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**Models of Community Planning**

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## Models of Community Planning

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Community planning at the local government level exhibits a much greater degree of variation in the methods of planning than those of the typical state or federal agency. While the local planning processes may originate from the administrative levels and may be strongly tied to benchmarking—like their state-level counterparts—there also exists a much greater degree of variation. A review of the literature and the experiences and observations of the authors representing three university extension programs in community development suggest that four basic models can be identified. The four models that clearly emerge from an analysis and review of those experiences are: **managerial (M), legislative (L), limited community participation (LCP), and community empowerment process (CEP) models.** (Lacy, Dougherty, Gibson, 1999) We have selected thirteen different communities from Virginia, Ohio, and West Virginia to illustrate some of these conclusions. They range from small rural county governments to suburban governments and include two municipal governments as well as a school system. Based upon observations from the thirteen cases studied and the rather loosely framed criteria to evaluate the success of community based planning efforts, we have reached several tentative conclusions. We label our conclusions as tentative because we intend to develop a framework to measure more precisely the conclusions reached through our observations. These conclusions help provide a framework for estimating the likely success/outcome of future community strategic planning efforts.

### Local Models of Community Planning: Observations from Thirteen Cases

Based upon nearly two decades of field work as participant observers in more than forty cases, our team developed a number of observations relating to the *critical importance of leadership styles* to the success of community planning programs. Community planning provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate leadership processes and styles because there are identifiable steps in the process.

Each community that engages in some form of planning process develops its own unique approach to planning. However, some common threads run through most community planning processes. Based upon our four models of community planning, we used five questions to study thirteen cases where members of our research team had been involved as facilitators in the community planning processes.

1. Why was the process initiated?
2. Who initiated the process?
3. When has the process been most effective?
4. What has been achieved by the process?

5. Were there mechanisms put in place to ensure that the process continued?

The traditional model, the **managerial model**, of community planning is the most common of the four models and is closely related to those strategic planning models found in the private sector. They are top down, follow fairly rigidly prescribed steps, are very linear in their application and provide very little room for meaningful stakeholder participation.

A second model, **the legislative model**, is the second most widely used model. It is usually initiated to develop an action agenda to guide and direct the decisions of the organization's governing body and administrative team. Usually the organization's CAO and one or more members of the governing body initiate the process. In some variations the process is initiated entirely by members of the community's governing body. Under these circumstances the locality's CAO and administrative staff are likely to become actively involved in promoting the process. The results and outcomes of the strategic planning process in this situation include: the development of an agenda; the development of community acceptance, or "buy-in" of that agenda; and the legitimization of decisions made by the community's governing body and/or administrative team.

A third model is the **limited community participation model**. The unique feature of this model is that a committee, task force or commission is created and members appointed to develop and guide the process. The distinguishing feature of this model is the very limited amount of citizen participation outside membership of the appointed Commission. Often the process is initiated by the governing body, sometimes with prodding from the CAO. For the most part, the activities surrounding the planning process continue for ten to eighteen months. After the citizens committee completes a report and presents it to the governing body, the formal planning activities begin to diminish and are internalized to the decision-making processes of the administrative team and / or the governing body.

A fourth model, the **community empowerment process model**, is built around extensive community participation and is designed as an empowerment process to develop a community agenda and engage the residents of the community over a long period of time. Usually the process is initiated by a proactive governing body. The organization's administrative team may be involved, but only at the request of the governing body. In the most successful cases an institutionalized process to ensure continued participation by residents is established. A review board or similar institution is created to provide for regular monitoring of the progress toward the goals that were established during the process.

### **Evidence from Different Cases**

Using thirteen different communities from Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia as case studies, we established a loose framework to examine our observations. The communities ranged from small rural county governments to suburban governments and included two municipal governments as well as a county school system. We compared a variety of

criteria in addition to size and type of government. As a brief description, we looked at such things as:

- the reasons for initiating the process – economic stagnation, transitional community, governing body conflict, team building;
- who initiated the process– the chief administrative officer, the governing body, administrative team;
- participants in the process– the chief administrative officer, the governing body, the administrative team, citizens;
- the amount of time and quality of participants – ranged from highly involved to not involved at all; and,
- qualities of the principle leader(s).

A brief profile of the thirteen different communities selected to illustrate some of the tentative conclusions appear in the table below. We label our conclusions as tentative because we intend to develop a framework to measure more precisely the conclusions reached through our observations. Table I below provides a general description of the communities studied.

