathews County, albeit unsuccessfully (Koenig, 2017).

Fauquier County

Although activists in Fauquier did not make their presence felt in local meetings as much as their counterparts did in other localities, events there catalyzed a statewide lobbying push for legislation that saw Tea Partiers gaining access to the halls of the General Assembly (Helderman and Kumar, 2011). However, the rally outside the BZA office in August of 2012 was one of the most notable and symbolic events of Tea Party activism in Virginia (Osborn, 2014). Several Tea Party affiliated politicians attended, along with over 50 activists (Bell-Wine, 2012).

Policy Enactment and Implementation

The most visible indicator of influence is the achievement of preferred policy outcomes. This also includes the repeal of certain policies or blocking their implementation (Andrews and

Edwards, 2004). In the following localities, activists successfully lobbied for the creation of desired policies, or were instrumental in blocking the implementation of others.

Charlottesville and the New River Valley

In Albemarle County and the City of Roanoke, activists convinced legislators to repeal their jurisdiction's membership to ICLEI. Although some observers suggested the moves were mostly symbolic, the localities did lose access to valuable software that had helped measure the local greenhouse gas emissions (Tubbs, 2011; Purdy, 2014; Tubbs, 2017). In Albemarle County, one Supervisor claimed that ICLEI had helped the County recognize over \$600,000 in savings related to increased energy efficiency (Wheeler, 2011).

Chesterfield County

When the Chester Patriots, Virginia Campaign for Liberty, and Chesterfield Tea Party began to show up at Board of Supervisor meetings claiming that the proposed comp plan was a harbinger of Agenda 21, it stopped the plan implementation in its tracks (Gregory, 2011, Hester, 2011). The planning department's subsequent revised comp plan incorporated language much more protective of property rights while refraining from mentioning Smart Growth and New Urbanism principles (Buettner, 2012c; McConnell, 2015a). The revised plan also did not envision the County in a hundred years at "full build out", something which the previous version had (Turner, 2016).

The Middle Peninsula

Activists in the Middle Peninsula delayed or defeated several government initiated programs. Creation of the Mathews County Aquaculture Business Park was thwarted by opponents who believed the venture was "socialistic" and anti free market. After much contact from activists, members of the citizen-led committee who had been tasked with deciding the

Park's fate decided to nix the entire project (Hamilton, 2011; Lawrence, 2012). Implementation of several other policies were also delayed, such as Middlesex County's water conservation plan (Lawrence, 2012). Overall, activism proved to be an "anchor on the business of government", as local officials chose to forgo new planning initiatives to avoid future confrontations (Lawrence, 2016).

CHAPTER FIVE: THE RESPONSE FROM PLANNERS

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

3. How did planners respond to activism? What were the impacts of their response?

New Kent County

When opponents of New Kent's proposed zoning changes showed up public meetings, the Board of Supervisors and County staff immediately responded by creating the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Committee (Board of Supervisors, 2006b). ZORC was almost entirely comprised of citizen volunteers, an unprecedented move by the County government (Hathaway, 2016). Although activists still opposed ZORC throughout its existence, participants and observers doubted that the subsequent changes to the zoning ordinance would have been adopted if not for the work of the committee (Hathaway, 2016).

In addition, County staff ensured that getting public participation could be achieved long-term by creating New Kent University. As of 2016, approximately 200 New Kent residents had gone through the program (Chamberlain, 2008d; Jones, 2016). Its first classes included several members of the New Kent County Citizens Coalition, the group that had so vigorously opposed the zoning update. After learning about all the things local government did and why, County staff had effectively "won over" those who had previously opposed their efforts (Hathaway, 2016).

New Kent's response to activism was thus highly effective. Activists did not prevent the zoning ordinance and subsequent comprehensive plan from being updated accordingly. Both policy documents included modern planning principles (Jones, 2012). New Kent staff had also implemented a program that welcomed the public into the halls of local government, thereby

helping to prevent the rise of future opposition by educating citizens beforehand (Chamberlain, 2008d; Hathaway, 2016).

