WHAT MAKES A NEIGHBORHOOD? A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS. CASE STUDIES: PLAN NEW YORK CITY 2030 AND THE SEATTLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

by

CASSANDRA ANNE O'HEARN

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Public Policy, Planning and Management
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2014

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Cassandra O'Hearn for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Public Policy, Planning and Management to be taken June 2014

Title: What Makes A Neighborhood? A Critical Analysis of Successful Urban
Neighborhoods.

Approved: _____
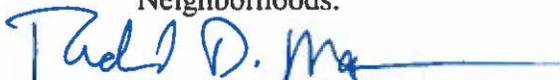
Richard Margerum

This thesis analyzes the neighborhood chapter of the comprehensive plans for New York City and Seattle, Washington to identify frameworks for addressing mixed use development, open space and walkability. It identifies strong neighborhood identity to be the main theme of the Comprehensive Plan for New York City, and sustainability to be the main theme of the Comprehensive Plan for Seattle. These conclusions are applied to neighborhood planning more broadly in order to show the range of interpretations of neighborhood planning. This thesis acknowledges that there is no correct method to facilitate neighborhood planning. Instead, it proposes the importance of writing a plan that matches the identity of a neighborhood, and describes a methodology which can be applied in order to discover main identities of a neighborhood and write plans that support neighborhood character.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my primary advisor Professor Richard Margerum for several years spent mentoring on this project. I would also like to thank my secondary advisor Richie Weinman and my Clark Honors College Representative Ocean Howell for their support and direction on this process.

I would also like to thank my mom and dad for their love and support through this process. I would like to thank my Clark Honors College advisor Louise Bishop for always having time to answer one last question. Finally thank you to my friends who have been there through my years at the University of Oregon Laura, Michael, Garrett, Maggie, Anna and many others.

Control click

Table of Contents

List of Relevant Acronyms

FRESH: Food Retail Expansion to Support Health

MIUDQ: Maryland Inventory of Urban Design Qualities

MXD: Mixed Use Development

NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

PlaNYC: New York City's Comprehensive Plan

TOD: Transit-Oriented Development

TND: Traditional Neighborhood Developments

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

What are important ideas in creating a welcoming and enjoyable neighborhood? Creating an environmentally friendly living environment? Including places for children to play or community centers? Access to healthy or locally grown food? This thesis looks at important factors that are included in creating strong urban neighborhoods. In order to further analyze this topic this thesis will look at neighborhood plans to see how two cities go about answering these questions.

This thesis is developed from the vantage point of city planning. It is a synthesis of several key features of urban neighborhood plans. The main objective is not to come to a single conclusion defining a "good" neighborhood plan, or to say that there is a single way to effectively design a neighborhood. Instead, the objective is to address several key aspects of urban neighborhood planning documents, compare them with literature on urban planning and conclude with a few specific recommendations as to what makes neighborhoods work.

Neighborhood Planning

The study of urban planning is filled with buzz words on how to keep cities "green", "compact" or "increase walkability". However, effective urban planning looks at more than individual aspects, it takes a systems thinking approach. In his book Contemporary Urban Planning, John M. Levy states the ideals of planning this way, "the best and most effective planners are those with good peripheral vision-those who

not only have mastered the technical side of planning but also understand the relationships between planning issues and the major forces in the society around them."[1]

In order to encourage this type of thinking, this thesis will explore three main ideas around neighborhood planning: creating mixed use neighborhoods, the importance of integration of open space and the importance of creating walkable neighborhoods. I have found these three ideas to be of significance to neighborhood planning because they were all major themes of the two comprehensive plans I looked at as my primary research, and I continued to see them as main themes as I analyzed literature on neighborhood planning more broadly. These ideas will be analyzed within the context of the neighborhood chapter of two comprehensive plans: Plan New York City 2030 and the comprehensive plan for Seattle, Washington. The purpose of using these two plans is to research how two different large American cities have interpreted these three concepts and applied them in practice.

The purpose of this analysis is not to develop a single method for effective neighborhood planning. In fact, one of the main assumptions of this research is that there is not a single "cookie-cutter" approach to neighborhood planning, nor is there a single set of guidelines for what makes a neighborhood plan effective. Instead this thesis will explore the range of definitions and approaches to applying the concepts of mixed use, open space and walkability to their neighborhoods.

---

[1] Levy, John. *Contemporary Urban Planning*. Person Education, Inc. viii.

In order to understand how cities function, it is helpful to take a step back and look at how urban planning in the United States developed. Allan Jacobs (1980, page xi-xii) describes the role that urban planning has made in shaping cities in the United States:

> The practice of city planning in the United States has been generously supported since the post-World War II period began more than 30 years ago. Throughout the country, whenever capable civic and professional leadership crystallized and understandable city planning programs were proposed, such programs almost invariably received careful consideration and, in most cases, strong and continuing support. As a consequence, there are today a substantial number of city planning programs that have 20 to 30 years of sustained and relatively successful experience behind them.[2]

While this thesis has used a present day lens to examine important aspects of neighborhood planning, it is important to have some sense of how urban planning in the United States has evolved over time to enhance one's understanding of how urban planning addresses the needs of a neighborhood.

It is important to understand the character of a city and/or neighborhood in order to appropriately layout a city that will fit the needs of the community. One of the important elements in analyzing how a neighborhood fits the needs of the community, is to understand how neighborhoods are designed and identify the key stakeholders[3]. In his book Urban Development: The Logic of Making Plans, Lewis D. Hopkins discusses how urban planning is organized and the main objectives of planning as well as relationships between planners, developers and community members. The main thesis of Hopkins' book is an in-depth analysis of the process of city planning. Hopkins discusses the mechanisms used to envision and implement a plan, and argues that taking

---

[2] Jacobs Allan, *Making City Planning Work.* xi-xii
[3] In this context, a stakeholder is anyone who is invested in a neighborhood.

a systematic approach to urban planning is important because it helps a city or community find real solutions to complex and challenging problems, and outlines how those solutions can be implemented. This approach emphasizes the importance of seeing a neighborhood through the lens of systems thinking. When problems arise within a community, the leaders and community members need to look not only at how to solve the individual problems, but to take a broader approach e.g. using a needs assessment to determine what is needed to make the community stronger.

Hopkins also emphasizes the specific concerns of an urban planner in a professional community, noting that "planners considered land capabilities for agriculture and urban development, feasibility of transportation and sewer infrastructure, current residential patterns, financial implications for the various communities, available regulatory authority, scenarios of infrastructure expansion, and questions of timing and sequence of development."[4] As Hopkins explains, the role of an urban planner can cover a plethora of diverse subject areas that expand well beyond physical development. Hopkins explains that "plans can work as agendas, policies, visions, designs, and strategies. Each of these modes affect systems in different ways and thus fit different specific circumstances."[5] The role of a planner is to explore how diverse social interaction is facilitated by the built (or naturally preserved) environment. That requires getting to know the physical layout of the land, the political forces that govern it and the desires and lifestyles of the communities that interact with it. Planning is a complex and multifaceted process in which "individuals, voluntary groups, and

---

[4] Hopkins, Lewis. The Logic of Making Plans:. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001. Print. 81.
[5] Hopkins, Lewis. *The Logic of Making Plans:*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001. Print. 6.

coercive groups such as governments decide to take actions and, therefore, may also decide to make plans."[6]

Planning is complex and multifaceted, so it is essential that planners, urban designers, and others who work on the design of a neighborhood have a central vision for the design. This thesis will demonstrate the importance of that vision by identifying the central themes of the housing and neighborhood plans for New York City and Seattle, Washington respectively. Specifically, this thesis will examine how the concepts of mixed use, open space and walkability are interpreted in these plans. Ultimately this thesis seeks to explore different methods that can inform other urban neighborhood planning efforts.

The Role of Urban Planners

The role of an urban planner varies from city to city. What is within his or her power will depend on aspects of a city such as size and political structure. Some of the categories that urban planners may fit into include: planner as neutral public servant, planner as builder of community consensus, planner as entrepreneur, planner as advocate and the planner as agent of radical change[7].[8] The power of an urban planner to implement change in a written planning document or in a specific physical area is also a highly political process.

My focus question for this thesis is:

---

[6] Hopkins, Lewis. *The Logic of Making Plans:*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001. Print. 81.
[7] Planner as agent of radical change is the most rare of planning styles.
[8] Hopkins, Lewis. *The Logic of Making Plans:*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001. Print. 100-101.

How do the housing and neighborhood sections of the comprehensive plans for Seattle, Washington and New York City interpret the three themes mixed use, open space and walkability?

I address this question by reviewing the planning literature around the three themes mixed use, open space and walkability. I then analyze how these themes are interpreted in the comprehensive plans for New York City and Seattle demonstrating both similarities and differences in how these terms are applied.

Chapter Sequence

My thesis is organized into six chapters. In chapter two I review the literature related to the three main themes. I also explain the range of genres from which my literature is pulled. This will help give the reader insight into how I formed my opinions on my major topics, and ultimately formed my conclusions.

