College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
Theses and Dissertations

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

3-2013

The role of nonprofits as administrators in municipal sustainability planning: An exploration of four cities

Morgan Benson
DePaul University, MORGAN924@GMAIL.COM

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

THE ROLE OF NONPROFITS AS ADMINISTRATORS IN MUNICIPAL SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING: AN EXPLORATION OF FOUR CITIES.

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

March 2013

By

Morgan C. Benson

School of Public Service

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

Abstract

Municipal governments across the United States have been integrating sustainability into their planning and economic development strategies for more than a decade. Despite this, forging a consensus on exactly what a "sustainable city" is—or how communities can pursue sustainability in financially and politically viable ways—has proven difficult. Over the past several years, however, many governments have strengthened their initiatives by harnessing the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve as administrators of their sustainability plans. The roles of nonprofits vary between cities but often include information gathering and designing and developing plans, while the task of implementing these plans is managed by the municipal governments. This study explores this promising and emerging technique against the backdrop of theories of collaboration and cross-sector coordination and their practical application. Through an intensive case-study approach that involved interviews with key staff members in four U.S. communities, including Akron, Ohio; Elgin, Illinois; Fairfield, Iowa and ; Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois it explores these partnerships and the practical lessons that these pioneers in nonprofit-municipal collaboration suggest for other communities. The findings also illustrate the value of collaborative theory in understanding how nonprofits and municipalities can work together in the design and development of community sustainability plans. Interpreted broadly, such results can help deepen scholarly understanding of the potential value of intersectoral strategic planning initiatives among different entities.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

In cities across the United States, sustainability has become a prominent part of the local dialogue. With the growing awareness and commitment to sustainability from the general public, state and local governments have begun to promote sustainable development through municipal plans that enable cities and regions to integrate sustainability principles into future policies and programs. While federal funding and efforts of national organizations have encouraged the inclusion of sustainability in local government plans, many of these plans continue to be, at best, works in progress for a number of reasons. A particularly significant problem has been that the meaning of sustainability has remained ambiguous. Furthermore, best practices for measuring sustainability efforts have remained unclear and piecemeal. Many stakeholders also remain divided about how to oversee the creation and implementation of these plans due to their multi-faceted nature.

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives related to the enhancement of local sustainability plans: i) explore the relationships between municipalities and nonprofits related to the development of sustainability plans through the lens of collaborative theory; and ii) identify best practices within these partnerships that other cities can learn from.

Of particular importance to the study is the question of how sustainability planning can be done in ways that encourage community buy-in and accountability while ensuring that these efforts are financially and politically successful. As the study shows, sustainability plans can help cities measure the long-term impact of different environmental and energy savings programs by establishing goals and metrics. Nevertheless, no consensus yet exists on the best way to develop such a plan that is effective and can withstand financial and political challenges.

Considerable need exists for research in these areas on account of growing prevalence of sustainability planning in cities across the country. Some communities are preparing distinct sustainability plans, which are similar to city master plans but place heightened emphasis on environmental, social and economic promotion. These plans offer municipalities a way to bring city services, land use and infrastructure together under one framework that acknowledges the interconnectedness of these issues. Other communities attempt to integrate concepts related to sustainability into existing plans, such as those pertaining to the building code, zoning and water-resource management.

To draw insights about these issues, the study reviews sustainability planning in four communities that has emerged out of collaborative relationships with nonprofit organizations. In each case, nonprofits helped to oversee the development of the plan. While this relationship may, in many ways, seem natural—with nonprofits lending their technical expertise and mission-focus to shape the political action of municipalities—little previous research has explored the nature of these relationships. Given the multidisciplinary nature of the concept of sustainability itself, the study seeks to determine whether cross-sector collaboration between cities and nonprofits can be successfully integrated into the culture of cities within the context of sustainability plans. The study explores these relationships and identifies best practices and common themes that are relevant to other cities.

The analysis section of this study seeks to answer the following questions: i) what can be discerned about municipal-nonprofit relationships when evaluated through the lens of collaborative theory? ii) what are the key characteristics of this collaborative process? iii) what benefits can nonprofits offer municipalities related to the development of sustainability plans— and what best practices can cities take from this model of collaboration?

2

Empirical Analysis

The study explores these collaborative relationships through semi-structured interviews and site visits with staff from the selected municipalities and nonprofits, as well as other key individuals/community members. The research employs a case-study approach, involving four Midwestern cities of varying sizes and demographic characteristics: Akron, Ohio; Fairfield, Iowa; Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois and; Elgin, Illinois. By exploring the operational characteristics of these relationships through the application of collaborative theory, the study seeks to identify common trends and variations within how municipalities and nonprofits partner on sustainability plans.

The analysis provided in the chapters that follow analyzes public-nonprofit relationships through the theoretical framework of inter-organizational collaboration, for which a wide body of research exists. Against this theoretical backdrop, the study strives to identify ways that cities can utilize nonprofits. The study also presents practical lessons municipalities can take away from this model to build upon an understanding of sustainability and pursue sustainable practices in ways that are measurable, rooted in the community and financially viable.

Chapter Two: Background

This chapter offers background perspective relevant to the analysis provide in later chapters. The narrative is divided into subsections that offer a workable definition of sustainability, describe its evolution and explore how the concept became integrated into municipal planning.

The Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability has emerged as a means of mitigating the effects of climate change and preparing communities to meet the challenges of a world that continues to grow in population while natural resources become increasingly scarce. While there are many definitions of sustainability, most center on a balance between economic growth, social equality and environmental protection (Dilworth, Stokes, Weinberger, & Spatari, 2011, p. 20).

Finding the proper "balance" in these areas requires consideration of environmental degradation, climate change, economic turmoil and social inequities—factors which have left local governments feeling pressured to adopt more holistic solutions to their problems. Concerns over the rising frequency of natural disasters, high unemployment and social unrest, meanwhile, have created a sense of urgency in finding such a balance.

In recent years, the "Triple Bottom Line" concept of sustainability has basked in the spotlight. This concept calls for economy, society and environment to be addressed simultaneously. In a sustainable society, economic opportunity abounds, resources are distributed equitably and transparently and the integrity of the natural environment is not compromised because of human development (Sharma and Kearins, 2010, p. 169). Within this framework, economic development and environmental protection are no longer perceived as opposing goals (Okubo, 2010).

The term sustainability was first used by environmentalists in the 1970's, but gained its popular meaning in the late 1980's following the United Nations recommendations on the subject (Salkin, 2009, p. 124). According to its report on the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987, p. 43, as cited in Dilworth, et al, 2011, p. 24), "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." As this definition reflects, sustainability is not about hindering economic growth, but about decoupling financial success with environmental degradation. From an urban perspective, sustainability means city planning to encourage utilization of local resources in a way that supports social equity, environmental integrity and economic prosperity, all with a balance between the needs of today and future demands.

The rhetoric of sustainability quickly gained popularity with both environmental activists and supporters of economic growth, but also drew criticism as a meaningless concept that could be used in multiple and contradictory ways (Dresner, 2008, as cited in Salkin, 2009, p. 124). The term's ability for multiple interpretations leads to an inherent tension, with environmentalists arguing that it can be misused as a cover to claim practices are protecting the planet while they continue to destroy it covertly, and economists claiming that it is too cautious about the future and limiting to economic growth.

While experts agree that greenhouse gas emissions must be dramatically decreased immediately in order to forestall global warming and its effects, political efforts to do so on a global scale have been limited in scope and reach. The Kyoto Protocol, a protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC) aimed at fighting global warming has been signed by 84 countries that have committed in principle to emission

5

reduction. However, despite this global call for action the U.S. has not ratified the agreement, nor has it developed meaningful ways to address climate change (Salkin, 2009, p. 122). For additional information on the Kyoto Protocol and other terms related to sustainability see table 1.

Local government approaches to climate change and sustainability

Recognizing that the federal government is an unreliable partner in sustainability planning, state and local governments have taken a leadership role in developing emission reduction strategies through climate action plans, emission reductions and sustainability planning. For many American cities, sustainability has become a key planning strategy for building economic, social and environmental systems. While the stimulus for pursuing sustainability may come from a variety of sources—political priorities, citizen interest and access to funding—sustainability continues to be on the agenda of local governments as a way to decrease costs and increase livability.

Driven largely by the efforts of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and federal funding streams, local governments are promoting green building practices, renewable energy, green space conservation and development patterns that reduce driving emissions (Salkin, 2009, p. 123). While there continues to be a need for the U.S. to develop a coordinated national policy, these locally-based efforts are building an understanding of sustainability—primarily related to environmental sustainability— and how it is pursued.

Table 1: Key definitions related to sustainability	
Kyoto Protocol	An international agreement related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that sets binding targets for industrialized countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The protocol was adopted in 1997; as of 2011, 191 states have signed and ratified the protocol—the U.S. has not (United Nations, 2012).
U.S. Green Building Council	A private, nonprofit organization promoting cost-efficiency and energy saving techniques in ways buildings are designed, built and operated. The organization pursues these goals through a variety of educational and advocacy initiatives, but is probably best known for its LEED green building rating system (U.S. Green Building Council, n.d.).
LEED certification	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is a rating system developed by the USGBC related to the design, construction and operation of buildings, homes and communities to provide a practical and measurable framework for green practices. LEED certification consists a point system and ranking that ranges from certified, to silver, gold and the highest ranking, platinum (USGBC, n.d.).
Green economy	An economy that fosters improved quality of life for humans and social equity while simultaneously reducing environmental harm and degradation; an economy that has a low carbon footprint, is resource efficient and socially inclusive (UN Environment Programme, n.d.).
Green collar jobs	A job that reduces waste and pollution and benefits the environment, and pays a decent wage and is part of a career path with the ability for upward mobility (Walsh, 2008).
Stormwater runoff	Occurs when rain or snowmelt flows over impervious (paved) surfaces, preventing it from naturally soaking into the ground. In addition to causing flooding, this runoff can then pick up debris, chemicals and other pollutants that are then carried to sewer systems, lakes, rivers or coastal waters—causing pollution and adverse effects on plants, fish, animals and humans (U.S. EPA, 2003).
Green roof or cool roof	A green roof is a vegetative layer grown on a rooftop which shades the roof surface and removes heat from the air between the rooftop and building interior. Cool roofs provide cooling through solar reflectance, thereby reducing heat transfer to the building (U.S. EPA, n.d.).
Transit-Oriented Development	A planning strategy to create urban communities anchored around public transportation. The purpose of TOD is to concentrate housing and commercial development close to transit infrastructure so that residents and commuters have viable options to driving (CMAP, 2012).
Alternative energy	Energy that is produced without the undesirable consequences of the burning of fossil fuels or without having high carbon dioxide emissions.
Renewable energy	Natural, recurring energy sources that can be harvested without the detrimental effects of carbon emissions, such as solar, wind and hydro power.

In the United States, state regulative power and land use policies have fostered the ability of local governments to pursue sustainability. Most states require that zoning regulations be developed and implemented in accordance with a comprehensive land use plan, often known as a general plan or master plan. These documents represent a shared vision of a municipality or region for the future—addressing housing, public infrastructure needs, recreational/open space, agriculture, transportation and economic development (Salkin, 2009, p. 125). For additional examples of locally-focused sustainability policies, see the Table 2.

Local sustainability planning touches on many aspects of the ways that people live, work and interact with each other. Within the context of local planning, cities are obligated to provide services related to sustainability, such as clean drinking water, safe public spaces, traffic alleviation and basic infrastructure maintenance. Furthermore, most societal issues, including the effects of environmental devastation, natural disasters, economic downturn, high unemployment, public health concerns and social inequities are often first and most profoundly felt on the local level (ICLEI, n.d.) as are the cost implications of dealing with these challenges. Additionally, local governments often face less complex political landscapes, allowing them to respond to the needs, interests and demands of their communities, and to develop approaches that are realistic and relevant to their jurisdictions (ICLEI, n.d.). States and local governments have pioneered sustainable planning by adding these elements to their comprehensive plans (Salkin, 2009).

Table 2: Focus areas of many local government sustainability plans & policies	
Energy	Requirements for energy conservation and greenhouse gas emission reduction Growth of renewable energy resources Encouraging sustainable building materials and techniques, including green building practices, "green roofs" and "cool roofs" on commercial and residential properties
Conservation	Preservation and protection of air, water/stormwater, habitat, wildlife and other natural systems, as well as resource and waste conservation Protection of areas based on environmental, historical or cultural significance
Land Use	Designing with transportation and mobility in mind Promotion and protection of parks, open space and recreation Addressing sprawl, and density issues through a variety of strategies, including transit-oriented development (TOD)
Transportation	Encouraging the public to walk, bike, and use mass transit more than driving
Housing	Fostering residential growth in higher-density urban settings, as well as mixed-use development Ensuring residential buildings are constructed using sustainable methods and assisting existing residential properties with energy saving retrofits Supporting affordable housing as it relates to social equity
Climate Change	Planning for natural disasters—earthquakes, fires, floods and land subsidence related to changes in weather patterns and increases in flooding, droughts, wildfires and coastal erosion
Water Issues	Ensuring access to fresh water Preparing for/coping with drought and flooding, as well as changing water levels Stormwater management and rainwater collection
Economy	Encouraging economic development through clean technology and green jobs, local commerce, tourism and local food sourcing Supporting employment and workforce training programs, such as green job training, employment and wage standards and workforce skill-building
Society	Promotion of affordability and social equity through affordable housing, poverty-reduction, human services and race and social equity Access to health care, community health and wellness and public safety Support for education, arts and culture and civic engagement and vitality

Sustainability plan vs. climate action plan

Among the many policies that state and local governments have adopted in recent years, two stand out for being prevalent throughout the United States: the development of sustainability plans and the development much more narrowly focused climate action plans. While the two are similar, they are different in scope and orientation. According to ICLEI, a sustainability plan is a climate action plan with a broader, more holistic view of how environmental issues intersect with economic and social concerns on a societal level (ICLEI, n.d.). Climate action plans focus on greenhouse gas emission analysis and reduction effort. While they may include other environmental efforts beyond energy consumption and emission reduction, such as clean energy and green job promotion, they do not define and explore these issues as thoroughly as a sustainability plan.

The emergence of the sustainable city in the U.S.

Many local governments are using the regulative power they have to incorporate sustainable practices into their master plans. Language related to energy use, conservation, land use, transportation, housing and climate change adaptation are all integrated into these plans. In addition to addressing zoning and infrastructure, these plans emphasize livability and physical features to appeal to and attract new residents, including pedestrian and bike networks, tree-planting projects, protecting green space, the directing of development towards existing urban centers, local food access and the promotion of streetscaping and mixed-use to make neighborhoods more pedestrian friendly and encourage community building.

