

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOLUNTARY COORDINATION AMONG LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM A REGIONAL LAND USE PLANNING PROCESS

BY

DUSTIN ALLRED

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Assistant Professor Arnab Chakraborty, Chair
Professor Robert Olshansky
Assistant Professor Bev Wilson
Professor David Wilson

Abstract:

Regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance has been portrayed as a way to address the fragmented development priorities of local jurisdictions. The Sacramento region's Blueprint has been identified as an exemplar of this 'New Regionalism' but we know relatively little about how comprehensive regional land use plans like Blueprint influence the development priorities of local jurisdictions. I use Blueprint to investigate whether this 'New Regionalism' has lived up to its stated promise of achieving more sustainable patterns of regional development through collaborative and cooperative approaches to regional planning. I evaluate the effectiveness of the Blueprint implementation effort using a mix of methods – a spatial analysis of development activity as measured by residential building permits, and a comparative case study of several jurisdictions to find out in richer, more nuanced detail, what has happened at the local level as jurisdictions tried to align their development priorities with the region's growth principles. Case study jurisdictions examined include Sacramento, Davis, Elk Grove and Sacramento County. Data was generated from interviews with planners, city officials, and stakeholders, along with an analysis of planning documentation and media accounts.

The analysis shows that implementation has been selective and uneven, with the plan's influence mediated by fiscal and legal constraints or opportunities, NIMBYism, local culture, existing urban form characteristics, and the 'growth first' mentality of some local leaders, the business community and developers. This suggests that voluntary governance arrangements may not be the optimal setting for achieving regional goals, particularly with regard to issues of affordable housing and the equity implications of regional growth.

Nonetheless, Blueprint has inserted a regional awareness into the agendas of local planners, politicians, the development community, and the public. The results offer planners a window onto the different motivations and logics that shape local land use policy and provide a new understanding of the importance of regional processes like Blueprint in creating a space where alternative urban development paradigms can be argued and debated. Going forward, planners should consider alternatives to the broad based approach of voluntary governance, tailoring policy approaches to the political context of specific jurisdictions – allowing for flexibility through incentives in some places, while a more stringent regulatory approach is called for in others.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Local officials often find it very difficult to make things-regionalism work, which requires negotiating initial agreements and continually balancing interests among many local communities. But what so many metropolitan areas desperately need – people-regionalism – is even tougher to accomplish (Cisneros 1995, 9).

People-regionalism must address the heart of America’s ‘urban problem’ – the new face of poverty. Forty years ago rural workers and the elderly constituted the greatest number of poor people in this country. Today, tremendous improvements in Social Security, Medicare and Federal pension laws have largely eliminated poverty among senior citizens, and the constant industrialization of American agriculture and migration to urban areas have reduced the numbers of rural poor. The most extreme poverty in America is now found in geographically isolated, economically depressed, and racially segregated inner cities and older declining suburbs. Inner cities have become warehouses of America’s poorest citizens (ibid., 9).

These quotes come from an essay by Henry Cisneros, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) during the mid-1990s entitled “Regionalism: The New Geography of

Opportunity.” The essay is an attempt to frame regionalism¹ as a way to plan for the sustainable development of our cities with a specific focus on reducing the inequality between central cities and their suburbs, and mitigating the “harmful effects of sprawl.” He argues that decades of urban decentralization have isolated inner city residents, depriving them of opportunity and creating the conditions of decline and disinvestment. For him, regionalism is seen as a way to overcome the fragmentation of local jurisdictions, remove barriers to affordable housing and enhance the overall economic prospects of the region’s residents. Similarly, the goals and principles of the Sacramento Area Council of Government’s (SACOG) Blueprint plan for regional growth promises to balance the triangle of sustainability (social equality, economic vitality, and environmental protection) through a “bold vision for growth” that promises compact, mixed-use development, along with housing and transit choices as an alternative to low density development (SACOG 2010, 1). The Blueprint brought together a diverse group of “local officials, civic groups, environmental advocates, the development community, and the public” in 2001 for a 3-year process to create a collaborative vision to guide the region’s growth over the next 40 years (SACOG 2010, 1). However, what has been implemented at the local level is less clear. We know relatively little about how regional land use plans like Blueprint influence the development priorities of local jurisdictions. Compliance with the Blueprint is entirely voluntary and SACOG has no authority over local land use decisions, raising questions about the influence of the plan. Ultimately, local jurisdictions are left to selectively incorporate regional goals as they see fit.

¹ Regionalism here is understood as the coordination of metropolitan urban policy among interdependent local political jurisdictions (Basolo 2003).

This study examines how local jurisdictions balance the demands of various interests and coalitions as they engage with regional planning processes like Blueprint. To do this I ask the following research questions: *Can voluntary regional planning processes affect a change in local development priorities? Is this influence apparent in regional development activity? If not, what are the factors and forces that prevent local implementation and how do these pressures on local jurisdictions shape implementation efforts?* To answer these questions, I empirically chronicle the implementation efforts related to the Sacramento region's Blueprint project to find out if voluntary regional collaboration is an effective alternative to regional government for metropolitan areas facing the mounting ecological impacts of low-density sprawl and the social and fiscal implications of continued urban decentralization.

The New Regionalism and Voluntary Governance

In the last two decades, regional planning has been hailed in the planning literature for its promise to facilitate more sustainable and equitable patterns of development by matching land use policy coordination to the scale at which labor markets, commute sheds and housing markets operate (Basolo 2003; Foster 2011; Swanstrom 2001; Wheeler 2002). However, when it comes to making land use decisions, the autonomy of the local jurisdiction has historically limited the scope of actual regional solutions. Although regionalism and regional planning are not new ideas in planning practice, Sacramento's Blueprint project represents a specific type of regionalism, one that is increasingly used by metropolitan areas lacking a formal regional planning authority. Dubbed the 'New Regionalism,' these processes rely on a framework of informal and voluntary institutional arrangements for planning and plan implementation

(Wheeler 2002). Such processes have gained in popularity because they allow for a regional dialogue without placing limits on local decision-making authority.

However, less is known about how the plans and policies based on these regional processes are accommodated and implemented at the local level. These processes rely on the tenets of social learning, and communicative and collaborative planning approaches, as a way to generate the political support needed to overcome local resistance and reprioritize development agendas. Critics have questioned the effectiveness of such arrangements as a means to move beyond the parochial interests of a politically fragmented region. To work, these processes require a robust civic culture, but studies have found the necessary civic capacity is often lacking (Jonas and Pincetl 2006), leaving the processes themselves vulnerable to capture by special interests and civic elites (Fischler 2000). In the end, local jurisdictions retain control over development priorities and are as likely to act in self-interest, as they are to support regional visions for future growth (Hastings and Basolo 2003; Norris 2001; Rosan 2007). Critics also suggest that plans produced by these processes represent a regionalism to the lowest common denominator, with a consensus produced to minimize conflict, leaving difficult issues unresolved (Foster 2011). In the end, compromise and coalition building weakens mandates and requirements, and the consideration of issues like regional equity that might produce local winners and losers are not addressed. (Barbour and Deakin 2012).

Others have observed this approach as a shift towards neoliberal spatial practices,² facilitated by a more inclusive 'civic regionalism' and focused one-sidedly on market based solutions (Swyngedouw 2005; Brenner 2002). These studies suggest that while such processes

² Spatial practices here are interpreted as the range of tools and techniques used by local governments to manage and shape the built environment (Dierwetcher 2008).

enable new forms of public participation, they also empower new actors, disempower others, and redefine the meaning of political citizenship. As a result, a much greater role in urban policy making is given to private economic actors and civil society groups (e.g. Chambers of Commerce). There is an increased reliance on public-private partnerships to leverage investment in support of urban policy (Lehrer and Laidley 2009). These critics suggest that resulting regionalism in planning practice has lost some of its 'progressive' potential to address interurban issues like affordable housing or revenue sharing, what scholars like Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka (2011) called *community development or policy reform regionalism*. Instead, they contend that regional planning policies and practices have come to favor what Friedmann (1987) called a 'market rationality' over a 'social rationality,' and this focus is attributed to the particular institutional arrangement of voluntary governance. These debates raise important questions about what has been represented as a social innovation (voluntary governance), and whether or not this should be seen as what Swyngedouw (2005) describes as a restructuring of political democracy that can ultimately produce a democratic deficit.

To date, studies of this New Regionalism agree that regions are confronted with mounting collective action problems and the need to find a way to better coordinate the development priorities of local jurisdictions. Most are pessimistic about the ability of a voluntary regionalism to produce a regional ethos in the face of self-interested local governments (Foster 2011). Yet surveys of contemporary regional planning processes document a growing interest with regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance (Knaap and Lewis 2011). Although these processes face significant barriers to success, their potential for uneven and surprising results demands a more complex assessment. It remains to

be seen whether the New Regionalism can help achieve Cisneros' "geography of opportunity" or whether these processes are part of a "much longer-standing social movement spearheaded by large-scale business interests" seeking to "rationalize land use and environmental planning, coordinate infrastructure, and make government more fiscally efficient and responsive to growth" to the detriment of other agendas (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 482).

Sacramento's Blueprint Project: The Local Implementation of Regional Plans

To answer these questions, this study presents both a spatial analysis of development outcomes and a comparative case study of the implementation efforts in four jurisdictions. Using the larger case of Sacramento's Blueprint regional land use planning processes, the analysis identifies how the often conflicting spatial rationalities³ or logics of land use policy are reflected in the political struggle for local support and implementation of the larger regional vision. The Sacramento region was chosen both because it has been featured in numerous academic articles about the New Regionalism, and it has been recognized with multiple awards and accolades for its perceived ability to overcome the fragmentation of local governance to forge a progressive consensus about the future of region-wide growth. Four places within the region have been selected as cases to capture a range of social, economic and political contexts, including the historic central city, a first ring suburb, the exurban fringe, and a regional job center. The cases have also been chosen to capture a range of rationalities or

³ The use of the term *spatial rationalities* with regard to the spatial practices they legitimize comes from the geographer Margo Huxley (2006), who has described them as the motivations, ambitions, assumed truths and taken-for granted justifications that drive urban politics and planning.

theorized reasons why they might support or resist implementation of the plan’s vision (Table 1).

Table 1: Case Selection and Spatial Rationalities

	Type	Rationalities	Practices
Davis	Regional job center	Unity (Justice); Engagement (Diversity)	Smart growth; Inclusionary housing; Environmental protection
Elk Grove	Fast growing low-density suburb	Retreat (Freedom)	Low-density zoning; Fiscal zoning; Exclusionary zoning
Sacramento City	Central city	Unity (Justice); Tradition (Nostalgia); Engagement (Diversity)	Infill; TOD; Redevelopment; Historic preservation; Community development
Sacramento County	Mixed urban and rural	Tradition (Nostalgia); Retreat (Freedom)	Low-density zoning; Fiscal zoning; Exclusionary zoning; Community development

Despite SACOG’s claims of widespread Blueprint support at the local level, I argue that implementation more accurately reflects the selective incorporation of the regional vision based on what makes sense to a specific urban development regime, or the place-based characteristics of a particular jurisdiction. Although Blueprint has successfully inserted a regional awareness into the agendas of local planners, politicians, the development community, and the public, the influence of the regional plan is limited to the degree that it advances the interests of local stakeholders in the development process or resolves a particular governance dilemma. As a result, the spatial rationalities employed by a particular urban regime (e.g. the place-specific growth machine) are important factors that shape local implementation efforts and ultimately, development outcomes as they legitimate certain policy approaches and make unfeasible others. As regional planners consider the next steps they need to recognize that implementation efforts are mediated by these local rationalities which can be both enabling and disabling with respect to regional goals. The region is not monolithic and regional planners

should be aware of the different motivations and desires of member jurisdictions. Planners should consider alternatives to the broad, consensus based approach of voluntary governance, tailoring policy approaches to address the diversity of political contexts in specific jurisdictions – allowing for flexibility through incentives in some places, while a more stringent regulatory approach requiring consistency and evaluating outcomes is called for in others.

Despite the multiplicity of rationalities employed by local jurisdictions, some common themes emerged from conversations with local stakeholders regarding the challenges of local implementation. A feature of successful plan implementation across the cases is an emphasis on projects that are both Blueprint consistent and help portray the jurisdiction as entrepreneurial – enhancing the economic value of urban (or suburban) space and attracting investment. Local implementation efforts focused on the urban design and ‘greening’ elements of the plan (e.g. place-based reimagining and urban transformation) have not been matched with an emphasis on addressing questions of equity and affordable housing. When regions rely on processes of voluntary governance they create new arenas in which powerful constituencies like the growth machine can influence urban policy and promote a particular interpretation of sustainable development, evident both in the way stakeholders describe plan implementation and the type of projects highlighted as Blueprint consistent. The comments of regional stakeholders serve to confirm the adaptive capacity of the growth machine in particular as it works to coopt New Regionalist processes like Blueprint, and repurpose them as a way open up new spaces (both infill and ‘greenfield’) to development and redevelopment. Ultimately, these findings raise important questions about the ability of processes like Blueprint to address redistributive issues – an underlying premise of sustainability.

Despite reservations among scholars about the prospects and meaning these processes, the practice is gaining in popularity. The Blueprint process is now a formal requirement for all regions in the State of California as part of the State's Senate Bill (SB) 375.⁴ Nation-wide, regional planning processes commonly employ a framework similar to Blueprint as a way to shape regional growth without limiting local land use authority. However, these findings challenge the hegemonic discourse of regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance as the only (e.g. politically palatable) way forward at the regional scale. The results of this study illustrate important considerations for planners and policy makers as they consider the options for managing the growth of metropolitan areas. Unless States grant statutory power to regional institutions, implementation efforts will be limited and shaped more by the prevailing discourses of urban policy – neoliberalism, globalization, and interurban competition – than a vision of collective region-wide sustainability. The following section provides an overview of the dissertation's organization and summarizes the study's findings and conclusions.

Dissertation Outline

I start with a review of the literature on regionalism and regional planning in **Chapter 2**. I argue that a better understanding of the historical precedents of regionalism and regional planning provide key insights into the institutional arrangements of the New Regionalism. I also argue that critiques of regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance provide

⁴ California Senate Bill 375, also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, mandates that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each region develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that integrates transportation, land-use and housing policies as a way to achieve regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets.

important insights into both the likely success of such regional planning process and the theorized limits to their effectiveness. In **Chapter 3** I go into detail on how I have constructed the analytical framework used to answer my research questions. This chapter begins with a discussion of the larger case study selection and concludes with how I have framed my research questions. I draw on the work of Dierwetcher (2008) and While et al. (2004) in framing the obstacles to local support for regionalism and regional planning. I argue that institutional and cultural barriers, competition among municipalities for growth and resources, and the conflicting spatial rationalities used to advance place-making policies often limit local coordination of development priorities. These spatial rationalities legitimate local planning policies and practices that either work to implement regional goals or not. These “rationalities – protecting traditions, promoting liberty, facilitating diversity, and demanding justice – work just under the philosophical surface of the overall paradigm to give intellectual shape to the concrete planning goals and overall spatial promises” that planners set out to achieve (Dierwetcher 2008, 88).

Chapter 4 explains in detail how data was collected and constructed, and the methods of analysis that were used. The study consists of two phases that involve both statistical and spatial models, along with qualitative case studies including interviews of key stakeholders about the implementation efforts of the SACOG plan in four jurisdictions. **Chapter 5** attends to the first phase of this study, which examines the degree to which development activity after the adoption and implementation of the Blueprint plan is consistent with the Blueprint Preferred Scenario and Growth Principles. I use a model of Blueprint consistency by regional neighborhood to evaluate the location characteristics of post-process development activity. I

find that the locational characteristics of development activity post-Blueprint are not more consistent with the plan's Growth Principles when compared pre-Blueprint activity. In **Chapter 6**, I examine the aftermath of this process by looking at the outcomes of the plan and its influence on planning practice and land use policy in four local jurisdictions across the region. Questions I address are: How has the plan been implemented at the local level and how does this relate to the local context? Why do some places go to great lengths to implement the regional vision while others do next to nothing? What shapes the characteristics of implementation efforts? As Brenner (2002, 18) warns of this "newest metropolitan regionalism," there is "nothing intrinsically positive... about the metropolitan or regional scale of governance" and that until they are "vested with substantive political content and organizational capacities through place-specific sociopolitical struggles" the outcomes of these processes are uncertain. Here I use a qualitative case-study approach, analyzing planning documents and reports, along with interviews of participant stakeholders from these four places to identify: 1) the contextual factors that constrain or enable the choices of decision makers with respect to implementing regional land use plans, and 2) the forces that influence how decision makers choose among policy options at the local level.

I conclude with a discussion of the results from both phases of the study and policy implications for planners in **Chapter 7**. I argue that the results show local implementation has been selective and uneven, with the plan's influence mediated by fiscal and legal constraints or opportunities, NIMBYism, local culture, existing urban form characteristics, and the 'growth first' mentality of some local leaders, the business community and developers. This suggests that voluntary regional collaboration may not be the best arrangement for achieving

comprehensive regional goals, particularly with regard to issues of affordable housing and the equity implications of regional growth. While this approach to regional planning has inherent limitations, the results suggest a way forward and highlight some potential next steps that build on what has worked so far. While there is a case to be made for continuing to push for stronger mandates, planners can also work to build on existing arrangements and local accomplishments. The Blueprint project represents an important step in working to build political communities and coalitions that support more comprehensive regional land use planning. Blueprint succeeded in articulating a new set of goals to guide regional growth, an important first step that has been augmented by ongoing regional planning efforts and a program of fiscal incentives and technical assistance managed by SACOG to encourage Blueprint consistent projects and plan.

Nonetheless, I argue that a framework of voluntary governance, although not entirely unsuccessful, is nevertheless limited in its ability to affect a change at the local level. Local planning is a place-specific political struggle for how land use policy is prioritized, and how the benefits (or costs) of growth are distributed. Plan consistency with regional goals is just one pressure among many on local decision makers and the outcome is uncertain when regions lack mechanisms to hold member jurisdictions accountable to their commitments. Local debates also reflect a struggle for the meaning of key concepts like sustainability. Whether it is new development or redevelopment, both local leaders and developers attempt to cast projects in a favorable light because 'sustainability' exerts a powerful influence on urban politics. As I show, sustainability is most often interpreted locally and regionally through a lens of environmentalism, leaving questions of social and spatial equity unaddressed as projects are

celebrated for their walkability or incorporation of 'green' best practices. As a result, I argue that although the regionalism of SACOG's Blueprint has created a region-wide conversation about the externalities of uncoordinated growth, it ultimately falls short of the progressive vision sketched out by Cisneros.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The world is becoming increasingly urban. While the impact of this shift varies by place, the historic effect of this increase in urban populations has been the steady expansion of urban boundaries outwards, overwhelming the authority of any single political jurisdiction. Myron Orfield (2002, 1), a leading demographer at the Brookings Institution, starts off his latest edition of *American Metropolitics* by describing this uncoordinated regional growth as an “evolving pattern of intense, unequal competition and inefficient, environmentally damaging local land use” that “threatens every community and region.” How can cities manage the externalities of growth when political boundaries no longer correspond to functional territories? This presents a timely challenge for both scholars and practitioners, as policy makers struggle to find solutions that balance the demands of local residents for livable communities, with the economic imperatives of a hegemonic “growth first” ideology. Orfield goes on to join a growing chorus of planners and scholars calling for policy reform to allow for the regional coordination of local planning. This movement, dubbed the New Regionalism, argues for a more inclusive regional planning based on informal and voluntary institutional arrangements.

However, critics have questioned the effectiveness of such arrangements. Local jurisdictions ultimately retain control over development priorities and are as likely to act in self-interest, as they are to support regional visions for future growth. Are these arrangements ineffectual by design? Or do they reflect place-specific political responses to the effects of economic restructuring and neoliberal state restructuring? The answers to these questions inform the expectations associated with regional scale planning solutions. This chapter looks at the existing research to examine the promise and practice of regionalism and regional planning

in the United States. The **first** section looks at the arguments made for regional land use planning, and regionalism more broadly, as a policy approach to deal with the challenges facing American cities related to uncoordinated growth. While the promises of regional planning are made clear in the literature, I argue that we know relatively little about the efficacy of New Regionalist approaches to regional planning. The **second** section looks at the history of regionalism and regional planning in the US as a way to understand how past attempts at implementing regional solutions have shaped both the institutional context of regional policy making and the scope of the problems it focuses on. The **third** section looks at contemporary regional movements, including the New Regionalism, and the existing literature evaluating their effectiveness. The **fourth** section focuses on the specific experience of regional planning in California, the setting of the case under study. The limitations of similarly civic-minded approaches in California's past and across the nation raise important questions about the ability of a voluntary regionalism to implement a comprehensive planning agenda. I conclude with a **fifth** section on the literature that questions the efficacy of this approach, particularly as a paradigm that can realize more equitable urban futures – an implicit goal of the New Regionalism.

In the US, sprawling and segmented patterns of urban development and land use have been the dominant form of urbanization during the post-war years of economic and spatial expansion. These trends contribute to excessive resource consumption, regional congestion, inefficient service provision, environmental degradation and spatial inequality (Harvey 2009; Pastor et al. 2009; Wheeler 2002). While strategies and policy approaches abound for dealing with the negative externalities of this growth, planners, policy makers and scholars have

increasingly latched on to growth management land use controls as prescriptions for targeting the ills of metropolitan growth (Basolo 2003). Growth management, and more recently planning paradigms like smart growth, New Urbanism and sustainable development have been promoted as guides for land use policy to address these issues. Common to all is an emphasis on regionalism as a way to overcome the fragmented nature of land use controls in the US context (Barbour and Deakin 2012; Duany 2001).

A focus on the regional scale by planning scholars and urban theorists is hardly new. An interest in regional solutions to the problems of metropolitan growth goes back at least as far as the planning profession itself (Fishman 2000). Post-war planners in particular have struggled to create institutional forms that allow for a more coordinated metropolitan growth. As a result, most regions have some form of regional governance, whether this is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Council of Government (COG), metropolitan transportation authority or some combination of the three. However, these organizations have been historically marginalized, limited in focus and authority, and largely subservient to the local governments they advise (Barbour 2002; Rosan 2007). Control of land use policy, a key determinant in the character and location of new growth, has remained the exclusive domain of local governments.

Recent calls for a new round of growth management solutions crafted at the regional scale have gained enough momentum to have been identified as a movement (the 'New Regionalism') with a consensus around a particular set of planning principles (Downs 1994; Mitchell-Weaver et al. 2000; Rusk 1993; Wheeler 2002). This new wave of regionalism differs from past attempts (e.g. Portland's Metro and others) in its reliance on a governance

framework, or voluntary regionalism to implement a regional plan for future development. Regional governance assumes that “existing institutions can be harnessed in new ways, that cooperation can be carried out on a fluid and voluntary basis among localities and that people can best regulate themselves through horizontally linked institutions” rather than a formal regional government (Savitch and Vogel 2000, 161). The exact form these institutions take varies but they have in common a reliance on the communicative and collaborative tenets of planning practice, often utilizing visioning exercises in what is promoted as a bottom-up, stakeholder led process to create region-wide land use plans (Wheeler 2002).

Critics of this New Regionalism range from skeptics of collaborative governance to those who see something more insidious at work. Norris (2001, 532) and others question whether regional governance can occur without metropolitan government, particularly in the context of “greater governmental fragmentation and historically stronger local government autonomy.” Others, like Brenner (2000) and Swyngedouw (2005, 1992), see the emergence of these informal institutional arrangements as a “governance-beyond-the-state” that give a much larger role in policy making to “private economic actors on the one hand and to parts of civil society on the other in self-managing what until recently was provided or organized by the national or local state” with ambiguous results.

The Regional Problem

Once a country of farms, small towns, and big cities, the United States today is a nation of regions. More than 8 out of 10 Americans live in one of 300 metropolitan areas. Nearly half the population lives in the 25 largest regions.

Within these 25 regions, thousands of cities compete fiercely with each other, with little common social, political, or economic strategy (Orfield 2003, 1).

The defining feature of post war urbanization, low-density development or sprawl, has accelerated in recent years (Duany et al. 2001; Pendall 1999). Recent research shows that urban areas in the US are expanding at a rate about twice that of population growth, and average densities continue to decrease (HUD 2000; Seto et al. 2011; Ewing et al. 2002). These patterns of development have given rise to problems of affordable housing, congestion, environmental degradation and questions about inter-jurisdictional equity (Burchell et al. 2002). As Rosan (2007) and others suggest, regions continue to sprawl at least partly because of the development decisions of local jurisdictions and their failure to consider the collective impact of their atomized actions (Campbell 1996; Konishi 2000; Downs 1994). As described by Knaap and Lewis (2011, 178), the logic of regional planning is obvious because “transportation and wastewater networks, natural ecosystems, and social and economic interdependencies extend beyond the boundaries of most local governments, they require regional-scale planning and management.” Similarly, Wheeler (2009) suggests that unsustainable patterns of urbanization have necessitated a new planning framework and is providing the inertia needed for greater regional coordination. This section looks at problems facing the cities and suburbs of regions in the US and the arguments made by scholars and planners for regional solutions.

The literature explains the inability of local jurisdictions to adequately plan for the regional commons as a series of collective action problems. While the region as a whole would benefit from the implementation of a regional plan, the perceived costs to any one individual jurisdiction, means that local governments are unwilling to take decisions that might not

maximize their benefit. Collectively, the decisions of local jurisdictions result in negative externalities that hurt the region, and over the long term, the individual jurisdiction itself (Orfield 1997). The literature suggests several justifications for regional planning including: 1) environmental sustainability, 2) institutional fit and efficiency, and 3) regional inequality. These three topics are discussed in more detail below.

Environmental Sustainability

Foster (2011), in developing a regional “ethos” cites the impact of uncoordinated development on the environment as a key justification for regional planning. The piecemeal development allowed by local jurisdictions “paves over farmland, destroys poorly understood and ecologically undervalued habitats, and fragments forestland” (Dierwechter 2008, 8). Sprawling and uncoordinated patterns of suburban development consume more resources by default (Cervero and Arrington 2008; Ewing and Cervero 2001; Ewing et al 2002; Ewing and Rong 2008; Kahn 2000; Newman and Kenworthy 1999; TRB 2009). Large amounts of fuel are required to move goods and people over great distances everyday. It requires more roads, wire, pipes, concrete and land than compact development (Duany et al. 2000; Orr 2008). Sprawl consumes more than twice the amount of land as alternative patterns of development with a greater impact on the loss of natural habitat loss and deforestation (Orr 2008). Political fragmentation allows local jurisdictions to zone for low-density development types in areas that would otherwise be better suited for more compact development (Lewis 1996). Studies find that more fragmented metropolitan areas in the US are in fact associated with lower densities and less compact development (Carruthers and Ulfarsson 2002; Razin and Rosentraub 2000).

Institutional Fit, Norms and Questions of Efficiency

Basolo (2003) and Norris (2001) show how metropolitan fragmentation results in wasteful and inefficient duplication of services and infrastructure. Other studies suggest that policies targeting growth management are most effective when implemented at the regional scale because they are able to internalize spillover effects (Swanstrom 2001; Wheeler 2002; Womersley 2006). Several studies have confirmed this by comparing the level of government fragmentation with measurable outcomes of urban development such as density, urbanized land area, property values and public expenditures on infrastructure (Barnes and Ledebur 1998; Peirce 1993; Wallis 1994). A fragmented government structure drives competition between local governments creates inefficiencies and limits gains from scale economies in service provision (Downs 1994; Rusk 1993; 1999).

Studies have also shown that infrastructure investments meant to relieve congestion and reduce emissions have often induced more traffic and facilitated more sprawl before reaching a new congested equilibrium (Cervero 2003; Giuliano 2004). Local jurisdictions also have an incentive to attract new growth regardless of regional goals, famously identified by Logan and Molotch (1987) in their analysis of the local growth machine. This has also been interpreted as contributing to a lack of local self-determination as “competition between localities for tax ratables that undermines the sovereign powers of local governments to shape future development” limits their willingness to reject types or locations of growth that might not otherwise be consistent with regional goals (Swanstrom 2001, 491). This logic has often been used to justify fiscal or restrictive zoning, just one example of local land use policies that

might make sense at the local scale but introduce inefficiencies when their regionally impact is considered. Other studies have looked at the impact of zoning policies that restrict or exclude certain types of development, like multi-family housing, unnecessarily inflating housing values and increasing the risk of foreclosure (Chakraborty et al. 2013).

Regional Inequality

The uncoordinated pursuit of revenue maximizing growth by local jurisdictions has implications for regional equity as well. The regional housing literature points to housing market interdependence among jurisdictions as another reason to plan for housing needs at the regional scale. The exclusionary zoning policies and NIMBY attitudes of suburban jurisdictions limits the production of affordable housing, creating a spatial mismatch between newly forming job centers and low-income residents (Basolo and Hastings 2003; Chakraborty et al. 2010). Low-income households are burdened with higher transportation costs and commute times. The lack of affordable housing for low-income people close to available jobs results in income and racial segregation, inadequate physical conditions and prohibitively high transportation costs (Downs 1994; Davis 1991; Schneider, 1989). This also affects the opportunities of low-income residents to access higher quality services because they are unable to afford housing in suburban jurisdictions where these opportunities are located. Other studies suggest that central cities are regional economic engines on which suburban workers and governments depend (Blair et al. 1996; Barnes and Ledebare 1998; Savitch et al. 1993).

Even with the recent growth suburban job centers and multi-nucleated urban forms, studies have suggested that this decentralization has had a negative effect on the economic

performance of regions as a whole (Orfield 1997, Rusk 1993, 1997). At the same time, federal tax policies that favor homeownership essentially subsidize suburban development at the expense of central city renters (Dierwechter 2008). The average cost pricing structures for services also means that low-income central city residents in-effect subsidize suburban development, making these developments more profitable for developers (Carruthers and Ulfarsson 2003). Residentially exclusive suburbs have been the largest beneficiaries of regional infrastructure and economic growth (Katz and Bernstein 1998). The suburban decentralization of regions has contributed to a long-term drain of population, jobs and resources from central cities, leaving them with a diminished tax base unable to pay for the upkeep of an urban infrastructure designed for a much larger population (Dierwechter 2008; Orfield 1997, 2002).

As the demographic characteristics of the suburbs changes with time, these issues are no longer limited to the impact of local exclusionary policies on central city residents. As Orfield (2002) makes clear in *American Metropolitcs*, the suburbs are no longer wealthy homogenous enclaves. Economic and racial change is occurring in both older suburbs and the exurban fringe as central city residents move outward to escape poverty, improve school choices, or seek more affordable options of homeownership (Katz et al. 2005). Some communities are adding population at a rate faster than the expansion of a tax base sufficient to pay for new city services and infrastructure, raising doubts about the stability and resiliency of these places.

The History of Regionalism and Regional Planning in the US

The previous section makes a clear case for the efficacy of and need for regional approaches. However, despite this evidence, regional scale planning has rarely received

sustained political support. As much as regionalism has been a recurrent story in the history of planning practice and urban policy, resistance to regional planning among local jurisdictions has limited both its effectiveness and the extent of its implementation. This section looks at the history of regional planning as a way to understand the institutional context in which regional plans are being created today. The ideas of regional planning are not new in and of themselves, and the history of efforts to implement regional solutions go a long way towards explaining why regional institutions today take the form of voluntary agencies with limited authority, focused on issues with broad support.

Progressive Era Planning and the Region

Peter Hall (2002), a leading historian of urban planning, begins the story of regional planning in the US with Patrick Geddes and his ideas regarding the harmonious relationship of a city to its larger region. Both Geddes and later disciples like Lewis Mumford, Clarence Stein and Benton Mackaye, conceived of the region as a network of planned cities located such that they allow for a symbiotic relationship with nature in contrast to what they saw as the exploitive basis of capitalist cities (Fishman 2000; Hall 2002). Their vision was to be achieved through the deconcentration of cities and their overcrowded populations. The Garden City designs of Ebenezer Howard were influential on the group and leant their efforts a utopian feel. Groups like the Regional Plan Association of America (RPAA) advocated for a holistic, urban ecological approach to studying how cities were linked to the surrounding countryside, providing normative prescriptions for the planning of new cities as a way to limit the sprawling conurbations of places like New York City. Regional planning was conceptualized as planning for

a cultural region, larger than any one city, and attuned to the natural setting (Seltzer and Carbonell 2011). Informed by the ideas of socialism and other anti-capitalist movements migrating west from Europe, these groups had a decidedly left-leaning and idealistic bent that saw something like regional planning as a way for the state to intervene and remedy the excesses of the free-market by providing for an urban design not based on class exploitation (Weaver 1984).

This was contrasted with what later came to be known as ‘metropolitan regionalism,’ focused on creating efficient links between the central city and the countryside (Fishman 2000). For the ‘metropolitanists,’ regional planning was legitimated as way to sustain the economic and cultural primacy of the central city (Seltzer and Carbonell 2011). The often-cited exemplars of this approach are the 1929 Regional Plan for New York and its Environs. This plan and others like it promoted the efficient planned growth of large scale cities as opposed to the decentralized satellite cities envisioned by regionalists like Geddes and Mumford. Much like the reactionary impetus of contemporary iterations of regional planning (e.g. concerns about economic competitiveness, or the impacts of sprawl), the regional plan for New York was a response to concerns about the city’s ability to accommodate projected growth without compromising economic functionality. The RPAA were in fact vocal critics of the plan, claiming that the plan failed to question the assumed projections of growth, and did not address issues of social justice, particularly with regard to the housing needs of low-income groups. It is, however, the economic functionality argument that has gained the largest following through the years, some have argued, because of its ties to and promotion by local elites and business leaders as a way to ensure the continued economic vitality of the established central city

(Brenner 2002; Jonas and Pincetl 2006). These themes of regional planning for economic competitiveness now form the heart of what has become a hegemonic understanding of regionalism as practiced by planners and policy makers in the US context.

The 'metropolitanists' perspective quickly gained favor with the political and economic elites of the cities who were willing to accept the interventions of planning by the state if the general purpose was to solve problems of efficiency. This initial split, characterized by scholars like Fishman (2000) as a divide between the city and suburbs, also predicted the eventual domination of regional planning by concerns about the competitiveness of place at the expense of the more normative or idealistic values represented by the early 'regionalist' proponents. The 'regionalists' were to have some success in advancing their policies during the national response to the depression of the 1930s, particularly with regard to social housing, but a post-war political environment that had little tolerance for anything that hinted at socialism or communism ultimately tempered their idealism. Although idealism in regional planning would surface again, it would be largely limited to concerns about the environment.

The dominant post-war regionalism was a pragmatic regionalism based on applying the methods of a scientific rational planning to address the challenges of accommodating a period of rapid growth. 'Metropolitanists' ideas continued to hold sway as planners sought to preserve the primacy of the central city in fast suburbanizing regions through urban renewal policies. As with early efforts in Chicago and New York, these interventions were mostly concerned with maintaining the economic competitiveness of cities facing decentralization at both a regional and national scale. Groups representing business interests like the Commercial Club of Chicago often commissioned these plans (Knaap and Lewis 2011). Although some scholars see a

'regionalist' imprint in federal post-war transportation and housing policies, there was never any serious attempt to build the satellite cities envisioned by the Garden City movement or the RPAA. What resulted instead was an expansion of the central city conurbation through suburban sprawl. While new cities formed, they served mostly as bedroom communities for central city commuters. These post-war patterns of development led to even greater congestion and pollution. During the same period, regional scientists expanded the definition of a region beyond the spatial extent of a place to include the economic linkages of sub-national economies. According to Wheeler (2002), these efforts were primarily focused on problems of underdevelopment and economic competitiveness. The theme of economic competitiveness would go on to become a dominant narrative in regional planning. Towards the end of the 1960s, concerns about environmental degradation and impacts to suburban quality of life galvanized what would become a powerful middle- and upper-class environmentalist coalition intent on preserving the rural idyll of their communities. This movement created a renewed interest in regional planning, particularly as a way to mitigate the negative externalities of continued urban decentralization through the better management of growth.

Post War Regionalism and The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Policy

Buoyed by the legislative successes of the environmental movement during the 1960s and 1970s, regional planning increasingly came to be seen as a way to use spatial planning to mitigate the negative externalities of urbanization. Popularized by Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature*, this ecological approach to planning tried to rationalize urban expansion by identifying the best regional locations for new development. The publication of McHarg's ideas coincided

with the passage of a range of national and state legislation that reallocated some land use responsibilities between state and local governments (Bosselman and Callies 1971; and Steiner 2011). Dubbed the 'Quiet Revolution,' these growth management regulations were meant to identify development that would impact areas of critical environmental concern and ensure that development beneficial to the region as a whole was not blocked by local land use policy. While many of these initiatives eventually faced legal challenges or were watered down, scholars have acknowledge their success in repurposing the regionalism of Geddes as a way to preserve suburban quality of life (Rast 2006). Suburban communities, disengaged from the central city, became supporters of growth management policies with a regional focus to the extent that they were seen as protecting both the environmental quality and the economic competitiveness of their communities.

Around the same time, regional agencies, often mandated by federal legislation, began to appear. These agencies most commonly took the form of councils of government (COGs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and special districts. In their review of recent regional planning processes, Knaap and Lewis (2011, 178) date the expansion of metropolitan institutions to the post-war era between 1945 and 1980, "fueled largely by federal funding requirements." Federal legislation governing the dispersal of grants to states in the 1960s specifically required the creation of regional scale planning agencies to review applications by local jurisdictions. At one time these efforts included an array of programs ranging from housing and community development to water resource planning. However, federal funding for these programs were cut over the years to the point where by 1980 only regional transportation planning was still receiving federal assistance (Knaap and Lewis 2011).

Contemporary Regional Movements and the Hegemony of Regionalism Governance

Since the early 1990s, there has been a dramatic resurgence of interest in regional planning in North America, particularly at the metropolitan level. Many planning practitioners, academics, and members of the general public have come to see regional strategies as essential in dealing with the current problems related to growth management, environmental protection, equity, and quality of life (Wheeler 2002, 267).

The last two decades have seen a marked increase in regional initiatives that have sought to move regional planning beyond the minimum requirements of the MPO transportation planning process. Different from the regional planning efforts of the 'Quiet Revolution,' these movements have been broadly defined as attempts to shape more 'sustainable' patterns of development (balancing environment-economy-equity concerns). In the process, they have taken on several different aspects of sustainability with varying levels of success. The literature tends to group these movements by: 1) smart growth and New Urbanist development approaches, 2) land use and transportation linkages, 3) fair-share affordable housing policies, and 4) regional equity. The New Regionalism is the umbrella movement and has adopted the goals of smart growth mixed with elements of more design focused planning paradigms like New Urbanism or Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). This movement includes some aspects of the remaining three although not with equal consideration. Other movements have been focused on policy reform related to specific

regional challenges like fair-share affordable housing, or regional equity. This section provides an overview of each movement and concludes with what the literature has to say about the effectiveness and feasibility of these movements so far.

Smart Growth and New Urbanism

Regional planning processes have increasingly adopted the tenets of the smart growth and New Urbanist planning paradigms (Gearin 2004). These development strategies have grown in popularity as more politically feasible solutions (win-win) that attempt to reconcile both pro-growth and anti-growth constituencies using “market-based approaches that promote the tripartite concerns of sustainability” (Krueger and Gibbs 2008, 1263). Although these paradigms differ in their focus, both emphasize regional solutions and regional planning as instrumental to addressing the challenges facing cities and their suburbs (Dierwechter 2008; Duany et al. 2001). This shift has not been limited to local efforts. As the quote from HUD Secretary Cisneros made clear in the Introduction, the federal government has been interested in the prospects of regionalism for some time. More recently, several federal initiatives have emphasized the potential of regionalism and regional planning to create ‘sustainable communities.’ Smart Growth America, a national organization advocating for adoption of smart growth policies, enthusiastically tracks the Obama administration’s promotion of an urban policy based on creating “sustainable communities” through metropolitan scale smart growth initiatives (Smart Growth America 2013b). The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD 2013) recently created the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities to foster the development of Regional Plan(s) for Sustainable Development across the nation

(HUD 2010). This new Office is design to “help build stronger, more sustainable communities by connecting housing to jobs, fostering innovation and building a clean energy economy” (HUD 2010). Recent legislation in response to the foreclosure crisis has also incorporated the ideas of smart growth and regional planning as a way to revitalize cities and communities. The *Community Regeneration, Sustainability, and Innovation Act* provide funds for planning and plan implementation that advances smart growth goals, acts to “stimulate more integrated and sophisticated regional planning to guide state, metropolitan, and local investments in land use, transportation and housing, as well as to challenge localities to undertake zoning and land use reforms” (HUD 2013).

Transportation and Land Use

Another focus of recent regional planning efforts has come from the realization that planning for regional transportation needs separate from land use policy makes little sense (Giuliano 1989; 1992; Kelly 1994; Levine 2006). Regional transportation plans prepared by MPOs have “rarely acknowledge any feedback effects from transportation improvements on land use, and thereby ignore these effects on project and plan evaluation,” an omission that has the potential to exaggerate “mobility and environmental benefits of transportation projects, and undervaluing the potential benefits of land use or integrated land use and transportation policies” (Waddell et al. 2007, 383). While MPOs have traditionally created transportation plans targeting the efficient movement of goods and people have been created at the regional scale, only recently have these agencies sought to plan for both land use and transportation, hoping to exploit the synergies between the two as a way to realize goals often

summarized as sustainable development. To a certain extent, this shift has been facilitated by an evolving understanding of the land use-transportation (travel behavior) relationship as a key factor contributing to the “nature and evolution of urban form” (Giuliano 1989, 145).

Transportation investments represent major government expenditures and the location of these investments influences “firm location, household location, real estate development, land prices, and density” (Waddell et al. 2007, 382). Similarly, the locational decisions of households and businesses are influenced by the ease (cost) of transportation associated with the activities of each. New transportation links or expanded capacity makes areas more attractive in terms of development. Conversely, new development increases demands on existing infrastructure, leading to congestion and calls to expand capacity or construct new links.

Affordable Housing

A key link between transportation planning and land use policy has been the regional consideration of housing needs as a way to mitigate transportation demand impacts and reduce inequality in access to jobs and services. Scholars have advocated for regional housing policies that target the spatial mismatch between jobs and housing, and work to remove local barriers (e.g. exclusionary zoning) to the production of affordable housing (Basolo and Hastings 2003; Chakraborty et al. 2010). Few places have policies to address this outcome of metropolitan fragmentation. Portland, Oregon and Minneapolis, Minnesota have policies in place, and California requires state-wide planning for regional housing needs. California created a statewide mandate for regional COGs to determine the existing and expected housing needs for households at all income levels (Lewis 2003). Regional housing needs are based on existing and

future demand. Existing demand takes into account the ways in which the housing market is not meeting the needs of a jurisdiction's residents. Future needs are based on population and employment growth forecasts and public participation. These needs are then allocated to local jurisdictions, which are expected to make plans (the General Plan Housing Element) that address how they will accommodate their share of the regions housing needs.

Equity

Despite the lack of attention that issues of social equity receive in formal regional planning efforts, some scholars have highlighted efforts by a diverse group of stakeholders to address these challenges at the regional scale (Bullard 2007). For example, Pastor et al. (2000) have identified regionally scaled social movements around equity issues of central city-suburban economic development disparities and revenue sharing agreements. Characterized more as community organizing at the regional scale than formal regional planning processes, these movements have sought to engage with regional institutions and organizations to address issues of interurban equity through policy reform, targeted community development, and capacity building or consciousness raising (Pastor et al. 2000).

