Neighborhood Leaders On Citizen Participation in Austin, Texas:
A Descriptive Study

by

Jasmine Griffin-Ives

An Applied Research Project
(Political Science 5397)
Submitted to the Department of Political Science
Texas State University
In Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Public Administration

Spring 2011

Faculty Approval:

_____
Patricia M. Shields, PhD

_____
Dr. Glynn Tiller, PhD

_____
Nancy Warren, MA

Abstract

Citizen input is a necessary requirement of an authentically democratic government. While voting is still the prevailing solution, declining public trust in governments worldwide has triggered public officials to find other techniques for soliciting citizen input. At the federal, state and local level, public administrators seek direct citizen involvement through citizen participation. Citizen participation provides a means of two-way communication between citizens and policy makers, and ideally, results in mutually satisfying policy outcomes. Simply providing an opportunity for direct citizen input, however, is not the panacea for successful policy creation. Without proper execution, citizen participation activities can return expensive, one-sided policies, co-opted by citizen groups or public officials. In short, citizen participation must provide opportunities for authentic or meaningful citizen involvement to be effective. Defining meaningful citizen participation through the following six indicators, Broad Public Participation, Issue and Process Framing, Deliberation, Management Effectiveness, Credibility and Tangible Results, this project describes Austin, Texas neighborhood leaders' confidence that city-sponsored citizen participation are authentic.

To achieve this purpose, a survey of neighborhood groups listed on the Austin Community Registry was conducted. Using a Likert scale design, respondents scored their agreement with a series of statements based on the indicators. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate a mean value for each statement. Four mean ranges were identified and labeled as follows: no confidence, low confidence, some confidence or high confidence. Survey results indicated that neighborhood leaders have little confidence in Austin citizen participation efforts as five of the six indicators, Broad Public Participation, Issue and Process Framing, Deliberation, Credibility and Tangible Results fell in the "low confidence" range. Neighborhood leaders had "some confidence" that Austin, Texas efforts include Management Effectiveness. Overall, results suggest neighborhood leaders value citizen participation, would like to have more options for how to participate, feel efforts lack credibility, and that recommendations made through participation are rarely implemented.

Contents

Table of Charts

Author's Statement

Author Jasmine Griffin-Ives has always had an interest in the average person's role in government. She graduated with a B.A. in History from Castleton College in Vermont where she focused on modern social history. Jasmine has participated in many community strategic planning efforts and attended the Governor's Institute on Public Policy in her home state of Vermont. Jasmine worked for Goodwill Industries of Central Texas as a Workforce Development Training Coordinator, creating work readiness curriculum for individuals with barriers to employment. She currently does project and contract management for the Capital Area Workforce Board's External Affairs Department. Jasmine has also served as a volunteer Advocacy Trainer and volunteer coordinator for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Jasmine is a member of Pi Alpha Alpha, the national honor society for Public Affairs and Administration, Phi Alpha Theta, the national honor society for History and Alpha Chi, the Texas State University Honor Society. Jasmine can be reached by email at jasmine.griffin@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my family, particularly my grandparents, George and Rose Griffin for always encouraging me to ask questions and read everything I could get my hands on. I'd also like to thank Josh and Noah for their never-ending understanding, support and forgiveness, and for putting up with my school mess. Without you two, the road to graduation would have been too quiet and too lonely. Finally, I'd like to thank my mom, Susan, my dad, Bill and my sister, Becki for always being there for me.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public trust in government has been in decline since the middle of the 20th century.[1] Speculated causes have ranging from specific controversial political events (i.e. Watergate Scandal) to inflated services expectations from overeducated and mollycoddled citizenry (Wang 2007; Dalton 2005). Regardless of the cause, decreased confidence in government negatively affects the field of public administration. Operating in an environment of mistrust, public administrators face difficult interactions with insolent customers, high levels of scrutiny by the media and unrealistic demands from voter-conscious elected officials. While the greatest lack of trust is in the federal government, and increasingly in state governments, trust issues also affect public administrators at the local level (Berner 2004, 149).

To counter declining public faith, many local governments are investing in citizen participation (Wang 2007; Yang and Callahan 2005). Also referred to as citizen involvement and deliberative democracy, citizen participation generally refers to any act of democracy. The term, however, is more specifically used to describe direct citizen action in policy creation. Citizen participation differs from other democratic activities such as voting, lobbying, serving on a jury, running for office and contributing or assisting in a campaign (Marschall 2004, 231.) For example, voting activities are mostly limited to the selection of a representative and occasionally allow yes or no decision-making through referendums. Lobbying is an action to influence how representatives make decisions on issues. Running for office and campaigning aim to influence who is selected as a representative, but have little direct effect on policy implementation (Verba

---

[1] See Crosby et al. (1986); Kathi and Copper, (2005, 560); Berner and Smith (2004, 140).

and Nie, 1972). Citizen participation, on the other hand, aims to create better policies through direct communication between citizens and policy makers.

The goals of citizen participation are typically described as three-fold.[2] The first is ideological: by increasing participation in government, citizens are exposed to the democratic process and have a greater connection to the ethos of democracy (DeSario 1987, 184; Stoll 2001, 529). In other words, citizen participation improves democracy simply because citizens are more actively participating in government.

The other goals of participation are more practical. Through the representative democracy system, public officials or lawmakers are elected to represent the interests of citizens. As such, lawmakers responding to campaign promises, party or personal political agendas, or reacting to citizen complaints create laws. Laws are generally broad and possibly ideological statements on issues, but often lack specific guidance on implementation or management. Public administrators are, then, responsible for turning a law into policy or a detailed course of action on how to achieve the objectives of the law.

Citizen Participation aids in the creation of effective policies as citizens communicate specific needs directly to policy makers. Citizens, able to candidly express details on their wants and preferences, help policy makers choose action agreeable to the public. Hence, the second goal of citizen participation is to create policies designed by citizens.

Managing government is arduous task. Operations take place in a very public setting and are controlled by complex and often onerous, legal restrictions. Moreover, governments are responsible to the needs of inherently diverse groups of stakeholders. In many cases, elected officials pass laws unpopular with the public or a certain section of the public. Officials can also

---

[2] See King and Stivers (1998, 195); Berner and Smith (2004, 148); Yang and Callahan (2005, 191); Irving and Stansbury (2004, 55).

pass laws sees as favorable in theory, but require the implementation of unfavorable policies. By involving citizens in the policy creation process, public officials are able to directly educate citizens on the complexity of government. For example, knowledge of budgetary limitations, technical challenges or legal standards can help citizens understand why a popular solution may be infeasible. Increasing citizen "buy-in" for policies, especially those which may be controversial or unpopular (Irving and Stansbury 2004) is the third goal of citizen participation.

Citizen participation, ideally, "closes the loop" in the governing process by creating channels of communication between public administrators (those who define, implement and enforce policies) and citizens (those who request and experience policies). In short, the goals of citizen participation are to foster a democratic spirit and increase communication between citizens and policy makers.

Neighborhood Groups and Citizen Participation:

At the local level, neighborhood groups are an obvious focus of citizen participation efforts. In addition to utilitarian functions such as creating neighborhood watch groups, making decisions on commonly shared space, and organizing park clean up days, many groups set agendas for community planning, defend neighborhoods from unfavorable development, and try to influence city decisions on issues such as environmental and social policies. Neighborhood associations represent a "bottom-up" and vested way for citizens to organize. Residents of neighborhoods share common space and interests. When neighborhood groups connect with local government to solve local problems, such as crime, lack of recreational space or unfavorable development, the members of the groups are engaged in citizen participation.

Groups embody the organized interests of citizens living within established boundaries; therefore, leaders are uniquely suited to represent citizen needs in participation activities.

Neighborhood leaders can help shape effective policies because they are familiar with the needs of their community. Likewise, cities use neighborhood groups as points of contact for dealing with neighborhood issues (Logan 1990, 70). The leaders of neighborhood groups often work closely with city staff on projects that seek citizen input, including those which extend beyond a neighborhood's borders. Consequently, designated neighborhood leaders are in a good position to judge the quality of citizen participation efforts in their area.

Research Purpose:

Set in Austin, Texas, the purpose of this project is to describe neighborhood leadership's confidence that citizen participation efforts are meaningful. The project identified the following six indicators necessary for meaningful participation:

- **Broad Public Participation**
- **Issue and Process Framing**
- **Deliberation**
- **Management Effectiveness**
- **Credibility**
- **Tangible Results**

To gather evidence on neighborhood leadership's confidence in Austin's participation efforts, a survey constructed from the indicators was administered. Mean scores are used to label neighborhood leaders' confidence in each indicator as no confidence, low confidence, some confidence or high confidence. An overall confidence level is also presented based on the results for each indicator.

Benefits of Research:

Citizen participation efforts are often expensive and time consuming. By having a better understanding of how neighborhood leadership sees participation efforts, city policy makers and staff can create more efficient and effective programs. Results of this project may be particularly useful to the newly created Austin Neighborhood Assistance Center[3]. This project also provides a method for testing neighborhood groups' opinions in other communities for benchmarking or comparative studies. Finally, the project develops questions for further research into the relationship between neighborhoods and citizen participation.

Chapter Summaries:

Chapter 2 provides a brief introduction to neighborhood politics. The two major types of neighborhood-based groups are defined and issues of neighborhood group participation are discussed. Chapter 3 introduces neighborhood politics in Austin, Texas including city-sponsored efforts to engage neighborhood groups in citizen participation. The chapter concludes with a review of citizen participation efforts proposed in the Imagine Austin comprehensive planning process.

Chapter 4 discusses citizen participation. First, scholarly work on citizen participation is reviewed to identify indicators of meaningful participation. Each indicator is further defined through a series of sub-indicators. At the conclusion of the chapter, indicators are compiled into a conceptual framework.

Chapter 5 introduces the methodology used to achieve the project's purpose. The conceptual framework of essential indicators presented in Chapter 4 is operationalized into survey questions. The population for the project is discussed as well as the distribution

---

[3] For more information on the Austin Neighborhood Assistance Center, see Chapter 2 or visit http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighborhood/default.htm.

technique. The benefits and weakness of survey research are also presented. The chapter closes

with a discussion of Human Subject Protection Issues. Chapter 6 summarizes the survey results.

Descriptive statistics analyze responses to each survey question. Respondent comments are also

used to illustrate results. Chapter 7 concludes the project by summarizing the survey results.

Mean scores calculated in Chapter 6 are used to label neighborhood leadership's confidence in

each indicator as no confidence, little confidence, some confidence or high confidence.

Limitations of the research are discussed and areas for further study are recommended.

Chapter 2: Neighborhood Politics: History and Setting

"A neighborhood is a limited territory within a larger urban area where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially…all cities have neighborhoods, virtually all dwellings in city and suburb are located in neighborhoods, and nearly everyone is a neighborhood resident even though he or she doesn't always articulate this role."
-Howard Hallman 1984, 13.

Chapter Purpose:

This chapter provides a brief introduction to neighborhood politics. The two major types of neighborhood-based groups are defined, and issues of neighborhood group participation are discussed. The next chapter surveys neighborhood politics in Austin, Texas, particularly city-sponsored efforts to engage neighborhood groups in citizen participation activities.

Neighborhood Groups:

As suggested by Howard Hallman above, most city residents live in a neighborhood.[4] Neighborhoods are the immediate area surrounding and including people's homes; they generally have recreational space, transportation systems, businesses, churches, schools and arts/culture centers. Inhabitants or residents often share values and have common interests because of their relationship to the neighborhood. Residents form interest groups in order to organize and advocate for common goals such as increasing neighborhood safety and security, improving service delivery, NIMBY[5] causes and/or to create a stronger sense of community. Neighborhood-based interest groups or civic organizations are the subject of this study.

---

[4] Individuals who are experiencing homelessness may not be considered neighborhood residents. In Austin, however, the homeless community has created a neighborhood group, Homeless Neighborhood Association, to advocate for common interests based on the space group members occupy. More information about neighborhood groups in Austin, Texas follows in the next section.

[5] NIMBY stands for "Not in my backyard" and refers to situations where residents oppose a policy, not because they disagree with its purpose, but because they are concerned about perceived negative effects to their neighborhood.

Neighborhood groups are as diverse as the neighborhoods they represent (Rich 1980, 560). While not always the case, factors like housing quality, economic activity and historical and cultural identity can cause people to gravitate toward neighborhoods inhabited by similar people (Stoll 2001, 531.) Since neighborhoods represent nearly every resident of a city, neighborhood groups can vary greatly in cultural norms and values, socio-economic status, or race and ethnic identity. A few generalizations, however, can be made about the nature of neighborhood-based groups. Members are usually organized, with varying degrees of formality; there is usually a system for paying dues and voting in association elections. There are also generally opportunities to participate in neighborhood activities such as neighborhood beautification projects, community social nights, political activities or neighborhood watch groups. Neighborhood groups also often interact with local government.

Voluntary Neighborhood Associations and Residential Community Associations are the two major forms of neighborhood-based groups and have very distinct histories. It can be argued, however, that both groups developed to address a universal desire for better public services. Voluntary Neighborhood Associations were traditionally formed in poor, often minority neighborhoods and petitioned municipal governments for service improvements (Nachmias and Palen 1982, 191; Stoll 2001, 532.) Residential Community Associations, on the other hand, were formed by developers to serve the interests of wealthy homeowners, willing to share the cost of high quality community services. In other words, poorer neighborhoods looked to government to increase the quality of services, while wealthy groups broke away from government to provide their own standards of service. Both organizations are discussed in more detail below.

Examples include opposition to hazardous waste facilities, jails, homeless shelters and railroads. For more information, see Hermansson (2007).

Voluntary Neighborhood Associations:

   Paraphrasing the famous French philosopher and political scientist, Alexis de Tocqueville, Hallman (1984) asserts that the Americans have always been association-formers.[6] Hallman notes that early police forces and fireman were voluntary barrages of citizens, investing personal time to ensure the safety of their communities. Neighborhood associations emerged in the last half of the 19th century, when citizens turned their focus on "improving living conditions" for poor and disenfranchised groups.[7] Hallman provides examples of private charity organizations helping poor immigrant neighborhoods in Buffalo, New York and settlement houses providing services targeted specifically to the needs of poor neighborhoods in New York City and Chicago.

   Contemporary Voluntary Neighborhood Groups, however, were formed in poor urban cities in the middle of the 21st century. Challenging what they perceived as inequality between wealthy and poor areas, economically disadvantaged residents and/or minorities attempted to influence government officials through collective action. Amassing power at the grassroots level to do battle with municipal departments was considered the best solution to better and equitable service delivery (Cooper et al. 2005, 562.) Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, neighborhood volunteers staged protests to force local government into providing needed services (Dilger 1992, 107).

   As a result, voluntary neighborhood groups and governments viewed each other as adversaries. Kathi (2005, 562) describes neighborhood organizations and municipal government relations as "adversarial and conflictual" explaining the commonly held belief that "the interest

---

[6] Alexis de Tocqueville noted in his 1830's travels through the US, that "Americans of all ages, all conditions and all dispositions form associations (Hallman 1984, 106). Hallman further illustrates this point by claiming that Tocqueville's observations were true "at least a century" before the French Philosopher traveled in the new world.
[7] Other scholars ascribe the origins of neighborhood associations to the Progressive Era. See Haeberle (1986) and Kathi and Cooper (2005).

of city bureaucrats and communities were inevitably and inescapably at odds." Moreover, local public officials viewed early voluntary neighborhood tactics of protest and upheaval as anti-social and counterproductive. Federal programs mandating citizen participation such as the Model Cities Program and the Community Action Program provided resources and the legal backing for poor communities to organize, possibly fueling the fire between poor residents and local government. [8]

Today Voluntary Neighborhood Associations can be found in most communities. Most start in reaction to an unfavorable policy or threat to the neighborhood, and at first, existed only to eliminate the threat.[9] Many groups continued to function after the resolution of the original issue, and expand interest to other problems (Logan 1990, 89). Contemporary groups have adopted more cooperative techniques for achieving neighborhood goals. Realizing governments simply did not possess funds to provide additional services, Voluntary Neighborhood Associations looked to other sources to meet goals often forming partnerships with business groups or developing services on their own (Dilger (1992, 107). Voluntary neighborhood groups, nevertheless, are still dynamic players in local government politics.

---

[8] For more on the Model Cities Program and the Community Action Program, see Cunningham (1972); Logan (1990, 74 & 75), Hallman (1984, 121-134), Dilger (1992, 107).
[9] According to an *Austin American Statesman* article on the formation of the Austin Neighborhood Council, most early Austin Neighborhood groups were formed to "face a crisis" such as the destruction of a neighborhood park. For more on the formation of the Austin Neighborhood Council, see Carrington (1973).

Residential Community Associations:

The second type of neighborhood-based groups are Residential Community Associations (RCA).[10] Residential Community Associations are private collaborations of citizens connected through commonly, owned space. Typically, developers build a community of houses with shared amenities. Individuals who then purchase homes on the development, enter into a contractual relationship with other property owners. In short, RCAs create formalized, legal relationships between property owners to share ownership and responsibility for common space and usually includes the delivery of services.

Members are usually legally bound to a set of quasi-laws called Covenants, Rules and Regulations (CR&R). These rules create uniform guidelines managing shared space and can "determine whether and under what conditions homeowners can own a cat or a dog, build an addition to their home, have a television antenna etc" (Dilger 1992, 1). RCA members vote to elect a board of directors, responsible for managing the property and enforcing CR&Rs. Unlike voluntary groups, membership for homeowners and the payment of dues is typically obligatory.

While Residential Community Associations do participate in political issues, they are much more involved in creating collective service delivery than Voluntary Neighborhood Associations (Dilger 1992). Residential Community Associations offer services traditionally provided by local government. As a result, RCAs tend be more isolated from local politics than Voluntary Neighborhood Associations. In fact, the lack of participation on the part of RCA members has been noted by many scholars.[11]

---

[10]In this study, the term "Residential Community Associations" includes Homeowner's Associations and Condominium Associations. For additional information on Residential Community Associations Texas, see the following thesis by Political Science graduate student, Nancy Warren at Texas State University-San Marcos: Regulating Texas Homeowner's Associations, August (2001).

[11] See Dilger, (1992); Haeberle, (1986); and Warren (2001).