Municipalities have become quite creative in their efforts to integrate sustainability into their comprehensive plans. Blacksburg, Virginia's plan, for example, seeks to maintain

Blacksburg's air quality by encouraging centralized development patterns and expanding pedestrian and bicycle pathways (Salkin, 2009, p. 135). Buffalo, New York's comprehensive plan includes policies to mitigate climate change that take into account the community's proximity to Lake Erie, as well as weather and water level variations and the economic impact of these trends(Salkin, 2009, p. 137). Seattle, Washington's comprehensive plan was amended in 2007 to include emission reduction targets and a new requirement for city building projects to be carbon neutral by 2030 (Salkin, 2009, p. 139). As these examples demonstrate, municipalities are pursuing sustainability in many different ways tailored to their identity and local needs.

These efforts have been supported by organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, a nonpartisan organization serving over 1,300 cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Although its policies have evolved over the years, the Conference has been a public supporter of policies related to energy use and its environment implications for the last several decades. More recently, the Conference has highlighted the need for global climate protection efforts and called on local governments to adopt policies on a rage of related issues, including renewable energy promotion, the development of national standards for emission reduction, sustainable building practices and better transportation options. In 2005, the Conference endorsed the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, an initiative launched by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels which allowed for mayors from across the country to commit to reducing their jurisdiction's emissions to seven percent below 1990 levels by 2012—a reduction in line with the Kyoto Protocol (ICLEI, 2006).

The U.S. Conference of Mayors created the Mayors Climate Protection Center in 2007 to address the urgent need to provide mayors with guidance and support in promoting their cities' efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Center was also designed to connect municipalities with grant opportunities and other strategies to fund these efforts. A 2011 survey

of 400 mayors conducted for the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that three in four cities were increasing their use of "clean" energies (United States Conference of Mayors, 2011). One in three cities had included climate change adaptation as an element of their capital planning or improvements programs and one-quarter of all cities had set targets for renewable energy use. Furthermore, mayors identified clean energy practices and sustainable technologies as a driver of economic benefit and a way to pursue the national goals of energy independence and security (United States Conference of Mayors, 2011).

The survey results also highlights the fact that sustainability efforts—particularly those pertaining to energy—require federal resources and more emphasis on partnership if they are to survive. The survey also highlighted the view that cities must identify financing solutions that have "minimal budget impact and keep cities on track with their sustainability goals using proven technologies" (United States Conference of Mayors, 2011). The CEO and Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors interpreted the survey results as showing that: "the key drivers behind much of this activity are, not surprisingly, economic: to attract new businesses and jobs, reduce energy costs, and develop a greener economy" (United States Conference of Mayors, 2011). As of 2012, 1,054 mayors from across the country have committed to the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Federal Government Support for Sustainability

Local sustainability efforts have drawn strength from federal government support. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program, part of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, was funded with 2009 stimulus dollars. The program provided $3.2 billion to city, county and state programs related to reducing emissions and energy

use and improving energy efficiency. In 2009, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to form the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This interagency partnership was created to assist local communities in the U.S. to: 1) improve access to affordable housing, 2) increase transportation options and 3) lower transportation costs—all with protection of the environment in mind (United States Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Sustainable Communities, 2012).

This program has had far-reaching implications for local planning. The dollars it provides supports the coordination of housing, transportation, water and other infrastructure in order "to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money and reduce pollution" (United States Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Sustainable Communities, 2012). By providing funding, as well as policy and legislative recommendations, the partnership promotes access to housing and transportation through a framework of cost savings, promotion of public health, equity, economic growth, community revitalization and preservation and efficiency and effectiveness of local governments. However, while the Partnership for Sustainable Communities remains a resource for cities, EECBG funds were fully expended by 2012. There are presently no plans for the program's renewal, and it remains unknown to what extent local sustainability efforts will continue without this large infusion of federal support.

New models of sustainability plans are constantly emerging as cities across the country experiment with new techniques. Many cities have developed dedicated sustainability units or offices that are housed within municipal environmental, public works or planning departments (Portney, 2005). Others have created sustainability positions within the executive office of the local government, including the mayor's office or city manager's office. In these cases, the municipal positions are responsible for the sustainability plan's development and implementation. While housing these positions within city offices may legitimize them, they are still vulnerable to budget cuts and the fierce politicking that characterize many local governments. Partially in response to this reality, nonprofits are emerging as the principal designers and administrators of some sustainability plans, while leaving local governments to implement the plans. Many of these nonprofit organizations have long histories advocating for environmental and social justice, and welcome the opportunity to shift their focus from policy development to program implementation. Many also are vigorous champions of both the public and private sectors in areas where the goals of these sectors overlap.

The Components of Effective Sustainability Plans

Despite the demonstrated benefits of collaboration, municipalities still struggle to define the criteria needed to assure that their sustainability plans become viable. While there is great variety among plans, these documents typically includes the following elements: 1) a greenhouse gas inventory, 2) based on the inventory, as well as an analysis of energy saving opportunities, a realistic emission reduction target is set and 3) policy and strategy recommendations are then made to accomplish the proposed reductions (Salkin, 2009, p. 140). International organizations,

such as ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability, as well as locally-based nonprofits have

also created tools to assist cities in developing sustainability plans and standardizing the process.

According to the ICLEI Milestones for Sustainability, cities are encouraged to go through the

following steps in pursuing sustainability planning (Table 3):

Table 3: The ICLEI Milestones for Sustainability steps	
Pre-milestone: *make a commitment, form a team*	Hire a sustainability coordinator Obtain buy-in from an elected official Form teams that bring together city departments, key experts, and the community
Milestone 1: *Conduct a sustainability assessment*	Develop a greenhouse gas emissions inventory
Milestone 2: *Establish sustainability goals*	Define clear, relevant, and measurable goals Include the public in the planning process to identify what sustainability goals are important to the community overall
Milestone 3: *Develop a local sustainability plan*	Draft a plan to achieve targets Set up plan of implementation within plan Gather community member feedback
Milestone 4: *Implementation*	Put policies and measures in place
Milestone 5: *Evaluate*	Report on progress & update plans as needed

ICLEI's efforts to standardize the sustainability planning process create opportunities for

nonprofits to assume a proactive role in the development, promotion and implementation of

sustainable practices. It also leverages their strengths by removing much of the ambiguity that

can make governments wary of enlisting these outsiders. Natural resource protection and the

intersection of environmental, economic and social inequities have of course been central to the

mission of countless nonprofit organizations over the years.

In this context, many governments are reaching out to nonprofits to design sustainability plans. Some recognize that nonprofits may have a breadth of experience in working to identify community interests and mobilize citizen action. Others are attracted by the fact that nonprofits are accustomed to bringing together technical experts and key stakeholders in order to accomplish their goals. Working with nonprofits also creates opportunities to attract outside financial support, as these organizations are often skilled in soliciting grants and other donations. Nonprofits also have experience measuring the impact of their efforts, as well as identifying diverse funding strategies in ways that local governments lack. These attributes make nonprofit organizations valuable partners in efforts to develop sustainability plans that are measurable, rooted in the community and financially viable.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter explores the literature on the role of local governments in promoting sustainable planning. This literature can be roughly divided into three categories: i) local government approaches and strategies, ii) social equity and local leadership and iii) interorganizational collaboration.

Local Government Approaches and Strategies

The first branch of literature focuses on the methods used by municipal governments to engage in sustainability planning. The research of Saha and Paterson (2008) has been particularly influential by showing that most cities are adopting sustainability plans in a fragmented fashion. They identify challenges ranging from resistance on an organizational level to the inability to "make connections" across community issues. While the authors recommend that cities create a dedicated office and staff devoted to sustainability, they acknowledge that this is not yet a common practice. Twelve percent of respondents had an office of sustainability at the time of the study's publication. While a surge in federal stimulus funding starting in 2009 made sustainability offices more prevalent, the study puts great emphasis on the need for governments to look to alternative strategies to support the development of comprehensive sustainability plans in the future.

Another landmark study by Portney and Cuttler (2010) offers extensive analysis of the relationship between the number of nonprofit organizations a city works with and that city's commitment to sustainability policies. Among the 13 U.S. cities they surveyed, seven cities were deemed "sustainable" (with comprehensive plans in place). The authors examine the importance

of nonprofits relative to sustainability efforts by conducting correlation analysis. The authors determined that government officials in the cities judged to be "sustainable" had six times more contact with nonprofit and community organizations than businesses. The authors also found that sustainability plans are significantly more likely to be successful in communities in which local governments are more aware of, and involved with, local nonprofits.

Social Equity, Local Leadership and Sustainability

Another branch of literature focuses on the need for cross-generational and social equity in sustainability planning. This literature identifies why public involvement is essential to sustainability planning. Portney (2005) identifies public engagement, including the involvement of grassroots community organizations, as both essential to the development of comprehensive sustainability plans and a goal of sustainability itself. The study includes a small number of cities that have included civic engagement as key to sustainability. Through review of sustainability programs, the author questions the relationship between the degree to which cities pursue sustainability and the characteristics of local civil society.

Governments have been considering the concept of sustainability and how to partner with other sectors to achieve it for the last two decades. A related and equally influential area of scholarship explores why planning for sustainability has turned out to be much slower and more cumbersome than anticipated (Sharma and Kearins, 2010, p. 169). While advocates tout the financial savings and increased efficiency sustainability offers, the research shows that "true" sustainability requires transformational change at the individual, organizational and societal level as well as a shift in the way decisions are made in both the short and long-term (Egri and Herman, 2000; United Nations, 1992, as cited in Sharma and Kearins, 2010, p. 174). These

18

changes, of course, are daunting to governments, who often end up adopting only piecemeal strategies that focus only on cost savings and publicly popular "greening" activities, while doing little to address issues of social equity, economics and environmental resource allocation.

AtKisson (1996) employs a case study approach to study the Sustainable Seattle project, which created Seattle's sustainability plan through the leadership of a volunteer-based civic group. The group used community input to develop indicators to assess the success of the city's efforts while also making the plan accessible and understandable to the public. These concepts are further articulated in a study by Wheeler (2008), who explores the increasing role of nonprofits and civic-based organizations in local sustainability plan development. The author identifies the need for additional goal-setting and progress reporting, as well as increased public awareness/involvement in the development of these plans. Wheeler explores how the involvement of stakeholders and community activism are instrumental to the process. By evaluating the role of a nonprofit in the development of Pennsylvania's Climate Action Plan, Wheeler concludes that involving community organizations can enhance public awareness and the sense of "investment" that residents feel in the process.

Interorganizational Collaboration

A third category of scholarly literature focuses on the use of interorganizational collaboration. Sharma and Kearins (2010) study regional efforts in New Zealand to draw insights on why collaboration is a necessary component of sustainability plan development. The authors also note, however, that there is a paucity of empirical studies on the standardized practices and replicable lessons related to collaboration and sustainability.

19

Through the theoretical framework of interorganizational collaboration, this study uses case study analysis to identify the processes and outcomes of this model and the benefits of collaboration related to sustainability. The authors analyze the potential benefits of partnership through the framework of learning, relationship-building, joint problem-solving, shared values, efficiency, resource sharing, cost savings, capacity building and survival. Through this analysis, the authors conclude that collaboration between sectors is essential. Furthermore, they suggest that this model of partnership creates the need for a new theoretical paradigm—since sustainability provides a powerful and natural rationale for intersectoral collaboration.

In a landmark study of interorganizational collaboration, Gray (1985) identifies the importance of shared problem-solving among public and private (including nonprofit) organizations. The author defines collaboration as 1) the sharing of appreciations and/or tangible resources (information, labor, funding), 2) by two or more stakeholders and 3) to solve a set of problems which no one entity can solve on their own. Three phases of effective collaboration are identified: problem-setting, direction-setting and structuring. The problem solving phase involves identifying the appropriate stakeholders, building consensus on who has a stake and mutual expectations and moving towards an appreciation of interdependence and legitimacy among partners. Direction-setting, Gray argues, occurs when a sense of common purpose is developed, information is gathered and shared equally and partners acknowledge worth (i.e., importance) of the other parties involved. Proper "structuring" of collaborations requires clearly defined and designated responsibilities as well as the opportunity for productive negotiations in an environment where expectations are transparent. Gray also finds the presence of a convener and having partners in close geographical proximity can also enhance collaboration.

Building upon this study, subsequent work by Gray and Wood (1991) identifies three critical issues associated with collaboration: the preconditions that make collaboration possible and motivate stakeholder participation, the process through which collaboration occurs and the outcomes of collaboration. The authors emphasize the importance of the following questions in accessing the potential of collaboration: is the group involved in decision-making/goal-setting? How is information collected and shared? How often parties come together? How are power and resources shared? And why ultimately do organizations and municipalities choose collaboration? The authors also stress the need to consider whether there was dissatisfaction with past or existing practices that encouraged partnership.

Within the context of local government and nonprofit collaborations, Gazley and Brudney (2007) explore the question of why these sectors come together to collaborate. The authors find that collaboration creates the ability to address shared problems more effectively. Intersectoral collaboration can increase cost savings, access to new resources and funding diversity. It also fosters shared learning, higher quality, a gain in competitive advantage and a lessening of risk. The authors also hypothesize that the value, opportunities and challenges associated with collaboration will differ by sector. For example, local governments may tout the cost savings and ability to expand services as the greatest benefit of partnership, while nonprofits emphasize working together as a strategic response to uncertainty.

The research, however, is far from complete. While there is a wealth of research on intersectoral collaboration, there is very little research on the implications of collaboration between governments and nonprofits as it applies to the development (as opposed to the implementation) of local sustainability plans. The model of nonprofits serving as administrators of municipal sustainability plans is particularly in need of further study. Through analysis of the

operational aspects of local government-nonprofit relationships, the following chapters explore

not only why municipalities are choosing this model, but the challenges and perceived payoffs

from doing so.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It provides an overview of how cities were selected, interviews were conducted and how content was analyzed to lay the groundwork for the analysis in Chapter Five.

Cities were selected on the basis of five distinct criteria: 1) the municipality must be in the Midwest and be an active member of ICLEI; 2) the municipality must have a comprehensive sustainability plan in place and; 3) a partnership with a nonprofit entity must exist wherein the nonprofit has been actively involved in and responsible for the administration (design, development, and evaluation) of the city's sustainability plan.

Once these criteria were developed, the author used a list of ICLEI-member cities located in the Midwest to identify cities that publicly acknowledged the involvement of a nonprofit organization in the development of their sustainability plan. After this initial research phase, eight potential cities were identified. Further study demonstrated that some of these cities had climate action plans (rather than true sustainability plans) as well as less-formal/developed relationships with nonprofits, which resulted in the list being narrowed to six. This list was then reviewed with staff from ICLEI, who offered recommendations based on staff availability, overall plan quality and other factors. After taking their recommendations into account, the list of communities was reduced to just four.

The term "administration" is used to identify sustainability plans in which 1) specific phases of development of the plan itself, including assessment, planning, design, writing and evaluation have been assigned to a nonprofit; 2) the collaboration between the municipality and nonprofit has been defined and acknowledged in the plan itself, as well as in media and other

publicly-available documents and; 3) the design of the plan mandates the input and involvement

of both municipal and nonprofit actors. Through this approach, the following four cities were

selected: Akron, Ohio; Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois; Elgin, Illinois and; Fairfield, Iowa

(Figure 1). Background information about these communities is provided later in this chapter.