The Umbrella Movement: Characteristics of the New Regionalism

The New Regionalism has emerged as the dominant movement for comprehensive regional planning. A review of the relevant literature suggests that these process share the following characteristics despite occurring in different social, political and economic contexts (Knaap and Lewis 2011; Wheeler 2002):

- Planning to achieve ‘**sustainable**’ development
- Relying on a framework of **voluntary governance** to overcome local resistance
- Plans as **visions** for future growth – but not actual zoning maps or capital investment lists
- An attempt to **shape the character** of, not control, regional growth using preferred future development scenarios (e.g. smart growth)
- A **comprehensive** agenda that includes issues of urban design (physical planning), resource conservation, social equity, environmental protection, and quality of life concerns
- A ‘bottom-up’ **collaborative** process using **communicative** and visioning processes
- Goals framed in a more **normative** or activist vein that reflects the pursuit of a ‘good urbanism’ as described by paradigms like New Urbanism or smart growth

Several regions have recently conducted regional planning processes that can be characterized as New Regionalist. Some of these include California’s statewide Blueprint process, Envision Utah, Denver’s Metro Vision, and Chicago’s 2040 Regional Framework Plan. Commenting on the similarities among these processes, Knaap and Lewis (2011) suggested that the New Regionalism has achieved a near hegemonic place in the practice of regional planners. A unifying feature of the New Regionalist perspective is an institutional framework of voluntary governance. Governance here means governing without formal government institutions. The movement for the New Regionalism draws on contemporary theories of social democratic philosophies that see regional governance as a model of participatory democracy, more

inclusive and flexible than traditional forms of government (Jonas and Pincetl 2006). As such it is premised on “voluntary agreements, multi-jurisdictional compacts... to activate local civil society and economic interests around a more efficient and responsive set of approaches to... ongoing problems of growth management, resource degradation, and urbanization” (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 483). Wallis (1994, 21) distinguishes governance as having a lack of distinct political units, relying the collective capacity of local jurisdictions to “assess needs and opportunities, and to mobilize resources in response to them.” Governance is underpinned by certain assumptions about the inefficacy of simple intergovernmental agreements to address issues of fragmented local land use policy, and a belief that a civic culture combining public, private and nonprofit can better address regional problems. However, it is unclear if places have adopted this paradigm by choice or out of necessity. As Gearin (2004) suggests, smart growth influenced regional planning processes (e.g. the New Regionalism) have gained in popularity because they promise win-win outcomes for a broad range of stakeholders, particularly developers, in contrast to earlier efforts at regional planning that sought to limit or control growth through constraints like growth boundaries.

Evaluating the Effectiveness So Far

Studies by Chapin (2007), Dierwetcher (2008), Lewis et al. (2009) and others, report varying degrees of regional coordination in looking at recent processes fitting the New Regionalist description, although outcomes have generally been less than expected in terms of affecting more compact patterns of metropolitan growth. Dierwechter (2008) attributes the levels of regional support and implementation to the degree that the rationalities (logic)

underpinning local land use policies are consistent with regional goals. Similarly, Goetz (2013), looking at Denver's Metro Region plan, finds that policies increasing exurban densities along transit (light rail) corridors had broad support among jurisdictions that saw the financial benefit of new development types.

Although there has been little evaluation of regional plan implementation or their influence on development outcomes, some studies have attempted to characterize what makes a regional process more or less successful. Knaap and Lewis (2011, 177) find that despite technological advances in the capacity of agencies to develop regional plans for development, "implementation issues remain formidable" absent "extensive" institutional reform. Only in Portland, where a legal framework links regional plans to local land use decisions were the authors able to detect an influence of the regional plan "on the ground" (Knaap and Lewis 2011, 205). Rosan (2007) reached a similar conclusion, finding that the legal context for regional plan making and local implementation is critical predictor of success. In cases of voluntary or weak regionalism, she found that the technical capacity of the agency, their mission, and their ability to provide fiscal or other incentives to encourage local support were important predictors of successful plan implementation. A comparison of Portland and Atlanta by Nelson (2000) found that quality of life was higher in the less fragmented Portland. In a case study of regional planning in the Buffalo metropolitan area, Foster (1997) finds that fiscal, legal, political, and historical motivations are most important in shaping institutions overtime and influencing regional outcomes.

These processes and the resulting plans are fundamentally about land use reform and using regional impacts to alter the way local governments make land use decision. Popper

(1981) in a study of land use reform during the second wave of regionalism (the 'Quiet Revolution') found that support for reform varies spatially by the type of challenges facing a jurisdiction. Some areas are pro-growth (depressed rural areas or growing urban areas that depend on new growth for fiscal health) and others anti-growth (areas with strong economies and/or strong environmental sentiments/culture). Acceptance of land use reform depended on a mix of local support, strong standards or guidelines and a planning process insulated from developer interests. He found that opposition was not just limited to stakeholder groups but existed as a general public ambivalence about land use planning – worth while in the abstract but objectionable when it impacts (or is perceived to have the potential to impact) individual property interests. Like the regional plans created by the New Regionalists, a lack of regional police power to enforce or control development meant that mitigating the impact of new growth was done on a piecemeal basis of negotiating concessions from the developer. Regarding the successful implementation of land use reform he found the following factors to be important predictors of success:

- **Institutional appointments** – the makeup the boards of institutions and organizations that are charged with implementing or regulated by state legislation because boards don't just represent the public interest but are composed of stakeholder defined most often by having an economic stake (e.g. the very sectors that are being regulated)
- **Unfunded mandates** – new legislation rarely comes with new financing and the impact often overwhelms existing staff and resources
- **Enforcement** – agencies lack resources and responsibility usually falls on local governments who may not have supported legislation to begin with

- **Captured participation** – citizen participation is often captured by well organized or powerful stakeholder groups – e.g. the *growth machine*
- **Legal and political challenges** – coming from both the regulated developers and local governments who want growth and feel that the plans are an intrusion on their ability to make land use decisions

Other studies have looked at specific aspects of more focused regional movements. A study of regional housing policy found little evidence that policies in Portland and Minneapolis, two regions with a long history of more formal regional planning, have had much success in creating a fair share of affordable housing in resistant communities, largely because policies are either unenforceable (no regional authority to compel local jurisdictions to act) or unenforced (insufficient political support) (Basolo and Hastings 2003). They find local decision makers are predominantly concerned with policies impacting a jurisdiction's economic interests (e.g. public choice theory). This inhibits both the production (zoning for) of affordable housing and a willingness to consider the regional implications. Affordable housing is seen as redistributive, taking resources from the median resident and giving them to the less well-off. Interurban competition means local officials will "seek to improve the local jurisdiction's economic status and thus improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of their cities" rather than invest in affordable housing (Basolo and Hastings 2003, 465). Similarly, this translates into unwillingness on the part of local leaders to participate in regional scale housing policies.

Even when a regional housing policy is in place, studies have questioned its effectiveness in overcoming local rationalities and NIMBY attitudes. In general, these policies

are voluntary, like regional land use planning as a whole, and regional organizations lack an enforcement mechanism. A study of California's housing element law found that just under half of the local jurisdictions throughout the state were not in compliance with the State's suggestions for meeting local housing needs (Lewis 2003). Common issues uncovered by the author include local growth controls, strict building codes, developer fees, and permitting procedures, which work to constrain the production of new housing for all income groups. This study goes on to ask if certain place types are more likely to be in noncompliance, finding that smaller and wealthier cities are more likely to be noncompliant, particularly those with an older housing stock.

Basolo and Hastings (2003) suggest that local governments have been more willing to consider economic development policies at the regional scale because regional economic competitiveness at the national or global scale is understood as a valid concern ideologically (e.g. discourses of globalization and glocalization), whereas housing is considered a local issue. Issues of NIMBYism, racism, fiscal disparities and fears of quality of life impacts limit the willingness of local jurisdictions to engage issues like affordable housing regionally. As a result, they suggest that paradigms like the New Regionalism "may be so overly invested in economic development that regional issues such as fair-share housing receive no attention" (Basolo and Hastings 2003, 468).

Swanstrom (1995) looks at the challenges of planning for regional equity, He contends that formal efforts to address regional inequality fail as the suburbs become increasingly self-reliant. He argues that regional plans have attempted (or been forced by neoliberal restructuring) to move beyond the redistributive programs of the federal government that

targeted low-income groups as a way to address inequality. Instead, these processes try to establish the economic interdependence of suburbs to their cities as a way mobilize wealthy suburban enclaves to care about the fate of inner city residents. These efforts have had little success because of the underlying tensions between freedom (the suburbs) and equality (the region). Proponents of public choice theory see the explosive growth of the suburbs and the retreat of the middle-class as evidence that freedom or liberty has won out over equality. However, in his view wealthy suburbs are no more 'free' than impoverished inner city neighborhoods or poorer suburbs because to sustain their quality of life they must constantly chase new growth – a situation that favors “competition over cooperation (Swanstrom 2001, 492). For him, regionalism should be based on moving beyond economic interests (competition) and appealing to collective ethical ideals of justice and fairness:

What we argue about when we argue about regionalism is mostly the economic costs and benefits of alternative institutional arrangements. We need to broaden the conversation. If Americans are going to be persuaded to embrace the new regionalism and create more civic metropolises, it will not simply be because such reforms will increase their annual incomes or give them more bang for the buck in local services. It will also be because regional reforms enhance deeply held political values (Swanstrom 2001, 493).

A key characteristic of the New Regionalism is its reliance on voluntary governance arrangements that include a variety of actors (public and private) in creating consensus about regional development priorities. This is often done through large-scale processes of public

participation in visioning exercises despite doubts about the effectiveness of these plan making formats to produce actionable plans (Helling 1998). Proponents of the New Regionalism acknowledge that not all places have the strong civic culture this requires but suggest that capacity can be built through social learning and the development of networks. Some studies of metropolitan institution building have found evidence that they evolve overtime as a path-dependent process of iterative problem solving in which social learning from “past events shapes the subsequent choices by establishing a range of available options and their costs and benefits” (Taylor 2010, 2). These ideas draw on the literatures of institutional learning and historical institutionalism that understands institutions not just as structures (rules or norms) that constrain innovation but also as potential agents of change, reflecting the cultural, social and political environments in which they are embedded (Pierson 2011). However, the direction these institutions take overtime is uncertain because regional governance institutions have no natural constituency and their creation tends to be driven by self-interested local elites.

Central to the workings of a voluntary governance framework is the use of communicative and collaborative planning approaches to overcome local government resistance and fragmentation. Postmodernist planning theory suggests that multi-party or group decision-making processes are best served by communicative or collaborative approaches (Healy 1997; Hoch 1994). Voluntary governance assumes a transformation of institutions to allow for greater participation, negotiation, and conflict mediation (Swyngedouw 2005). Rather than advocating for structural change, proponents of communicative and collaborative theories claim these processes achieve a more democratic and consensual decision making process through public deliberation (Innes and Borher 2010). They are

premised on the ideas of deliberative democracy that suggest that through the course of discussion people will change their minds. Change is incremental as planners acknowledge that only through piecemeal discursive process can groups come to any agreement about collectively experienced problems and what to do about them (Healy 1997). In response to historic critiques of a modernist planning tradition that assumed a unitary public interest, these processes claim to offer a more equitable and efficient forum for accommodating a diverse public. These processes have been characterized as innovative institutional structures that allow a diverse group of stakeholders to think about collective challenges across various group boundaries. With a greater emphasis on public participation, decision making in such a context is thought to become more transparent. While these processes are increasingly mandated by legal requirements governing public participation, their use is also driven by normative perceptions of the appropriate institutional context in which to pursue regional solutions. In the case of planning for regional development, they offer a decision-making approach to solving collective action problems in a context where no authoritative structure exists. In addition, such processes are often argued for as more appropriate in contexts where there is a history of inequality or exclusion. In this sense, communicative or collaborative processes are seen as more inclusive, offering the potential to empower actors or groups that had been previously excluded from the planning process (Innes 1992). In practice, these ideas are operationalized through processes like visioning exercises and scenario planning. The literature promotes these processes as a way to provide a framework for engaging disparate stakeholder in a process of social learning, building capacity while at the same time forging a regional identity and coordinating policy decisions (Bartholomew 2007; Healy 2006).

California's Regionalism, Blueprint Planning and the Sacramento Metropolitan Area

This section argues that the Blueprint project is not unprecedented and the literature shows how regionalism in California results from a specific historical trajectory shaped by urbanization, political pressure, and trends in planning practice. Support for regionalism has been both historically contingent and path dependent. The strength of political movements and the weakness of opponents at various points in time allowed certain regional efforts to move forward while others were repeatedly rebuffed. Overtime, regional institutions adopted certain characteristics based on hegemonic assumptions about the political feasibility of actual regional scale government in contrast to the more acceptable forms of ad-hoc regional governance most common today.

Wheeler and Beebe (2011), reflecting on historical development trends in the region, characterize the Sacramento region as a typical mid-size urban area: an established central core with substantial suburban and ex-urban development. Post-war development accounts for more than 90 percent of the region's urbanized area. During the most recent housing boom, the region experienced significant new housing construction and the continued conversion of agricultural lands into low-density developments (Reese 2011). The most recent regional land use planning efforts, the Blueprint project and MTP/SCS update, were specifically initiated in response to what has been referred to as an alarming set of projections modeling the impact of current development patterns on regional measures of environmental degradation and quality of life.

The literature dates California's interest in regionalism to the late 19th and early 20th century (Barbour 2002; Jonas and Pincetl 2006). The outlines of three waves are apparent in the focus and extent of regional efforts: 1) concerns about economic competitiveness, 2) accommodating explosive post-war growth, and 3) smart growth civic regionalism (e.g. the New Regionalism). The **first wave** was tied to Progressive Era reformers seeking to insulate cities from state and national politics and their machines (Barbour 2002). Home rule authority was transferred to cities during this period, empowering them with the authority to control local land use planning. At that point in time, cities contained the majority of the population and thus could be considered metropolitan or regional in the breadth of their planning mandate. An unforeseen consequence of home rule for cities was the incentive it created for suburban expansion. Overtime, metropolitan areas consisting of a cluster of independent cities came to share space but not political units – fragmented metropolitan governance.

This led to concerns among civic elites (e.g. city boosters) about the economic impact of uncoordinated growth on the metropolitan region as a whole. Jonas and Pincetl (2006) document early (1900s) regional planning efforts in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area similar to the Regional Plan Associations (RPA) Regional Plan for New York and its Environs and Burnham's Plan of Chicago, focused on rationalizing the linkages between local land use policy to ensure continued economic competitiveness. The success of these efforts hinged on support by large-scale corporate interests with a fiscal interest in the coordination of region-wide infrastructure provision to overcome smaller-scale business interests favoring local land use control as a way to limit competition. From early on, these institutions of civic regionalism (e.g. the Commerce Club of Chicago) were valued first and foremost for their efficiency and

functionality as guarantors of economic growth. As Foster (2011) notes, “business and civic interests, which operate comfortably at the regional scale, have been consistently fervent proponents of regional authority.”

The **second wave** of efforts at regional planning in California occurs during the post-war (WWII) economic expansion and population boom and is characterized by the formation of narrowly focused agencies and voluntary organizations in response to popular (i.e. upper- and middle-class) concerns about the impact of uncoordinated growth on the environment. Barbour (2002) describes how cities were overwhelmed by these changes, unable to keep up with the demand for infrastructure and services as cities suburbanized. State and federal agencies were called on to step in and help cities deal with the problems of rapid growth, alleviating the environmental and mobility impacts of suburbanization, and the decline in the abandoned central city neighborhoods left behind. These regional planning efforts were institutionalized as a vertical regionalism of single purpose agencies, like the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Local Agency Formation Commissions⁵ (LAFCOs), the California Coastal Commission, and the California Department of Housing and Community Development⁶ (HCD). Care was taken not to infringe on the autonomy of politically powerful cities. Voluntary organizations like councils of government (COGs) were created to deal with specific issues and disperse new sources of federal funding (transportation and housing).

While COGs in particular came to be a regional conduit for state and federal funds, they were limited in scope to issues like transportation. There were attempts to formalize a more

⁵ LAFCOs were created as county-level commissions empowered to review local proposals for annexation or incorporation, coordinate and make more efficient jurisdictional and service boundaries, and providing a measure of restraint to uncontrolled urban expansion (CALAFCO 2013).

⁶ HCD was charged with developing statewide housing policy, eventually to include administration of the Regional Housing Needs Assessments and Allocations (HCD 2013).

comprehensive regional planning. Jonas and Pincetl (2006) found that civil society groups, predominantly located in areas with a vocal middle- and upper-class constituency, led several drives to create a state-level mandate for comprehensive regional planning. They argue that these groups were focused mostly on class-based concerns like the environmental or the quality of life impacts of rapid post-war growth. Similar to the genesis of Blueprint, the non-profit California Tomorrow started a 20 year campaign in 1962 advocating for regional planning and governance. Scholars argue that the failures of these movements gave support to a retrenchment by established middle- and upper-class communities – a defense of the local (quality of life) through homeowner tax-revolts (e.g. California’s Proposition 13⁷) and growth control policies that ultimately lacked a regional coherence (Jonas and Pincetl 2006; Ruth 2006; Sears and Citrin 1982; and Self 2003). Proposition 13 in particular played a key role in shaping subsequent local land use policy and significantly influenced unwillingness of local government to concede land use control of any kind to a regional authority (Quigley and Rosenthal 2005). Localities were forced to rely on the local sales tax base to raise revenues and so focused their efforts on attracting tax-producing development and limiting the land available for land uses like affordable or lower-cost housing, seen as costing more in services than they provided in revenue because of property tax caps (Pogodzinski 1991).

In particular, fear about the negative aspects of suburbanization and decentralization (e.g. environmental harm, social and racial polarizatio) created political support for growth control policies in some cities and counties. Johnston et al. (1984) found widespread concerns about the impacts of losing prime agricultural lands to continued suburbanization as the main

⁷ California’s Proposition 13 limited the general property tax rate to one percent of property value annually and reassessment to no more that two percent annually, except for new ownership or construction (Barbour 2007).

driver in Sacramento County's successful effort to adopt an urban services boundary. The Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), a strong, well-organized environmental organization still active in the region and vocal participants in the most recent regional planning efforts, led the effort. Like Blueprint, the plan was premised on shifting development from 'greenfield' sites to redevelopment efforts in established local communities to accommodate growth at higher densities. However, local communities retained planning authority and refused to consider infill development because of its perceived negative impacts (e.g. crime, loss of housing values, degraded services). In the end, Johnson et al. (1984) claim that the plan was more successful in limiting the conversion of agricultural lands than it was in creating more dense infill development. New growth on the fringe simply located outside the County (Levine 1999). To the degree that it was implemented, this example of regionalism was biased towards middle-class concerns like preserving the rural idyll of the suburbs and the exurban fringe, but did little to address concerns about affordability and accessibility for low-income groups located in already urbanized centers within the County (Rast 2006).

Jonas and Pincetl (2006) trace California's **third wave** of regionalism to the State's recession of 1990s. In response to limited State resources, private organizations like the Irvine Foundation, which managed large conservation areas throughout the state, began to advocate for and organize a 'civic regionalism' around questions economic development and livability. Civil society and its institutions were increasingly seen as important partners in the perceived need for regional economic development to ensure the continued competitiveness of local communities. This shift reflected both neoliberal state restructuring and the embrace of social capital theorists like Putnam (2001) who advocated for a social sustainability approach to

economic development that focused on civil society networks as predictors of community health and resilience. The competitiveness of regions was seen as linked to the ability to adapt and innovate in response to macroeconomic changes like globalization or deindustrialization – a reality that favored market-based responses (networks of economic actors) over the slow moving state (Feiock 2009; Saxenian 1994). A report by the Irvine Foundation issued in 1998 explicitly made the case for a focus on quality of life concerns with the speed, flexibility, knowledge base and social networks of a region as drivers of permanent innovation and thriving communities (Jonas and Pincetl 2006). The urban (neighborhoods and communities) was identified as the site of planning interventions (redevelopment, revitalization, reimagining) with the region as the site for integrating workplace and living activities – reflecting patterns of development that increasing located places of residence in different political jurisdictions than places of employment.

Promoted as an innovation in and of itself, the new civic regionalism was premised on the ability of civil society to self-organize in response to a range of issues, bringing together public, private and non-profit stakeholders in new ways (CCRL 2001). It is based on assumptions about the democratic potential of bottom-up, citizen led, voluntary collaboration to yield informed dialogues about the future of collective space (the region). These taken-for-granted truths about governance arrangements “increasingly crowd out other kinds of rationalities for the organization of metropolitan space” Dierwechter (2008, 3).

As a result, the institutional capacity of organizations like SACOG bare the imprint of these initial regional collaborative organizations promoted by groups like the Irvine Foundation. The standard bearers for smart growth planning in the State, at one time this foundation could

count 20 active organizations or Collaborative Regional Initiatives (CRIs) comprised of civic entrepreneurs throughout California (The James Irvine Foundation 2013). Unsurprisingly, these organizations have had to confront local jurisdictional boundaries and control as barriers to the implementation of regional plans. Unable to do more than advocate for growth management policies, their efforts have been limited to an embrace of smart growth principles and a focus on livability and market-based solutions reflecting the concerns of the civic elite (Jonas and Pincetl 2006).

Unlike Portland and the Metro regional government, these organizations have not worked towards the creation of regional government institutions or new structures of government or land use regulation, accepting the political status quo. Critics suggest that they have functioned best as “conveners of groups and organizations across business sectors – much like chambers of commerce...” (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 499). Apart from high profile outreach efforts like Blueprint, participation has been limited to business and policy elites from both the public and non-profit sectors. As with many planning processes, they have had little success engaging with low-income populations (CCRL 2001). Regionalism continues to receive attention at the State level, particularly during periods of intense growth, when the effects of a fragmented land use planning approach are most apparent. However, this regionalism consistently reflects a civic regionalism that relies on voluntary collaboration and the entrepreneurial reimagining of existing institutional structures amid and assumed robust local civil society (CCRL 2000). While more recent efforts have produced legislation like the nominally region-based SB 375 and AB 32, formal requirements have been limited to the production of plans and reports. This regionalism, while more formalized than past examples, continues to be

a “process-based, non-regulatory approach that seeks to circumnavigate a formal politically geography of the [local] State” (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 500).

These sections have looked at the history of regionalism and regional planning in the US as a whole and California in particular to understand how regional institutions have been shaped over time to reflect particular values. The resulting norms and practices go a long way in explaining the current reliance on a framework of voluntary regional governance. Although early attempts at regional planning were linked to Progressive Era reformers, regional planning in practice quickly came to be seen more as a way to ensure the continued economic competitiveness of metropolitan areas than address issues of social inequality. Civil society groups increasingly initiated these plans, a characteristic that is now a defining feature of the New Regionalism. To the extent that regional planning has addressed other issues, it has been limited to narrowly focused agencies in response to largely upper- and middle-class concerns about the quality of life impacts of uncoordinated urban growth. The following section looks at the contemporary critiques of the New Regionalism and what a reliance on these processes means for the prospects and promise of recent regional planning projects.

Regionalism, Regional Governance and Their Discontents

Although the narrative of the New Regionalism presents regional planning as a more flexible and responsive governance initiative, better equipped to deal with the challenges of urban growth in the context of fragmented home rule governments, its assumptions have not gone unchallenged. There is nothing inherently progressive about regionalism, and regional plan outcomes are dependent on how institutions are vested through politics and social

struggle. Multiple scholars have attacked the ideas and concepts that underpin metropolitan governance and regional cooperation from different perspectives:

Public Choice Theory

Those most obviously opposed to regional planning efforts are advocates of local government autonomy and public choice theory like Tiebout (1956) and Gordon and Richardson (1997). The adherents of public choice theory argue that competition among local jurisdictions maximizes aggregate utility for residents in a region. Assuming no mobility restrictions on individuals, Tiebout asserted that rational individuals would choose to live in a place that maximizes their preferences for local amenities. In this framework, existing political boundaries become protectors of property values, exclusion and differentiation that reflect the efficient workings of the free market. According to Gordon and Richardson (1997, 96, emphasis added), “low-density settlement is the overwhelming **choice** for residential living.” Attempts to reverse these development trends, a stated goal of the New Regionalism, risks introducing inefficiencies, costs that in their view outweigh the benefits.

Basolo (2003), reviewing the evidence of rational actor model-based analysis on which public choice theories are based, finds little hope for the success of voluntary regionalism. In her view of this literature, the rational decision making paradigm suggests “regionalism, at least in regions with many jurisdictions, will not happen without coercion or selective incentives” (Basolo 2003, 458). However, she acknowledges the desirability of regional solutions for certain problems and falls back on the ideas of social learning and complexity in calling for more research to better understand the context specific factors that limit the attractiveness of

regional solutions to rational actors. Studies by Basolo and Hastings (2003) and Swanstrom (2001) have questioned these assumptions, suggesting that regional scale plans and policies might be more efficient at allocating resources and dealing with collective action problems. They admit that the “roadblocks to comprehensive regionalism that include regional housing efforts are numerous and difficult to surmount” but the evidence against regional support is not limited to the rational decisions of individual households or local leaders. Irrational factors like NIMBYism linked to racism, class bias, and unquestioned assumptions about the benefits of growth are also significant barriers to voluntary regional approaches.

Democratic Deficit

Scholars like Swyngedouw (2005) complain about the potential for regional institutions to create a democratic deficit. He identifies how these new forms of stakeholder participation empower new actors and allow traditional assemblages of metropolitan power like the growth machine undue influence, undermining the ideals of communicative planning processes by ignoring relations of power. Others take aim at the way more formal regional institutions like MPOs and COGs favor the suburbs at the expense of more populous central cities by giving jurisdictions equal voting power (Rusk 1999). Regional boards are also typically composed of unelected members, raising questions of accountability. From the opposite political spectrum, scholars claim that regionalism is an attack on private property rights (Gordon and Richardson 2001; O’Toole 2007). Scholars also note that there is a long history of land use policy favoring individual property rights and regional planning is seen as a threat to these rights (Blomley 2004; Jacobs 2007). This has created a property rights backlash in response to regional planning

efforts. Frick and Waddell (2012) in their study of recent public participation in land use planning processes commented on how the Tea Party has become a vocal opposition to anything regional. They claim that in particular, the association of regional plans with climate change mitigation efforts has had a polarizing effect with such groups, giving rise to what has become a dominant social movement in some regions.

Neoliberal Governance Rationalities

Many scholars also see the widespread adoption of regionalism in a governance framework as evidence of the rise of a neoliberal governmental rationality (Dierwechter 2008; Lehrer and Laidley 2009; Swyngedouw 2005; Wilson 2007). Neoliberalism is here defined as a withdrawal of the state and the empowerment of new actors, specifically civil society groups (e.g. Chambers of Commerce being the most common) (Hackworth 2007; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). The principles of neoliberalism include a preference for unregulated markets free of state interference, and entrepreneurial and competitive styles of urban governance (Brenner and Theodore 2002, and While et al. 2004). Regionalism, like the more comprehensive smart growth planning paradigm, has been presented in the literature as a social innovation and an idealized normative model of urban growth management that promises both sustainable development and good governance. However, critics like Swyngedouw (2005), Brenner and Theodore (2002), and others have noted an underexplored flip side to this governance shift. The neoliberal rationalities that underpin the paradigm include “constant calls for improved regulatory ‘flexibility,’ the proliferation of public-sector ‘business plans,’ new public-private community partnerships, and most prosaic of all, the quotidian language of

improved service delivery to (economic) customers rather than (political) citizens” (Dierwechter 2008, 3). These New Regionalist planning processes are operationalized as public-private organizations and they inhabit a political sphere that has been eroded by the imposition of a free-market ideology that presents certain assumptions – the inefficiency of the state, growth first – as truths or rules of the game (Lehrer and Laidley 200; Swyngedouw 2005; Wilson 2007). It represents both a political discourse related to reforming the welfare state and a set of policies, or “rolled out” neoliberalism that has led to increasingly worsening inequality and an increase population of marginalized and desperate people (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010; Fainstein 2001, Harvey 2005).

One link between the New Regionalism and neoliberalism is a reliance on a framework of voluntary governance. The literature characterizes the preference for governance over government as an example of rolled-out neoliberalism (Sager 2011). Alvarez (2012), in her article on the evolving civil society agenda describes a hegemonic set of normative and prescriptive assumptions about “citizen participation.” Both political and economic elites mobilize the discourse of a ‘virtuous civil society’ as a way to promote democracy, stability, and vitality. She claims this has a civilizing effect (i.e. governmentality), which manages both the aspirations and dissent of the participants. Participation represents a new meso-scale political arena in which the state seeks to co-opt dissent, produce consensus and “manage down” the aspirations of participants to be more realistic in their demands (Blakeley 2010, 140). Producing consensus through participation as a governing strategy weakens traditional forms of representation and accountability and draws citizens “into a populist city-wide unity in which government, the private sector and citizens are all exhorted to work” for common cause

without addressing material inequality and power imbalances based on class, gender and race (Blakeley 2010, 140). Governance is understood as a technology of agency, enhancing participation but also giving a greater role to private economic actors. Only deserving citizens are welcome to participate and contentious popular movements are seen as illegitimate. As such, it has been observed as a means of achieving marketization, budgetary discipline, decentralization and an overall reduction in state services.

Although the preference for governance strategies is often presented as a choice based on merit, Hackworth (2007) shows that the choices of cities and regions are constrained by institutional mechanisms. The effect of neoliberal reforms has been a defunding and hollowing out of the nation-state, which has removed the buffer between local governments and the market. In this new reality, local governments are increasingly at the whims of finance capital (and its disciplining effect) as they seek new ways to finance infrastructure projects and pay for services. Financial institutions and more specifically actors like bond rating agencies play a particularly important role in limiting the choices of local governments, forcing them to adopt market friendly neoliberal type reforms to ensure the availability of finance capital. New governance arrangements have resulted that limit democratic decision making and give these outside institutions undue influence through special use districts and public-private partnerships (Hackworth 2007).

Urban Politics and Discourse

An important aspect of this state restructuring is the role of discourse in shaping collective knowledge about the region, particularly with regard to the communicative or

discursive processes and politics on which the New Regionalism relies. Logan and Molotch (1987) famously identified how a coalition of local elites constructed a hegemonic ideology regarding the value free benefits of growth and development. Jonas and Wilson (1999, 9) have shown the durability of this arrangement, providing a new understanding of the role of discourse in constructing the narratives of sustainability and smart growth that drive regional plans:

Take, for example, the city boosters whose actions Molotch has sought to understand. Their involvement extends to a complex pattern of intervention, which insists upon articulating themes that seek to strike a responsive chord in mainstream thought. Their articulations are never isolated and above the fray, but are always linked to the world of existing imaginings and dreams. In this sense, growth machine interventions – often subtle and nuanced – penetrate far corners of local life that tie growth strategems to commonsense thought and taken-for-granted practice. Thus, power becomes wielded not through contextless articulations that foist power and a new way of seeing on an unsuspecting mainstream but through cultivating prevailing beliefs and values in an ongoing political intervention.

These themes or discourses are varied and shifting based on the needs of the growth machine. The tactics and strategies they employ are contingent on larger scale discourses like neoliberalism and sustainable development, and how these tropes shape ways of understanding the city (Hackworth 2007). The solution has been to expand the neoliberal

project beyond a set of policies to a discursive ideological project to establish the efficacy of neoliberalism and its acceptance as necessary logic or common sense (Harvey 2005). The logic of neoliberal entrepreneurialism links environmentalism, sustainable development and the “greening” of the city discourse to policies promoting the city as ‘open for business,’ opening up new spaces of the city for reinvestment and revitalization (Raco 2005; While et al. 2004). In this way, environmental goals are incorporated by urban regimes as they contend with place specific needs related to social reproduction and interurban competition. Gearin (2004) has called this the ‘smart growth machine,’ to reflect the acceptance of smart growth approaches in particular by civic elites as a way to brand regional space and secure economic competitiveness.

Many aspects of the New Regionalism seem to fit this ‘new urban politics’ in which new iterations of the growth machine are focused on attracting new investment and enhancing the economic value of urban space, particularly central cities, as a way to further the creation of wealth and capital accumulation (Cox 1993; Jonas and Wilson 1999). Whereas in previous decades the growth machine was focused on sustaining post war growth, Hackworth (2007) argues that cities enter into coalition with a different focus now. Cities are now more interested to enhance their position in the global marketplace through quality of life improvements and place-based policies that will attract private investment. There is a focus on new modes of consumption and production that will not be outsourced, like luxury housing and retail along with tourism.

Swyngedouw (2005) and others have shown how in this restructuring, discourses are mobilized in political projects to gain collective support for empty signifiers of the urban imaginary. These include the creative city, the sustainable city, the competitive city, the global

city, and others. Potentially neutral, these imagined spaces could serve a variety of political projects (progressive and regressive), depending on who “persuasively constructs and uses it” (Wilson and Wouters 2003, 136). Often they are used to marshal support for space transforming policies aimed at exploiting new profit making potential, and marginalizing social and economic undesirables. Regional problems of concentrated poverty and spatial inequality are reframed as quality of life issues that privilege the visual and result in superficial aesthetic remedies, gentrification and further displacement or containment of marginalized populations (Gonzalez and Lejano 2009; Marcuse 2000).

Although urban regimes pursue these policies for a variety of reason (e.g. economic, regulatory or public pressure), it is also possible to understand these as the logic of neoliberal urban entrepreneurialism (While et al. 2004). The incorporation of environmental goals and the greening of urban governance reflect the place specific needs of urban regimes with regard to social reproduction and competition between local jurisdictions. While et al. (2004, 550), in a study of urban transformation in Manchester, UK, termed this the urban ‘sustainability fix.’ They find evidence that, environmental gains notwithstanding, “urban entrepreneurialism itself might depend on the active remaking of urban environments and ecologies.” The result is the “selective incorporation of environmental goals, determined by the balance of pressures for and against environmental policy within and across the city” (While et al. 2004).

From this perspective, regional plans can serve both to highlight investment opportunities and produce consensus for the construction of a symbolic spaces (e.g. green infrastructure, waterfront redevelopment, etc.) that serves to mask the reproduction of spatial inequality in access to public goods at the same time that they satisfy the quality of life

concerns of middle-class and upper-class environmentalists. The growth machine coalition of local developers and real estate interests also mobilize the discourse of globalization and interurban competition to open up these new spaces in the region to investment and profitability under the guise of discourses like sustainable development and investment in green infrastructure (Raco 2005; Kipfer and Keil 2002; Eisinger 2000; Kern 2010; Kingfisher 2007; Lehrer and Laidley 2009). Similarly, gentrification is not just the workings of the local real estate market. It is used to create new spaces of profit for investment capital and as an ideological opportunity to replace the physical manifestations of the Keynesian state (public housing and public space) (Hackworth 2007).

The Limits of Communicative Planning

Liberal and deliberative forms of democracy have been incorporated into planning practice through the paradigms of communicative and collaborative planning as a way to realize more just and equitable planning outcomes (Healy 1997). Scholars have also questioned the hegemony of communicative planning, a key technology of regional governance (Beauregard 1996; Faludi 1996; Fischler 2000; Flyvbjerg 1998; Purcell 2009). Purcell (2009) in particular thinks that communicative and collaborative planning practices are poorly equipped to confront the challenges of neoliberalization and are just as likely to be used to legitimize the practices of an urban politics that emphasizes market logics and competitive discipline.

Faced with claims of a democratic deficit, as well as a crisis of confidence based on the observed increases in inequality and an expansion of the gap between the wealthy and the poor, Purcell (2009) warns that urban regimes will co-opt democratic rhetoric and practice in

order to legitimate their policies and maintain hegemony. In utilizing decision-making processes that are promoted and perceived as democratic, regimes are able to shape outcomes in their favor without necessarily changing existing power relations. By leaving in place existing power imbalances among stakeholder groups and individual actors, neoliberals are able to forge consensus, while claiming a process of political equality. For example, regimes mobilizing discourses of neoliberals are increasingly seen to associate their projects with planning processes seen to have democratic underpinnings, thus providing discursive cover for their space transforming efforts. There is even a degree of ambivalence, particularly with regard to the devolution of power from the federal to the local state in terms of ensuring that all material outcomes favor capital interests. Scholars have shown that to maintain hegemony, these regimes are willing to concede less than optimal outcomes to a degree (Jonas and Wilson 1999; While et al. 2004).

Problematising the Discourse of the New Regionalism

Despite these reservations among scholars, the practice of regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance seems to gain in popularity. This chapter has reviewed both the history of regionalism and the characteristics of contemporary regional planning practice. Historically, regionalism has been called on to address a range of issues, from the environmental impact of urbanization to the efficient provision of infrastructure and services across jurisdictional boundaries. However, most efforts have been narrowly focused and comprehensive regional planning has failed to gain the necessary political support to create higher levels of government. Since the 1990s, the literature reflects a hegemonic discourse

about the promises of regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance as a more politically feasible alternative. Critics have questioned the effectiveness of this approach and the potential of these arrangements to redefine the meaning of political citizenship as new actors are empowered as participants in more inclusive processes of participation. This ‘civic’ regionalism represents a longstanding strain of regionalism premised on the presence of a strong civic culture and a willingness of local actors to make decisions based on the good of the collective region. When successful, this regionalism has been limited in scope to economic competitiveness, place-making, and quality of life enhancements to the detriment of other regional issues like affordable housing or tax sharing. However, I argue that a more comprehensive regionalism including equality concerns is what gives the New Regionalism and regional planning what scholars have called its ‘promise’ for social transformation. Based on my review of the literature, it seems doubtful that regional planning in its current reincarnation has the capacity to create enforceable policies addressing regional housing needs, tax sharing, jobs accessibility, segregation, and disinvestment in the urban core. Nonetheless, addressing these issues and more were all explicit and implicit goals of Sacramento’s Blueprint.

This chapter has shown how the discourse of voluntary regional governance has come to assume such significance in policy circles, legitimating certain policy choices while foreclosing on others. The following chapters will problematize the discourse of the New Regionalism by looking at the case of a typical regional land use planning process conducted in a context of voluntary governance. The literature suggests these shifts in governance have enabled control by new assemblages of power – the ‘smart growth machine’ – with uncertain implications for

development outcomes. This study provides a more nuanced reading of these shifts, uncovering their progressive and regressive tendencies, what it offers and what it neglects.

Chapter 3: Analytical Framework

This chapter expands on the analytical framework used to answer my research questions. The chapter begins by making the case for why the Sacramento region was chosen as the location of the study. Next I discuss the theorized relationships between the Blueprint process and subsequent implementation efforts. I conclude with hypothesized outcomes, both in terms of post-Blueprint development activity, and the enabling or disabling factors and forces affecting local implementation of the regional vision.

What's So Important About Sacramento's Blueprint Project?

Sacramento -- yoked to the car and mired in one of the lousiest housing markets in the country -- offers an intriguing laboratory for that idea. Four years ago, just as oil was gaining momentum in its torrid climb to \$140 a barrel and beyond, the six-county region adopted a plan for growth through 2050 that roped off some areas from development while concentrating growth more densely in others, emphasizing keeping jobs near homes. The local governments in the area aren't compelled to follow the so-called Blueprint, but the plan -- backed by a strange-bedfellows coalition of ordinary citizens, politicians, developers and environmentalists -- shows signs of working, nonetheless (Campoy 2008, 2).

Sacramento's Blueprint has been held up as a paradigmatic example of New Regionalist planning (Barbour and Teitz 2006; Bartholomew and Ewing 2009; Eisberg 2007; Knaap and Lewis 2011; Richards and Dalbey 2006; Vellinga 2004; Wheeler and Beebe 2011). The above

quote comes from an article written in the Wall Street Journal nearly five years after the Blueprint was adopted. The article, entitled “With gas over \$4, cities explore whether it’s smart to be dense” goes on to sing the praises of Blueprint and its apparent ability to overcome the resistance of local jurisdictions to have implemented the regional vision in the intervening years. The article cites figures showing a huge increase in the number of projects with attached units and a smaller decrease in the number of large lot (greater than 5,500 square feet) detached single-family houses. According to SACOG’s Chief Executive Officer Mike McKeever, key to the success of Blueprint was being able to “paint a detailed, realistic picture of what life would be like in 2050 if the traditional pattern of plopping one house on one acre of ground far from owner’s jobs continued’ (Campoy 2008, 2). This was, according to Mr. McKeever, democracy at work.

When the Blueprint was initiated in 2002, the State of California was expected to add 12 million new residents by 2020, an increase of more than 34 percent over the current population. The region’s six counties and 22 cities contain several of the fastest growing places in the nation (Figure 1). In the Sacramento region, population and employment projections predicted the region would add 1.7 million people and 1 million new jobs by 2050 (SACOG 2010). At a basic level, this represented a 73 percent increase over the then current regional population of 3.4 million people. Unsurprisingly, these projections, when modeled with the existing patterns of land use and transportation investment priorities, predicted a significant decline regional quality of life, particularly in terms of pollution and congestion levels (SACOG 2010). Transportation models showed that congestion alone was expected to increase over 50 percent by the year 2025. As the story goes, it was exactly such warnings about the impact of

future development in the region that led the SACOG Board of Directors to initiate a region-wide land use planning process, what eventually came to be known as the Sacramento Region Blueprint project. The underlying premise of the process was to use the MPO/COG to guide regional stakeholders in a collaborative, consensus building process to create a vision for future development that more coherently integrated SACOG's transportation and affordable housing plans with region-wide development priorities (SACOG 2013d). Never intended to halt growth entirely, the project adopted the language of the smart growth planning paradigm as a way to create a dialogue about how growth could be accommodated in a way that coordinated the policies of fragmented agencies and jurisdictions without infringing on their autonomy.

Regional planners hoped to influence local land use policy in two ways. First, they wanted to use a massive participatory planning process to engage the public and create awareness among regional stakeholders about the consequences of the continued uncoordinated development choices of local communities. They hoped that both a social and political movement would result with the momentum to affect a change in the way local jurisdictions plan for and manage new growth. Second, by basing the plan on a consensus building process, they hoped to overcome the opposition of local leaders, business people, and the development community through either changing their minds or accommodating their concerns (SACOG 2013d).