Residential Community Associations are not a new phenomenon, though their popularity and presence in the United States have greatly increased in the last 50 years (Dilger 1992.) [12] In the 1960s, changes in land cost and development needs led to policies which increase the number of housing units developers were allowed to build per acre and loosened setback easements and other design restrictions. Increasing the number of units on a piece of land made adding community amenities more cost efficient. Developers, therefore, were able to attract wealthy homebuyers with promises of high-level services such as professional lawn care, trash removal, and on-property golf course. By the 1980s, the number of Residential Community Associations grew substantially (Dilger 1991). The popularity of these types of associations, for residents interested in community services and for developers interested in profit, continues to expand. While the role of voluntary groups in local politics has been extensively studied, citizen participation in RCAs has received limited scholarly attention (Dilger 1991, 17; Hawkins et al. 1997, 61).[13]

Despite significant differences between Residential Community Associations and Voluntary Neighborhood Associations, both serve as interest groups for people connected by a geographically delineated area. Both groups elect leadership from the member-base and share a common interest and investment in neighborhood affairs with other members. Moreover, both associations work with local government in citizen participation efforts, and both groups select individuals to represent neighborhood interests. In the next section, neighborhood leadership is discussed.

---

[12] Dilger (1992) notes that residential community associations are a common form of housing organization in Europe dating back to 1600s. However, they did not gain significant popularity in the United States until the 1960s.

[13] Legal standards for RCAs including the right of the RCAs to enforce CR&R and the legal relationship between members of the RCAs, property developers, board of directors and local municipalities has been extensively studied. For more on RCA legal issues, see Dilger (1991) and Hawkins et al. (1997).

Neighborhood Leadership:

For the purpose of this study, neighborhood leadership is defined as those individuals who represent the interest of neighborhood associations.[14] Associations typically elect a primary leader such as a president or chairperson, and a group of secondary leaders such as vice-presidents, treasurers, community relationship officers etc. Group officers are responsible for organizing activities, collecting operational resources and representing neighborhood interests. This study focuses on neighborhood leaderships' assessment of city participation initiatives, because leadership is most likely to be involved and/or aware of citizen participation activities and represent the interests of neighborhood stakeholders.

Neighborhood Groups as Important Political Actors:

Neighborhood groups are important political actors in municipal communities for three main reasons. First, groups provide opportunities for cooperative and therefore, more effective action. Neighborhood associations offer a channel for individual citizens to learn how governments work, to share interests with neighbors, and to practice citizen participation.[15] Building on Peter Berger & Richard John Neuhaus' perception of community organizations, Verba and Nie (1972, 25) note that neighborhood associations serve a mediation role between an "individual in his private life and the large institution of public life." Mark Austin (1991) views neighborhood groups as "important sources of social ties as well as serving as a means for residents to pursue important collective goals for the neighborhood."

Second, neighborhood associations create political awareness. Membership in associations leads to greater citizen knowledge and involvement in wider community issues (Austin 1991, 529)." Marschall (2004, 241-242) argues, "citizen contacts serve as important

---

[14] This distinction is made because leaders of civic organizations such as church officials can also be seen as neighborhood leaders.

[15] See Austin (1991, 529); Kathi and Cooper (2005, 565); Nachmias (1982, 191).

mechanisms not only for recruiting individuals to take action but also for the dissemination of vital information about local events." In her study on factors that motivate individuals to engage in education and public safety issues, Marschall (2004) found that membership in a neighborhood association increased the likelihood that an individual would get involved in local politics, calling neighborhood groups "arenas for the development of organizational and communication skills relevant for political participation." Other scholars suggests that neighborhood associations which engage in many and varied issues are more likely to influence local politics.[16]

Last, groups serve as contacts for public administrators, making communication of essential information easier and more cost effective for government. Governments, Hallman (1984) explains, "often look to neighborhoods as collective units for involving citizens in developing public policies and program implementation." When citizen are organized into groups such as neighborhood associations, they develop their own system for disseminating information and taking action. Describing neighborhood associations as in an "ideal position to generate solutions that are both effective and democratic" (2009, 5), Lelieveldt et al. points out that neighborhood associations mirror little governments. As such, neighborhood associations bring together groups of citizens who share common interests, educate members on political issues and help governments identify solutions.

Chapter Summary:

Chapter 2 provides a brief introduction to neighborhood politics. The two major types of neighborhood-based groups were defined, and issues of neighborhood group participation were discussed. In the next chapter, neighborhood politics in Austin, Texas will be presented.

---

[16] See Cooper et al. (2005, 211); Verba and Nie (1972, 318).

Chapter 3: Setting: Austin, Texas

"Citizen Participation is the lifeblood of a healthy democracy, and that's something we value deeply in Austin." *Mayor Lee Leffingwell, 2011 State of the City Address, delivered 02.25.11*

Chapter Purpose:

Chapter 3 introduces neighborhood politics in Austin, Texas, including city-sponsored efforts to engage neighborhood groups in citizen participation.[17] The chapter concludes with a review of citizen participation efforts proposed in the Imagine Austin comprehensive planning process.

Austin:

State capital, Austin, Texas is the fourth largest city in the state of Texas and the fifteenth largest city in the United States with a population of over 750, 000 people.[18] Located in the path of the Colorado River, Austin is in the middle of the Texas Hill Country, an area of rolling hills covered in oak, cedar and mesquite trees. Known as the "The Live Music Capital of the World," "The Blueberry in the Tomato Soup" and its pro-local business slogan "Keep Austin Weird," Austin is home to unique, progressive and independent-minded people. According to the Austin Chamber of Commerce website, "Austinites" are generally young, highly educated, progressive, diverse and tech savvy (Greater Austin Chamber n.d).

Austin is also a changing community. According to the city demographer's office, Austin is majority-minority community. Asian and Hispanic populations are rising while black populations are experiencing diminution. Other trends indicate sprawl is increasing and so is the division between the wealthy and the poor (Robinson, n.d.) The city population has nearly doubled in the last 30 years and is predicted to reach almost 1.2 million people by 2040

---

[17] For additional information on Citizen Participation in Austin, Texas, see the following Applied Research Projects by Public Administration graduate students at Texas State University-San Marcos: *Exploring the Barriers to Community Involvement in Public Transportation: The Case of Capital Metro* by Aida Berduo Douglas; *Bicycle Transportation Issues: Describing the Attitudes and Opinions of Cyclists in Austin, Texas* by Justin William Marlin; *An Assessment of Public Participation in the South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group* by Wendy Barron.

[18] The data provided above is for the City of Austin. The City of Austin is at the central of the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes the following counties includes Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson. The Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area is home to almost 2 million people, is the 35th largest in the US and is about the size of the state of Connecticut.

(Robinson, 2010). To paraphrase Robinson, Austin and the greater Austin metropolitan area is evolving.

The City of Austin employs around 10,000 people and has a 651.6 million dollar budget for fiscal year 2011. It operates with Council-Manager system; the City Council[19] appoints the city manager who serves as the Chief Administrative Officer. The city mission statement is to be in "Most Liveable City in the World" which according to the city manager's office means "that Austin is a place where all residents participate in its opportunities, its vibrancy and its richness of culture and diversity." Austin, Texas is considered to be especially committed to citizen participation as a means of creating citizen-focused policy. Austin's commitment to citizen participation is discussed in the section below.

Austin's Commitment to Citizen Participation:

As illustrated in the quote presented at the beginning of this chapter, Austin's current mayor, Lee Leffingwell (2011) recognizes citizen participation as an essential quality of democracy. The city manager, Mark Ott (2009) praises Austin as the home of a very active citizenry and considers citizen participation a necessity for the creation of effective policy. City Planner Sonya Lopez (2006) credits Austin with a "remarkable record of citizen-based planning. Outside of city government, the Urban Institute's Governing-for-Results and Accountability project report, "States, Citizens and Local Performance Management," described Austin citizen participation efforts as, "well-developed, high level, and forward looking (Dusenbury et al. 2000)."

Neighborhoods:

While there are many interest groups in Austin, neighborhood associations are a dynamic part of the citizen action community. Austin Neighborhood Group Community Registry lists

---

[19] Per the Austin City Hall Website, the Austin City Council is made up of six council members plus the mayor. Each is elected at large by the entire city and serves staggering three-year terms.

over 500 groups involved in neighborhood politics.[20] Moreover, Austin neighborhood groups are organized and connected. Established in 1973, the Austin Neighborhood Council (ANC) serves as an advisory/advocacy umbrella organization where neighborhood groups can learn about citywide neighborhood issues and find commonalities. According to the organization's website (Austin Neighborhood Council 2010), ANC members band together under the motto "Strength through Unity." ANC issues member-supported resolutions, communicates with members through an email list, posts city documents related to neighborhoods on its website, rallies for political issues of interest to neighborhood groups and endorses city council members found to support neighborhood issues. In addition, numerous other collaboration groups organize and connect multiple neighborhood groups to advocate for goals and shared interests.[21]

City policy makers value Austin neighborhood groups. The city's current comprehensive plan specifically outlines neighborhood-based groups as targets for citizen participation, and the city has initiated policies to increase neighborhood involvement (City of Austin 2008, 83). Affirming this commitment, Policy 511.3 of the Comprehensive Plan Interim Update calls for an "increase of the power of neighborhood residents in decisions affecting the neighborhood" and states "Associations representing each neighborhood in the city should be encouraged, and citizen input on zoning changes and other public policy should be sought and used (City of Austin 2008, 83)."

---

[20] Three lists of Austin neighborhood groups were found while researching this project. Because the Austin Community Registry was the most extensive, it was used as the population for this study. The Austin Neighborhood Council (ANC) maintains a list of neighborhood groups. More information about ANC is offered in this chapter. A list of neighborhood groups was also found on MAIN.ORG/Neighborhood Associations.

[21] While no complete data on the number of neighborhood-based groups exists for Austin, many sources list between 100 to 400 autonomous Austin neighborhood groups. Complete data on the number of neighborhood associations in any community is difficult or impossible to find. Hawking et al. (1997, 61) claims that without census tracking of specific data on neighborhood groups, it is difficult to calculate the number of quasi-government organizations, such as voluntary neighborhood associations and residential community associations.

The Neighborhood Planning Process and the Neighborhood Assistance Center are two initiatives specifically designed to achieve Policy: 511.3. The first citizen participation initiative targeted at neighborhood associations is the Neighborhood Planning Process. Enacted in 1996, Neighborhood Planning is described by the city as "allow(ing) citizens a chance to shape the neighborhoods where they live, work, own property, or own or manage a business" (City of Austin n.d. d). [22] In order to participate in the process, neighborhoods create contact teams who work with the city to establish a vision for the future of growth and development in the neighborhood. Plans are approved by the city council and made a part of the public record. Once a plan has been adopted, an amendment process can be undertaken to revise the plan.

While the Neighborhood Planning Process was designed to provide neighborhood residents with some input in future land use decisions for their neighborhoods, there is disagreement in the community about how successful or authentic efforts have been. The Austin Neighborhood Council has expressed great concern over the authenticity of the neighborhood planning process through many resolutions on the topic.

The second initiative, the Neighborhood Assistance Center (NAC), was created in 2009 in response to requests from neighborhood groups especially with the Neighborhood Planning Process. The mission of the NAC is to help neighborhood associations more easily participate in city government. According to the city website, the department provides neighborhood associations with "better access to the City's resources, and information about processes and how to become active members in the decisions that affect neighborhoods" (City of Austin n.d e).

---

[22] There are currently 25 adopted neighborhood plans with 4 under consideration for approval. For more information, see City of Austin: Overview of Neighborhood Planning (2009.)

In an email to the researcher, Jody Zemel (2011) Neighborhood Advisor employed by NAC, adds the following, "the purpose of the Neighborhood Assistance Center program is to promote transparency of the city planning and development review processes by facilitating the engagement of neighborhood organizations." Zemel goes on to say that Neighborhood Advisors "respond to neighborhood organizations' requests for information, advise and assistance regarding development projects and city processes by providing access to resources and city expertise as requested" and "indentifies, documents and facilitates solutions to concerns raised by neighborhood stakeholders."

The city also has numerous citizen advisory boards and commissions. According to the city's Boards and Committees webpage, advisory committees "offer citizens an opportunity to participate in the city's governmental process. Their activities help shape and influence public policy in many areas (City of Austin n.d. c)." The website lists numerous advisory committees, posts vacancies, and provides information on how to apply for a spot on an advisory committee, as well as meeting schedules.

Imagine Austin:

Austin is on the verge of a new strategic planning effort. The Imagine Austin project was implemented in 2009. The project intends to create a new comprehensive plan to replace the current strategic planning of record adopted in 1979. Among the core values of the project is creating a vision for Austin's future with a focus on community involvement. The city hired the consulting firm, Wallace Roberts and Todd, LLC, specifically to engage in citizen participation efforts. A report released in September, 2009, "Making Austin: Pubic Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan," lays out how the city plans to achieve its goal to involve the community in Austin's future.

Acknowledging the role of neighborhood associations on its list of community leaders, Imagine Austin's website states that neighborhood leaders will help create broad public participation in the planning process (City of Austin Comprehensive Plan 2009). Neighborhood and other civic leaders are charged with the dissemination of information by organizing stakeholder meetings, communicating with stakeholders through neighborhood association websites, and by newsletters as well as "volunteering in other ways to further dialogue and encourage input" (City of Austin Comprehensive Plan 2009).

In keeping with Austin's tradition of citizen participation efforts, the Imagine Austin Plan has made a lofty and very public goal of increasing citizen input in Austin's future. Do all of these efforts to create citizen participation in Austin, however, mean that neighborhood leaders feel that current processes are authentic? The next chapter discusses indicators of authentic or meaningful citizen participation programs.

Chapter Summary:

Chapter 3 introduces the setting for the project by discussing citizen participation and neighborhood politics in Austin, Texas. Major citizen participation efforts targeted at neighborhood groups were reviewed and Austin's current planning process, Imagine Austin was discussed.

Chapter 4: Indicators of Meaningful Citizen Participation

"Authentic participation is possible."

-Cheryl Simrell King, Kathryn M. Feltey and Bridet O'Neill Susel 1998, 325.

Chapter Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to describe standard indicators of meaningful citizen participation efforts. Six essential indicators of meaningful participation are identified and defined through a series of sub-indicators. Providing a common set of standards to gauge stakeholder opinions across diverse neighborhood groups, indicators are used to create the conceptual framework for this project.

Citizen Participation: Definition

Citizen participation is the direct involvement of citizens in the creation and implementation of government policies and services. It is a "process wherein the common amateurs of a community exercise power over decisions related to the general affairs of the community" (Cunningham 1972, 595). Citizen participation "embraces the fundamental democratic values of accountability and equality" and "reflects the norms that policies (and) governments should be responsive to the view of policy constituents or citizens" (DeSario 1987, 184). In other words, it is a "government efforts to involve citizens in administrative decision-making and management decisions (Yang and Callahan 2005)."

Investing in citizen participation has practical benefits: the creation of more effective and efficient policies.[23] It is generally agreed upon by scholars that citizen participation achieves more effective and efficient government for the following three reasons. First, citizen input helps

---

[23] See King and Stivers (1998, 195); Berner and Smith (2004, 148); Yang and Callahan (2005, 191); Irving and Stansbury (2004, 55).

government choose the right issues to address. Second, citizen involvement helps the public understand the difficulty of policy creation and, therefore, participants are more knowledgeable about government. Third, with a better understanding of each other through the development of policy, citizens and government are more likely to support the implementation of policies.[24] In short, government learns what citizens need, citizens learn how government works, and both groups, therefore, are more supportive of outcomes.

Barriers to Meaningful Citizen Participation:

Citizen Participation is not a panacea as mandates alone do not guarantee effective or efficient policy creation.[25] Both citizens and public officials can view involvement as a waste of resources, especially with increasingly smaller community budgets. Initiatives can be time consuming and frustrating for both groups (Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Irving and Stansbury, 2004). Input from uninformed, but empowered citizen groups can create bad, even harmful decisions (Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Irving and Stansbury, 2004). Co-opting citizen groups, public officials can create "token" processes to elicit public support without providing authentic participation opportunities (Irving and Stansbury, 2004).

How, then, do public officials create meaningful citizen participation opportunities? Many researchers have tried to answer this question. This project creates a framework of six indicators essential for meaningful or authentic participation. The framework is presented next.

---

[24] See Cupps (1977); Rowe and Frewer (2000); Irving and Stansbury (2004); Meter (1975);.

[25] See Haeberle (1986, 109); Strange (1972); Irving and Stansbury, (2004).

Indicators of Meaningful Participation:

This section identifies six necessary indicators and corresponding sub-indicators of meaningful citizen participation.[26] The indicators were selected using evidence from numerous Public Administration articles. Four articles from the literature offered previously constructed tools for describing meaningful citizen participation efforts (Shields and Tajalli 2006, p. 25). Combining the indicators from these articles, the framework is then expanded by introducing additional sub-indicators from other sources.

The first set of criteria was developed in Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer's (1986) article, "Citizen Panels: A New Approach to Citizen Participation." The authors build the criteria to address contemporary criticism that successful citizen participation activities lacked meaningful representation, focused on insignificant issues and "overall, had limited impact (170)." Identifying six standards needed in authentic citizen participation activities, Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer (1986) used the criteria to evaluate the success of Citizen Panels. The authors proposed the following indicators for a successful citizen participation process: Participant Selection, Effective Decision Making, Fair Procedures, Cost Effectiveness, Flexibility and Follow-Through on Recommendations.

The second criteria set is presented by King et al. (1998) "The Questions of Participation: Towards Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration." The authors argue for increased participation efforts to combat declining trust in government. They cited a current disconnection between citizens and government as the cause for both declining trust and the inefficiency of current participation efforts. The article outlines three necessary actions for

---

[26] The set of indicators presented here have not been empirically tested to prove a collective relationship with participation success. An empirical test of the validity and reliability of the indicators' scope and nuances is not the purpose of this study.

increasing and improving citizen participation: empowering and educating citizens, re-educating public administrators, and enabling administrative structures and processes. King et al. (1998) flesh out each area by describing specific and practical steps needed to increase the legitimacy of citizen participation. Examples include:

> *Use electronic resources (but don't rely only upon them);*
> *Provide on-site, free child-care;*
> *Catered meals at a nominal charge for participants,*
> *Free meals for disadvantaged participants;*
> *Change the way we meet and interact with each other and with citizens:*
> *Many small meetings, roundtable discussions, outside facilitators;*
> *No one privileged in group because of position, status, demographic characteristics*[27]

The third criteria was presented by Edward Weeks' (2000) article, "The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: Results from Four Large-Scale Trials." Weeks (2000) called his criteria minimum conditions required for deliberative democracy. He proposed four measures: Broad Public Participation, Informed Public Judgment, Opportunities for Deliberation and Credible Results.