Figure 1: Map of communities included in case-study analysis and the years their sustainability plan was established

Fairfield, Iowa
Established plan in 2009

Akron, Ohio
Established plan in 2009

Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois
Established plan in 2011

Elgin, Illinois
Established plan in 2011
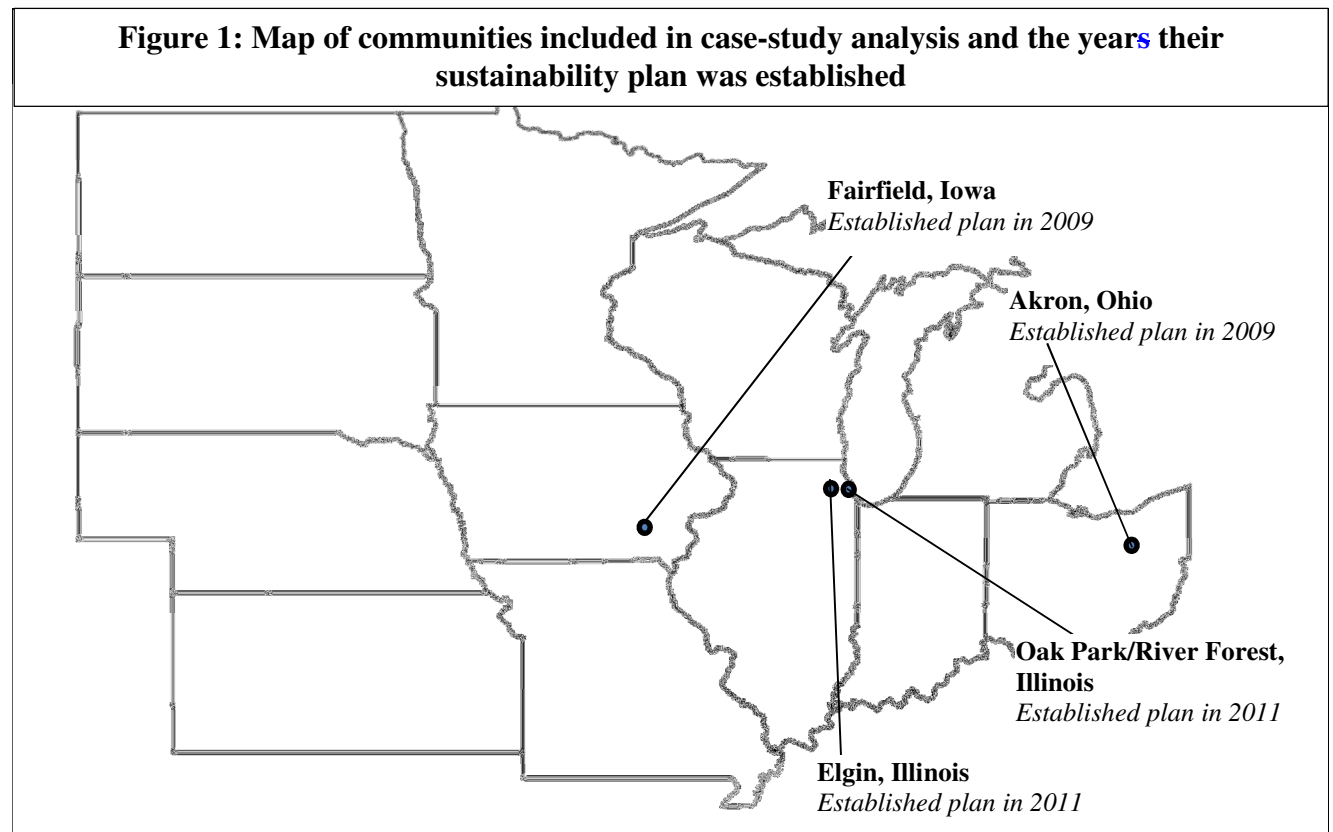
Staff at ICLEI provided assistance in identifying contacts from each city, either from the

municipal or nonprofit side of the collaborative relationship. The researcher contacted each key

individual, requesting their involvement in the study and a referral to someone from the other

side of the relationship (municipal or nonprofit) who would also be appropriate to interview.

Fortunately, every individual that was contacted and asked to participate agreed to participate

and offered at least one referral to another person to interview related to the relationship.

As potential interviewees were identified and contacted, the researcher developed a framework for interview questions based on the key concepts of interorganizational collaboration and collaborative theory. Once this framework was developed, the researcher created specific questions within each subtopic that would provide practical information on the characteristics and structure of the relationship. For additional detail on this theoretical framework and interview topics related to this framework, see Table 4, below. A full list of interview questions is included as Appendix I.

Table 4: Collaborative theories and related interview question topics covered	
Collaborative Theory Concept	*Related Interview Question Topics*
Problem-setting & preconditions	Selection process Mandate, if any, to participate
Direction-setting & guidance	How guidance is given? How are expectations managed? Sharing of information & accountability
Structuring of relationship	How are assignments and changes made? Shared purpose and direction Power-sharing issues Frequency of meeting/coming together
Resource use & implications	What are the cost implications? What are the time implications? Efficiency of resource use/ access to resources
Community visibility & interest	Interaction and involvement of community Public understanding and support Public opinion and credibility Impact on community livability and competitive advantage

As Table 4 demonstrates, interview topics were developed to relate to collaborative theory while also ensuring that the practical aspects of collaboration were also covered.

Questions were also vetted by experts serving as advisors to the study and were reviewed after the first interviews were conducted to ensure that all essential topics were covered.

Altogether, 12 individuals from the municipal, nonprofit and community member-level of involvement in the development of sustainability plans were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in person when possible, as well as over the phone. The researcher travelled to all four cities, two of which were outside of the Chicago-area (Akron, Ohio and Fairfield, Iowa) to meet with staff and attend relevant partner events as possible. Among the meetings and locations visited were Oak Park/River Forest PlanIt Green Committee monthly meeting, the Keep Akron Beautiful offices as well as City of Akron Engineering Department, various events related to Earth Day celebration in Fairfield—including community orchard planting event and other activities organized by the sustainability coordinator and community members, and several site visits to "green projects" and other sites relevant to the city's sustainability plan in Elgin.

All interviews were recorded and reviewed to identify key aspects of the collaboration, highlight trends and code data on the basis of a collaborative theoretical framework (see Appendix II). This coding method was subsequently used to relate the case findings to the key aspects of collaboration, as identified in the literature review. The following table summarizes the dates of site visits related to this study, as well as details of the types of interactions and activities/events observed during site visits.

Table 5: Case cities site visits and types of interactions/observations			
City Visited	*Date of Site Visit*	*Type of interaction/observation*	*# of interviewees*
Akron, Ohio	5/11/2012	Visit to KAB offices and City Hall; performed two in-person interviews on site, as well as two additional phone interviews in June 2012.	4 total
Fairfield, Iowa	4/20/2012-4/21/2012	Observed/attended Earth Day community festivities, including public orchard planting. Performed two in-person interviews, with one additional phone interview in May 2012.	3 total
Elgin, Illinois	1/20/2013	Field visits to green projects in Elgin, including the Riverside Storm Water project and bike paths, geothermal lake at Sherman Hospital and green building at Judson University campus.	2 total
Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois	4/24/2012	Attended PlanIt Green committee meeting. After meeting all interviewees at meeting, performed over the phone interviews.	3 total

Attempts were made to meet interviewees in person and observe planning and implementation efforts in person as available. This table also highlights the variety of activities cities offered to promote their sustainability plans.

After reviewing recorded interviews and writing detailed summaries, the researcher created a coding system to quantify the number of responses that corresponded to relevant aspects of intersectoral collaboration. Coding was based on the key characteristics of partnership as defined by collaborative theory, developed from literature on the topic (see Appendix II). These include the three phases of collaboration: problem-setting, direction-setting and structuring (Gray, 1985), as well as the three critical issues associated with collaboration: the preconditions that make collaboration possible and motivate stakeholder participation, the process through which collaboration occurs and the outcomes of collaboration (Gray & Wood, 1991) and the cost savings and efficiency of resource use that collaboration offers (Gazley &

Brudney, 2007, pp. 399, 402). After developing the coding system, the researcher reviewed

interview notes using this coding framework, and coded themes and phrases from the interviews

that evoked relevant theoretical concepts. Coding allowed the researcher to discern common

themes and practical lessons for other cities. For full detail on coding results, see Appendix II.

Background on case cities

The four cities selected have much in common. All have worked with ICLEI and

developed a formal sustainability plan. Each had involved nonprofit organizations, including

grassroots community organizations, in the design and development of their sustainability plans.

However, the cities differ with respect to their methods of partnering with nonprofits on the

plans' development. They also differ with respect to who is involved in the plan's design, how

direction is given and what opportunities exist for the broader community to be involved.

The following section provides a brief overview of the cities involved in this study, what

processes they utilized in developing a sustainability plan in collaboration with nonprofit

organizations and what is included in their individual municipal sustainability plans:

Akron, Ohio

Akron, Ohio, located in the northeast region of Ohio, is the fifth largest city in the state.

The city had a population of 199,110 at the time of the 2010 census. Between 2000 and 2010,

Akron's population decreased by 8.3 percent, dropping under 200,000 for the first time since

1911. Once considered the rubber capital of the world, Akron was at one point home to

companies such as General Tire, Goodrich, Firestone and Goodyear. Today, Goodyear and

Firestone maintain a presence in the city, with both building LEED certified facilities within the

28

city. As part of the "Rustbelt," Akron has felt the economic and social challenges associated with the loss of industry, jobs and population over the last several decades. In order to attract new businesses and students to the University of Akron, the city has looked for creative ways to reinvent itself. Akron has won numerous awards from the National Civic League and National Arbor Day Foundation due to its economic development and beautification efforts.

In 2007, Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic signed on the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Change agreement, committing to substantial emissions reduction efforts. Rather than charging the city government with planning how this would be achieved, the Mayor called on the local nonprofit organization, Keep Akron Beautiful, to design a sustainability plan for his city. In a letter from Plusquellic that introduced the plan, he stated: "We did not create a new department or add employees to prepare this extensive plan…Instead, we already had a well-established environmentally-friendly organization in place – Keep Akron Beautiful – whom I tasked with the job of spearheading Akron's effort to bring government, residents and the private sector together to plan for the future" (Keep Akron Beautiful, 2009).

Keep Akron Beautiful (KAB), a nonprofit organization founded in 1980 and an affiliate of the national litter cleanup and city beautification organization, Keep America Beautiful since 1987, had a close working relationship with the City, but lacked experience in developing a sustainability plan. Following the Mayor's call to action, Keep Akron Beautiful brought in a private consulting firm, Affinity Consultants, Inc. to provide support to the plan development process. KAB worked closely with ICLEI and utilized a number of techniques from that organization's toolkit for designing a baseline assessment and evaluation measures. Acting upon the Mayor's decree, KAB also brought together a group of citizens keenly-involved in city planning, as well as those committed to environmental protection to develop the plan.

29

The Akron sustainability plan, the "Greenprint for Akron," was published in April 2009. To the plan focuses on the principles of reducing climate change, reducing waste, promoting responsible practices, exercising fiscal prudence, developing a green job economy and encouraging smart growth. Based on this framework, Akron's sustainability plan focuses on the following areas: smart energy, smart water management, smart materials and waste management, smart transit, smart development, smart conservation, smart community education and smart green jobs. For a full list of strategies involved, see Appendix III, Additional Detail on Case Cities' Sustainability Plans.

For additional detail on the characteristics of collaboration related to Akron's sustainability plan development, see Table 6.

	Table 6: Summary of Nonprofit/Municipal Relationship Related to Plan Development: Akron, Ohio
How did planning process & collaboration come about?	Mayor (who was president of U.S. Conference of Mayors at the time) identified sustainability as priority, and called on Keep Akron Beautiful to design sustainability plan for the city. KAB had long-standing relationship with city. City called on internal Service Director to recruit staff from city into the core planning team and hold members (already reporting to Service Director) accountable. Mayor championed/promoted publicly, but then stepped aside.
Structure of relationship	KAB was subcontractor of the City. KAB executive director acts as main convener of group (through planning and implementation), the Green Ribbon Panel, assigning roles and responsibilities to members, keeping them on task/accountable and collecting regular progress reports. Service Director assigns sustainability goals (in addition to budget and operating goals) to all of his staff represented on the Panel.
Description of planning/decision-making group(s)	Green Ribbon Panel, made up of 30 individuals. Core group was originally formed with KAB board members/involved volunteers and those committed to mission; added engineers and staff from city facilities, as well as representatives from local utilities. Group divided into 8 subgroups responsible for coming up with strategies specific to their topic and implementation, as well as gathering success stories, pictures and data to share with KAB.
Key convener of planning group, if applicable:	KAB executive director and City Service Director manage group jointly. Service Director already has working/reporting relationship with majority of city staff on panel and so development and implementation of plan are part of ongoing job responsibilities.
Role of sustainability coordinator, if applicable:	N/A; there is <u>no sustainability coordinator </u>for Akron—city assigns components of plan implementation to city staff, incorporating activities into job responsibilities.
Assessment/evaluation tools:	KAB did baseline assessment/greenhouse gas inventory of Akron using ICLEI software and has since done follow-up survey to measure progress.
Main sources of funding:	KAB is partially funded by City; City paid for subcontract with EECBG funding for plan development. City gave KAB additional funding to support activities related to plan's development. KAB pursues diverse funding sources—foundations, individuals, corporations, and government.
Other key characteristics of relationship/ lessons learned:	KAB and the City have worked over the last five years to make sustainability a part of everyday decision-making for city government. "It has to be practical and save money or they're not going to do it." Long-term strategy has proven to naysayers that this isn't going away. KAB executive director position has dual-reporting structure to both City Service Director and KAB board.
Community involvement	KAB primarily focused on getting buy-in from the local government first, and now that plan is being implemented, has refocused on community engagement, with an emphasis on local business recognition, as well as outreach to schools. Developing an effective strategy to work with residents/residential properties remains a challenge.

Table 6 highlights the fact that organizers incorporated the development and implementation of the sustainability plan into the job responsibilities of the city's staff to encourage buy-in and accountability. The role of the city's mayor in initiating the plan's development is also noteworthy, as is the fact that once KAB agreed to participate, the mayor stepped back and allowed the nonprofit to take the lead—while continuing to cheerlead the project to the public. The fact that KAB was already partially funded by the city is interesting, since it demonstrates the strong existing relationship between the two entities. Although KAB was not explicitly working on sustainability efforts prior to its involvement in the sustainability plan, the organization's history with the city and connections made it a suitable choice.

Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois

The Village of Oak Park, a suburb with a continuous border with Chicago, had a population of 51,878 at the time of the 2010 census. River Forest, its neighbor, had a population of 11,172 at the time. With their proximity to Chicago, access to public transportation, and rich local history (Oak Park was the birthplace of Ernest Hemingway and home to an abundance of Frank Lloyd Wright-designed buildings), Oak Park and River Forest have enjoyed relatively stable, affluent and diverse populations. The communities are also known for their informed and active civic community. River Forest is also home to Dominican and Concordia Universities. The two cities have had a close relationship throughout their histories, and share a high school, a chamber of commerce and a local newspaper. The connection between the two communities also led to the creation of the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation (OPRF Community Foundation), a nonprofit committed to community development across both cities.

In 2008, the OPRF Community Foundation conducted a community visioning process bringing together local businesses, government, non-profit organizations and key individuals as part of a capacity-building grant to support engaged and more livable communities. This project, entitled Community*works,* identified numerous goals for the community and from those identified three key priority areas—Success for All Youth, Leadership Development and Environmental Sustainability. The organization and its advisory board were then tasked with finding a way to actively promote environmental sustainability.

In order to encourage the communities of Oak Park and River Forest to pursue sustainability in a meaningful way, the OPRF Community Foundation's Community*works* advisory board issued a request for proposals and approved the funding of a three-step process. Through this funding, the following steps were implemented:

Phase One (May-December 2010): The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), a Chicago-based nonprofit that promotes livable, sustainable urban communities was funded to develop baseline metrics to measure current community usage levels for the communities.

Phase Two (August-December 2010): Seven Generations Ahead (SGA), an Oak-Park based non-profit organization focused on environmental sustainability in the Midwest, and the Delta Institute, a Chicago-based nonprofit working to promote the green economy in the Great Lakes region, receive funding to create a draft sustainability plan that lays out goals, targets and strategies for each environmental sustainability area building upon CNT's baseline results.

Phase Three (January-June 2011): Led by SGA and the Delta Institute and building upon the first two phases, the plan was finalized, with a focus on securing commitments from the community and building the infrastructure required to implement the plan.

Oak Park/River Forest PlanIt Green Plan

Through an extensive process to collect community input and involve stakeholders, a draft plan was completed and released in June 2011. The PlanItGreen plan was developed with an emphasis on community involvement, environmental stewardship, fiscal responsibility, communication, long-term feasibility and effective implementation. Under the umbrella of these overarching themes, the plan outlines goals and strategies in many areas, including: education, energy, waste, water, community development, transportation, green economic development, open space/ecosystems and food. For additional detail on Oak Park/River Forest's sustainability plan, see Appendix III, Additional Detail on Case Cities' Sustainability Plans.

For additional detail on the characteristics of collaboration related to Oak Park/River Forest's sustainability plan development, see Table 7, below.

Table 7: Summary of Nonprofit/Municipal Relationship Related to Plan Development: Oak Park/River Forest, Illinois	
How did planning process & collaboration come about?	OPRF Community Foundation identified environmental sustainability as a key priority area and provided grant funding for the development and implementation of a community-wide sustainability plan, which Seven Generations Ahead (a nonprofit based on Oak Park) and the Delta Institute received together to oversee the plan.
Structure of relationship	OPRF Community Foundation was involved in creating initial sub-committee, with members adding representatives from community identified as important to include in process. Seven Generations Ahead acts as lead contractor (reporting to OPRF Community Foundation, as a grantee) and oversees PlanItGreen committee efforts.
Description of planning/decision-making group(s)	PlanItGreen committee —comprised of 12-18 representatives of community institutions, groups and interested individuals. Committee developed work plans, approved by Community Foundation, with timeframes and deadlines. Through planning and into implementation, group continues to meet monthly and report quarterly on progress towards goals and adjustments as needed.
Key convener of planning group, if applicable:	Seven Generations Ahead has had long-standing presence in Oak Park, with sustainability at the forefront of its mission. Executive director of SGA had been advocating for years for the Community Foundation to fund the development of a community-wide sustainability plan, and researching models from across the country. SGA manages the PlanItGreen committee and overall project, with Delta Institute providing technical expertise.
Role of sustainability coordinator, if applicable:	There is a sustainability coordinator position for Oak Park; however, this position was created before SGA and the Delta Institute began the process of developing a sustainability plan. The sustainability coordinator is a member of the PlanItGreen committee.
Assessment/evaluation tools:	OPRF Community Foundation contracted the Center for Neighborhood Technology (a nonprofit, based in Chicago with a focus on sustainability) to compile a baseline metrics for the communities.
Main sources of funding:	OPRF Community Foundation funded Seven Generations Ahead and Delta Institute for the first year of plan development, and then renewed funding for implementation. Currently, the OPRF Community Foundation partially supports the implementation of the plan, and SGA pursues additional funding.
Other key characteristics of relationship/ lessons learned:	Plan is unique in that it is the plan for two cities—which also led to the need for a third-party to oversee the design and implementation of the plan. Sense that the broad-support from the community gathered through the plan's development will allow it to continue regardless of political shifts/changes in administrations.
Community involvement	Extensive community involvement in the plan's development. Community survey was administered, with 1,000+ respondents. Community forum was then held with breakout sessions for small groups to develop strategies around different topic areas, coordinated by the PlanItGreen committee. Draft of plan was then presented to community, with key stakeholders/community institutions asked to sign on in support of the plan. Through this process, members of planning committee were identified.

SGA's long-term commitment, presence in the community and history of advocating for sustainability in Oak Park made it a logical partner. Interestingly, Oak Park has a sustainability coordinator who has been involved in the PlanItGreen committee. This position was in place before the sustainability planning process was initiated. This individual has acted as a member of the planning group that SGA oversaw. A tremendous effort was made to gather community input throughout the planning process through surveys, public forums and outreach to get stakeholders to sign on to the plan is also significant.

Fairfield, Iowa

The smallest city included in this study, Fairfield had a population of 9,464 at the time of the 2010 census. The community is surrounded by farmland and home to the Maharishi University of Management, which is considered one of the world's largest training centers for those who practice transcendental meditation. The presence of this unique institution has attracted environmentally-minded entrepreneurs to Fairfield for the last several decades. Among some of the small businesses that call Fairfield home, there is a tofu company, several software firms, a chimney supplies wholesaler, a natural foods grocery store, an oil brokerage and a telecommunications company. The Maharishi University's academic programs include the Institute of Sustainability and a newly-opened Sustainable Living Center. In addition, the nearby Maharishi Vedic City, which started as a subdivision of Fairfield, hosts an annual Eco-fair and claims to have the most solar-powered and green homes in Iowa.

Within this culture of environmental harmony and economic development, Fairfield's Mayor Ed Malloy began talking with interested community business owners and leaders in late 2006 about the potential for creating a sustainability plan for the city that would support and

foster the sustainability culture within Fairfield while creating jobs, wealth and opportunities for investment in the community's buildings, design and infrastructure. The Go-Green Commission, a group of 20 individuals, was appointed by the Mayor in early 2008 to come together as a planning group to develop a sustainability plan and gather support and commitments from different community institutions and groups to implement the plan. This group then worked with the Institute for Decision Making at the University of Northern Iowa, an organization the city had worked with before, to develop a framework and benchmarking process for designing and evaluating the plan.

Fairfield Go-Green Strategic Plan

The Fairfield Go-Green Strategic Plan was completed in November 2008 and implemented in summer 2009 with specific goals and objectives, as well as assignments within the document for clearly-defined lead and secondary implementers of the plan. Within the plan, objectives are outlined addressing the following strategies: energy and emissions, forestry and agriculture, green building, land use, leadership education and outreach, recycling and waste reduction, sustainable water and transportation. For full detail on the Fairfield sustainability plan, see Appendix III, Additional Detail on Case Cities' Sustainability Plans.

For additional detail on the characteristics of collaboration related to Fairfield's sustainability plan development, see Table 8, below:

Table 8: Summary of Nonprofit/Municipal Relationship Related to Plan Development: Fairfield, Iowa	
How did planning process & collaboration come about?	Go-Green Commission was appointed by Mayor; Mayor had been involved in state-wide advisory group for Iowa State University and began discussing sustainability with University Extension staff, with potential to partner/coordinate efforts. Mayor brought together key individuals to form diverse committee to develop community sustainability plan.
Structure of relationship	Mayor tasked commission to develop plan, and then commission contracted the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making to assist with visioning and goal setting for the group. Commission acted on behalf of the city and then stepped aside once the plan was developed to encourage community implementation.
Description of planning/decision-making group(s)	Having worked with the city on its economic development plan previously, Institute for Decision Making assisted in the development of goals, objectives and strategies for commission, on behalf of the city. Commission then reviewed goals and identified what stakeholders/institutions would need to be the primary and secondary leads to accomplish those strategies.
Key convener of planning group, if applicable:	Mayor played primary role as convener of group, and then stepped aside and allowed commission (and community implementers) to manage process.
Role of sustainability coordinator, if applicable:	Sustainability coordinator position created within municipal offices, as part of plan's development, with a dual reporting role to the City and the Iowa State University Extension. City pays 40% of the sustainability coordinators' salary and University paying 60%. S.C. works with University Extension—travelling around state developing training, tools, educational sessions and planning work to offer to other communities and organizations related to developing sustainability plans themselves. University helps to support the coordinator's efforts in Fairfield because it supports their overall strategy across the state.
Assessment/evaluation tools:	Institute for Decision Making managed baseline/inventory process.
Main sources of funding:	City of Fairfield and Iowa State University Extension applied jointly for a grant through the Iowa Office of Energy Independence (no longer in existence) to initially support development of the plan. City and University Extension continue to pursue federal and local government funding, as well as contributions from foundations and individuals. Implementation efforts are largely shaped by what funding is available.
Other key characteristics of relationship/ lessons learned:	City of Fairfield has a contract with Iowa State University, and then sustainability coordinator has a contract with Iowa State—both recently renewed for the next five years.
Community involvement	Commission designed to be representative of the broader community to design the plan; 55 organizations and businesses signed off on the plan. Up until now, community involvement has largely been around workshops and educational offerings. Coordinator has worked on training/tasking community members to serve as local experts related to sustainability. Also, around new energy efficiency project, working to get community members to agree to implement energy saving efforts, and engage them to think about their energy use. Community orchard with volunteers coordinating plantings, and other community events.

As Table 8 demonstrates, there are a number of characteristics in the case of Fairfield that stand out. As in the case of Akron, the mayor of Fairfield played a critical role in raising and legitimizing the case for a sustainability plan, and then once the process began, the mayor stepped aside and allowed the planning entity to manage the process. However, in the case of Fairfield, rather than using an existing nonprofit to lead the planning process, the mayor created a community group to serve as the administrator of the plan. Furthermore, it is also of note that Fairfield collaborated with another nonprofit—the University Extension—to fund the sustainability coordinator position proposed in the plan, and that this diversity of funding expanded the role and reach of the coordinator to work across the state and promote the Fairfield model across the region. This arrangement and dual-funding strategy also potentially protects the sustainability coordinator's position from financial and political threats.

Elgin, Illinois

Located approximately 40 miles northwest of Chicago, Elgin had a population of 108,188 at the time of the 2010 census, making it the eighth-largest city in Illinois. From its beginnings in the 19th century, the city has benefitted from its close proximity to Chicago and border with the Fox River. Attracting industry and residents since the railroad came to the city in 1850; today the city's proximity to O'Hare International Airport and three interchanges on I-90 have led to the continued growth of Elgin, even as other cities in the region lose population. One of the fastest growing cities in Illinois, Elgin's rapid growth has brought with it concerns over traffic, urban sprawl and the capacity of city infrastructure to support its new residents. In the 1990's, Elgin became one of the few cities in Northern Illinois to host a riverboat casino, an initially-controversial decision that has since proven to be a significant income source for the city.

The City Elgin began to plan for the development of a sustainability plan in late 2009, with the city releasing a request for applications for consulting firms and organizations to apply through a competitive process to develop the plan through the three phases that had been outlined by the city council—from visioning, to development of a sustainability action plan, through implementation. With direction from the Elgin Sustainability Steering Committee (comprised of representatives from community working groups), a private consulting firm, AECOM, was awarded the contract to implement phase one of the plan's development. AECOM then contracted the Center for Neighborhood Technology to perform the baseline assessment phase of greenhouse gas emissions and energy use for the city. Following the first phase of the plan, the city decided to implement the next phase themselves, ending its relationship with AECOM and sanctioning the Sustainability Steering Committee to oversee the plan's completion with the input of the community working groups.

Elgin Sustainability Action Plan

The City of Elgin Sustainability Action Plan was adopted in August 2011. The plan laid a framework for the community in the following areas: alternative energy, economic development, green building technology, energy conservation, green infrastructure, healthy living, community education, recycling and waste management, transportation and mobility, urban design and water resources. For additional detail on Elgin's sustainability plan, see Appendix III, Additional Detail on Case Cities' Sustainability Plans.

For additional detail on the characteristics of collaboration related to Elgin's sustainability plan development, see Table 9, below:

Table 9: Summary of Nonprofit/Municipal Relationship Related to Plan Development: Elgin, Illinois

How did planning process & collaboration come about?	City staff were directed by city council to develop sustainability master plan (with community groups pushing for city to do more); issued RFP to hire a contractor to provide technical/professional assistance, and awarded contract to a private consulting firm, AECOM, which sub-contracted with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), a nonprofit based in Chicago with a focus on sustainability.
Structure of relationship	City council created a steering committee to oversee consultant selection and plan development process; from this committee, 9 citizen-based working groups were created (with volunteers from community) to develop everyday strategies to complement consultant's work to develop plan. During phase one, consultant did policy analysis, with CNT performing baseline data collection/analysis. Following this phase, steering committee and working groups took over development of the plan, with city council overseeing process and ending relationship with AECOM.
Description of planning/decision-making group(s)	Steering committee was comprised of city staff, city council members, members of corporate community/chamber of commerce, and representatives from city departments, school district and others. Committee decided on framework of citizen working groups to focus on household strategies related to different focus areas and marketed groups to community to attract working group members.
Key convener of planning group, if applicable:	Management Analyst (on city staff) led planning process—coordinating monthly meetings/assignments, setting deadlines and deliverables for each month.
Role of sustainability coordinator, if applicable, and other staffing:	Lead city staff member was Management Analyst, who works on a variety of projects for the city, including sustainability efforts and grants management. (Note, this position's title has since been changed to Sustainability & Grants Coordinator within the Elgin city government.)
Assessment/evaluation tools:	CNT assisted with transportation and energy emissions inventory, as part of phase one of plan development. CNT did extensive data collection and then presented/discussed findings to steering committee.
Main sources of funding:	City funded initial phase of plan's development through contract with private consultant. After switching to community-based planning strategy, considerable money was saved, as the working groups were comprised of volunteers (including city council and municipal staff members). Into implementation, efforts have been directed by local and federal grant funding as available.
Other key characteristics of relationship/ lessons learned:	City moved from working with a private consultant to a city and volunteer-led plan partly due to the fact that the city decided they would rather have a community-based plan—and were surprised by the level of ownership for the plan community members demonstrated.
Community involvement	City included outreach campaign to community in initial phases of the plan's development to encourage residents to join working groups. Long-term community involvement has led to people looking for ways activities can be part of the plan's implementation—rather than focusing only on the goals included in the original plan.