The success of New Kent University helped explain why the County never experienced Tea Party opposition directed at local government. County staff attributed this to several factors, including having a limited budget and not having programs that had attracted activism in other localities. Also, no major planning initiatives were undertaken during the time that the concern over Agenda-21 was greatest. And New Kent's focus on inclusionary participatory strategies in the years prior to the Tea Party minimized such opposition before it could begin (Hathaway, 2016).

Charlottesville and the New River Valley

When activism occurred in Charlottesville and the New River Valley, regional planners proactively responded by implementing a model for participation that brought thousands of citizens into the planning process. In each place, this was a conscious decision by planners in response to Tea Party opposition. While they employed slightly different methods, planners in Charlottesville and the New River Valley each felt they achieved positive outcomes (Anonymous, 2016; Frederick, 2016).

In both areas, citizens were given the opportunity to contribute through a variety of means that blended a traditional and novel approach to gathering public input. Charlottesville area residents could provide their thoughts on the initiative in four different kinds of public meetings, ranging from formal to informal settings (Frederick, 2016). Those involved in the PDC's effort in the New River Valley had an even larger array of options for participating. There, citizens could attend numerous public meetings, serve on working groups, or watch performances by Virginia Tech students that showcased the principles of sustainability and

community (Anonymous, 2016; “New River Valley Livability Initiative”, 2016). With widespread involvement and subsequent support for these initiatives, the efforts created a significant amount of political legitimacy (Anonymous, 2016; Frederick, 2016).

The impact of Tea Party activism was mitigated in both cases. In the New River Valley, the biggest activist group, the Pulaski County Tea Party, did not even participate in any of the initiative’s events (Anonymous, 2016). This contrasted with the participation of the Jefferson Area Party with the Charlottesville PDC effort. However, in both cases, planners felt that the participation of a broad swath of citizens from diverse backgrounds and beliefs limited the influence of any one specific group, including the Tea Party (Anonymous, 2016; Frederick, 2016).

Chesterfield County

When the Renaissance Planning Group was tasked with creating a modern comp plan for Chesterfield, the outside consulting agency organized a traditional participation strategy. It centered around a thirty member steering committee that hoped to represent the views of citizens and stakeholders. The results of the steering committee’s work would be presented in a formal public meeting, advertised in traditional media and on the County’s website (Pearson, 2009a; Pearson, 2009b). This approach received criticism from the County’s Board of Supervisors even before the Chesterfield Tea Partiers became engaged, with the politicians questioning if enough citizens would be involved (Pearson, 2009a). When activists did become involve, they too expressed concerns regarding participation (Hester, 2011).

After Tea Party activists began to show up at public meetings, saying the proposed plan read “like a Marxist manifesto” and would implement an “abolishment of private property rights”, Board members and County planners changed course (Holt, 2011; Turner, 2016). The

Renaissance Planning Group was let go and County planners employed a new model of participation, one that incorporated community meetings, visioning sessions, and internet-based outreach (Dovi, 2012; Simmelink, 2016). Rather than ignoring activists, planners invited them into the process. In addition, more people became involved than had been when the Renaissance Planning Group was coordinating participation. The new, revitalized planning process was a success (Turner, 2016). Within a year, the new approach led to a “lean, clear, practical document” that eschewed planning jargon and had tacit approval from area Tea Party groups (Buettner, 2012c).

Again, the success of an inclusive, bottom-up model of participation was evident in the Chesterfield case. When the process was led by the steering committee and an outside consulting agency, criticism against the plan mounted from Tea Partiers and others. However, when local planners focused on receiving input from a broad and varied body of the general public, the effort gained newfound energy and support.

The Middle Peninsula

Perhaps no case laid bare the distinction between an inclusive, bottom-up participatory approach versus a more traditional, top-down one. Unlike regional PDCs elsewhere during the height of activism, the Middle Peninsula PDC did not significantly seek public input. In previous years, the standard approach was more than adequate. In the formal meetings of the regional planning commission, participants were only allowed to speak during public comment periods and only on topics that were up for discussion. Yet when activism reached its zenith in 2012, activists at the PDCs meetings shouted down planners and ignored formal rules and procedures (Chillemi, 2012). Their use Saul’s Alinsky’s “triangulation” strategy to place activists

throughout the seating area was designed to prevent the facilitator from moving forward on their agenda. When put into use, it proved to be a great disruptive measure (Lawrence, 2012).