The final criteria set is from Rowe and Frewer's (2000) article, "Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation." Rowe and Frewer (2000) developed the criteria to measure the usefulness of different citizen participation techniques and offer the most extensive list. Representativeness, independence, influence and early involvement are identified as acceptance criteria while resource accessibility, task definition, structured decision making and cost-effectiveness are seen as indicators of a successful process.

---

[27] See King et Al (1998, 324) for a complete list of recommendations.

From these four studies, six indicators of meaningful participation are found:

- **Broad Public Participation**
- **Issue and Process Framing**
- **Deliberation**
- **Management Effectiveness**
- **Credibility**
- **Tangible Results**

The six indicators are the **descriptive categories** used to create the conceptual framework for this project and will be used to describe Austin leaderships' opinion of current citizen participation activities. Each category is further divided into sub-characteristics or basic indicators. Table 4.1 outlines the essential indicators and sub-indicators from the four key articles. Additional sources are also used to justify and further define each measure.

Table 4.1 Indicators of Meaningful Citizen Participation

| | Key Sources | | | | Supplemental Sources | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer (1986)	King, Feltey and Susel (1998)	Rowe and Frewer (2000)	Weeks (2000)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Broad Public Participation	X	X	X	X		x		x								x					x	x	x
Access		X	X	X	x	x		x		x						x						x	x
Method of participation		X		X							x					x		x					x
Selection of Key Stakeholders	X		X	X						x						x						x	
Issue Framing	X	X	X																x			x	
Education on the Issues	X	X	X	X	x	x					x	x										x	
Structured decision-making	X		X												x				x			x	
Clearly defined goals			X																x	x			
Deliberation	X		X	X				x												x			
Encouraged	X		X	X						x		x								x			
Adequate time and Flexibility	X	X	X	X											x						x	x	
Consider Alternatives	X		X	X																			
Management Effectiveness		X	X							x						x	x					x	
Cost Effectiveness	X	X	X									x			x								
Value Added		X	X					x				x				x							
Well organized	X		X							x						x						x	
Credibility	X			X				x														x	
Transparency	X		X	X				x									x						
Legitimate	X			X																			
Support from the top	X		X	X	x						x												
Tangible Results	X	X		X					x		x											x	x
Action is taken	X	X	X						x	x				x	x							x	
Plan for next steps														x								x	
Follow Up														x	x							x	

Supplemental Source Key
1-Alder and Blake 1990
2-Cunningham 1972
3-Cupps 1977
4-Godschalk and Stiftel 1981
5-Haeberle 1986
6-Halverson
7-Ho and Coates 2004
8-Irvin and Stansbury
9-Jonsson 2005
10-Kathi and Cooper 2005
11-Kathlene and Martin 1991
12-Marschall 2004
13-Meter 1975
14-Rosener 1978
15-Sager 1991
16-Shields 2003
17-Van Til and Van Til 1970
18-Williams 1976
19-Yang and Callahan 2005

Description of Key Indicators

A description of each element and its characteristics is provided below.

Broad Public Participation

The first and most important element of successful citizen participation is **broad public participation**. Remembering the three goals of citizen participation (creating democratic spirit, developing policies people want and fostering support for reasonable policies,) the need for broad representation of stakeholders is clear. If a limited number of individuals take part in processes, or if individuals represent only certain groups, democratic awareness will not be spread, created policies represent only special interests, and citizen understanding of government limitations and constraints will remain inadequate. Involving every individual is apt to be counterproductive; nevertheless, the right mix of representation is essential in meeting authentic participation goals. All of the existing criteria sets argued the importance of representativeness in effective activities. Furthermore, numerous other articles called for representation in citizen participation programs.[28] Representation can be divided into the following three basic indicators: **access**, **multiple options for participation** and **selection of key stakeholders**.

Access:

For a process to be representative of stakeholders, community members should have access to events where participation is sought.[29] Early scholarship on citizen participation by James Cunningham (1972, 599) described **Access** as the "opportunity to participate" and "what citizens are really after." Citizens, he explains, "are not going to attend every forum and debate

---

[28] See Cunningham (1972); Godschalk and Stiftel (1981); Van Til and Van Til, (1970); Marschall (2004); Williams (1976); Yang and Callahan (2005).

[29] See Cunningham (1972, 599); Godschalk and Stiftel (1981, 601); Williams (1976), Rowe and Frewer (2000, 13).

every question. But they want the right to do so." Access also includes knowledge that opportunities exist (Godschalk and Stiftel, 1981, 601) and the ability and ease of participation (Rowe and Frewer 2000, 13).

First, the public needs to be aware of opportunities to participate. Participation is important for all groups, but is critical for groups least likely or able to take part (Stoll 2001). In general middle and upper class groups have higher levels of efficacy and may directly express opinions to policymakers. Haeberle (1986, 115) argues persons of lower income status "may be more reluctant to telephone or write decision makers, or be more deferential and less likely to question the explanations they receive from city officials." In fact, a positive relationship between participation and higher socio-economic status has been empirically proven by many studies.[30]

Therefore, efforts specifically targeting low income, immigrant and minority groups are suggested.[31] These efforts include providing information in multiple languages, making information culturally relevant to groups and making it accessible to individuals with varying education levels. King et al. (1998, 325) even suggest public administrators should "go out and get democracy" by going to places where hard-to-reach citizens are found such as laundrymats and break-rooms of major employers, along with schools and churches.

Information about participation should be present in all major newspapers together with small-scale media directed to specific community members (Alder and Blake 1990, 37). Online and e-participation programs can provide greater ease for participation and increase access, but cannot be the only options, as many traditionally disenfranchised groups are below the digital divide.

---

[30] See Marschall, (2004); Rich (1980, 564); Logan and Rabrenovic (1990).

Access also includes the practical ability to participate in activities. Rowe and Frewer (2000, 13) recommend that the task environment "be sufficiently friendly to allow ease of attendance and not disadvantage some members so they drop out of the process. " Examples include planning session convenience, both location and timing, and the readability and understandability of materials (Irving and Stansbury 2004, 62; Williams 1978, 352). The level of commitment expected of citizens should also be communicated and reasonable, so that individuals feel comfortable completing activities. If commitments are not communicated, participants are more likely to drop out. Feeling the experience was a failure, these individuals will be less likely to get involved in the future. To make committing to processes easier, King et al. (1998, 324) suggest offering low or no-cost childcare and meals for participants, particularly disadvantaged groups.

Last, the literature describes **access** as the ability to be involved in the process at relevant times in policy creation. If citizen participation opportunities are not available until after major decisions have been made, citizens are less likely to be able to redirect policies.[32] For example, Williams (1976, 349) cautions that implementing citizen participation too late in the city planning process can result in "frustration and unforeseen delays in the whole planning process" when citizens try to undo unfavorable past decisions.

Multiple Options for Participation:

Similar to "**access**," but important enough to list separately, the literature suggests that public officials should provide **multiple options for participation.**[33] In the last forty years, many techniques of participation were developed (Berner 2004). Techniques can vary in the level of commitment required of individuals, as well as the amount of effort necessary for

---

[32] See Rowe and Frewer (2000, 14); Alder and Blake (1990); Williams (1976, 349).
[33] See Weeks (2000(; Meter (1975); Kathlene and Martin (1991); Rowe and Frewer (2000).

completing an activity. Some options, such as standing committees, are ongoing, extensive and complex. Other options, such as surveys, are one-time, straightforward and simple.

In their article, "Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment: The Initial Iowa Experience," Ho and Coates (2004, 34) offer the following list of common participation methods ranked by the number of citizens potentially reached. They also identify limitations of each method. First, citizen surveys cast the widest net because the instrument can "reach all groups especially the passive and unvocal." Second, citizen phone lines can reach numerous citizens, but only those willing to call. Third, computer assisted information kiosks can provide broad access, but only to citizens "with computer skills." Fourth, websites provide ease for many, but again serve only those with internet access. Fifth, Interactive Internet Chat rooms are great for "those with computer skills and a willingness to engage in dialogue." Sixth, focus groups are best for a small number of community leaders and citizens who have available time and are willing and able to commit to lengthy meetings. Finally, the standing citizen advisory board, which requires the highest level of commitment, can serve only the smallest group of participants.

To summarize, all **methods of participation** offer advantages and disadvantages to public officials and stakeholders. Advisory boards may offer the most effective type of communication, but only a limited number of citizens should and can participate at such a high commitment level. On the other hand, citizen surveys offer a low cost means of collecting feedback from a large group, but do not provide two-way communication, clarification of responses, and report only opinions at one moment in time (Kathlene and Martin 1991, 49).

If the goal of participation is to achieve both broad and representative contributions from citizens, initiatives should use many ways for citizens to provide input. If participation activities are not attracting a representative group, Yang and Callahan (2005, 212) suggest "introducing a

variety of participation mechanisms and maintaining multi-faceted approaches to attract other members of the community." Weeks (2000, 363), Rowe and Frewer (2000, 124) recommend combining methods. For example, group sessions can create options, surveys can be used to provide feedback on these options by other groups of citizens, and last, web-blogs, phone lines or newspaper columns can offer places for citizens to write or call in opinions.[34]

Selection of Key Stakeholders:

Access and **multiple options for participation** make available opportunities for broad groups of stakeholders to get involved. Nevertheless, access and participation methods alone do not guarantee that a diverse mix of community members will be involved in decisions. Public officials should take care that representation is not limited to special interest groups. To fairly and effectively use citizen participation as a means of increasing democracy in policy creation, citizen involvement should be representative of **key stakeholders.**[35]

Weeks (2000, 361) argues citizen participation should be broad, and citizens as a group be "representative of the general public." Rowe and Frewer (2000, 11) also argued that representativeness of the larger group is a key component of a citizen participation process. Crosby et al. (1986, 171) listed participant selection as the first criteria for successful citizen participation in citizen panels, explaining participants should "clearly represent the broader public." To create authentic and meaningful groups, public administrators ought to take steps to ensure that involvement is inclusive of **key stakeholders** or those individuals with a direct interest in the outcomes of activities. If participation efforts lack key stakeholders, public administrators should solicit involvement from under-represented groups.

---

[34] This multiple methods approach is similar to techniques utilized in case study research.
[35] See Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer (1986, 171); Weeks (2000, 361); Rowe and Frewer (2000, 11).

To create policy buy-in and increase the strength of democracy, the literature advises alerting, attracting, selecting and retaining a diverse and representative group of citizens. The first indicator of meaningful participation, therefore, is having **Broad Public Participation**.

Issue and Process Framing

If citizen participation goals are to bring together a diverse group of citizens educated about government processes, to create mutually satisfying solutions in a timely manner, public administrators should conduct **Issue and process framing.** Public officials should take care to avoid co-opting citizens through token activities designed to legitimize pre-determined solutions. Issue and process framing, rather, provides stakeholders with common information on both the problem and the process for finding solutions. Public officials should serve as process facilitators framing issues so citizens can choose between feasible alternatives (1986, 171.) **Issue and Process Framing** includes **educating the participants on issues**; **properly structuring activities** to effectively work through problems and establishing **clearly defined goals** to be accomplished in the activity.

Education on Issues:

Multiple scholars list **education on issues** as a key element of successful deliberative democracy.[36] Citizens should be educated on the history of the topics, technical and budgetary factors, and alterative views on how to resolve problems. If citizens engage in participation activities without proper **education on issues**, they will be much more likely to stick with pre-conceived notions about government. Uninformed participators could create harmful policies, public officials could lose faith in the citizen participation process, and other community members could become distrustful of citizen participation results.

---

[36] See Weeks (2000); Rowe and Frewer (2000); Irving and Stansbury (2004); Jonsson (2005); Meter (1975); Williams (1976); Crosby et al, (1986).

Weeks (2000, 361) contends, "Becoming informed about a policy problem requires a knowledge of the basic indicators of the problem, about the relationship among those indicators, and about the consequences and tradeoffs associated with alternative policies." Irvin and Stansbury's (2004, 56) essay on citizen participation in the Environmental Protection Agency, noted education as an important leveler between citizens and policy makers. "Informed and involved citizens become citizen-experts, understanding technically difficult situations and seeing holistic, communitywide solutions," administrators are able to explain their reasons for pursuing what, at first glance, would not be popular to the public. Jonsson (2005, 497) found that citizens expect to be educated on issues during citizen participation activities. Williams (1976, 353) suggests a Study Guide, or a carefully designed reference book, as a practical means for communicating the right information in a useable format.

Meter (1975, 812) asserted, "the major problem for citizen groups is not the lack of information, but too much information of the wrong kind." She noted that when too much information is provided, citizens do not have time to carefully examine data and therefore, often miss essential indicators. Hence, "it is very important for the administrator to take the time to develop, in consultation with each citizen group, what that group's information needs are, and then see that they get only the specific categories of information requested, in a useful format."

Properly Structured Activities:

Properly structuring activities creates environments where effective decision-making can be an efficient process, as well as building trust between citizens and government officials. Debunking the common criticism of participation that citizens lack the knowledge to make appropriate decisions, Crosby et al. (1986, 172) argue that citizens "can do an effective job of decision-making if the hearing format is properly structured." Furthermore, "the information

presented not only should be accurate and relevant but should also be organized and presented in a way which is meaningful without being patronizing."

Public officials typically serve as process managers; scholars on citizen participation argue that public officials should act more like facilitators to create situations where citizens can make effective decisions. On his look at citizen participation in city planning, Williams (1976, 350) explains that the role of the public administration is to "organize participation …(so) the results will be productive and useful."

Additionally, Kathi and Cooper's (2005, 565) Learning and Design Model program emphasized control and organized activities, such as the use of timelines, project guidelines and directed facilitation. The authors contend that structured activities are more effective and efficient, and therefore help create trusting workable relationships between neighborhood councils and city officials.[37]

Cleary Defined Goals:

Citizen participation activities should have **clearly defined goals** (Rowe and Frewer 2000; Rosener 1978). Like the relationship between access and multiple options for participation, this sub-element is very similar to properly structured activities. However, structured activities help citizens and public officials work through an issue, while having an overall goal for the meeting helps processes stay tangible and measureable. For example, when public administrators engage with neighborhood groups to solicit comments on current planning processes, an outcome measure for the activity should be defined. Are comments going to impact future processes, change current practices, or justify more resources for citizen engagement? By

---

[37] Technological advancements in communication make e-participation a simplified and accessible means of citizen participation. For more information on e-government, see Reddick (2007) and Beaumaster (2007).

defining goals for activities, both citizens and officials can stay on task and accountable to the process.

Rowe and Frewer (2000, 11) point to the importance of defined goals for judging the effectiveness of citizen participation efforts. The authors make the case that public officials should "ensure that there is as little confusion and dispute as possible regarding the scope of the participation exercise, its expected outcomes and the mechanisms of the procedure." For citizen participation efforts to have value, Rosener argues that efforts should lend themselves to evaluation. Clearly defined goal-oriented efforts are easier to assess because results can be measured against established objectives (Rosener 1978, 459).

For example, the Learning and Design Process created distinctive purposes for each meeting between neighborhood councils and officials in order to keep sessions on track and moving forward (Kathi and Cooper 2005, 564.) Williams (1976, 354) suggested clearly defined goals help participants and administrators leave the activity with a better understanding of what was accomplished and what the next steps are in the process.

The citizen participation process is more effective when issues are framed using **education**, **structured decision-making activities** and **clearly defined goals**. It is the responsibility of public administrators to create organized and productive processes, initially framing the issue, and establishing a measureable goal for the activity.

Deliberation

The third indicator**, deliberation,** is essential to meaningful citizen participation activities. It is the job of public administrators to create supportive processes for citizen participation. By initially structuring activities, educating on relevant issues and defining goals for activities, administrators create environments conducive to effective and efficient decision-

making. Processes are not authentic if administrators dictate or micromanage citizen decision-making. Once citizens have been educated on appropriate issues related to the policy area, they should have opportunities to reason through alternatives, request additional information, and debate the logic of possible solutions.[38]

Deliberation is central to "*community of inquiry*" theory. Developed by classical pragmatists, particularly John Dewey and Jane Addams, *a community of inquiry* starts with a problem and adds an experimental attitude linked to participatory democracy (Shield 2003, 6). Moreover, debate is necessary to find the right tools for problem solving. Shields (2003, 519-522) explains, "A community of inquiry is difficult to form if members are "fixated" in their belief system and impervious to fresh evidence." Furthermore, "problem solving linked to definitive solutions can close off discussion and debate." Put differently, without time and opportunity to work through issues, solutions will likely not be an accurate reflection of the group's opinion as a whole. Citizens involved could understandably bend to the pressures of aggressive team members or further entrench towards preconceived positions. Deliberation should be **encouraged** by administrators, **adequate time and flexibility** provided, and administrators should help citizens create and **consider alternatives**.

---

[38] See Weeks (2000); Shields (2003); Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer (1986); Godschalk and Stiftel (1981).

Encouraged:

Public officials should encourage open and honest deliberation. Williams (1976, 352) maintained, "participants should be encouraged to digress within reason and follow chains of thought different from those contained in the study outline." Irving and Stansbury (2004, 62) considered "debate over an issue" as an indicator that a citizen participation initiative is worth the cost. Weeks (2001, 361) adds that deliberation is "an application of creative intelligence and normative evaluation that leads ultimately to the formation of personal judgment." Face-to-face interaction can add to this process, but is not necessary to create deliberation. What is necessary is that participators are encouraged to think through issues until they come to authentic, and ideally, logical solutions. Encouraging deliberation is particularly important for disenfranchised groups who may lack the self-efficacy to challenge other group members.

Adequate Time and Flexibility:

To create an environment of deliberation, processes should be designed so participants have both time and flexibility to think through options. Irving and Stansbury (2004, 62) find participation is less successful when contributors are required to "master complex technical information quickly." Cunningham (1972, 599) also points to the importance of time in the creation of successful participation, arguing, "time is a cost in participation and has to be reckoned with."