In chapter three, I discuss the methodology I used to organize and guide my research. This includes my research question, a brief discussion of why I chose to focus my research in the manner that I did. I will also discuss how my final conclusions will be presented.

In chapter four, I briefly summarize the two comprehensive plans that I used as the primary data for my research. The point of this section is both to illustrate that I am examining only one aspect of a very complex series of documents, and to give the reader some context for the two urban plans I used to conduct my research.

Chapter five will look at my three main themes in-depth: mixed use, open space and walkability. The three sections are organized in the following manner: a brief introduction, a commentary on New York City's approach followed by a commentary on Seattle's approach. I end each section with a brief summary of what can be seen both in the literature and in the examples of my two case studies.

Finally, chapter six will include the conclusions and recommendations of this thesis which are divided into two main categories. First, I will identify the evidence that supports the main focus for the two cities that I am examining (Strong Neighborhood Identity in New York City and Sustainability in Seattle). Then I will discuss the implications of my three themes: mixed use as systems thinking, open space as destination and walkability as community. This chapter is intended to apply the main ideas brought out in my two case studies to a broader range of neighborhood planning questions and challenges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My thesis will focus on urban neighborhood development. To understand more about neighborhood planning, I reviewed the urban planning literature focusing on interpretations of neighborhoods. While many of the themes are relatable other neighborhood designs (such as suburban and rural) this is beyond the scope of the body of literature that I will be referencing and the analysis and conclusions of this thesis.

I limited my analysis to my three major themes: mixed use, open space and walkability. These three were the themes I saw arise predominantly out of the neighborhood analysis of the two comprehensive plans. There are many other aspects of planning that impact the livability of a neighborhood, but I focused specifically on the role of neighborhood planning as it was explored in my two case studies, as well as in my secondary research.

My supporting literature examines individual aspects of urban planning from a technical perspective, as well as the public's role and the societal impacts of neighborhood planning. I have also referenced a few websites, in order to further my analysis of city programs referenced within the plans. Both the technical work of urban planning and the social construct and implications of planning are relevant to evaluating my two case studies. While urban planning is primarily focused around shaping the physical environment, it also includes political and social constructs. Since physical spaces are where people work, play and form relationships, urban planning is a reciprocal relationship between the physical and the social or cultural activities in an area.

Common Themes

Table 2 summarizes the findings from my literature review. For the first theme the Schmitz and Scully suggest that mixed use planning can be used to encourage higher density development. In addition Jane Jacobs discusses mixed use planning as a method to encourage use of a space during a variety of times of day and night. Kelly and Becker identify mixed use planning as Jane Jacobs does, with an emphasis on consistent activity in the area. What is useful will vary from city to city, which is reflected in the varying views of the authors.

For the second theme, open space, the literature emphasizes the importance of having a clear intention for the design of open space. There is some debate as to whether open space should be primarily used as a tool for conservation of wildlife and natural habitats or to bring people together within the community. Another idea put forth, specifically by Kelly and Becker, is the importance of having open space accessible to community members, regardless of factors such as physical abilities and socio economic status. These are ideas that may need to be addressed on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.

For the third theme, walkability there is an emphasis on physical health and activity within a community. In the book Creating Walkable Places Schmitz and Scully discuss the rising concerns about health risks such as obesity, they discuss how designing neighborhoods in a way that discourages auto-dependency and encourages walkability and other alternative modes of transportation is supported from a health

perspective.[9] For example Schmitz and Scully point to a study done in 2003 by Raid

Ewig, Tom Schmid, Richard Killingsworth, Amy Zlot and Stephen Raudenbus entitled

"The Relationship between Urban Sprawl and Physical Activity, Obesity, and

Morbidity." In summary of the study, Schmitz and Scully state that "the researchers

concluded that many more people would get exercise as part of their daily activities if

the environment in which they lived and worked supported a more active way of life."[10]

However, there is also some discussion in the literature, by authors such as Jane

Jacobs, of the importance of walkable neighborhoods for the social health of a

community. In a chapter entitled "The Use of Sidewalks: Contact" in her book The

Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jacobs explains that "the casual public

sidewalk life of cities ties directly into other types of public life... although there is no

end to their variety."[11] In this way, Jacobs addresses walkability as a tool for building

social connections within a community. As compared to Schmitz and Scully who are

analyzing walkability for the physical benefits, Jacobs focuses on how "sidewalk life"

or personal interaction can also be an important benefit of creating walkable

neighborhoods. Both the health benefits addressed by Schmitz and Scully and the social

benefits addressed by Jacobs are important lenses to use in analyzing the success of

planning for walkable neighborhoods. However, the different interpretations made by

these two sources show the importance of understanding the underlying needs and

identities of a neighborhood.

---

[9] Schmitz and Scully. Creating Walkable Places. pp. 3.
[10] Schmitz and Scully. Creating Walkable Places. pp. 3.
[11] Jacobs, Jane. The Death and Life of Great American Cities pp. 57.

Table 1: Mixed Use, Open Space and Walkability in Urban Planning Literature

Author	Mixed Use	Open Space	Walkability
Schmitz and Scully 2006	▪ A mix of uses enhances the walking experience. ▪ Mixed use can help create a sense of place. ▪ Encourages high density.	▪ Must have a purpose. ▪ Needs to be welcoming, safe and attractive. ▪ Intentional design is critical.	▪ Sedentary lifestyle health concerns. ▪ Demand for more pedestrian-oriented development. ▪ Both the public and private sector have a role in creating walkable neighborhoods. ▪ Walking makes people not only healthier, but happier as well.
J. Jacobs 1961	▪ A form of order, not chaos. ▪ Different uses at different times of day, so that areas do not suffer "dead time". ▪ Should serve frequent users of an area, as well as attract new users. ▪ Diversity is key to consistent usage.	▪ Must have a purpose. ▪ More successful when overlapped with mixed-use areas. ▪ Should have a mixture of uses through out the day.	▪ A well used city street is a safe street. ▪ City streets as a place for children at play. ▪ Mixed use development increases walkability.
Kelly and Becker 2000	▪ Mixed use keeps an area active. ▪ The role of zoning in creating or prohibiting mixed-use areas. ▪ The rigidity of zoning.	▪ Valued as space preservation primarily, and then for recreational use. ▪ Equal community access to open space is important.	▪ Not directly addressed in this source.

MXD Development handbook The Urban Land Institute 1987	▪ Development within a coherent plan. ▪ Emphasis on listing and evaluating examples of mixed use development. ▪ Early residentially oriented mixed use areas focused on quieter more secure areas than other types of mixed-use development.	▪ Integrate open space into other necessary features, such as parking. ▪ Open space is not a main concern of this source.	▪ More focused on compact parking than walkability.
A. Jacobs 1980	▪ Mixed use is addressed in this source.	▪ Open space is not addressed in this source.	▪ Zoning parking away from the center of downtown to encourage walking.
Main Ideas from the Literature	▪ Diversity of uses is generally a positive planning strategy. ▪ Can increase safety of an area. ▪ Should create or add to a strong sense of place.	▪ Is this nature-centered or people centered? ▪ It is very important that open space have an intentional design.	▪ Sedentary lifestyle concern. ▪ Increasing safety ▪ Mixed-use development encourages walkability. ▪ Several sources do not address walkability.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My Focus Question

How do the housing and neighborhood sections of the comprehensive plans for Seattle, Washington and New York City interpret the three themes mixed-use, open space and walkability?

Why New York City and Seattle as Case Studies?

There are several reasons I decided to use New York City and Seattle, WA as case studies of neighborhood design. First, both cities are in the U.S. which I felt would to some degree limit cultural differences. Second, each comprehensive plan identifies several key markers of neighborhood planning to be examined. Third, both of these cities are coastal cities. There are also some key differences between the two cities that are important to acknowledge. For example, U.S. East Coast and West Coast cities developed in different eras.

My Research Process

My findings are based on a content analysis of PlaNYC 2030 and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The overarching focal point of my analysis was to analyze what main themes were central to the two neighborhood plans. While I did not hypothesize what those themes would be, I did begin this research with the assumption that I would find one central theme in each plan. In order to examine this premise I have looked at

several of the main objectives of each neighborhood plan and discuss how they relate back to those two main themes.

Next I examined relevant information from PlaNYC 2030 to discuss how New York City approach is related to strong neighborhood identity. Following that I analyzed the structure used in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and showed how that is related to sustainability. I also analyzed some of the specific programs found in the plans more in depth by using material from their websites and other related sources. Finally, I wrote a synthesis, identifying what I believe to be important points from each plan and discussing future significance more broadly.

My final conclusions at the end of my thesis discuss what has been learned about mixed use, open space and walkability. It includes both specific conclusions on each of the two plans, as well as general concepts learned related to the field of urban planning. Finally, I discussed some of the implications for each city and again discuss how they relate to the themes of strong neighborhood identity for New York City and sustainability for Seattle.