Table 9 provides details about the municipal/nonprofit collaboration in Elgin—the only case I considered that involved a for-profit consulting firm. Interestingly, it is also the only case where the planning process was dramatically altered amid the development of the plan. In the end community "working groups" and steering committee members who initially merely assisted the for-profit consultants ended up shepherding the plan to completion. These aspects of the Elgin case suggest that in cities with an active civic community, residents will want to—and perhaps demand—to be involved. It also highlights the significant financial incentives that exist for cities to use community groups and nonprofits rather than for-profit consulting firms.

These above paragraphs provide context on the cities included in this study, and demonstrate the tremendous variety within these four cases. The following chapter explores the theoretical implications and practical lessons related to the key stages and characteristics of collaboration.

Chapter Five: Content Analysis

This chapter includes theoretical analysis and practical lessons discerned from interview data. The researcher conducted content analysis exploring the stages in which collaborative relationships were developed and identifies the issues and concepts that emerged most often during interviews. By doing so, and considering the results against the backdrop of theories of collaboration, the analysis seeks to identify important issues that affect the development, evolution and performance of municipal/nonprofit partnerships. The chapter concludes with practical lessons drawn from the key elements of each case specific to sustainability plan development.

Content Analysis Area I: Preconditions of partnership & selection process

The first area of content analysis relates to partnership arrangements and the partnership-selection process. As noted earlier this report, a wide body of theory suggests that collaboration increases in times of crises and when the problems faced are too great for any single entity to solve (Aldrich, 1976, as cited in Gray, 1985, p. 912). This area also encompasses the motivations that drive entities to participate.

Content Analysis

The interviewees made frequent reference to critical issues encountered in this area while also drawing attention to the preconditions that make collaboration possible and the process of selecting partners. Not surprisingly, interviewees emphasized the importance of a clear financial and strategic benefit to working together to develop a sustainability plan.

Respondents frequently mentioned that collaborative efforts can achieve results no individual organization can (18 responses), that it requires organizations to put aside their private interests (17) and that partners need to spring specific skills to the table (17). The results also point to the importance of a mandate from the government—in this case, the support/mandate from local government leadership in the form of the cities' mayors, in legitimizing the process.

Table 10: **Content Analysis Area 1:** **High frequency concepts of collaboration, related to preconditions**	
Collaborative theory concept	*# of times referenced*
Collaboration as a phenomenon to achieve desired ends that no single organization can achieve independently*	18
For collaboration to occur, involved stakeholders must see it as serving their own interests*	17
The parties involved in the collaboration possess the resources and skills sufficient to justify their involvement**	17
Successful collaboration requires the involvement of many and diverse stakeholders**	16
Parties are motivated by an expectation that they will gain a strategic advantage by collaborating***	15
There is a shared perception of legitimacy among partners, shaped by experience working together, a history of collaboration, or existing power relations between parties**	14
Collaboration is possible and successful when stakeholders see that they will derive benefit*	12
Partners are mutually motivated to participate by a shared belief that the benefits of their endeavors exceed the costs**	11
A mandate from the government or from leadership within government may serve to legitimize the collaborative relationship**, *	10

* Concept referenced from Wood & Gray, 1991
** Concept referenced from Gray, 1985
*** Concept referenced from Gray & Wood, 1991

The results also show that concepts related to organization "power relations" (14 responses) and issues of political legitimacy (10) are important. While the use of political pressure and access to funding is not surprising, it is interesting that the cases where these

characteristics were present were those in which the mandate for collaboration came from the city's mayor. Furthermore, in Akron, Ohio, where development of a sustainability plan had been integrated in the job responsibilities of city staff, interviewees expressed a sense of pressure to participate more than interviewees from other cities. While interviewees in all cities noted that developing a sustainability plan collaboratively gave them to access new resources and improved efficiency, many also commented on the pressure they felt to participate from the leader mandating the effort – and the negative consequences that would result from failure to participate. For instance, in Akron interviewees suggested that some municipal staff involved in sustainability planning did not necessarily see the value in these efforts, but because it was part of their job responsibilities—and they would get reprimanded by their boss if they didn't participate—they were obligated to be involved. In cases where a nonprofit initiated/mandated the plan's development, there did not appear to be this sense of coercion. However, this pressure is not necessarily negative, since it potentially leads to a greater level of compliance with the plan.

Other concepts evoked far less frequent responses but are nonetheless important (Table 11). These issues center on such things as the fear of losing resources by not collaborating (4 responses) and the motivating factor of shared purpose (9). These results shed light on some of the subtle dynamics that make it imperative for organizations to constantly make adjustments if they are to be successful.

Table 11:

Content Analysis Area 1:

Low frequency concepts of collaboration, related to preconditions

(but still deemed significant to study)

Collaborative theory concept	*# of times referenced*
Collaboration is more likely to occur when there is a high degree of recognized interdependence among stakeholders**	9
Stakeholders are motivated to collaborate by a shared purpose to achieve a common goal***	9
Partners collaborate in order to gain control and/or reduce certainty in accessing critical resources*	7
Sharing at least one common interest motivates partners to participate***	6
Government control of resources can serve to encourage stakeholders to participate that might not otherwise	5
Collaboration can be held together by participants' fear of what they might lose from not participating, as well as expectations of gaining something by partnering*	4
Stakeholders are selected to participate through a careful selection process**	4

* Concept referenced from Wood & Gray, 1991
** Concept referenced from Gray, 1985
*** Concept referenced from Gray & Wood, 1991

Practical Lessons for Cities

The cases evaluated suggest that a variety of conditions can spur collaboration between local governments and nonprofits in sustainability planning. While the types of nonprofits involved in the process were of varying age and sophistication, all of the organizations involved in collaborative strategies had a history of working with the partner city in some context. Building upon these concepts, the following practical lessons were identified related to the preconditions for collaboration and selection process used to identify partners.

Finding 1.1: The impetus to collaborate can come from either the nonprofit or public sectors. In Akron and Fairfield, the mayors were the catalyst for development of the sustainability plans' development, in Oak Park/River Forest, the call came from the OPRF Community Foundation; in Elgin, it was the city council, with pressure from citizen groups. In

all cases, there were clear benefits to working with nonprofits—interviewees referenced the nonprofit sector as "steeped in an ethos of collaboration" and cited the "reputation," "experience" and "commitment" of their nonprofit partners—but the support of local governments was also invaluable. The content analysis, however, did not suggest that a particular type of entity or organization was best suited make the call for sustainability; what appears most important is that efforts be initiated by an entity with the authority, community support and political will to bring people together.

Finding 1.2: Regardless of how the collaboration is initiated, a city's mayor/leadership has a critical role to play. In Akron and Fairfield, it was the mayors that called for the development of each city's sustainability plans. Interviewees from these cities pointed to the mayors' critical roles in sanctioning and timing, as well as acting as "cheerleader" for the initiatives through press conferences, websites, local news outlets and public functions. In Elgin, the city council championed the development of a plan, while in Oak Park/River Forest, although it was the Community Foundation that formerly set up a planning process, interviewees noted that the leadership from Seven Generations Ahead had been advocating for a sustainability plan to the city for years. It is clear that, regardless of the level of involvement, the backing of local government leadership, as well as their support of the intersectoral collaboration, offers a legitimacy and priority for these projects.

Finding 1.3: It is not necessary for the nonprofit involved in collaboration to have an explicit mission related to "sustainability." In the case of Oak Park/River Forest, both nonprofit partners have missions explicitly focused on sustainability; similarly, in the case of Elgin, while the lead convener at the beginning of the planning process was a for-profit consultant, that entity partnered with the Center for Neighborhood Technology—an organization committed to

sustainability. However, in the case of Akron, Keep Akron Beautiful, a nonprofit committed to recycling, liter reduction and beautification efforts—but with no mention of sustainability in its mission was tasked by the mayor to develop a sustainability plan. This variation in mission among nonprofit partners highlights the fact that it is more important to work with a nonprofit that has a strong reputation within the community. Furthermore, interviewees cited positive experiences of working together in the past as one of the main reasons they selected the nonprofit to partner with on developing the plan. Interviewees highlighted a "feeling of trust" when they were able to build on past collaboration, as well as the sense that "Past successes tell us that we can work together well—so when challenges are faced, they don't become insurmountable."

Finding 1.4: Sustainability is widely regarded as "good business" for cities. It is a tool for reducing costs and attracting customers. Interviewees across cities and sectors noted that sustainability first and foremost is about saving money—but it also is about staying current, pursuing cutting-edge projects and shaping the city's efforts based on community demand. As one interviewee said, "Just like a business, cities need to reduce costs and attract customers—encouraging residents and businesses to come or stay here." What is essential is that each city pursues sustainability and works with partners in a way that builds upon the unique strengths and characteristics of their community.

Content Analysis Area 2: Direction-setting & Guidance

The second area of content analysis explores issues of strategic direction and guidance provide to nonprofits. Collaborative theory suggests that the direction-setting phase of partnership is essential to working together. During this phase, diverse stakeholders come together, share their individual values and approaches and begin to develop a sense of common

purpose to achieve that which they cannot alone (Gray, 1985, p. 917). The content analysis conducted in this area explores the extent to which "direction setting" in early phases was critical to long-term success. The analysis also explores how diverse groups developed a shared sense of purpose and how changes in direction were brought up and addressed.

Content Analysis

The comments of respondents were far less consistent in this area than the previous one in part because of the dramatic differences in the strategic approaches they employ (Table 2). Almost all interviewees (18 respondents) noted that experts were an essential component of collaboration. Various types of "experts" were referenced during interviews, including technical experts and nonprofits brought in specifically for their technical expertise, as well as experts in the fields of environmental issues, developing measureable goals and outcomes and others.

Table 12: Content Analysis Area 2: High and low frequency concepts of collaboration, related to direction-setting	
Collaborative theory concept	*# of times referenced*
The inclusion of experts is critical to successful collaboration**	23
The authority that has brought together collaboration gives ongoing direction throughout the process**	8
Stakeholders are able to make continual adaptations to collaboration**	8
Partners amass multiple parties and sources of information to identify problems and solutions**	8
Coincidence in values among stakeholders helps to facilitate direction-setting**	7
Collaboration begins with an extensive search process, wherein stakeholders bring together multiple parties and sources of information, review information and identify problems and potential solutions**	6
Within the collaboration, stakeholders retain independent decision-making powers while agreeing to abide by shared rules within the alliance*	4
Stakeholders are able to make changes through group conversations and debates*	3

* Concept referenced from Wood & Gray, 1991
** Concept referenced from Gray, 1985
*** Concept referenced from Gray & Wood, 1991

There was less clustering in responses in other areas than in those in the previous section. As mentioned, the concept of including various kinds of experts was referenced often (23 responses), with the second most frequently referenced concept related to authority only being referenced 8 times. The issues of how easily changes can be made (8 responses) and the process by which information is gathered (8 responses) were also referenced. Also of note, many interviewees identified that the local government or funding agency gave direction to the planning group throughout the process, rather than providing direction early on and then allowing the nonprofit and/or planning group to manage itself. While many interviewees noted that the nonprofits involved in the partnership were given the authority to make and monitor assignments, as well as to act as the main convener of the planning groups/entities, comparatively few (4) mentioned that is was important that they regain independence. In the case of Akron, Fairfield and Elgin that authority was the mayor and/or city council, whereas in Oak Park/River Forest, where the initial convener had been the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation, the Foundation continued to be involved in the direction of the planning group—both as a grantor to the project and member of the PlanItGreen Committee.

Practical Lessons for Cities

The direction setting processes identified in the cases included in this study also highlight the strengths that each sector brings to the process, as well as the importance of collaboration to the concept of sustainability itself. The following lessons for cities were identified across cases.

Finding 2.1: It is important to include the "right people," even if (or especially if) they aren't predisposed to look at problems from an environmental perspective. Interviewees in Fairfield and Akron noted the importance of including environmentally-minded "true believers,"

as well as those who might not initially understand the importance of sustainability, but who were in positions of power and would help create a diverse group that was representative of the community—so as to give credibility to the initiative and make sure people take it seriously. In Oak Park/River Forest and Elgin, interviewees also highlighted the importance of including representatives of the community entities that would be critical to implementation. Interviewees also stressed the importance of involving a broad base of constituencies to learn about sustainability, share best practices and openly ask questions about the process to create a shared sense of purpose.

Finding 2.2: Metrics are essential to provide a yardstick to measure improvements. All of the nonprofits involved in the planning processes utilized the skills of other nonprofits related to developing baseline metrics and emission inventories. In Akron, the city engineers did a baseline assessment of aggregate utility usage data, transportation patterns, county waste data and energy usage by building type using ICLEI's software. In Elgin, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) performed an analysis of energy use and inventory of transportation emissions while also considering stakeholder engagement and assessment tool development. In Oak Park/River Forest, CNT and the Delta Institute provided technical expertise in partnership with Seven Generations Ahead on matters related to local energy consumption, municipal facility energy use, transportation (vehicle miles traveled), solid waste creation, water use and overall emissions. In Fairfield, the planning group worked with ICLEI to develop a local energy audit, a system to track waste streams, an inventory of local green jobs and other baseline metrics, while also working with the University of Iowa's Institute for Decision Making to develop goals and a timeline for the group. This emphasis on measurement across cases highlights the importance of developing baseline metrics and a mechanism for measuring.

Finding 2.3: Localities must find their own ways to navigate the politics of sustainability. Interviewees highlighted a variety of political challenges related to developing a plan. In Akron, some of KAB's more conservative funders stopped giving to the organization because they didn't agree with the plan or support the concept of sustainability; in Fairfield, after the city partnered with the University Extension to lessen the negative perception of sustainability among more conservative residents, some liberal community members voiced their sense that the University's focus on big-agriculture went against sustainability. The lesson here is that these efforts will likely be perceived negatively by someone, and so it is important to have the political-will and long-term vision to see these things through. Interviewees across cities pointed to the fact that these issues often slow down or go dormant during election seasons—but an effective political leader can push these efforts along without causing too much public outcry.

Finding 2.4: Cities are already pursuing sustainability in pieces—but having a plan brings a sense of focus and legitimacy to their efforts. Several interviewees pointed out that having a plan in place helped to "legitimize" sustainability in their communities. Interviewees cited the "need to create enough officialness," "creating something bigger than one organization" and the ability of a plan to "formalize, [let us] get our hands around sustainability and give it more focus." This legitimization also appeared to lead to more funding opportunities as well. Interviewees also cited the importance of building some early wins into the plan that were financially beneficial, politically possible and publicly visible that the community could support and be proud of—both as a way to make the efforts more popular, as well as to provide encouragement to those involved in the planning process.