Consideration of Alternatives:

Finally, deliberation should be structured so that **alternatives are considered**. Limited resources and diverse opinions inevitably lead to situations where governments must make tough choices between multiple options. "When citizens have participated in the hard process of weighing the alternatives available they will understand better the need for many unpopular actions (Williams 1976, 349-350)."

Participation processes should encourage citizens to understand issues deeply by allowing time for debate and independent consideration. Processes should be flexible enough to allow citizens to reframe issues or request additional information. Public officials should help citizens brainstorm alternatives. In conclusion, citizen participation efforts will fall short of the goal to help citizens and public officials make better policy without adequate deliberation. The next indicator looks at management effectiveness.

Management Effectiveness:

Without **competent management**, citizen participation activities can waste resources, increase distrust in public officials, and/or result in one-sided or dangerous policies.[39] According to Meter (1975, 807), the job of a manager "is to organize, to sort things out, and to make sure the right information is available at the right time from the appropriate people in order to make decisions." Managers should also ensure that activities result in cost-effective solutions and add value to processes.

Cost Effectiveness:

Citizen participation efforts can be costly to public systems. The literature suggests processes should be **cost effective**.[40] Although citizen participation efforts can vary greatly in cost, Irvin and Stansbury (2004, 58) argue that they always carry greater upfront expense than an expert opinion. Crosby et al. (1986 172) make the case that "if one method of citizen participation turns out to cost two or three times more than another, then good reason should be presented as to why the more expensive method is worth the cost." If citizens do not see participation as cost-effective or worth the investment time, stakeholders are likely to see efforts as ineffective and frustrating. Likewise, if public officials disagree efforts are cost effective, they

---

[39] See Irving and Stansbury (2004, 58-60); Rowe and Frewer (2000, 11).
[40] See Kathlene and Martin (1991); Rowe and Frewer (2000); Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer (1986).

are less likely to create a positive environment for participation. Scholars argue for cost-effectiveness in meaningful citizen participation programs.

Value Added:

In addition to being cost effective, participation efforts should **add value** to policy creation. If efforts cause additional frustration or confusion over issues, trust between participants and officials can diminish. Many scholars argue that citizen participation can greatly improve government effectiveness, but only if the issue is right for the citizen participation process.[41] Citizen participation should not be used to resolve every issue (Cupps 1977, 478). The literature suggests citizen participation processes and topics should be vetted by management to ensure that such participation does add value. Management with experience running a participation program, or educated on advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation may be best suited to ensure that value is added to the process.

Well Organized:

Well-organized processes are also advocated in the literature and identified as a factor of management effectiveness. Again writing on planning, Williams (1976, 350) suggests, "the professional planner carries a responsibility to organize participation in such a way that results will be productive and useful." Reminding us that citizen participation requires volunteering time, Meter (1975, 807) argues, " citizens… define their own area of interest." Therefore, management should be able to keep processes relevant to citizen interests, while at the same time focused on stated goals. A poorly administered activity will likely discredit current citizen participation efforts and dissuade future participation.

---

[41] See Rowe and Frewer (2000); Meter (1975); Cupps (1977); and Irving and Stansbury (2004).

Since public officials are responsible for organizing and managing citizen participation efforts, they hold a central role in the effectiveness of processes. Public management should create opportunities for authentic participation that add value to the community, are cost-effective and well organized.

Credibility

The fifth indicator of the model, **credibility,** is imperative to the success of citizen participation efforts. Citizen participation requires the support of not only city staff and citizen participants, but also of elected officials and other community stakeholders. Because as Weeks (2000, 362) reminds "any solution to a significant public problem will likely displease some segment of the community." Those in disagreement with the proposed solutions will accuse the process of poor representation and ineffective use of community resources. Credible citizen participation processes can minimize the opposition to decisions and make follow-through more likely. Processes should "be methologically sound" as well as having "a high degree of face validity for public officials and be easily communicated to the news media and the public (Weeks 2000, 362.)"

To establish **credibility**, three sub-indicators were identified from the literature. Processes should be **transparent** to the greater public. Outsiders should view procedures as needed, fair and methodologically sound. In other words, processes should be **legitimate**. Finally, elected officials and top city management should **support processes.**

Transparency:

Credible processes are **transparent**. It is necessary for those outside the process to understand how outcomes and/or recommendations are achieved. Rosener (1978, 462) notes that "ambiguity often serves to protect public administrators and citizen participators from being

accountable." Making information available and understandable to the public, therefore, increases credibility by assuring the public that a group does not seek or require protections from such ambiguity.

As stated above, displaced groups may condemn the citizen participation process to discredit the decision. To combat negative publicity, the community, including public officials and the media should understand and respect the citizen participation methodology. Furthermore, policy makers should advocate for the credibility of solutions created from processes (Weeks 2001, 362.) Rowe and Frewer (2000, 15) add that "the process should be transparent so that the public can see what is going on and how decisions are being made." This can be accomplished by "releasing information on aspects of the procedure, varying from the manner of the selection of the public participants, to the way a decision is reached, to the minutes of the meetings." Likewise, Godschalk and Stiftel (1981) argue that if citizen participation is thoroughly vetted and understood by the community, community members and media are more likely to support solutions.

Legitimacy:

Godschalk and Stiftel (1981) outline the next sub-element of **credibility**. Those outside of the process, such as elected officials and other community members should see a need for the investment in public involvement. The credibility of citizen participation depends on its **legitimacy**. According to Crosby et al. (1986), "the more legitimate the process in the minds of the public, the more difficult it will be for public officials to ignore the recommendations." In order for outcomes of participation to be considered, the community needs to realize that there is a need for the actions (Irving and Stansbury 2004, 62) and, as Crosby et al (1986), states, the procedures should also be seen as fair.

Support from Top Management:

Additionally, processes need **support** from elected officials and top management. Citizen participation initiatives are best received with both "bottom up" and "top down support." If elected officials and/or top management dismiss citizen participation as a "token" approach to pacify citizens, or ignore recommendations in favor of politically motivated alternatives, citizen and staff time is wasted. Processes, then, lose credibility throughout the community.

The success of citizen participation efforts is connected to the integrity of the process. In order to build **credibility**, processes should be **transparent**, **legitimate** and have the **support of top management**.

Tangible Results

Tangible Results constitutes the last indicator of the model. Producing outcomes is essential to the authenticity of citizen participation. Citizens volunteer time to activities with the expectation that efforts will lead to action. Communities invest in citizen participation, officials support activities, and other stakeholders accept participation when processes lead to results.

Action on Recommendations:

As stated before, citizens participate based on their own interests. Practical concerns, such as economic livelihood or the safety of neighborhood children drive an individual's decision to participate in efforts. Therefore, the effect policies will have on neighborhoods inherently matter to citizens. If processes fail to create changes, citizens can be expected to write off activities as arbitrary. Haeberle (1986, 115) found that citizen "incentives to continue participating evaporate" for citizens if efforts are disconnected from results. In his assessment of neighborhood participation in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, Haeberle predicted that future participation depends on the city's "concerted effort to bring about results on those issues that

concern neighborhood associations." Irvin and Stansbury (2004, 59) agree with Haeberle's logic: "if citizen participants are misled into thinking their decisions will be implemented, and then the decisions are ignored or merely taken under advisement, resentment will develop over time."

Nevertheless, Yang and Callahan's (2005, 204) survey of administrators in medium-sized cities found most had citizen participation programs, but city staff rarely used citizen recommendations in policy creation. Instead, administrators viewed participation as "a symbolic gesture." Ergo, participation efforts were designed to serve the needs of administrators by placating citizen interests. Yang and Callahan (2005, 212) conclude their survey with a challenge to public administrators to re-evaluate citizen participation goals to avoid creating greater mistrust from the public. Citizens volunteering time to participation activities want results with substantial meaning for their communities.

Likewise, top officials and other community members need to perceive efforts as meaningful. If processes are arbitrary and do not increase public trust in government, funding is more likely to be cut, further reducing citizen input. Citizen participation processes should, therefore, ensure **action is taken on recommendations**, communicate next steps at the end of processes, and follow up with participants after activities to communicate results.

Communicating Next Steps:
The action of providing **next steps** allows citizens and public officials to leave the process with a shared understanding of what was accomplished and what to expect in the future (Ho and Coates 2004, 29.) By building **next steps** into the process, citizens and public administrators develop a working relationship, citizens understand what to expect from the process, and both citizens and administrators can be held accountable to commitments. For example, Kathi and Cooper's (2005, 565) Learning and Design model includes an "agreement-

coordination stage," where a formal agreement was created. The "formal agreements between neighborhood councils and city service departments," which "were not ends in themselves; rather, they were the means by which future relationships could be established, implemented and sustained."

Follow-Up:

Public administration should also **follow-up** with participants, particularly if recommendations are not followed. By keeping the channels of communication open, trust and respect between groups can develop. Citizens who engage in activities will be more likely to continue if they feel their efforts are valuable. Providing **follow up** on recommendations helps the community see processes as credible, holds public officials accountable to any commitments made, and provides continued engagement with participants.

Conceptual Framework

In summation, citizen participation efforts ought to include the right participants who are empowered to make good decisions in a timely manner. Good decision-making requires education from public officials and opportunities to deliberate on issues. Processes should be a worthy investment of public resources and citizen time. Those outside of the process, such as the media, other community members, and elected officials, should respect outcomes and recommendations that need to be incorporated into policy creation.

According to the literature, citizen participation efforts aim to achieve the following goals: increasing trust in government, educating the public on the difficulties of democracy, and creating more effective and efficient policies. Citizen participation is a "complex and multifaceted" issue of public administration and therefore "dictates a descriptive framework that is often multifaceted" (Shields and Tajalli 2006, p. 25). Six categories necessary for meaningful

citizen participation: Broad, Public Participation, Issue and Process Framing, Deliberation, Management Effectiveness, Credibility, and Tangible Results are identified from the literature. These categories are further defined by sub-indicators. The descriptive categories are used to create a survey to describe neighborhood leaders' confidence in citizen participation efforts in Austin, Texas.

The Conceptual Framework is summarized on Table 4.2 below and outlines each element with reference information.

Table 4.2 Conceptual Framework-Indicators of Meaningful Citizen Participation

DESCRIPTIVE CATOGORIES	LITERATURE :
Broad Public Participation	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Cunningham 1972; Godschalk and Stiftel 1981; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Marschall 2004; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Van Til and Van Til, 1970; Weeks 2000; Williams 1976; Yang and Callahan, 2005
1. Access	Alder and Blake 1990; Cunningham 1972; Godschalk and Stiftel 1981; Halverson 2003; Kathlene and Martin 1991; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks 2000; Williams 1976: Yang and Callahan, 2005
2. Multiple ways to participate	Ho and Coates 2004; Kathlene and Martin 1991; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Meter 1975; Yang and Callahan, 2005; Weeks 2000
3. Selection of key stakeholders	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Haeberle 1986; Kathlene and Martin 1991; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks 2000; Williams 1976
Issue Framing	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Rosener 1978; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Williams 1976
1. Education on the Issues	Alder and Blake 1990; Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Cunningham 1972; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Jonsson 2005; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks, 2000; Williams 1976
2. Structured decision-making activities	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Kathi and Cooper 2005; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Sager 1991; Williams 1976
3. Clearly defined goals	Rosener 1978; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Sager 1991
Deliberation	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Godschalk and Stiftel 1981; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Shields 2003; Weeks, 2000
1. Encouraged	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Halverson 2003; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Shields 2003; Weeks, 2000
2. Adequate time and Flexibility	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Shields 2003; Van Til and Van Til, 1970; Weeks, 2000; Williams 1976
3. Consider Alternatives	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks, 2000
Management Effectiveness	Haeberle 1986; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Meter 1975; Rosener 1978; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Williams 1976
1. Cost Effectiveness	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Kathlene and Martin 1991; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Rowe and Frewer 2000

2. Value Added	Cupps 1977; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Meter 1975; Rowe and Frewer 2000
3.Well organized	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Halverson 2003; Meter 1975; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Williams 1976
Credibility	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Godschalk and Stiftel 1981; Weeks, 2000; Williams 1976
1. Transparency	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Godschalk and Stiftel 1981; Rosener 1978; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks, 2000
2. Legitimate	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Weeks, 2000
3. Support from the top	Alder and Blake 1990; Ho and Coates 2004; Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Weeks, 2000
Tangible Results	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Haeberle 1986; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Weeks, 2000; Williams 1976; Yang and Callahan, 2005
1. Action	Crosby, Kelly and Schaefer 1986; Halverson 2003; Ho and Coates 2004; King, Feltey and Susel 1998; Kathi and Cooper 2005; Kathlene and Martin 1991; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Williams 1976
2. Next Steps	Kathi and Cooper 2005; Williams 1976
3. Follow Up	Kathi and Cooper 2005; Kathlene and Martin 1991; Williams 1976

Chapter Summary:

Chapter 4 defined citizen participation. Scholarly works on citizen participation were reviewed and the following six criteria for meaningful participation were presented: Broad Public Participation, Issue and Process Framing, Deliberation, Management Effectiveness, Credibility and Tangible Results. Each element was further defined through a series of sub-indicators. Finally, indicators were compiled into a conceptual framework. By creating objective criteria for evaluating opinions across diverse neighborhood groups, this study describes neighborhood leaderships' overall opinion on authenticity of city-sponsored citizen participation efforts. In chapter 5, the methodology for achieving the research purpose is presented.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly.
-Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, (2004, 254).

Chapter Purpose:

Chapter 5 introduces the methodology used to achieve the project's purpose. The

conceptual framework of essential indicators is operationalized into survey questions. Survey

research was chosen as the most appropriate technique to achieve the research purpose because it

allowed for the collection of data from a large and disconnected group of neighborhood leaders.

This chapter further justifies survey research through a discussion of its strengths and

weaknesses as well as how the survey tool was vetted to ensure it produced reliable and valid

results. The study population is also introduced and the statistical methods used to analyze the

results are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Human Subject Protection

Issues.

Method:

As described in Chapter 3, Austin has an active community of neighborhood leaders representing unique groups. Each Austin neighborhood has distinct characteristics due to location, socio-economic status, ethnic and cultural identity and organizational structure. Likewise, neighborhood leaders have had unique experiences with citizen participation. The purpose of this project is to describe neighborhood leadership's confidence in the authenticity of city-sponsored participation activities. Six indicators of meaningful participation were identified from the literature:

- **Broad Public Participation**
- **Issue and Process Framing**
- **Deliberation**
- **Management Effectiveness**
- **Credibility**
- **Tangible Results**

Each of the six categories is further defined through a series of sub-categories. In this project, these indicators and sub-indicators were used as a conceptual framework to create a survey, gathering evidence from Austin neighborhood leaders (Shields 1998). Since this project aims to describe the opinions of almost 400 association leaders in Austin, Texas, survey research was determined to be the best method of data collection from this large and diverse population. Furthermore, generalized survey questions allow diverse groups to be polled using common measures.

To test neighborhood leaders' opinion on the presence of each indicator, the survey asked all participants to respond to the same set of statements. A discussion of the survey statements for each indictor follows.

Broad Public Participation:

The survey tested neighborhood leaders' confidence that participation efforts included **Broad Public Participation** by asking questions about citizen *access* to participation, the availability of *methods* and if *key stakeholders* were included in the process. *Access* is defined as knowledge of participation, convenience of participation and cultural access or the ability to participate in one's primary language. Likewise, various methods of participation should be utilized and fitting for targeted groups. Selection of key stakeholders is defined as having the right individuals involved in participation. Public officials should be involved in the selection of participants to ensure that key stakeholders are involved in the process. Questionnaire statements were developed to test for each of these definitions.

Issue and Process Framing:

For the indicator **Issue and Process Framing**, three sub-indicators were identified from the literature. The first, *Education on Issues,* suggested that citizens should be sufficiently educated, have access to all necessary information, be able to ask for additional data and that public officials should avoid providing excessive information. The next sub-element, *properly structuring activities*, was defined as shaping citizen expectations, organized and effective activities and providing clear guidelines. The final sub-element of **Issue and Process Framing** suggested that activities should *have clearly defined goals*. Survey statements tested for each of these items.

Deliberation:

Deliberation includes three sub-indicators, *encouraged by public officials*, *adequate time and flexibility* and *consideration of alternatives*. Adequate time and flexibility is described as

allowing time to make the best decision and the flexibility to change the structure of the activity to create adequate choices for resolution. Consideration of alternatives was defined in two ways; first, public officials need to allow participants to introduce alternative solutions; second, public officials should help participants create alternatives if participants are not satisfied with available options. Questionnaire statements were asked to test for each of these definitions.

Management Effectiveness:

Cost Effectiveness, *Value- Added* and *Well-Organized Activities* are the sub-indicators of **Management Effectiveness**. Two survey questions test neighborhood leadership's confidence in these sub-indicators. For cost effectiveness, respondents were asked if they felt citizen participation efforts were cost effective and worth the investment of city resources. To test if leaders' felt participation added value, respondents were asked if efforts helped the city create better policies and if city staff dedicated adequate time and effort to activities. The last sub-element was tested through the following statement; were activities effectively managed by city staff?

Credibility:

The fifth element in the model, **Credibility**, is defined by the following three sub-indicators: *Transparency*, *Legitimacy* and *Support from Top Officials*. The literature suggested that activities must be transparent to the greater community to be credible. Two statements tested for *transparency*. Respondents were asked if they felt activities were transparent and if they felt that other community stakeholders (besides neighborhood groups) understood participation activities and outcomes. The literature also suggested that activities be viewed as legitimate and specified the importance of media support. Four statements asked about sub-element, *legitimacy*. Respondents were asked if they felt activities were credible, city staff was trustworthy, if

members of the community understood why citizen participation was important and if the Austin media understood citizen participation. The final sub-element, *support from the top*, was tested by two statements: Does leadership supported citizen participation activities? Does leadership honor decisions made in participation activities?

Tangible Results:

  Tangible Results was further delineated through three sub-indicators: *Action*, *Next Steps* and *Follow Up*. *Action* is described as decision implementation and adequate consideration by policy makers. *Next Steps* is defined as participant understanding of what happens after a participation activity. The last sub-element, *Follow-Up*, is defined as public officials communicating with participants after citizen participation activities to report the status of recommendations. A questionnaire statement responded to each definition. Define

  Operationalization Table 5.1 details specific survey questions. Respondents were asked to rate agreement with each statement on the following scale: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1. Questions marked with *** are negative. Scoring is reversed for these questions. A copy of the complete survey tool is also available in the appendix.