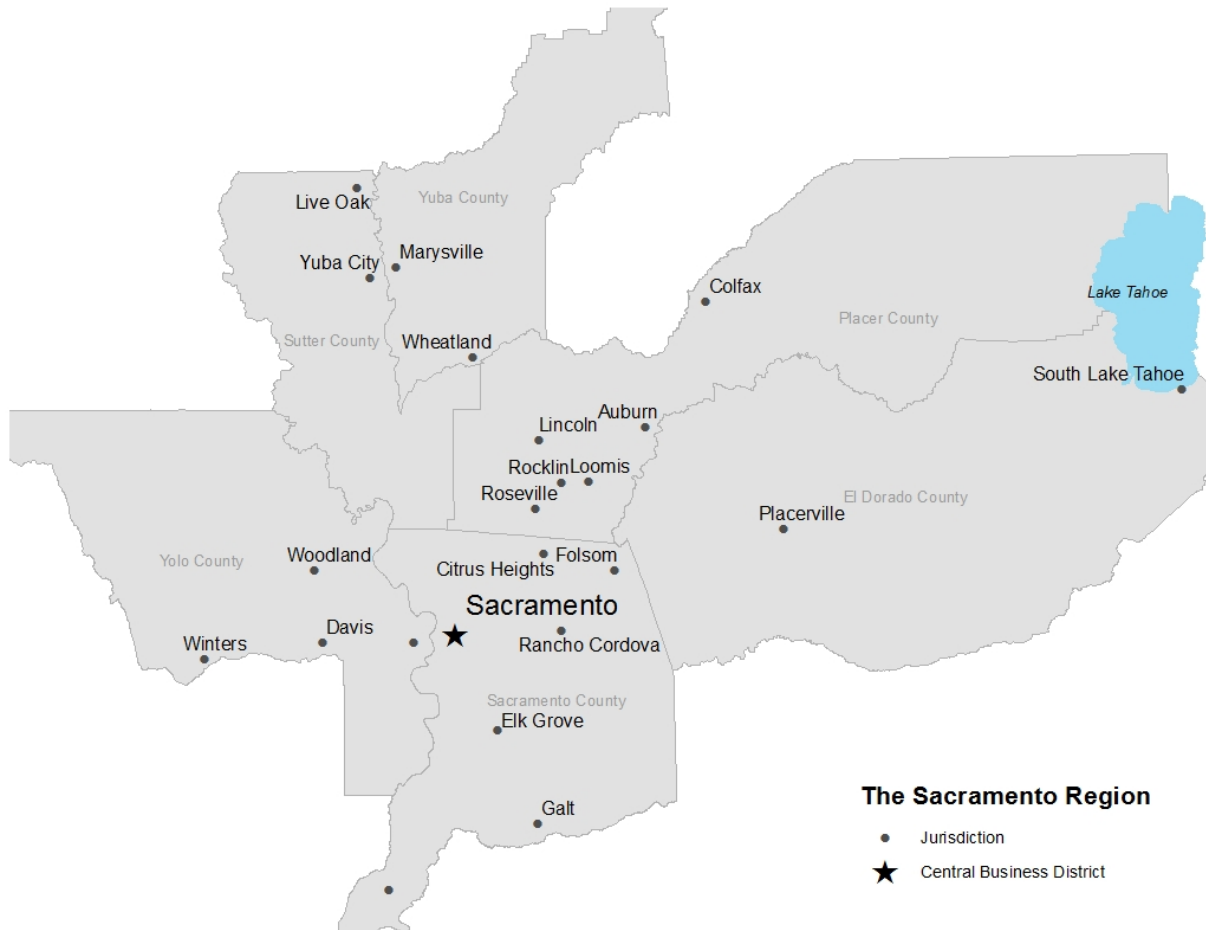


Figure 1: The Sacramento Region

Whether or not and to what degree this has happened is unclear. Throughout the housing boom of the early and mid 2000s the region grew considerably with the majority of this growth occurring on the exurban fringe of the more suburban municipalities (Reese 2011). As Figure 2 shows, development activity region-wide has slowed considerably since peaking in 2003. Promotional material released by SACOG to celebrate the 5-year anniversary of the plan suggests a range of implementation activities at the local level (SACOG 2013c). However, the scope and scale of this activity seems to vary by jurisdiction. Places like the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County have both undertaken General Plan updates that incorporate the

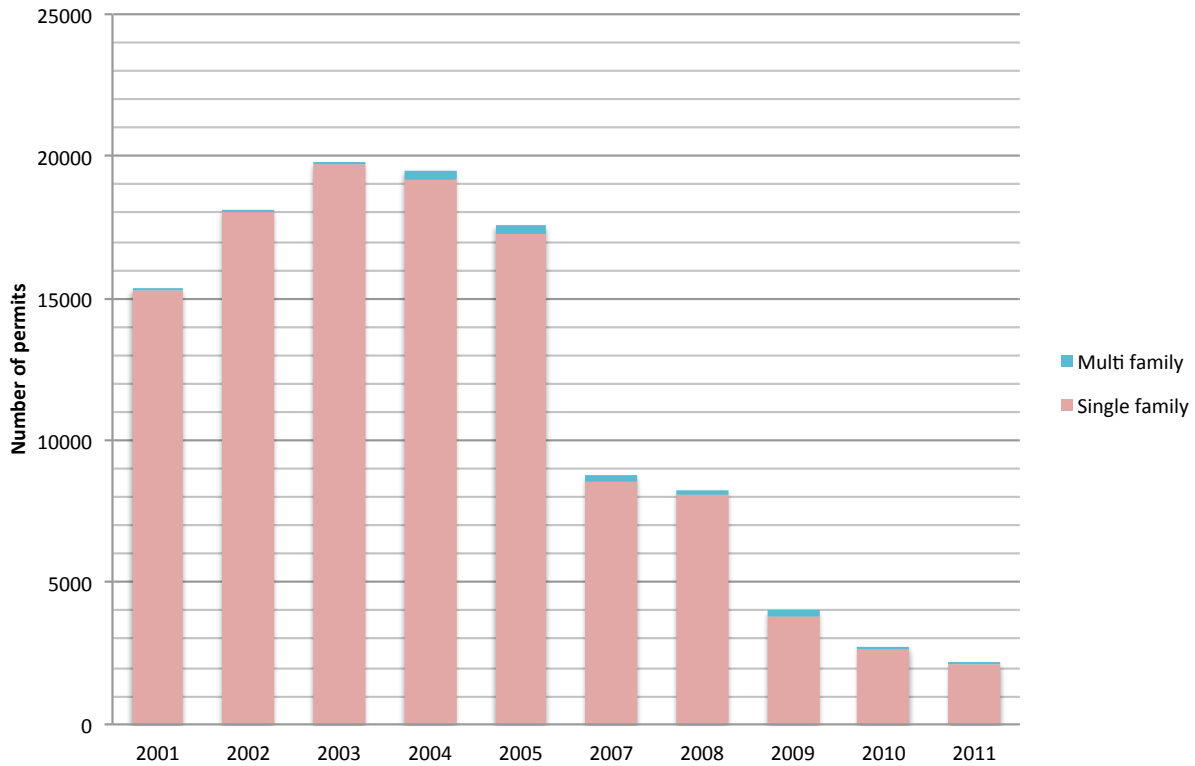


Figure 2: Development Activity by Year

principles and concepts of Blueprint. At the same time Elk Grove, a suburban city incorporated at the turn of the millennium, has recently made headlines over its attempt to expand into new areas not included in the Blueprint or subsequent MTPs (Kalb 2012).

The Blueprint project has been praised for its innovative approach to what is essentially a visioning process in advance of an update to the region’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), known in California as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). In a typical planning cycle, projections for population, employment, and land use change would be based on the forecasts contained in the General Plans of local jurisdictions, reflecting a projection forward of current trends based on individual land use maps and zoning regulations. Critics of this process argue that the resulting MTP is little more than a collection of local growth projections with

little regard to the collective impact of local patterns of development and land use change (Barbour 2002). The Blueprint project was purported to turn this process on its head by initiating region-wide land use planning process, the output of which was a future land use map for the region as whole that articulated a set of growth principles derived from a collaborative, stakeholder led process of community participation (SACOG 2010). These maps and projections would then serve as inputs for the subsequent MTP, MTP 2035. Transportation funding and investment priorities would then be aligned to facilitate the implementation of this alternative future vision. Leaning heavily on the ideas incorporated in the smart growth planning paradigm, the Preferred Scenario imagined a region built more compactly, with growth concentrated around existing centers and corridors of urbanization and transit access. As a result, the modeled impacts of the Preferred Scenario show significant improvements across many measures of the region's quality of life and environmental footprint when compared to the Base Case Scenario. The Base Case Scenario represented a projection forward of current trends, or what would have occurred had the inputs for the MTP 2035 process come from the local jurisdictions absent a regional lens. For example, while the Base Case Scenario predicted a meager increase of transit accessible housing (2 percent), in the Preferred Scenario this number rose to 38 percent. The Base Case Scenario predicted a housing mix in the new housing stock of 80 percent large lot single-family units, and 20 percent small-lot attached units. The Preferred Scenario reverses this mix, predicting only 31 percent of new housing will be large lot single-family units, compared to 69 percent small-lot attached units. Implementation of the Preferred Scenario would result in 46 percent reduction in the amount of land consumed by urbanization, and a 39 percent reduction in the amount of agricultural land lost to urbanization. In the Base

Case Scenario, all new growth would be accommodated on land currently vacant (e.g. 'greenfield' development), while the Preferred Scenario accommodated 13 percent of this growth through the reinvestment and intensification of existing urban cores and corridors. However, realizing this alternative future requires changes in how local jurisdictions plan for and manage new growth.

In a report celebrating the five-year anniversary of the Blueprint project published by SACOG, the agency heralded the success of the process, highlighting Blueprint consistent projects, both planned and constructed, throughout the region's local jurisdictions. The report also presents several metrics that suggest the effect of the project on transportation related outcomes has been positive. The indicators show improvements in transit boardings per capita, annual delay per traveller, and daily vehicle miles travelled per capita over the post-plan period (SACOG 2010). Taken together, these metrics portray the regional plan that has successfully altered certain behaviors and externalities related to the trends of urban decentralization. However, these measures say little about the type of development activity that has been planned for or constructed since the plan was adopted. Many of the changes shown in the anniversary report could just as easily be explained by national shifts in transportation and transit use, which some have attributed to the recent housing crisis and recession (Maley and Weinberger 2009; Puentes 2012).

Measuring the Influence of Blueprint on Local Jurisdictions

The Blueprint project was expected to influence the local adoption of the plan's Growth Principles, both as an outcome of the process itself, and through the implementation efforts of

SACOG in the intervening years. The process itself was designed to produce consensus around a collective vision for the region's future. Interviews with participants during the process show that they were generally interested in regionalism and sustainable development, particularly 'quality design' and 'housing choice' from the outset (Eisberg 2007). The planning process followed the basic tenets of communicative and collaborative planning, convening a series of workshops throughout the region to engage stakeholders and the public in an iterative process of agreeing on a preferred development scenario and the growth principles that would be needed to get there. The idea was that such a process would result in widespread acceptance, both among the public but also with key stakeholders including the leadership and decision makers of the local jurisdictions who would ultimately be responsible for implementing the plan. The degree of implementation would depend on how local decision makers and planners balanced pressures for and against prioritizing development consistent with Blueprint.

Implementation also hinged on a few key programs run by SACOG that are used to incentivize local planning and project development consistent with the Blueprint vision. These programs fall into three categories: 1) technical support (e.g. modeling tools), 2) educational activities and resources for outreach efforts, and 3) financial assistance. The financial assistance amounts to grants for planning and capital improvements in support of plans and projects that incorporate the Growth Principles and move a local jurisdiction towards the Preferred Scenario.

Finally, implementation has likely been affected, either positively or negatively, by subsequent regional planning efforts and changes to state planning mandates. In 2008 the State passed the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), creating a state-wide mandate for Blueprint type planning with the explicit goal of using the

alignment of transportation, housing and land use decisions to achieve GHG emissions targets established by the California Air Resources Board (ARB). SB 375 requires all MPOs to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) plan as part of the MTP planning process. The regional SCS details the strategies and projects that will allow a region to meet its GHG emission targets. In theory, eligibility for State and Federal transportation funds depends on local jurisdictions only approving development in areas included in the Sustainable Communities Strategies.

However, as I have shown in Chapter 1, there are obstacles to implementing regional plans in the context of a weak regional organization with no land use planning authority. Synthesizing the findings of scholars who have looked at regional planning in a governance framework more critically, I argue that local implementation is enabled or disabled by specific place-based contextual factors that promote or inhibit coordinated land use planning. These contextual factors are constituted by the wider social forces and rationalities and are reflected in local financial, technical, legal, and regulatory assemblages (Dierwechter 2008). Factors of expected importance include:

- Financial constraints
- Legal and regulatory constraints
- Knowledge base and technical sophistication
- Framing of regionalism at the local level
- Institutional commitments to coordination
- Intergovernmental agreements
- Institutional incentives
- Role of citizen engagement and participation

- Discourses of sustainability (the sustainable development agenda, smart growth, new urbanism, etc.)
- National ideologies and discourses (globalization, global cities, economic competitiveness, neoliberalism, etc.)

How would a voluntary regional plan like Blueprint result in actual changes to development outcomes at the local level? Figure 3 presents a model of how this might occur. The intervening factors and forces mediate the degree of influence. Local jurisdictions must balance the pressures that these forces and factors exert, acting as both opportunities and constraints (While et al. 2004). These pressures also exist in a larger discursive field. The discursive field contains any number of competing discourses with varying degrees of power that give meaning to and organize social institutions and practices like planning. For example, in a process like Blueprint, the discourse of sustainability exerts a powerful influence on how urban development is understood, but it must contend with the neoliberal ideology of 'growth-first' and the 'entrepreneurial city' (Peck and Tickell 2002). As a result, what becomes normalized as 'sustainable development' is uncertain and dependent on place-specific political struggles.

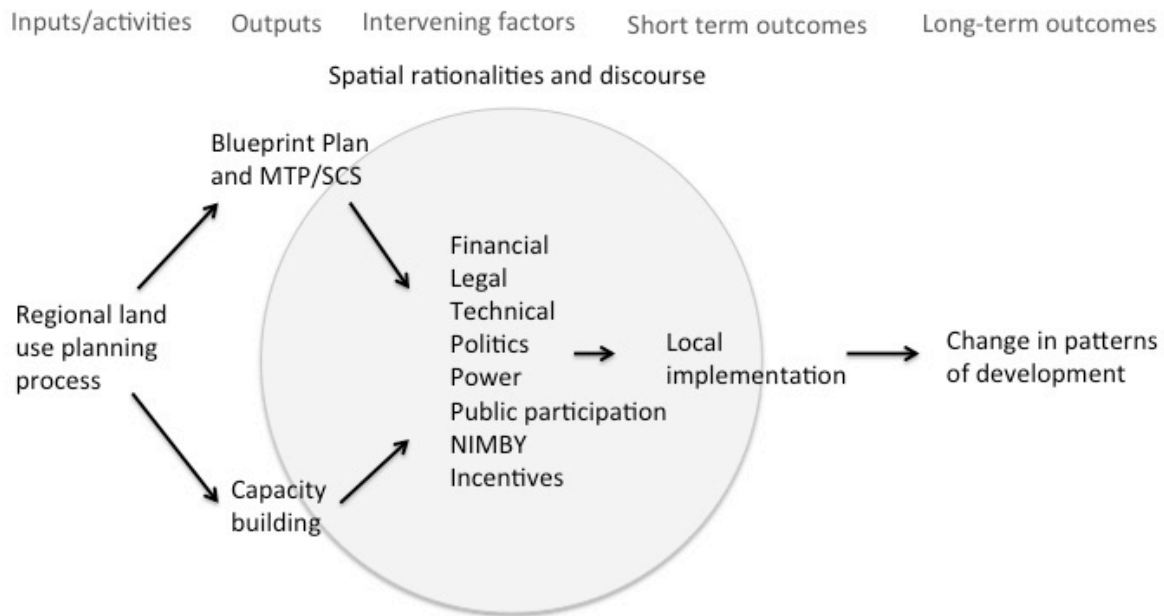
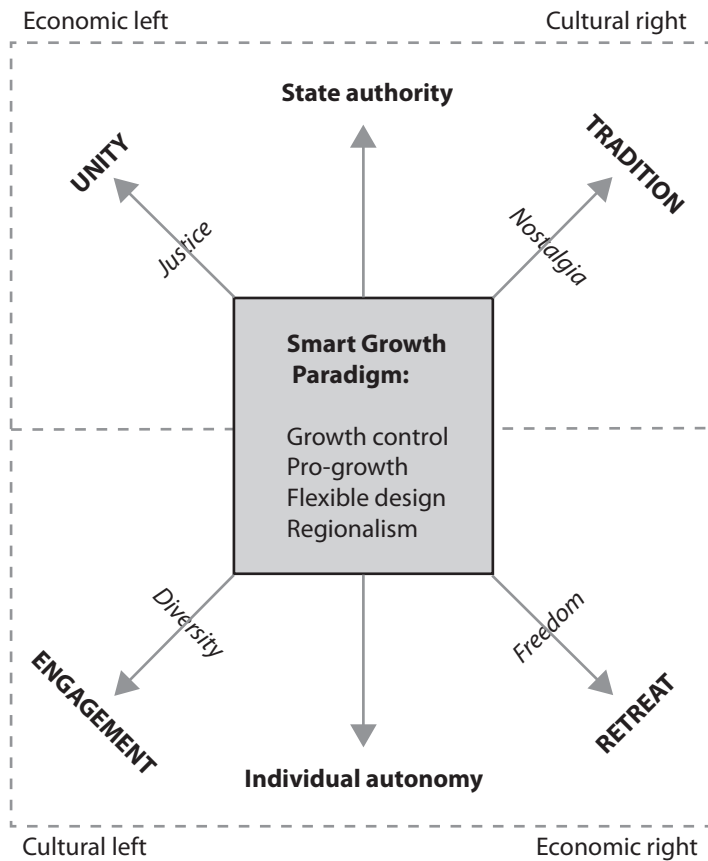


Figure 3: The Influence of Blueprint on Local Jurisdictions

As Massey (2005), Soja (1989) and others contend, space matters, not only as a container of urban life and resources, but because it is constitutive of social relations. For example, a suburban municipality may support the idea that the collective quality of life in a region is important to their ability to attract and retain households and jobs. However, when a regional plan to improve this quality targets growth and infrastructure investments toward a declining central city at the perceived expense of the suburbs, this support may be limited. In this example, competition for jobs and resources pits cities against one another in a zero-sum game to attract growth at any cost. While there is widespread acceptance of growth

management as necessary among planners, how this is reflected in the tools and techniques of local practice depends on the development priorities of local leaders. To understand how this support varies across the space of a region, I rely heavily on the ideas of Huxley (2006), Dierwechter (2008), and While et al. (2004) and others for their framing of urban development and planning as the mutually constitutive relationship between the state, economy, and culture. Planning for regional sustainability, like all urban planning efforts, is an “attempt by specific communities of actors to balance a series of specific tensions” that characterizes society as a whole (Dierwechter 2008, 65). Figure 4 refers to Dierwechter’s diagram of spatial rationalities as a way to explain how the support for various urban planning efforts differs by specific community type. These rationalities exist on a continuum that ranges from the economic left and right to the cultural left and right, accommodating Smart Growth policies that are legitimated with claims for unity, tradition, engagement and retreat. In the example above, investment in a metropolitan light rail to better connect the suburbs to the central city would be located in the upper left-hand quadrant of the diagram. A suburban community’s support of a New Urbanist style development on the urban fringe as a form of growth management would be located in the lower right-hand quadrant. The former reflects a region-wide discussion of social justice and inclusion, setting up a conflict between those who agree with these and those who do not. The latter is more easily associated with the discourses of freedom (of choice) and individualism combined with the nostalgic tendencies of New Urbanism.



Source: Dierwechter 2008

Figure 4: The 'Spatial Rationalities' of the Smart Growth Planning Paradigm

So while sustainability and consistency with Blueprint are contested and socially constructed ideas, this study is specifically interested in how these ideas have been mobilized by decision makers and stakeholder in support of land use policy. In **Chapter 4**, I start by asking if development activity in the region post-Blueprint has been more or less consistent with the regional vision. In **Chapter 5** I ask what influence the plan has had on local land use policy and practice – and attempt to uncover the intervening forces and factors affecting plan implementation at the local level. Drawing on Dierwechter (2008) and While et al. (2004), I hypothesize that the degree of Blueprint’s influence on local policies, practice and ultimately

development outcomes has been mediated by these factors and shaped by larger scale discourses that infuse all aspects of local decision making. Following Dierwechter's diagram of spatial rationalities and territorial tensions, the expectation is that planning in a framework of voluntary governance or 'civic' regionalism did not produce consensus about contentious issues like the location and allocation of affordable housing. I suspect that the consensus embodied by the reflects a regionalism to the lowest common denominator, and this will be evident in the character and extent of local implementation efforts. In addition, I argue that the study will uncover the multiple and often conflicting rationalities present under the rhetoric of smart growth that individual cities tend to employ. Development outcomes measured by development activity will likely reflect this unevenness as well, with places approving projects consistent with Blueprint when it makes sense and resisting the norms of Blueprint when it threatens the perceived needs of local regeneration. This will highlight the spatially uneven acceptance of regionalism as a component of larger smart growth and sustainability concerns, and provide insight into how regional processes and institutions can be constructed to bridge the gap between the rhetoric of sustainability and practice.

Chapter 4: Data and Methodology

As described in Chapter 2, the phases of this study correspond to the two overarching research questions. The first phase of the study uses building permit data as a way to evaluate whether or not development in the region has been more or less consistent with the principles of the regional planning process, and how variation is distributed across the region. The second phase of the study uses case studies of the Blueprint project and several local jurisdictions to investigate the challenges related to plan implementation. This phase, based on an analysis of interviews, planning documentation and media accounts, provides a more nuanced account of how local jurisdictions frame regional problems, and what factors and forces shape their efforts at implementing regional plans like Blueprint.

Defining and Measuring Consistency with Blueprint Growth Principles

To construct the indicators that can measure the consistency of local outcomes with the Blueprint's Growth Principles, this study draws on a technique developed by Talen and Koschinsky (2011). That study developed indicators of neighborhood sustainability to determine whether affordable housing projects were located in neighborhoods that were more or less sustainable. Similarly, this study uses a combination of GIS parcel and urban form data, along with neighborhood level socio-economic data from the 2010 census (US Census Bureau 2010) to construct 19 variables operationalizing the Blueprint's Growth Principles. These variables were then combined into an index that assesses consistency with the Blueprint's Growth Principles. The Growth Principles were developed during the Blueprint project by SACOG planners as a way to implement the growth concepts embodied by the Preferred Scenario land

use map. As described in the Blueprint (SACOG 2010), the principles are: Transportation Choices, Mixed-Use Development, Compact Development, Housing Choice and Diversity, Use of Existing Assets, Quality Design, and Natural Resource Conservation.

Although these principles were derived from the facilitated input of regional stakeholders, they are closely aligned with ideas and concepts of the broader Smart Growth, New Urbanist and sustainable development paradigms. The website for Smart Growth America, a national advocacy organization, lists as its goals the building of communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops, and schools (Smart Growth America 2013a). The US Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Smart Growth program lists a similar set of principles (USEPA 2013). According to the policy briefs and fact sheets associated with these two national advocates for smart growth, the 'sustainability' of these neighborhoods and business districts are realized through a combination of policies that promote compact development, increased densities, improved accessibility and better connectivity. As such, they lend themselves to a framework of analysis taken from the extensive literature on the definition and measurement of sustainable neighborhoods (Farr 2008, Jabareen 2006, Song and Knaap 2004, and Talen 2005). This literature utilizes criteria such as affordability, density, diversity, the level of compactness, and accessibility as indicators of 'good urbanism.' The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) rating system has become the standard bearer for how sustainable neighborhood form is quantified (Talen and Koschinsky 2011; USGBC 2013). To evaluate the consistency of development activity in the Sacramento region with the Blueprint principles, this study borrows

from these studies and the LEED_ND evaluation and certification program to construct a set of quantifiable characteristics (Table 2).

Table 2: Blueprint Consistency Variables and Components

Blueprint principle	Urban form characteristic	Dimensions affected	Measurement variable	More consistent is:	Less consistent is:
Transportation choice	Location of facilities	Access, connectivity	% of parcels within 1/2 mile of light rail stop	higher	lower
			% of parcels within 1 mile of Amtrak stop	higher	lower
			% of parcels within 1 mile of bicycle trail	higher	lower
			% of population using other than auto for commute	higher	lower
Mixed-use development	Neighborhood pattern and design	Urban form, connectivity	Sum of intersections/square mile	higher	lower
			Median distance (in feet) between intersections	lower	higher
			Log Ratio of employment to residents	lower	higher
			% of parcels within 1 mile of employment center	higher	lower
Compact development	Density	Diversity, connectivity	Housing units/area	higher	lower
			Population/area	higher	lower
Housing choice and diversity	Diversity	Housing mix, diversity	Diversity of people	higher	lower
			Diversity of form	higher	lower
Use of existing assets	Proximity	Access, connectivity	Average distance (in feet) to nearest light rail stop	lower	higher
			Average distance (in feet) to nearest school	lower	higher
Natural resource conservation	Open space, contiguity	Location, density	Average distance (in feet) to nearest employment center	lower	higher
			Average distance (in feet) to nearest city center	lower	higher
			Average distance (in feet) to nearest park or open space	lower	higher
			Commute time	lower	higher
			Ratio of open space	higher	lower

Notes: Sources: Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Mapping Center; Sacramento County GIS Department; El Dorado County Assessor; Placer County Community Development Resource Agency; Sutter County Assessor; Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department; Yuba County Information Technology Division

Constructing the Consistency Indicators

Each Blueprint principle was quantified by constructing a corresponding measurable characteristic of urban form. The characteristics in Table 2 were then used to create neighborhood or tract level indicators of consistency with the Blueprint principles. The indicators or variables were based on established measures of urban form keeping in mind what could be operationalized with data available at the regional scale. Sources of data include the US Census Bureau, SACOG, and the six county governments of the region. Non-standard variables were calculated using a series of operations in ArcGIS that combined and transformed Census and spatial data sets. Data on development activity came from SACOG. SACOG staff collects information on permits for residential projects from every jurisdiction (city and county)

in the region on an annual basis. The available data ranged from the initial year of data collection, 2001, through the most recent year for which data has been compiled, 2011. Parcel level data for the entire six county region was collected from individual County Planning and Assessors departments. GIS shapefiles for region-wide streets, highways, transit, open space, and schools were provided by the SACOG Mapping Center. Table 2 describes how these data sets were combined to measure each of the 19 variables.

The Transportation Choice principle was operationalized by determining the percent of parcels in a tract that were within what is considered a reasonable distance of transportation facilities to allow for ease of use. Measures of neighborhood pattern and design were used as proxies for the Mixed-use Development principle. Connectivity was operationalized as both the density of intersections and the average length of a block. The mix of land uses was estimated using a ratio of jobs to residents and the percent of a tract's parcels that were within one mile of an employment center. Employment centers were identified using a method developed by Marley and Gardner (2010) for the US Census based on a combination of the jobs ratio ($\text{jobs/residents} > 1$) and job density. The criteria for job density were based on the Census Bureau definition of urbanized areas as 500 persons per square mile. Considering that all tracts in an employment center must have more jobs than residents, a minimum employment density of 500 jobs per square mile was used to delimit the employment clusters. Tracts meeting both of these criteria were identified as employment centers for the purpose of the study (Figure 5). Data on employment per Census Tract was taken from the most recent Census Transportation Planning Package (2000) for which tract level counts are available.

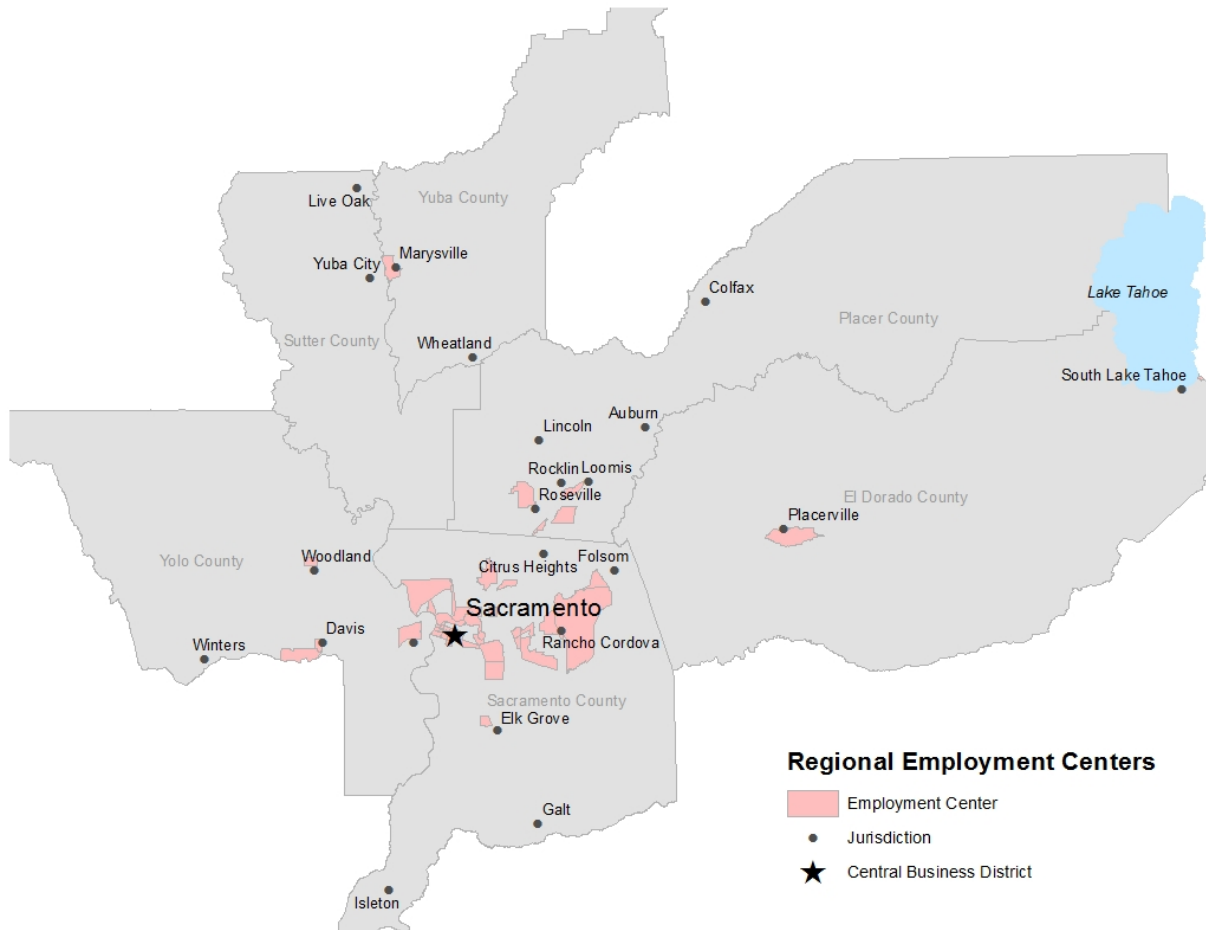


Figure 5: Regional Employment Centers

Consistency with the Compact Development principle is based on two measures of density: housing density (units per square mile) and population density (people per square mile). The Housing Choice and Diversity principle was operationalized using two measures of diversity relating to urban form and population. Data for these two measures came from the 2010 Census counts. Measures of diversity were calculated using the Gini-Simpson diversity index (Gibbs and Martin 1962). Diversity is measured as:

$$\lambda = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^R p_i^2$$

where p_i is the proportional abundance of the types interest. For “diversity of people,” diversity was calculated using the following categories:

- Race/ethnicity (White alone/Black alone/Asian alone/American Indian alone/Pacific Islander alone/Hispanic)
- Age (5 years and under/6 to 18 years/19 to 34 years/35 to 64 years/65 years and over)
- Family income (under \$25,000/\$25,000 to 50,000/\$50,000 to \$75,000/\$75,000 to \$100,000/\$100,000 and over)
- Family type (married, with children under 19/married, with no children under 18/single, with children under 18/singe, no children under 18/non-family household)

For “diversity of form,” diversity was calculated using the following categories:

- Housing unit type (1 unit detached/1 unit attached/2 units/3 or 4 units/5 to 9 units/10 to 19 units/20 to 49 units/ greater than 50 units)
- Housing tenure (owner occupied/renter occupied)
- Year built (built 1939 or earlier/built 1940 to 1959/built 1960 to 1979/built 1980 to 1999/built 2000 or later)
- Unit size (No bedroom/1 bedroom/2 bedrooms/3 bedrooms/4 bedrooms/5 or more bedrooms)
- Housing value (less than \$100,000/\$100,000 to \$149,999/\$150,000 to \$199,999/\$200,000 to \$299,999/\$300,000 to \$499,999/\$500,000 and over)
- Monthly rent (under \$500/\$500 to \$750/\$750 to \$1000/\$1000 to \$1500/\$1500 and over)

For the Use of Existing Assets and Natural Resource Conservation principles, ArcGIS was used to measure the distance of each parcel from different facilities. An average distance for each parcel within a tract was then calculated. The ratio of open space was calculated in ArcGIS using shapefiles of parks and open space in the region to determine the share in each tract.

The Quality Design principle was omitted because of limitations in the available data describing individual projects and the subjectivity involved with assessing the aesthetic value of a particular project. This principle was meant to address internal aspects of a project's physical design, ranging from aesthetics, to set backs, along with the provision and location of certain features like sidewalks or garages. While these are important considerations, particularly with regard to the perceived challenges of marketing certain development types emphasized in the plan (e.g. mixed use and higher density), this study is more concerned with the spatial location of projects.

The 19 variables, grouped by subset (growth principle), were then combined into an index related to each of the six principles. Each variable was then converted to quintiles. The resulting quintile variables (scored 1 to 5, low to high, in terms of their consistency) were then summed to generate a consistency indicator for each principle (Transportation Choice, Mixed-use Development, Compact Development, Housing Choice and Diversity, Use of Existing Assets, and Natural Resource Conservation). Variables where a higher value indicates a lower consistency, such as the average distance to a light rail station, were recoded to match the quintile direction of those variables whose scores moved from 1 to 5, low to high, in terms of consistency. The values of these indicators were summed to create an overall consistency

indicator ranging in value from a minimum of 29 (the lowest consistency) to 77 (the highest consistency) (Table 3).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Blueprint Consistency Indicators

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Travel Choice	119997	4	17	6.18	1.790
Mixed-use Development	119997	4	20	9.93	3.124
Compact Development	119997	2	10	4.87	2.458
Housing Choice and Diversity	119997	2	10	4.92	2.215
Use of Existing Assets	119997	2	10	7.27	1.884
Natural Resource Conservation	119997	5	24	14.02	3.559
Overall Blueprint Consistency	119997	29	77	47.2	8.000

To compare the consistency of housing permits across different criteria, development activity variables were created that grouped permits by year (before – 2001 to 2003, and after – 2004 to 2011, Blueprint adoption) and by type (single-family and multi-family). There were a total of 119, 977 permits included in the data set (Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Development Activity

	Single-family	Multi-family
All permits	118242	1735
Before Blueprint adoption	53006	184
After Blueprint adoption	65236	1551
High share	98670	974
Lower share	19572	761

Three tests were conducted on the resulting data set of indicators to explore the relationship between neighborhood level consistency with the Blueprint’s Growth Principles and development activity: 1) linear regression, 2) difference in means tests, and 3) Mantel correlation tests. First, linear regression was used to test the direction and strength of the relationship between consistency and activity, with development activity as the dependent variable and consistency as the predictor. In addition to Blueprint consistency (described earlier), additional explanatory variables theorized to affect local support of regional planning

were added to the model. Development activity, measured as the approved residential building permits post-Blueprint per housing units in a Census Tract, were modeled as a function of 1) Blueprint consistency of the underlying neighborhood or Census Tract), 2) variables that are said to shape local planning capacity in a jurisdiction, and 3) variables that can influence the supply of available land for development. The ratio of development activity to housing units ranges from zero to 1.43. There are four Census Tracts with a ratio greater than one, meaning that development activity in these areas exceeds the number of housing units. Two of these tracts are located in Placer County, one is in unincorporated Sacramento County and the last is in Rancho Cordova. Foster (2012) constructed an index of a region's capacity to cope with future challenges, like those facing the Sacramento region, based on the literature of resilience. The index is meant to be a measure of a region's ability "bounce back" from a disturbance or respond to challenges. These disturbances and challenges can range from natural disasters to economic restructuring, population loss or the externalities of growth. The index is a composite of several indicators grouped into three categories: regional economic capacity, socio-demographic capacity, and community connectivity capacity.

For the purpose of this study, variables serving as proxies for the capacity of local jurisdictions to respond to planning challenges were adapted from Foster's (2012) list of indicators that comprise her regional resiliency index. These include educational attainment, voting (2008 general election) results, civic infrastructure, and homeownership (Table 5).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Regression Models

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Development activity per housing unit by Census Tract	519	0.00	1.43	0.08	0.18
Blueprint consistency by Census Tract	519	29.00	77.00	51.85	10.08
Distance from urban core (miles) by Census Tract	519	0.36	91.44	17.80	17.55
Percent change in population from 2000 to 2010 by jurisdiction	519	-40	282	25	47
Educational attainment by jurisdiction	519	0.28	19.36	2.91	2.89
Percent voted Democrat (2008 general election) by jurisdiction	519	0.37	0.76	0.54	0.10
Civic institution per 10,000 people by jurisdiction	519	0.00	20.00	3.48	3.41
Homeownership by jurisdiction	519	0.23	0.75	0.54	0.08

Higher levels of each planning capacity variable are expected to correspond to a greater willingness to address collective action problems such as regional growth management, and a lower ratio of development activity to housing units. Educational attainment is a measure of the percentage of the population age 25 and older that has a bachelor’s degree or higher divided by the percentage of the population age 25 and older without a high school diploma or equivalent. Norris et al. (2008) says that resiliency is enhanced by social capacities associated with education. The voting results variable is calculated as the percentage of voters in a jurisdiction that voted democrat in the 2008 general election (University of California, Berkeley 2008). Gale (1992) and others have shown that support for growth management is higher in jurisdictions with a majority of Democratic Party voters. The civic infrastructure variable is a measure of community engagement that uses the density of civic organizations as a proxy. The literature (Heinz Center 2002) suggests that the networks represented by community organizations provide the space for residents to “understand, invest in and take care of” their community (Foster 2012). The proxy is calculated as the number of civic organizations per 10,000 people in a jurisdiction. Tract level data aggregate to the jurisdiction level comes from

the 2008 Community Business Patterns, 3-digit NAICS code 813 (“religious, grant-making, civic, professional, and similar organizations”). The homeownership variable is a measure of the percentage of housing units that are owner occupied and serves as a proxy for place attachment and commitment, qualities that studies link to resilience and a ‘thickness’ of civil society (Pendall et al. 2012). The distance from the urban core is included based on the literature documenting the dominant urban trends in the development of US cities like decentralization and sprawl (Orfield 2002). If historic development trends hold over the study period, the expectation is that distance from the urban core will be positively associated with development activity, describing a decentralized pattern of development. The percent population change variable is included as a measure of the growth pressures in a local jurisdiction. In a study looking at the drivers of suburban expansion, Brueckner (2000) identified a growing population as a powerful force shaping urban spatial expansion. The expectation is that places experiencing an increase in population (growth pressures) would be positively associated with development activity. Expected outcomes are shown in Table 6. If development activity post-Blueprint was more consistent with the growth principles then the expectation is that the consistency of a tract is a positive and significant predictor of the ratio of development activity to housing units. However, there is a considerable literature taking a skeptical view of voluntary regional planning processes like Blueprint to overcome local interests, in which case the effect of Blueprint consistency is less certain.

Table 6: Expected Relationships to Development Activity

Variable	Sign
Blueprint consistency	+/-
Distance from urban core (miles)	+
Change in population from 2000 to 2010	+
Educational attainment by jurisdiction	+/-
Percent voted Democrat (2008 general election) by jurisdiction	-
Civic institution infrastructure by jurisdiction	-
Homeownership by jurisdiction	+/-

The primary regression equation can be expressed as follows:

$$DevAct = f(BPconsist, DCBD, \Delta P, EDUC, V, CV, H)$$

where, *DevAct* = tract level residential building permits/housing units from 2004 to 2011; *DCBD* = distance to the central business district; ΔP = percent change in jurisdiction population from 2000 to 2010, *EDUC* = jurisdiction educational attainment; *V* = percent jurisdiction voting Democrat; *CV* = jurisdiction civic infrastructure; and *H* = percent owner occupied housing by jurisdiction.

Development activity in one neighborhood can also affect development activity in surrounding neighborhoods. This is true for both infill and ‘greenfield’ development. The feasibility of a successful project increases as more development occurs and creates a surge of interest in a larger area of a city or the region on the part of developers, city officials and consumers. This possibility suggests that there might be spillover effects across neighborhoods. Studies have documented the potential for spatial association to reduce or exaggerate the explanatory power of basic statistical models (Paez and Scott 2004). As a result, a Moran’s I test statistic is used to explore the existence of spatial dependence. If the results of the Moran’s I test suggest spatial association between variables, using OLS models alone could fail to account for spatial dependence due to that method’s assumption of independence (Ward and Gleditsch

2008). To accommodate this possibility, a best-fit model was first estimated using OLS. The residuals of the OLS model were then tested for spatial autocorrelation using the Moran’s I test. The results of this test are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Diagnostic for Spatial Dependence of Development Activity

Test	Value
Moran's I	8.6600 ***
Lagrange Multiplier (lag)	63.4568 ***
Robust LM (lag)	4.7960 **
Lagrange Multiplier (error)	58.6627 ***
Robust LM (error)	0.0019

Notes: * Significant at the 0.1 level; ** Significant at the 0.05 level; *** Significant at the 0.01 level

The significance of the Moran’s I test statistic indicates spatial autocorrelation of the residuals in the OLS model and suggests that a Spatial Lag Model (SLM) is the most appropriate. In response, an SLM model was estimated following the methodological specifications of Anselin (1995) regarding standard regression diagnostics for spatial dependence. The SLM uses as a spatially lagged dependent variable to capture the spillover effects of the average level of development activity in each observation’s neighboring geographies (as specified in the spatial weights matrix). This spatially autoregressive structure is commonly used to model the influence of neighboring units on the value of the dependent variable at a given location. The spatial model were estimated for the best-fit OLS model.

The second test was designed to provide a more nuanced accounting for how development pre- and post-Blueprint was similar, different, or the same across all of the component indicators. The t-test is designed to compare the mean of a variable between two groups. The significance of the difference between the mean of each group can then be assessed using the t-statistic calculated as part of the t-test. The framework for the analysis was

to compare the consistency scores of neighborhoods and permits across several criteria. Comparisons include before and after Blueprint adoption, higher and lower shares of regional development activity, and single-family residential development versus multi-family residential. In all cases, a difference-in-means test (t-test) was used, with the null hypothesis that areas being compared come from the same population and therefore have the same mean. Rejection of the null hypothesis suggests that differences in the consistency of comparison groups are statistically significant. Tests were conducted at the Census Tract level.

In addition to the spatial autoregressive model described above, Mantel tests were used to further explore the relationship between and within the dependent variable, development activity, and Blueprint consistency. Initially, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to test for association between the dependent and independent variables. However, this method fails to account for potential clustering or spatial association between variables. To test for spatial association among variables, the Mantel test and partial Mantel was used to estimate a measure of association. The Mantel test was developed to “take the spatial and/or the temporal autocorrelation of the data into account by computing the relationship between two distance matrices (Fortin and Gurevitch 2001, 310). When data on the Blueprint consistency of development activity are analyzed by OLS, if the consistency is found to have little or no influence on development activity, this implies that either measures of consistency have no influence on development outcomes or that the effect is cancelled by the spatial association of other development activity or by other unmeasured or uncontrolled factors (Fortin and Gurevitch 2001). When there is a significant difference in the amount of development activity based on changes in Blueprint consistency, Fortin and Gurevitch (2001) describe three possible

reasons: 1) development activity has no spatial pattern and consistency really effects the level of development activity, 2) the degree of spatial autocorrelation of development activity is significant and is creating a false significance of the consistency effect, or 3) both the degree of spatial autocorrelation and the consistency effect are significant. The Mantel and partial Mantel tests provide the ability to parse which of the previous cases is occurring in the data.