Despite these challenges, the PDC did not alter its approach, thus, activists had an easier time dominating public meetings. The approach of the Middle Peninsula PDC differed not only from other Virginia PDCs, but also from other planning efforts in the region. When Gloucester County proposed that Gloucester Point be designated an urban development area, County planners implemented a participation strategy that was very collaborative in nature. Several public outreach meetings were held, along with an online and telephone survey and the creation of a steering committee (“Gloucester County-Comprehensive Plan Amendment”, 2011). Thus, the project gained fairly broad public support. This is why supporters of the effort called out anti-Agenda 21 activists when they attended meetings (Ducey-Ortiz, 2017). As explained by County planners, when fellow citizens pushed back against activists it was much more effective than any action public officials could have taken.

Fauquier County

When activists rallied around Martha Boneta and pushed back against the County’s enforcement of the zoning ordinance, the county government did not truly respond (Johnson, 2016). The only responses that were given came during the meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals that heard Boneta’s case (Grandstaff, 2012). For the entire period, the County tried to treat the issue as any other routine matter of zoning enforcement.

LESSONS FOR PLANNING PRACTICE

5. How can local governments effectively handle opposition while providing for inclusive, collaborative, and successful planning efforts?

A clear pattern emerges when analyzing the cases together. In places where planners worked to broaden public participation, the impacts of activism were mitigated. Here, efforts incorporated principles of the communicative style of planning in attempting to give large numbers of people a role in the planning process. Such principles include gathering information from diverse sources, the use of a bottom-up, collaborative approach to identify desired outcomes, and the use of practical heuristics such as respectful dialogue and listening that make the communicative style useful (Innes, 1995; Innes, 1998; Forester, 2012; Innes and Booher, 2015). When put into practice, these principles helped generate the dual effect of mitigating the impacts of activism, while also strengthening inclusion and collaboration among stakeholders. Proponents of the communicative style argue that this leads to planning outcomes that are more reflective of community desires, and thus inherently better (Innes, 1995).

The use of the communicative style of planning was the primary causal mechanism that mitigated the impact of Tea Partiers. Perhaps surprisingly, it was not underlying demographics or the political inclinations of localities. This was due to the fact that communicative planning efforts were successful in areas that were politically conservative, as based on past voting records. The most notable examples included New Kent, Gloucester, and localities in the New River Valley region (“Election”, 2012; Ballotpedia, 2016). Each of these places were very conservative; however, after planners employed techniques of the communicative style, they still successfully mitigated the effects of conservative activism by bringing more people into the process (Hathaway, 2016; Ducey-Ortiz, 2017, Wilson, 2017). As displayed by the Henrico case, demographics did influence whether or not significant activism arose in the first place at the local level, yet a conservative populace per se was no inhibitor of a successful communicative effort.

Where a communicative approach was used, planners sought to get as many people involved as possible. One purpose of this was to ensure that knowledge from a diverse array of sources contributed to the decision-making process. This is one of the primary characteristics of the communicative style, and reflects the approach's contrast with the more traditional, rational style of planning (Innes and Booher, 2015). For advocates of the communicative approach, information that is socially constructed within a community is the most influential and effective for making decisions (Innes, 1995). Technical sources of knowledge, such as expert opinions and academic writings, although still necessary, are insufficient alone to help decision-makers produce successful outcomes. Non-technical sources must play a role too. Such sources include the experience of citizens from a diverse set of backgrounds, occupations, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses (Innes, 1998).

Virginia planners implemented numerous measures to democratize the flow of information. Online surveys, phone surveys, outreach meetings, visioning sessions, 'open houses', and steering committees comprised of diverse sets of stakeholders were all attempts to obtain varied sources of information. They were also measures to ensure that planning efforts were collaborative and 'bottom-up' in nature. This too is an elemental component of the communicative approach, as citizens, not planners or politicians alone, must play a meaningful role in determining what the desired outcomes of a project should be.