Table 5.1 Operationalization Table- Survey Questions Developed from Six Indicators of Meaningful Citizen Participation

CATEGORY	SURVEY QUESTIONS
Broad Public Participation	
Access	1. It is easy to find out about participation opportunities 2. Participation activities are available in the primary languages used by my association members 3. Participation activities are held on days and times best for members of my organization's schedule
Method of Participation	4. The city offers participation methods well-suited to the needs of my association 5. More methods of participation are needed***
Selection of Key Stakeholders	6. Activities often lack adequate and fair representation of key stakeholders*** 7. If representation is not reflective of the greater community, city staff take measures to solicit adequate representation
Issue and Process Framing	
Education on Issues	8. City staff sufficiently educates my association on policy issues 9. City staff withholds necessary information, making it hard for my association to fully understand issues*** 10. City staff is reluctant to provide additional information on policy issues when requested*** 11. City staff provides too much information on topics making it difficult for my association to be prepared for decision-making***
Properly Structured Activities	12. Activities are structured so participants know what to expect 13. Participation activities are disorganized, lack format and waste time *** 14. City staff provide fair and clear deadlines for decision-making
Clearly Defined Goals	15. Participation activities have clearly defined goals
Deliberation	
Encouraged	16. Deliberation is encouraged in citizen participation activities
Adequate Time and Flexibility	17. Adequate time is allowed to make the best decisions for my neighborhood 18. My association is rushed to make decisions*** 19. Activities are flexible; my association is allowed to change the structure of the debate when available options are not adequate
Consideration of Alternatives	20. City staff are receptive to alternative solutions proposed by my

	association
	21. City staff discourages my association from proposing alternative options to solve problems***
	22. City staff helps my association develop alternatives if adequate options have not yet been created

Management Effectiveness	
Cost Effectiveness	23. Participation activities are cost effective
	24. Participation activities are a waste of limited city resources***
Value-Added	25. Citizen participation activities help the city create better policies
	26. City staff dedicates adequate time/efforts to ensure activities are valuable
Well-Organized	27. Activities are well organized
	28. Activities are poorly managed by city staff

Credibility	
Transparency	29. Participation efforts are transparent
	30. Stakeholders, other than neighborhood groups, have trouble understanding participation activities and outcomes***
Legitimacy	31. Decisions made from participation activities lack credibility***
	32. My association finds city staff trustworthy
	33. Members of the community understand the need for citizen participation
	34. The Austin media understand how and why participation activities are conducted
Support from Top Officials	35. Elected officials and top city management disregard decisions made in participation activities***
	36. Elected officials and top city management support citizen participation programs

Tangible Results	
Action	37. Recommendations made by my association are rarely implemented by city policy makers***
	38. Solutions proposed by my association are given adequate consideration by city policy makers
	39. Most recommendations made by my association don't live past the activity***
Next Steps	40. After my association participates in activities, city staff communicates likely next steps in the policy creation
Follow-Up	41. If recommendations are not followed, city staff communicates the reason to my association
	42. Staff follows up with my organization on the results of participation activities

Note A-Respondents were asked to rate agreement with each statement on the following scale: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

Note B-Questions marked with *** are negative. Scoring is reversed for these questions.

Survey Research:

A survey is a research technique designed to collect information from a specific group of people on a specific topic. Surveying is a popular research tool with many advantages and some disadvantages. According to Ronald Czaja and Johnny Blair's (2005, 3-5) "Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decision and Procedures," a project must pass three tests before choosing survey research for data collection. First, "the target population must be clearly defined." Next, survey respondents must be able to answer questions asked. Last, the survey must have a clearly defined goal. This project met those three tests. The population was clearly defined as all neighborhood leaders listed on the Austin Community Registry[42], questions were specifically designed for neighborhood leaders[43] and finally, this survey has a clearly defined goal to describe neighborhood leaders' confidence in citizen participation by using six indicators identified from the literature.

Other research techniques such as direct observation, content analysis and/or interview research may be affected by individual associations' perceptions of issues, making general observations difficult to interpret. Babbie explains survey research prevents this problem by "ask (ing) exactly the same questions of all subjects and having to impute the same intent to all respondents giving a particular response (2004, 287.)" The Likert scale offers an additional advantage to this study because of "the unambiguous ordinality of response categories" (Babbie 2004, 179.) In other words, participants are unlikely to misinterpret the response options. Survey research offers an advantage to participants as well. Completing a survey can be done at the

---

[42] For more information, see Population section below.
[43] For more information, see Pre-Test section below.

respondents' convenience without any excessive commitment on the part of the individuals (Salant and Dillman 1994, 9.)

Survey research, nevertheless, has drawbacks. Verba and Nie (1972, 16) point out survey research is limited to one person's perception at one moment in time. As Babbie (2004, 288) points out, "people's opinion on issues seldom take the form of strongly agreeing, agreeing, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing." Accordingly, a neighborhood representative response to statements on the Likert scale could vary by day based on mood or current events.

A weakness of this project is the lack of triangulation. Babbie notes (2004, 288) "full awareness of the inherent or probable weaknesses of survey research can partially resolve them in some cases…researchers are on the safest ground when they can employ several research methods in studying a given topic." To address this limitation, the researcher is forthcoming about any concerns with data validity and reliability.

Pre-Test:

The survey was pre-tested by ten individuals who are currently or have been active in neighborhood politics. As a result of their review, a number of minor modifications were made to the form and content of the survey, including the addition of a definition for "Citizen Participation Activities" on each survey page and the rewording of questions found to be confusing.

Population-Austin Community Registry:

The study targets autonomous neighborhood leaders in Austin, Texas listed on the Austin Community Registry as of January 15th, 2010. The latter is an online city managed list of neighborhood associations. While there are over 500 groups recorded on the registry, some of the

groups do not meet the definition of a neighborhood group for the purpose of this study. A total of 102 entries were removed from the population. Entries were removed for one of the three following reasons: 1) The entry was for a city representative such as an Neighborhood Liaison 2) The entry was a special interest group such as the Save Our Springs Alliance 3) The entry was for a group made up of a coalition of other neighborhood groups such as the Austin Neighborhood Council or a Combined Area Planning Team.

The remaining 395 groups make up the population studied by this project. The project attempted to engage all individuals in the population. Contact information is listed for each group on the community registry. If an email contact was not provided, a phone call was placed to the contact to solicit an email address. Individuals contacted by phone were also given the option to receive a survey by mail. Four individuals requested a mail copy of the survey. In total, 261 neighborhood leaders received an invitation to participate in the survey.

An online survey tool, Survey Monkey, was used to collect and compile responses. The survey was distributed to the email contacts throughout the week of March 1st, 2011, and the survey link was open until March 20th, 2011. Two reminder emails were sent to all contacts during this period. 129 individuals accessed the survey link. One survey was returned by mail.

Survey respondents were not asked to provide demographic information such as age, income or gender. While this information may have been able to illustrate response bias, no population information is available to compare to the survey respondents' demographics. The researcher felt personal information would add to the length of the survey without adding benefit to the results. Furthermore, asking for personal information may have discouraged neighborhood leaders from participating in the survey.

The survey did ask for information on the neighborhood group represented by the respondent. First, a zip code was required in order to participate. Next, respondents were asked to select if their organization was a voluntary neighborhood group, a residential community association or a homeowner's group, and if membership in the organization was mandatory.

Statistics:

Survey results describe neighborhood leadership's confidence that citizen participation efforts are meaningful. Neighborhood representatives are asked to respond to a series of statements with their level of agreement. Using a 5-point Likert model, the following choices are provided: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. Results are described in two ways. First, the percentage of respondents who indicated agreement, a neutral opinion, or disagreement for each statement, is presented and the mean is discussed. Next, the indicator and its sub-indicators are assigned a confidence measure based on where the mean score falls in the range. If the mean score fell between 1 and 1.99, it was assigned a confidence measure of "No Confidence". Mean scores falling between 2-2.99 were labeled as "Little Confidence". Means between 3-3.99 were labeled "Some Confidence" and finally, means falling between 4 and 4.99 were labeled as "High Confidence." These labels are used to gauge the meaningfulness of citizen participation activities in Austin and to provide an overall description of how confident neighborhood leaders are with Austin efforts.

Table 5.2 Neighborhood Leadership: Confidence Level in Citizen Participation

Mean Score	Neighborhood Leaderships' Confidence in Citizen Participation Activities
1 -1.99	No Confidence
2-2.99	Little Confidence
3-3.99	Some Confidence
4-4.99	High Confidence

Note A-Respondents were asked to rate agreement with each survey statement on the following scale: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1
Note B- Scoring was reversed for negative statements, marked by ***. (See Table 5.1).
Note C- Mean scores are calculated for each statement and aggregated for each sub-indicator and indicator.
Note D-Means scores are used to describe neighborhood leaders' confidence in each of the six citizen participation indicators and sub-indicators. A overall mean score is also calculate and used to describe neighborhood leaders' overall confidence in Austin, Texas citizen participation activities.

Human Subjects Protection:

As described above, the evidence for this project is collected by survey research. The project received exemption (EXP2011E7738) from a full review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board. Due to its reliance on human participation, efforts were undertaken to ensure voluntary participation of neighborhood association representatives. All surveys include a description of the research purpose. Survey respondents were told how findings are used. Furthermore, leaders were not asked to identify associations by name and were only required to provide a zip code.

Each survey included an assurance of confidentiality statement, communicating to partakers that participation was completely voluntary, and that choosing not to participate in the survey would not affect the association's relationship with Texas State University or the researcher. Subjects were also provided with the researcher's contact information if they had any questions or concerns about the project.

Chapter Summary:

This chapter has presented the methodology of this research. A survey tool to describe leaderships' confidence that Austin participation efforts are meaningful was created from a

conceptual framework of the essential indicators gleaned from the literature. Preliminary

indicators for assessing citizen participation were developed from a literature review. The next

chapter presents the results of the survey and analyzes the confidence scores for each element

and sub-element. Written responses to open-ended questions are also discussed.

Chapter 6: Results

"From years of experience, many many participation activities are just to check off a box on someone's checklist. Activities are designed to arrive at the desire outcome, then the City and stakeholders can say they had community input."
-Anonymous comment from a survey participant

Chapter Purpose:

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of a survey of neighborhood leaders in Austin, Texas. Six indicators of authentic citizen participation were identified from the literature as necessary for creating meaningful participation and were used as a conceptual framework for the project. Descriptive statistics interpret the survey results.

Respondent Information:

Of the 261 neighborhood leaders contacted for the survey, 129 accessed the online survey tool, Survey Monkey. Participants were required to provide a zip code in order to partake in the survey exercise. They were also asked to indicate the type of organization they represent and if membership in their associations was mandatory.

All of the zip code groups, located in Travis County, were represented in the survey results.[44] Seventy-one and a half percent of respondents identified their organization as a Voluntary Neighborhood Association, while the remaining 29.5 percent identified their organization as either a Residential Community Association or a Home Owner's Association. Twenty-four percent responded that membership was mandatory, 74.4 percent indicated that

---

[44] Travis County divides the City of Austin and any ETJ into one of eight zip code groups. A chart of the Zip Code Groups is provided in Table 6.1 and a map of the zip code groups is available in Appendix III. The city defines an "extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) as the unincorporated land within five miles of Austin's boundary that is not within the city limits or ETJ of another city. It is the territory where Austin alone is authorized to annex land. The ETJ enables the City to extend regulations to adjacent land where development can affect quality of life within the city. ETJ regulations also help to ensure that subdivisions that may be annexed by Austin in the future meet minimum standards for road access, lot size, and other factors." For more information, see http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/annexation/faq.htm.

membership was not mandatory and the remaining 1.6 percent skipped the question. Results for

these questions are presented on Tables 6.1 to 6.3 below.

Table 6.1 Zip Code Distribution Results

Zip Code Category	Zip Codes	n=Respondents
East	78702, 78721,78722, 78723, 78724,78725	27
Central	78701, 78705, 78712, 78751, 78756	8
North	78727, 78728, 78729, 78757, 78758, 78759	20
West	78620, 78663, 78703, 78733, 78738, 78746	9
Northwest	78641, 78645, 78726, 78730, 78731, 78734,78750	16
Northeast	78613, 78641,78645, 78654, 78669, 78726, 78730, 78731 78732, 78734, 78750	10
Southwest	78652, 78704, 78735, 78736, 78737, 78739, 78745, 78748, 78749	28
Southeast	78617, 78741, 78744, 78747, 78742, 78719 78612, 78640, 78610	10

Note A: Zip code categories are loosely based on Multiple Listing Service (MLS) categories. This information was sourced from the Travis County Community Impact Report: Part 11: A map of zip codes is located in the appendix.
Note B: One response was received from P.O. Box zip code, 78716, which is not part of the zip code categories.

Table 6.2 Association Type Distribution

Association Type	N=129	Percent
Voluntary Neighborhood Association	91	71.5%
Residential Community Association or Home Owner's Association	38	29.5%

Table 6.3 Mandatory Membership Distribution

Mandatory Membership	N=125	Percent
Yes	30	24%
No	93	74.4%
Skipped Question	2	1.6%

Results:

      This project developed a list of essential indicators necessary for meaningful citizen

participation. Indicators, incorporated into the conceptual framework and the basis for a survey,

describe Austin neighborhood leaderships' confidence in city-funded participation activities.

Descriptive statistics are used to interpret survey responses. Similarly, written responses

corresponding to each element are presented and discussed.[45]

Overall Results:

      Survey results indicate that neighborhood leaders have little confidence that current

efforts are meaningful. Mean scores for five of the six indicators were between 2 and 2.9 on a

scale from 1 to 5. Also falling in the "little confidence" range, the overall mean for all indicators

was 2.81. This suggests that, on the whole, neighborhood leaders lack confidence in current

efforts. Results are displayed on Table 6.4 below.

---

[45] A note on written survey responses: respondents were offered a chance to write a text answer to an optional question at the end of the survey. Asking respondents if they had any additional comments about their experience with citizen participation activities in Austin, Texas, the question provided respondents an opportunity to elaborate on their opinions on participation. Fifty-five respondents provided an answer to the question. If applicable, answers were matched to the citizen participation element addressed. Whether responses were negative or positive responses was also noted. The majority of responses were negative, some were positive and negative, and a few were just positive. Written responses are not used in the scoring of neighborhood leaders' confidence in citizen participation activities, but are included at the conclusion of each element's results to elaborate and illustrate the research findings.

Table 6.4- Six Indicators of Meaningful Participation: Mean Scores/Confidence Ranking

Indicators of Meaningful Participation	Mean Score	Confidence
Broad Public Participation	**2.69**	**Low**
Issue and Process Framing	**2.73**	**Low**
Deliberation	**2.74**	**Low**
Management Effectiveness	**3.25**	**Some**
Credibility	**2.78**	**Low**
Tangible Results	**2.70**	**Low**
Overall Mean for All Indicators	**2.81**	**Low**

Note A-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
Means falling between:
1-1.99=No Confidence
2-2.99=Little Confidence
3-3.99=Some Confidence
4-4.99=High Confidence

It's important to note, however that when aggregated, responses to statements fell into three fairly even groups: those who indicated confidence in Austin, Texas' citizen participation efforts (29%) those who were neutral about efforts (33%) and those responded negatively (37%). A significant finding of this project is the presence of these "answer trends." See Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5- Percent of Respondents Per Type: Agreement, No Opinion, Disagreement

Average Response for Agreement, No Opinion and Disagreement	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree
	29%	33%	37%

Note A-Respondents were asked to rate agreement with each survey statement on the following scale: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1
Note B-A total of 130 neighborhood leaders responded to the survey. An average of 113 responded to each statement.

Results for each specific element are presented below.

Broad Public Participation:

Citizen involvement efforts are most meaningful when a diverse group of stakeholders engage in activities. Without adequate representation of the greater community, processes can be co-opted by special interests groups, losing the ability to increase citizen trust in government or create authentic support for policies. Therefore, the first indicator of successful participation is Broad Public Participation. Three sub-indicators, **access**, **multiple methods of participation** and **selection of key stakeholders**, defined this concept. Survey questions explored each sub-element.

Access:

Four survey questions examined leaders' confidence in their **access** to citizen participation efforts. The questions focused on communication and convenience of participation opportunities as well as the variety of topics covered by activities. On three out of the four questions, responses described participation processes as accessible.

Almost fifty percent of respondents were in agreement that *participation opportunities were easy to find*. Thirty-nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that participation activities were only offered on a limited number of topics, while 31 percent were neutral).

Survey results indicated that over 70 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *opportunities were available in the primary language used by their association members.* In hindsight, this question did not achieve its purpose. Since the survey neglected to ask for the primary language used by the association, responses actually masked evidence on community members' overall accessibility to activities. For this reason, the question was removed from the analysis. See the footnote below for more information.[46]

---

[46] According to the 2000 US Census, 31percent of Austin Metro residents spoke a language other than English at home. (Unfortunately, this question was removed from the 2010 census.) While only 15 percent of respondents disagreed with this statement, it may represent associations in predominantly Spanish speaking neighborhoods. If

On the final question, *the convenience of participation schedules*, the majority of respondents (43%) did not have an opinion. Of the respondents who did express an opinion, 34 percent disagreed (22% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed) while only 21percent were in agreement.

Methods of Participation:

Meaningful citizen participation requires **multiple** involvement **methods**. By providing assorted methods, cities have the best chance of attracting diverse and varied participants, as many factors affect a participant's ability to engage in activities. Some participation techniques require long-term commitments and high skill levels. Other methods are one-time, straightforward and simple. Furthermore, some techniques require individuals to be comfortable speaking in front of audiences. Others require participants to have computer skills. By providing a variety of methods, cities are most likely to attract broad participation.