Content Analysis Area 3: Structure of Relationship

According to collaborative theory, the structuring of collaborative groups formalizes the efforts of the entity, thereby legitimizing the relationship. This phase also helps to ensure that the direction that partners developed during the direction-setting phase is continually followed and that roles and responsibilities are well-defined (Gray, 1985, p. 928). These new structures allow for stakeholders to hold each other accountable, but they also serve to demonstrate to outsiders that a change has occurred (Gray, 1985, p. 930). Theory also suggests that effective structure allows for stakeholders to negotiate with each other and make changes throughout the process (Gray & Wood, 1991, p. 930).

Collaborative theory emphasizes the critical role of a convener in the establishment, legitimization and overall guidance of collaboration (Wood & Gray, 1991). A convener that brings stakeholders together and pushes efforts forward is critical to a successful collaboration. Regardless of whether the convener is a private, public or nonprofit actor, he or she must be given authority to oversee the effort. Stakeholders must also believe in the authority of this individual. It is also of note that the authority does not necessarily need to come from a mayor or local government leader. The authority can come from a person's reputation or long-standing relationships with community members, although the backing of the local government and community is, of course, helpful. Related to the practical implications of structure, theory also suggests that collaboration is positively enhanced by the physical coming together of partners (Schermerhorn, 1975, as cited in Gray, 1985, p. 930), highlighting the importance of working with community partners and having stakeholders meet often and in person.

Within the context this study, the researcher aimed to highlight and explore the different collaborative structures that each city adopted with an emphasis on the role of convener, as well

as to examine stakeholders' ability to ask questions and make changes, and identify the presence of power issues, if any.

Content Analysis

Respondents had a great deal of insight to share about the role of the convener as well as other aspects of the structure of the collaborative relationship related to sustainability plan development. The following aspects of collaborative theory were referenced in particularly significant ways during the interviews.

Table 13: Content Analysis Area 3: High frequency concepts of collaboration, related to structure	
Collaborative theory concept	*# of times referenced*
Convener may process formal or informal authority based on position, influence among informal networks, and/or credibility among stakeholders*	20
Stakeholders believe the convener has the authority to organize and take on their role**	15
Creation of new structures related to the collaboration serve to legitimize a shift in power**	13
A formal structure with designated roles ensures that an agreed-upon direction is pursued**	12
Process of developing shared responsibility can cause stakeholders to put pressure on those not participating—thereby creating a new social norm*	10
The role of the convener is critical to the setting and monitoring of assignments**	10

* Wood & Gray, 1991
** Gray, 1985
*** Gray & Wood, 1991

In addition, the following table highlights the concepts related to collaborative theory were also referenced during interviews and deemed of note, though less often:

Table 14:

Content Analysis Area 3:

Low frequency concepts of collaboration, related to structure

Collaborative theory concept	# of times referenced
Convener is <u>a natural authority</u> in community that appeals to stakeholders, such as a funding agency, government office or other powerful entity**	9
Process of collaborating involves institutionalizing some form of structure***	9
Free exchange of information builds joint appreciation and enables increased understanding of problem***	8
Cultural norms support collaboration**	7
Collaboration involves a strong convener** from nonprofit sector	7
Collaboration involves a strong convener** from public sector	6
The nonprofit involved in the collaboration is given the authority to make assignments and manage them for follow-through**	6
Convener is seen as fair and trustworthy, so stakeholders trust authority will be balanced*	6
There is sufficient distribution of power so that all partners can influence direction**	5
With high-levels of conflict among stakeholders, a neutral third-party may be selected as convener**	4
Physical proximity facilitates interdependence**	3
Collaboration involves a strong convener from both the local government and nonprofit sector**	2

* Wood & Gray, 1991
** Gray, 1985
*** Gray & Wood, 1991

The theoretical concepts included in Tables 13-14 highlight the importance of the convener possessing some type of authority (through the government or through a positive-reputation in the community) in order to bring stakeholders together and organize them towards a shared goal. A significant number of respondents referenced the importance of the lead convener possessing the authority—either formal or informal—to justify their involvement (20 responses). They also suggest that creating a structure to the collaboration (as we see in the creation of different formal committees, panels and commissions) serves to make the effort more legitimate (15 responses).

Of particular interest are comments on the role of convener and the justification for that position to be held by an individual from the nonprofit (7 responses) or local government sector

(6 responses), or jointly by representatives of both sectors (2 responses). Indeed, across the cases considered, there is significant variation in who acts as lead convener. For instance, in Oak Park/River Forest, a nonprofit acted as lead convener, while in the case of Elgin, the local government (through the role of the Management Analyst) acted as lead convener. Furthermore, local government and nonprofits jointly convened in Akron (with leadership from Keep Akron Beautiful and the city Service Director working together) as well as in the case of Fairfield (where the local government created a community group to develop the plan and collaborated with a nonprofit University to fund the sustainability coordinator position). These configurations in who takes the role of convener illustrate that one sector is not necessarily better suited to act as convener than the other. It instead appears that it is of greater importance to appoint a convener with the authority to bring stakeholders together (9 responses) that best suits the unique needs and identity of the community.

Table 14 also highlights issues of conflict within collaboration. While conflict was not frequently mentioned (4 responses), interviewees in Oak Park/River Forest did mention that developing a plan for two cities did appear to create the necessity of a third-party to act as convener. It is also noteworthy that there was minimal mention of any issues related to power sharing between stakeholders across all of the cases included in the study.

Practical lessons for Cities

A variety of themes related to the personality characteristics of the lead convener, how often partners came together and the sharing of information were echoed among the respondents.

Finding 3.1: The convener needs to be persistent and relatively demanding to be successful. As mentioned earlier, the role of convener was played by many different entities in

each city: in Akron, it was the KAB executive director together with the city's service director; in Fairfield, it was the Go Green Commission with support from the Institute for Decision Making; in the case of Oak Park/River Forest, the executive director of Seven Generations Ahead convened the planning group and; in Elgin, it was the Management Analyst on the city staff. One common theme that emerged across these different structures was that 1-2 community leaders tended to take on the role of convener and these individuals all had strong personalities. Interviewees cited the following personality traits of conveners: "on time, very organized and directive;" "a big personality;" "they knew she meant it and she wasn't going away;" "a take charge kind of guy;" "the one tracking the heartbeat [of the plan] and" 'his experience and relationships made him a natural fit." It is also noteworthy that while these conveners were seen as having the "right personality" to lead the process; they were also seen as trustworthy and possessing the authority and credibility needed to justify their role as a leader.

Staff from the municipal and nonprofit partners also highlighted the importance of regular meetings during the planning process—at least monthly and often more often. These meetings offered a chance for the convener to assign tasks to group members and assess their progress on a regular basis, as well as encouraging a shared sense of purpose within the group.

Finding 3.2: A city does not necessarily need a sustainability coordinator—as long as those responsible for planning and implementation are defined and held accountable. Again, there is significant variation among case cities in terms of the role, if any, of a sustainability coordinator. In Akron, there was no sustainability coordinator and involvement in the planning process was incorporated into the job responsibilities of city staff under the direction of the Service Director and with oversight from KAB. In OPRF, there was a sustainability coordinator within the Oak Park village government, but that position was in place before the sustainability

planning process began and was involved as one of many on the PlanItGreen Committee. In Fairfield, a sustainability coordinator position was created as part of the plan, responsible for plan implementation and with a dual reporting structure to both the city and the University Extension. In Elgin, it was the Management Analyst on the city staff that was assigned to the plan's development and implementation (that position has since been changed to Sustainability and Grants Coordinator).

These variations suggest that while a sustainability coordinator certainly is well-suited to coordinate the planning process, a different position could also play this role—provided they are given the authority and support to do so. It also suggests that cities are looking more to incorporating these responsibilities into existing positions, perhaps to reduce financial vulnerability and political controversy these positions may carry.

Finding 3.3: Sustainability needs to be institutionalized, so that it becomes "business as usual". Several interviewees cited the importance of formalizing and legitimizing sustainability in the long-term, so that it a "lens of sustainability" is created and it becomes the way business is done from a municipal perspective. Related to negative perceptions of sustainability, interviewees also noted this institutionalization of sustainability was a way to show citizens that pursuing sustainability is not a fad and that it is valued by the local government.

Content Analysis Area 4: Resource Use & Implications

The fourth area of content analysis was the use of resources and the implications that resources have on the success of plans. Collaborative theory suggests that organizations can collaborate to secure additional resources and foster a competitive advantage (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 156), as well as to improve the efficiency of resource use (Wood & Gray, 1991, p.157).

Collaboration has the potential to offer partners cost savings and quality improvement (Gazley & Brudney, 2007, p. 396). Theory also suggests that while collaboration can offer access to additional resources, these resources often come from new and ever-changing sources—bringing with them more complexity and potential turbulence (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 156). Within the context of this study, it was of interest to explore what effect, if any, working with a nonprofit (rather than developing the plan within city government or hiring a private consultant) had on the cost and time implications of developing sustainability plans for cities, as well as what the benefits and challenges were for nonprofits in participating in this process.

Content Analysis

    While collaborative theory offers little explicit guidance on issues of the cost and time implications of collaborative relationships, interviewees felt a great deal of pressure to constantly reassess the ways they use their limited resources. Building upon this issue of resource use, the following concepts were cited more frequently.

Table 15:

Content Analysis Area 4:

High and low frequency concepts of collaboration, related to resource use

Collaborative theory concept	# of times referenced
Collaboration is motivated by the need to maximize efficiency and reduce costs***	15
Collaboration leads to access to new resources*	10
Collaboration saves money from the municipal perspective***	7
Collaboration can help improve the efficiency of resource use*	6
Collaboration can take more time (as a resource) than working alone***	4
Collaboration can take more time at first, but save time in the long-run***	2
Access to resources encourages participation*	2
Collaboration can increase transaction costs by introducing new relationships and tasks*	2
Collaboration can both save money and cost more***	2

* Wood & Gray, 1991
** Gray, 1985
*** Gray & Wood, 1991

As Table 15 demonstrates, the pursuit of sustainability is critically linked to decreasing costs and increasing efficiency of resource use (15 responses). Furthermore, interviewees emphasized the fact that pursuing sustainability and doing so in a collaborative way allowed both municipalities and nonprofits to access new resources (10 responses). Interviewees from both sectors also highlighted that collaborating with another sector allowed partners to benefit from the resources that each sector had unique access to—such as federal funding for cities and private foundation funding for nonprofits.

There was less consensus among interviewees about the benefits and costs of collaboration with respect to cost and time. While from the municipal perspective, the majority of interviewees noted that collaborating saved money (7 responses); from the nonprofit perspective many of the interviewees felt that the collaboration had cost more money and time than originally estimated. Despite this, these interviewees still felt the efforts had been

worthwhile—because they had been integral to the mission of their organizations. Several interviewees also noted that collaborating took more time than developing the sustainability plan in-house or through a private consultant (4 responses), but that taking this time during the development phase saved time in the long-run (2 responses). By taking more time at the beginning, the public was more involved and aware of the plan and the stakeholders needed to implement the plan were already on board, which saved time in the long-run and made the plan more successful overall.

Practical lessons for cities

A salient lesson from the interviews is that, it from a municipal perspective, collaboration is first and foremost about saving money. Furthermore, this is an area where nonprofits once again bring a critical set of skills to the relationship, since their commitment to mission and experience pursuing creative funding strategies offer cities a real benefit. The following lessons for cities are also deemed of note:

Finding 4.1: Having a sustainability plan opens up new funding sources and working collaboratively increases the variety of sources that can be pursued. Interviewees noted that the development of a sustainability plan enabled cities to pursue additional funding sources and that partnering with nonprofits also provided access to new resources—because as partners, both nonprofits and municipalities were able to benefit from the funding sources of each other (sources they would not be able to access on their own).

Interviewees from Akron noted the critical impact of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program as a stimulus to get cities moving towards sustainability—and given the current political realities, they voiced concern over what will happen as that

funding is phased out. However, all of the cities included in the study rely on grant funding from a variety of sources and interviewees emphasized the importance of outside funding and the influence of funding opportunities on how sustainability is pursued.

Finding 4.2: However you plan, sustainability will be pursued in terms of where the money is and what efforts will save money—there has to be a financial benefit, or it won't get done. All interviewees highlighted the importance of sustainability as a way to save money, and as one interviewees said, "If it doesn't save money, it won't be pursued." Another noted: "All the things that come out of the plan have saved the city money—and they wouldn't have been done if they weren't saving—it's always a double decision." According to another interviewee, "We work to emphasis money saved, money earned, quality of life improved." Not surprisingly, sustainability must be synonymous with cost savings

Finding 4.3: Working collaboratively may take more time, but the inclusion of experts and gathering of stakeholder input saves time in the long-run. While interviewees noted that access to the existing relationships that nonprofits often have saves time in terms of getting stakeholders to participate (including residents, local businesses, organizations and institutions, as well as others) the majority of interviewees suggested that involving a diverse group of stakeholders in the development phase takes more time than it would if a city were to create a plan alone. Nevertheless, following this approach saves time in the long run, because the community already supports the plan and so it can be put into action faster during implementation. As one interviewee noted, "It's more time consuming because you're engaging the community…but that pays for itself in terms of buy-in and enthusiasm [in implementation.]" Another interviewee highlighted, when staff have questioned the choice to involve so many

people in the process, "The job would have been harder without all that coming together—it might have been quicker, but it would not have been as real."

As one interviewee from the nonprofit sector noted, "This model [of cities working with nonprofits] is so much healthier than the city-generated plan that doesn't have the broad support and doesn't last beyond the administration that made it. This is really long-term stuff, and it needs to be housed somewhere what that can happen."

Finding 4.4: There is a definite cost savings for cities in utilizing nonprofits in the development of their sustainability plans. Municipal interviewees were unanimous in their opinion that working with a nonprofit on the plans' development saved money for the city; for nonprofits, taking on a role in developing sustainability plans required significant resources from their perspective—but the efforts were essential to their mission and role within the community.

Content Analysis Area 5: Community Visibility & Interest

Collaborative theory proposes that successful partnerships must be framed in a way that links the self-interests of stakeholders to the broader interests of the community (Gray & Wood, 1991, p. 14). Furthermore, intersectoral collaborative research suggests that from the municipal perspective, collaborating with a nonprofit has the potential to increase citizen satisfaction and trust in the local government (Gazley & Brudney, 2007, p. 392). For the purpose of this study, the researcher explored what impact, if any, working collaboratively had on citizens' awareness, opinion and/or involvement in the sustainability planning process. Given that there is little specific reference to community involvement or interest within collaborative theory, there were a limited number of theoretical concepts with which to analyze interview data. However, the following issues were deemed relevant and noteworthy.