Chapter 4: Two Case Studies

Introduction

For my thesis I used New York City's comprehensive plan, PlaNYC 2030 and Seattle, Washington's comprehensive plan. While not specifically discussed in this thesis, it should be noted that part of the logic for the selection of these two cities, was that they are both port cities, which could have a significant impact on trade and, thus, development. When looking at the development of New York City and Seattle, Washington, it is worth noting that they developed during very different eras.[12, 13] I narrowed my analysis to the sections concerning housing and neighborhoods. The data I found in the plans have served as the basis for my analysis. In this chapter, I provide an overview of these two plans and their context.

PlaNYC: The Basic Information on New York City's Comprehensive Plan

The most recent version of the Comprehensive Plan for New York City, henceforth referred to as PlaNYC 2030 was completed in 2011[14]. According to the 2010 census, New York City currently has 8,175,133 residents. This is expected to grow to more than nine million by 2030[15].

In terms of structure, the plan defines itself as follows: "The Plan brought together over 25 City agencies to work toward the vision of a greener, greater New York. While our long-term goals will not be met for many years, we are on schedule toward most of them and launched 97% of the 127 initiatives in the 2007 plan, as

---

[12] PlaNYC, Introduction page 5.
[13] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[14] PlaNYC, Introduction page 5.
[15] Ibid.

documented in annual progress reports."[16] Thus, the plan is organized into 127

initiatives, which lay out the methods by which the objectives of the plan will be

achieved.

The first official form of PlaNYC 2030 was published in 2007[17]. While urban

planning and neighborhood planning were clearly present from the settlement of

Manhattan in 1609[18], the plan formed in 2007 is not merely a documentation of the

urban plans for Manhattan. A quote from the introduction to PlaNYC expresses that,

"New York has always been a place of promise and possibility, a place where people go

in search of a better life. The millions who come to our city arrive with the capacity for

hope and hard work. And, as a result of their efforts, New York City has become an

epicenter of global commerce, attracting the best talent from around the world."[19]

While this thesis will only explore some main ideas from the "Housing and

Neighborhoods" section of PlaNYC 2030, it is important to understand neighborhood

planning in New York City with in its proper context. Thus, this section will provide a

brief overview of New York City's comprehensive plan, understanding that this is

intended as reference and not as an in-depth analysis.

PlaNYC was ordered through the New York City Mayor's Office in 2006, as

expressed on the official website nyc.gov[20]. This plan "released in 2007…was an

unprecedented effort to prepare the city for one million more residents, strengthen our

economy, combat climate change, and enhance the quality of life for all New

---

[16] PlaNYC, Introduction page 5.
[17] The City of New York. http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml
[18] National Geographic http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/09/manhattan/miller-text
[19] PlaNYC, Introduction page 9.
[20] The City of New York. http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml

Yorkers."[21] The plan is divided into nineteen different sections, varying from "Climate Change" to "Public Health" and other important policy areas.

Overall, PlaNYC 2030 identifies four main focal areas for improvement listing: growth management, infrastructure, a global economy and climate change.[22] Each of these themes are interwoven into the various section of the plan. While each of these themes will be discussed in relation to neighborhood planning in this thesis, the broader implications of these four themes in the context of PlaNYC 2030 is beyond the scope of this research.

The implementation of the goals laid out in PlaNYC 2030 is described in several ways. One brief description is as follows:

> New York City's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) was created as part of the Mayor's Office by local law in 2006. The Office coordinates with all other City agencies to develop, implement, and track the progress of PlaNYC and other issues of infrastructure and the environment which cut across multiple City departments... In addition to producing PlaNYC, the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability promotes the integration of sustainability goals and practices into the work of City agencies and the lives of New Yorkers.[23]

The plan itself is published through the Mayor's Office, which also publishes regular updates to the plan and progress being made toward the goals outlined in the plan. The various city departments are then responsible for the actual implementation of the plan.

Each piece of this process reiterates the central goal of PlaNYC, to enhance the identity of New York City as a global power. Another passage from the introduction of PlaNYC further discusses the identity of the city as described by the plan.

Our city's history teaches us that investing in our future is not a luxury, but

---

[21] The City of New York. http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml
[22] PlaNYC, Introduction pages 5-9.
[23] The City of New York. http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml

an imperative. In the 19th century, innovative and ambitious investments in infrastructure like the Croton water system and the Brooklyn Bridge, plus an unprecedented influx of new people, firmly established New York as the nation's leading city. In ensuing decades, the city's dynamism and ability to reinvent itself, exemplified by new investments in subways, skyscrapers, sanitation, and sewers all propelled New York's status as a global leader in infrastructure and innovation.[24]

This quote in PlaNYC discusses a more general, or even cliché, concept of "investing in the future" while also identifying the importance of seeing New York "as the nation's leading city."[25] Throughout the analysis of the "Housing and Neighborhoods" section of this plan, this thesis identifies the prominence of that sentiment.

---

[24] PlaNYC, Introduction page 3.
[25] Ibid.

Map of New York City Neighborhoods [26]

[26]"NYC Tourist," last modified 2014, http://www.nyctourist.com/map1.htm

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan: The Basic Information the Comprehensive Plan for Seattle, Washington

The first official comprehensive plan was adopted in 1994[27] and was "designed to articulate a vision of how Seattle will grow in ways that sustain its citizens' values."[28] The population of Seattle is 626, 600[29]. The plan is broken up into eleven sections and this thesis will be mainly referencing section 8, entitled "Neighborhood Planning Element". Seattle's comprehensive plan is extremely focused on expected growth over the next 20 years. The introduction to the plan explains that "the ideas in the plan were developed over five years through discussion and debate and the creative thinking of thousands of Seattle citizens working with City staff and elected officials."[30] [31] Specifically, the plan is looking at growth management and sustainable development.

Seattle has identified four core values for its comprehensive plan including: community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, economic security and social equity.[32] The central problem facing Seattle is maintaining sustainable growth, with a projected growth of 47,000 households and 84,000 jobs by the year 2024.[33] Seattle is concerned about this growth as it relates to local and regional environmental

---

[27] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[28] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[29] Seattle Department of Planning and Development.
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/populationdemographics/default.htm
[30] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[31] While I have not specifically researched this fact, nor will I prove or disprove it, a focus on community involvement should be noted.
[32] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[33] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page vii.

quality, neighborhood quality-of-life, economic opportunity, and the overall cost of

development.[34] These are all aspects of Seattle's main emphasis on sustainable growth.

The comprehensive plan states it will be used to guide Seattle through this

period of growth in the following manner.

> The principal purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide policies
> that guide the development of the City in the context of regional growth
> management. These polices can be looked to by citizens and by all levels
> of government in planning for growth. Specifically, the plan will be used
> by the City of Seattle to help make decisions about proposed ordinances,
> policies and programs. Although the Plan will be used to direct the
> development of regulations which govern land use and development, the
> Plan will not be used to review applications for specific development
> projects except when reference to this Comprehensive Plan is expressly
> required by an applicable development regulation.[35]

Thus the main objective of the plan is to set goals to be achieved. Within the field of

urban planning, implementation can be subsequently delegated to various planning

firms and government offices, i.e. implementation is not the chief focus of the plan

itself.

General tools for implementation of these goals can be found on Seattle's

official website. Under the heading entitled *Seattle's Comprehensive Plan: What &*

Why, the following core values are expressed: "(1) Directing growth to existing urban

centers and villages. (2) Contributing to the vibrancy of our neighborhood centers. (3)

Reinforcing the benefits of City investments in transit, parks, utilities, community

---

[34] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page vii.
[35] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, x.

centers, and other infrastructures."[36] Thus the focus is the importance of managing

growth in a way that builds strong urban centers.

---

[36] Seattle Department of Planning and Development.
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/completeprojectslist/comprehensiveplan/whatwhy/

Map of Seattle's Urban Villages[37]

Urban Village Figure 1

Urban Centers, Urban Villages, and Manufacturing / Industrial Centers

Legend:
- Urban Center
- Hub Urban Village
- Residential Urban Village
- Manufacturing/Industrial Center

N

0   1   2 Miles

2004 City of Seattle
No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness or merchantability, accompany this product.

Chapter 5: Plan Analysis

My analysis of the New York City and Seattle plans revealed both similarities and differences in how the main themes were addressed. In this section I examine how each plan interpreted mixed use, use of open space and walkability.

Creating Mixed Use Neighborhoods

One important aspect of successful urban neighborhoods, is the ability for a neighborhood to provide a variety of services to the inhabitants. My literature identified two main goals in which a make mixed use approach can help to make neighborhoods successful. The first is that it can increase safety of an area. The second is that it should create or add to a strong sense of place.

This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as writing objectives into the comprehensive plan and creating programs to implement those objectives. The projects I discuss below are used as examples of how New York City and Seattle have approached the implementation of mixed use neighborhoods.