Nearly half of respondents (45%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that *the city offers participation methods well suited to association needs*. When asked, *more methods of participation are needed*, a significant majority, 69 percent of respondents, strongly agreed. This indicates that neighborhood leaders feel current participation **methods** are insufficient and is a key finding of the study,

Selection of Key Stakeholders:

Without efforts to ensure key stakeholders are adequately represented, participation activities risk co-option by special interest groups. To reduce this possibility, public

---

materials are available in Spanish, this 15 percent could represent neighborhoods with immigrant populations who speak languages other than English or Spanish. What is clear from this question is that the majority of neighborhoods find out about opportunities in their primary language. If this survey is repeated, the researcher suggests revising this question to gather more information about the availability of materials in languages other than English. The researcher also recommends adding a specific question on access to citizen participation activities at relevant times in the process.

administrators are tasked with creating truly representative participant groups. Two survey questions looked at the sub-indicator **selection of key stakeholders**. The first question asked respondents if they felt *activities lack adequate and fair representation of key stakeholders*. Almost half of respondents were in agreement with this statement. Moreover, only 2 percent of respondents strongly disagreed while only 19 percent disagreed. The second question asked *if steps were taken by city staff to correct inadequate representation*. Forty five percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that city staff corrected representation issues. In summation, the majority of neighborhood leaders agreed that participation processes lacked adequate representation or systems for correcting unbalanced groups of stakeholders.

Overall Results- Broad Public Participation:

The mean score for **Broad Public Participation** was 2.62, and fell in the "little confidence" range. Of the three sub indicators, **Access** was scored in the "some confidence" range (3.02), while **Methods of Participation** and **Selection of Key Stakeholders** were in the "little confidence" range, with means of 2.43 and 2.62, respectively. The big picture of this category is that, while leaders for the most part had confidence in **Access To Participation**, they have little confidence in the **Methods** offered, or that city staff was doing an adequate job of **selecting key stakeholders**. Results indicate a need for more methods of participation, more convenient participation activities, and better selection processes for identifying and including key stakeholders. Results are presented on Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.6 Broad Public Participation Results-N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Broad Public Participation	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Access					
It is easy to find out about participation opportunities	119	48%	24%	28%	3.19
The city only offers participation activities on a limited number of topics that are not of interest to my association ***	119	29%	31%	39%	3.08
Participation activities are held on days and times best for members of my organization's schedule	121	22%	43%	32%	2.79
Access Overall Mean: 3.02					
Methods of Participation					
The city offers participation methods well-suited to the needs of my association	119	24%	31%	45%	2.72
More methods of participation are needed***	117	69%	23%	11%	2.13
Method of Participation Overall Mean=2.43					
Selection of Key Stakeholder					
Activities often lack adequate and fair representation of key stakeholders***	119	48%	30%	22%	2.55
If representation is not reflective of the greater community, city staff take measures to solicit adequate representation	118	24%	31%	45%	2.69
Selection of Key Stakeholder Overall Mean=2.63					
Broad Public Participation Overall Mean **2.69**					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
Note B-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
    Means falling between:
    1-1.99=No Confidence
    2-2.99=Little Confidence
    3-3.99=Some Confidence
    4-4.99=High Confidence

Broad Public Participation- Written Comments:

      Many of the written comments addressed issues of **Broad Public Participation** and

corresponding sub indicators. While one respondent wrote that city efforts had "impressive

outreach" and were "well-communicated," most comments addressing **Broad Public Participation** were negative.

Five comments mentioned that city efforts devalue the opinion of certain neighborhoods, particularly those located outside of key political areas. Three comments expressed unhappiness with the availability of opportunities to participate in languages other than English, and specifically mentioned the lack of opportunities for Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. One commenter wrote, "the city should do a better job of engaging young people and minorities so that the perspectives received from citizen participation are not always that of an older, relatively well-off, property owner."

Commenting both on the survey design and citizen participation in Austin, another respondent suggested that the survey should have asked a specific question on e-government options, writing "increasingly the City depends on online surveys and web-based information sources, creating yet another barrier to participation by certain groups."

Two comments indicated that meeting times and locations were poorly suited to the needs of neighborhood associations. One comment stated that the city takes little action to prevent attrition in participation efforts. Negative comments on Broad Public Participation can be summarized by one respondent, "the city should do a better job at listening to what each unique community/neighborhood needs!"

Issue and Process Framing:

Public administrators have a responsibility to prepare citizens for success in participation efforts. The next category, **Issue and Process Framing** argues that public administrators should provide **education on issues**, **properly structure activities** and **establish clearly defined goals** for the participation process.

Education on Issues:

Citizens should be **educated** on the history of issues, technical and budgetary factors, and provided with alterative views on how to resolve problems. Without education, citizens engaging in participation activities are more likely to stick with pre-conceived notions. Uninformed participators may create harmful policies, leading to a loss of faith in citizen participation processes by officials and other community members. Four questions assessed neighborhood leaderships' confidence that Austin citizen participation efforts include adequate education on issues.

Almost 60 percent disagree or strongly disagree that *city staff sufficiently educates neighborhood associations during participation efforts.* Responding to the statement, *city staff withholds necessary information, making it hard for my association to fully understand issues*, neighborhood leaders agreed or strongly agreed 39 percent of the time, had no opinion 31percent of the time, and disagreed or strongly disagreed 28 percent of the time. On the next question, *city staff is reluctant to provide additional information on policy issues when requested*, neighborhood leaders had no opinion slightly more than they agreed, but no significant majority stood out.

The final question for this section asks neighborhood leadership if *city officials provide too much information* during participation processes. A strong majority (63%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This suggests that neighborhood associations willing to invest time understanding complicate government issues and are looking for more education

opportunities. City staff may need to work with groups to identify necessary, useful and comprehendible information.

Properly Structured Activities:

Properly structured activities can create effective and efficient processes for citizens to consider alternatives and make good choices. Public administrators should act as meeting facilitators, ensuring that progress is being made, activities are task-oriented and citizens are given support throughout the process. Three survey questions gauge respondents' opinions on the structure of activities. Findings showed a slight majority in agreement that activities were properly structured and that respondents felt deadlines were fair and clear.

Cleary Defined Goals:

Activities should have **established goals**. Goals help both public administrators and participants see processes as tangible and measurable. The survey asked if respondents thought *Austin participation efforts had clearly defined goals*. A slight majority of respondents had no opinion, but percentages were very closely distributed across Agree, No Opinion and the combined score for Strongly Disagree or Disagree. No respondents selected Strongly Agree.

Overall Results- Issue and Process Framing:

Overall, respondents had little confidence in the **Issue and Process Framing Indicator**. Of the responses to the eight statements presented, all fell in the "little confidence" range except the question on **clear and fair deadlines** for decision-making (mean of 3.08.) The most significant finding on this indicator was that neighborhood leaders' desire far more education on issues. As mentioned above, 58 percent of respondents disagreed that the city sufficiently educates on issues. Likewise, 63 percent disagreed that the city provides too much information.

Table 6.7 Issue and Process Framing Results- N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Issues and Process Framing Results	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Education on Issues					
City staff sufficiently educates my association on policy issues	117	22%	21%	58%	2.49
City staff withholds necessary information, making it hard for my association to fully understand issues***	115	39%	31%	29%	2.79
City staff is reluctant to provide additional information on policy issues when requested***	116	35%	37%	28%	2.84
City staff provides too much information on topics making it difficult for my association to be prepared for decision-making	117	7%	31%	63%	2.32
Education on Issues Overall Mean: 2.60					
Structured Decision-Making					
Activities are structured so participants know what to expect	115	29%	36%	36%	2.87
Participation activities are disorganized, lack format and waste time***	117	21%	44%	35%	2.62
City staff provide fair and clear deadlines for decision-making	117	42%	29%	29%	3.08
Structured Decision-Making Overall Mean=2.85					
Clearly Defined Goals					
Participation activities have clearly defined goals	117	30%	36%	34%	2.86
Clearly Defined Goals Overall Mean=2.86					
Issue and Process Framing Overall Mean 2.73					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
Note B-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
    Means falling between:
    1-1.99=No Confidence
    2-2.99=Little Confidence
    3-3.99=Some Confidence
    4-4.99=High Confidence

Issue and Process Framing-Written Comments:

A few comments dealt with **Issue and Process Framing Indicator**. All comments were negative. One responder stated that education on issues was "inadequate" because "there was no discussion on the consequences of action/policies." Another respondent wrote the "public was not being educated" and that processes were non-existent. A third respondent offered suggestions for improving the structure of activities by creating "a published agenda for every meeting," including "the times of presentations and speaker's name and place of employment."

Deliberation:

The third indicator, **Deliberation**, looks at how citizens are engaged in critical thinking on issues before moving on any recommendations or decisions. Critical thinking requires opportunities to work through issues. Citizen participation activities should **encourage** citizens to deliberate and provide **adequate time and flexibility**. Activities should also allow for the development and **consideration of alternatives**.

Encouraged:

Public administrators should **encourage** citizens to use critical thinking skills. If individuals are allowed to deliberate on issues, debate solutions and/or have time away from the process to consider options, citizens will be more vested in outcomes and more willing to critically address tough issues. Survey participants were asked *if deliberation is encouraged in citizen participation activities*. No significant majority was found. Results were evenly distributed between the agreement (37%) and disagreement (38%) options with 27 percent of respondents having a neutral opinion. City staff may consider focus group analysis to better understand why some neighborhood leaders feel deliberation is encouraged while others do not.

Adequate Time and Flexibility in the Process:

As stated above, good decision-making requires time and the ability to change the structure of activities, ask for more information, or discuss unexpected issues. Three questions asked about **time and flexibility** in citizen participation activities. The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that *adequate time was provided for decision-making*. When presented with the statement, *my association is rushed to make decisions*, 42 percent of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. The remaining answers were evenly distributed between agreement (30%) and disagreement (29%). Very few respondents (8%) agreed with the final statement in this section, *activities are flexible; my association is allowed to change the structure of the debate when available options are not adequate*. Over 50 percent disagreed and 35 percent expressed a neutral opinion. This suggests the survey respondents would like to see more flexibility in processes.

Consideration of Alternatives:

Survey takers were asked to respond to three statements on opportunities to **consider alternatives** during participation activities. When asked *if city staff was receptive to alternatives proposed by my association*, 44 percent of respondents were in disagreement, 42 percent were neutral, 13percent agreed and no one strongly agreed. Answers were distributed fairly even on the negative statement, *city staff discourages my association from proposing alternative options to solve problem*. When asked if *city staff helps create alternatives*, agreement was much lower. Thirty eight percent disagreed with this statement, 35 percent were neutral and only 17 percent chose an agreement answer.

Overall Results- Deliberation:

        The third indicator, Deliberation, scored in the "little confidence" range with a mean of 2.74. A significant number of respondents disagreed that activities were flexible, that they had adequate time to make decisions, or that city staff helped create alternatives. This suggests that the city should look into more flexible processes that encourage deliberation and the consideration of alternatives.

Table 6.8-Deliberation Results- N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Deliberation Results	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Encouraged					
Deliberation is encouraged in citizen participation activities	113	36%	27%	38%	2.90
Encouraged Overall Mean: 2.90					
Adequate Time and Flexibility in the Process					
Adequate time is allowed to make the best decisions for my neighborhood	112	22%	34%	45%	2.66
My association is rushed to make decisions***	110	30%	42%	29%	2.99
Activities are flexible; my association is allowed to change the structure of the debate when available options are not adequate	114	8%	35%	57%	2.35
Adequate Time and Flexibility in the Process Overall Mean=2.67					
Consideration of Alternatives					
City staff are receptive to alternative solutions proposed by my association	113	13%	42%	44%	2.54
City staff discourages my association from proposing alternative options to solve problems***	114	33%	39%	28%	2.88
City staff helps my association develop alternatives if adequate options have not yet been created	114	17%	35%	48%	2.54
Consideration of Alternatives Overall Mean=2.65					
Management Effectiveness Results Overall Mean **2.74**					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
Note B-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
    Means falling between:
    1-1.99=No Confidence
    2-2.99=Little Confidence
    3-3.99=Some Confidence
    4-4.99=High Confidence

Deliberation-Written Comments:

        There were no written comments specifically addressing deliberation.

Management Effectiveness:

All participation activities have significant costs both in time and dollar resources. In order to create "buy-in" from elected officials, build trust with citizens and garner support from the greater community, processes should be effectively managed. According to the literature, processes are **effectively managed** if they are **cost effective**, **add value** to policy creation and are **well organized**.

Cost-Effective:

Citizen participation is costly. Public administrators need to **manage cost** to ensure the efforts are worth the resources invested. Neighborhood leaders were asked two questions about the cost-effectiveness of citizen participation activities. Interestingly, the majority of respondents selected Neutral when asked *if participation activities are cost effective*. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, on average, a third of respondents selected Neutral on any given question; therefore, significantly more individuals chose a neutral opinion on the cost-effectiveness of citizen participation than for other statements. Respondents possibly did not feel qualified to evaluate the cost of efforts or did not want to share their true opinion on this issue. Further research is needed to empirically understand a large neutral response on this question. Respondents in agreement (22%) and disagreement (25%) respondents were fairly even. When asked to respond to the statement, *participation activities are a waste of limited city resources*, however, the majority of respondents offered an opinion; 66 percent disagreed, 23 percent were neutral and only 11percent were in agreement. The strong support of city participation efforts is a key finding of this research.

Value-Added:

Processes should **add value** to policy creation. In other words, participants should see their involvement as an asset to the community. Since citizen participation activities are run by governments, public administrators are responsible for making sure that processes **add value**. Neighborhood leaders were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statement: *citizen participation activities help the city create better policies*. Seventy percent agreed with this statement and only 9 percent were in disagreement. This is another key finding of the study. Again, neighborhood leaders expressed strong support for citizen participation activities.

For the next statement, *citizen participation dedicates adequate time/efforts to ensure activities have value,* the majority of respondents had a neutral (39%) opinion. Clearly, respondents feel that citizen participation adds value. However, it is unclear if more time and effort is needed to ensure value is added in processes.

Well-Organized:

Activities should be **well-organized**. **Well-organized** activities help communicate to participants that the city takes efforts seriously, respects participant time, and dedicates adequate resources to make activities successful. Two statements on the organizational quality of citizen participation activities were included in the survey. The first statement, *activities are well-organized*, had the following results: 40 percent neutral opinion, 34 percent agreement and 27 percent disagreement. On the second statement, *activities are poorly managed by city staff*, 43 percent of respondents had a neutral opinion, 31percent disagreed (no respondents strongly disagreed) and the remaining 26 percent were in agreement. Responses for this sub-indictor were widely dispersed.

Overall Results- Management Effectiveness:

The fourth indicator, **Management Effectiveness**, was the only one of the six to score in the "some confidence" range. Respondents were confident that citizen participation efforts were **cost-effective**, **added value** to the community and were **well- organized**. In fact, almost 70 percent of respondents supported current funding and staff time spent on citizen participation activities.

Table 6.10 Management Effectiveness Results- N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Management Effectiveness Results	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Cost Effectiveness					
Participation activities are cost effective	113	22%	52%	25%	2.92
Participation activities are a waste of limited city resources ***	113	19%	23%	66%	3.74
				Cost Effectiveness Overall Mean: 3.33	
Value Added					
Citizen participation activities help the city create better policies	110	70%	21%	9%	3.83
City staff dedicates adequate time/efforts to ensure activities are valuable	112	32%	39%	28%	3.00
				Value Added Overall Mean=3.42	
Well Organized					
Activities are well organized	111	34%	40%	27%	3.05
Activities are poorly managed by city staff	113	26%	43%	31%	2.97
				Well Organized Overall Mean=3.01	
Management Effectiveness Results Overall Mean **3.25**					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
*Note B-*Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
Means falling between:
1-1.99=No Confidence
2-2.99=Little Confidence
3-3.99=Some Confidence
4-4.99=High Confidence

Management Effectiveness-Written Comments:

There were no written comments specifically addressing Management Effectiveness.

Credibility:

       Credibility is imperative to the success of citizen participation efforts. Citizen

participation should have the support of city staff and citizen participants, as well as elected

officials and other community stakeholders. To establish **credibility**, three sub-indicators were

identified from the literature. Processes should be **transparent** to the greater public. Those

outside of the process should view procedures as needed, fair and methodologically sound. In

other words, processes should be **legitimate**. Finally, **elected officials and top city**

management should support citizen participation.

Transparency:

       It is necessary for those outside the activities to understand how outcomes and/or

recommendations are achieved. Processes that are open, clear, and easy to understand are

transparent. The survey asked two questions related to **transparency**. When asked if

participation efforts are transparent, a near majority of respondents (48%) indicated

disagreement with this statement. The second statement asked participants to assess if *processes*

were clear to stakeholders other than neighborhood groups. Forty-four percent were in

agreement with this statement, 40 percent had a neutral opinion and only 16 percent disagreed or

strongly disagreed. Overall, survey results indicated that neighborhood leaders view efforts as

lacking necessary transparency.

Legitimacy:

      Processes should be **legitimate**, meaning that those outside of the process should view

procedures as needed, fair and methodologically sound. Four statements were used to assess

neighborhood leaderships' confidence that Austin activities are **legitimate**. Responses to the first

statement represent a key finding of this study. When asked if *citizen participation activities*

lacked credibility, 68 percent of respondents agreed, and only 20 percent indicated disagreement.

The next statement looked at neighborhood leaders' opinions on the *trustworthiness of city staff*. Responses were evenly distributed between all three options. In the third statement, neighborhood leaders were asked if *members of the community understand the need for citizen participation*. Almost 70 percent were in agreement, 13 percent were neutral and 20 percent were in disagreement. The final statement in this grouping asked if the *Media understands the need for participation.* Neutral opinions were the majority. Almost 40 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed and only 21percent were in agreement.

Support from Top Officials:

Citizen participation initiatives are best received with both "bottom up" and "top down" support. If elected officials and/or top management dismiss citizen participation as a "token" approach to creating policy support from the public or ignore recommendations in favor of politically motivated alternatives, processes will lack the **credibility** needed to be effective.

The mean score for this sub indicator was 2.67, suggesting that respondents had little confidence that efforts were supported by top officials. On the question, *elected officials and top city management disregard decisions made in participation activities*, the majority of respondents (55%) agreed. The results for the next statement, *elected officials and city management support citizen participation*, 37 percent were in agreement while 38 percent were in disagreement (25% selected neutral). Overall, a significant amount of neighborhood leaders feel top officials lack support for citizen participation. In order for the City of Austin to create meaningful opportunities for Citizen Participation, citizens need to trust that top officials believe in participation processes and activities. Efforts should be undertaken to understand why neighborhood leaders see a lack of support from the top, including survey top officials to see how they perceive citizen participation activities.