Content Analysis

The implications of successful intersectoral collaboration suggest a positive effect on how the public views these efforts. Related to the community-implications of collaboration, the following theoretical concepts were identified during interviews:

Table 16:	
Content Analysis Area 5:	
High and low frequency concepts of collaboration, related to visibility & interest	
Collaborative theory concept	*# of times referenced*
Linking self-interest with community interest is essential to collaboration***	23
Collaboration over time supports a shift in culture** and creates a lens of sustainability that shapes initiatives moving forward	9

* Wood & Gray, 1991
** Gray, 1985
*** Gray & Wood, 1991

As Table 16 demonstrates, interviewees emphasized the importance of developing a sustainability plan that was created with the interests and demands of the broader community in mind. Overwhelmingly, respondents highlighted the importance of connecting citizens' self-interests with the overall needs and goals of the community related to sustainability (23 responses). Interviewees suggested that making sure stakeholders felt that the planning process and plan itself was going to benefit them was essential to the success of these efforts. Interestingly, interviewees also emphasized that having a plan in place, which served to formalize the sustainability projects that were often already beginning to happen—helped to create a "lens of sustainability" that impacted decision-making on multiple levels within the community (9 responses). This seemed critical to the long-term success and longevity of pursing

sustainability—perhaps even more important than achieving specific goals from the plans themselves.

Practical Lessons for Cities

The interviews underscored the many ways that "buy-in" and involvement from community residents can affect a plan's success. However, there was little agreement about when community involvement and input should be encouraged—with some cities involving community members from the very beginning and others not calling for citizen action until the plan's later stages. Regardless, it is clear across cases that community involvement and interest are critical to a sustainability plan's success. Specifically, the following practical lessons for cities were identified:

Finding 5.1: Addressing sustainability at the municipal and for-profit levels is more straightforward than at the residential level—but reaching households, though challenging, is essential. While many of the case cities focused initial implementation efforts on upgrades and energy efficiency programs for city facilities and public infrastructure, the majority of interviewees identified the continuing challenge of reaching households. Residential properties also generate the most greenhouse gas and are often comprised of an older, less energy efficient stock. Interviewees noted that it is essential to find an effective and money-saving strategy to get residential properties to participate in energy saving and retrofitting programs.

Finding 5.2: Sustainability from a municipal perspective must first and foremost be about saving money—but it is also a critical tool in increasing the livability of cities, thereby attracting residents. Interviewees noted the critical importance of ensuring that sustainability saves money from a municipal perspective, but they also suggested that these efforts are also about improving

65

the quality of life for residents. Interviewees cited "cool, unique projects" and the ability of sustainability as a way for cities "to stand out from other cities." As another interviewee commented, in addition to promoting the financial benefit of sustainability the planning groups were tasked to demonstrate the "quality of life improved" of projects.

Finding 5.3: Numerous outlets for community involvement should be cultivated to facilitate citizen "buy in" and reach diverse groups. While not all cities included in the study encouraged community input during the planning phase of the sustainability plan, those that did offered a variety of ways for citizens to get involved. In OPRF, the planning group administered a community survey, held public forums, met with congregations and other community groups and then organized municipal staff and community events to present the completed plan. In Elgin, the city made a call out to the community for volunteers to create the plan's working groups—an effort to collect community input that was so successful that these working groups ultimately took over the development of the plan. Even in cities that did not gather broad community input from the beginning, organizers did bring together planning committees (usually comprised of local residents) that they felt could speak on behalf of all stakeholders.

In Akron, community involvement in the plan was not promoted until the implementation phase of the plan, with staff noting "We felt we couldn't tell other entities that they needed to do it until the city did it themselves." Similarly, in Fairfield, the plan was not rolled out to the broader community until it was completed; as one interviewee said, "[As far as community involvement, there was] nothing until the plan was ready to go. You don't plant a seed and then dig it up every day to see how it is growing—you just plant it." However, in both OPRF and Elgin, there was significant community involvement and input before the plans' development even began, and this strategy was deemed essential to the plan's success. This variation in when

66

and how the broader community becomes involved highlights the complexity of this issue. Interviewees also highlighted the continuing challenge in getting lower income and more diverse populations aware and involved in the plans.

In addition, interviewees highlighted the importance of developing a community involvement strategy that was unique to their particular city. In some places where planners identified potential pushback or delays from the broader community in developing a plan, a decision was made to wait to involve residents until the plan was completed. In other cities with extensive citizen activism, planners knew it was critical to facilitate public involvement from the beginning. This variation highlights the importance of citizen involvement strategies being developed within the context of the community.

Finding 5.4: Citizens may not know all the details of a sustainability plan, but just having a plan can offer a "spark" to get residents thinking about incorporating sustainability into their lives. Several interviewees noted the importance of developing sustainability plans as a way of creating a "lens of sustainability" that influences decision-making on a community-wide scale. Interviewees also highlighted that having a plan does not necessarily mean that only the action steps included in the plan are implemented—but that having a plan allows citizens to think about how they could be doing things sustainably, thereby changing the culture.

Interviewees also stressed the fact that community members' time is precious, and many simply aren't comfortable making large commitment that makes them feel pressured to participate. In OPRF, planners identified the importance of holding one-time events that citizens can come to as their schedule allows. In Fairfield, the sustainability coordinator has focused on community education workshops and other grassroots events. Interviewees suggested that a way to minimize pushback was to offer citizens "quick and easy" ways to be involved

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study, while limited in its scope, shows that a great deal can be learned by exploring the experiences of four U.S. cities that have partnered with nonprofits on the development of their sustainability plans. These cities offer valuable lessons about the ways municipalities can pursue sustainability— as well as other collaborative planning efforts— to address the issues they face that defy a one-size-fit-all problem solving approach. While attempts were made to include cities from different parts of the Midwest, as well as communities of varying sizes and demographics, the researcher did use the recommendations and connections from contacts formerly affiliated with ICLEI, which did make the selection process a purposive one.

One notable limitation of the study is that it did not attempt to assess the quality of the plans themselves—which generally focus more on environmental sustainability, with less emphasis on the economic and social aspects of the concept— or compare these cases to cities that have developed a sustainability plan without the involvement of nonprofits. Indeed, the tremendous variation in how cities pursue sustainability planning and utilize nonprofits in that process certainly warrants further study. There also is a particular need for additional analysis comparing the quality and overall success of sustainability plans developed by nonprofits with those developed by private consultants or by municipal government staff.

The issues of how "increased livability" is measured and valued, and the issue of whether sustainability plans truly are a catalyst for citizen-based leadership and engagement in a broader sense, also warrant further study.   Furthermore, while this study highlights the value of intersectoral collaboration in the design of sustainability plans, more research is needed to explore the occurrence and impact of cross-sector collaboration on the implementation of

sustainability efforts. Such research could also shed light on the effectiveness of collaborative strategic planning initiatives in other aspects of municipal governance.

The author not does claim that this study offers a definitive analysis of the characteristics of intersectoral collaboration, or a framework of how cities and nonprofits must work together to create successful sustainability plans. Rather, as an explorative study, it pursued the more modest goal of shedding light on some of the ways that nonprofits and municipalities can work together related to sustainability planning. Through the framework of collaborative theory, it describes the characteristics of this model of partnership and looks at the most salient lessons on how stakeholders view intersectoral collaboration.

Despite these limitations, the cases provide much reason for sustainability officers and advocates to feel encouraged by the progress being made. There is no one, correct way to pursue sustainability or develop a sustainability plan. Partners can take considerable latitudes when working together to deal with the idiosyncratic aspects of their community and the varying level of resources that they have. Nevertheless, results show clearly that sustainability planning must be seen as a course of cost savings and increased livability for cities if it is to achieve the political support it needs to thrive in the long run. As the different strategies and mandates to participate across cities demonstrate, the pursuit of sustainability appears destined to remain an important part of the municipal agenda for years to come. While these efforts were often initiated by the newfound availability of federal funds, that is no longer the case. As attention turns to deficit reduction, funding is shrinking at both the federal and state government levels and it appears that this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. Instead, funding for sustainability will increasingly be tied to smaller, more local and private or nonprofit sources.

This will require more creative fundraising strategies and flexibility in terms of how sustainability is pursued.

While this change will present many challenges for cities, it also puts a premium on the skills and aptitudes that nonprofits bring to the collaborative process, as successful nonprofits must be nimble in their ability to pursue diversity funding sources and measure their success. Perhaps most importantly, nonprofits' experience in building long-term relationships in their communities and commitment to mission over financial profit are essential to the pursuit of a goal as long-term in nature as sustainability.

Though the interviewing process, stakeholders emphasized the importance of working with a nonprofit that already had a successful history of collaboration, strong relationships and credibility within the local government and broader community. Furthermore, nonprofits are typically led by individuals who are passionate about the organization's mission and that have extensive relationships with stakeholders in the community. These individuals also typically possess the "big personalities" that many of the interviewees alluded to when describing the character traits of the conveners of their planning groups. While not all of the conveners identified in this study were from the nonprofit sector, the majority were, suggesting that nonprofits are also uniquely suited to provide committed individuals that can play the role of convener in the process of developing local sustainability plans.

Regardless of how they decide to pursue sustainability, municipalities will be tested to find new creative approaches to ensure these efforts are financially feasible, politically popular (or at least not unpopular) and survivable in the long-term. As the difficultly of doing this grows, nonprofit partners can provide invaluable support—even if their primary purpose is to bring credibility to the partnerships that emerge. In many cities, however, nonprofits can do much

more. These organizations possess the long-term vision, acknowledgement of interdependence

and resourcefulness that are the very embodiment of many aspects of the sustainability agenda.

References

AtKisson, A. (1996). Developing indicators of sustainable community: Lessons from Sustainable Seattle. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review, 16 (4-6),* 337-350.

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (n.d.). *Urban Design, Transit Oriented Development.* Retrieved November 17, 2012, from http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/strategy-papers/urban-design/transit-oriented-development.

City of Akron (OH). (2009). Greenprint for Akron. Retrieved November 10, 2011 from http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/Temporary_Pages/2009_Greenprint_Akron_source.pdf.

City of Elgin (IL). (2011). City of Elgin sustainability action plan: Developed and written by Elgin citizens participating in Elgin's sustainability working groups. Retrieved November 10, 2011 from http://cityofelgin.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/13163.

City of Fairfield (IA). (2009). Fairfield go-green strategic plan. Retrieved November 10, 2011 from http://www.fairfieldiowa.com/pdf/fairfield_go-green_strategic_plan_2020.pdf.

Dilworth, R., Stokes, R., Weinberger, R. & Spatari, S. (2011). The place of planning in sustainability metrics for public works: Lessons from the Philadelphia region. *Public Works Management Policy, 16 (1),* 20-39.

Gazley, B. & and Brudney, J.L. (2007). The purpose (and perils) of government-nonprofit partnership. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* 36(3), 389-415.

Gray, B. (1985). Conditions facilitating interorganizational collaboration. *Human Relations, 38(10),* 911-936.

Gray, B. & Wood, D.J. (1991). Collaborative alliances: Moving from practice to theory. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27(1),* 3-22.

ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. (2006). *U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement: Climate Action Handbook.* Retrieved January 30, 2013 from http://www.iclei.org/documents/USA/documents/CCP/Climate_Action_Handbook-0906.pdf.

ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. (n.d.). *The Five Milestone Process.* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=810.

ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. (n.d.). *What is a Sustainability Plan?* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://www.icleiusa.org/action-center/planning/ICLEI_What%20Is%20a%20Sustainability%20Plan.pdf.

Okubo, D. (2010). Local governments and the economics of community sustainability. *National Civic Review, 99 (3),* 45-53.

Portney, K. (2005). Civic engagement and sustainable cities in the United States. *Public Administration Review, 65(5),* 579-591.

Portney, K. & Cuttler, Z. (2010). The local nonprofit sector and the pursuit of sustainability in American cities: a preliminary exploration. *Local Environment*, *15(4),* 323-339.

Saha, D. & Paterson, R.G. (2008). Local government efforts to promote the "three Es" of sustainable development: Survey in medium to large cities in the United States. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 28(1),* 21-37.

Salkin, P. (2009). Sustainability and land use planning: Greening state and local land use plans and regulations to address climate change challenges and preserve resources for future generations. *William & Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review, 34(1),* 121-170.

Sharma, A. & Kearins, K. (2010). Interorganizational collaboration for regional sustainability: What happens when organizational representatives come together? *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 47(2),* 168-203.

United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.) *What is the green economy initiative.* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/AboutGEI/WhatisGEI/tabid/29784/Default.aspx.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (1998). *Kyoto Protocol.* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2012). *Status of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/status_of_ratification/items/2613.php.

U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2011, June 17). *Despite Lagging Economy, U.S. Mayors Still Find Ways to Advance Energy, Sustainability* [Press release]. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://usmayors.org/79thAnnualMeeting/documents/RELEASE_CLEANENERGYSURVEY_0611.pdf.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.) *Heat island effect.* Retrieved October 31, 2012 from http://www.epa.gov/hiri/.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2003) *Water: After the storm.* Retrieved October 31, 2012 from http://water.epa.gov/action/weatherchannel/stormwater.cfm.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Sustainable Communities. (2012). Partnership for Sustainable Communities: Three years of helping communities achieve their visions for growth and prosperity. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/partnership_accomplishments_report_508%20compliant_final_062112.pdf.

U.S. Green Building Council. (n.d.). *About USGBC*. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://new.usgbc.org/about.

Villages of Oak Park and River Forest (IL). (2011). PlanItGreen: The environmental sustainability plan for Oak Park and River Forest. Retrieved November 10, 2011 from http://www.oak-park.us/public/pdfs/Environment/PlanIt%20Green%20final%20plan.pdf.

Walsh, B. (2008, May). What is a green-collar job exactly? *Time, 171 (21).* Retrieved October 29, 2012 from http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1809506,00.html.

Wheeler, S.M. (2008). State and municipal climate change plans: The first generation. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 74(4),* 481-496.

Wood, D.J. & Gray, B. (1991). Towards a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27(2),* 139-162.

Full List of Interview Questions

Questions Related to Stage 1: Problem Setting/Preconditions

Selection Process:
1) Why did your municipality/staff decide to contract/work with a nonprofit as the administrator of your local sustainability plan? *(for municipal staff only)*
2) Where there any events/mandates/other that brought about this partnership?
3) Had your municipality attempted to develop a sustainability plan before? What about those experiences, if any, influenced your decision to partner with a nonprofit? *(for municipal staff only)*
4) How did you initiate this collaboration? Did you have experience working with the nonprofit you selected in the past? *(for municipal staff only)*
5) How did you select the stakeholders involved in the plan development process? *(for municipal staff only)*
6) Is there a bidding process and/or contractual agreement? Does the partnership have a timeframe?

Questions Related to Stage 2: Direction-Setting/Process

Guidance:
1) How is direction and guidance given within the collaborative relationship?
2) How are expectations set and managed?
3) During the assessment/initial stages of the plan development, is one partner the collector and keeper of information/data related to the plan, or do both parties share responsibility/knowledge for this information?
4) If the nonprofit was assigned for one part or specific parts of the plan development, why those parts? *(for municipal staff only)*

Accountability:
1) How does the municipality manage the nonprofit contractor/partner?
2) Are there goals and/or indicators specific to the collaboration with the nonprofit?
3) Specific to plan development, how are deadlines/benchmarks set and monitored between partners?
4) Is there a sense that working with a partner encourages more accountability between partners and to the broader community? If so, please provide examples.