PlaNYC

PlaNYC highlights easy access to goods and service within close proximity as a critical aspect of neighborhood planning. *Initiative 9: Promote walkable destinations for retail and other service* states, "in order to support a mix of uses in neighborhoods, we will promote neighborhood shopping districts as part of a broader Neighborhood Retail Strategy that seeks to maintain built environments to attract private investment,

local residents, and visitors and support the needs of small businesses."[38] Not only does this evaluate the role of retail in neighborhoods, it combines benefits of residential space, public space and privately owned businesses to bring together multiple aspects of a community both socially and economically.

One of the ways that New York City has encouraged development of more walkable neighborhoods is by supporting projects that bring neighborhood residents and visitors together and create attractive destinations where people can easy intermingle. PlaNYC 2030 describes the importance of using community initiatives in order to achieve the goals that have been asserted in the plan. The plan expresses that "we must empower communities to develop and implement neighborhood-specific solutions to the challenges they face. By providing local partners with technical, financial, and regulatory assistance, we can foster greener, greater communities. In doing so, we will create a healthier, more equitable city, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood."[39] This demonstrates how PlaNYC 2030 addresses city wide change on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis.

Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH)

One effort encourage walkability and bring healthy, nutritional food resources to people who would not otherwise have access to them is the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health initiative, also known as the FRESH initiative. In initiative 7 for PlaNYC 2030's "Housing" chapter, the plan describes one plan to assess the health of its' neighborhoods.

---

[38] PlaNYC, Introduction page 28.
[39] PlaNYC, Housing page 21.

We have begun and will complete a study in East New York, Brooklyn, where, working in close cooperation with the Community Board and other local stakeholders, including the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, we will generate recommendations for land use and zoning changes, and assess other opportunities for making the neighborhood greener. The collaboration will include identifying opportunities to improve walkability, bicycle access, streetscape, traffic safety, and connections among housing, retail, educational, and employment opportunities.[40]

FRESH is an important example of how PlaNYC uses a project-based approach to improve important aspects of neighborhoods such as "connections among housing, retail, educational, and employment opportunities."[41]

According to New York City Economic Development Corporation's website, "the FRESH initiative was established by the City in partnership with the City Council in 2009 after a study by the NYC Departments of City Planning and Health and Mental Hygiene showed that many low-income areas across the city are underserved by supermarkets and full-service grocery stores."[42] The website explains that this program is specifically focused on communities which have inadequate access to healthy food on a daily basis.

The FRESH initiative, which was started by Mayor Bloomberg in his Five-Borough Economic Opportunity Plan, "promotes the establishment and retention of neighborhood grocery stores in underserved communities by providing zoning and financial incentives."[43] This means that while the program is overseen by Mayor Bloomberg, it is largely left to the individual districts to implement the program.

---

[40] PlaNYC, Housing page 27.
[41] Ibid.
[42] New York City Economic Development Corporation "Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH). Last modified 2013." Accessed June 1, 2014.
[43] New York City Economic Development Corporation "Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH). Last modified 2013." Accessed December 6, 2013.

One way that the FRESH program helps to strengthen neighborhood identity is that it is implemented on the neighborhood level, allowing for some degree of neighborhood interpretation. For this reason the success of the FRESH initiative varies from borough to borough, each borough theoretically being able to adapt the FRESH program to meet its' own needs. However, it is unclear whether each borough is really benefitting, or at least to the degree expected, from the program. For example, "FRESH provides zoning and financial incentives to grocers who open stores in New York's underserved communities, but so far the program has been underutilized with only three stores coming to the South Bronx since the program began."[44] Indeed, the decision to allow individual districts latitude in implementation has resulted in inequalities in implementation. This appears to be one of the major setbacks of the FRESH program.

Finally, an example of a project to fall under the FRESH program is the Fine Fare supermarket. The homepage for the website of the Fine Fare Supermarket reads

> at Fine Fare Supermarkets our grocery, dairy, produce, meat, deli, fish bakery departments have everything you need. Our stores are conveniently located in the New York Tri-State area. Local merchants own and operate each store. The understand the needs of each neighborhood and stock quality products that are always fresh and competitively priced. At Fine Fare we care about the community and are here to serve you. Come shop with us![45]

This mission statement demonstrated important qualities of the FRESH program that have previously been discussed. For example the mission statement discusses the need to see each neighborhood as unique and requiring slightly different products to meet the needs of each neighborhood. Fine Fare Supermarket is an excellent example of the FRESH program because "the Fine Fare supermarket will join a list of 16 FRESH

---

[44] "United Fund Advisors" last modified August 29, 2013. Accessed December 4, 2013.
[45] "Fine Fare Supermarkets" last modified 2014. Accessed December 5, 2013.

projects to have been approved since the program's inception in 2009."[46] In addition,

the article explains that "(Fine Fare Supermarket) was created in partnership with the

City Council to increase access to food in underserved communities by creating

incentives for the establishment and retention of neighborhood supermarkets. The

closest full-service grocery stores to this project are over a quarter mile away."[47] This is

another example of the FRESH program in action.

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan

As opposed to the project based implementation system that New York City is

using to address the creation of mixed use neighborhoods, Seattle's approach is to focus

on strengthening the core of each urban village. The Seattle Comprehensive Plan has

four main areas in which it highlights the importance of mixed use planning:

> 1. Urban centers are the densest neighborhoods in the city and are both
> regional centers and neighborhoods that provide a diverse mix of uses,
> housing, and employment opportunities. Larger urban centers are divided
> into urban center villages to recognize the distinct character of different
> neighborhoods within them.
>
> 2. Manufacturing/Industrial Centers are home to the city's thriving
> industrial businesses. As with urban centers, Manufacturing/Industrial
> Centers are regional designations and are an important regional resource.
>
> 3. Hub urban villages are communities that provide a balance of housing
> and employment, generally at densities lower than those found in urban
> centers. These areas provide a focus of goods, services, and employment
> to communities that are not close to urban centers.
>
> 4. Residential urban villages provide a focus of goods and services for
> residents and surrounding communities but may not provide a
> concentration of employment. [48]

---

[46] "United Fund Advisors" last modified August 29, 2013. Accessed December 4, 2013.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element page 1.5.

These four main areas bring out several key features critical to effective neighborhood planning. The first idea the plan brings forth is that urban centers have high density. This is both a characteristic of the neighborhood and an implication for the perception of the neighborhood. The second highlights the importance of industrial centers as a regional resource. Industrial centers within hub urban village provide important resources, notably employment to the community. Thirdly, urban villages balance housing and employment and integrate both into the community. Finally, urban villages combine goods and services.

This is a strong example of how Seattle's neighborhood plan is focused around growing sustainably. The first objective listed is to create strong urban cores in neighborhoods, which they hope will encourage compact growth and discourage urban sprawl. The plan also cites creating mixed-use neighborhoods, which includes business and residential use. The following example describes how the "densest neighborhoods" are in fact titled "urban centers". The plan states that "urban centers are the densest neighborhoods in the city and are both regional centers and neighborhoods that provide a diverse mix of uses, housing, and employment opportunities. Larger urban centers are divided into urban center villages to recognize the distinct character of different neighborhoods within them."[49] This example, taken from Seattle's comprehensive plan, shows how Seattle combines housing and employment in its urban village model.

The goal is to then create a healthier environment both physically and socially. Integration of uses creates an environment that is innovative and adaptable to future change. This is hypothesized to result in strong, sustainable neighborhoods. The

---

[49] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element page 1.3.

following section from the Urban Village Element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan

explains Seattle's strategy for creating compact, mixed use neighborhoods.

> Maintain and enhance Seattle's character as the city grows and changes.
> Seattle's character includes its built environment: large areas of detached
> single-family houses both inside and outside of urban villages, many
> thriving multifamily areas, mixed-use commercial areas, industrial areas,
> major institutions, and a densely developed downtown with surrounding
> high-density neighborhoods. Seattle's character also includes its setting
> on Puget Sound, its lakes and mountain views, its hills and watercourses,
> and its many parks and open spaces.[50]

This description includes a strong focus of multifamily housing, as well as single-family

housing, inside and outside of urban villages. While single-family housing is not a trait

of compact growth, it is not all designated to a single area, and is instead interwoven

with other types of housing, which encourages a more sustainable method of growth.

In addition to supporting diverse housing types in urban neighborhoods, Seattle's

Comprehensive Plan addresses the importance of creating neighborhoods that include

resources for the community. These resources are important for growing sustainably.

The following quote from the Seattle Comprehensive Plan discusses important

aspects the plan has highlighted which keep communities healthy and sustainable.

> Promote conditions that support healthy neighborhoods throughout the
> city, including those conducive to helping mixed-use urban village
> communities thrive, such as focused transportation demand management
> strategies, vital business districts, a range of housing choices, a range of
> park and open space facilities, and investment and reinvestment in
> neighborhoods.[51]

This quote includes characteristics for a healthy neighborhood, such as planning for

mixed-use development and finding ways to encourage sustainable transportation

---

[50] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction page v.
[51] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element page 1.5.

demand management. While much of the infrastructure will be provided by outside

developers, the structure provided by the plan shows how the Seattle Comprehensive

Plan is able to look at growth methods that are sustainable and multifaceted.