Overall Results-Credibility:

The **Credibility Indicator** scored in the "little confidence" range with a mean of 2.78. Most respondents felt processes lack **transparency**. Respondents, however, expressed some confidence that process were **legitimate**. Mean scores for the sub-indicator, **support from top officials** varied significantly. Most respondents indicated that officials disregard decisions, but almost 40 percent felt that officials support citizen participation efforts. This could indicate that officials are interested in creating citizen buy-in through processes, while not as interested in creating citizen-centric policies. As mentioned above, efforts are needed to understand why some neighborhood leaders see top officials as supportive and others do not.

Table 6.12 Credibility Results- N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Credibility Results	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Transparency					
Participation efforts are transparent	110	25%	27%	48%	2.65
Stakeholders, other than neighborhood groups, have trouble understanding participation activities and outcomes***	109	44%	40%	16%	2.64
Transparency Overall Mean: 2.64					
Legitimacy					
Decisions made from participation activities lack credibility***	110	68%	13%	20%	2.88
My association finds city staff trustworthy	110	34%	36%	30%	2.96
Members of the community understand the need for citizen participation	110	68%	13%	20%	3.55
The Austin media understand how and why participation activities are conducted	110	21%	42%	37%	2.75
Legitimacy Overall Mean=3.04					
Support from Top Officials					
Elected officials and top city management disregard decisions made in participation activities***	110	53%	33%	15%	2.45
Elected officials and top city management support citizen participation programs	110	37%	25%	38%	2.9
Support from Top Officials Overall Mean=2.94					
Credibility Results Overall Mean **2.78**					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
Note B-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
    Means falling between:
    1-1.99=No Confidence
    2-2.99=Little Confidence
    3-3.99=Some Confidence
    4-4.99=High Confidence

Credibility-Written Comments:

        The majority of written comments negatively addressed **credibility** issues on all three

sub-indicators. **Transparency** of processes was described as inadequate by two responders.

Three responders cited **legitimacy** issues and **lack of top management support**. Summing up

the sentiments described by others, one respondent wrote "Neighborhoods only get lip service

from city staff… Everything is predetermined before the "citizen participation" ever starts!"

Another respondent, however, cited too much citizen participation as the issue, writing "much progress is thwarted by too much citizen participation because most citizens do not fully understand the global issues and seek solutions that tend to solve short-term problems or address their own specific issues."

Tangible Results:

Action on recommendations is crucial to the authenticity of citizen participation. Almost always volunteering time to participation activities, citizens expect their efforts will lead to the creation of favorable policies. Without positive outcomes, citizen will be less likely to participation in future activities. Top officials and other community members also need to see the value of investing in participation. If processes are arbitrary and do a poor job of increasing public trust in government, funding is more likely to be cut, further reducing stakeholder input. Citizen participation processes should, therefore, ensure **action is taken** on recommendations, **communicate next steps** at the end of processes, and **follow-up** with participants after activities on resulting progress and/or action.

Action:

Almost 50 percent of respondents were in agreement that *recommendations are rarely implemented*. Results were very similar for the other statement in this sub-element, *most recommendations made by my association don't live past the activity*. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were in disagreement when asked if *solutions are given adequate consideration by city policy makers*. Clearly, respondents have little confidence that action will results from activities.

Next Steps:

Citizens should understand **Next Steps** at the conclusion of a citizen participation activity. **Next Steps** provide a means to hold public officials accountable. The survey presented one statement regarding **Next Steps**: *after my association participates in activities, city staff communicate likely next steps in policy creation*. Most respondents had a neutral opinion on this question and the agreement/disagreement responses were very close, 30 percent and 28 percent respectively.

Follow-Up:

Public administrators should also follow-up with participants, particularly if recommendations are not followed. By keeping the channels of communication open, trust and respect between groups can develop. Citizens who engage in activities will be more likely to continue if they feel their efforts are valuable. Providing follow-up on recommendations helps the community see processes as credible, holds public officials accountable to any commitments made, and provides continued engagement with citizen participants. The survey addresses follow-up twice. First, respondents were whether they agree the statement, *If recommendations are not followed, city staff communicate the reason to my association*. Nearly half disagreed with this statement, 39 percent were neutral and only 15 percent were in agreement. The second statement, *staff follows up with my organization on the results of participation activities*, had similar results; however, slightly more respondents agreed and were neutral.

Overall Conclusions- Tangible Results:

Neighborhood leaders have little confidence that participation activities lead to tangible results. They particularly lack confidence that action will be taken on recommendations.

Table 6.14 Tangible Results - N, Response Percentages and Mean Scores

Tangible Results	N	% Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Mean
Action					
Recommendations made by my association are rarely implemented by city policy makers***	109	49%	37%	14%	2.47
Solutions proposed by my association are given adequate consideration by city policy makers	109	17%	45%	39%	2.68
Most recommendations made by my association don't live past the activity***	108	48%	44%	8%	2.49
Action Overall Mean: 2.55					
Next Steps					
After my association participates in activities, city staff communicates likely next steps in the policy creation	108	30%	42%	28%	2.94
Next Steps Overall Mean=2.65					
Follow Up					
If recommendations are not followed, city staff communicate the reason to my association	108	15%	39%	46%	2.57
Staff follows up with my organization on the results of participation activities	109	21%	40%	39%	2.72
Follow Up Overall Mean=2.65					
Tangible Results Overall Mean **2.70**					

Note A=*** represents a negatively formed question.
Note B-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
    Means falling between:
    1-1.99=No Confidence
    2-2.99=Little Confidence
    3-3.99=Some Confidence
    4-4.99=High Confidence

Tangible Results-Written Responses:

       Written responses addressed issues on the lack of action taken on recommendations and follow up after participation activities. Three respondents cited the lack of action, while two other respondents described a lack of follow-up by city staff. Writing about the new Imagine Austin plan, one respondent explained "it was a big marketing effort to get people excited…, but in the end it will be like all other issues...the city will do what the city will do...regardless of the public's opinion/vote/cries/pleas/etc."

Chapter Summary:

The purpose of this chapter was to present and analyze the results of a survey targeting neighborhood leaders in Austin, Texas. Six indicators were identified from the literature as necessary for creating meaningful participation. Using the indicators as a conceptual framework, a survey was constructed. The survey results describe leaders' confidence that Austin participation efforts are meaningful.

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis revealed answer trends in the survey results. Participants fell into three fairly even groups: those who were in agreement (29%), those who were neutral (33%) and those who were in disagreement (37%). This may suggest that neighborhood leaders have three viewpoints on citizen participation: positive, neutral and negative.

Survey results indicate that neighborhood leaders have little confidence that current efforts are meaningful. Mean scores for five of the six indicators were between 2 and 2.9 on a scale from 1 to 5. The overall mean for all indicators was 2.81. This suggests that overall, neighborhood leaders lack confidence in current efforts.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Purpose:

This research describes neighborhood leaderships' confidence that citizen participation efforts are meaningful. Six indicators were identified from the literature as necessary for meaningful participation. The six indicators, Broad Public Participation, Issue and Process Framing, Deliberation, Management Effectiveness, Credibility and Tangible Results are further defined through sub-indicators. Indicators and sub-indicators serve as descriptive categories for this project and make up a conceptual framework. To gather evidence, a survey constructed from the indicators was administered.

Results Summary:

Results show that overall neighborhood leaders had "little confidence" that city participation activities are meaningful. Five of the six indicators scored in the "little confidence range with a mean between 2-2.99; Broad Public Participation (2.69), Issue and Process Framing (2.73), Deliberation (2.74), Credibility (2.78) and Tangible Results (2.70). Mean scores for these categories were grouped closely together. Only Management Effectiveness was labeled as "some confidence" (3.25). Clearly, management effectiveness had a significantly higher mean score than the other indicators.

Taking a closer look at the sub-indicators, mean scores continued to be grouped together. Six sub-indicators scored in the "Some Confidence" range. None received a score in the High Confidence group. All of the sub-indicators in the management effectiveness category scored in the "some confidence" range. In addition, sub-indicators, Access and Legitimacy, had means above three.

See Table 7.1 for a summary of the results.

Table 7.1 Results Summary- Neighborhood Leaders' Confidence in Indicators

Indicators of Meaningful Participation	Mean Score	Confidence
Broad Public Participation	**2.69**	**Low**
Access	*3.02*	*Some*
Methods of Participation	*2.43*	*Low*
Selection of Key Stakeholders	*2.62*	*Low*
Issue and Process Framing	**2.73**	**Low**
Education on Issues	*2.60*	*Low*
Properly Structured Activities	*2.85*	*Low*
Clearly Defined Goals	*2.86*	*Low*
Deliberation	**2.74**	**Low**
Encouraged	*2.90*	*Low*
Adequate Time and Flexibility	*2.67*	*Low*
Consideration of Alternatives	*2.65*	*Low*
Management Effectiveness	**3.25**	**Some**
Cost Effectiveness	*3.33*	*Some*
Value Added	*3.42*	*Some*
Well-Organized	*3.01*	*Some*
Credibility	**2.78**	**Low**
Transparency	*2.64*	*Low*
Legitimacy	*3.04*	*Some*
Support from top officials	*2.67*	*Low*
Tangible Results	**2.70**	**Low**
Action Taken	*2.55*	*Low*
Next Steps	*2.65*	*Low*
Follow Up	*2.65*	*Low*
Overall Mean for All Indicators	**2.81**	**Low**

Note A-Scores are assigned a confidence level based on the following scale (See Chapter 5-Table 5.2 for more information):
Means falling between:
1-1.99=No Confidence
2-2.99=Little Confidence
3-3.99=Some Confidence
4-4.99=High Confidence

Key Findings of the Survey:

1) Respondents answered in one of three trends: Agree, Disagree, Neutral
2) Neighborhood leaders value citizen participation efforts
3) Four Recommendations to make Austin, Texas citizen participation activities more meaningful for neighborhood leadership
    a. Provide more education on issues
    b. Build more methods, time and flexibility into processes
    c. Improve the credibility by ensuring support from top officials

Respondents answered in one of three trends: Agree, Disagree, Neutral

The first key finding of this research is that neighborhood leaders have widely disbursed opinions on citizen participation. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis revealed answer trends in the survey results. Participants fell into three fairly even groups: those who were in agreement (29%), those who were neutral 33%), and those who were in disagreement (37%). This may suggest that neighborhood leaders have three distant viewpoints on citizen participation, positive, neutral and negative. While results showed that most indicators fell in the Little Confidence range, results may also express that there is great distribution between groups.

A significant amount of neighborhood leaders lack confidence in city-sponsored participation activities. Nevertheless, the pattern of answer trends suggests that current participation processes are working for some groups. In order to improve citizen participation processes, city staff should find out what factors cause some neighborhood groups to feel positive about citizen participation. Do demographics play a role? In other words, do neighborhood leaders with high socio-economic status have a different opinion of citizen participation efforts than those of lower socio-economic status? Do other factors such as race, ethnicity, age or political persuasion affect an individual's confidence in citizen participation? Bottom line, survey results indicate that the City of Austin current investment in citizen

participation works for some neighborhood leaders and does not work for others. In order for the city to create meaningful participation opportunities, further research is needed to understand what causes the variance of opinion amongst neighborhood leaders.

Neighborhood leaders value citizen participation efforts.

Survey results indicated that Austin Neighborhood Leaders value citizen participation. First, a significant number of neighborhood leaders participated in the survey. The leaders contacted by phone expressed curiosity about the project and were enthusiastic about improving citizen participation. Moreover, responses to questions on the value of participation and the cost effectiveness of activities were inconsistent with the answer trend model. Nearly 70 percent of respondents disagreed that efforts were a waste of limited city resources and 70 percent felt that participation adds value to the community. In short, neighborhood leadership feels that citizen participation is important in Austin, Texas.

Results suggest that neighborhood leaders look to citizen participation as a means for improving their neighborhoods and ultimately see participation as an essential element in creating effective city policies. Survey results, however, also suggested that neighborhood leaders saw ample areas needing improvement. These areas and recommendations for improving participation are discussed below.

Four Recommendations for Improvement

- **<u>Provide more education on issues</u>**

Nearly 60 percent of Austin Neighborhood leaders surveyed for this project disagreed that the city provides sufficient education on policy issues. Numerous public administration

scholars, however, stress the importance of issue education in effective, efficient and meaningful citizen participation.[47] While the Imagine Austin "Making Austin: Public Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan," indicates a commitment to providing extensive education on the Comprehensive Planning process, it lacks such a strong commitment statement to ensure that community members understand the underlying policy issues of city planning. Political or legal standards may prevent in popular idea from, ultimately, being implemented. That being said, the Imagine Austin plan does provide numerous ways for individuals to access education on issues including fact sheets posted on a community webpage, email blasts with project updates, staff information booth at community events and support for community members from city librarians. This survey should be repeated in the next five years to see if these efforts improve neighborhood leaders' perception on issue education.

- **<u>Build more participation methods, time and flexibility into processes</u>**

Six-nine percent of respondents agreed that more methods of participation are necessary and nearly 50 percent disagreed that current methods were well-suited to their associations. Likewise, only eight percent of respondents felt processes were flexible and nearly 50 percent agreed that more time was needed to make decisions. Clearly, neighborhood leaders see a need for more participation methods, more time to make decisions and more flexibility in the decision-making process. The "Making Austin" (2009, 7) report makes a strong commitment to improving and increasing participation methods. In fact, the first principle of the plan speaks to the need of multiple methods of participation citing "different people have different experiences, preferences, constraints and capacities to participate" and concludes that" being open to all requires having multiple ways to participate." As suggested in the previous recommendation,

---

[47] See Alder and Blake (1990), Crosby et al. (1986), Cunningham (1972), Irving and Stansbury (2004), Jonsson (2005), King et al. (1998), Rowe and Frewer (2000), Weeks (2000) and Williams (1976).

conducting a follow-up study in the next five years would provide a better understanding of the effects of the Imagine Austin plan had on neighborhood leaders' confidence in participation methods.

The Imagine Austin process creates a multi-year approach for citizen participation, though providing time and flexibility for decision-making is not specifically addressed in the report "Making Austin" Report. The City of Austin should work with stakeholders such as neighborhood groups to provide ample time and flexibility in processes if meaningful citizen participation is truly a priority.

- **Improve the credibility of processes by ensuring support from top officials**

Nearly 70 percent of respondents agreed that citizen participation efforts lack credibility while over fifty percent felt that elected officials and top city management disregard decisions made through citizen participation processes. In order for neighborhood leaders to think of citizen participation as meaningful, they need to believe that volunteering time and effort affects change in city policy making. As illustrated in the quote opening the results chapter, when activities are perceived as "checkmarks," credibility is greatly damaged for all community members.

Some of the responsibility for creating top official support, however, returns to community members as voters select city council members. City staff members, including top officials, work for the City Council. As such, staff members, by definition, are limited in their ability to hold council members accountable to citizen participation goals. Community leaders such as neighborhood leaders need to apply pressure to council members to stay true to participation decisions either through direct contact or through voting.

Limitations of Research:

A significant weakness of this project is the lack of triangulation. Structured interviews with neighborhood groups would provide further information on how to improve programs. Content Analysis of current activities could provide more specific recommendations on how to improve programs. City staff could also be surveyed to get their opinion of working with Austin neighborhood associations.

Research Agenda:

Many questions remain about citizen participation in Austin Neighborhood Associations. What are the main factors contributing to lack of trust between Austin officials and neighborhood groups? What motivates some groups to be dissatisfied with participation efforts, others to have no opinion and still others do be content with participation efforts? How will the Imagine Austin Planning process change neighborhood leaderships' opinion of citizen participation? Will things get better or worse?

Are neighborhood groups insular and self-serving? Does city government attempt to placate residents with "symbolic" participation efforts? Is city participation really worth the cost? Further research into citizen participation is necessary to better understand these issues. Likewise, further research into neighborhood groups' role in the Imagine Austin process is necessary to understand how the city is addressing participation in the future.

Bibliography

Adler, Sy and Gerald F. Blake. 1990. The effects of a formal Citizen Participation program on involvement in the planning process: A case study of Portland, Oregon. *State & Local Government Review.* 22 (1): 37-43.

Austin Neighborhood Council. About ANC. Accessed November 21, 2010. http://www.ancweb.org/about.htm>.

Austin, D. Mark. 1991. Community Context and Complexity of Organizational Structure in Neighborhood Associations. *Administration & Society*. 22: 516-531.

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. 10 ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004.

Barron, Wendy. "An Assessment of Public Participation in the South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group" (2006). *Applied Research Projects, Texas State University-San Marcos.* Paper 162. http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/162

Beaumaster, Suzanne. 2007. "E-Government and Creating a Citizen-Centric Government: A Study of Federal Governments CIOs" in *Modern Public Information Technology Systems: Issues and Challenges*, ed. David Garson. *(*New York, New York. IGI Publishing), 143-165.

Berner, Maureen and Sonya Smith. 2004. The State of the States: A Review of State Requirements for Citizen Participation in the Local Government Budget Process. *State & Local Government Review.* 36 (2): 140-150.

Carrington, Dale. 1973. ANC provides support for Neighborhood Organizations. Austin American Statesmen. Accessed from the Austin Neighborhood Council Website November 21, 2010.

City of Austin. (n.d. a)Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. Accessed November 14th, 2010 < http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/compplan/comp_plan_faq.htm#why)>.

2009. Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. Making Austin: Public Participation in the New Comprehensive Plan. Accessed March 15th, 2011 < http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/compplan/comp_plan_faq.htm#why)>.

(n.d. b) Community Registry. Assessed December 15th, 2010 http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighbor/search.htm.

2008. Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan Interim Update
	Assessed October 15th, 2010
http://www.imaginaaustin.net/comp_plan_interim_update.htm.

2009. Making Austin: Public Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan.
	Assessed March 29, 2010.
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/compplan/participationplan.htm

2009. Overview of Neighborhood Planning: Neighborhood Planning: Criteria Webpage.
	Assessed April 15th, 2011.
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/neighborhood/faqs.htm

(n.d c.) Boards and Committees Webpage
	Assessed December 20th, 2010
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/cityclerk/bc_info_center.htm

(n.d. d) Neighborhood Planning History
	Assessed December 20th, 2010
(http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/neighborhood/planning_history.htm)

(n.d. e) Neighborhood Assistance Center
	Assessed December 20th, 2010
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighborhood/

Cooper, Christopher A., Anthony J. Nownes and Steven Roberts. 2005. Perceptions of power: Interest
	groups in local politics. *State & Local Government Review*. 37 (3): 206-216.