To run the Mantel tests, two distance matrices are generated: one containing spatial distances and one distance between measured outcomes at the given point (tract level Blueprint consistency using the tract centroid. In the spatial distance matrix, entries for pairs of points (tract centroids) that are close together are lower than for pairs of points that are far apart. In the measured outcome matrix, entries for pairs of locations with similar outcomes (Blueprint consistency) are lower than for pairs of points with dissimilar outcomes. The Mantel tests then uses the two matrices to test for a correlation. The tests calculates the correlation of the Blueprint consistency scores in the matrices, “then permuting the matrices and calculating the same test statistic under each permutation and comparing the original test statistic to the distribution of test statistics from the permutations to generate a p-value” (IDRE 2013). Similarly, the partial Mantel test is used to calculate the correlation between two variables with another held constant (Fortin and Gurevitch 2001). Knowing that Blueprint consistency is affected by spatial location, it makes sense to test whether Blueprint consistency affects development activity when the effects of spatial location are kept constant.

Case Studies

To better understand the factors and forces that shape the local implementation of regional plans in a voluntary governance framework, this phase of the study compares 4 case jurisdictions within the larger case of SACOG and the Blueprint project. The purpose of the case studies is to provide a detailed description of implementation process in the local context using a series of “interrelated concepts and/or propositions about how the world might be understood, analyzed, or transformed” (Dierwetcher 2008, 121). The overarching case of the Sacramento region’s Blueprint project was selected both because it has been featured in numerous academic articles about the New Regionalism, and it has been recognized with multiple awards and accolades for its perceived ability to overcome fragmented local governance and forge a regional consensus on future growth. In the literature on contemporary regional planning practice, it is portrayed as the vanguard of regional land use planning approaches that use existing institutions like MPOs and COGs rather than creating new regional institutions. Like most regions in the US, the regional organization of SACOG has no land use planning authority and relies on the voluntary implementation efforts of local jurisdictions.

The four case jurisdictions within the larger case of the Sacramento region were selected to capture a range of urban forms, growth trajectories, and theorized motivating rationalities. Prospective cases were identified using an analysis of census data, planning documents and newspaper articles. After a list of potential sites was identified, these were discussed with a long-range planner with the city of Sacramento. The list of potential cases was further refined during the initial round of interviews with regional stakeholders. This list was narrowed to four based on their potential as interesting cases and an availability of research

subjects willing to participate in the study. The cases are: the City of Sacramento, the City of Davis, the City of Elk Grove, and Sacramento County. These jurisdictions include the urbanized central city, the surrounding heavily urbanized county, a suburban job center (spatially distinct from the central city), and a fast growing place on exurban fringe. The cases are identified in Figure 6 and Table 8. The city of Sacramento is the historic center of both population and employment in the region. An initial review of planning documents at the regional scale and discussions with regional planners identified the City of Sacramento as a place in the region that has aggressively pursued incorporating aspects of the Blueprint vision into their plans and priorities for development. Several cities and counties were suggested as places that have been the most resistant to the ideas and values of Blueprint. For the most part, these places were suburban jurisdictions to the south and east of the urban core. Folsom, Roseville, Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove were all identified as potential cases. Elk Grove was eventually chosen based on their remarkable growth rate over the last decade and their notoriety for having refused to negotiate their local growth assumptions as part of the Blueprint and MTP 2035 planning processes. The city of Elk Grove is a fast growing suburb located on the southern urban fringe of the City of Sacramento. The city incorporated in 2001 out of Sacramento County. Sacramento County includes the cities of Sacramento and Elk Grove, and its unincorporated communities contain both the largest grouping of population in the region as well as the largest capacity for accommodating new growth consistent with Blueprint. The city of Davis is a geographically separated regional job center.

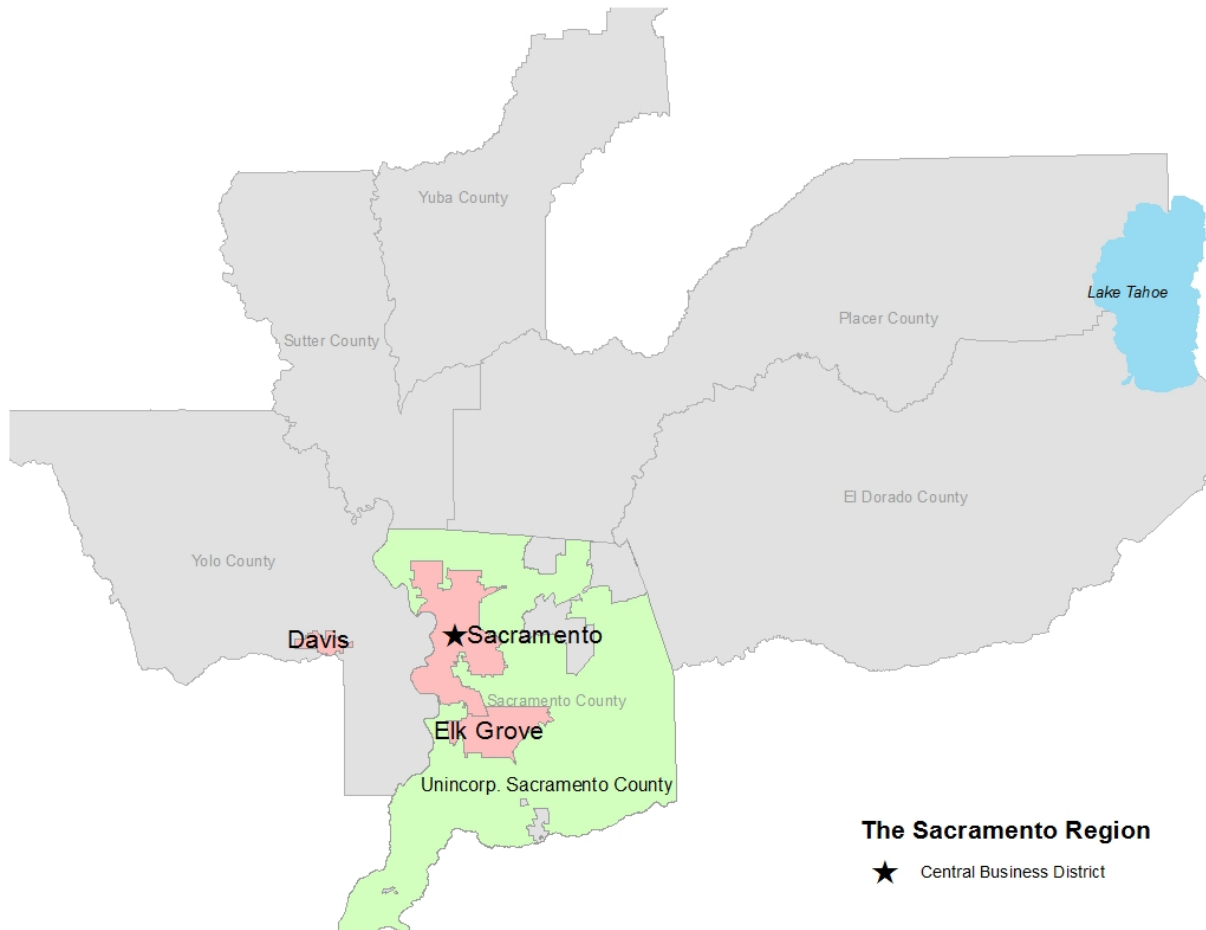


Figure 6: Case Study Sites

Table 8: Case Study Site Characteristics

	Elk Grove	Davis	Sacramento	Sacramento County
Pop 2000	59,984	60,308	407,018	1,223,499
Pop 2010	153,015	65,622	466,488	1,418,788
Change (percent)	155.1	8.8	14.6	13.7
Housing units 2000	18,903	23,611	163,914	474,814
Housing units 2010	50,634	25,869	190,911	555,932
HU change (percent)	167.9	9.6	16.5	17.1
Multi-family housing (percent)	9.4	42.6	32.2	35.9
Median value owner occupied housing 2010	\$360,900	\$571,600	\$311,900	\$324,200
Land area (sq mi) 2010	42.19	9.89	97.92	964.64
Density (per/sq mi) 2000	3,965	5,772	4,190	1,267
Density (per/sq mi) 2010	3,627	6,637	4,764	1,470
Density change (percent)	-8.5	15.0	13.7	16.0

Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census

Data was generated by confidential, semi-structured interviews with local and regional planners and stakeholder participants, combined with an analysis of the planning documentation and media reports related to the Blueprint planning process and subsequent implementation efforts. The analysis involved examining hundreds of items associated with urban policy-making: meeting minutes; policy documents; plans; websites; maps; published research by academics, non-profits, and governments; and newspaper articles dating from the early 2000s to the present. The analysis also draws on data from more than 20 interviews with a variety of study participants. Participants include city, county and council of government/MPO employees, consultants, non-profit organization staff, elected and appointed city officials, and representatives of business organizations. A theoretical sampling strategy was used to seek out participants with knowledge of, experience with, and opinions, both positive and negative, about the Blueprint project and subsequent regional planning processes under study (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The goal in selecting participants was not to capture all possible variations in stakeholder views of Blueprint or regional planning, but to use the selected cases as a guide to identify stakeholders with knowledge of Blueprint to gain a deeper understanding of how local jurisdictions approach regional problems. Participants were identified through an analysis of regional stakeholders, references from other study participants, and reviewing planning documents, meeting minutes, and media accounts. Participants were invited to participate in the study, either by email or phone call. Participants consenting to participate were interviewed individually, either in person or by phone. Some interview subjects requested anonymity. In general, subjects are referred to by the organization they represent and their position within that organization. During the interviews participants

were encouraged to provide their accounts of what they have observed or experienced as participants in Blueprint or subsequent implementation efforts. Subjects were also encouraged to share their interpretation of those events and efforts, expressing their opinions or feelings about the challenges related to implementing Blueprint at the local level, and comparing their experience across different communities. Questions used to facilitate the discussion can be found in the **Appendix**.

The interviews and the review of planning documents and media accounts were conducted to both gauge local implementation efforts and also to get a sense of how local planners and stakeholders talk about Blueprint and the broader sustainable development agenda as a way to understand the role discourse⁸ plays in shaping knowledge about the city/region and the efficacy of certain policy approaches (e.g. green infrastructure, economic development, or affordable housing). This discourse was examined through a content analysis of three sources: interviews with planners and regional stakeholders, city and county government documents and reports, and media accounts of development and planning related issues in the region. The data was analyzed using pattern matching as prescribed by Yin (2008) to determine if case observations match hypothesized expectations about place-based spatial rationalities, looking for similarities and differences between the cases. Triangulation of multiple data sources and interview subjects was used to create a rich understanding of the case under study.

⁸ Discourse here refers to texts, narratives, images and other cultural artifacts that, taken together, are active producers of knowledge, meaning and power relations.

Chapter 5: Development Activity and Blueprint Consistency

This chapter is an empirical investigation of the degree to which development activity after the adoption and implementation of the Blueprint plan is consistent with the Blueprint Preferred Scenario and Growth Principles. Proponents of the New Regionalism claim that processes like Blueprint are able to affect a change in local planning practice and a realignment of local development priorities in support of regional goals through processes of collaborative and communicative planning. However, skeptics of the New Regionalism and voluntary governance arrangements suggest the likelihood of a process like Blueprint affecting a change in local development priorities is slim. Instead, development activity is more likely to reflect traditional drivers of growth, such as the desire to maximize revenues (e.g. fiscal zoning), existing demand for lower density housing types, the availability of underdeveloped land, and the preference of developers to develop in areas where there is less uncertainty (e.g. the suburbs or the exurban fringe). I start by asking if these if the voluntary regional land use planning process of Blueprint has affected a change in local development priorities measurable as consistency with the plan's Growth Principles? If the Blueprint project and subsequent implementation efforts were able to affect a change in local development priorities, then the expectation is: 1) development activity post-Blueprint will be more consistent than pre-plan development activity, and 2) areas that have received a larger share of regional development activity will be those that are more consistent with the Blueprint.

At its core, the Blueprint project is a land use plan that evaluates the suitability of areas in the region to accommodate growth consistent with the plan's guiding principles. As a result, this analysis focuses on the consistency of the location in which development activity is

situated. The Preferred Scenario of Blueprint was premised on a fundamental change to these assumptions, with more than 13 percent of new growth accommodated through the redevelopment of areas that are currently developed but underutilized in terms of the plan’s

Table 9: General Plan Consistency

Place	Updated since Blueprint?	Makes reference to Blueprint consistency		
		Land Use Element	Transportation Element	Housing Element
El Dorado County	N	N	N	N
Placer County	N	N	N	N
Sacramento County	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sutter County	Y	N	N	N
Yolo County	Y	Y	Y	Y
Yuba County	N	N	N	Y
Auburn	N	N	N	N
Citrus Heights	Y	N	N	N
Colfax	N	N	N	N
Davis	Y	N	N	Y
Elk Grove	N	N	N	N
Folsom	N	N	N	N
Galt	Y	N	N	N
Isleton	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lincoln	Y	Y	Y	Y
Live Oak	Y	N	N	N
Loomis	N	N	N	N
Marysville	N	N	N	N
Placerville	N	N	N	N
Rancho Cordova	Y	Y	Y	Y
Rocklin	Y	N	N	Y
Roseville	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sacramento	Y	Y	Y	Y
West Sacramento	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wheatland	Y	Y	N	N
Winters	N	N	N	N
Woodland	In progress	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yuba City	N	N	N	N

Notes: Y = Yes, N = No; **green** shading indicates a plan update referencing Blueprint, **red** shading indicates a plan update that does not reference Blueprint

Source: Author’s plan evaluations

Growth Principles. Whether consistent development activity is infill or ‘greenfield,’ successful implementation of the plan depends on the willingness of local jurisdictions to make changes to zoning ordinances and development codes to allow for and encourage such development.

One indication of local support for regional goals is whether or not a jurisdiction has updated their General Plan to reflect regional development priorities. Table 9 summarizes the status of this effort. Slightly more than half (15) of the region’s jurisdictions have updated or are in the process of updating their General Plan. Of those plans that have been updated and adopted, less than half (7) makes mention of using Blueprint as a guide for future development, raising questions about the likely influence of the Blueprint project on local development priorities. These places tend to be the larger cities and more established suburban job centers.

The following analysis is based on data collected from 2001, the first year for which data on development activity is available, to 2011, the most recent year. There were 119,997 permits for new residential units issued during this time. The number of permits issued per year varies considerably. As noted in Chapter 4, the study period captures both the boom and bust of the regional housing market. Development activity peaked in 2003, trending downward since. However, the total number of permits issued during the 7 year post-Blueprint period exceeds the permits issued prior to Blueprint. In the period prior there were 53,190 permits issued while 66,787 were issued after Blueprint was adopted. The year 2004 was used as the cut-off between what was considered pre- and post-Blueprint development activity. The Blueprint project was initiated in 2001 and the SACOG Board of Directors adopted the final plan in 2004. While the approval time for a permit varies by jurisdiction and scope, both Sacramento and Sacramento County said that the Blueprint growth principles were incorporated as

guidelines in negotiations with developers over concessions for larger projects starting in 2002, allowing time for the plan to influence project approvals by 2004 (interview, Sacramento Planner).

In between the start of the Blueprint process and its final adoption, the SACOG Board and its planning staff made clear that the plan would require a significant rethinking of growth assumptions in the region, apparent by the level of local and national media coverage it received. Responding to questions about the plan's influence, planners and developers suggested that regardless of local changes to land use policy, the planning process contributed to a feeling that post-Blueprint projects would need to meet different standards and guidelines (interview, Sacramento and SACOG Planners). The influence of the Blueprint on local development priorities is explored in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6, but regional stakeholders indicated a pervasive sense among developers that proposals would need to at least consider consistency with the growth principles, if only as one of several project options. Almost immediately, planners in the region described how projects were submitted with 'Blueprint' alternatives, which served as starting points for negotiation with planning officials. SACOG also initiated a plan review process of its own as a service to local jurisdictions, checking plans for Blueprint consistency and placing further pressure on developers to address the Blueprint growth concepts (interview, SACOG Planner).

The analytical methods, as described in Chapter 3, used both statistical models and difference-in-means tests to compare the consistency scores of neighborhoods across several criteria. First, models were estimated using both OLS and spatial autoregression to explore the relationship between development activity and Blueprint consistency. Next, difference-in-

means tests were used to compare Blueprint consistency across time and levels of development activity. Comparisons include before and after Blueprint adoption, higher and lower shares of regional development activity, and single-family residential development versus multi-family residential. In all cases, a difference-in-means test (t-test) was used, with the null hypothesis that areas being compared come from the same population and therefore have the same mean. Rejection of the null hypothesis suggests that differences in the consistency of comparison groups are statistically significant. Tests were conducted at the Census Tract level. Finally, Mantel tests were calculated to account for the possibility of spatial interaction in development outcomes and Blueprint consistency.

Results

When the consistency scores by tract for the region are mapped, a visual comparison suggests that the neighborhoods and areas of the region showing a high consistency with the Blueprint principles are generally aligned with the Preferred Scenario map (Figure 7). In the Preferred Scenario map shown at left, the locations of future growth are shown in purple while red shows areas of existing growth. In the map on the right, modeled consistency is shown in increasingly darker shades of grey, with the darkest areas representing areas of the region most consistent with the Blueprint Growth Principles. What the map on the left fails to capture is the plan's emphasis on infill development and the intensification of corridors and hubs through redevelopment. However, in general tracts with above average consistency scores are clustered near existing urban centers and along transportation corridors. This comparison provides some

validation that the consistency indicators were able to capture the intent and growth concepts embodied by the growth principles.

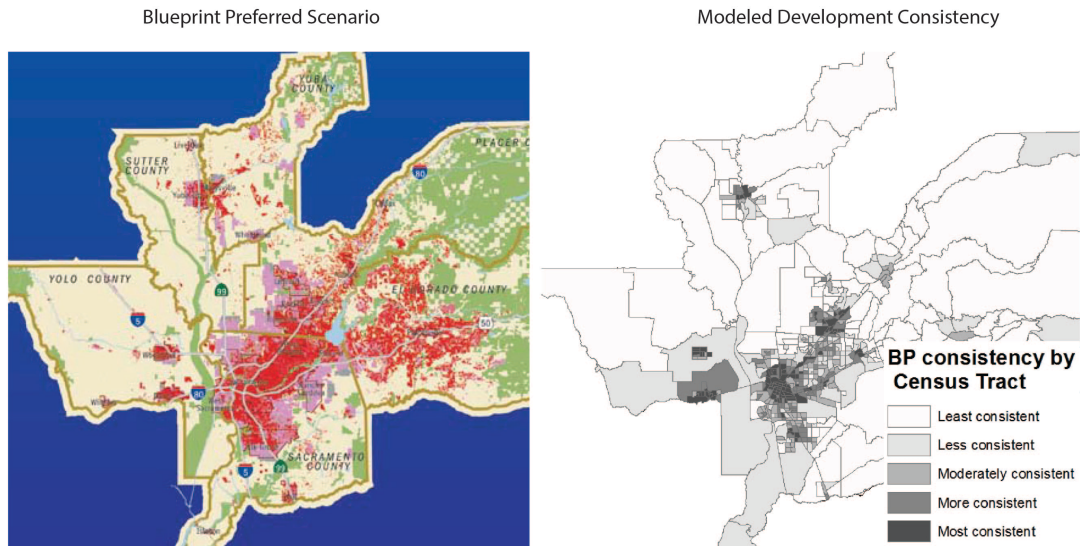


Figure 7: Comparing Consistency with the Preferred Scenario. Source: <http://www.sacregionblueprint.org>

The distribution of development activity throughout the region varied greatly. As Figure 8 shows, tracts with a higher share of development activity (greater than the regional average) were generally located outside the urban core of the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County. While these two jurisdictions (the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County) account for nearly 40 percent of the region’s population, only 24 percent (28 out the 116) of the tracts with a higher share of development activity are located in the urban core.

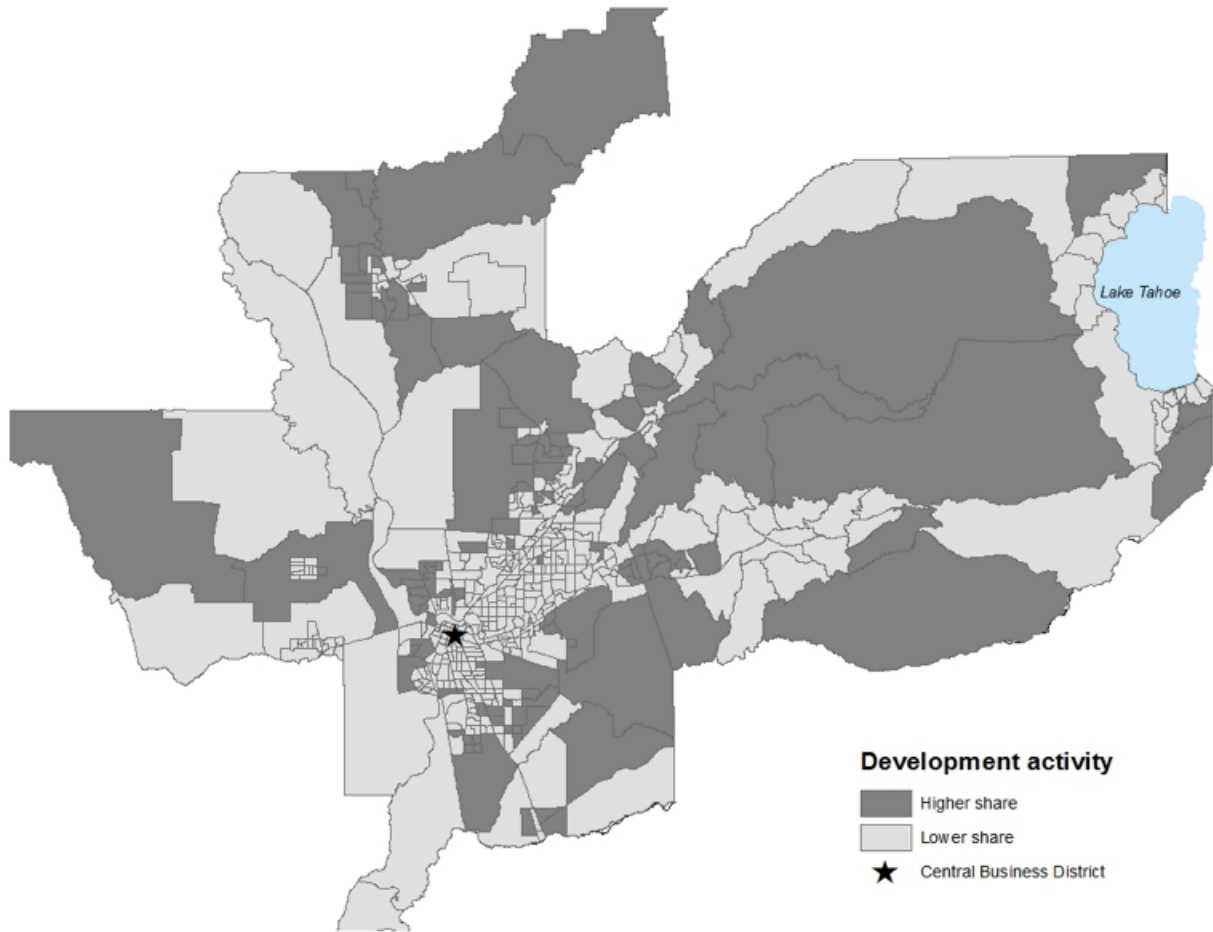


Figure 8: Post-Blueprint Development Activity

The relationship between Blueprint consistency and post-process development activity appears nonlinear. Consistency scores on both the lower and higher ends are associated with neighborhoods receiving very little planned or constructed development activity. A majority of the development activity is grouped towards lower end of the consistency score distribution. A simple regression shows that the Blueprint consistency of the tract in which development activity is located, although significant, is a very poor predictor of development activity itself, with an R-squared of 0.07. There were a total of 66,787 of permits issued post-process and of

those, only 4 percent or 4,958 are located in tracts ranking in the top tertile of the consistency score.

Mantel tests were also calculated to account for spatial affects on the location and frequency of development activity, and Blueprint consistency scores. Results of the Mantel test show whether neighborhoods (Census Tracts) with large amounts of development activity or Blueprint consistency are located next to other neighborhoods with large amount of the same, as opposed to the null hypothesis, which would mean that there is no relationship between development activity or consistency and spatial location. The results of the Mantel test on Blueprint consistency show that the null hypothesis that the two matrices, spatial distance and Blueprint consistency distance are unrelated can be rejected with a p value of 0.01. The observed correlation, $r = 0.1392202$, suggests that the matrix entries are positively associated. This means that smaller differences in Blueprint consistency at the tract level are generally seen among pairs of tracts that are close to each other rather than far from each other. In other words, the spatial location of neighborhoods has a significant effect on Blueprint consistency. However, the same cannot be said for development activity. When the same test is performed on development activity (number of residential building permits per tract), the results show that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected because the p value = 0.8272.

Partial Mantel tests were also calculated to test for the correlation between development activity and Blueprint consistency, with the spatial effects held constant. The results of the partial Mantel test, shown in Table 10, suggest that Blueprint consistency is not a significant predictor of development activity. This description holds when development activity

is isolated by year (before and after Blueprint) and by type (single- and multi-family housing permits).

Table 10: Mantel Tests on Development Activity and Blueprint Consistency

Dependent variable	Mantel tests	
	R	P
All development activity	-0.0087	0.6300
Development activity before 2004	-0.0382	0.9360
Development activity between 2004 and 2011	0.0048	0.4210
Single family housing	0.0067	0.3660
Multi-family housing	-0.0262	0.8220

The relationship between development activity and Blueprint consistency was further explored by estimating a series of statistical models, expanding on the initial OLS model and including a spatial autoregressive model (spatial lag) to account for potential spatial association between the development activity of proximate neighborhoods. The results of a number of alternative specifications are shown in Table 11. Overall, the models support skeptics of regional governance. Blueprint consistency, while a significant predictor of development activity, has a very small effect. Further, the coefficient is negative, suggesting that as neighborhoods exhibit a higher level of Blueprint consistency, development activity as a share of existing housing units decreases. The magnitude of the coefficient for Blueprint consistency is similar across all models. The best-fit model is the full SLM model that accounts for spatial interaction in the dependent variable, with an R^2 value of 0.2415. In the OLS models, other significant predictors of development activity included distance from the urban core, the change in population, educational attainment, and the density of civic institutions. Both educational attainment and the density of civic institutions are negatively associated with development activity, confirming Foster's (2012) formulation of place-based capacity as a

determinant of a jurisdictions willingness or ability to address collective action challenges like growth management. However, with the exception of distance from the urban core, these

Table 11: Determinants of Development Activity at the Census Tract Level

Dependent variable - development activity per housing units by census tract				
Description	OLS			SLM
Constant	0.3100 *** (0.0390)	0.3644 ** (0.2010)	0.0910 (0.2484)	0.0829 (0.2299)
Blueprint consistency by Census Tract	-0.0045 *** (0.0007)	-0.0053 *** (0.0009)	-0.0061 *** (0.0009)	-0.0043 *** (0.0009)
Distance from urban core by Census Tract		-0.0007 (0.0005)	-0.0014 ** (0.0006)	-0.0011 * (0.0006)
Percent change in population from 2000 to 2010 by jurisdiction		0.0816 *** (0.0244)	0.0466 ** (0.0285)	0.0133 (0.0263)
Educational attainment by jurisdiction		0.0003 (0.0027)	-0.0062 ** (0.0037)	-0.0039 (0.0034)
Percent voted Democrat (2008 general election) by jurisdiction		0.0350 (0.1700)	0.4313 * (0.2379)	0.2947 (0.2206)
Civic institution per 10,000 people by jurisdiction		-0.0048 (0.0251)	-0.0497 *** (0.0295)	-0.0385 (0.0274)
Homeownership by jurisdiction		-0.0689 (0.2118)	0.1503 (0.2457)	0.0707 (0.2277)
El Dorado County dummy			0.0497 ** (0.0438)	0.0405 (0.0407)
Placer County dummy			0.1137 ** (0.0398)	0.0855 * (0.0372)
Sutter County dummy			0.0871 (0.0441)	0.0603 (0.0411)
Yolo County dummy			0.0697 ** (0.0323)	0.0438 (0.0300)
Yuba County dummy			0.0905 (0.0536)	0.0640 (0.0499)
λ				
ρ				0.3971 *** (0.0552)
R ²	0.0670	0.1138	0.1369	0.2415
Adjusted R ²	0.0652	0.1017	0.1164	
Log Likelihood				230.64
AIC				-433.28
Breusch-Pagan Test				261.15 ***
N	519	519	519	519

Notes: * Significant at the 0.1 level; ** Significant at the 0.05 level; *** Significant at the 0.01 level: Error shown in parenthesis

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, 2010; SACOG; UC Berkeley Statewide Database

variables are no longer significant when the spillover effects of adjacent development activity are included in the model. Surprisingly, the population change variable is not significant in the SLM model, raising doubts with regard to interpreting development activity as a response to growth pressures. The dummy variable for Placer County remains significant in the SLM model, suggesting that this county has a higher level of development activity per housing units than the reference county of Sacramento. The estimate for the spatially lagged y term (ρ) is large and positive (0.3971) and highly significant. Comparing the values of the spatial model diagnostics (Log-Likelihood, AIC, and SC) between the best-fit OLS model and the SLM model suggests an improvement in fit for the spatial lag specification. The Log-Likelihood increases from 205.71 to 230.64. Both the AIC (from -385.41 to -433.28) and the SC (from -330.13 to -373.76) decrease. This supports the suspicion that the development activity in a tract co-varies with the development activity among the tract's geographical neighbors.

The results of the difference in means test suggest that in general, tracts receiving a higher share (greater than the regional average) of regional development activity after Blueprint adoption (2004) were less consistent than those tracts receiving a smaller share (less than the regional average) (Table 12). Neighborhoods (defined here as Census Tracts) with a higher share of development activity were less consistent across all component scores except for one, the Use of Existing Assets. So while neighborhoods receiving a higher share of development score better in terms of proximity to infrastructure and facilities like schools and transit (light rail), they score worse in terms of the accessibility of transportation choices, mix-use and compact urban form characteristics, housing options, diversity and the conservation of

Table 12: T-Tests on Blueprint Consistency by Share of Development Activity

Blueprint principle	Development activity at the Census Tract Level				Development activity before				Development activity between 2004 and 2011				Development activity after			
	All development activity		2004		Development activity before		Development activity between 2004 and 2011		Development activity after		Single family housing		Multi-family housing			
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE		
Transportation choice	Higher share	6.2400	0.1608	6.2727	0.1638	6.2759	0.1764	6.2870	0.1776	6.2870	0.1776	6.2870	0.1776	6.2835		
	Lower share	8.0838	0.1430	8.0073	0.1408	8.0323	0.1405	8.0248	0.1403	8.0248	0.1403	8.0248	0.1403	0.1316		
	Combined	7.6397	0.1203	7.6397	0.1203	7.6397	0.1203	7.6397	0.1203	7.6397	0.1203	7.6397	0.1203	0.1203		
	Difference	-1.8438 ***	0.2696	-1.7346 ***	0.2846	-1.7564 ***	0.2785	-1.7378 ***	0.2796	-1.7378 ***	0.2796	-1.7378 ***	0.2796	0.2917		
Mixed-use development	Higher share	9.1920	0.2816	9.8727	0.2868	9.0948	0.2921	9.0783	0.2941	9.0783	0.2941	9.0783	0.2941	0.3768		
	Lower share	11.8477	0.1877	11.5672	0.1915	11.8164	0.1851	11.8144	0.1846	11.8144	0.1846	11.8144	0.1846	0.1811		
	Combined	11.2081	0.1654	11.2081	0.1654	11.2081	0.1654	11.2081	0.1654	11.2081	0.1654	11.2081	0.1654	0.1654		
	Difference	-2.6557 ***	0.3692	-1.6945 ***	0.3982	-2.7216 ***	0.3790	-2.7361 ***	0.3801	-2.7361 ***	0.3801	-2.7361 ***	0.3801	0.3978		
Compact development	Higher share	4.3920	0.2047	4.8273	0.2324	4.3276	0.2200	2.0435	0.1029	2.0435	0.1029	2.0435	0.1029	0.1249		
	Lower share	6.5000	0.1371	6.3056	0.1373	6.4715	0.1344	3.0990	0.0657	3.0990	0.0657	2.8182	0.0670			
	Combined	5.9923	0.1217	5.9923	0.1217	5.9923	0.1217	5.9923	0.1217	5.9923	0.1217	5.9923	0.1217	0.0591		
	Difference	-2.1080 ***	0.2695	-1.4784 ***	0.2910	-2.1439 ***	0.2769	-1.0555 ***	0.1348	-1.0555 ***	0.1348	-1.0555 ***	0.1348	0.1436		
Housing choice and diversity	Higher share	4.8080	0.2072	4.7364	0.2121	5.1293	0.2250	5.1130	0.2263	5.1130	0.2263	5.1130	0.2263	0.2221		
	Lower share	6.3680	0.1167	6.3301	0.1160	6.2407	0.1170	6.2426	0.1167	6.2426	0.1167	6.2426	0.1167	0.1165		
	Combined	5.9923	0.1057	5.9923	0.1057	5.9923	0.1057	5.9923	0.1057	5.9923	0.1057	5.9923	0.1057	0.1057		
	Difference	-1.5600 ***	0.2377	-1.5937 ***	0.2492	-1.1114 ***	0.2492	-1.1295 ***	0.2499	-1.1295 ***	0.2499	-1.1295 ***	0.2499	0.2508		
Use of existing assets	Higher share	7.5120	0.1613	7.2091	0.1670	7.6983	0.1750	7.6957	0.1765	7.6957	0.1765	7.6957	0.1765	0.2381		
	Lower share	5.5102	0.1227	5.6650	0.1242	5.5012	0.1184	5.5074	0.1183	5.5074	0.1183	5.5074	0.1183	0.1202		
	Combined	5.9923	0.1076	5.9923	0.1076	5.9923	0.1076	5.9923	0.1076	5.9923	0.1076	5.9923	0.1076	0.1076		
	Difference	2.0018 ***	0.2361	1.5441 ***	0.2547	2.1970 ***	0.2399	2.1882 ***	0.2409	2.1882 ***	0.2409	2.1882 ***	0.2409	0.2610		
Natural resource conservation	Higher share	13.5040	0.3539	14.4091	0.3810	13.2241	0.3568	13.2435	0.3594	13.2435	0.3594	13.2435	0.3594	0.3807		
	Lower share	15.5051	0.2011	15.1883	0.2018	15.5409	0.1988	15.5297	0.1986	15.5297	0.1986	15.5297	0.1986	0.2023		
	Combined	15.0231	0.1787	15.0231	0.1787	15.0231	0.1787	15.0231	0.1787	15.0231	0.1787	15.0231	0.1787	0.1787		
	Difference	-2.0011 ***	0.4090	-0.7792	0.4363	-2.3168 ***	0.4171	-2.2862	0.4188	-2.2862	0.4188	-2.2862	0.4188	0.4342		
Overall Blueprint consistency	Higher share	45.6480	0.7547	47.3273	0.8174	45.7500	0.8071	45.7500	0.8140	45.7500	0.8140	45.7500	0.8140	0.9444		
	Lower share	53.8147	0.4921	53.0636	0.5004	53.6030	0.4869	53.5792	0.4863	53.5792	0.4863	53.5792	0.4863	0.4940		
	Combined	51.8478	0.4425	51.8478	0.4425	51.8478	0.4425	51.8478	0.4425	51.8478	0.4425	51.8478	0.4425	0.4425		
	Difference	-8.1667 ***	0.9717	-5.7363 ***	1.0541	-7.8530 ***	1.0057	-7.8140 ***	1.0097	-7.8140 ***	1.0097	-7.8140 ***	1.0097	1.0641		

Note: p-value: ***0.001; **0.01; *0.05; HS is tracts with a higher share of development activity, LS is tracts with a lower share of development activity; N: HS All (125), LS All (394); N: HS before 2004 (110), LS before 2004 (409); N: HS after 2004 (116), LS after 2004 (403); N: HS single family (115), LS single family (112), LS multi family (407).

open space. The difference between high and low share neighborhoods is significant across all indices.

This analysis can be further broken down by development type. The same table also isolates single-family and multi-family residential development during the post-Blueprint period. As with all development activity, neighborhoods with a higher share of single-family residential development are less consistent than neighborhoods with a lower share. However, the results differ for multi-family housing. Neighborhoods with a higher share of multi-family development are more consistent than neighborhoods with a lower share. Specifically, neighborhoods with a higher share of multi-family residential development activity score higher in terms of access to transportation choices and mixed-use urban form characteristics. These neighborhoods also offer a greater diversity of housing types, and are more diverse in general. In terms of measures of compact development and open space conservation, there was no difference between neighborhoods with a higher or lower share of multi-family development.

A difference-in-means analysis can also be used to compare consistency scores of individual permits across pre- and post process time periods. Table 13 shows how the mean tract level consistency scores of development activity varies across time and housing type. In agreement with the results of the previous analysis, the results show that in terms of overall consistency, development activity post-Blueprint is less consistent than pre-Blueprint development activity. This finding is true for both single- and multi-family housing permits. Some variation remains when the scores of the individual components are reviewed. For all development activity, scores for the Transportation Choice indicator are higher post-Blueprint. This is true for the Housing Choice and Diversity, and Use of Existing Assets indicators as well.

However, these results do not hold when multi-family units are separated out. The scores for multi-family housing permits are generally less consistent in the post-Blueprint period. Half of the indicators are less consistent post-process, while the other half show no different between scores for the two periods.

Table 13: T-Tests on Blueprint Consistency by Year

Blueprint principle		Development activity at the Census Tract level by type					
		All development activity		Single family housing		Multi-family housing	
		Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Transportation choice	Before BP	6.0677	0.0067	6.0608	0.0067	8.0543	0.2386
	After BP	6.2727	0.0076	6.2457	0.0075	7.4107	0.0709
	Combined	6.1818	0.0052	6.1628	0.0051	7.4790	0.0684
	Difference	-0.2050 ***	0.0104	-0.1849 ***	0.0103	0.6436 **	0.2217
		After more choice		After more choice		After less choice	
Mixed-use development	Before BP	10.2039	0.0127	10.1985	0.0127	11.7500	0.2968
	After BP	9.7196	0.0126	9.6757	0.0126	11.5667	0.0887
	Combined	9.9343	0.0090	9.9101	0.0090	11.5862	0.0853
	Difference	0.4843 ***	0.0181	0.5228 ***	0.0181	0.1833	0.2771
		After less mixed-use		After less mixed-use		No difference	
Compact development	Before BP	5.2188	0.0105	5.2147	0.0105	6.4130	0.1997
	After BP	4.5900	0.0095	4.5639	0.0096	5.6867	0.0649
	Combined	4.8688	0.0071	4.8556	0.0071	5.7637	0.0619
	Difference	0.6288 ***	0.0142	0.6508 ***	0.0142	0.7264 ***	0.2005
		After less compact		After less compact		After less compact	
Housing choice and diversity	Before BP	4.6160	0.0089	4.6098	0.0089	6.3967	0.1642
	After BP	5.1707	0.0090	5.1451	0.0090	6.2476	0.0654
	Combined	4.9248	0.0064	4.9051	0.0064	6.2634	0.0610
	Difference	-0.5547 ***	0.0128	-0.5353 ***	0.0128	0.1492	0.1981
		After more choice and diversity		After more choice and diversity		No difference	
Use of existing assets	Before BP	6.9929	0.0074	6.9959	0.0074	6.1467	0.1573
	After BP	7.4851	0.0077	7.5117	0.0077	6.3649	0.0585
	Combined	7.2669	0.0054	7.2805	0.0055	6.3418	0.0549
	Difference	-0.4921 ***	0.0109	-0.5158 ***	0.0109	-0.2182	0.1784
		After more use		After more use		No difference	
Natural resource conservation	Before BP	14.7668	0.0151	14.7631	0.0151	15.8261	0.3266
	After BP	13.4250	0.0136	13.3868	0.0137	15.0310	0.0961
	Combined	14.0199	0.0103	14.0038	0.0103	15.1153	0.0928
	Difference	1.3418 ***	0.0203	1.3763 ***	0.0204	0.7951 **	0.3008
		After less conservation		After less conservation		After less conservation	
Overall Blueprint consistency	Before BP	47.8661	0.0331	47.8428	0.0330	54.5870	0.8195
	After BP	46.6631	0.0319	46.5289	0.0320	52.3075	0.2319
	Combined	47.1964	0.0231	47.1179	0.0231	52.5493	0.2253
	Difference	1.2031 ***	0.0464	1.3139 ***	0.0463	2.2794 ***	0.7299
		After less consistent		After less consistent		After less consistent	

Note: p-value: ***0.001; **0.01; *0.05; BP is Blueprint; N: Before All (53,910), After All (66,787); N: Before SF (53,006), After SF (65,236); N: Before MF (184), After MF (1,551).

Figures 9 and 10 compare the dimensions of Blueprint consistency by pre- and post-Blueprint periods and development type. The tables present percentages of residential permits that are located in tracts with low, medium, and high consistency scores (tertiles). As Figure 9 shows, more than half of all permits issued during the study period scored in the lowest tertile

of consistency. While this poor showing is consistent across the pre- and post-Blueprint divide, the percentage of tracts with a low consistency score increases slightly during the post-Blueprint period from 2004 to 2011. Only when multi-family housing permits are isolated does the percentage of tracts scoring in the lowest third drop below 50 percent. More than 78 percent of post-Blueprint multi-family permits are located in tracts with a higher than average consistency score compare with only 48 percent for single-family housing permits. Although the percentage of development activity scoring in the highest third is nearly the same across both time periods, a smaller percentage of post-Blueprint permits scored in the middle third. This means that development post-Blueprint is generally less consistent, not more, than pre-Blueprint activity, despite the claims of the region’s boosters.