Questions Related to Stage 3: Structuring/Outcomes of Collaboration

Structure of Relationship
1) Are tasks/responsibilities assigned, and by whom? How are these assignments monitored for follow-through or completion?
2) What efforts are made to ensure that the direction of plan development is shared and agreed upon by both the local government and nonprofit parties?

3) Are there any issues/challenges that come up related to the sharing of power between entities?
4) How often and in what capacity to the collaborative parties come together? Are there regular meetings/roundtable discussions?
5) How are changes/adjustments to the collaboration made as/if needed?

Cost Implications:
1) What are the cost implications, from both the municipal and nonprofit perspective?
2) Does this collaboration save money, cost more or have no effect of cost for collaborative parties, as compared with doing the plan in-house or using a private contractor? *(for municipal staff only)*
3) How are these initiatives funded and does the collaborative relationship have any impact on the diversity of funding (i.e., are other/more funding sources available due to collaboration)?

Time Issues:
1) What are the time implications of the collaboration? Does it save time, take more time or have no real impact on time management, compared to developing the sustainability plan in-house or with a private consultant? *(for municipal staff only)*
2) How much time was allocated for the collaboration (plan design and development, etc.)?
3) How long did the process take, and were deadlines set and/or met? Were these deadlines appropriate and agreed upon?

Community Visibility and Interest:
1) How much interaction with community members and/or groups is involved in the collaboration related to the sustainability plan?
2) What ability does the public/community have for involvement/input in the plan development?
3) Are there aspects related to the collaboration that have affected community interest, and/or benefited the public's opinion of/satisfaction with the municipality/nonprofit?
4) Has the collaborative relationship increased the creditability of either partner to the public?

Collaborative Theory Codes & Frequency of Reference Results

PROBLEM-SETTING & PRECONDITIONS	Code	Freq. of reference
Is collaboration invited or mandated/required (and/or initiated thru persuasion)	COLL INVT/MAND	1
Mandate from higher level of government may legitimize relationship	MANDAT-GOVT	10
Shared perceptions of legitimacy- shaped by historical relations/existing power	LEGIT HIST	14
Degree of recognized interdependence among stakeholders= greater likelihood of collaboration	REC-INTERDEP	9
Parties "must" share at least one common interest	SHAR-COM INTERES	6
Substantial external pressure to form collaboration	SUB EXT PRESS	1
Collaboration as an interorganizational phenomenon to achieve desired ends that no single org can achieve acting unilaterally	COLLAB TO ACHIEV	18
Collaborate to gain control/reduce uncertainty of crucial resources	GAIN CNTL RESOUR	7
Gov't control of vital resources encourages stakeholders to participate	GOVT RES ENCOR	5
Mandated collaboration is first held together by participants' fear of what they will lose from not participating & expectations of gaining something	MAND COLL FEAR	4
Gain strategic advantage by collaborating	STRT- ADVA	15
Mutual positive motivation (shared belief that benefits exceed costs)	ML + MOT	11
Stakeholders are motivated to collaborate by a shared purpose to achieve common purpose	MOT SHARD PURP	9
High interdependence	MOTIV- HIGH INTER	4
High stakes (though they do not need to be the same for both parties)	MOTIV- HIGH STKS	3
More/Diverse stakeholders involved in collaboration	+ DIV-STK	16
Principle of shared responsibility among stakeholders	SHARD RESPONS	2
Collaboration is possible when stakeholders see that they will derive benefit	STK BENFT COLLAB	12
If collab. is to occur, involved stakeholders must see it as serving their own interests	STK SRV INTRST	17
Parties possess resources and skills sufficient to justify involvement	SUFF RES/SK	17
Careful selection of stakeholders	CARE-STK	4

DIRECTION SETTING & GUIDANCE:	Code	Freq. of reference
Coincidence in values among stakeholders to facilitate direction setting	COIN-VAL STK	7
Inclusion of Experts	INC-EXP	23
Authority gives ongoing direction throughout process	ONGOING DIRECT	8
Extensive search process-wherein stakeholders amass and review info	EXT SEARCH-INFO	6
Multiple parties/sources of information to identify problem and solutions	MULTI-PART	8
Continual adaptation of collaboration/stakeholders	CONT-ADAPT	8
Within collab, stakeholders retain independent decision-making powers while agreeing to abide by shared rules within alliance	RET INDEP ABIDE	4
Stakeholders are able to make changes through discussion/debate	GRP DISC CHNG	3
STRUCTURE OF RELATIONSHIP:	Code	Freq. of reference
With high-levels of conflict among stakeholders, neutral 3rd party as convener	CONVEN 3RD PRTY	4
Was convener asked to convene by stakeholders of problem domain	CONVEN ASKED	0
Convener seen as fair/trustworthy- so stakeholders trust authority will be balanced	CONVEN FAIR	6
Did convener initiate collaboration unilaterally/proactively	CONVEN INITIA	2
Convener may possess informal (or formal) authority based on position and influence in informal network and/or credibility among stakeholders	CONVEN-AUTH	21
In absence of NA, powerful stakeholder as convener (more likely to be successful when there is already high-degree of recognized interdependence and legitimacy among stakeholders	CONVEN-POW STK	1
Central umbrella org. that serves as convening authority	CENTRL-CONVEN	2
Convener is a natural Authority that appeals to stakeholders (funding agency, gov't office)	NAT AUT-CONVEN	9
Role of strong convener (from local government and/or Nonprofit)	STRNG CONVEN-LG/NP	14 Local Gov't: 5 Non-profit: 7 Both: 2
Convener uses credibility/influence/knowledge (as basis for authority) To help stakeholders negotiate shared understanding of problem and est. Collab problem-solving process	CONV AUTH NEG	21
Role of convener critical to setting and monitoring assignments	CONVEN-ASSIGN	10

Convener heavily involved in suggestions/implementation of change	CONVEN CHNGS	1
Convener's role to identify and bring legitimate stakeholders to table	CONV- BRNG STK	2
Linking self-interest with community interest essential for collaboration	LINK-INTERS	23
Importance of convener that sees mission that can be fulfilled thru collaboration	MIS THRU COLLAB	1
Importance of stakeholders believing convener has authority to organize	STK BLV AUTH	15
Formal structure with designated roles to ensure agreed-up direction is pursued	FORM STRUCT-DIR	12
Process of collaborating involves institutionalizing some form of structure	INSTITUT-STRUCT	9
Frequency of meeting/coming together (high: + or low: -)	FREQ MTG +/-	15 (+)
Creation of new structures related to collab. Serve to legitimize shift in power	STRUCT-SHIFT PWR	13
Nonprofit given authority to make assignments/manage for follow-thru	NP- SET EXPECT	6
Process of developing shared responsibility can cause stakeholders to Put pressure on those not participating—thereby creating new social norm	STK PRESS OTHERS	10
Cultural norms support collaboration	CULT COLLAB	7
Direction early on, and then allow NP to manage themselves	EARLY- NP MANAG	1
Free info exchange builds joint appreciation & enables increased understanding of problem	INFO EXCH + UNDRS	8
Physical proximity facilitates interdependence	PROX INTERDEP	3
Shared understanding leads to creation and agreement to rules for managing relationship and seeking solutions- which reduces environmental complexity and turbulence	RULES REDUC COM	0
Each entity legitimizing goals/methods of other collaborators (+)	STK-LEGIT OTHRS	3
Sufficient distribution of power so that all can influence direction	SUF DIST POWER	5
Some groups holding greater control over resources than others	HOLD CONTROL	2
Level of issues related to power sharing: high or low	PWR ISS HIGH/LOW	High: 1 Low: 3
Struggle for control/access to critical resources	STRUG FOR CONTRL	1

RESOURCE USE & IMPLICATIONS:	Code	Freq. of reference
Collaboration is motivated by the need to maximize efficiency and reduce costs	MOT- RED COST	15
Collaboration can increase transaction costs, introduce new relationships/tasks	COLLAB INCR COST	2
Access to resources (from non-government sources) encourage participation	ACS RESRC ENC	10
Saves money/ costs more (non-profit perspective)	COST (-/+) NP	NP (-) 2
Saves money/ costs more (municipal perspective)	COST (-/+) MUN	MUN (+) 7
Collaboration can help improve efficiency of resource use	IMPRV EFFIC RESRC	6
Save time (as resource) or take more time (MUN)	TIME RES (+/-)	(+) 1 (-) 4
Save time (as resource) or take more time (NP)	TIME RES (+/-)	2
Collaboration leads to access to new resources	ASC NW RSC	10
COMMUNITY VISABILITY & INTEREST:	**Code**	**Freq. of reference**
Linking self-interest with community interest is essential to successful collaboration	COMMUN-INT	23
Collaboration over time supports a shift in culture, and creates a new lens (of sustainability) that shapes efforts moving forward	CRT LENS	9

Appendix III: Additional Detail on Case Cities' Sustainability Plans

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Key Elements of the *Greenprint for Akron*

Smart energy & emissions

Promote energy efficiency, alternative energy, green rooftops, green building, EnergyStar and advocate for energy audits.

Smart water & wastewater management

Promote water quality and conservation and improve water systems. Improve wastewater systems, methane recovery and waste sludge to prevent stormwater pollution.

Smart materials & solid waste management

Encourage environmental purchasing. Encourage curbside recycling, reduce consumption of natural resources and prevent non-point source pollution.

Smart transit

Promote mass/rapid transit, walkable urban neighborhoods, bicycle plan and towpath trails, carpooling, conversion of municipal fleets and efficient traffic control.

Smart development

Support neighborhood revitalization, brownfield recapture, reduce urban sprawl, encourage land banking, adaptive reuse and historical preservation.

Smart conservation of natural resources

Preserve urban forestry, streams and watershed, maintain and expand open spaces and maintain municipal park system.

Smart community education & promotion of progress

Educate the community (with an emphasis on youth) on climate change and sustainable practices. Inform and involve public in Greenprint implementation and tracking. Promote community engagement, school recycling, employee training and incentives and commercial/industrial recognition and support.

Smart green jobs

Promote green job recruitment, such as the Greentech Incubator as well as other local projects and encourage green skills training locally.

</div>

Key Elements of *PlanIt Green: Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park & River Forest*

Education

Develop a bottom-up approach that gets children and youth learning about green practices, connects to residents in their daily lives and makes "going green" fun.

Energy

Promote energy efficiency and energy consumption reductions. Increase renewable energy procurement and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Waste

Increase residential waste diversion from landfills through recycling, composting and other strategies. Decrease waste generation across both communities.

Water

Reduce potable water consumption and stormwater runoff. Educate and communicate the need for water management, conservation and quality to residents.

Community development

Create community development values and core principles plan and sustainable development criteria. Review and amend local codes and ordinances and promote community development.

Transportation

Decrease vehicle miles travelled by car. Decrease overall greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Increase use of public transit and alternative transport.

Green economic development

Become a model of the green economy by developing a concentration of green businesses in OPRF. Function as the go-to-green economy magnet that attracts green purchasing from community and surrounding areas. Pilot shared renewable energy systems, cooperative financing models and/or green purchasing networks.

Open space and ecosystem preservation

Contribute to greater ecosystem services in the region. Enhance existing open spaces and ecosystems.

Food

Use more public, private and institutional land to grow more food, including for those in need. Increase availability of local/regional food year round. Build healthy soil in both communities

Key Elements of the *Fairfield Go-Green Strategic Plan*

Energy and emissions

Develop a community wind project and other ways to integrate clean power into the city's energy portfolio. Hold a local energy fair at the high school annually. Develop an energy audit team and a wide-range of locally sources for renewable energy supplies

Forestry and agriculture

Create an organization to develop local food production and processing. Establish Fairfield as a center for local organic food production/processing. Develop and preserve natural habitats. Increase carbon sequestration. Develop a community greenbelt including fruit trees and edible landscapes.

Green buildings

Showcase building projects that use energy efficient systems and renewable building materials. Reduce the amount of energy consumed in building by providing benchmarks and financial incentives for new and retrofitted green buildings. Reduce city-wide building energy use. Promote LEED certification through education, promotion and incentives.

Land Use

Revitalize Fairfield's downtown and cultural district as a sustainable hubs of business, government and civic activity. Encourage collaboration within cities, counties and other entities in establishing sustainable land-use planning throughout Jefferson County. Encourage a transition to healthier more efficient operations.

Leadership education & outreach

Establish Fairfield and Jefferson County as a center of excellence for sustainable technologies. Attract human and financial capital with and for sustainable development. Engage the communities in broad-scale communication regarding sustainability.

Engage and support a position for a sustainability coordinator. Promote the benefits and available resources for walking and biking to the public. Cultivate and empower community leadership. Develop a mass public awareness campaign about sustainability centered on personal and direct education.

Engage students and develop opportunities in K-12 education in sustainability learning and projects. Develop and market a sustainability learning center. Create and grow a specific green foundation. Establish the city and county as a model for green-collar job creation.

Recycling and waste reduction

Establish a Jefferson Co. education program to increase resident and business recycling rates to 100%. Identify ways to convert waste to assets or dispose of with minimal environmental impact and minimize waste streams at source.

Sustainable water

Increase efficiency of potable water use and improve sewer performance. Improve management and quality of stormwater.

Transportation

Endorse and encourage private-sector efforts to decrease fossil fuel consumption. Create conservation or and alternatives to fossil fuels. Expand infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.

Key Elements of the *City of Elgin Sustainability Action Plan*

Alternative energy

Encourage energy conservation, develop and pursue clean/renewable energy alternatives. Increase the use of renewable energy by city residents and businesses.

Economic development

Leverage programs and incentives to attract businesses to Elgin. Encourage a strong educational system and workforce training to develop skilled labor force. Identify the sustainability industry as a growing field within Elgin.

Green building technology and energy conservation

Educate key groups on sustainable and energy-efficient design. Develop and implement sustainable building policies. Develop financial programs to encourage sustainable/energy efficiency building projects.

Green infrastructure

Achieve integrity of open space along regional waterways. Reduce surface runoff through stormwater management and permeable pavement. Preserve natural resources and green space.

Healthy living and community education

Educate the community on the value of sustainable practices and healthy living.

Recycling and waste management

Increase recycling and waste reduction in the business sector. Promote residential recycling, composting and source reduction. Encourage the city and residents to purchase and use environmentally-friendly products.

Transportation and mobility

Reduce energy consumption and pollution from transportation operations and infrastructure. Promote alternative transportation options.

Urban Design

Foster a livable community and sustainable transportation system. Promote responsible land use.

Water Resources

Encourage water conservation. Educate residents about pollutants that affect Elgin's water supply. Improve water quality throughout Elgin's waterways.