**Table I. Community Characteristics and the Planning Model Adopted**

<b>Name of Locality</b>	<b>Classification/ Type of Government</b>	<b>Model/ Type</b>	<b>Reason for Initiation</b>
Community 1	Rural	LCP	Economic Stagnation
Community 2	Small Urban	CEP	Transitional Community
Community 3	Suburban Fringe	M/LCP	CAO/Anticipated Change
Community 4	Suburban Fringe	M	Community/Governing Body Conflict
Community 5	Suburban Fringe	CEP	Transitional Community
Community 6	Suburban Fringe	CEP	Transitional Community/ Division
Community 7	Suburban Fringe	M	Staff/Governing Body Team Building
Community 8	Suburban Fringe	CEP	Build Community Support/Ownership
Community 9	Rural	M	Community Stagnation
Community 10	Suburban Fringe	LCP/L	Transitional Community
Community 11	Suburban Fringe	CEP	Economic Development/Change
Community 12	Rural	M/L	Transitional Community/Stagnation
Community 13	Suburban Fringe	L/LCP	Transitional Community/Change

The thirteen cases identified in Table I include three rural counties facing economic stagnation. In Community 1, the strategic planning process was initiated by the CAO (Chief Administrative Officer) and the governing body, but included the appointment of a twenty-seven member Commission on the Future that did not seek much community involvement or participation. Community 12 was a rural transitional community facing economic stagnation. The chair of the Planning commission initiated the process with the tacit approval and support of the governing body. Conflict arose during the process which eventually resulted in the champion of the process leaving office. Poor communication and engagement methods to involve the

community eventually doomed the efforts. In Community 9 the process was initiated by the CAO with support from the governing body, but the process never engaged the governing body in a sustained way and was never expanded to the community.

Communities 4, 7 and 11 share a border with an urbanizing area and are classified as suburban fringe. In two cases (4 and 7) the planning process was initiated by the CAO with support from the governing body. In both cases the governing body had no sustained involvement in the process and in both cases the community was never engaged in the process. In one case, (11) the process was initiated by the communities' top elected official with approval from the governing body. An existing planning commission became, by default, the commission on the future. To date the process has engaged the community in a variety of ways and continues with energy and commitment.

Four Communities, 2, 5, 6, and 8 were classified as community empowerment models with "commissions on the future" appointed to engage the community. All four processes were initiated by public officials because these are "transitional communities" facing a number of concerns relating to change. They are all classified as transitional because they were changing in fundamental character--population growth and becoming more suburban.

Three of the communities (3, 10, and 13) were classified as limited citizen participation models because commissions on the future were appointed, but were not expected to actively engage the community in the process. In Community 3, seven residents were appointed to serve with the administrative team to develop a strategic plan that largely rubber-stamped an administrative plan. In community 10 a twenty-seven member Commission on the Future was created. In community 13, a twenty-one member Commission was appointed. In both communities the commissions did engage the community in a limited way with publicity and some open meetings. However, community participation was very limited.

Summaries of the basic community planning characteristics are presented in Table II.

**Table II. Summary of Community Planning Characteristics**

<b>Name of Locality</b>	<b>Life-cycle/ Longevity</b>	<b>Mechanism for Continuation</b>	<b>Principal Process Type</b>	<b>Level Of Success/ Impact</b>
Community 1	9 mos./ 2 yrs.	None	TPM	Low/ Low
Community 2	5 yrs./ 16 yrs.	Formal Committee	CPM	High/ High
Community 3	6 mos./ 20 mos.	None	TPM	Low/ Low
Community 4	5 yrs./ Sporadic	None	TPM	Low/ Low
Community 5	10 mos./ 3 yrs.	Informal	CPM	High/ Moderate
Community 6	12 mos./ 5 yrs.	Informal Committee	CPM	High/ Moderate
Community 7	10 years/ Sporadic	None	TPM	Low/ Low
Community 8	2 yrs./ 5 yrs.	Formal Committee	CPM	High/ High
Community 9	10 yrs/ sporadic	None	TPM	Low/ Moderate
Community 10	9 mos./ 3 yrs.	Informal Committee	CPM	High/ Moderate
Community 11	1 yr./ 1 yr.	Formal Committee	CPM	High/ High
Community 12	3.5 yrs. / dormant	Informal / Chair of PC	TPM	Low/ Low
Community 13	2 yrs./ Continuing	Formal / Committee	CPM	Moderate/ Moderate

“Life cycle” and “longevity” refer, respectively, to the length of the formal process and the length of time that the efforts from the process continued to have an impact. “Mechanism for continuation” refers to the creation or development of a process to continue the community planning effort. An informal process refers to an ad hoc committee that evolved to continue the efforts. “None” refers to a situation where no process was developed to continue the planning process except at the whims and circumstances of the CAO and the governing body. “Principal Leader Type” refers to a classification of the individual (s) who had the primary responsibility to guide or direct the planning process. We have used two categories to distinguish between types of leaders. One type, TPM, is the traditional process management, and the other is labeled CPM or contemporary process management. A TPM process is more focused on outcome and control while a CPM process is more focused on process and consensus building. The traits more closely associated with each type of leadership are identified in Table III. The last column in Table II refers to two dimensions of outcomes associated

with the processes. “Level of success” refers to the extent that the leaders and principal participants were able to engage their intended constituency over a sustained period. For example, a managerial model would be highly successful if the administrative/managerial staff and governing body were using the process and the goals of the process as a framework for making many decisions. An LCP model would be expected to engage some residents of the community beyond the appointed members of the committee/commission. By the term engage, the reference is to participation in meetings, widespread publicity, and open public meetings. A ratio of 3-1 (non-member to member) is the arbitrary number established as a measure of engagement for participation for both the LCP and CEP models. The term “impact” refers to the development of identifiable results from the process. Were there projects or programs undertaken to move toward achieving one or more of the goals established during the process? While the measures used in Table II are very subjective, the future research agenda is to develop measurable characteristics and collect the data to evaluate the tentative conclusions we have formulated.