Conclusions

Both PlaNYC 2030 and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan highlight the

importance of creating incentives for high density and mixed use planning in order to

create diverse, sustainable neighborhoods. The Seattle Comprehensive Plan outlines

methods which build on development that already exists, specifically increasing

housing density and including retail and employment in order to attain the objective of a

healthy, successful neighborhood. The PlaNYC 2030 discusses similar ideas, but

implements the plan's objectives through specific programs, like FRESH, which is

implemented already, although it is being adjusted as the plan is updated. The Seattle

Comprehensive Plan addressed methods by which both local residents and city

government could positively impact neighborhoods, whereas PlaNYC mainly focused

on the role of neighborhood members to outline and implement changes.

This agrees with the literature, specifically the assertions of Jane Jacobs, who

explores ideas like consistent use of open space at varying times of the day or night.

The idea of implementing various programs, also aligns with the literature, such as

Schmitz and Sculley, whom discuss the importance of creating a sense of space and

identity through integrating a variety of uses compactly. While the comprehensive plans

for both cities can be used as a guide to designing vibrant, mixed use neighborhoods, it

is generally programs implemented in the neighborhoods that are able to bring

community members together and build stronger community ties.

Integration of Open Space

The second topic I analyzed in the two plans was the integration of open space

into neighborhoods. In my literature review I noted several sources (such as: Schmitz

and Scully, Jane Jacobs as well as Kelly and Becker) who noted the importance of

intentionality in designing open space. Jane Jacobs also noted the importance of

designing open space for uses during a variety of times of the day and night. The

following to sections will analyze how the two neighborhood plans have interpreted

these themes.

PlaNYC

PlaNYC differentiates "Parks and Open Spaces" from housing in its

comprehensive plan. However, since the section deals greatly with use in

neighborhoods, and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan includes parks in it's "Urban

Village" section, it appeared appropriate to compare it in my analysis. In addition,

PlaNYC specifically unites parks and open space as important aspects of

neighborhoods. It states that "parks and public space play indispensable roles in our

neighborhoods. They provide places to exercise. They are community forums for formal

and informal interactions. They serve important ecological functions. They are also an

important catalyst for economic development, raising property values and breathing life

into neighborhoods."[52] Parks serve as spaces for community connection, environmental concern and economic capital and are important to neighborhood health and vitality.

The "Parks and Open Spaces" objectives shall quickly be reviewed. The fifteen objectives are: (1)create tools to identify parks and public space priority areas, (2) open under utilized spaces as playgrounds or part-time public spaces, (3) facilitate urban agriculture and community gardening, (4) continue to expand usable hours at existing sites, (5) create and upgrade flagship parks, (6) convert former landfills into public space and parkland, (7) increase opportunities for water-based recreation, (8) activate the streetscape, (9) improve collaboration between city, state, and federal partners (10)create a network of green corridors, (11) plant one million trees, (12) conserve natural areas, (13) support ecological connectivity, (14) support and encourage stewardship, (15) incorporate sustainability through the design and maintenance of all public space.[53]

One fundamental theme that can be seen in the above fifteen objectives is the idea that the purpose of parks and open spaces is to build community. This means the space should be a place where planned events can be held with the intention of bringing community members together to enhance the physical space and social atmosphere. One such example is listed under *Initiative 8: Activate the Streetscape.* PlaNYC states that "we are moving on multiple fronts to make our streets more attractive places for a wide range of users. We are building plazas within public rights-of-way to create multi-use

---

[52] PlaNYC Parks and Public Space, 34.
[53] PlaNYC Parks and Public Space, 35.

open spaces. These plazas are bringing residents together and extending outdoor

opportunities beyond our parks and into our neighborhoods."[54]

As is stated in the summary above, PlaNYC is using the idea of creating mixed

use areas around parks in order to encourage interaction and use of the space by many

diverse segments of society. This ties back to the main idea in the beginning of this

section, stating that it is important that open spaces are planned with an intention, a

reason for people to visit the area, a central vision. It is understood that each individual

will take away his/her experience from the space, but it is up to the planner to create an

open space that encourages these types of experiences. Open spaces are not beneficial to

a neighborhood simply because they are there. It is important to include a sense of

common vision in the space that will bring people out and encourage interaction both

with the space itself and with each other.

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan

In the Seattle Comprehensive Plan one goal for open space states the importance

of open space as follows.

> through the creation, preservation, and enhancement of the city's open
> spaces, support the development patterns called for by this plan, enhance
> environmental quality, provide light, air, and visual relief; offer
> community-building opportunities; provide buffers between residential
> areas and incompatible uses; provide spaces for sports and recreation;
> and protect environmentally sensitive areas.[55]

There are many ideas within the quote that discuss the importance of planning for open

space with a sense of purpose and identity. To name a few specific examples the plan

discusses specific categories such as buffering residential areas, space for recreation and

---

[54] PlaNYC Parks and Public Space, 42.
[55] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 1.25.

conservation of environmentally sensitive areas. These areas can provide a general

outline that can be adapted for each space. For example, an open space might be

tailored to a particular sport or a variety of sports. There may be native wildlife or

foliage in the area that would have specific precautions to be taken. Even though the

wording is broad and could apply to a variety of different concepts, it creates a road

map or checklist that can be followed in the planning and preserving of any open space.

This step is important to help city plans avoid glancing over "open space" as the broad,

unattainable topic that Jane Jacobs described.

In addition, the Seattle Comprehensive Plan outlines eight specific methods to

achieve the previously stated goals. They include; (1) amenities in more densely

populated areas, (2) recreational opportunities for daytime populations in urban centers,

(3) mitigation of the impacts of large scale development, (4) increased opportunities to

walk regularly to open spaces by providing them close by, (5) connections linking urban

centers and villages, through a system of parks, boulevards, community gardens, urban

trails, and natural areas, (6) network of connections to the regional open space system,

(7) protected environmentally critical areas, and (8) enhanced tree canopy and

understory throughout the city.[56] These eight objectives clarify "open space" by using

objectives such as opportunities for walking, community parks and a connectedness of

the open spaces to the rest of the city.

Even though some of these goals are still relatively broad, such as the first

"amenities in more densely populated areas" some of this open-ended structure is

necessary in order for the individual neighborhoods to adapt the main idea in a way that

---

[56] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 1.25-1.26.

35

will best fit that specific community. In other cases, such as "enhanced tree canopy and understory throughout the city" the plan gives more specific instruction (still allowing a degree of creativity) as to how these areas should be shaped. These goals relate to community building, health and environment.

Conclusions

Protection of and access to natural spaces, such as city parks, is one important aspect of use of open space. However, the Seattle Comprehensive Plan focuses on the importance of natural conservation by highlighting aspects such as air quality and light, while many of PlaNYC's initiatives focus on community building and awareness of underutilized space. While these difference may be do simply to the differences in geographic space, there are two methods of thinking here and neither is complete with out the other. Conservation and community interaction are both important to open space design.

Walkability

The third topic that I analyzed was walkable spaces with inviting destinations. This idea of encouraging interactions within neighborhoods requires well integrated planning, from a variety of perspectives such as zoning, pedestrian interaction, and health concerns. For example Schmitz and Scully describe walkability primarily as a health concern, discussing the importance of walkability in neighborhoods for combating the sedentary lifestyle. Jacobs, on the other hand, describes the importance of walkability as a form of safety. She discusses having city streets that are safe for all,

and that this is achieved by always having "eyes on the street". The two plans also interpret walkability in a variety of ways.

PlaNYC

PlaNYC focuses on how to use common habits of daily life into a more condensed physical space to strengthen community. The plan states that "by encouraging denser development in neighborhoods well-served by transit while limiting growth in auto-dependent areas, we can steer new development to areas where residential growth is sustainable."[57] This is an example of how New York City plans to continue to implement denser development in neighborhoods that are "well-served by transit", in order to encourage more use of mass transit, and create more walkable neighborhoods.

Encouraging development of mass transit is an important part of the plan, but it is not the only method to create accessibility. The plan asserts that "by encouraging the location of residents, jobs, retail, and other services within a walkable distance from one another, we can encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation and decrease greenhouse gas emissions." [58] Thus zoning for mixed use development also has a significant impact on walkability.

One example of these walkable services is can be found in the FRESH program. This program is used to "encourage the growth of new grocery stores and supermarkets, we launched the FRESH program, which provides zoning and financial incentives for full-service grocery stores that locate in certain neighborhoods considered underserved

---

[57] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 23.
[58] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 28.

by food retailers."[59] In this example, FRESH is using both a top down method of zoning and a business centered incentive process in order to bring healthier foods and more resources into a community. This is an example of how New York City strengthens individual neighborhoods in order to create a more walkable city.

Another way that PlaNYC discusses encouraging walkability while designing fully functioning neighborhoods with a strong sense of identity is by redeveloping "lightly used" portions of land in a manner that will be more useful to neighborhoods.