This community-based decision-making process was evident in many of the cases. For example, in the New River Valley, planners started the outreach process by telling citizens there was a "blank slate" in terms of outcomes. Their participation would decide the shape and form of outcomes (Anonymous, 2016). Charlottesville regional planners offered "open houses" for citizens for the same reason. In many localities, surveys to gather the thoughts and opinions of

individuals served as a guide for planning efforts (Frederick, 2016; Simmelink, 2016; Turner, 2016). As explained by the communicative literature, this aimed to create a more authentic dialogue among participants and produce outcomes more aligned with the public interest, two essential components of the communicative style (Innes, 1998; Brooks, 2002).

In order to accomplish these ends, Virginia planners adopted techniques that proponents of the communicative theory have long advocated. As explained by Forester (2012), these can be as simple as listening, inclusion, and taking care to maintain honest, open, and respectful dialogue. Throughout the cases, storytelling was an important and useful measure too. This was particularly evident in the New River Valley, where Virginia Tech students staged theatrical performances designed to dramatically reinforce the themes and ideas of the initiative (Anonymous, 2016; “New River Valley Livability Initiative”, 2016). Smaller-scale efforts incorporated storytelling as well, such as Gloucester County’s plan to designate Gloucester Point an urban development area. There, planners presented a succinct vision of the area’s future while retaining elements of its past. Yet planners still asked for the community’s direction as well (Gloucester County Board of Supervisors, 2011).

A common characteristic in every case where planners adopted elements of the communicative style was the pro-active, *policymaking* aspect of the effort. Planners, politicians, and citizens were trying to determine long-range goals and the policies that would realize them. These efforts included activities like rewriting zoning ordinances, identifying ways to promote sustainability, updating comprehensive plans, et cetera. However, this is not all that the profession of planning does in Virginia. Elements of the field also deal with plan *implementation*, or the day-to-day, administrative functioning of local and state government so that plans, policies, and procedures adopted by legislative bodies are actually implemented

(Healey, 2009). Work within this side of planning can include development plan review, issuance of permits, and zoning enforcement. Within this side of planning, participation is often limited or seen as a hindrance (Bull, 2014). It also is problematic for legal or technical reasons. For example, could (or should) a large group of citizens participate in the enforcement of a locality's zoning ordinance? Should citizens review a site plan? Or is this part of planning better handled by administrative personnel who possess expertise and experience?

Such was the dilemma when Tea Party activists protested the action of local governments in Fauquier and Henrico. In both cases, at issue was enforcement of the zoning ordinance of each locality. In Henrico, pushback against the County was limited. There, activists were more focused on national politics. Henrico's demographics and the County's well-known penchant for smooth, budget-conscious governance seemed to push activists to direct their attention away from local matters (Galuzska, 2013; Galuzska, 2014). Thus, County personnel were able to deal with Tea Party opposition almost singlehandedly (Blankinship, 2016). However, Fauquier County planners were not fortunate enough to experience the same fate. Activism was not limited in its scale or the resulting impacts. So what, if anything, could Fauquier County have done differently to mitigate opposition?

Addressing opposition with elements of the communicative style could have helped Fauquier County navigate activism. Although the approach requires that input and policy guidance come from the "bottom-up", this does not mean that information flows exclusively in one-direction (Brooks, 2002; Innes and Booher, 2015). Planners, politicians, and other "experts" can work to educate citizens on issues. The knowledge and vision planners can impart on the public can still add great value to public discourse (Innes, 1998). This creates a more authentic dialogue by diminishing the impact of misinformation (Forester, 2012). If Fauquier County had

proactively presented their position in various forms of media, from public relations statements to newspaper editorials, the effect on activism may have been different. Although opposition to the County's action would have likely continued, a proactive communication campaign could have limited its impact by inspiring a public backlash against Tea Partiers.