Crosby, Ned and Janet M. Kelly, Paul Schaefer. 1986. Citizens panels: A new approach to Citizen
	Participation. Public Management Forum. *Public Administration Review*. 46 (2): 170-178.

Cunningham, James V. 1972. Citizen Participation in public affairs. *Public Administration Review*. 32,
	Special Issue: Curriculum Essays on Citizens, Politics, and Administration in Urban
	Neighborhoods: 589-602.

Cupps, James V. 1977. Emerging Problems of Citizen Participation. *Public Administration Review*. 37, (5):
	478-487.

Czaja, Ronald and Johnny Blair. 2005. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures.* London.
	Sage Productions.

Dalton, Russell. 2005. The Social Transformation of Trust in Government. *International Reivew of
	Sociology*. 15, (1): 133-154.

DeSario, Jack and Stuart Langton. 1987. *Citizen Participation in Public Decision Making.* Westport CT. Greenwood Press.

Dewey, John. 1927. *The Public and Its Problems*, New York, Henry Holt & Co.

Dilger, Robert Jay. 1991. Residential Community Associations: Issues, impacts, and relevance for local government in American governance. *State & Local Government Review*. 23 (1): 17-23.

Dilger, Robert Jay. 1992. *Neighborhood Politics: Residential Community Associations in American Governance.* New York: New York University Press.

Dusenbury, Pat, Blaine Linerand and Elisa Vinson. 2000. States, Citizens and Local Performance. *Accessed from* [www.**urban**.**org**/](http://www.urban.org/) *on March 20th, 2011.*

Godschalk, David R., and Bruce Stiftel. 1981. Making Waves: Public Participation in State Water Planning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 17, (4): 597-614.

Gravetter, Frederick J. and Larry B. Wallnau. 2007. *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences.* Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.

Haeberle, Steven. 1986. Good neighbors and good neighborhood: Comparing demographic and environmental influences on neighborhood activism. S*tate & Local Government Review.* 18 (3): 109-116.

Hallman, Howard H. 1984. *Neighborhood: Their Place in Urban Life*. Beverly Hill, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hawkins, Brett W, Stephan L. Percy and Steven R. Montreal. 1997. Residential Community Associations and the American Intergovernmental System. *Publius*. 27 (3): 61-74.

Hermansson, Helene. 2007. The Ethics of NIMBY Conflicts. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice.* 10 (1) 23-34.

Ho, Alfred and Paul Coates. 2004. Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment: The initial Iowa Experience. *Public Performance & Management Review*. 27 (3) 29-50.

Irvin, Renee and John Stansbury. 2004. Citizen Participation in decision making: Is it worth the effort? *Public Administration Review*. 64 (1) 55-65.

Johnson, Timothy Lee, "The Downtown Austin Planning Process as a Community of Inquiry: An Exploratory Study" (2008). *Applied Research Projects, Texas State University-San Marcos.* Paper 276.
http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/276

Jonsson, Anna. 2005. Public Participation in Water Resources Management: Stakeholder
Voices on Degree, Scale, Potential, and Methods in Future Water Management. *Ambio* 34, (7): 495-500.

Kathlene, Lyn and John a. Martin. 1991. Enhancing Citizen Participation: Panel Designs, Perspectives, and Policy Formation. *The Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.* 46-63.

Kathi, Pradeep Chandra and Terry L. Cooper. 2005. Democratizing the Administrative State: Connecting Neighborhood Councils and City Agencies. *Public Administration Review*. 65 (5) 559-567.

King, Cheryl Simrell and C. Stivers. 1998. *Government is us: Public administration in an anti-government era*, ed. C. King and C. Stivers, 28-48. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, Cheryl Simrell, Kathryn M. Feltey and Bridget O'Neill Susel. 1998. The question of participation: Toward authentic public participation in public administration. *Public Administration Review* 58 (4): 317-326.

Krebs, Timothy B. and John P. Pelissero. 2010. What Influences City Council Adoption and Support for Reinventing Government? Environmental or Institutional Factors? *Public Administration Review*. 70 (2): 258-267.

Langton, Stuart. 1978. Citizen Participation in America. Lexington, MA. D.C. Heath and CO.

Leffingwell, Lee. 2011. State of the City Address. Delivered at the Austin City Hall on February 25, 2011. Quote taken for a transcript of the speech posted. http://www.mayorleffingwell.com/ Accessed on March 1st, 2011.

Lelieveldt, Herman, Karien Dekker, Beate Volker and Rene Torenvlied. 2009. Civic organizations as political actors: Mapping and predicting the involvement of civic organizations in neighborhood problem-solving and coproduction. *Urban Affairs Review*. 45 (3): 3-24.

Logan, John R. and Gordana Rabrenovic. 1990. Neighborhood Associations: Their Issues, their Allies, and their Opponents. *Urban Affairs Review*. 26: 68-94.

Lopez, Sonya, (2006). Comprehensive Planning in Austin, Texas: One Neighborhood at a time. Sourced for the University of Texas-Austin School of Architecture call for papers.
http://soa.utexas.edu/crp/planningforum/

Marschall, Melissa J. 2004. Citizen Participation and the neighborhood context: A new look at the coproduction of local public goods. *Political Research Quarterly*. 57 (2): 231-244.

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin and James M. Cook. 2001. Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 27: 415-444.

Meter, Elena. 1975. Citizen Participation in the policy management process. *Public Administration Review*. 35: 804-812.

Meyer, Megan and Cheryl Hyde. 2004. Too much of a "good" thing? Insular neighborhood associations, nonreciprocal civility, and the promotion of civic health. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Supplement to 33 (3): 77S-96S.

Nachmias, Chava and J. John Palen. 1982. Membership in voluntary neighborhood associations and urban revitalization. *Policy Sciences*. 14 (2): 179-193.

Ott, Mark, Class lecture in Texas State Political Science Class 5321: Introduction to Public Policy and Administration. Notes taken by author. April 1st, 2009.

Pelletier, David, Vivica Krakk, Christine McCullum. Ulla Uvsitatlo and Robert Rich. 1999. The shaping of collective values though deliberative democracy: An empirical study from New York's North County. *Policy Sciences* 32 (2): 103-131.

Reddick, Christopher G. 2007. "E-Participation Models" in *Modern Public Information Technology Systems: Issues and Challenges,* ed. David Garson. (*New York, New York. IGI Publishing), 127-142.

John D. Kelly, "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War," in *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, ed. John D. Kelly et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 77.

Rich, Richard C. 1980. A Political-Economy Approach to the Study of Neighborhood Organizations. *American Journal of Political Science*. 24 (4): 559-592.

Robinson, Rick. n.d. The Top Ten Big Demographic Trends for Austin, Texas. City of Austin Website. Assessed December 20th, 2010
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/demographics/

(n.d.) City of Austin Demographics. Assessed March 31, 2011
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/demographics/

Rosener, Judy B. 1978. Citizen Participation: Can We Measure Its Effectiveness? *Public Administration Review* 38, no. 5: 457-463.

Rowe, Gene and Frewer, Lynn J. 2000. Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 25, (1): 3-29

Salant, P and Dillman. D.A. 1999. How to Conduct Your Own Survey. New York, New York. John Witley & Son. Inc.

Shields, P. 1998. Pragmatism as philosophy of science: A tool for public administration. *Research in Public Administration*. 4: 195-225.

Shields, P. 2003. The community of inquiry: classical pragmatism and public administration. *Administration & Society*. 35: 510-538.

Shields, P and H. Tajalli 2006. Intermediate theory: the missing link in successful student scholarship." *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. 12 (3): 313-334.

Stoll, Michael A. 2001. Race, neighborhood poverty, and participation in voluntary associations. *Sociological Forum*. 16 (3): 529-557.

Strange, John H. 1972. The impact of Citizen Participation on public administration. *Public Administration Review*. 32: 457-470.

Thomas, John Clayton. 1995. *Public Participation in Public Decisions: New Skills and Strategies for Public Managers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Van Meter, Elena. 1975. Citizen Participation in the Policy Management Process: Panel Designs, Perspectives, and Policy Formation. *Public Administration Review. Special Issue*. 804-823.

Van Til, Jon and Sally Bould Van Til. 1970. Citizen Participation in Social Policy: The end of a cycle? *Social Problems. 17 (3):* 313-323.

Verba, Sidney and Norman H. Nie. 1972. *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Vigoda, Eran. 2002. From responsiveness to collaboration: Governance, citizens, and the next generation of public administration. *Public Administration Review*. 62 (5): 527-540.

Warren, Nancy. 2001. Regulating Texas Homeowner's Associations. Graduate Thesis for the Political Science Department at Texas State University-San Marcos.

Wang, XiaoHu and Montgomery Wan Wart. 2007. When public participation in administration leads to trust: An Empirical Assessment of Manager's Perceptions. *Public Performance & Management Review*. 29 (2): 191-216.

Weeks, Edward C. 2000. The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: Results from Four Large-Scale Trials. *Public Administration Review*. 60 (4): 360-372.

Williams, Sydney. 1976. Citizen Participation in city and regional planning: An effective American methodology. *The Town Planning Review*. 47 (4): 349-358.

Yang, Kaifeng and Kathe Callahan. 2005. Assessing Citizen Involvement Efforts by Local Government. *Public Performance & Management Review*. 29 (2): 191-216.

Appendix One: Survey Tool

1. Welcome

Hi,

Thanks for your interest in this project. As you may know, the City of Austin has made a long term commitment to increasing citizen participation. In fact, the current comprehensive plan has a specific policy goal of increasing neighborhood involvement in neighborhood planning.

This preliminary study explores neighborhood groups' assessment of the city's progress toward greater participation in policy development and planning. Study results will be used to make recommendations to the recently created Neighborhood Assistance Center as well as develop questions for further studies on citizen participation in Austin.

In the survey, you will be asked to rate your agreement with statements on "citizen participation activities." Citizen participation activities are defined as any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.*** This definition is repeated at the top of each survey page for your reference.

The survey will begin with a few basic questions about your association. Next, you will be asked to rate your agreement with a series of statements. A test group was able to complete the survey in 5 to 15 minutes.

In order to participate in this survey, you should be a representative of a neighborhood association that is affected by City of Austin policies. If you are no longer a representative of a neighborhood association or feel that someone else in the association should complete the survey, please pass the survey along to the appropriate contact for your neighborhood.

As stated in the contact email, participation in this survey is voluntary and confidential. If you have any questions/concerns or would prefer a paper copy of this survey be mailed to you, please contact me at jg1652@txstate.edu or by phone at 512-289-0260.

Thanks for participating.

2.

* 1. Zip code:

3. Charasteristics of Your Neighborhood Assoication

1. Please select your association type from the list below:

○ Voluntary Neighborhood Association

○ Home Owner's Association

○ Residential Community Association

* 2. Is membership in your association mandatory for neighborhood residents?

○ Yes

○ No

Other (please specify)

[   ]

4. Broad Public Participation

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

✱ 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It is easy to find out about participation opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
The city only offers participation activities on a limited number of topics that are not of interest to my association	○	○	○	○	○
Participation activities are available in the primary languages used by my association members	○	○	○	○	○
Activities often lack adequate and fair representation of key stakeholders	○	○	○	○	○
Participation activities are held on days and times best for members of my organization's schedule	○	○	○	○	○
More methods of participation are needed	○	○	○	○	○
If representation is not reflective of the greater community, city staff take measures to solicit adequate representation	○	○	○	○	○
The city offers participation methods well-suited to the needs of my association	○	○	○	○	○

5. Issue Framing

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

* 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
City staff sufficiently educates my association on policy issues so we can make educated decisions	○	○	○	○	○
City staff withholds necessary information, making it hard for my association to fully understand issues	○	○	○	○	○
City staff is reluctant to provide additional information on policy issues when requested	○	○	○	○	○
City staff provides too much information on topics making it difficult for my association to be prepared for decision-making	○	○	○	○	○
Participation activities are structured so participants know what to expect	○	○	○	○	○
Participation activities are disorganized, lack format and waste time	○	○	○	○	○
City staff provides fair and clear deadlines for decision making	○	○	○	○	○
Participation activities have clearly defined goals	○	○	○	○	○

6. Deliberation

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

* 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Deliberation is encouraged in citizen participation activities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Adequate time is allowed to make the best decisions for my neighborhood	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My association is rushed to make decisions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Activities are flexible; my association is allowed to change the structure of the debate when available options are not adequate	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
City staff are receptive to alternative solutions proposed by my association	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
City staff discourages my association from proposing alternative options to solve problems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
City staff helps my association develop alternatives if adequate options have not yet been created	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. Management Effectiveness

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

✱ 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Participation activities are cost effective	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Citizen participation activities help the city create better policies	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Activities are well organized	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Participation activities are a waste of limited city resources	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
City staff dedicates adequate time/efforts to ensure activities are valuable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Activities are poorly managed by city staff	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

8. Credibility

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

* 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Participation efforts are transparent	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The Austin media understand how and why participation activities are conducted	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Elected officials and top city management support citizen participation programs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Decisions made from participation activities lack credibility	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My association finds city staff trustworthy	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Members of the community understand the need for citizen participation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Elected officials and top city management disregard decisions made in participation activities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stakeholders, other than neighborhood groups, have trouble understanding participation activities and outcomes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

9. Action on Recommendations

Definition of a "Citizen Participation Activity"=

any method which the city uses to inform citizens, gather feedback, discuss solutions or work through problems. Activities can be meetings, surveys, online forums and work groups or any other method in which citizens are given an opportunity to participate in government decision-making.

*** This definition is repeated at the top of each page for your reference.***

* 1. Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Recommendations made by my association are rarely implemented by city policy makers	○	○	○	○	○
Solutions proposed by my association are given adequate consideration by city policy makers	○	○	○	○	○
Most recommendations made by my association don't live past the activity	○	○	○	○	○
If recommendations are not followed, city staff communicate the reason to my association	○	○	○	○	○
After my association participates in activities, city staff communicates likely next steps in the policy creation	○	○	○	○	○
Staff follows up with my organization on the results of participation activities	○	○	○	○	○

10. Feedback on Citizen Participation Actitivies

1. If you would like to add any additional comments about your experience with citizen participation activities in Austin, Texas, please do so here:

11. Survey End

Thank you for your participation in this project. When the final report is complete, I will email a link to all neighborhood associations contacted for this study. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by email at jg1652@txstate.edu or by phone, 512-289-0260.

Sincerely,
Jasmine Griffin-Ives

Appendix Two: Survey Responses

Broad Public Participation

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
It is easy to find out about participation opportunities	8	49	29	24	9	119
***The city only offers participation activities on a limited number of topics that are not of interest to my association	6	29	37	43	4	119
Participation activities are available in the primary languages used by my association members	45	50	7	14	4	120
***Activities often lack adequate and fair representation of key stakeholders	22	36	36	23	2	119
Participation activities are held on days and times best for members of my organization's schedule	4	23	52	27	15	121
***More methods of participation are needed	38	43	27	12	1	121
If representation is not reflective of the greater community, city staff take measures to solicit adequate representation	8	20	37	33	20	118
The city offers participation methods well-suited to the needs of my association	2	30	31	45	11	119

Issue and Process Framing

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
City staff sufficiently educates my association on policy issues so we can make educated decisions	1	25	24	44	23	117
City staff withholds necessary information, making it hard for my association to fully understand issues	18	27	36	29	5	115
City staff is reluctant to provide additional information on policy issues when requested	18	22	43	27	6	116
City staff provides too much information on topics making it difficult for my association to be prepared for decision-making	0	8	36	58	15	117
Participation activities are structured so participants know what to expect	1	32	41	33	8	115
Participation activities are disorganized, lack format and waste time	7	18	51	39	2	117
City staff provides fair and clear deadlines for decision making	3	46	34	25	9	117
Participation activities have clearly defined goals	0	35	42	29	11	117

Deliberation

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
Deliberation is encouraged in citizen participation activities	3	38	30	29	13	113
Adequate time is allowed to make the best decisions for my	2	22	38	36	14	112
My association is rushed to make decisions	5	27	46	28	4	110
Activities are flexible; my association is allowed to change	1	8	40	46	19	114
City staff are receptive to alternative solutions proposed by	0	15	48	33	17	113
City staff discourages my association from proposing	11	26	45	30	2	114
City staff helps my association develop alternatives if	0	19	40	39	16	114
The city offers participation methods well-suited to the needs of my association	2	30	31	45	11	119

Management Effectiveness

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting

Answer Options	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Response
Participation activities are cost effective	2	23	59	22	7	113
Citizen participation activities help the city create better	27	50	23	7	3	110
Activities are well organized	2	36	44	24	5	111
Participation activities are a waste of limited city resources	3	9	26	51	24	113
City staff dedicates adequate time/efforts to ensure	2	34	44	27	5	112
Activities are poorly managed by city staff	9	20	49	35	0	113
				answered question		109
				skipped question		16

Credibility

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting

Answer Options	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Response
Participation efforts are transparent	1	26	30	39	14	110
The Austin media understand how and why participation	1	22	46	31	10	110
Elected officials and top city management support citizen	3	37	28	30	12	110
Decisions made from participation activities lack credibility	14	26	35	29	6	110
My association finds city staff trustworthy	5	32	40	20	13	110
Members of the community understand the need for citizen	14	60	14	16	6	110
Elected officials and top city management disregard	22	36	36	13	3	110
Stakeholders, other than neighborhood groups, have trouble understanding participation activities and outcomes	9	39	44	16	1	109

Tangible Results

Reflecting on your association's experience with citizen participation activities, please rate your agreement with the statements below by selecting						
Answer Options	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Response
Recommendations made by my association are rarely	19	35	40	15	0	109
Solutions proposed by my association are given adequate	2	16	49	29	13	109
Most recommendations made by my association don't live	13	39	47	8	1	108
If recommendations are not followed, city staff	2	14	42	36	14	108
After my association participates in activities, city staff	1	31	45	22	9	108
Staff follows up with my organization on the results of	0	23	43	31	11	108

Appendix Three: Travis County Zip Code Map

Zip Code Categories
Travis County, Texas, 2009