Table III contains terms that generally describe the traits associated with the core leadership groups that were engaged in the strategic planning process. These traits are based upon field observations and have not undergone rigorous testing and evaluation to establish validity.

**Table III. Principal Leadership Styles: Process Traits**

Traditional Process Management	Contemporary Process Management
Expert/Guarded Learners Coalition Builders Controlling Directing Manipulative Impatient Goal Focused Filtered Accessibility Motivated/Driven Assertive/Aggressive Information Filters Gate Keepers	Open Learners Consensus Builders Facilitating Sharing Empowering Patient/Tolerant Goal Negotiable Accessible Motivators/Motivating Flexible/permissive Information Disseminators Tour Guides/Conductors

It is important to begin to develop measures of the personal traits and group traits of those who engage in leadership roles in bureaucracies and communities. The primary research task is to study leaders of community planning processes in order to identify and measure those traits that will be most strongly associated with success. The traits in Table III are a beginning point. Developing job descriptions that pay attention to the KSA's (knowledge, skills and abilities) of process leaders will have more to do with the success

of a community strategic planning process than the number of people engaged in the process, or the amount of time and energy put into the effort.

### **Conclusions from the Case Studies**

Based upon observations from the thirteen cases studied and the rather loosely framed criteria to evaluate the success of community based planning efforts, we have reached several tentative conclusions. These conclusions help provide a framework for estimating the likely success/outcome of future community planning efforts.

1. Traditional process management (TPM) approaches are not likely to produce a successful community planning process. In this instance "successful community planning process" refers clearly to engaging a relevant constituency. The constituency may be small such as an administrative team or governing body. Or, the relevant constituency may be much larger including many community residents. Traditional process managers are likely to leave the impression that the plan is "their plan" and does not belong to the group or the community. Such plans have a longevity that is largely coterminous with the organizational status of the leader. Without "buy in" and "ownership" any action agendas developed in the planning process will be dependent upon the leader to guide their implementation.
2. Contemporary process management (CPM) approaches are more likely to lead an organization or community through a successful community planning process because the participants / constituency are engaged in the development of the plan. "Ownership" and "sweat equity" are important elements among participants in community planning processes. Without establishing commitment to a community plan and the process through which it is developed, participants lose interest and participation diminishes.
3. Community planning processes that develop a formal structure to continue the efforts generated during the first phase of the process are likely to have longevity and produce identifiable impacts/outcomes. In one of the cases studied, the commission recommended the appointment of a review committee to evaluate progress and report annually to the governing body. That process continues to this date. In another case the commission recommended the creation of a number of formal committees to continue to address items from the action agenda. Five of those committees were incorporated into the advisory governance structure of the community and continue today.
4. Community planning processes that rely upon the energy, commitment, and good will of some undefined owner of the implementation process are likely to fail. Some level of responsibility must be assigned to a committee or office to assure that decisions are measured against the plan. Sometimes, in the absence of a formal structure, an informal ad hoc committee of original and new participants will develop to monitor progress toward the goals and action agendas developed during the planning process. This was the situation in one of the cases included in the study. Such a committee takes on the role similar to a "civic movement," a PAC (Political Action Committee) or an advocacy group.

Community developers/facilitators have traditionally paid close attention to the design and development of community planning processes. Many good designs and processes exist. However, two key elements relating to the success of the planning effort are too frequently ignored during the process design and implementation stages--leadership and a sustaining structure or process. Too little conventional wisdom or research based attention has been paid to the critical variable of leadership. It is time to turn our attention to measuring the leadership traits of successful leaders of community planning efforts. Further, we must develop a better understanding of the mechanisms for sustaining a community planning program and incorporate those into the processes that communities use to develop plans.

Thirteen case studies in communities from Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia do not provide a sufficient information base to develop good measures of leadership and process style. However it is important to incorporate those measures of evaluation into the process design and implementation stages of planning if we want to develop sustained community planning efforts that produce continuing results. If the goal is to create successful "engaging leadership" models, it is important for researchers and facilitators to develop measures relating to the process dynamics that surround the leadership/participant interactions. Further, the sustaining mechanisms for evaluating progress and keeping the community engaged must be incorporated *a priori* into the process design.