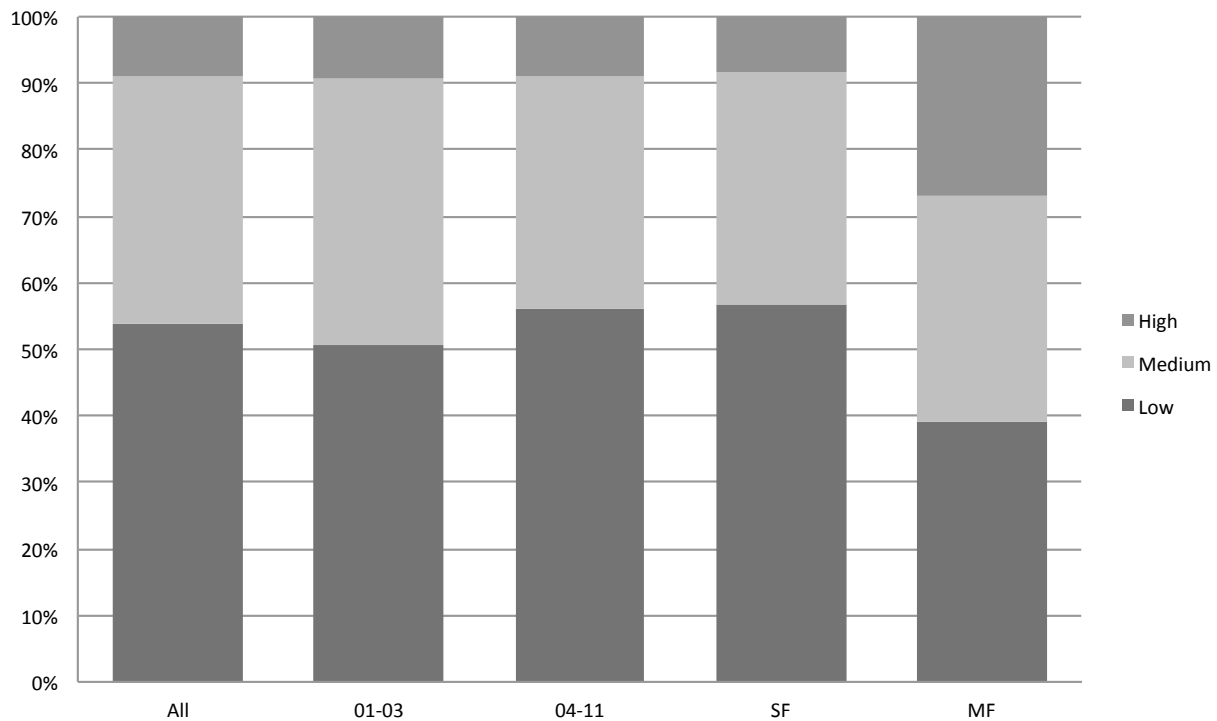


Figure 9: Percent Overall Consistency with Blueprint

Figure 10 further breaks down the consistency indicator by its component parts. Looking at the individual components tells a more nuanced story about the changes in development activity from pre- to post-Blueprint. For both the Transportation Choice, and the Housing Choice and Diversity indicators, the post-Blueprint period had both a higher share of permits in the top third and a smaller share in the bottom third, scoring better on the whole than pre-Blueprint

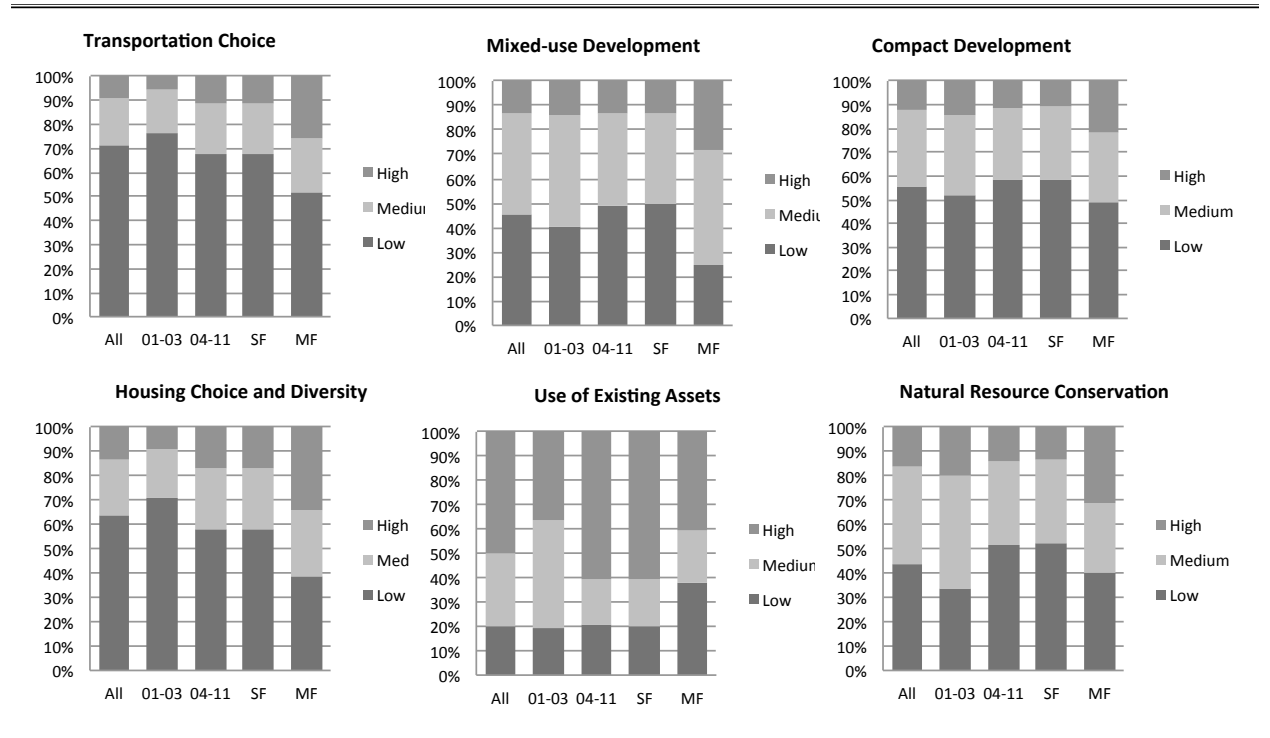


Figure 10: Percent Consistency of Individual Blueprint Indicators

permits. The Mixed-use Development, Compact Development, and Natural Resource Conservation indicators all tell a story similar to the overall consistency indicator. Post-Blueprint development activity also scored better in terms of siting more development near existing assets (Use of Existing Assets). The share of permits post-Blueprint scoring in the top third of

consistency with this indicator exceeded pre process permits by roughly 25 percent. As with the overall consistency indicator, multi-family housing permits (post process) had a higher share in the top third of scores than did single-family permits across all indicators except for the Use of Existing Assets indicator.

Figures 11 through 14 help to visualize how these relationships differed across the space at the regional and local scales. As Figure 8 above showed, tracts with a higher share of development activity were generally located on the fringe of urbanized areas, and at a distance

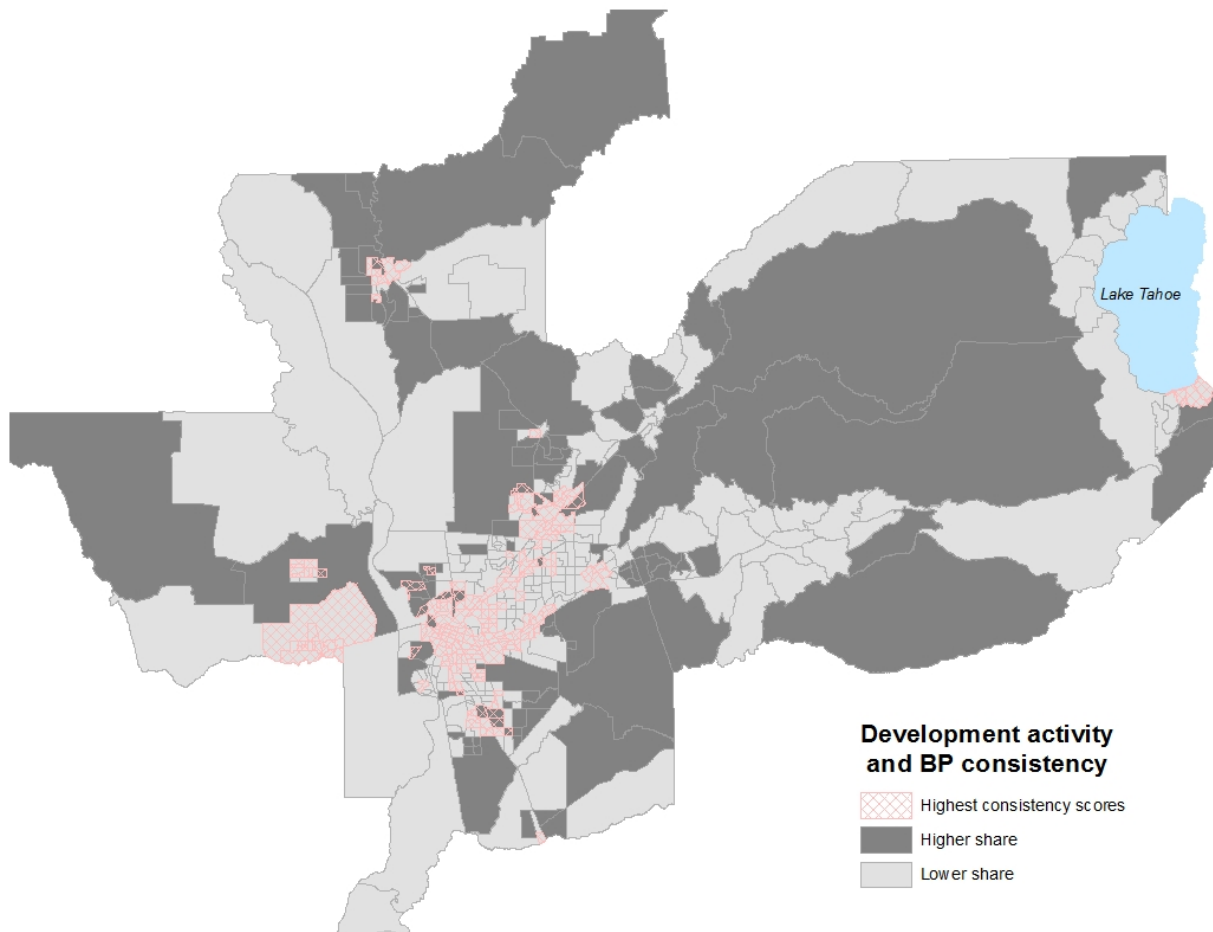


Figure 11: Development Activity and Blueprint Consistency

from centers of population and employment. Figure 11 adds a layer of information to the development activity base showing tracts with the highest consistency scores. While some overlap is evident, the majority of the tracts with high development activity are located outside of the areas with a high concentration of the most Blueprint consistent neighborhoods, reflecting the a continuation of past development trends that have favored decentralization and sprawl over density and intensification. Exceptions include the northern and southern extents of the City of Sacramento, some portions of Elk Grove in the south, and a small portion of Yuba City in the north.

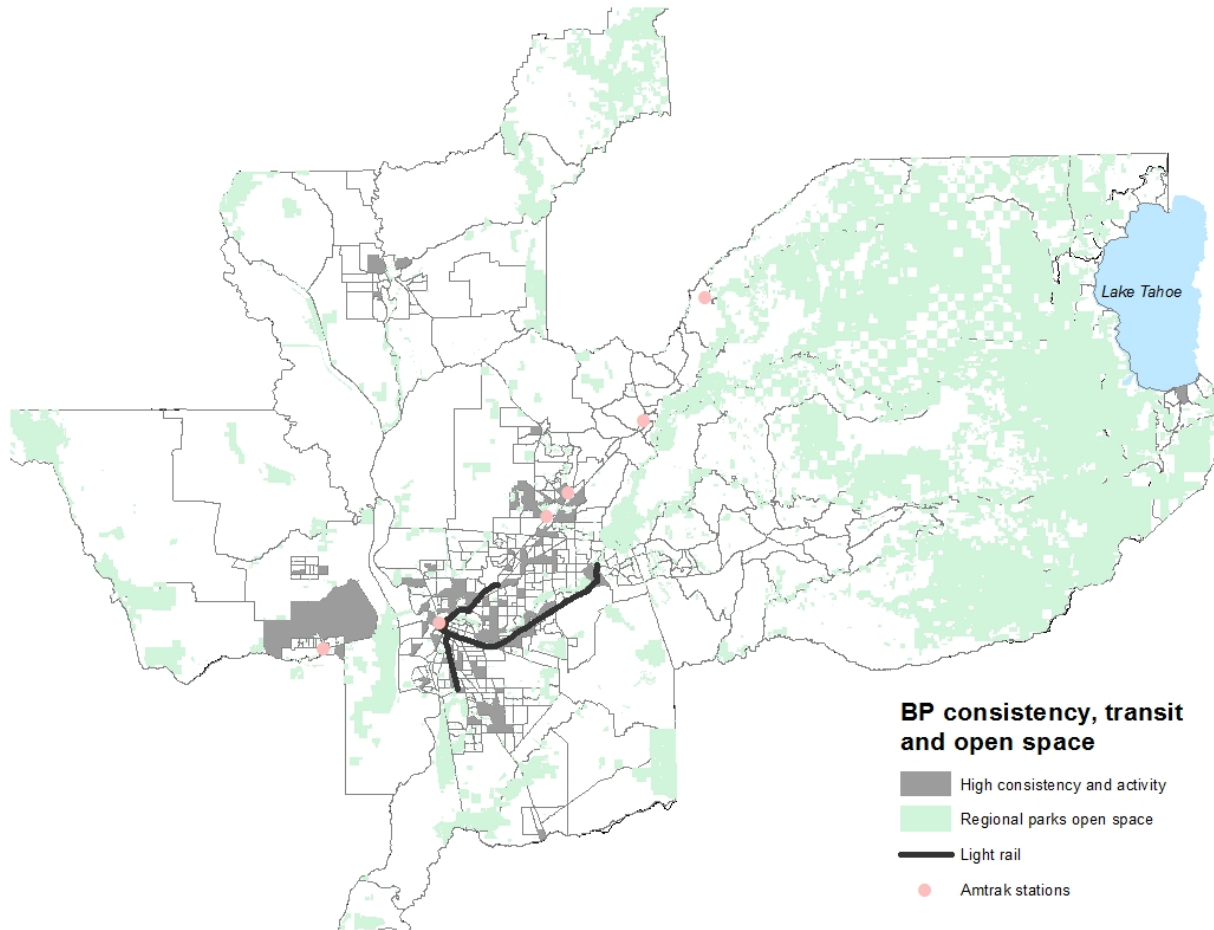


Figure 12: Blueprint Consistency and the Location of Regional Transit and Open Space

Figure 12 highlights those tracts that had both higher amounts of development activity and higher consistency scores. Not coincidentally, many of these tracts are located near areas of existing urban development and adjacent to either metro or regional transit lines. The plan's emphasis on transit choice and accessibility is reflected across multiple principles and adds greater weight to those criteria. Figure 12 also shows the locations of parks and open space across the region. While it is harder to recognize correspondence between open space and consistency, closer inspection of individual tract shows that those areas with higher consistency scores, particularly those in urbanized areas, correspond to a concentration of parks and open space.

Reflecting the continued decentralization of urban development in the region, the overwhelming majority of development activity in both periods (pre- and post-Blueprint) is for the construction of new single-family housing units. Ninety eight percent of all permits received from 2001 to 2011 were for single-family housing. In the post-Blueprint period, this drops slightly to just over 97 percent but the difference is negligible. It follows then that the consistency of tracts where these new single-family housing units are located is critical to the overall ability of the region to realize its vision for the future. Figure 13 highlights how these post process single-family units overlay on top of the tracts with the lowest consistency scores. Compared with the locations of multi-family units (Figure 14), it becomes apparent that while some single-family permits are located in more Blueprint consistent tracts, the majority (56 percent) are located in tracts scoring in the lowest tertile. Only eight percent are located in tracts scoring in the highest tertile. This contrasts markedly with the locations of multi-family units. Nearly thirty percent of multi-family permits are located in the highest tertile of

consistency scores. What is unclear is if this occurs because of restrictions on multi-family units in suburban neighborhoods and jurisdictions, or because of a deliberate effort on the part of planners to locate these units near transit and services that increase the Blueprint consistency of the neighborhood. The case studies in Chapter 5 shed some light on this, particularly in the city of Elk Grove, where affordable housing advocates claim that the City sites affordable housing in the middle of nowhere to avoid NIMBY opposition in more desirable areas.

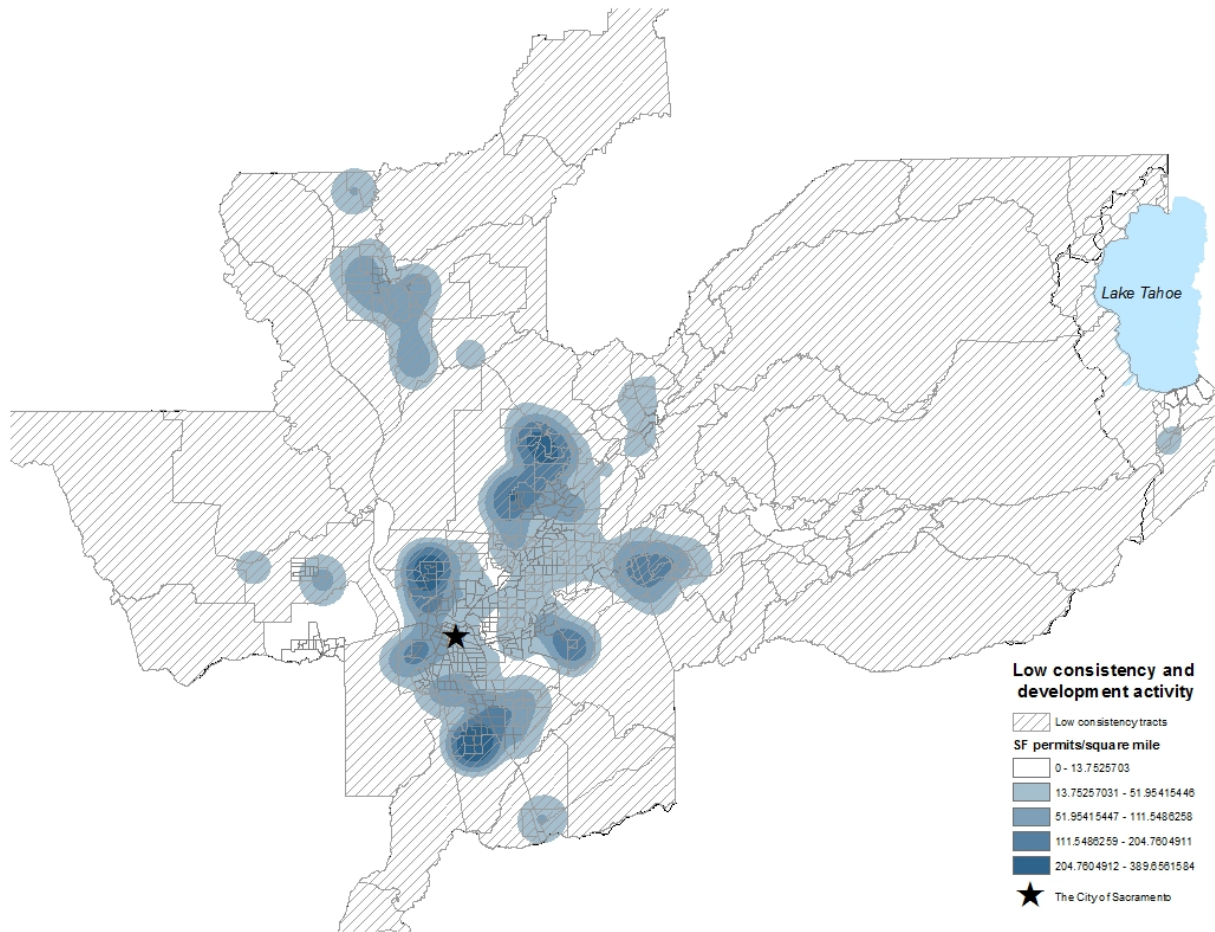


Figure 13: Low Blueprint Consistency Tracts and Development Activity

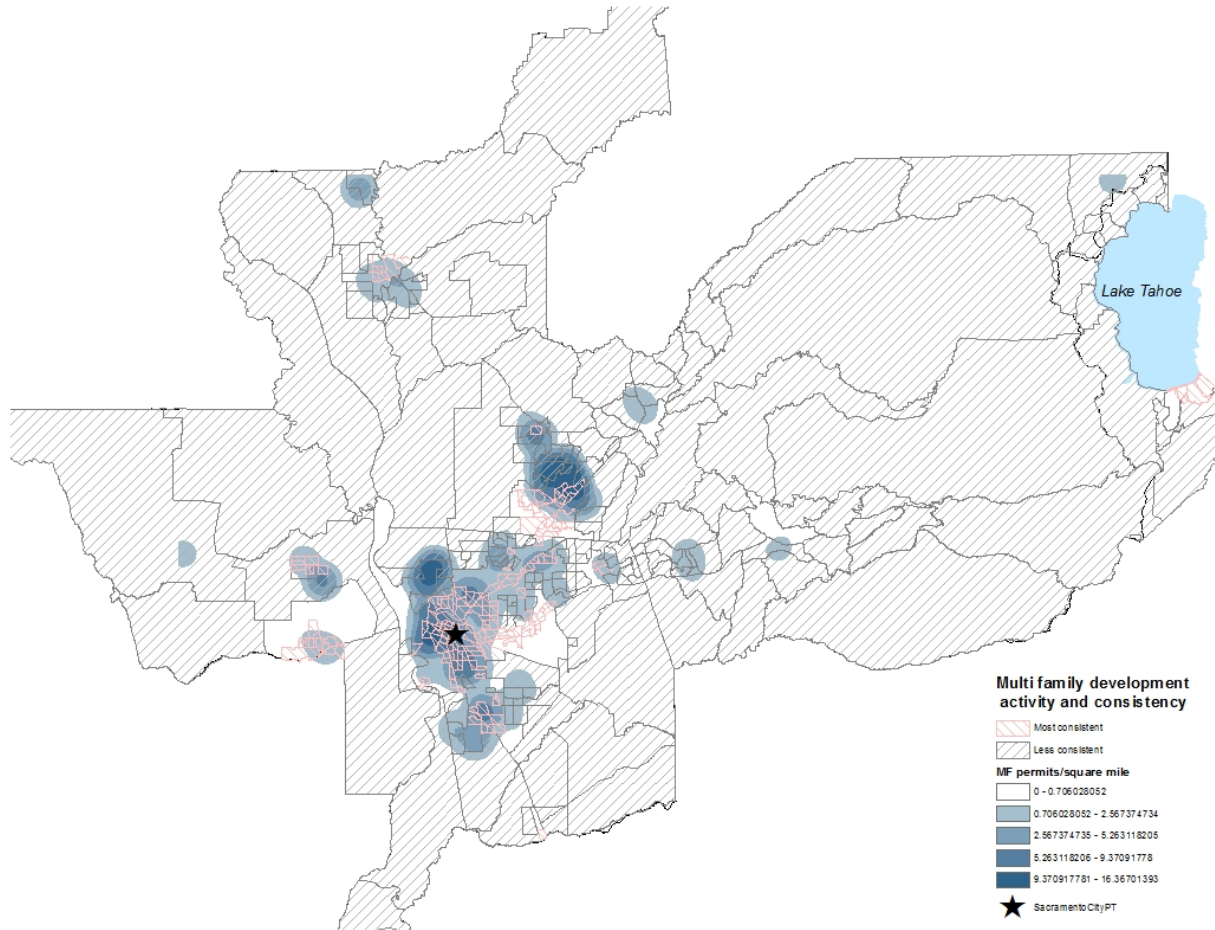


Figure 14: Multi-family Development Activity and Blueprint Consistency

By combining consistency scores with levels of development activity it is possible to create a tract level typology of neighborhoods throughout the region. Figure 15 provides a visualization of the region partitioned into these tract level typologies. The typology organizes the space of the region in terms of both development activity and Blueprint consistency (Table 14). Unsurprisingly, tracts with high consistency and high development activity are located on the fringe of existing urban areas. While this represents the further decentralization of

Table 14: Typologies of Blueprint Consistency

		Development activity	
		High	Low
Blueprint consistency	High	Highest tertile overall consistency-development activity higher than the regional average	Highest tertile overall consistency-development activity lower than the regional average
	Low	Lowest tertile overall consistency-development activity higher than the regional average	Lowest tertile overall consistency-development activity lower than the regional average

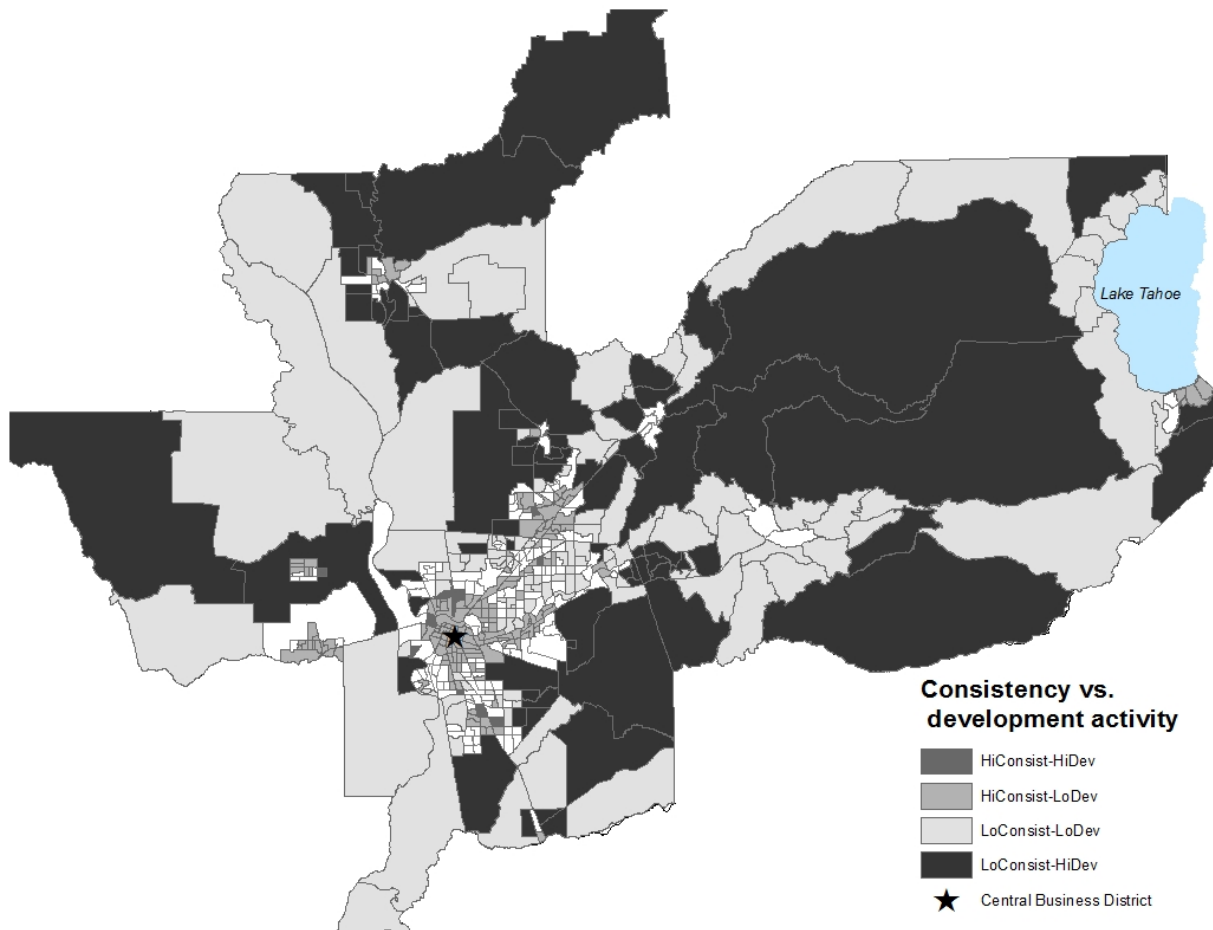


Figure 15: Typologies of Blueprint Consistency and Development Activity

development in the region, it is nonetheless consistent with the growth concepts of Blueprint. However, tracts meeting these criteria are few. In terms of the potential for development consistent with Blueprint, those tracts with a lower share of development activity but scoring in the top tertile for consistency are generally located in the urban core of the central city (Sacramento) or the older suburban cities that have developed their own economic base, like Davis to the west and Roseville to the northeast.

Discussion

While the previous analysis is not meant to be a definitive statement on the effectiveness of the Blueprint process, it does provide a sense of how development in the region has proceeded and sheds some light on the plan's influence at the local level. Although the analysis presents a pessimistic view of region-wide consistency with the plan, a more nuanced reading shows that there is considerable variation by political jurisdiction. To begin with, development activity is not distributed equally throughout the region. As Figure 16 shows, a few jurisdictions account for most of the observed residential development activity. Not surprisingly, development activity mirrors overall changes in population. The City of Sacramento, the largest city in the region also leads in development activity. The two suburban cities that led the region in growth over the last decade (Elk Grove and Roseville) along with Lincoln, round out the top four. This supports the idea that the observed development activity is the result of city's accommodating demand for new housing. However, the results of the SLM model also suggest that the location of areas with higher amounts of development activity is

driven by development activity itself. The inclusion of Lincoln, the thirteenth largest city (out of 23) provides some insights into the explanation for why post process growth seems so obviously inconsistent. Although a small city, it has grown by close to 300 percent over the past decade. Most of this development activity (more than 90 percent) scores in the lowest tertile of consistency. Despite their rhetorical support of regional planning efforts like Blueprint, suburban jurisdictions like these employ a range of approaches and rationalities with regard to setting priorities for how growth is managed, accommodated, or pursued. A survey of municipal governments in California by Lewis and Barbour (1998) found that concerns about tax revenue were consistently the top priority of local leaders when it came to setting policies affecting growth. Local governments depend on the physical growth of cities to fund existing services and larger-lot, higher end suburban houses are more likely to provide this return on investment than would smaller attached units. This type of fiscal zoning has been documented elsewhere as a widespread and pervasive driver of local development priorities and land use policies (Gyourko 1991). At the same time, localities face pressures from both developers and land owners to continue rezoning exurban agricultural lands to allow for development. As Jonas and Wilson (1999, 3) detail in their update of Molotch's (1976) *city as growth machine* thesis, assemblages of local elites whose fortunes are tied to "possibilities of place" continue to "drive urban politics in their quest to expand the local economy and accumulate wealth."

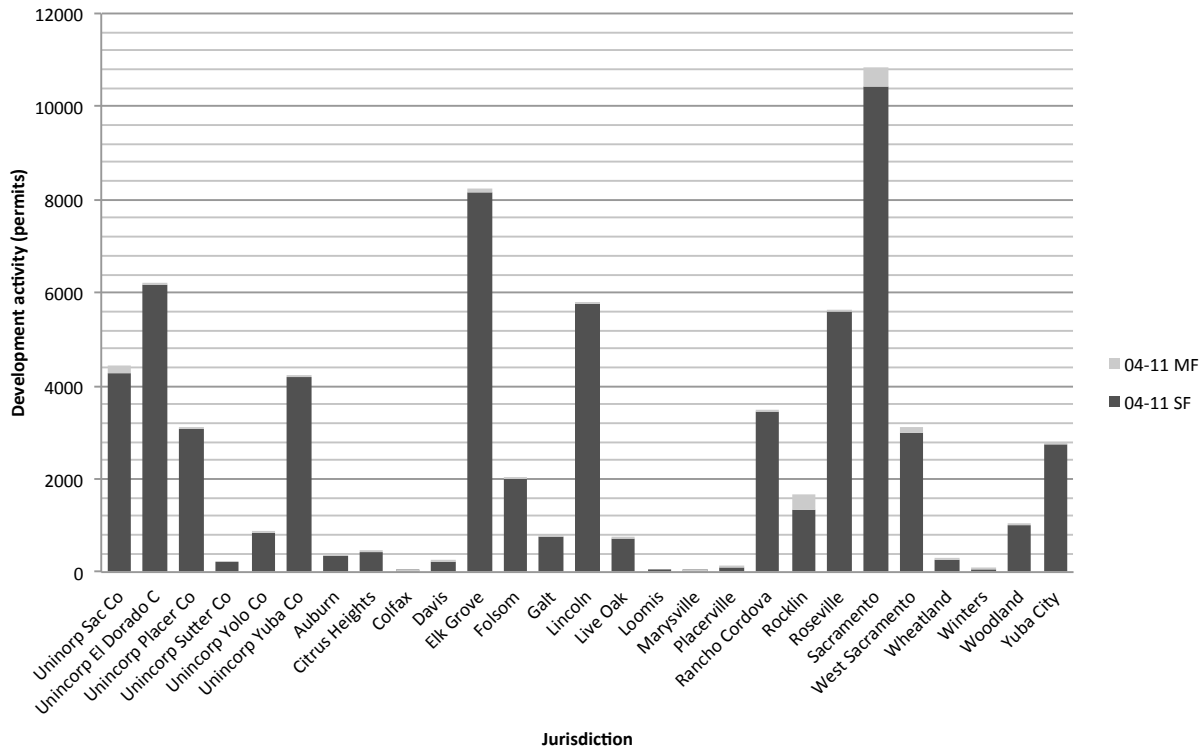


Figure 16: Development Activity by Jurisdiction

The prospects of a voluntary regional planning process overcoming these often conflicting local interests are questionable. While there are examples of regional plans for development having been implemented successfully, they are limited to those few cases where an actual regional government exists and has the authority to compel local jurisdictions to plan and make those plans consistent with the collective regional vision. The most commonly cited example is Portland Metro, the elected government with land use planning authority for the region of Portland, Oregon. However, outside of Portland, most regional institutions lack this authority to compel changes to local development priorities. Table 15 suggests a typology of regional institutions based on the strength of their ability to implement regional plans.

Table 15: The Strength of Regional Institutions

Type	Functional basis	Implementation mechanisms
Weak	Advisory, capacity building	Technical assistance, consensus building, voluntary
Moderate	Advisory, capacity building, incentives	Financial assistance
Strong	Advisory, capacity building, incentives, regulatory authority	Plan review for consistency, compliance with regional plans

For weak to moderate regional institutions like SACOG, planning is not effective when local jurisdictions retain their autonomy, and plan according to their own interests. While these interests may align with the region’s, there is no guarantee. As Figure 17 shows, those jurisdictions with the largest share of tracts with high consistency and a higher share of

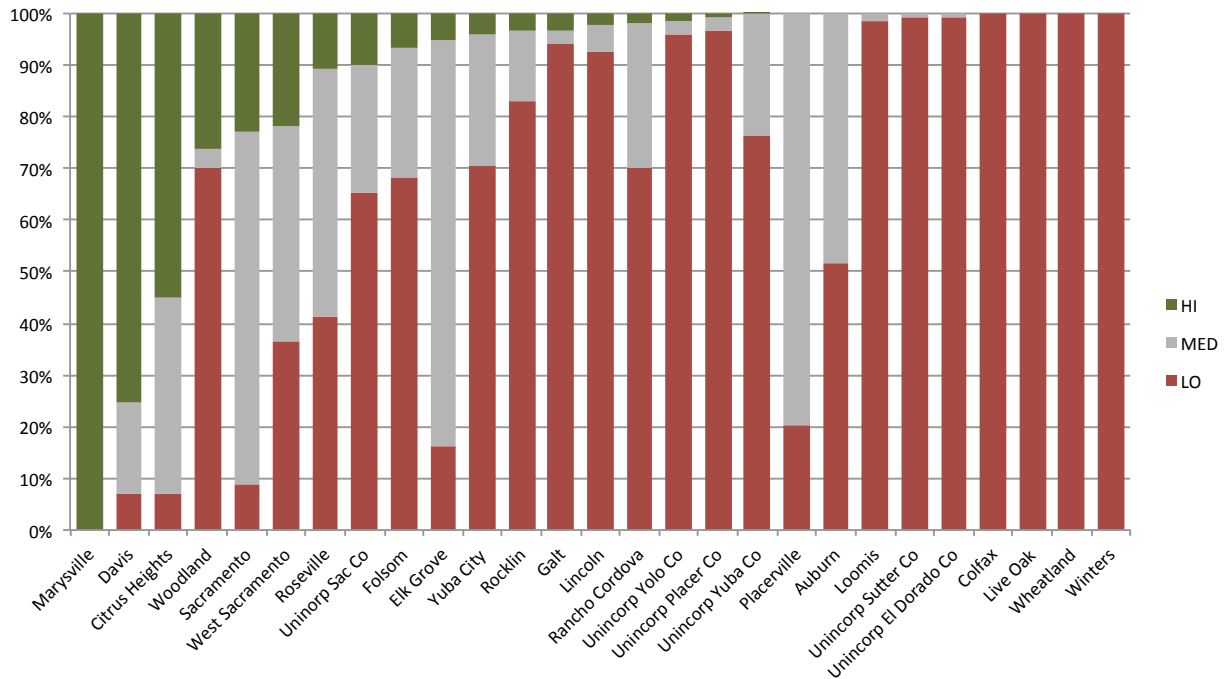


Figure 17: Blueprint Consistency of Development Activity by Jurisdiction

development activity are those job centers served best by regional transit, like Davis, Sacramento, and West Sacramento. For these places, prioritizing a more compact and contiguous development agenda makes sense in terms of existing opportunities and synergies. Those places where development activity is mostly inconsistent are those more rural counties and far flung cities, developing at very low densities, like Lincoln.

This chapter has looked at the consistency of regional development activity post-Blueprint as a way to gauge the plan's influence on local development priorities through the type of development they allow. Although the results show that development post-Blueprint has been generally located in areas that are less consistent when compared to pre-Blueprint activity, there are some surprising exceptions. The location of post-plan multi-family housing is generally more consistent when compared to both pre-plan development and when contrasted with higher and lower shares of development activity. This represents a success in terms of implementing the plan's vision of providing greater housing choice (a variety of types and prices) in areas of the region best able to minimize their environmental impact and maximize existing assets, be they physical infrastructure or socio-cultural capital. Perhaps unsurprising, the overwhelming majority of development activity in the region is single-family housing located in areas less consistent than pre-plan development. The exception is how the average consistency of where these units are located with regard to existing assets like schools post-Blueprint is an improvement on pre-plan development activity.

The spatial variation in Blueprint consistency and development activity suggests varying levels of support for the plan within the region's political jurisdictions. This points to a need to better understand the context in which these land use decisions are made and the limitations

or constraints that both planners and local leader face. The Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, the urban core of the region, account for more than a third of the region's approved multi-family units. By default, these areas are more consistent with Blueprint, existing at the center of the region and containing the highest regional densities. It is possible that these development types simply make more sense or are more politically acceptable in certain places compared to other where the resistance to ideas like infill is stronger. Although regionalism might make sense or be widely accepted in the abstract, implementation at the local level ultimately hinges on how local decision makers balance the pressures for support of regionally consistent policies with the pressures in opposition. As is evident in this analysis, most jurisdictions across the region have seemingly failed to prioritize development consistent with the agenda agreed to in Blueprint. Although each jurisdiction contains areas that are more or less consistent with the plan's vision, most new development is being approved for areas that are less consistent. This is confirmed by the results of the regression analysis, which suggest that locational consistency alone is a poor predictor of development activity. Rather, the variables meant to capture the context in which decisions are made (i.e. the capacity of local civil society) and the clustering effect suggest that other forces are at work either encouraging or discouraging Blueprint consistency. The next chapter takes a closer look at both the variation in Blueprint implementation and tries to uncover these factors and forces, and how they have shaped implementation efforts at the local level by looking at four specific jurisdictions and their engagement with the Blueprint project: the City of Sacramento, Davis, Elk Grove and Sacramento County.

Chapter 6: Case Studies – The Sacramento Region Blueprint Project

We were able to survey all of our member agencies and find something that we could tangibly show that implements Blueprint. Now it may be something like... downtown streetscaping, but we could find something in every jurisdiction (interview, SACOG Planner).

This chapter explores the influence of the Blueprint project on planning practice and land use policy in four local jurisdictions across the region: the City of Sacramento, the City of Elk Grove, the City of Davis, and Sacramento County. The quote above gives a sense that the scope and scale of implementation has varied throughout the region. Drawing from Dierwetcher (2008) and While et al. (2004), I find that the reasons for local support of voluntary planning processes like Blueprint varies, depending on local pressures, and the perceived costs of participation compared with expected gains. The following cases take a closer look at how four different local jurisdictions have implemented (or not) the principles and vision of the Blueprint preferred growth scenario, uncovering in the process the factors and forces that have shaped this willingness and informed the rationalities behind their decisions. To illustrate this I draw on hours of in-person and telephone interviews, along with an analysis of planning documents and media accounts. Interview subjects were selected to capture a variety of regional stakeholders that includes planners, elected and appointed officials, developers, and other representatives of various civil society groups (environmental, business, and social equity focused). Interviews were conducted over a period spanning June 2012 to April 2013. I begin each case with a brief summary of the jurisdiction before detailing how local planners have

engaged with the Blueprint implementation process and how this relates to local development priorities, with a focus on specific projects that illustrate the tensions of incorporating a regional vision in local plans and practice.

Implementation of Blueprint across the four cases has varied widely. Some jurisdictions have gone as far as changing the rules of development (zoning ordinance and development guidelines) to allow for Blueprint consistent projects, while others have incorporated the language of Blueprint into their planning discourse. Regardless, most would claim that they have incorporated at least some of the growth principles of Blueprint, or the broader goals of the smart growth planning paradigm and sustainable development, reflecting at least the symbolic power of being Blueprint consistent, even if the rhetoric does not match the practice. Throughout the cases, efforts at implementation demonstrate the ongoing tension between the rhetorical goals of plans like Blueprint, and the practices of local jurisdictions.

The City of Sacramento

People are already in tune with the lifestyle that is envisioned more by Blueprint and our General Plan. So it is kind of an easy match – they may not have known about the Blueprint but they knew they liked midtown Sac and all the neat restaurants and shops there and how beautiful the architecture and the shaded trees were, and everything close by that you could walk to, people like that (interview, Sacramento Councilmember).

The City of Sacramento is the economic and historic center of the region. It is both the capital of the State of California and the home of the county seat of Sacramento County. Sacramento was founded in 1849 and it the oldest incorporated city in the state. The city has a City Council Manager form of government consisting of a Mayor, elected by the general public of the city, and eight Council members (City of Sacramento 2013a). According to the City's website, the Council "establishes policies, ordinances, and land uses; approves the City's annual budget, contracts, and agreements; here's appeals of decisions made by city staff or citizen advisory groups, and appoints four Council Officers" including a City Manager (City of Sacramento 2013a). The City Manager provides the "leadership and direction for the operation and management of all City departments.

The City grew at a rate of 14.6 percent over the decade from 2000 to 2010, and added close to 30,000 new housing units, making it along with the region as a whole, one of the fastest growing metropolitan regions in the country. Although the City continues to expand into undeveloped areas, it also saw its average density increase by almost 14 percent. The City of Sacramento has a majority of minorities and has been celebrated as one of the most diverse cities in the country. In a Time magazine article from 2002, Sacramento was named the most diverse city in the US by the Harvard Civil Rights Project (Stodghill and Bower 2002). However, as the article goes on to explain, this diversity masks lingering inequality:

But while Sacramento approaches an ideal for integration, it certainly isn't paradise. Beneath the multicolored surface, the city's 407,018 inhabitants vacillate between racial harmony and ethnic tension. You see a Sikh casually strolling into a Mexican restaurant for takeout, an Eskimo and a white punk

hanging out together downtown. But you also see black and Hispanic parents outraged because their kids' test scores lag behind those of whites and Asians in integrated schools. (Stodghill and Bower 2002, 2).

Of the four cases, Sacramento appears to have had the most success implementing the Blueprint at the local level. According to planners with the City, efforts at implementation have included the following (interview, Sacramento Planner):

- Making its General Plan consistent with the Blueprint
- Updating the zoning map to reflect these changes
- Targeting capital investments to support Blueprint consistent projects
- Revising their zoning and development code to reflect the Blueprint growth principles
- Incorporating Blueprint principles in master plans for infill and transit supported hubs and corridors

In 2009, the City Council adopted the Sacramento 2030 General Plan. According to the City's website, the plan "set a new direction for the future of Sacramento... based on the City's Smart Growth Principles, Council adopted Vision and Guiding Principles for the General Plan, and the Sacramento Area Council of Government's Blueprint" (City of Sacramento 2009).