Communication is important to the planning process because information is power. Based on their position as experts and organizers, planners are uniquely suited to share information. It remains the best tool through which they can exert influence (Forester, 1982). Thus, information sharing between planners and the general public not only democratizes the planning process, it also leads to better outcomes. As displayed throughout the case studies, better results are based on better information (Innes, 1995; Innes, 1998; Forester, 2012). Planners must expect, anticipate, and respond to campaigns of misinformation and extreme opposition. They must even work to include those who are opposed to their efforts. These steps are vital if planners are to be successful in leading an effort that incorporates useful input from citizens.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, Tea Party activists significantly impacted planning in Virginia. But whether or not this impact was negative was largely dependent upon how planners responded. In localities where planners relied on traditional methods of public participation, activists were much more successful in influencing outcomes in ways that mitigated the work of planners. This occurred in the Middle Peninsula and Fauquier County. Meanwhile, in localities where planners worked to increase public participation, activists were not able to significantly influence the planning process. Planners achieved such successes in Charlottesville, the New River Valley, Chesterfield, and New Kent. In each of these cases, planners emphasized that it was the threat posed by conservative activism that convinced them to adopt inclusive strategies for participation. Thousands of citizens became engaged in planning efforts as a result.

Activists also impacted planning by influencing legislation enacted at the state level. Localities were given the option to designate urban development areas rather than being mandated to do so. At first, this caused many localities to drop their UDAs from their comprehensive plans. However, the lasting impact on planning was minimal, as legislation passed in 2014 incentivized local governments to designate UDAs as part of gaining funding for transportation projects (Jackson, 2017). Activists also successfully pushed for an amendment to the state constitution that strengthened protections for private property rights. The amendment was approved by a majority of voters in the 2012 general election (“Virginia Eminent Domain Amendment, Question 1,” 2012). Finally, the “Boneta Bill” limited the ability of localities to regulate agricultural uses. The bill expanded the definition of agricultural uses and prohibited local governments from requiring special use permits.

Thus, the overall impact on planning stemming from the Tea Party's legislative efforts was mixed. Legislation pertaining to UDAs changed how localities designate such areas, but has not restricted them from doing so entirely (Anonymous, 2017). The property rights amendment has yet to increase the cost of eminent domain action by local governments and state agencies, although it may in the future (McGlennon, 2017). And while the "Boneta Bill" precluded localities from practicing zoning enforcement measures they had previously relied on, supporters of the bill argued it protected a culturally and historically significant aspect of Virginia life. In other states, such as "Right to Farm" laws have even found support amongst members of the planning profession (Daniels and Daniels, 2004).

For the planners themselves, activism affected their daily work lives in several ways. First and foremost, in every case where activism occurred, responding to opposition took up an enormous amount of staff time that could have been devoted to more substantial pursuits. Responding to complaints, educating legislators, and drafting memos to explain otherwise obvious facts, such as how the local planning commission was not being duped by the United Nations, prevented planners from dedicating time to the truly important work to be done in their communities. Activism also hindered the ability of local governments to proactively make policy, as decision-makers became wary of pursuing goals that might have catalyzed further opposition (Lawrence, 2016). Thus, perhaps the greatest impact of activism has been the fact that a number of planning initiatives were never pursued.

In addition to providing an analysis of how activism impacted planning in Virginia, this study also provided a broad overview of how Virginia planners consider public input. Through the cases, it is apparent that planners have increasingly employed many of the techniques espoused by proponents of the communicative theory. In efforts across the Commonwealth,

thousands of Virginians contributed their thoughts, opinions, and guidance, resulting in an unprecedented number of people becoming involved. This is especially noteworthy in a state known for its historic deference to political elites (Sabato, 1981). Although critiques of the communicative style of planning remain abundant in current literature, there is general consensus that increased public participation is a welcome and needed addition to planning practice (Innes and Booher, 2015). That Virginia planners are incorporating participation to an unprecedented degree, and that they are giving it a decision-making role, indicates that planning in the Commonwealth is keeping abreast of the profession's best practices and modes of thought.

As an exploratory study, this work provides several paths forward for future research. One potential direction is toward gaining a better understanding of how participation influenced plans. Although this study discovered that increased public participation prevented Tea Party activists from dominating planning processes, it did not identify the interrelationship between participation and the content of plans. Understanding what impact individuals had on outcomes would provide several valuable insights. First, it could identify precisely which strategies or actionable steps taken by planners truly motivated people to get involved and remain active participants. Second, it could shed light on which outcomes were produced primarily because of increased participation and how they differed from those gained by a more traditional approach. And finally, it could reveal how participants felt about their role, and point to the specific strengths and weaknesses of a participatory approach. Overall, gaining these insights would help discern the true value of a communicative approach in practice.