> Opportunities exist to repurpose and redevelop lightly used portions of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) sites, including surface parking facilities, in ways that can reinforce their relationship to surrounding neighborhoods. When NYCHA began building tall towers surrounded by open space and parking lots beginning in the 1940s, the result often interrupted the continuity of neighborhoods and retail corridors, and too often left NYCHA developments as islands isolated from the broader community. In 2004, NYCHA and the City agreed to target some of the areas on these sites for new housing.[60]

The New York City Housing authority looks for ways in which these lightly used portions of land can be turned into open space or areas for commercial and retail development. This is also an example of how New York City is achieving a city-wide goal on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis.

Seattle Comprehensive Plan

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan addresses the issue of walkability through a variety of strategies. Many strategies are focused on how to implement new development that will continue to maintain a compact and sustainable pattern of growth. Two of the main policies for housing that include an emphasis on compact development

---

[59] Ibid.
[60] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 26.

38

within their goals include "encourage housing development through both new

construction and renovation of existing structures"[61], as well as "encourage the

development of incentive packages for housing construction and rehabilitation"[62] and

"encourage the development of housing opportunities for a mix of incomes."[63] These

examples show how the Seattle Comprehensive Plan is regulating housing that

encourages compact development. There are many other ways Seattle is encouraging

walkability.

The plan attempts to "promote densities, mixes of uses, and transportation

improvements that support walking, use of public transportation, and other

transportation demand management (TDM) strategies, especially within urban centers

and urban villages."[64] It is important to remember that having a highly functioning mass

transit system, while a critical piece of creating a "walkable environment", needs to be

supplemented by other aspects of the neighborhood that encourage taking part in that

environment. Examples of this include retail, open markets, and other social hubs.

A third method of increasing walkability in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan is

the importance of not only designing compact neighborhoods, but also shape future

growth so that it remains compact and thinking about the connectedness of

neighborhoods on a greater scale, to other neighborhoods as well as the city. This can

help to "direct the greatest share of future development to centers and urban villages

and reduce the potential for dispersed growth along arterials and in other areas not

---

[61] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 8.84.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 1.4.

conducive to walking, transit use, and cohesive community development."[65] This methodology allows for sustainable growth in a way that continues to be compact. It also shows how the Seattle Comprehensive Plan is directing future growth in a more sustainable manner.

Conclusions

The importance of designing neighborhoods that not only allow for compact growth, but encourage walkability through vibrancy and access to a diverse range of goods and service is apparent in both plans. Both plans encourage engagement and exploration with the physical and social environment through walking and designing spaces that can be engaged with on foot, and on a personal level. PlaNYC focuses on access to mass transit and compact design which encourages integrated, sustainable growth. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan highlights the importance of a mix of residential use, commercial use and access to employment as key aspects of a successful neighborhood. This shows that both external and internal networks are important to examine when planning for compact, walkable neighborhoods.

---

[65] Ibid.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

      In this chapter I summarize some of the broader themes and conclusions from my study. First, I present an analysis of the cross cutting themes from my analysis of PlaNYC and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Second, I elaborate on the themes of mixed use, open space and walkability and how they were interpreted in New York City and Seattle. Finally, I make some conjectures as to what this means for the future of neighborhood planning.

Cross-Cutting Themes in the Plans

      One conclusion that has come out of my research has been the importance of having a central goal or focus for the plan, a direction that the city is looking towards for the next 20 years. What that goal is will be is dependent upon the city, but for both New York City and Seattle I found that having an identifiable goal that can hold the various elements of the neighborhood plan together was important.

      However, the ways in which New York City and Seattle interpreted the central goal and then laid out a series of steps to move toward it was very different (see Table 2). PlaNYC 2030 focused on the importance of the individual interpretations of each neighborhood, to build strong neighborhood identity. The Seattle Comprehensive Plan identified sustainability as a central goal, and embedded that into the neighborhood chapter of the comprehensive plan, so that each individual initiative was tied in to the goal of making Seattle a sustainable city.

41

Table 2: Mixed-Use, Open Space and Walkability the Plans

Plan	Mixed Use	Open Space	Walkability	Conclusions
PlaNYC 2030	▪ Promote walkable destinations. ▪ Neighborhood programs.	▪ Community connection. ▪ Environmental concervation. ▪ Economic capital. ▪ Neighborhood programs.	▪ Denser development. ▪ Programs that encourage walkability. ▪ Commercial and retail destinations.	▪ Implement neighborhood programs. ▪ Destination centered planning. ▪ Open space as community connection.
Seattle Comprehensive Plan	▪ High density urban areas. ▪ Industrial centers as a resource. ▪ Compact, mixed-use neighborhoods encourage walking and transit use.	▪ Space for recreation. ▪ Asset for conservation. ▪ Buffer for residential.	▪ Provide services and employment close to residents. ▪ Use incentive zoning to encourage affordable housing near mass transit.	▪ Mixed use neighborhoods. ▪ Incentive zoning near mass transit. ▪ Open-space as conservation.
Themes	▪ Different uses support each other. ▪ Include key services. ▪ Build strong community connection.	▪ Intentionally planned, serves a purpose. ▪ Has use at varying times of day and night.	▪ Attractive destinations. ▪ Encourage high density development. ▪ Addresses community needs.	

Strong Neighborhood Identity in New York City

Through analyzing the initiatives of the housing and neighborhoods chapter of PlaNYC 2030 I have come to the conclusion that a central theme of the plan is to create strong identities in the neighborhoods of New York City. The plan expresses that "city government can't make New York sustainable on its own. We need everyone to build a greener, greater New York-which is by definition made up of greener, greater neighborhoods. We will engage with and support local sustainability efforts and projects to nurture those neighborhoods."[66] In this quote PlaNYC 2030 is directly stating that the sustainability of the city is directly supported by the strength of its' neighborhoods, and the ability of city government to support the neighborhood initiatives and sustainability efforts.

One neighborhood initiative that has already been discussed in this thesis is the FRESH program. In addition FRESH, the plan lists the Healthy Bodegas program, the Green Carts program and the Health Bucks program. Through the Healthy Bodegas program "more than 1,000 bodegas have promoted the sale of fresh produce and low-fat dairy products, increasing sales of these products."[67] This program is helping to create a healthier New York City neighborhood by neighborhood. While the program does target the entire city, targeting of customers is directed at local, neighborhood residents.

A similar program briefly discussed in PlaNYC 2030 is the Green Carts program. A brief description of the Green Carts program shows how the city is using a program-centered approach to encourage vitality of New York City through its neighborhoods.

---

[66] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 23.
[67] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 28.

The Green Carts has issued almost 500 new permits to street vendors selling fresh fruit and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods, quickly and effectively expanding retail options. By augmenting the federal food stamp program (SNAP) with "Health Bucks," we are providing SNAP recipients with $2 in coupons for every $5 in SNAP spent at farmers markets. More than 110,000 Health Bucks were distributed in 2009, generating an additional $220,000 in sales of fresh, locally grown fruit and vegetables.[68]

This quote discusses that it issues "permits to street vendors selling fresh fruit and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods" encouraging healthier living neighborhood-by-neighborhood. PlaNYC is also looking to improve food options by serving neighborhoods with healthier grocery stores.

One method of encouraging the addition of healthier grocery stores into a neighborhood is through issuing incentives to grocery stores that reflect similar values. PlaNYC discusses this strategy in the following way.

We will facilitate the creation of 300 more healthy food retail options in targeted underserved neighborhoods. To encourage the growth of new grocery stores and supermarkets, we launched the FRESH program, which provides zoning and financial incentives for full-service grocery stores that locate in certain neighborhoods considered underserved by food retailers. We will identify additional amendments to zoning, including an expansion of the FRESH program, to direct grocery stores to more communities with food access needs.[69]

In addition to working on a neighborhood scale, FRESH works with full-service grocery stores, issuing financial incentives to locate in neighborhoods. The plan can not control what business decide to do, or exactly where they decide to locate, but the plan can express a clear direction in which neighborhoods might develop. The plan can articulate clear goals, such as working with neighborhoods on tasks such as increasing

---

[68] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 28.
[69] Ibid.

access to healthy food options, an offer incentives for business to follow. This is the approach that PlaNYC has taken through the FRESH program.

Imitative eight of PlaNYC 2030 discusses another approach to creating strong neighborhood identity. Discussing the redevelopment of areas such as surface parking to be areas that are more connected to the neighborhood and are able to create strong neighborhood identity. The following is an example from lightly used portions of the New York Housing authority, which could be repurposed and redeveloped.

> Opportunities exist to repurpose and redevelop lightly used portions of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) sites, including surface parking facilities, in ways that can reinforce their relationship to surrounding neighborhoods. When NYCHA began building tall towers surrounded by open space and parking lots beginning in the 1940s, the result often interrupted the continuity of neighborhoods and retail corridors, and too often left NYCHA developments as islands isolated from the broader community. In 2004, NYCHA and the City agreed to target some of the areas on these sites for new housing.[70]

This quote describing the intent of the New York City Housing Authority to work with New York City to "target some of the (open space and parking lots) on these sites for new housing" is an example of how development agencies are working with the guidelines of PlaNYC 2030 to develop land in existing neighborhoods in ways that can "reinforce their relationship to surrounding neighborhoods". The fact that the plan discusses the importance of a development's relationship to nearby neighborhoods is an example of the strong focus on neighborhood identity found in PlaNYC.