Planning documents cite six themes for prioritizing development decisions as having emerged from the planning process:

- Making great places
- Growing smarter

- Maintaining a vibrant economy
- Creating a healthy city
- Living lightly and reducing the City's 'carbon footprint'
- Developing a 'sustainable future'

Planning officials and stakeholders active in the city attributed these successful implementation efforts to a pre-existing citywide commitment to smart growth policies. Smart growth policies were adopted by the city in 2001. This helped set the stage prior to the Blueprint process by starting the discussion amongst planning staff and local leaders about how future development should occur. In addition, the city started their General Plan update process just as SACOG was adopting the final version of Blueprint. According to planning officials, having participated in the Blueprint process changed the idea of what a General Plan update should be. The city's prior General Plan, adopted in 1988, had primarily relied on annexation to accommodate growth. Utilizing pre-smart growth ideas, the city planned to "gobble up more farmland north of the city and the southeast of the city until we started bumping up against other jurisdictions that are competing for more greenfield area" (interview, Sacramento Planning Official).

The significance of Blueprint's impact on how local planners framed the problem of accommodating forecast growth is reflected in the name change associated with the General Plan process. The effort was renamed from the "General Plan Update" to the "2030 General Plan." Although this seems like a small difference, according to planners, this was meant to represent a clean break, emphasizing that the new plan was not simply an update but rather a

new approach to how the City and its resident understood its future. What had been thought of as merely an exercise in projecting past trends forward to meet statutory requirements became a long-range planning process intent on re-shaping the location and characteristics of future growth. The Land Use Element was renamed the Land Use and Urban Form Element, and the Transportation Element was renamed the Mobility and Connectivity Element, reflecting an awareness of how these plans affected performance outcomes in the city and the region as a whole. The new General Plan is characterized by planners and local leaders as much more visionary in its approach to how the city will develop. As with the Blueprint planning effort, the General Plan considers how the city's urban form and land use policies relate to larger scale issues like health and global warming. Throughout, planning officials characterized political support as key to the plans successful adoption and consistency with Blueprint.

Councilmembers have confirmed this unanimous support.

The result was a General Plan that planners and local leaders describe as being very consistent with the Blueprint. However, planners did note some divergences with the growth assumptions reflected in the Blueprint preferred scenario. First, as an outcome of the General Plan update, the city had allocated growth that exceeded Blueprint projections by cramming “a lot more growth in our vacant and underutilized areas, we mapped out all of our opportunity areas and figured out what the average build out would be over a 25 year period and figured out that we could actually take more [growth] than what the Blueprint said we could” (interview, Sacramento Planner). So in this sense, the city exceeded the expectations of Blueprint and more than satisfied the goal of focusing growth in existing urbanized areas and creating a more compact urban form. This has been done primarily through master planned

intensification and infill projects in areas of the city that contained uses inconsistent with the new vision for the neighborhood (e.g. Township 29 and the Railyards) or built out at densities lower than what new or existing zoning allows.

Second, the Blueprint allocated more growth in one of the few undeveloped areas of the city (North Natomas) than the General Plan. According to planners, the city had chosen not to consider this area for development both because it had been able to accommodate projected growth elsewhere, and because of flooding and habitat conservation concerns. The area is located near the Sacramento River and a temporary moratorium had been placed on development in the area post-Hurricane Katrina as new flood plain development guidelines were being considered. This confusion over future development in the area represents an interesting aspect of how conflicting conceptions of sustainable development get enshrined in regional plans as stakeholders in different jurisdictions advance their own interests. As part of a joint planning process with the County (North Natomas Joint Visioning Process), planners with the City of Sacramento described how the city had been given planning responsibility for the area, despite it being outside the city's sphere of influence. An agreement with the County that predated the Blueprint had established joint planning authority. According to planning documents, the planning process was structured as a collaboration between the City and the County, although the County Board of Supervisors retained ultimate decision making authority about whether or not the City's sphere of influence should be extended to cover the area in question (City of Sacramento 2013b). The purpose of the collaboration was to "guide future urban growth for more efficient use of the land, while securing permanent preservation of

open space/farmland” and provide for revenue sharing between the City and the County to prevent a competition for tax revenue through development entitlements.

Despite the position of the city, documentation shows how the County and landowners in the area had been advocating for development during the Blueprint process. Its inclusion in the Blueprint as an area projected to receive development illustrates how stakeholders were able to overcome and subvert the smart growth goals of the city and lay the groundwork for the eventual approval of development in an area that might have otherwise remained open space. By appealing to the County, stakeholders were able to bypass the approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) before the city would have any official authority to review proposed development in the area. As an unincorporated area outside the city’s sphere of influence, the County faces no such hurdles in entitling future development projects.

Stakeholders from a variety of advocacy organizations in the region (Environmental Council of Sacramento, WALKSacramento, Sacramento Housing Alliance and others) voiced a common criticism of the Blueprint’s limited effect on patterns of development during interviews: that even as General Plans incorporate Blueprint principles, zoning and development codes remain unchanged. Sacramento is the exception as the only jurisdiction to re-write its development codes post-Blueprint. According to planners there, what prohibits local jurisdictions from doing smart growth type development is zoning. Dubbed ‘Sacramento Streamline,’ the update process has received significant support and backing, not just from SACOG and environmentalists, but from the development community as well. The Sacramento Business Journal reports that the project “stems in part from suggestion by architects and Region Builders, a coalition founded by the Sacramento Regional Builders Exchange” (Nax

2012b, 1). This article goes on to quote a councilmember who “wants to send a business-friendly message to developers and others,” saying:

To me, government has been very lazy. It has been creating laws for the worst offenders but should be rewarding the great actors. If you are a developer and have done very good projects and crossed all your T’s and dotted your I’s, we should look at you differently (Nax 2012b, 1).

There is a distinct sense that the code revision is as much about allowing Blueprint consistent growth, as it is a response to the concerns of the development community in general, who are portrayed as a group doing good things for the city as a whole. The rewrite moves away from the traditional ideas of Euclidean zoning, and the changes will result in a code that is more performance based, focused less on use than context (interview, Sacramento Planner). According to planning documents the new Planning and Development Code will “provide flexibility in development standards to facilitate development” (City of Sacramento 2013). Changes to development policy have also included rewriting the Zoning Code Parking Regulations to “improve the ease of doing business in the City and promote sustainable communities” (City of Sacramento 2012). According to the city, these changes will “encourage economic development, help the City maximize the use of existing parking opportunities citywide, reduce impacts to neighborhoods, and promote alternative modes of transportation and sustainable building” (City of Sacramento 2012).

Local planners, politicians and stakeholders all cited numerous examples of projects characterized as consistent with Blueprint that either didn’t happen or required an unwieldy

number of special approvals because of the disconnect between the zoning code and the Blueprint principles. One example is the mixed-use, affordable housing development, La Valentina (Figure 18). This development, 26 years in the making, is located on the brownfield site of a former auto body shop on the northern edge of downtown and adjacent to a stop on the new light rail system. Planners at both the local and regional level cite this project as a rare example satisfying many, if not all of the Blueprint principles at once. In addition to adding density along a transit corridor, the project epitomizes context appropriate, high quality design (features normally found in more expensive condo-type developments) of affordable housing in a way that integrates density on a human scale. For approval, the project required seven special permits, four variances, and three and half years of negotiation.



Figure 18: La Valentina Affordable Housing Development as Featured in the March 2013 Issue of Architectural Record. Source: <http://www.dbarchitect.com>

Although planners and affordable housing advocates have championed this project, it highlights tensions within the goals of sustainability and Blueprint's development priorities. The project provides quality affordable housing adjacent to transit, but it also concentrates low-income residents in an area of the central city that has historically been home to marginalized groups:

The Alkali Flat site was idle for about two decades, and attracted what [Councilmember] Cohn described as 'negative elements' to the neighborhood, one of the oldest in Sacramento. He said the apartment residents are welcomed, and the area would benefit from having 'more eyes on the street' (Nax 2012a).

The implication here is that redevelopment and infill do more than just satisfy Blueprint's growth principles. These projects are also seen by local leaders as a way to transform urban spaces, in the process removing populations deemed inappropriate for these reimagined spaces (i.e. urban renewal). The project has been lauded as much for its design as for its social goals.

In addition to the administrative challenge of getting the project approved, the development faced considerable NIMBY resistance from the receiving community. The project is located in an area of the city that had seen significant decline and disinvestment as adjacent riverfront industries move outside the city or the region. As a result, infill advocates described the project's neighbors as resistant to the siting of affordable housing in an area perceived developers as less likely to generate organized resistance. Acceptance of the project ultimately depended on convincing local leaders and residents that the quality of the design (e.g. modern architecture) would offset negative perceptions around affordable housing and serve as a

catalyzing project for the neighborhood, signaling to other developers and consumers that the area was changing for the better:

The vitality of our urban environment has been rediscovered and the Blueprint gives us a tool to leverage the future and make that continue to happen... I'm so enthusiastic about how desirable this neighborhood is... from here down to C street was considered a total backwater, 95 percent rental, very few homeowners, very, very low economic demographics, generally an undesirable place to be, and now it is still 90 percent renters but who is living in this neighborhood has changed pretty dramatically... (interview, Infill Advocate).

City officials and infill advocates often mentioned the La Valentina project, not only because it supports their claims about the barriers to implementing Blueprint but also because so few of the projects deemed consistent with Blueprint actually address the social sustainability of new development. Although infill affordable housing projects might be rare, other areas of the city are dotted with new infill projects, decidedly more upscale in character. In neighborhoods like Midtown, a historic neighborhood just east of downtown, these infill developments have been accompanied by the requisite amenities of a newly hip neighborhood. Cafes, food trucks, boutiques, and restaurants line the streets and farmers markets fill the parks on the weekends. The neighborhood even has its own website created by the Midtown Business Association (www.exploremidtown.org), promoting a particular quality of life that emphasizes both its 'green' design and its abundance of trendy establishments Midtown (Figure 19). According to planners, downtown adjacent neighborhoods like this have been revitalized

with little assistance from the city. A key distinction in the character of the transformation in places like Midtown has been a well organized local constituency, able to gain concessions from developers and demand projects that are considered higher quality in design, and able to mitigate the effects of increased densities (interview, Sacramento Planner).

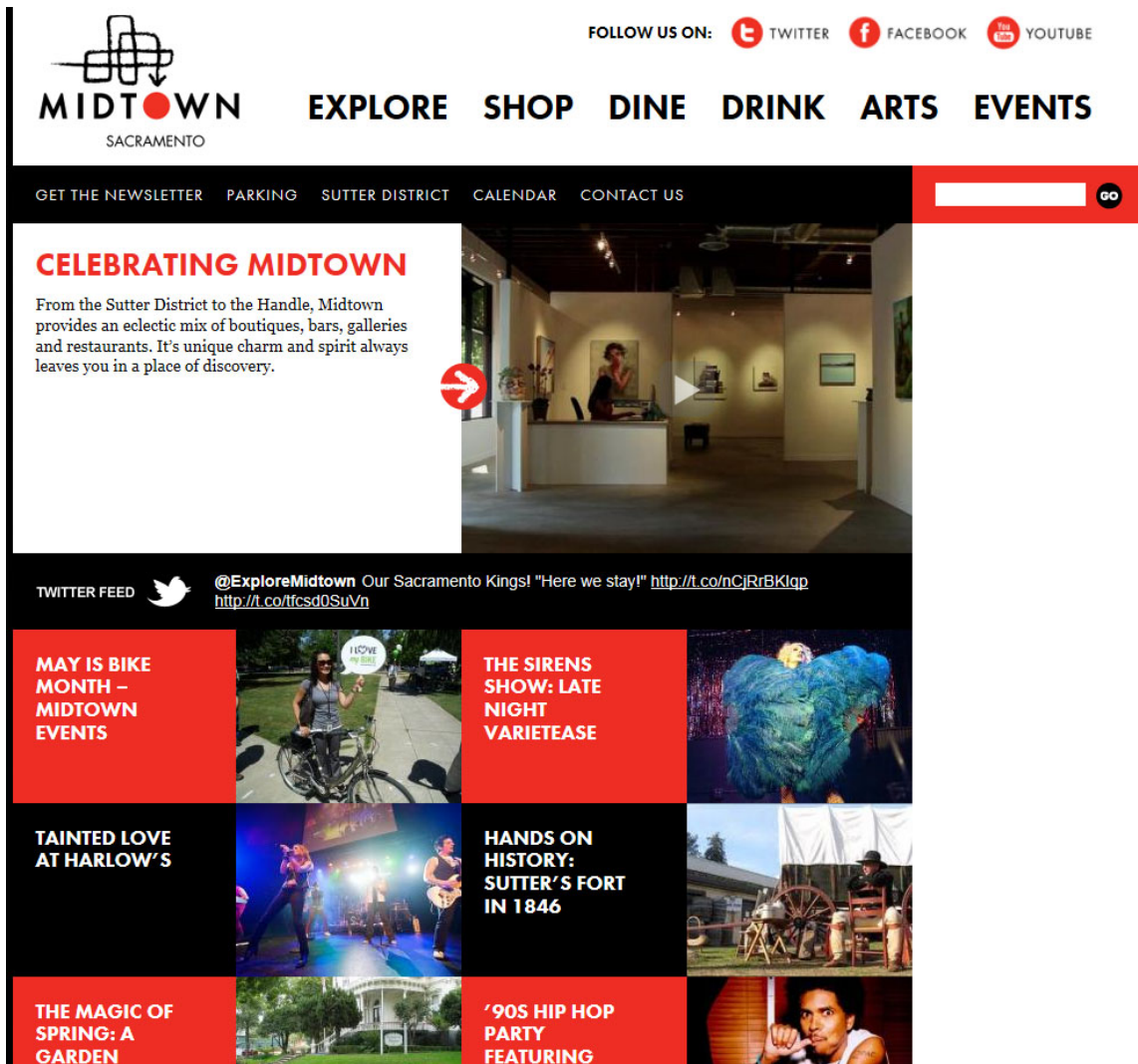


Figure 19: Screenshot of the *Explore Midtown* Website. Source: <http://www.exploremidtown.org>

Efforts to revalorize neighborhoods like Midtown predate Blueprint but they represent the type of development that is consistent with the vision of the plan and with attempts by

developers and local leaders to reimagine the community as a regional destination for consumption. Planning officials noted that some residents in these downtown adjacent neighborhoods did not want to change anything in the character of their neighborhoods. In fact, there is another neighborhood organization that resists efforts to reimagine what they consider a historic residential community (<http://sacmidtown.org/>). This despite the fact that existing zoning already allowed for much more dense development (e.g. taller buildings). In the case of Midtown, the Floor to Area Ratios (FARs) in the General Plan update had actually been changed to be consistent with the zoning that already allowed for higher density projects. This situation existed because the central city had been built up at a lower density than what the zoning code allowed. During the code update, a compromise was reached that reduced the entitled density but still allowed for increases beyond what currently exists. Both local and regional planners contend changes like this that allow for infill development at higher densities are necessary for the successful implementation of Blueprint. Although developers were pushing for these higher densities in exchange for providing community benefits (e.g. parks or open space), communities were hesitant based on past experiences. In this case, the economic imperative of sustainable infill development satisfies the goals of both the city to increase revenues from underutilized land, and from developers who stand to profit from the rent gap of gentrifying neighborhoods. According to planning officials, opponents were not necessarily anti-growth, but were concerned with the project details and the quality of design. As a result, the compromise included more than just a reduction in allowable densities. Design review requirements were added to consider how infill design elements transition with the surrounding neighborhood context.

More often than not, environmental policy and Blueprint consistency are being driven by an economic rationality. Developers can look at the higher densities of the Blueprint preferred scenario map for Sacramento and see a way for them to be more profitable and still claim to be sustainable (interview, Infill Developer). Projects seen as implementing Blueprint are limited to ‘win-win’ strategies that provide some measure of environmental progress while creating new opportunities for growth and/or redevelopment. These include supporting new urban forms (or traditional in the case of the region’s infatuation with New Urbanist design principles), TOD intensification of existing corridors, and opening up new spaces of the city to development – what is in effect a restructuring of the city for a “new phase of wealth creation” (While et al. 2004, 566). More typical of these ‘win-win’ projects are the River District master plan and the Township 9 mixed-use project, cited by planners and local leaders as exemplary of projects consistent with the Blueprint Vision (Figure 20). In fact, the project’s Environmental Impact Report (EIR) shows that consistency with Blueprint was considered an important factor when evaluating the project’s impact:

Moreover, the project is consistent with SACOG Preferred Blueprint Scenario, a bold vision for growth that promotes compact, mixed-use development and more transit choices as an alternative to low density development and, in turn, reduces individual projects’ CO2 emissions and decreases greenhouse gasses (City of Sacramento 2007, 252).



Figure 20: Aerial View of the Township 9 Project Site. Source: <http://www.cityofsacramento.org/dsd/projects/documents/T9-Overview.pdf>

According to project’s Summary Booklet, Township 9 is a 65-acre “mixed use community being planned in exacting conformance with New Urbanist design principles” (Capital Station 65 LLC 2007, 2). The project is located in a formally industrial area between the American river and downtown Sacramento. The site is part of the larger 773-acre River District, a master planned site the City hopes to “evolve from a primarily light-industrial, low-intensity commercial district, to that of a series of walkable neighborhoods” (City of Sacramento 2011, 1). The name Township 9 refers to the name given the area by the City in 1865. When complete, the development will consist 2,980 housing units, more than 150,000 square feet of ground floor

retail, and more than 20 acres of “public open space.” The developer describes the project as providing a mix of high density housing types, connected to a mix of land uses by “pedestrian and bicycle friendly tree-lined streets.” The description continues:

High quality architecture and a public open space network will be punctuated by architectural references to the property’s historic uses. The public open space network will be culminated by the sensitive integration of public park area with the natural environment of the American River. Through the enhanced, visual and safe physical access provided by Township 9, residents will be dramatically reminded why Sacramento is known as The River City (Capital Station 65 LLC 2007, 2).

A distinct conception of Blueprint consistency emerged from this description – one that links the sustainable development agenda to quality of life and aesthetic concerns. Although the project and the larger master plan are presented by the City and its supporters as a ‘win-win’ project, consistent with Blueprint and an example of ‘sustainable development,’ its impact on measures of social sustainability and social justice are less clear (Figure 21). Unmentioned in planning documents for Township 9, the success of the project hinges on not just creating a mix of new uses but removing uses that might be seen as undesirable to potential residents of the new luxury developments.



Figure 21: Developer's Website for the Township 9 Project. Source: <http://www.t9ontheriver.com>

The area is considered 'blighted' by the City, the product of economic restructuring and disinvestment, and is the location of public housing and social service providers, a perceived challenge to the feasibility of development there as acknowledged by a Councilmember:

More problematic in that area is that you have a lot of social service providers, particularly for homeless, so you have a big homeless presence in that area as well (interview, Sacramento Councilmember).

This comment underscores the revanchist potential of the project that is otherwise obscured by appeals to the sustainable development discourse and Blueprint consistency. The

Housing Authority of the County of Sacramento (HASCO) manages the 218 units of Twin Rivers public housing project. In 2011, HASCO was awarded a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a “comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation and revitalization” (SHRA 2012, 1). As planning documents note, the Transformation Plan is premised on demolition of the Twin Rivers units and the redevelopment of the site per the River District-Railyards master plan. Although redevelopment of the units is still in the planning phase, early documents show that replacement in-place is not being considered as an option because to do so would make the larger mixed-use project “uncompetitive.” As an alternative, early reports recommend locating an off-site location for replacement units, noting that it will be easier to build in a location where the housing authority already has control of a site, once again concentrating low-income populations but making way for the redevelopment of the target area.

Preparing the site for redevelopment has also involved considerable public investments. The City and State have invested more than \$30 million in infrastructure (roads and sewers) upgrades to make the site viable for dense redevelopment. The first buildings to break ground on the site are the Canary Place apartments, a 180-unit affordable housing complex built with tax-exempt financing (Staff 2013). The City of Sacramento has an inclusionary housing ordinance and local leaders have characterized support for this project as a way to both eliminate blight and satisfy State affordable housing targets (interview, Sacramento Councilmember). However, the project has drawn criticism from affordable housing advocates because it isolates new affordable housing away from the larger project, rather than integrating the affordable units with market rate units.

An often-critiqued aspect of the sustainability discourse is a bias against efforts to address social inequality in favor of environmental, economic competitiveness and quality of life concerns (Campbell 1996; While et al. 2004). Projects like Township 9 are a good example of how the meanings assigned to ideas like regionalism and sustainability are shaped by struggles over land use, and attempts to balance the demands of competing interests. The coalition of actors advocating for this project appeal to a discourse of growth that promotes redevelopment as generally good for the community as a whole, despite the impacts on specific populations.

As the experience and examples of Sacramento demonstrates, the meaning, support for, and implications of regional plans like Blueprint are “determined by conflicts rooted in particular geographies of valorization and devaluation in the contemporary city” (While et al. 2004, 565). In Sacramento, these conflicts are played out both in the local politics of neighborhood change, and in the city-wide efforts of local elites (the growth machine) to reimagine the city, and facilitate the redevelop areas of the city that lag behind this discursive construct. While planners in the City talk about sustainability and Blueprint as something that makes sense for the City, it is unclear to what extent support for the alternative regional futures of the Preferred Scenario (a compact urban form, increased infill development...) is premised on mobilizing local elites, developers, businesses, non-profits and other stakeholders around concern for the regional good so much as enhancing the competitiveness of the city, and creating advantages over perceived rivals, both within the region and beyond. This is not to suggest that policy changes in Sacramento only exist to facilitate growth with a negative impact on the living environment. Rather, the transition of urban space from industrial to post-

industrial (working riverfronts and railyards to luxury condos) represents a series of “light green’ policy actions, quite literally, to clean-up the spaces of industrial capitalism and create a more livable city, at least for those willing and able to consume the particular spaces entailed by this transition” (While et al. 2004, 565).

The City of Elk Grove

SACOG was going to get nowhere... If SACOG continued to push a higher density land use distribution within the city limits that was completely inconsistent with the City’s General Plan, the City would have been a lot more vocal against the Blueprint (interview, Elk Grove Planner).

The City of Elk Grove is located approximately 15 miles south of central Sacramento. Elk Grove was the first California city to incorporate in the 21st century. Between 2000 and 2010, the population nearly doubled, making it the second largest city in the county and one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. The City is 46 percent White, 26 percent Asian, 11 percent African-American, and 18 percent Hispanic or Latino. The unincorporated town of Elk Grove was founded in 1850, and existed for many decades as a home base for the surrounding agriculture and mining activities. During the recent housing boom (early 2000s) the city saw explosive growth as a bedroom community and suburb of Sacramento, with 74.6 percent of housing units being owner occupied, considerably higher than the State’s homeownership rate of 56.7 percent. Ninety percent of the City’s housing units are single-family detached units with only 3 percent multi-family (5 or more units). The median household income is \$78,564, the

highest of the four cases under study. More recently, the city has been hit hard by foreclosures and a decline in property values (Data Center 2012). A Council/Manager governs the City, with an elected city council and an appointed city manager. The community profile on the city's webpage describes the city as being "home to an entrepreneurial spirit and superior quality of life, Elk Grove is a family oriented community where opportunity is around every corner" (City of Elk Grove 2013). The city promotes an identity as an exclusive suburb, in contrast to the urbanism of Sacramento as the central city and the urban County from which it was incorporated:

The city offers everything from starter homes to ranch estates, and provides a safe, youthful environment where families put down roots. Its population of more than 150,000 residents is diverse in ethnicity, age and income levels. There are approximately 40,000 households in Elk Grove with a median income of more than \$82,000 (City of Elk Grove City 2013).

According to the City's General Plan, incorporation came about after years of advocacy by local residents who saw a need for "local control over the decisions which affect the quality of life in Elk Grove" (City of Elk Grove 2003, 5). The County ballot measure, which led to incorporation, the "Yes on J" campaign (Figure 22) stressed "increased law enforcement presence and local control."



Figure 22: Elk Grove Municipal Incorporation Campaign Sign. Source: <http://www.elkgrovecity.org>

Although the city is represented in the media as an example of everything that is wrong with suburban sprawl, it is also home to a New Urbanist development by Peter Calthorpe, a project that predates Blueprint and the City's incorporation, but nonetheless embodies many of the Blueprint principles. The city inherited much of its urban form from the County upon incorporation. Yet during the housing boom of the early 2000s its land use policies facilitated an unprecedented increase in the consumption of open space for new residential development (Reese 2011). These trends reflect the development priorities of the City which planning officials freely admit have little to do with regional visions for a more compact urban form. Planners adamantly claimed that the "city did not adopt the Blueprint in any formal way" (interview, Elk Grove Planner).

Planners described the Blueprint's allocation of higher densities in locations of the city inconsistent with the city's General Plan as the main point of contention. A guiding principle of

Blueprint was the concentration of growth in a more compact urban form, adjacent to existing urbanized areas and infrastructure. Approximately one third of Elk Grove's territory was considered underdeveloped by the preferred scenario ultimately adopted by the SACOG board. This area on the eastern side of the city is adjacent to a major highway providing north-south access to Sacramento. It contains approximately 5000 acres that have been developed as rural low-density, directly abutting medium and higher density development to the west. Attempts by SACOG planners to suggest changes to land use in this area were met with vocal resistance by residents, their representatives and homeowners associations. Although they felt constrained by development guidelines in the General Plan and direction from local leaders, planners admitted to "scratching their heads" about how development is allocated in the city. To them, underdeveloped areas adjacent to higher density and transportation links to job centers is where you need to "concentrate development as you continue to grow because the roadway systems are there, and large lots are wasted land." However, Blueprint was always understood by local leaders to be a model or a tool for reference, not as a regulatory requirement. Local leaders and stakeholders approached Blueprint with caution, suspecting that local interests and desires would not be adequately reflected in the preferred scenario.

The comments of planning officials in the city suggested that this lack of support for Blueprint derives from a fundamental unwillingness on the part of local leaders and their constituents to give up local control of land use decisions to a higher level authority, like SACOG. Representatives from the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), characterized this less as an issue of autonomy, and more an issue of a city that sees continued growth as necessary to its fiscal health:

When times are good, cities don't want to slow development down and when times are bad cities don't want to push back on development for fear of losing out (interview, ECOS Representative).

According to a planner with the city, the city council did not adopt a resolution in support of the Blueprint preferred scenario or development principles because “they [the growth assumptions in Blueprint] were not consistent with Elk Grove’s General Plan.” The General Plan contained assumptions about growth in underdeveloped areas that limited densities to 2-acre lots. The Blueprint preferred scenario increased densities in these underdeveloped areas to accommodate projected regional growth within the City’s existing borders. Planning officials attributed this opposition to increased density to NIMBYism and a desire to maintain the “rural character” of their neighborhoods. Planners described a fear among residents that redevelopment will bring unwanted change (e.g. density that impacts housing values and quality of life) and so they resist not only changes to zoning but also the construction of any infrastructure that might facilitate future development. Planners note that support for the preservation of this area is continuously reaffirmed by the city council. One planning official mentioned that when he was hired as a planner for the city, one of the first people to come meet with him was a representative of this community’s homeowners association who wanted to know whether “I was going to support the policy, or did I have an idea that I was going to increase densities, and I was going to change all that, that’s all they really cared about” (interview, Elk Grove Planning Official). Developers propose different development types, but residents oppose any changes. Planners recalled that when the City’s

first General Plan was being drafted there were land owners and developers that were pushing for higher densities in the areas close to more dense, urban areas, and “they got shot down, every time they come up with an idea it gets killed” (interview, Elk Grove Planning Commissioner).

Comments like this challenge suggestions that regional planning fails solely because local jurisdictions resist constraints on growth. In this case, multiple rationalities are at work within the city. Communities resist the imposition of higher densities while the more typical growth coalition fears being unable to push further into undeveloped areas of the region. Although these seem contradictory at first, the one works in the others favor. Constraints on infill development push any new growth into ‘greenfields’ on the edge of the city to the south, further away from regional job centers, into areas of the region generally less consistent with the Blueprint. A recent article in the Sacramento Bee cited an average commute time for Elk Grove residents of 60 minutes, contrasted with a regional average of less than 30 minutes (Reese 2011). The City has been the subject of numerous articles critical of its expansive growth and more recently, its high rates of foreclosure in these same communities. A recent article in the Sacramento Bee (Lyman 2012), the region’s biggest daily newspaper, described a conversation with a resident of Elk Grove and out-of-work carpenter who recalled “putting up 300 houses at a time” but that they are all underwater now. An article on CNNMoney.com from 2008 listed Elk Grove’s two Zip Codes among a list of the 100 Zip Codes across the country with the highest rates of foreclosure (Christie 2008). Nonetheless, planners and local officials there are taking steps to expand the City’s boundaries, adding more than 8000 acres to its sphere of influence (SOI).

If successful, this will present another example of non-compliance with Blueprint. The desired areas are beyond both the Blueprint prescribed growth areas for Elk Grove, and the County's Urban Services Boundary (USB). Development in this area was also not included in the City's growth assumptions that were incorporated in Blueprint and the MTP 2035. In an Op-Ed piece in the Sacramento Bee, residents defended the expansion as necessary, not because of projected demand, but because new homes are seen as an economic gain for the city:

Expansion of Elk Grove is definitely a good thing. Expansion means more homes, businesses, and overall more chances for economic success. Elk Grove is a great area, having many small and large businesses, and a steadily increasing number of homes. The next logical step would be to expand. Some may complain that expanding will bring strip malls and unrestrained urban sprawl. But that's what brings up home values and brings businesses to Elk Grove (Daniels 2012).

In contrast to places like Sacramento and Davis where growth management is seen as a way to promote the city as 'green' and boost its competitive advantage, the discourse associated with growth management (or Blueprint) in Elk Grove portrays attempts to limit or otherwise shape future development as a threat to private property values. Unconstrained growth is seen as something that benefits the city or community as whole even though increases in property value accrue most directly to individual property owners (homeowners but also land speculators on the urban edge), while the costs (congestion, pollution...) are borne collectively. This rationale for resisting the collective growth management goals of a plan like Blueprint fits with Logan and Molotch's (1987) conception of the growth machine – ensuring

that local residents understand growth as always beneficial through a discursive project that links growth to local competitiveness. This has a disciplining effect that comes through in the comments of those residents who support the expansion out fear that if the growth stops property values will decline.

As a result, planning officials implied that Blueprint, along with SB 375, have come to be seen as more of a “hammer, a regulatory effort, and that if you don’t comply with the Blueprint then bad things are going to happen to you” in the sense that property values will decline (interview, Elk Grove Planning Official). This has created a popular backlash, feeding support for Agenda 21 conspiracy groups that see land use policy targeting GHG reductions as an illegal infringement on their property rights, despite public awareness that issues like traffic congestion and pollution degrade the quality of life for everyone. The city recently went through a planning process to draft a sustainability element for its General Plan. While planners characterized local leaders as supportive of the general concept of sustainability, when a draft of the plan was submitted to council, they thought that a lot of the language went too far. Planners were proud of the plan they had put together but they said the city council wanted to change the language of the plan from creating mandatory policies to make them voluntary. For example, requirements for mandatory energy audits of new construction or resales were eliminated and energy efficiency target were changed to voluntary guidelines.

Planners described being disappointed that despite a huge outreach effort, no one from the public came to meetings about the sustainability element. In their view, interest in sustainability is limited to quality of life concerns. When asked to describe sustainability policies that had wide public support, an Elk Grove Planning Commission listed retrofitting poorly

connected subdivisions with trails and bike paths (interview, Elk Grove Planning Commissioner). Residents and their representatives are not generally receptive to a regional vision of sustainability that relies on increases in density to mitigate the impacts of growth and create more equitable opportunities. As with the other case study jurisdictions, density is negatively associated with affordable housing, and affordable housing is always controversial.

Despite Elk Grove's noncompliance with the Blueprint's preferred development scenario, planners describe efforts to incorporate elements of "smart growth and sustainable development paradigms" into their practice. The growth assumptions of the city's General Plan were eventually incorporated into Blueprint and the MTP so that the city technically considers itself to be consistent with the letter of the plan, if not the vision. Planners say that projects are generally evaluated based on consistency with Blueprint principles as a practice although no policies or plans make specific mention of Blueprint. Unlike in Sacramento and Davis, planning documents do not make reference to Blueprint. When asked for examples of how the City is pursuing Blueprint consistent projects planners were most proud of efforts to balance the local job/housing ratio (interview, Elk Grove Planner). The city inherited the identity of a bedroom community upon incorporation but planners described efforts at diversifying development types and bringing in more jobs as a way to be more self-sufficient and lessen the traffic load on major highways, a particular concern after the city experienced such high rates of foreclosure during the recent crisis. Once again, the embrace of Blueprint is limited to what makes sense locally. The projects described as bringing jobs to Elk Grove were in all cases examples of taking jobs from other places in the region, particularly a hospital in Sacramento, furthering the effects of suburban decentralization and the draining of the central city tax base.

The City is also in the process master planning, in-house, the last remaining large ‘greenfield’ within the city’s jurisdiction, the Southeast Policy Area (SEPA) (Figures 23 and 24). This site, located on the southern edge of the City, consists of more than 1,200 acres, currently being used as agricultural land. Land in the area is held by multiple landowners and have made failed attempts to develop the area piecemeal prior to the recent economic downturn. The City has identified the area as the location of future development in their General Plan (consistent with Blueprint and the MTP/SCS) and the master planning process is seen as a way to create a strategic vision for the area (City of Elk Grove 2012).

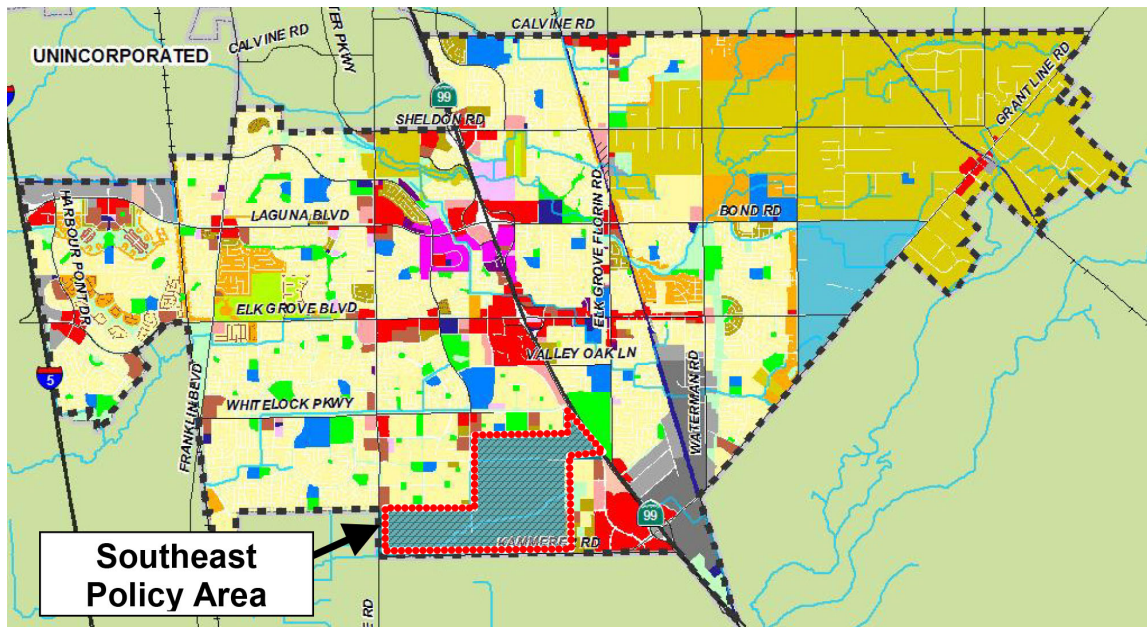


Figure 23: Elk Grove's Southeast Policy Area. Source: <http://www.egplanning.org/projects/sepa>

According to planning officials, the proposals under consideration include a mix of uses, from a sports complex to a college campus and generally incorporate “principles of good planning” (interview, Elk Grove Planner). The site exists in alignment with the region’s light rail, although no plans exist to extend service to the site. In a twist, planning documents show how

stakeholders in the planning process have actually referred to a desire to produce a “Midtown” Sacramento lifestyle, a simulacrum of urban life in what is now a ‘greenfield’ site, and another example of sustainability portrayed as a lifestyle, as opposed to a political struggle for how the costs and benefits of regional growth are distributed. Planners, local leaders, land owners and developers have mobilized discourses of regionalism, sustainability and smart growth as a way to legitimize certain types of development that would be vehemently opposed in other parts of the city. This demonstrates how the ‘regional fix’ described previously is place contingent. Where as these same ideas are seen as threats to individual liberty elsewhere in the city, the growth coalition in Elk Grove is able to frame development of this site as critical to the sustained economic success of the City.

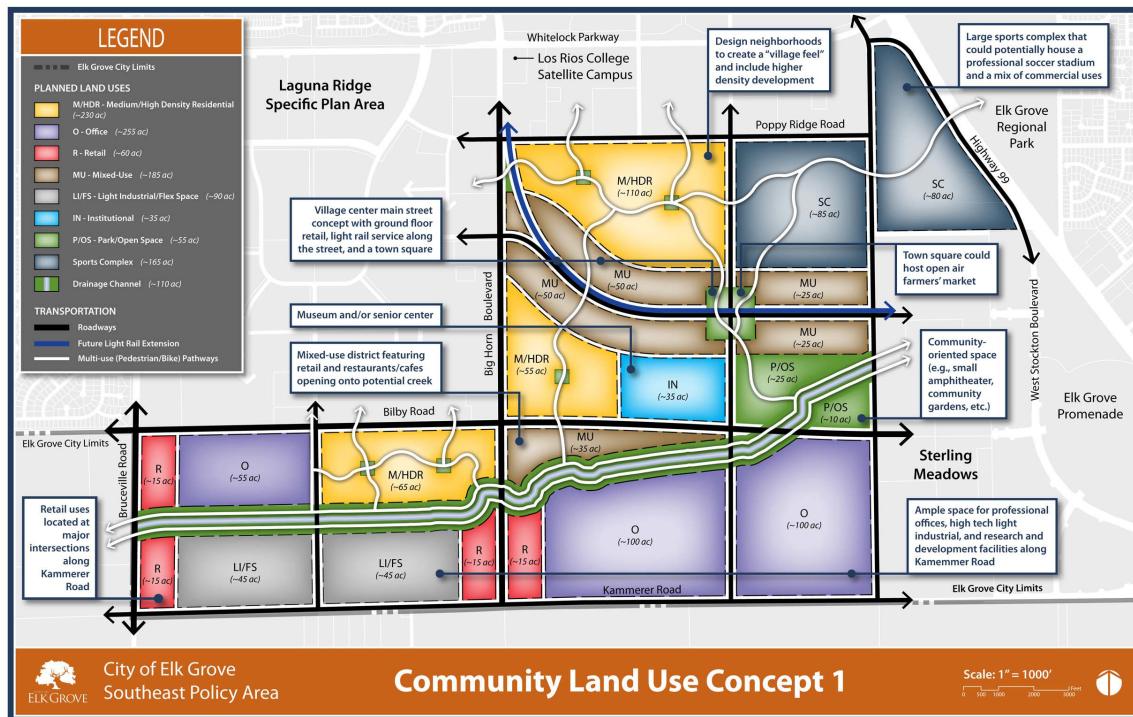


Figure 24: Elk Grove's Southeast Policy Master Plan Concept. Source: <http://www.egplanning.org/projects/sepa>

Planners note that while the city council is supportive of incorporating the Blueprint Growth Principles in the site design, they are also careful not to go against property owners wary that some requirements may take away from the attractiveness of the project to potential investors and tenants (e.g. too much density). With the master plan there is an incentive for Blueprint consistency based on pre-approval of the environmental review process. Planners also acknowledged that review of the project by SACOG could provide political cover to local planners, adding regional legitimacy to master plan elements that might otherwise be lost in the negotiation process with developers. Nonetheless, planning documents show that Blueprint consistency is only included as a project alternative to be analyzed in comparison to the impact of the City's preferred alternative.

The City's seemingly contradictory development priorities reflect competing rationalities and interests. Although growth is seen as a universal good, the type of growth that the City pursues and its consistency with the regional vision is more ambiguous and contingent on local politics. In a recent campaign debate, the incumbent mayor, when challenged about the need to develop the Southeast Policy Area, defended the City's plans as a way to add jobs, not housing:

'We have 150,000 residents and 30,000 jobs,' Davis said. 'That is a jobs-to-housing balance that isn't healthy. If people are working in our city, they will spend money in our economy. The Southeast (Policy Area) is our main opportunity. It's a large piece of land where we can put high-quality employment centers' (Gonzales 2012).

As with example in Sacramento, there is the sense that ‘sustainable’ development, and by extension Blueprint consistency, is primarily a matter of what makes sense economically. In the same conversation the mayor stated that he had no intention of withdrawing the City’s request to expand its SOI, an area that is slated to receive even more residential development. Groups opposing the expansion describe the annexation proposal as being driven by a coalition of developers and land owners, the local growth machine, and question the assumed linkages between ever more residential growth and financial returns.

The City of Davis

*A lot of the time, when they are talking about sustainability, they are talking about getting things that allow people to get out of their cars, and walk or bike, and just by saying it that way and they are not talking about low-income people... because in large part, a lot of low-income people just don’t have cars, ... a lot of [green development] is really catering to middle- and upper-class people to adopt this new **sustainable lifestyle**... (interview, Sacramento Housing Alliance Representative, emphasis added).*

The City of Davis is located 11 miles west of Sacramento along Interstate 80. The land surrounding the City is characterized as some of the “most productive agricultural land in California” (City of Davis 2013a). Davis is home to the University of California at Davis (UCD) and the City has received international recognition for its culture of environmental awareness and policies promoting a more sustainable lifestyle (Davis 2013a). Of the four cases, Davis has the

most expensive housing and the highest levels of educational attainment. Recent estimates report median home values of \$560,500, with more than half of the City's home valued \$500,000 and \$1,000,000. A report by CNN's MONEY Magazine (2006) ranked Davis as the second highest US city in terms of residents with graduate degrees (nearly 40 percent). The City is 65 percent White, 22 percent Asian, 12.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 2.3 percent African American. The smallest jurisdiction in this study, Davis also grew by the smallest amount from 2000 to 2010, adding a little more than 5,000 residents and just over 2,000 housing units.

Like both Sacramento and Sacramento County, planners in Davis consider the City to have successfully implemented the Blueprint vision, an effort they largely attribute to a pre-existing emphasis on smart growth principles within the City. Unlike Sacramento and the County, Davis has not updated its General Plan post-Blueprint. Although the 2001 plan has been amended several times, most recently in 2007, it is largely based on a 1987 General Plan. As such, the 2001 update was only meant to address inconsistencies and add new information to the 1987 plan, but the basic assumptions, goals and values of the 1987 plan remained in place. As a result, the plan does not make specific mention of Blueprint even though many of the same smart growth principles are found in the plan's language. The Housing Element, most recently updated in 2010, makes specific reference to the Blueprint Growth Principles and planning documents show that the overarching goals and housing location principles are based on the Blueprint Growth Principles (City of Davis 2010).