Additional research may also help identify concrete steps planners can take to mitigate the damaging impacts of conservative activism. This is especially important due to the fact that

conservative activism will very likely never stop being a part of public debate. The argument between property rights advocates and planning proponents is a multi-century contention that goes back to the country's founding. It is grounded firmly within the conflict between individualism and collectivism, a debate that is fought out in myriad forms in American political and social life everyday (Jacobs, 2010). Because their profession is fundamentally about the allocation and reallocation of property rights, planners must be ready to diminish the concerns of activists while remaining committed to their community and citizens.

As recommended by Frick (2013) and Jacobs and Paulsen (2009), requiring that plans include a property rights impact statement would be a useful step for planners and activists alike. Akin to how an environmental impact assessment operates, a property rights impact statement could provide a tangible understanding of exactly how a planning measure might impact the owners of private property. The statement would list the short and long-term consequences of action and inaction associated with a planning proposal and give participants something concrete to debate (Jacobs and Paulsen, 2009). This may prevent the more ludicrous aspects of the recent confrontations between planners and anti Agenda 21 activists. While still not likely to breed complete consensus between activists and planners, including a property rights impact statement in plans may foster a more useful and honest dialogue between the two sides. As discussed throughout the presented cases, such a dialogue may provide a welcome addition to future planning efforts.

Promoting a more inclusive and truthful dialogue between planners, government officials, citizens, and activists of all political stripes, is an especially important endeavor. Planning, like most kinds of government activity, is a complex, nuanced field rife with potential pitfalls and political sticking points for all those engaged. However, it deserves a well-informed public

debate. Because of planning's highly visible and influential role in communities, the decisions made by practitioners will undoubtedly continue to spark confrontation. Planners must be willing and prepared to seek out public input and give participants decisive power in determining the fate of the communities in which they live. As shown by the work of those who successfully confronted Tea Party opposition, planners certainly have it in their power to do so.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Planners/Government Personnel/Citizens

1. Have any Tea Party activists, or similar activist groups, been active in your jurisdiction?
2. If so, what do you think were the events that caused activism?
3. Did activists garner a sizeable amount of local media attention? How were they portrayed?
4. What were the main initiatives your organization was working on at the time this activism arose?
5. What steps does your organization take to incorporate public participation?
6. What were methods employed by activists to make an impact upon your work and the overall work of the local government?
7. What were the impacts stemming from activists involvement?
8. Were the methods your organizations use to incorporate public participation impacted, and if yes, how so?
9. In what specific ways did activists *directly* impact your work?
10. How were local legislators impacted by activism? What were their responses?
11. Were pieces of set policy changed due to activism? If yes, how so?
12. What have you learned from dealing with such an activism? Would you handle it the same way you did previously or would you do so now in a different way?

Political Activists

1. What are the specific strategies and methods that your organization has used to to affect change?
2. Have you ever participated in a public meeting sponsored by a local government?
3. What policies has your organization advocated to your local government to adopt?

4. In your estimation, were these policy concerns acted upon by government personnel? Did they become a part of larger public debate, if they were not before?
5. Did you and your organization attempt to gain media attention? If so, what steps did you and your organization take to accomplish this? What was the result?
6. Did you contact local officials and legislators? How did you contact them and why did you choose these methods?
7. What policies did you want to see changed, repealed, or preserved by the local government(s) in the jurisdiction(s) you were active in?
8. What are the specific strategies and methods that you and your organization employed to affect this change?
9. Did you directly engage with government personnel in person, i.e. in public meetings, forums, town halls, protests, etc.? If so, how and why did you pursue such engagement?
10. Did you and your organization attempt to influence the planning process of local government in particular? If so, what reasons lead you to do so?
11. In your opinion, has your organization been successful in changing local government policy in a manner that you prefer?
12. What are you and your organization's long-term goals, strategies, etc.?

VITA

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