The plan also discusses creating strong neighborhood identity by encouraging neighborhoods to come together in order to grow sustainably. The plan explains that an important concept for successful neighborhood planning is to define what "growing

---

[70] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 26.

sustainably" means in each neighborhood instead of implementing a single system for

the entire city. PlaNYC describes how neighborhoods are already implementing this

style of neighborhood planning.

> Communities are already coming together to decide what they can do to
> make their neighborhoods more sustainable. The available opportunities
> and local priorities will be different in every neighborhood. To solutions
> that work in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn may be different than those that work
> in Bayside, Queens-and will often originate with the people that call
> those places home.[71]

In this quote the plan discusses a specific intention to have solutions to neighborhood

challenges, originate within the neighborhood. Not only are solutions developed within

a neighborhood more likely to address a problem or challenge more accurately, it also

empowers the community members to gain skills from working on the problem.[72] New

York City neighborhoods will benefit both by solving the problem and by strengthening

the community in the neighborhood-centered approach laid out in PlaNYC.

Finally, strong neighborhood identity comes through in the methods that the

plan identifies to encourage sustainability. The plan discusses how sustainability is

important both in the types of housing choices that are provided in a neighborhood, as

well as in the amenities that are provided within a neighborhood. The following excerpt

is one example of how New York City address sustainability on the neighborhood level.

> (building sustainable neighborhoods means) nurturing neighborhoods
> that provide housing choices and employment opportunities at multiple
> income levels. It means building housing that conserves energy and
> water, constructed of materials that do not harm residents' health. It also
> means cultivating neighborhoods that contain a vibrant mix of uses,
> including retail that offers healthy foods-a community asset missing

---

[71] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 27.
[72] The skills that they gain will depend on the problem, and thus can not be identified here.

from too many neighborhoods-and other services within walking
distance of residences.[73]

This portion of the plan discusses the importance of including housing and employment

at "multiple income levels" as well as encouraging neighborhoods that contain "a

vibrant mix of uses" including retail and access to healthy food within walking distance.

The plan continues to plan ways to implement the larger goals by strengthening

neighborhood programs and identifying neighborhood identity.

Sustainability in Seattle, Washington

After analyzing the Urban Village Element of the comprehensive plan for

Seattle, Washington, I have found the central theme to be sustainability. In the

introduction to Seattle's comprehensive plan, sustainability is defined as "the common-

sense notion that the health of our environment, our economy, our bodies, and our

community as a whole, are not only closely linked, but dependent on one another."[74] As

sustainability is a broad term, it is important that the analysis of Seattle's

comprehensive plan be completed using the definition that is specified within the plan.

In contrast to PlaNYC 2030 which is mainly initiative driven, Seattle has

identified it's overarching goal to be sustainability, which is then divided into four core

values for its' comprehensive plan. The core values that the plan has identified are

"economic opportunity and security, environmental stewardship, social equity and

community."[75] The plan then goes on to describe that "the overarching goal of this

Comprehensive Plan is to promote sustainable development – that is, development that

---

[73] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 27.
[74] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction pp. vii.
[75] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Introduction pp. vii.

reflects, protects, and advances these core values, through a smart and well-integrated approach to where and how we grow."[76] In these two descriptions the objectives of environmental stewardship and the promotion of sustainable development can be observed as foundational elements for the plan.

The central theme of sustainability can also be seen in the urban village strategy identified in the plan. According to Seattle's comprehensive plan "urban villages are community resources that enable the City to: deliver services more equitably, pursue a development pattern that is environmentally and economically sound, and provide a better means of managing growth and change through collaboration with the community in planning for the future of these areas."[77] This quote shows how the Seattle Comprehensive Plan is centered around "planning for the future", and that the plan includes an emphasis on environmental sustainability, in areas such as growth management and planning for the future.

In discussing the interpretation of mixed use neighborhoods by the Seattle Comprehensive Plan, I noted that compact growth was a key feature of how Seattle is planning to develop in a sustainable manner. One supporting objective of the plan is to "direct the greatest share of future development to centers and urban villages and reduce the potential for dispersed growth along arterials and in other areas not conducive to walking, transit use, and cohesive community development."[78] Listed as one of the goals for the Seattle Comprehensive Plan, this example highlights Seattle's intention to reduce dispersed growth and focus on urban villages which are conducive to "walking,

---

[76] Ibid.
[77] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element pp. 1.3.
[78] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element pp. 1.4.

transit use, and cohesive community development." These examples of Seattle show that the city, through the plan, is working to encourage sustainable growth and increase density within urban villages.

Interpreting the Plan Themes

As noted above, my analysis showed some differences between the New York and Seattle plans in how they interpreted the issues of mixed use, open space, and walkability. In light of these differences, the literature provides some additional insights into the application of these themes.

Mixed Use as Systems Thinking

The Urban Landscape Initiative includes three main criteria for a Mixed Use Neighborhoods in the book Mixed Use Development Handbook. They include: "(1) three or more significant revenue-producing uses that in well-planned projects are mutually supporting, (2) significant physical and functional integration of project components including uninterrupted pedestrian connections and (3) development in conformance with a coherent plan."[79] One of the main questions addressed in mixed-use planning is, is the planning purposeful and do the different uses support each other. This is an argument for taking a systems approach to planning,

While the systems approach to planning is not a direct theme of my research, I believe urban planning, and more specifically neighborhood planning, greatly benefits from systems thinking and it is thus worth noting briefly. In their book Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan, Kelly and Becker describe three

---

[79] *Mixed-Use Development Handbook* pp. 3.

central aspects of systems thinking. "(1) Everything is a system. (2) Every system is part of one or more larger system (and thus, by corollary, every system is made up of smaller systems). (3) Most systems are open systems that exchange energy with their environments (which are larger systems)."[80] Systems thinking is critical to neighborhood planning in two ways. The first is that the neighborhood is a system, and whatever needs or services are found within that neighborhood should be viewed within their relationship to the rest of the system. The second is that the neighborhood plays an important role in the larger community, and it is important to balance the view of a neighborhood as an individual entity and part of a larger city. Both of these methods of applying systems thinking can be seen in PlaNYC 2030 and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

In PlaNYC mixed use planning is mainly applied through creating desirable destinations and implementing neighborhood programs. The FRESH program is one example of how PlaNYC implements programs that don't just look at one individual challenge, like access to nutritious food, but, instead, look at how a system can be altered, or a new one implemented, that can meet multiple needs of community members on various levels.

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan addresses the challenge of mixed use planning by proposing high density neighborhoods in a residential urban village style. The main objective of the Seattle Plan for mixed use is to provide goods and services within the neighborhood. The plan discusses the importance of using a mixed use residential urban village model for neighborhood planning, in order to bring services into

---

[80] Kelly and Becker. *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan.* pp. 23.

neighborhoods. The plan describes these as follows, "residential urban villages provide a focus of goods and services for residents and surrounding communities but may not provide a concentration of employment."[81] The residential urban village style emphasizes the availability of goods and services within the neighborhood.

While PlaNYC 2030 emphasizes mixed use planning from a perspective of program implementation and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan focuses on having goods and services accessible to residents, both are examples of seeing mixed use as systems thinking, and not isolated amenities within the neighborhood. The plans took that broad theme and specifically described plans that would work best for each plan's own neighborhood structure.

Use of Open Space as Destinations

One of the main questions in planning any public space is: why will people come here? In other words: what will draw people to this place? And, what will cause them to interact with the physical and social environments around them? The book Creating Walkable Places explains that "pedestrians need a reason to be in a place. One reason is social contact: people want to be around other people. Thus, if a place has a healthy street life-a critical mass of activity-people are more likely to incorporate it into their daily lives."[82] In both PlaNYC 2030 and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan, it was evident that there needs to be an intension for what purpose open space is designed to serve within a neighborhood. PlaNYC identified that the purpose for open space in New

---

[81] Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Urban Village Element pp. 1.4.
[82] Schmitz and Scully. *Creating Walkable Places. pp. 23.*

51

York City was to design a space for human activity and interaction. In contrast, Seattle asserted that open space should principally be designated for nature conservation. Both of these approaches are valid, because they identify a reason to include open space, and allow for critical thinking on how that space will be used. The question then becomes: how does one create a space with a "healthy street life" that will encourage interaction both with the environment and with others?

Destination

Schmitz and Scully provide a few key ideas for ways in which open space can be effectively used. They suggest three main ideas: "a mix of commercial tenants and noncommercial activity that will keep people coming back, a nearby population base of residents, workers, or both (as well as) daytime and evening uses, to keep life on the streets for as much of the day as possible."[83] As stated previously, the main theme connecting these three ideas is not so much how the space is used, but that it does have a use. It is also important to note that the quote discusses the importance of use at all times including "daytime and evening uses." The design of urban spaces needs to have interesting focal points or creative layouts that draw people to them. In the best instances, the space will also encourage and interaction between a wide array of visitors. These unique and meaningful interactions go along with the ideas that Jane Jacobs discussed around a "complex and highly developed form of order."