While the city's pre-existing smart growth policies create a certain amount of consistency with Blueprint by default, both local and SACOG planners did highlight a key issue of compatibility between regional goals and those of Davis. Growth in Davis is 'severely limited'

through project review and a limited annual allotment of new housing allocations, priorities set by a city council that is against new growth except to accommodate locally projected needs (interview, Davis Planner). This growth rate is a set percentage and does not consider outside demand (in-migration) for new housing. Although this stance preserves both property values and the surrounding agricultural lands, it is at odds with a regional planning process like Blueprint that considers regional needs in allocating regional growth. By design, the Blueprint vision for regional growth concentrated new development in or contiguous to existing urbanized areas. Initial assumptions by SACOG planners allocated more growth to Davis based on regional needs than Davis projected internally. Regional planners from SACOG presented on particular potential infill projects to planning staff and council, which if realized would have accommodated new growth and done so in a way that was in agreement with Blueprint principles. However, local planners described a lack of support among local leaders and the public for changes to land use policy (zoning and development guidelines) that would be required to realize these projects, mainly because councilmembers were wary of NIMBY concerns (interview, Davis Planner). In the negotiation process, the internal assumptions of Davis' General Plan were eventually incorporated in the Blueprint and subsequent MTP 2035. As with the cases of Sacramento and Sacramento County, comments by local and regional planners create a sense that politicians and the public supported the broad ideas of a regional land use plan, but had issues when the local implications of this regional plan were made apparent.

This tension is embedded in the Davis General Plan's land use principles mandate that zoning reflect existing densities. At the same time, the plan also mandates that infill be used to

accommodate a majority of new population growth. These two principles present conflicting goals and have the potential to limit the production of new, more dense infill housing despite demand, contributing to price appreciation and a lack of affordable housing at low and mid income ranges – all concerns identified during the City’s recent Housing Element update (interview, Sacramento and Sacramento County Planners; City of Davis 2010). A limited allotment of new growth areas means little new housing and even less affordable set-asides. While the city has what planners characterized as a “very generous” inclusionary zoning ordinance, the obvious implication is that when growth is limited by city council’s no-growth priorities to less than 100 units per year, little new affordable housing is created. NIMBY and city opposition to infill projects that increase density or are targeted at lower income populations exacerbates this situation. Despite the City’s reputation for liberal politics, social sustainability and equity concerns, particularly with regard to affordable housing, seemingly take a back seat to pressures for local environmental policy making.

Although the city has identified many potential sites for infill development, planners noted that few have moved forward because of local NIMBY opposition. However, opposition is not limited to those potentially impacted on a block or in a neighborhood. One planner mentioned a desire on the part of city leaders (councilmembers) to avoid an influx of people from Sacramento and the Bay Area, concerned about the effect this would have on the quality of public service, especially schools. Media accounts and studies like Schafran’s (2012) analysis of northern Californian housing confirm this fear, tracking the migration of Bay Area residents inland and the mixed responses of local governments concerned about impacts to local property values and services.

In Davis, the sustainability discourse (or the lack there of) is deployed as a way to legitimate land use policies that restrict development and limit implementation of Blueprint's preferred scenario despite an urban form that conforms to the plan's growth principles. New development is perceived as a threat to the image of the city as 'sustainable' or 'green.' While this reflects what has been characterized as the values of upper- and middle-class residents in their concern for the environment, it also an example of how urban entrepreneurialism depends on the remaking, or in this case the maintenance of, 'sustainable' urban environments and ecologies. The City's reputation and competitiveness, both regionally and globally (as the site of a world class university and celebrated bicycling culture) depends in part on its 'green' image. At first glance this appears to contradict the neoliberal project of growth at any cost (Peck and Tickell 2002) but this image of the city is both a response to public pressure (residents demanding that environmental protection is a priority) and a way to communicate to a certain types of businesses (e.g. eco-investment). Planners describe a near hegemonic acceptance of growth controls as essential to the prosperity (and sustainability) of the city promoted by the city council. This shapes a different kind of urban entrepreneurialism around attracting and maintaining a highly educated, middle- and upper-class base of residents.

The City controls new development through requirements that council review and approval for each new project. This has the effect of politicizing all new projects and making them "battlegrounds" for different advocates (interview, Davis Planner). Both planners and the General Plan cite the preservation of agricultural land as the main driver of opposition to new development but this doesn't explain the resistance to infill, redevelopment and densification (interview, Davis Planner; City of Davis 2007). A Planning Official described councilmembers

remarking that people come to Davis because they expect certain things (e.g. a ‘green’ lifestyle), and any change from the status quo risks a change to this sense of place. Affordable housing advocates and developers in the region consistently cited the recent controversy surrounding the approval of the New Harmony affordable housing project as an example of this opposition (Figure 25). This conflict laid bare the tensions underlying urban economy-environment-equity conflicts as local residents sought to protect their local quality of life at the expense of regional goals for housing choice (fair share affordable housing).



Figure 25: The New Harmony Affordable Housing Development in Davis. Source: <http://www.mutualhousing.com>

The New Harmony project, now under construction, is a 69-unit infill development containing rentals for low- and very low-income households. According to planning documents,

the project is centrally located and adjacent to both local transit and regional transportation access (Highway 80). The project was supported by SACOG as a project consistent with the Blueprint principles – something Planners and the project’s developer described as critical to the eventual of the project by Council (interview, Mutual Housing California Representative). New Harmony nonetheless met with significant NIMBY opposition from neighborhood groups and the city. The City was eventually awarded a grant from SACOG to build an adjacent park as part of their funding programs used to incentivize Blueprint implementation. Comments at a hearing on the project by a representative of neighboring residents included:

Public notice should have been sent to a larger neighborhood area; property is zoned for business/light industrial; **increased density leads to increased crime and traffic; design not in keeping with the neighborhood; concentration of affordable housing in one general area; new students will attend Montgomery Elementary, where 31% of students already come from affordable housing;** questioned whether apartment complexes should be built within 90 meters of a freeway because of health of residents; Lancet study showed that proximity to highways damaged children’s lungs. (Mirabile 2009, emphasis added)

These comments give a sense of how local communities rhetorically link infill, increased density, and affordable housing (all central to a comprehensive Blueprint implementation) with crime and impacts to quality of life. According to the developer of the project, residents were resistant because “they associate these developments with crime” (interview, Mutual Housing California Representative). In the case of the New Harmony project, what started out as NIMBY

neighborhood groups transformed into a purported concern for the health of New Harmony's future occupants because the site was near the freeway, despite the fact that the majority of the City is within 5 miles of Highway 80 (interview, Mutual Housing California Representative). The project was eventually approved after the developer commissioned a study showing that any air quality concerns could be mitigated. Multiple organizations and agencies joined with Mutual Housing in a public relations effort to convince Council to approve the project, including SACOG, Yolo County, the Sacramento Housing Alliance, and ECOS.

Developers of infill and affordable housing generally described a planning staff in Davis supportive of Blueprint's goals regarding housing choice. In the case of Davis, resistance to certain aspects of Blueprint came from well-organized residents and their representatives. Although the City is characterized as a triumph of environmental policy, it seems like there is less attention to an "urban politics of social redistribution" (While et al. 2004 549). Affordable housing advocates complained that the City has recently undertaken steps to "dismantle their inclusionary housing ordinance" (interview, Mutual Housing California Representative). Planning documents describing the discussion around the latest Housing Element update describe a sense among certain members of Council that the City should be focused on planning for and attracting development that "pays for itself" and inclusionary affordable housing requirements make this more difficult (City of Davis 2013). The City also wants to make sure that they do not unduly impact a developer's ability to develop housing in the City of Davis" (City of Davis 2010, 6-2). Planning officials in the City made repeated allusions to the importance of "cultural and social amenities to making Blueprint consistent growth feasible" (interview, Davis Planning Official). The implication is that these infill projects are targeted for a

specific population, meant to attract the middle- and upper-class back to the city center from the suburbs. To compete with the suburbs, planners and local leaders give the impression that these developments, like Township 9 and the Midtown neighborhood in Sacramento, need to make up for what is lost by leaving the suburbs by providing for certain amenities – the **sustainability lifestyle**. How this fits with the needs of low-income groups, often the longtime residents of these areas, is unclear. In both Sacramento and Davis it seems like creating Blueprint consistent projects depends on either removing or isolating these groups from areas that have been identified as targets for revitalization and reimagining. While planners claim the City uses the Blueprint principles to evaluate new projects it seems that the emphasis on local quality of life and retaining a small town character (nostalgic sustainability) fails to recognize the city's role in the broader region as both an employment center and a bedroom community.

The County of Sacramento

When you engage people in a talk like Blueprint, its kind of a macro, vision-y type thing, ... When you get from that 30,000 foot level to the ground level and say, ok, remember that vision-y talk we had over there? Well, that means we are going to be building apartment buildings right next to your house, you know a lot of their thinking at the macro level goes right out the window and they say, well hold on, I wanted less traffic on the freeways and more people on light rail, but I didn't mean that I wanted apartment buildings in my neighborhood (interview, Sacramento County Planner).

Sacramento County spreads across approximately 994-square miles at the northern end of California's central valley agricultural region. The unincorporated areas of Sacramento County makeup the largest share of the region's population, exceeding the largest city, Sacramento, by close to 100,000. The County is home to several of the recently incorporated, fast-growing cities in the region, like Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova. In addition, two of the region's three job centers, Sacramento and Rancho Cordova, are located in the County. Demographically, the County closely parallels the diversity of Sacramento, with 57.5 percent White, 21.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, 15.4 percent African American, and 14.3 percent Asian. A Board of Supervisors, elected from the County's five districts, governs the County.

The County's role as the location of the core cultural and economic center of the region, combined with a capacity for new contiguous urban growth, has given it what regional planners and environmental advocates characterize as a key role in the implementation of Blueprint. In addition, many cities are land locked or built out:

A lot of the cities, they're somewhat landlocked. The city of Sacramento, they really have nowhere to expand unless they annex previously built out areas or potentially more North Natomas. Elk Grove is looking at expanding a little bit south but they're, other than a small spot, encumbered completely by flood plain... but the County is a major player when it comes to vacant land, so we were very, very central to either helping Blueprint succeed or not (interview, Sacramento County Planner).

Planners with the County characterized their implementation efforts as generally positive. They claim the County was able to successfully incorporate most of the Blueprint growth principles and vision into their latest General Plan update. The County's General Plan had been last updated in 1993. According to planners there, a key aspect of the plan update was the impact of Blueprint's growth allocations for the County. (interview, Sacramento County Planner) An urban policy area (UPA) within the UGB is supposed to expand over time to accommodate new growth in the County. The process to update the General Plan started in 2003, prior to the start of Blueprint. At that point, planners described the intent of the General Plan update as "just tweaking" the plan without revisiting new growth areas. However, within a year of starting the process, discussions with SACOG staff as part of the parallel Blueprint process expanded the focus of the update to incorporate the assumptions and principles of Blueprint. An initial analysis of the UPA holding capacity showed plenty of room for the County's anticipated growth, but the initial Blueprint preferred scenarios projected considerably more growth inside the County.

As a result, the County saw their projected growth in demand for new housing triple, from 29,000 to 100,000. According to planners, the General Plan update progressing in parallel to the Blueprint process then became a discussion about how to allocate this new growth, because just expanding the UPA would have meant accommodating the projected growth on farmland (interview, Sacramento County Planner). This would have created consistency with Blueprint projections but not the growth principles. Although SACOG had been careful throughout the process to say that the preferred scenario maps were only a vision, not land use

maps, County planners said that the discussion during the update instantly went down to the level of parcels and what these new numbers meant for increases in density.

County planning officials considered two options to plan for this growth: 1) revitalizing existing areas to allow for more intense development along existing corridors, and 2) identifying new growth areas within the USB. For the first option, sixteen mixed-use corridors were identified for revitalization and a process of adopting individual master plans were initiated. These plans would be responsible for changing existing zoning to reflect the assumption of Blueprint. Although the County looked at several new growth areas, in the end the General Plan did not expand the UPA (Sacramento County 2011). Instead, the County established performance criteria (modeled on Blueprint growth principles) that land owners would have to meet to develop land within the USB but outside the current UPA (Sacramento County 2011). Nonetheless, County planning officials admitted that it is much easier for the Counties to expand into 'greenfields' because they don't have to deal with LAFCO, they "just change the colors and lines on a map" (interview, Sacramento County Planner). To date, more than half of the corridor master plans have been completed. Planners describe varying support among local residents. Some places see this effort as a chance to "improve their neighborhoods," while other places argued for the status quo, fearing how increased densities might harm their quality of life (interview, Sacramento Planner). The varying response, according to planning officials, has to do with differences in income and existing quality of life. Planners explained that in 'distressed' communities, redevelopment consistent with Blueprint – increased densities – is seen as improvement over the status quo and a chance to attract both County and State

resources, along with private investment. Like previous discussions, consistency with Blueprint is primarily seen as a way to enhance inter- and intra-urban competitiveness.

However, not all observers of regional development are as optimistic about the County's implementation efforts. Representatives from ECOS and WalkSacramento, advocates for 'sustainable' development, both said that the biggest "problem jurisdictions" in terms of approving growth not consistent with Blueprint are the unincorporated areas of the Counties, and Sacramento County in particular (interviews, ECOS and WalkSacramento Representatives). According to them, most counties are not interested in being urban. This means low density growth, but relatively small amounts. The exception is Sacramento County, which finds itself in competition with the surrounding cities to attract growth and investment. To a certain extent, this competition is an outcome of the way counties are financed, particularly post-Proposition 13, which limited a jurisdiction's ability to raise revenues through property tax increases. According to a study looking at the effect of Proposition 13 on local government finance, Counties in California are now more dependent on property tax for revenue than elsewhere in the country (Barbour 2007). Tax reform had the effect of centralizing many of the counties roles as service provider at the State level. So while transfers from state to city have increased, the county has received less support from the state, making them more reliant on local sources of revenue. This has incentivized county pursuit of growth, along with fiscal zoning for the types of growth perceived to provide the greatest return on investment: low-density, large lot single-family detached housing. Although the County appears to have lost population from 2000 to 2010, the losses are actually the result of two of the region's fastest growing places

incorporating during the decade. These losses to incorporation only intensify the need to make up lost sale tax through new sources of property tax.

County planners optimistically described their efforts to revise the County's General Plan as a corrective to past trends. However, critics of the County charge that this only guarantees the internal consistency of projects, leaving questions about their location in the County up to the "whims of the County Board" (interviews, Sacramento Housing Alliance and ECOS Representatives). In the past, the County has been required (per its General Plan) to analyze land supply and demand within the Urban Services Area to determine if new growth areas outside the boundary should be approved. Under the new plan, this analysis is no longer required and decisions are now made based on how well an individual project meets the smart growth performance criteria (interview, ECOS Representative).

The first 'greenfield' project to be approved under this regime has sparked a region-wide controversy. The Cordova Hills project (Figure 26) is a 2,700-acre development located outside of the current Urban Services Boundary and according to an editorial in the Sacramento Bee "makes a mockery of the county's new planning principles" (Editorial Board 2012). The project adds more than 8,000 residential units and a shopping center to the "glut of housing and retail space that already sits idle around the region" (ibid.). Interviews with multiple subjects told a similar back-story about the project. The developer originally included plans for a new 223-acre university on the site as a way to enhance the attractiveness of the proposal. The university has been cited as a key reason why supervisors overruled planning staff in 2008 and allowed the developer to file an application for the project (Branan 2013). However, it

turned out there was no university other than on paper, as the development had not secured a commitment from any institutions to locate on site.



Figure 26: The Location of the Cordova Hills Project. Source: <http://cordovahills.com>

The approval of Cordova Hills points to the limits of a voluntary regionalism to overcome the self-interest of local jurisdictions. Media accounts and ECOS spokespeople report that the County's SACOG representative attempted unsuccessfully to convince the SACOG Board to include the project in the region's most recent SCS. SACOG declined because to do so would have meant the region could not meet its GHG emissions targets. As it stands, the ARB cannot certify the region's next MTP/SCS if it includes this project because it alters the assumptions about how emission targets will be met. Depending on the outcome, this could mean that transportation funds are withheld from the County. It is also evidence of the failure of Blueprint in a very public way. If the County is ultimately penalized, it will come from State level legislation (i.e. SB 375) and not SACOG. As a result, regional environmental advocates like ECOS and WalkSacramento put little faith in processes like Blueprint to effect a change in the development priorities of local jurisdictions. They are more optimistic about the potential for SB 375 and the SCS process to force local jurisdictions to at least comply with what had been included in these plans. However, even these measures have been criticized as weak, and enforcement relies on legal challenges, an expensive prospect that limits the effectiveness of the law. ECOS has already filed suit but they admit their prospects are dim and that at the most they will be able to delay the project long enough to erode its financial feasibility (interview, ECOS Representative).

As with other places in the region, implementing policies targeting issues of equity have been more challenging. Unlike the weak enforcement mechanism of SB 375 for regional environmental policy, no such mandate exists for questions of equity or social redistribution in terms of local land use policy. Several years ago the County was sued over its lack of affordable

housing production (interview, Sacramento Housing Alliance Representative). As a result, it now has an inclusionary housing ordinance. However, this policy relies on growth and the County did not see the explosive growth experienced by other places in the region.

Thus, while plans and development in the County post-Blueprint do not appear to implement all of the Blueprint vision and principles all of the time, they are generally Blueprint friendly in their approach, particularly with regard to the internal consistency of projects and master plans. The obvious exception is the Cordova Hills project. According to planners, stakeholders in the County have been supportive of the general concepts of smart growth and sustainability, and the way Blueprint frames the challenges facing the region. However, when these concepts are translated into projects that implement these concepts the support can waiver. Planners describe a more vocal opposition taking shape during the corridor master planning process and when land owners and developers actually submit applications to rezone parcels. For the local planners, the support or opposition comes back to whether or not local residents want change, not necessarily because they understand how local patterns of development impact regional measures of sustainability. This willingness to support regional planning, if only in concept, has lessened as subsequent state-led efforts like SB 375 have shifted the discussion from quality of life concerns to the link between urban form and climate change:

Folks were much more receptive to Blueprint in general because all of those concepts are something that somebody can find a common thread in there that they can agree with, you know, sure I don't want a smaller home or apartment but I can see that my son or daughter, who's getting out of college in a few years,

might want a smaller place... but when you get in to talks about somebody at the State saying my neighborhood has to change because we need to reduce the amount of CO2 in the air when China is belching it out and doesn't give a shit, that's a hard talk to have, especially with the whole Agenda 21 thing...

(interview, Sacramento County Planner).

This comment echoes the discourse employed by stakeholders in Elk Grove, portraying regional planning as a threat to local freedom. Agenda 21 here refers to a local conspiracy theory that seeks to link regional planning efforts like Blueprint to a non-binding United Nations (UN) pact (Agenda 21) signed by participants in the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The groups claim that regional plans like Blueprint, and land use policy more generally, is an attempt to implement Agenda 21 and strip people of their land use rights (Alcala 2012):

According to local critics, Agenda 21 is environmental extremism responsible for U.S Forest Service road closures, onerous regulations on family farms, high-density low-income housing projects, a ban on dredge mining, a Highway 50 wildlife crossing, unemployment, and maybe even traffic roundabouts.

Despite the activist agendas of groups like those described above, planners claim that the County Board has been supportive of Blueprint and the subsequent effort to incorporate Blueprint into the County's General Plan. However, their support seems to reflect more a pragmatic approach to balancing the conflicting and competing desires of stakeholders than an

embrace of regionalism. A push to accommodate new growth through redevelopment is balanced with the desires of local constituents to protect the existing character of their neighborhoods. Builders counter affordable housing advocates with claims that they can only build affordable housing in growth areas where land is cheap, delays fewer, and economies of scale exist. At the same time, builders and developers understand that SACOG controls the purse strings on transportation funds and if they don't develop per Blueprint then it will impact the feasibility of their projects as will have to pay added costs for transportation infrastructure (interview, Region Builders Representative).

Discussion

These case studies demonstrate the ways that the regionalism of Blueprint's land use planning process has influenced local development priorities. Rather than confirming the promise of voluntary governance and civic regionalism, the cases chronicle the challenges faced by advocates for a regional sustainable development agenda absent institutional reform. Efforts at making Blueprint consistent land use plans and policy across the four cases have been mixed, with variation both across and within jurisdictions. Why have local jurisdictions selectively incorporated the goals of Blueprint? As suggested by the literature, I too find the factors and forces that have enabled or disabled implementation range from monetary and legal incentives, to NIMBYism and political pressure. However, three critical points are revealed with regard to how these factors and forces influence of local implementation of the Blueprint. **First**, I argue that the responses of the interview subjects, combined with an analysis of media accounts, and planning documents, show how these options are mediated by local rationalities (logics) and

discursive projects (e.g. justice, nostalgia, diversity and freedom). These rationalities, shaped by particular discourses on the city, prescribe certain interventions and make unfeasible others – allowing for variation in how regionalism and Blueprint are understood at the local level.

Second, I suggest that both local and regional efforts at implementation are informed by a new politics of governance beyond the state that combines democratization and inclusiveness through stakeholder led, collaborative processes with the imposition of a dominant market ideology that valorizes deregulation, decentralization, and privatization. **Third**, the selective implementation of Blueprint is successful so long as planning processes at the local level can be organized for the purpose of producing profit and investment opportunities for real estate interests and increased revenues for the city (e.g. the ‘smart growth machine’).

This is not meant to completely discount the influence of Blueprint and SACOG on local plans and practices. According to both local and regional planners, incentives to reward local changes to land use plans and policy has proven an important factor in encouraging local Blueprint implementation. SACOG has limited resources, but the biggest monetary incentives are the Community Design Program, as well as planning and civic engagement grants. SACOG also offers technical assistance and data analysis. Many jurisdictions in the region lack the staff to do very technical analysis, limiting their ability to provide information to decision makers on the projected impact of proposed developments, particularly those that vary from the local norms (e.g. mixed-use, higher densities). SACOG also provides plan reviews (both area and general) upon request. Local planners in particular commented on how a favorable review by SACOG provides political cover for local decision makers facing NIMBY opposition in addition to lessening the perceived risk of project approval for developers. However, I argue that discursive

formations surrounding the ideas that underpin Blueprint (i.e. sustainability and smart growth) have the power to shape how the costs and benefits of urban growth (the target of Blueprint) are understood. The following sections expand on my three points, starting with a discussion of the underlying logics of local implementation.

The Multiple Rationalities of Local Blueprint Implementation

Drawing on the responses of the planners and stakeholders in the four cases, I suggest that there is a multiplicity of rationalities and narratives mobilized to legitimize a selective range of practices. A range of actors, including advocates for social justice, environmentalists, and planners themselves, produces these discourses. However, I argue that the dominant growth discourse is shaped by a coalition of actors – the urban growth machine. The practices legitimized by these discursive projects are rhetorically linked to the implementation of Blueprint and the selective incorporation of its ‘sustainable development’ goals, at the same time that they advance local development needs or resolve place-specific governance dilemmas. Sustainability, the philosophical foundation of the Blueprint, has become a kind of meta-narrative that accommodates a variety of practices and rationalities. As Campbell (1996, 301) warns, it is possible that “sustainable development has been stripped of its transformative power and reduced to its lowest common denominator.” I argue that the New Regionalism of plans like Blueprint risks a similar fate.

Common themes run through the narratives used to explain or justify the land use policies of each case and their relation to the Blueprint plan. These themes include the sustainable city, deregulation, and quality of life. All places refer to the ideas of sustainability

and sustainable development, although the meaning in reference to specific policies varies. The rise of neoliberalism is also evident in the place-making policies of the four case jurisdictions, a shift I address in a separate section below. There is a consistent emphasis on the need to deregulate and reimagine space, and to create market based solutions, as evidenced by the redevelopment and 'greenfield' master plans of Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Sacramento County. However, I argue that the mobilization of neoliberal discourses by a range of actors does not crowd out other kinds of rationalities. Evidence of different spatial rationalities can be detected in the way planners and local leaders describe policies and projects they see as implementing the Blueprint plan. In response to questions about the local implementation of Blueprint, planners from each jurisdiction describe multiple and often conflicting rationalities, creating a tension that is played out in communities, through the politics of representation, and participation in planning processes (Table 16). In addition to neoliberal rationalities (i.e. **retreat** from the collective - freedom) there is evidence of attempts to create spaces of diversity and housing choice (**engagement** and **unity**), as well as appeals to a sense of nostalgia and loss of community (**tradition**) as neighborhoods confront the prospect of change from infill development.

These rationalities are taken-for-granted truths about the appropriate policy responses to the externalities of regional growth. I argue that the uneven implementation efforts across the cases reflect the tensions present in the growth principles of smart growth oriented projects like Blueprint. The paradigm of development envisioned by Blueprint includes the containment of sprawl, redevelopment of existing urban areas, and improved design. At the local level, the paradigm has expanded to include an emphasis on regulatory flexibility. This

prescriptive for development constructs a conflict free (depoliticized) ideal that overwhelmingly focuses on what critics have called white, middle class, suburban concerns about the quality of life impacts of uncoordinated growth.

Table 16: The Multiple Rationalities and Spaces of Blueprint Implementation

	Unity (Justice)	Tradition (Nostalgia)	Engagement (Diversity)	Retreat (Freedom)
Davis	x	x	x	
Elk Grove		x		x
Sacramento City	x	x	x	x
Sacramento County	x		x	x

A prominent theme in Sacramento’s sustainable development discourse is the need to be a global city, and to realize this through the revalorization of underutilized urban neighborhoods. This project contains and mobilizes both discourses of **unity** (housing choice, less sprawl) and **retreat** (producing representations of urban space as individualized places of high-end consumption). Local leaders see the redevelopment of the River District and Railyards as a way to portray the city as a place with an “abundance of green building practices, mixed-use retail, high-tech offices, light-rail transportation, and many more unparalleled, contemporary features” (Capital Station 65 LLC 2007). The underlying rationality is a faith in the market to guide the necessary development and a need to minimize regulation that might slow this process down. At the same time, its emphasis on infill, transit oriented development and creating diverse, mixed-income and mixed-use neighborhoods suggest a space of **unity** or **justice**.

Opposition in Davis to some Blueprint assumptions about growth stemmed from a conservative spatial rationality of **tradition** based on the values of maintaining the character (e.g. quality of life) of established communities and nostalgia for what is assumed to be a more

sustainable pre-industrial past. This understanding of sustainability took precedence over a rationality based on **unity** or justice in the conflict over the New Harmony housing complex. Across the region, the similar focus on preserving neighborhood quality risks overwhelming the Blueprint principle of housing choice, by limiting the quantity of growth and minimizing the smart growth impact of new development. According to Dierwechter (2008, 67), when communities emphasize justice, regionalism should help a region “overcome the urge to retreat into homogenous enclaves and zones of individual privilege.” The politics of space in Davis allow for an embrace of regionalism as long as it doesn’t threaten local quality of life – e.g. an enclave of privilege. The city is progressive in its engagement with issues of sustainability but it prefers to retain the autonomy of a locality when it comes to issues of regional equity. Despite its engagement with the Blueprint process and use of its jargon, Elk Grove continues to appeal to the rationalities of **tradition** and **retreat**. The mobilization of these rationalities legitimizes policies that construct suburban spaces of autonomy, with an emphasis on protecting the individualized benefits of growth (property values) at the expense of collective regional goals.

Taken together, these rationalities, shaped by particular discourses on the city, prescribe certain interventions and make unfeasible others. They allow for a variation in how regionalism and Blueprint are understood at the local level, explaining the easy adoption of Blueprint into the lexicon of development across the region. However, the way this understanding translates into action has clear differences and highlights the tensions inherent in producing a voluntary consensus among places employing conflicting or contradictory spatial rationalities and values. Ultimately, the smoothing over of these tensions to create a coherent rendition of city or county growth is a political project, shaped by the struggle between

progressive and regressive coalitions to decide how the benefits (or costs) of growth are distributed (Wilson and Wouters 2003).

The Neoliberal Sensibility of Blueprint Consistent Urban Policy

Our goal is fundamental change: We want a government that's small enough to listen, big enough to tackle real problems, smart enough to spend our money wisely, and honest enough to be held accountable for results (California Forward 2013).

The quote above greets visitors to the website of California Forward, a nonprofit organization that has been a major supporter and advocate of statewide regional Blueprint planning. Their mission statement goes on to say that the state “needs a plan” to “restore trust” among Californians in their government. The implication is that the state alone is ill equipped to handle the challenges facing metropolitan areas and needs the expertise and resources of private actors and civil society groups (e.g. a ‘civic’ regionalism). Where as previous outcomes of regional land use reform (e.g. first and second wave regionalism) led to increased regulation, particularly with regard to state and federal management of environmental resources, this latest wave of regionalism, the New Regionalism is distinguished by its emphasis on market-based solutions in response to a discourse of inevitability with regard to the state’s inability to deal with these challenges (Hackworth 2007). This is evidence of the role that neoliberal discourses on the city play in shaping the Blueprint implementation efforts and urban policy more broadly.

With Blueprint, I argue that both local and regional efforts at implementation are informed by a new politics of governance beyond the state that combines democratization and inclusiveness through stakeholder led, collaborative processes with the imposition of a dominant market ideology that valorizes deregulation, decentralization, and privatization. Scholars like Swyngedouw (2005) have shown that fiscal constraints on local government have led to a horizontal devolution of power. Local government partners with private interests in new modes of governance that privilege and empower new actors like developers and Chambers of Commerce, while marginalizing others who lack the resources to ‘participate’ on the same level. With Blueprint, SACOG reached out to diverse group of stakeholders to act as event sponsors and organizers that I argue were biased in number towards the interests of the economic elites. In Sacramento, the Chamber of Commerce has been an active participant and financial supporter of regional planning efforts to the extent that they further the organizations interests:

*The single largest problem is a resource problem. If you are going to require a certain type of development then you’ve got to have the ecosystem associated with it. If you can’t, then you have to be able to have a certain type of development that enables folks to **independently** deal with issues as they see fit* (interview, Chamber of Commerce Representative, emphasis added).

The sense here is that the defunding of government, particularly in the central city where this organization was located, means that the state is unable to create the type of ‘sustainable’ development included in Blueprint. As a result, the state should get out of

the way and let market-based actors ‘independently’ deal with these problems – meaning less investment in transit, what he refers to as the ‘ecosystem,’ and more approval of low-density suburban development. Similarly, concern for place-based economic competitiveness is talked about as the result of too much government regulation:

The City has some influence over site planning, but our political stance here in Sacramento is that the developer has a lot of say over what they propose and the mantra is, you’ve laid out your desired land uses in the General Plan and your densities and now make the developer’s experience as easy as possible, while still enforcing the laws (interview, Sacramento Planner).

This portrayal of development policy in the region’s largest city has helped defuse resistance to the idea of Blueprint by allaying fears among developers and builders that this plan means more regulation. This also reflects what Swyngedouw (2005, 2003) and others have observed about the collaborative governance process biasing the power of participants in planning process towards those “who accept playing by the rules set from within elite networks” and those “associated with the drive towards marketization” with the effect of a “diminished the participatory status of groups associated with social democratic or anti-privatization strategies.” This is echoed in the admissions of social justice advocates and environmentalists who say there are limits to the effectiveness of participation as a way to influence the political process. They claim it is more effective to pursue legal challenges. Planners themselves observed that the Blueprint process favored “professional stakeholders” who could not only go

to the meetings and workshops, but were also able to lobby behind the scenes and meet elected officials and SACOG staff (interview, Sacramento County Planner).

An often repeated claim by planners and stakeholders in the region was the need to make land use policy more flexible in order to realize a more sustainable development:

The nice thing about our General Plan... is that there really are no strings attached other than just showing that you are consistent with the General Plan... that's not entirely difficult to do because... the policies were written intentionally flexible (interview, Sacramento City Planner).

Planners and local leaders link deregulation with sustainable or Blueprint consistency development. These reforms are understood as the only way forward, despite a clear indication from the residents of the neighborhoods receiving these projects that such changes might allow developers to bypass responding to public input on proposed projects:

Communities were saying no more bad infill – make it go through excruciating hearings process with a lot of controls so that we have the best product with a lot of community input. The infill developers didn't want to hear that cause more process and the more time it takes, as you know, just eats up development cost to the point where they just through up their hands and walk away. So obviously it was a balancing act (interview, Sacramento Planner).

This shift in policy is aligned with national and global discourses about the role of government in society. In response to the recent financial crisis, fiscal conservatives have seen the downturn as an opportunity to push a program of cutting government programs and

services (Krugman 2012). This fits within the larger discourse of an institutional neoliberalism intent on “state downsizing, austerity financing, public service ‘reform’” (Peck and Tickell 2002, 381). In California, policy changes attributed to the State’s budget crisis have included the cuts to state agencies that had been facilitating the smart growth activities of local jurisdictions. Redevelopment agencies, a major source of funding for infill type projects, were defunded and eventually eliminated, necessitating what planners describe as an even greater reliance on the private sector to advance Blueprint consistent projects (interview, Sacramento Planner). The Williamson Act, which provided a tax incentive to keep farmland at the urban edge from being sold and developed has been defunded as well. These state level changes have made it much more difficult for local jurisdictions to implement the principles of Blueprint by depriving them of funding sources in an environment in which fiscal austerity is considered the new normal and raising revenue to fund smart growth policies through tax increases are politically unfeasible. Encouraging implementation of regional plans like Blueprint and the MTP/SCS has been limited to providing incentives like streamlining regulatory requirements (CEQA) for plan consistent projects. There have been no attempts to increase the regulatory authority of regional organizations as a way to mandate consistency.

These cuts have also impacted local planners themselves, limiting the resources and staff available for implementation efforts and shifting the focus of local planning departments. Planners across the cases mentioned budget cut affecting planning staff as a significant factor in local jurisdictions not having the personnel to pursue the type of long-range planning envisioned by Blueprint. These cuts have meant that departments must shift resources to focus on current development review and approval. Planners also related that they feel pressured to

pursue projects and plans that win awards and create visibility for the department, continually justifying their jobs to local politicians and bolstering the competitiveness of the city in the global marketplace. They described how specific area plans are created that incorporate Blueprint principles but with a focus on transforming ‘underutilized’ space to address fiscal and quality of life issues to the exclusion of other concerns like equity, a shift observed in the focus of planning efforts on Sacramento’s Railyards and River District area (interview, Sacramento Planner).

The Growth Machine and Blueprint Implementation

Construction of new high-rise buildings in the Central Business District, retention and expansion of new employment centers in business parks, and the revitalization of older commercial corridors highlight the changes Sacramento is making to become a true urban environment (City of Sacramento 2009, 1.12).

This vision of Sacramento found in the City’s new General Plan shapes an understanding of their redevelopment plans as essential to the bid by local leaders situate Sacramento as a global city. Theorists like Harvey (1978) and Smith (1984) have described a process of cyclic and uneven development driven by profit potential and facilitated by local land use policies. The implementation of Blueprint is successful so long as planning processes at the local level can be organized for the purpose of producing profit and investment opportunities for real estate interests and increased revenues for the city. Infill in Sacramento and Davis occurs because it has re-developable land. The city incentivizes this type of development because this land is

considered under-producing in terms of tax revenue. A mix of the media, academics, civic boosters, developers and planners produce the downtowns of these places discursively as the new desirable place to live. Elsewhere, the parallels between Blueprint consistent projects and the interests of the growth machine are less clear, and as a result, implementation has been more controversial (e.g. Sacramento County's Cordova Hills or Elk Grove's annexation bid).

The revision of the zoning and development code in the City of Sacramento, seen by many as proof of the City's commitment to implementing Blueprint, can also be understood as planning staff responding to pressure, both from politician and the real estate lobby, to open up new areas for development in addition to streamlining the approval process. A recent article in the *New York Times* detailed similar efforts by the mayor and the planning department to up-zone parcels and make the development process more flexible, despite public opposition (Bagli 2012). In both cases, the changes are promoted as timely, taking advantage of the downturn to prepare for the next onslaught of growth. Of course, this also has the effect of ensuring that there will be another onslaught, and that developers will have an even easier time. That these projects are also consistent with Blueprint and have an emphasis on infill redevelopment as a means of accommodating growth sustainably provides discursive cover to projects that can sometimes have a revanchist underside as existing populations are deemed a barrier to the city's efforts to attract investment and valorized demographics like the creative class or empty-nesters:

Only way to address this in the River District is you get other developments so there aren't as many vacant lots for people to hang out, but that doesn't solve the homeless problem for the region (interview, Sacramento Councilmember).

Politicians and civic boosters use these quality of life investments as a way to brand the city as different and progressive, and to attract investment and employers who will bring jobs to the area are driving many of these planning efforts within the city. Planners in Davis emphasized the importance of rebranding these spaces as cultural centers, packed with ‘urban’ amenities in order to attract the middle-class who would otherwise locate in the suburbs (interview, Davis Planning Official). The City of Sacramento in particular promotes itself as a ‘sustainable city.’ According to the City’s website:

The City of Sacramento continues to value sustainable principles, projects, and programs. We deeply appreciate the community’s support as we move forward into the next 8 years in improving sustainability of the City of Sacramento for the benefit of our economy, environment, and the health of our residents (City of Sacramento 2009).

The guiding vision of the City’s General Plan is that Sacramento will be the “most livable city in America” (City of Sacramento 2009, 1-2). Sustainability here is mobilized as a way to both enhance the economic value of urban space and the natural environment. Although a project like Township 9 makes real progress in (potentially) limiting the environmental impact of development through its location, design, and density, it also appeals to a narrative of sustainability focused exclusively on ‘greening’ to improve local quality of life (Figure 27):

Sustainability: At Township Nine your car may get lonely—but you won’t. You’re just a half mile from downtown and with the River, local attractions and parks

right in your backyard not only will you save on gas—you'll be looking very fit as well. Walking and biking will be a way of life, which Mother Nature likes very much. Township Nine will be a leading example of environment friendly planning and building practices (Township Nine 2010, emphasis added).

This image and the quote above, taken from the website of the Township 9 developer, portrays the essence of the 'sustainability lifestyle.' This trickle down environmentalism provides rhetorical cover to policies that seek to recreate formerly 'blighted'

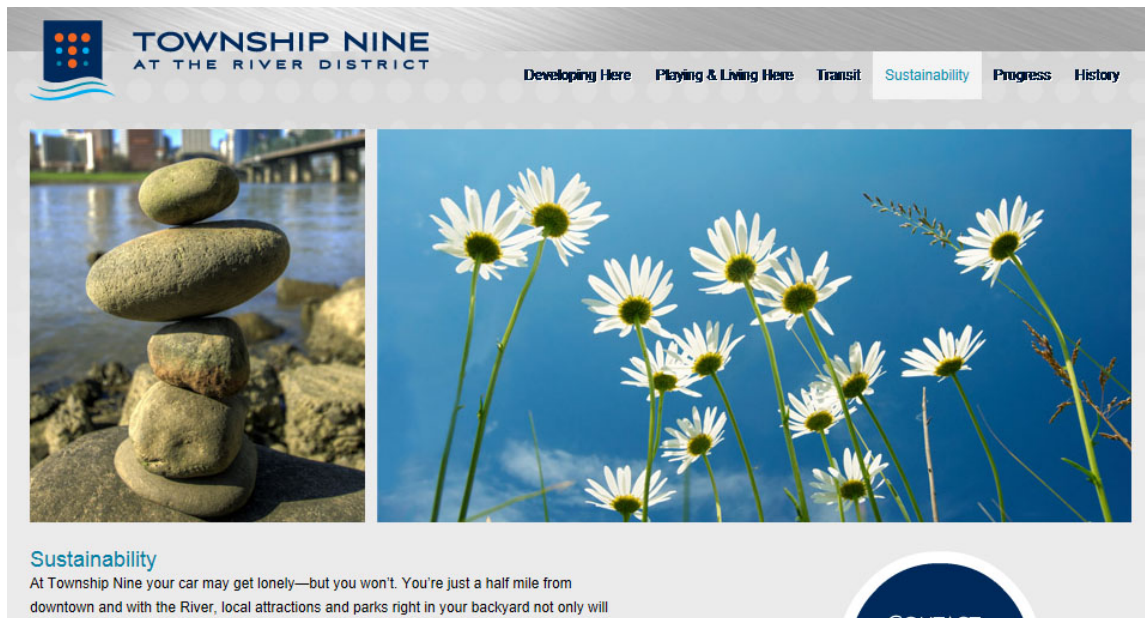


Figure 27: Portraying Sustainability at the Township 9 Project. Source: <http://www.t9ontheriver.com>

areas of the city as a playground economic elite (Lehrer and Laidle, 2009) in places like Sacramento and Davis. In other place like Elk Grove and Sacramento County, the same plan is used to legitimize 'greenfield' development and a zero-sum game of interurban competition for jobs and investment.

Other examples include the River District and Railyards master plans, locations of a proposed sports arena and luxury mixed-use redevelopment. The mayor of Sacramento has also been leading an effort called *Greenwise Jobs* to attract 'green' jobs to the region, diversifying the economic base and making the region less reliant on government and healthcare spending (interview, Sacramento Planner). The River District, along with several other areas identified as underperforming in the City of Sacramento, have been master planned with redevelopment in mind to make them 'income producing' for the city. In the River District and Railyards, developers have been buying up land in anticipation of the area 'transitioning to mixed-use' (interview, Sacramento Councilmember).

This is not to say that Blueprint has had no influence on local jurisdictions, but to question the direction of this influence with regard to more comprehensive regional goals, and try to uncover what factors mediate this influence. As Anderson and Sternberg (2013, 457) show, governance regimes (i.e. the local growth machine) are "acutely perceptive to evolving and varying local conditions, and exhibit an adept flexibility in their responsive capacities to new opportunities for growth." Local plans and projects always represent more than local jurisdictions placing regional consistency, or the collective regional 'good,' ahead of their more parochial interests. The examples of Blueprint consistent development (projects and plans) highlighted in the case studies underscore the tensions inherent in the multiplicities of regional growth management rationalities. A neoliberal sensibility is present but it is not totalizing or victorious in all cases. Ultimately, the local logic dominates and this means that Blueprint notwithstanding, most jurisdictions will likely continue to make land use policy decisions based on local considerations. Although local interests can align with regional goals, there is no

guarantee, and the voluntary nature of the New Regionalist plans like Blueprint suggests that implementation will be limited.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The Sacramento Region Blueprint laid out a forward thinking plan for transportation and development in the Capitol region and your leadership is serving as a model to other cities across California and around the nation (Boxer 2010).

This quote comes from US Senator Barbara Boxer, lauding the achievements of the Blueprint during a speech at SACOG's fifth anniversary celebration of the plan's adoption. The event highlighted the implementation activities of the region's cities and counties as proof that the Blueprint has transformed planning in the region. However, the results of this study tell a more nuanced story. I argue that implementation has been uneven at best, both across space and in the scope and character of policy approaches and planning interventions. Local implementation more accurately reflects the selective incorporation of the regional vision based on what makes sense to a specific city or county, or the place-based characteristics of a particular jurisdiction. As long as local jurisdictions retain absolute authority over land use decisions, the balance of pressures for and against support for Blueprint's vision for the region will determine their development priorities and ultimately shape development outcomes. As a result, I argue that the underlying tensions among the development priorities of different jurisdictions exposed by Blueprint, and wider debates about what is 'sustainable development,' reflects a political struggle to shape development in the city, county, and the broader region.

Local jurisdictions implement the plan to the degree that it provides a 'fix' for governance dilemmas. Across the cases, implementation has been most successful when it has

advanced goals of economic competitiveness, sometimes at the expense of social justice.