---

[83] Schmitz and Scully. *Creating Walkable Places. pp. 23.*

Area for Crime

The importance of having a use for open space was also noted by Jane Jacobs, when she warned about simply putting in open space with no specific purpose. She inquires, "More open space for what? For muggings? For bleak vacuums between buildings? Or for ordinary people to use and enjoy? But people do not use city open space just because it is there and because city planners and designers wish they would."[84] It is important for neighborhood plans to specifically address the issue of usefulness of a space. Again, it circles back to the question of what will draw people to a space. Are the plans identifying who they are hoping to draw to the place? Is there a sense of what will be done in this space? Does it need to be designed for a specific demographic or many demographics? These are questions that should be addressed in the planning process.

The idea of open space as a link between the environment and the community is discussed by Kelly and Becker as well. Kelly and Becker list some of the uses for open space that can prevent the sense of emptiness that has been cited by the previous sources. They encourage design and use of open space as follows.

> Today, there is an increasing interest in open-space linkages that provide visual and environmental connections among parts of a community. Often called greenways, these linkages provide routes for bike and pedestrian trails as well as habitat areas, allowing wildlife to thrive even in urban areas. Communities with complete systems of greenways find them heavily used, often for passive recreation-walking and biking and just enjoying the environment.[85]

---

[84] Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* pp. 90.
[85] Kelly and Becker. *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan.* pp. 163.

One of the important planning ideas that is highlighted by this quote is implementing

mixed-use organization into a space. They discuss combining recreational activities

with wild-life preservation. A key idea brought out in this planning is the importance of

giving residents of a community a vested interest in open space. That kind of planning

consists of more than just designating open space within a community. It requires

knowing the values and the culture of the neighborhood.

Walkability as Community

The life of a city resides not in its landmarks or endless high-rises, but in a

multitude of minute daily interactions that appear against the backdrop of an urban

environment. What encourages these interactions? From a logistical perspective there

are many techniques to make walkability safer and more convenient, which will be

examined here as well. However, this analysis will start from a more simplistic

standpoint. Why would people want to be walking? This relates to the theme of open

space, saying that walkability must not only be feasible, but also desirable. Schmitz and

Scully describe how mixed-use can add desirability to a walkable community.

> What makes a place attractive to pedestrians? From a design standpoint,
> there is not a set formula; such places are the product of the right
> location, a suitable mix of land uses and amenities, and design elements
> that enhance the walking experience. Not all locations can support
> pedestrian-oriented development. Walkable places benefit from high
> density, good access (both to and from the site, as well as good access to
> all components within a site), good transportation infrastructure, and
> proximity to compatible uses. These features all work together, creating
> multiple synergistic effects that, taken as a whole, determine how
> walkable an environment is."[86]

---

[86] Schmitz and Scully. *Creating Walkable Places. pp. 20.*

54

The first point made by Schmitz and Scully is that there is no set formula. As previously stated in the introduction, this agrees with the basic premise of my thesis. This is to say that effective neighborhood planning requires adaptation to the specific needs of the community, as well as an understanding of the greater context of the area surrounding the neighborhood. Schmitz and Scully also state that not all locations are walkable, or support pedestrian-oriented development. This statement requires not only understanding the needs of the community, but also the topography of the area and the social context that dictates the manner in which the space is used. Put simply one might say; know the people, know the geography and know how they relate to each other. From here one can start planning for the walkability of a neighborhood.

The next question might be, how does one design a neighborhood that is "suited to walkability"? This would mean, not only a neighborhood that is physically walkable, but also a neighborhood that includes amenities and attractions that encourage one to explore or engage with the area through walking. Kelly and Becker argue that this comes from the integration of public and private services as well as strong transportation links within the community.

> The goals of neighborhood planning are noble. At best, a neighborhood ought to be a partially self-contained mini-community, including within it many of the public and private services needed by its residents on a daily basis and providing good transportation links to allow residents to reach other services in the rest of the community.[87]

One of the main ideas that Kelly and Becker bring out is that a well planned neighborhood ought to be a "partially self-contained mini-community". This idea of a

---

[87] Kelly and Becker. *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan.* pp. 325.

mini-community means that in order to be walkable a neighborhood must be more than just compact, it must be well thought out. There needs to be an intention of both accessibility and character in the design for a walkable neighborhood. Something that looks deeper than the physical space between buildings or streets.

These designs must serve the many different abilities and needs of diverse community members, such as the elderly, young children, those with disability, or other unique needs a community might have. Schmitz and Scully emphasize that these needs can be met by placing as many homes as possible near a strong commercial core.

> Residential neighborhoods should be planned with as many homes as possible situated within walking distance of the commercial core. Parks and schools should be sited to allow children to walk to them. Residential neighborhoods should be designed with the least mobile residents in mind-children, senior citizens, and disabled people. Good neighborhood design emphasizes a sense of community without compromising privacy. To facilitate walking or biking between homes and other destinations, street patterns should emphasize connectivity and minimize distances between residents and other uses.[88]

Well-planned neighborhoods include a well laid out pattern within as well as effective connectivity to the downtown or other major urban areas nearby. While most of the strength of the neighborhood comes from a strong design within, it is also important to remember that the neighborhood is part of a wider city or region. Planning a neighborhood cannot be a completely isolated process, it should also be considered within the physical and cultural areas that surround it. Jane Jacobs states it as follows, "the lack of either economic or social self-containment is natural and necessary to city neighborhoods-simply because they are parts of cities."[89]

---

[88] Schmitz and Scully. *Creating Walkable Places.* pp. 37.
[89] Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* pp. 117.

The theme of walkability as community fits in well to PlaNYC 2030, as the plan is primarily initiative driven. In the case of walkability PlaNYC focuses on having desirable destinations that serve an array of purposes together to create a walkable neighborhood. The plan explains that, "by encouraging the location of residents, jobs, retail, and other services within a walkable distance from one another, we can encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation and decrease greenhouse gas emissions." [90] In PlaNYC 2030 homes, jobs and retail locations are referenced a key destinations that encourage walkability.

Neighborhood Planning: Where is it and where can it go from here?

This research by asking how to neighborhood plans (PlaNYC 2030 and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan) interpreted three themes: mixed use, open space and walkability. Why ask these questions? One reason is to learn how these three themes are interpreted by neighborhood plans, where there are differences in interpretations, and how these different interpretations have impacted the main objectives of the two plans. A second reason to ask these questions is to look at the tools that neighborhoods will use to answer these questions in the future.

One of the main objectives of this thesis has been to show the idea that there is no single way to approach neighborhood planning. As mentioned in the introduction, there is no cookie-cutter method, no simple process to follow to ensure that a neighborhood will be successful. This thesis has provided analysis of three important

---

[90] PlaNYC Housing and Neighborhoods, 28.

planning themes: mixed use, open space and walkability and demonstrated how to address these themes in urban neighborhood planning.

In the literature review chapter of this thesis as well as in the conclusion, there were examples of how neighborhood themes could be defined and implemented in a variety of different ways. These themes could mean different things in different neighborhoods, or to different planners, residents or visitors of the same neighborhood. This raises the question: how does planning move forward with multiple themes in play, none of them being completely right or wrong?

This thesis asserts that the most important aspect of writing or implementing a neighborhood plan is in understanding the neighborhood and its history. Designing neighborhoods is a human operation. Therefore, if a neighborhood is designed in a particular way it is because some person or group of people designed it that way. Who were they and what were their motives? Were they thinking about sustainability, identity or a variety of important themes for that neighborhood?

There is no correct way to understand a neighborhood, but looking at the interpretations of themes such as mixed use, open space and walkability would be a good place to start. The framework put forth in this thesis will allow those interested in looking more deeply at neighborhood planning, a context and three themes to begin the process.

These themes also reinforce the need for neighborhood planners to listen to the needs of the community members they are serving. Perhaps the best judges of neighborhood designs and plans are the people that inhabit the neighborhoods every day.

Bibliography

City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan. City of Seattle Department of Planning and
    Development, 2005.

Hopkins, Lewis. *Urban Development: The Logic of Making Plans.* Island Press, 2001.

Jacobs, Allan. *Making City Planning Work.* American Planning Association, 1980.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* Vintage Books, 1961.

Kelly, Eric and Barbara Becker. *Community Planning: An Introduction to the
    Comprehensive Plan.* Island Press, 2000

Levy, John M. *Contemporary Urban Planning.* 9th ed. Pearson Education, Inc., 2011.

"NYCTOURIST" Last Modified 2014. http://www.nyctourist.com/map1.htm

Plan New York City 2030. The City of New York. 2010.

Schmitz, Adrienne and Jason Scully. *Creating Walkable Places.* Urban Land Institute,
    2006.

Schwanke, Dean. *Mixed-Use Development Handbook.* Urban Land Institute, 1987.