Appeals to the discourse of neoliberalism, globalization and interurban competition are used to validate specific policies that may or may not align with the region's goals. I argue that the result is a somewhat ambivalent embrace of sustainable regional development – what makes sense in a specific place or jurisdiction depends on the outcome of this struggle or how interests are balanced. This explains the variation in implementation efforts, but it also explains why the poor overall consistency of regional development activity does not match the record of specific projects promoted by SACOG in their regional reports as evidence of local success. By looking at the detailed experience of the implementation effort, I challenge the assumptions of regional governance and give a more nuanced accounting of its promise and limitations to solve regional problems. Contrary to the beneficial claims of collaborative consensus building, I show how implementation efforts are undone by the political struggle for growth and the reimagining of place. In the process I identify what has worked to overcome local fragmentation and highlighted the limits of comprehensive planning in a framework of weak regionalism.

This chapter synthesizes and discusses the study's findings and their implications for planning practice and urban policy more broadly. I start by summarizing the implementation efforts of the case study jurisdictions. I suggest that several forces and factors mediate the influence of regional planning on local implementation, and propose a model for understanding why some places are more successful in implementing regional plans like Blueprint. I discuss how development activity post-Blueprint has been shaped by these factors, and what this means for how we understand the promise of regional solutions and regionalism, particularly as

they relate to issues of regional equity. I conclude by suggesting future research projects that lead from this study and the policy implications for regional planners and planning practice.

Selective Implementation by Local Jurisdictions

Despite the best intention of regional planners, a range of factors and forces that limit the choices available to local planners often undoes planning for sustainability at the regional scale. In both the cases reviewed and the variation in observed development outcomes, it is clear that some jurisdictions have been more successful than others in shaping an urban form that is consistent with the Blueprint vision (Table 17). If implementation is measured in terms of plan consistency, only 7 of the 28 (25 percent) jurisdictions have updated their General Plan since Blueprint adoption to include the region's growth principles in the guidance language for how development is prioritized. However, this gives little indication about how Blueprint has influenced specific policies at the local level.

Of the four cases examined here, Sacramento has had the most success in implementing the vision and growth principles of the plan, going so far as to change outdated zoning codes, ordinances and design guidelines to be consistent with the Blueprint principles. Implementation across the other cases has varied, with Sacramento County having incorporated Blueprint consistency into its General Plan, while Davis and Elk Grove have not. Davis has long embraced the ideas of smart growth and even growth control, but I found evidence of resistance to a regional vision that risks any change to their brand of environmental awareness through increased allocations of growth. Elk Grove rejected outright attempts to alter its development priorities to accommodate more regional growth. Of the four places, none were above criticism

by various local and regional stakeholders who saw shortcoming in the observed implementation efforts. In the entire region, only Elk Grove has claimed that Blueprint does not guide development decisions, although my analysis uncovered evidence that even there planners and local leaders have selectively incorporated the plan's growth principles into proposed projects and area master plans.

Contextual factors and forces explain much of the difference in implementation across the cases. I find that obstacles to implementation have included fiscal constraints or opportunities, NIMBYism, local culture (e.g. property rights), existing urban form characteristics, and a growth first mentality of local leaders, the business community and developers. Together, these factors most closely resemble the classic arguments of Logan and Molotch's (1987) urban growth machine – where the interests of place-based elites shape urban development. Places with an urban regime that supports the policies implied by the Blueprint principles, places like Sacramento and Davis, have more readily adopted policies that implement the vision of the plan⁹. The political economy and built environment in both cases facilitate an effort to affect a more compact urban form – an underlying principle of the Blueprint project. In Sacramento, redevelopment and infill makes sense to local stakeholders in terms of the economic and social benefits. Elsewhere, the local reaction has been mixed. Planners in Elk Grove in particular struggle against entrenched local interests opposed to both the idea of regionalism and the specifics of Blueprint.

⁹ It is entirely possible that these places would have taken the same decisions without the Blueprint but the plan is nonetheless useful as it legitimizes policies and projects that might otherwise be more controversial locally.

Table 17: Summary of Case Study Findings

Case	Description	Support	Implementation Outcome
Sacramento	Central city	Blueprint used to guide General Plan and development code update	Re-writing development code to allow for infill and density
Elk Grove	Fast growing exurb	Rejected Blueprint assumptions	Plans and practices inconsistent with Blueprint
Davis	Regional job center	Early growth control advocate	Resistant to accept regional growth center
Sacramento County	Regional core	Blueprint used to guide General Plan update	NIMBY opposition to density and questionable development approvals

Source: Author's interviews and analysis of planning documents

What's the incentive for local implementation?

According to SACOG planners, the Blueprint plan and process was meant to influence future patterns of regional development by restricting development and changing its character. This would occur through local changes to land use policy and development priorities. The underlying assumption was that local jurisdictions would make these changes because the plan, produced through a region-wide process of consensus building, represented the desires of their communities and constituents. City leaders themselves were active participants in the planning process. They helped to shape its vision, and as a result, it was thought that they would value (and agree with) the ideas contained in the plan, translating into support for local changes to land use policy. As the comments of local leaders and planners suggest, the plan was politically palatable because the politicians were assured by SACOG that it was only meant as a guide, and not another layer of regulation. The structure of the process and foundation of the agreement meant that local jurisdictions were ultimately free to incorporate aspects of the plan that made

sense and ignore those they opposed with little fear of repercussions. This selective incorporation of the plan’s vision is reflected in the observed development outcomes post-process. The analysis of development activity here shows that it has generally been concentrated outside of the urban core (Figure 28). No doubt this is partly explained by the relative ease of ‘greenfield’ development in contrast to the stories of difficult infill projects like La Valentina in the City of Sacramento. However, even within suburban jurisdictions, development activity has been concentrated in areas that are less consistent with the Blueprint growth principles. Figure 29 shows the distribution of development activity share and

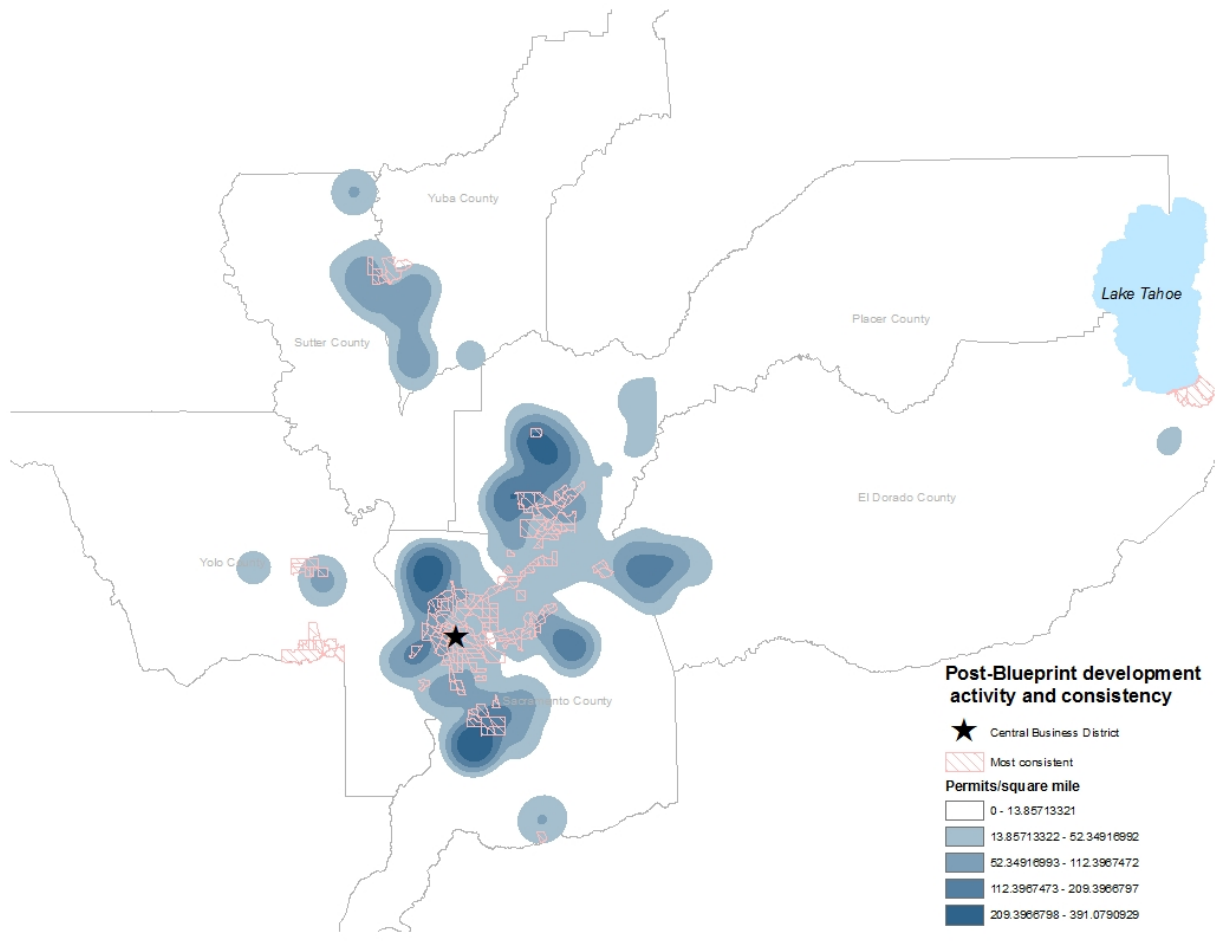


Figure 28: Blueprint Consistency by Census Tract

consistency in the fastest growing jurisdictions of the region. The principles themselves are vague enough to ensure that every jurisdiction contains areas more or less consistent, yet half of the development in Elk Grove, by far the fastest growing jurisdiction in the region, is located in areas of low consistency. Sacramento and West Sacramento have the largest share of development activity located in high consistency areas and are also the plans biggest supporters. Both these cities make up the urban core of the region. Over the study period, nine cities, including Elk Grove, the region’s fastest growing jurisdiction, became less dense, both in terms of population and housing.

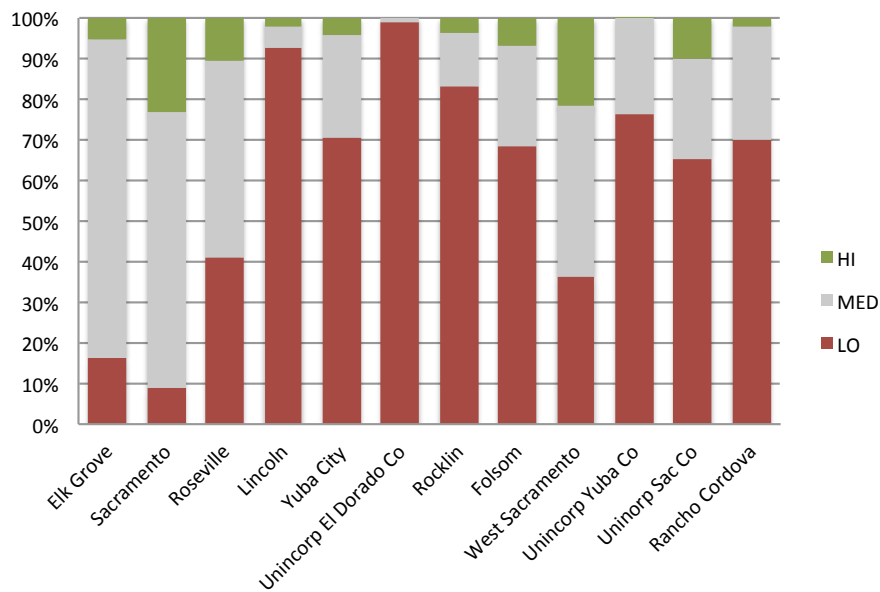


Figure 29: Blueprint Consistency in High-Growth Places

These results raise questions about the influence of Blueprint on local development priorities. Blueprint itself was based on a process of region-wide consensus building, but local support has been anything but unanimous, particularly when it comes to the specifics of

approving projects consistent with the regional vision. Planning is political and the politics of setting development priorities plays out in a variety of venues, ranging from meetings of planning commissions, to the elections of local representatives, and even in the Board meetings of SACOG. A local developer and infill advocate put it this way:

Politicians really don't care about whether or not they are creating a more environmentally sustainable community... they are looking for something that is going to make their city more economically viable, more desirable, and get re-elected (interview, Infill Advocate).

While this is surely a generalization and a cynical one at that, it gets to the core of the issue when thinking about why local jurisdictions make choices that implement or impede a regional plan like Blueprint. These politics reflect a place-specific struggle for how land use policy is used to protect the environment, grow the economy, enhance quality of life, or remedy equity concerns. These comments also reflect a struggle for the meaning of key concepts like sustainability. Whether it is new development or redevelopment, both local leaders and developers attempt to cast projects in a favorable light because 'sustainability' exerts a powerful influence on urban politics. In most cases, sustainability is interpreted through a lens of environmentalism or quality of life, leaving questions of social and spatial equity unaddressed as projects are celebrated for their walkability or the incorporation of 'green' best practices. SACOG features the implementation efforts of local jurisdictions in bi-monthly Regional Reports. In a section of the report called 'Local Government Features,' the success stories of cities and counties are highlighted (SACOG 2013b). Although these reports are meant

to give the reader a sense of how the implementation of Blueprint is proceeding, they are overwhelmingly focused on the revitalization (revalorization) of downtowns or the internal urban design aspects of specific projects. The reports all contain renderings of proposed or existing developments showing vibrant, dense, mixed use development (Figure 30). Taken

SACRAMENTO REGION

Blueprint

TRANSPORTATION LAND USE STUDY

IMPLEMENTATION

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FEATURE

City of Roseville

This is the second in a series of articles featuring local governments that are using Blueprint Project principles in built projects, plans or general plans. In March, SACOG Board member Rocky Rockholm gave a presentation to the SACOG Board regarding Roseville's smart planning that incorporates Blueprint principles.

in new growth areas," said Rocky Rockholm, SACOG Director and Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Roseville.

Roseville's planning staff is drafting specific implementation strategies mirroring Blueprint smart growth principles and adding community education and monitoring components. "Once examined by the Roseville Planning Commis-



Figure 30: Rendering from the Roseville Regional Report Depicting Downtown Revitalization.
Source: <http://www.sacregionblueprint.org>

together, these reports help constitute the meanings of regional sustainability as centered largely on quality of life and economic development. Growth is seen as good as long as it conforms to a certain lifestyle and there is no discussion of how the benefits of this growth are distributed both within jurisdictions and across the region. Although SACOG has been an active supporter of affordable housing projects, none of these reports highlight projects with a focus on equity or the equity implications of regional growth.

While Blueprint has been lauded with awards, perhaps the celebration came too soon. No doubt the planning process itself deserves recognition for its innovative use of planning

support systems and its ability to give participants a realistic view onto the future as a way to mobilize support for an otherwise abstract pursuit. However, drawing from empirical observations of the four cases, it seems that the implementation record has been disappointing. Even outside the cases, regional planners described a range of implementation efforts, both good and bad, including suburban job centers adding density through infill redevelopment (e.g. Roseville and Rancho Cordova), and areas on the exurban fringe unable to overcome conspiracy theorists linking regional planning to a loss of private property rights (e.g. Colfax). Blueprint and subsequent regional planning processes like the MTP/SCS create different “challenges (and opportunities) in different jurisdictions depending on the nature of the local economy, the local dependences of firms, workers and residents, inherited urban form and infrastructure, and so on” (While et al. 2004, 560). As the case studies have shown, those places that have most fully implemented the Blueprint are the places where it was expedient. Even then, implementation has been selective, with a priority on those elements that create win-win scenarios (economic development and ‘greening’ initiatives). Blueprint has been used to legitimize a range of projects, not all of them consistent with the plan in its entirety. In effect, I argue that Blueprint provides discursive cover for policies and practices that local planners and leaders perceive as necessary to a jurisdiction for a range of reasons or rationales, regional consistency being just one consideration.

The policies and practices pursued by local jurisdiction are an attempt by urban regimes to balance the competing pressures for and against regionalism in the specific example but also larger issues of sustainability and sustainable development in which Blueprint is situated (Figure 31). Drawing on the ideas of While et al. (2004), I propose the idea of a ‘regional sustainability

fix' as a way to understand why some places pursue regionally consistent policies and priorities while others do not. This concept is similar to Harvey's (1982) articulation of capitalism's dependence on a 'spatial fix' to resolve the crisis of overaccumulation through investment in the built environment. The State (planning) is the mediating structure that shapes the volume and direction (and location) of capital flows into and out of the built environment.

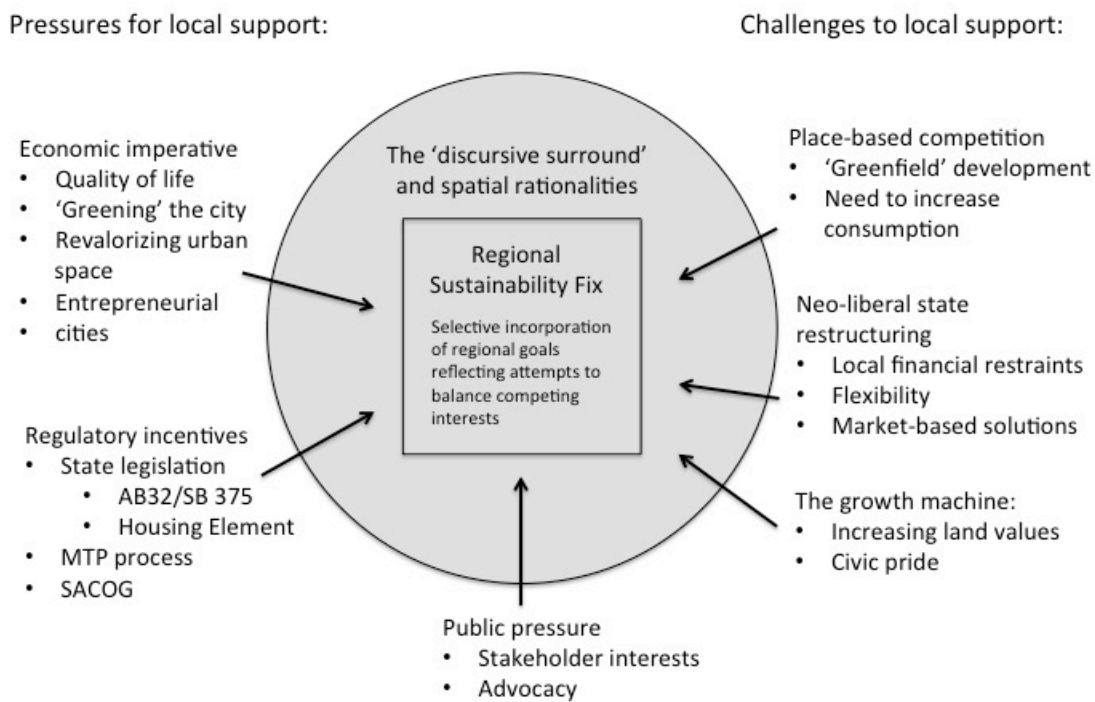


Figure 31: Local Pressures and the Regional Sustainability Fix

While this is certainly an aspect of the 'sustainability fix,' the concept broadens the scope to include not just the crisis of capital but also the crisis of governance, particularly as it relates to the reproduction of social organization. I argue that regional sustainable development is thus the "search for a spatio-institutional fix to safeguard growth trajectories in

the wake of industrial capitalism's long downturn, the global 'ecological crisis' and the rise of popular environmentalism" (While et al. 2005, 551). The policies that are produced by the search for a 'fix' are place-dependent, and are legitimized by a variety of spatial rationalities and discourse constructed by a shifting coalition of actors and institutions – the urban growth machine or the 'smart growth' machine. Discursive representations of the region are mobilized to gain support for policies that resolve local governance dilemmas. For example, local leaders, developers and business interests make appeals to the discourse of neoliberalism, globalization and interurban competition to open up these new spaces in the region to investment and profitability through a somewhat ambivalent embrace of sustainable development and investment in things like 'green' infrastructure, satisfying the demands of both property speculators and environmentalists alike. Their goals may or may not align with regional plans. With the example of Sacramento's Township 9 project, the goals align to a large degree. However, Elk Grove's push for annexation opposes. What makes sense in a specific place or jurisdiction depends on the outcome of this struggle or how interests are balanced. This explains the variation in implementation efforts, but it also explains why the poor overall consistency of regional development activity does not match the record of specific projects promoted by SACOG in their regional reports. These projects represent the selective incorporation of Blueprint's growth principles by local jurisdictions based on what makes sense to them. In some places, like Sacramento, this has meant an emphasis on infill projects that revitalize and revalorize 'underutilized' urban space while meeting the goals of the Blueprint. In Elk Grove this has meant master planned commercial developments that balance jobs and housing as a way to stabilize the community while also reducing transportation demand and

GHG emissions in the region. The City of Rocklin includes reference to Blueprint in its General Plan but only because the Preferred Scenario allocates it less growth, which means the City has less affordable housing to plan for.

Compliance with a regional plan like Blueprint is just one source of pressure on local jurisdictions. In recent times, a dominant pressure on regimes of urban governance has been neoliberalism as both an “ideology, mode of city governance, and driver of urban change” (Hackworth 2007, 2). While the neoliberalization of urban policy has meant many things including a growth first approach to development, city marketing, public/private partnerships, and a “deep antipathy to social collectives (like the ‘region’) and socio-spatial redistribution,” it has fundamentally occurred through a disciplining of politics by the market and an attempt to minimize state regulation (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2009, 104). This has resulted in a lack of faith in the government to solve problems with profound implications for the limits inherent in a process like Blueprint:

A recurring theme is that government cannot be left to solve problems, that there needs to be a shared identification of the problem, and a shared responsibility for addressing them in a coordinated way, better suited to the region itself (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 497).

I argue that this has manifested itself in the land use policy arena of Sacramento as a hegemonic understanding of the limits to both local and regional land use planning and implementation authority, as explained here by a developer and member of Region Builders:

One of the reasons for Region Builders was to change the context of the city council, so that those council people who are more willing to support an individual community member over good community planning were simply going to be driven out of office... it's probably one of the most aggressive programs that I've been in, that talks about how to create a better community by getting different elected officials. We tried all of the nice ways of doing this, going to meetings and going to commissions and talking, and I was like, you know what, we are done with that! You don't vote our way you're going out of office and we're going to replace you with someone who gets it! And so we're changing the context of the way the city council votes (interview, Infill Advocate).

In other words, development is better (and surprise – more sustainable) when government gets out of the way. The policy platform of Region Builders is premised on advocacy for the “consolidation and streamlining of project approval” and “common sense controls on staff from regional boards opposing projects” (Region Builders 2013). Organizations like Region Builders are not alone. These views were incorporated in the Blueprint process by a number of organizations, including Chambers of Commerce and other non-profits concerned with the economic competitiveness of the region. Another good example is California Forward, a non-profit working to bring government “closer to the people and move the state in the right direction” (California Forward 2013):

We believe empowered local communities are best equipped to solve their own problems, and there is a critical link between many of the problems that

threaten our future and our state government, which has become ineffective, unresponsive, and unable to fix itself.

So if a plan like Blueprint helps a particular project win approval (e.g. La Valentina, Township 9, or Folsom's annexation), then SACOG is doing good things, but when it opposes 'greenfield' development in Sacramento County or Elk Grove, it is needlessly harming the region's economy by interfering with the profitability of building.

As a result, the nature of outcomes and the regional 'sustainability fix' they provide appears at times ambiguous. It is unclear who benefits, how benefits are distributed and who might be harmed. As long as a plan like Blueprint provides a 'fix' for a local governance dilemma or even a 'spatial fix' in the sense used by Harvey (1982), then the plan is likely to have a variety of supporters among regional stakeholders. For example, projects like Township 9 in central Sacramento, a textbook example of TOD, also threatens to displace marginalized populations, both through the actual process of construction, but also through the long term effects of gentrification, rising property values and revanchist city policies. Nonetheless, the project adds housing units and jobs to the urban core, increasing transit friendly access and reducing the negative externalities of more typical regional growth on the urban fringe. Similarly, plans for TODs along the region's expanding light rail realize regional goals of utilizing existing infrastructure, increasing densities and offering development with transportation choices. Yet these developments in suburban places like Rancho Cordova have been criticized by affordable housing advocates as concentrating job growth in areas that are not accessible to low-income populations. In another example, the City of Folsom recently annexed an area for future growth

deemed consistent with Blueprint by SACOG, consuming open space but doing so in a way deemed consistent with a regional plan that was assured of having something for everyone. Regardless of how the costs and benefits of these projects are distributed, they provide a regional 'sustainability' fix, resolving governance dilemmas at both the local and regional scales. Perhaps as important, they provide a 'spatial fix' for investment capital looking for new spaces of profit. Each case offers evidence that implementation efforts, whatever shape they take, provide this governance 'fix.' Township 9 offers the revalorization of a historically marginalized neighborhood while the examples of Rancho Cordova and Folsom represent the valorization of 'greenfield' space through infrastructure investment that makes new development viable.

The current enthusiasm for a voluntary regional governance as regionalism belies not just an inability to overcome local fragmentation, but also the embrace of a development agenda dominated by the principles of market-driven reforms, and a push to enhance the economic competitiveness of local economies – all done in the name of 'sustainable development.' This is not to say that a plan like Blueprint is simply a 'rolled-out' neoliberal agenda (Raco 2005). Rather, I argue that it is the structure of this governance arrangement itself that allows for this outcome as one among many. Implementation of the plan is constituted from a variety of rationalities and practices employed by local jurisdictions as they contend with pressures for and against development consistent with Blueprint.

What Has Worked?

Despite the pessimistic assessment thus far, there are success stories with regard to local implementation efforts, suggesting Blueprint has nonetheless had an impact on local

planning and regional outcomes (Table 18). The average density in the region has increased slightly, with the biggest gains in the urban core (Sacramento and West Sacramento) and Davis. To the degree that local jurisdictions have selectively incorporated the smart growth

Table 18: Blueprint Implementation - What Has Worked?

Policy	Examples
Incentives	SACOG's support or opposition to specific projects and plans; SB 375 CEQA streamlining
Technical assistance	SACOG service provision to counties and cities without capacity or resources for more sophisticated planning analysis
Project funding	SACOG's funding programs for Blueprint consistent plans and projects
State mandates	AB 32 and SB 375 MTP/SCS consistency requirements

Source: Author's analysis of interviews and planning documents

principles and sustainable development agenda of Blueprint, the plan and the subsequent regional mandates it spawned have at a minimum inserted a regional awareness into the agendas of local planners and politicians. This is proof that stakeholders throughout the region have taken the process seriously and the debate about regional solutions continues to play out in public meetings and media reports on proposed plans and projects. Of those places where the plan has been more successfully implemented, certain strategies have worked better than others.

Interview respondents agreed that SACOG itself has been an important factor in local implementation. Of the four factors shown in Table 18, two are programs managed by SACOG as a way to encourage planning and projects consistent with Blueprint (SACOG 2013c). SACOG provides technical assistance to local planning agencies who do not have the capacity or

resources for more sophisticated analysis. Planners describe this as an important resource provides local jurisdictions with access to modeling tools that can be used to convince a skeptical council or public of the benefits of particular policy approaches that differ accepted practices. This service is also related to the way consistency with Blueprint has been incentivized in the region. Planners with local jurisdictions use SACOG's evaluation of local projects as a way to diffuse local opposition. Review by SACOG is not mandated but local planners see this as a way to both add legitimacy to plans and projects and deflect criticism, allowing them to imply their hands are tied by the need to satisfy SACOG. The results of these evaluations and the opinions of SACOG often become fodder for the media, magnifying their impact on public opinion and by extension, the willingness of local leaders to ignore their input.

Finally, state legislation like SB 375 has, to a certain extent, formalized the Blueprint process, at least as it concerns environmental sustainability. In theory, local jurisdictions can only approve projects and areas for development that are consistent with the region's plan for meeting state GHG emission targets. However, compliance is voluntary, and the recent examples of Sacramento County and Elk Grove cast doubts about the effectiveness of this model of voluntary compliance. Critics among the region's advocates for the environment and affordable housing claim that the plan has had the most impact on the design characteristics of individual projects, increasing quality of life measures on a small scale and only for those who can afford the price of new market rate units. These mandates have also created a backlash among climate change skeptics in certain jurisdictions by explicitly linking regional planning to global environmental issues. Although subsequent regional planning requirements like SB 375 have created a somewhat stronger legal basis for local coordination, they have also narrowed

the scope of regionalism, raising questions about how planners can engage with issues of regional equity absent a planning mandate. In the meantime, regional planners and stakeholders will continue to rely on the civic regionalism of Blueprint – a nonetheless attractive ideal within planning circles. Future research might look more closely at these processes themselves to better understand how they deal with existing relations of power and identify opportunities to challenge hegemonic discourses about sustainable urban development.

Policy Implications of the Blueprint Experience and Lessons for Planners

Uncritical absorption of New Regionalist ideas legitimate the reshaping of governance in California as if no other prior attempts at regional reform have occurred and there is no interest in addressing the functionality and logics of these earlier regionalisms (Jonas and Pincetl 2006, 502).

The Blueprint project represents the evolution of a regionalism in California that has long emphasized the need to bring together different actors (public, private, and non-profit) in collaborative and entrepreneurial ways to address the externalities of growth in fragmented metropolitan areas and realize the promise of regional planning. These processes and plans have followed the logic that “better government, not more government, or extra layers of government” is the best alternative to more stringent regional approaches that introduce new planning mandates through statewide legislation (State Assembly on Regionalism, 2002, 24). Blueprint, hailed by scholars and practitioners as the future of regional planning, is exactly this

– a process-based, non-regulatory approach to civic regionalism that avoids formal institutions or mandates in favor ‘new governance’ arrangements perceived as “preferable to bureaucratic agencies when resolving complex public problems” (Alexander 2011, 634). However, as the quote above suggests, an embrace of voluntary, public/private collaborations to advance regional goals does not come without some risks.

This approach has inherent limitations but the results of this study suggest a way forward and highlight some potential next steps that build on what has worked so far. While there is a case to be made for continuing to push for stronger mandates, planners can also work to build on existing arrangements and local accomplishments. The Blueprint project represents an important step in working to build political communities and coalitions that support more comprehensive regional land use planning. Blueprint succeeded in articulating a new set of goals to guide regional growth, an important first step, and a “key ‘moment’ in the social reproduction of urban space” that challenges notions of disparate communities in competition with other (Dierwetcher 2008, 241). Land use planning is an iterative process and Blueprint has set in motion a framework for the region’s residents to engage in a dialogue about how to best achieve what are progressive goals for future development. The Blueprint project has influenced subsequent local and regional planning efforts as much if not more than it has affected a change in local development priorities. The plan’s vision became the foundation of the subsequent MTP/SCS plan, and its plan making process served as the template for SB 375, which created a more narrowly defined regional land use planning mandate focused on meeting GHG emissions targets. The requirements of SB 375 are an encouraging outcome of Blueprint, building on the success of using incentives to alter local practices. In addition to

funding (infrastructure development and planning) from SACOG and the State for MTP/SCS consistent projects, SB 375 streamlines CEQA review for projects and plans located in transit priority areas identified as part of the MTP/SCS planning process. Similar to Maryland's Priority Funding Areas program, this is a way to incentivize growth in areas where new development is considered consistent with the region's goals.

Nonetheless, as regional planners consider next steps they need to recognize that, absent regional land use planning authority, implementation efforts are mediated by local spatial rationalities and projects that are both enabling and disabling with respect to regional goals. The region is not monolithic and regional planners should be attuned to the different motivations and desires of member jurisdictions. Planners should consider alternatives to the broad, consensus based approach of voluntary governance, tailoring policy approaches to address the diversity of political contexts in specific jurisdictions – allowing for flexibility through incentives in some places, while a more stringent regulatory approach requiring consistency and evaluating outcomes is called for in others. Like smart growth, the New Regionalism of Blueprint is “crosscut by multiple spatial rationalities, both regressive and progressive, enabling and disabling, left-wing, and right-wing” (Dierwetcher 2008, 239).

While the need for regional solutions with a broad coalition of support drives the metanarrative of the New Regionalism, the experience of the Sacramento region suggests that plan implementation is dependent on the variegated policies of local jurisdictions. To the degree that regional organizations with a weak planning mandate like SACOG can incentivize changes to local development priorities, these incentives should be tailored to local needs. The ‘sustainability fix’ at work in the City of Sacramento shapes a development and redevelopment

policy more consistent with regional goals than most places in the region. This rationality comingles with and works alongside other rationalities or spatial projects that value diversity, justice, and nostalgia. The broad growth principles of Blueprint allow for a flexibility in policy approaches that suits the needs of Sacramento's growth machine as they balance the pressures of competing interests and coalitions. As dense urban centers, Sacramento, along with Davis, are best able to accommodate the contradictions of smart growth – both promoting and controlling growth – in a way that eludes jurisdictions like Elk Grove who rely on growth period. Financial incentives in Sacramento work to make projects more attractive and technical assistance (modeling and plan review by SACOG) add to the legitimacy of projects that might otherwise be locally unpopular. Whereas in Sacramento County and Elk Grove, a stronger, more regulatory approach might better serve to influence local decision makers and tip the balance of pressures for and against regional consistency towards support for regional solutions. In all places, planners can use their skills of analysis (augmented by SACOG) to show how land use decisions taken locally ripple throughout the region. Planners need to engage with the values, fears and desires that rationalize local land policies at odds with regional goals (e.g. a reliance on restrictive or fiscal zoning).

In parallel with strengthening the existing framework, advocates for regional solutions should continue working towards stronger state mandates as a way to overcome the significant barriers to realizing a progressive agenda in a framework of voluntary regional collaboration. Planning in a process of voluntary regional governance produces regional plans without addressing the structural challenges (legal, fiscal and cultural) to such a regionalism, particularly an unchecked home rule and regional institutions that lack sources of revenue. Rooted in a

discourse of inevitability with regard to state capacities, popular distrust of the government, and the feasibility of legislative reform, this position forecloses on the possibilities of creating more democratic and empowered regional institutions. Planners and policy makers need to engage with State and federal authorities to encourage the transfer of more power to regional institutions, shifting the locus responsibility for action (e.g. Blueprint implementation) from the local or state to the region. A good example is the State's Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Like Blueprint, this policy for fair-share affordable housing relies on the voluntary compliance of local jurisdictions and as a result, remains largely unenforced. Strengthening the enforcement of the RHNA through fiscal and legal incentives would be a step in the right direction to address the equity implications of regional growth. Although these steps are deemed politically unpalatable, there is evidence that the public is dissatisfied with the status quo arrangement in which local jurisdictions individually manage of regional growth:

Polls reveal that the public may be ready for growth management reform, including a stronger role for regional planning agencies. A recent PPIC statewide poll, for example, revealed overwhelming public agreement (89%) that local governments should work together on local growth issues rather than make growth decisions on their own (Barbour and Teitz 2001 9).

Although SACOG and the Blueprint organizers claim evidence of a robust civic regionalism (i.e. broad participation and support for the regional vision) in their planning process, the case studies, particularly Sacramento County and Elk Grove, suggest otherwise. In relying on a civic regionalism to sway local jurisdictions, the region seems to lack either the

capacity (robust civil society) or the leadership to overcome fragmentation and local self-interest. Blueprint represents an attempt by planners to “re-center political power in civil society” (Friedmann 1987, 13). However, as the skeptics have pointed out, this assumes the presence of a robust civil society. Blueprint supporters describe the plan as grassroots initiated, but the concern is that the process has given disproportionate influence to the interests and money of large-scale businesses, developers, and the civil society organizations that serve as their stakeholder spokespeople. Swyngedouw (2005, 2003) identified this effect as a “Trojan Horse that diffuses and consolidates the ‘market’ as the principle institutional form.”

I argue that there is a tension in the promises of governance innovations like the Blueprint project. In constructing a stakeholder led process of collaborative regional planning there is the possibility of enhanced democratization through mass participation, a claim made by SACOG and the Blueprint’s proponents. However, it is also possible that these arrangements are associated with the “rise to prominence of new social actors, the consolidation of the presence of others, the exclusion or diminished power position of groups that were present in earlier forms of government [e.g. more formal representative governance] and the continuing exclusion of other social actors who have never been included” (Swyngedouw 2005, 2003). In other words, the participatory structure of a process like Blueprint does not guarantee robust participation and more equitable outcomes. According to SACOG, creating Blueprint was premised on involving a wide array of stakeholders in the planning process, both as participants and organizers (SACOG 2013d). While the list of organizers reflects a diverse group of participants, it does lean towards a majority of groups that are focused primarily on the

economic competitiveness of the region. Of the ninety-one organizers listed, more than a third are businesses, with many of those representing the development industry (Figure 32). The

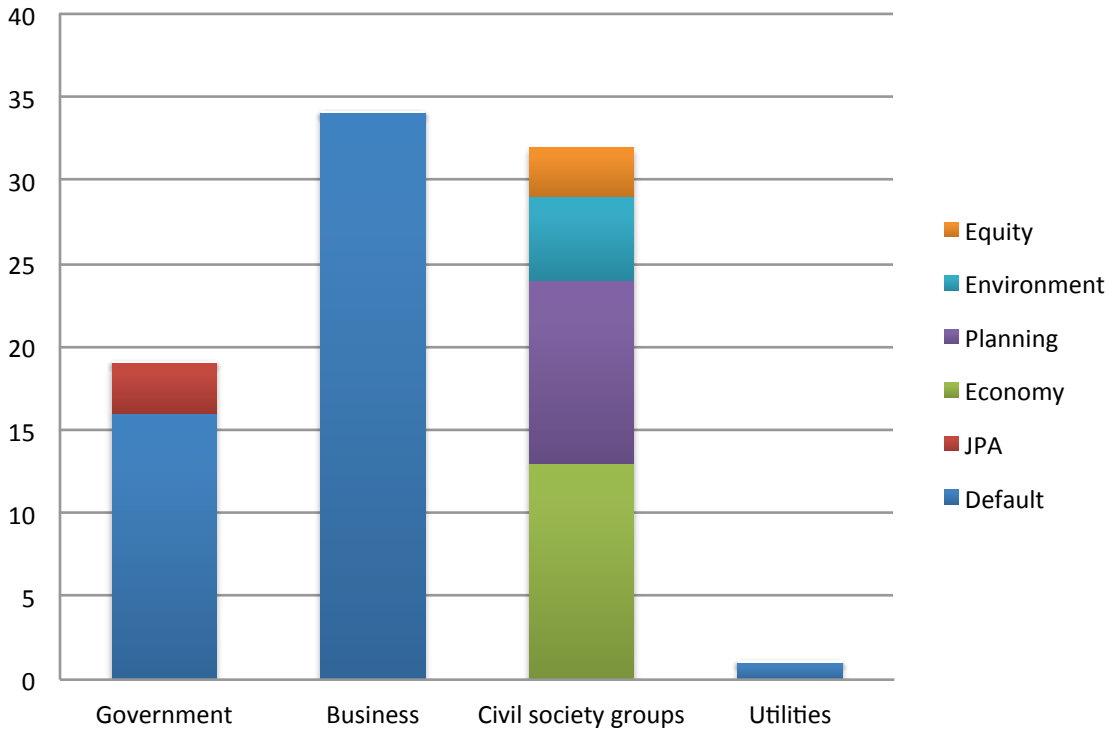


Figure 32: Blueprint Organizers and Supporters by Type

remaining organizers are divided between civil society groups and government agencies. However, the mix is not a balance of interests between the state, civil society and business. Of the civil society groups, more than a third are focused on advocacy related to issues of economic competitiveness, property rights, and the need to minimize state interference in the free market. The second largest group is advocates of planning (land use, transportation and urban design). Less than a handful (3) of the organizers are groups concerned with issues of social equity.

Of all the regional stakeholders interviewed for this study, those most disenchanted and skeptical were the advocates for issues of regional equity and environmental conservation (controlled growth – not simply ‘smart’ growth). Although all participated in the Blueprint and saw the value of creating the space for a regional dialogue on issues of regional growth, each also recounted a story of ultimately resorting to lawsuits and legal channels to achieve the goals of their organization. This seemed to be the only way to force local jurisdictions into what might have constituted a win-lose agreement in Blueprint, an acceptance that regional planning can create winners and losers, at least in the sense that local jurisdictions consider being told to accommodate more affordable housing, or restrict ‘greenfield’ development, a poor local outcome.

All this points to the need for policy makers to consider what might be the unintended consequences of accepting regional planning in a framework of voluntary governance as value neutral and the only feasible alternative. Planners and urban policy makers may need to challenge neoliberal discourses about the role of the state, reclaiming some of the progressive potential of planning and the state’s role in making this happen, and advocating for legislative change that mandates local consistency with a more comprehensive set of regional goals. The planners interviewed in this study often find themselves in the middle of this struggle, as the nominally neutral facilitators of the process operating within narrow political constraints. They take their direction from elected officials, seeing their role as providing unbiased (apolitical) information to be acted on by rational actors/decision makers. Friedmann (1987), in describing this role that planners play, explains how this has the effect of confirming and preserving existing power relations. Alternatively, planners can play the role of advocates, using their

knowledge and expertise to argue for social change. Change will not happen unless governance regimes are confronted with sufficient pressure, and planners can help facilitate that pressure.

Frick and Waddell (2012) recently reported on how conservative groups like the Tea Party have become vocal opponents to planning itself, a finding echoed by several interview subjects who have experienced this firsthand. Scholars like Wolf-Powers (2009) points out the hegemony of neoliberalism means that the state's range of options are limited, beholden to a neoliberal governance. To her, there remains a "sense of the latent possibility that state institutions, responsive to the disadvantaged and vulnerable in addition to the powerful and well-resourced, might achieve something that resembles a fair distribution of opportunities and pleasures within urban places" (Wolf-Powers 2009, 161). With the New Regionalism, this involves challenging the hegemonic discourse surrounding the role of the state and the need for empowered and accountable regional land use authority.

This challenge can come from outside planning circles as well – as part of Friedmann's re-centering of political power in an engaged civil society. Scholars like Pastor and Benner (2011) describe this as a truly grassroots, bottom-up regionalism of social movements, particularly those around movements for regional equity. As examples of what Marcuse (2009) calls "counter institutions," these groups can challenge the hegemonic ideas of a civic regionalism represented by processes like Blueprint, and expand the scope of formal regional planning mandates beyond environmental protection and enhanced quality of life. Closely linked to Wolf-Powers' concept of 'counterpublics,' these groups can work to destabilize hegemonic discourses, and the existing institutions and policies that allow for an imbalance of power and a concentration of regional benefits in the hands of a select group of regional

stakeholders, by changing the nature of the debate. Pastor and Benner (2011, 95), in an article evaluating Blueprint's original plan making process, found that groups with a more expansive definition of sustainable development (to include distributional equity and social justice) were frustrated by the "obstacles they encountered in trying to make a significant impact" on the planning process. For them, planning for regional equity does not simply mean that social justice advocates participate in formal collaborative processes like Blueprint. Rather, like Marcuse and Wolf-Powers, they see a role for these groups outside the formal constraints of a planning process, protesting and putting pressure on representatives to enact new legislation. Marginalized groups and urban social movements have a role to play (along with public planners) in the formation of 'counterpublic discourses' that challenge dominant narratives of urban redevelopment. Advocates for regional equity interviewed for the study cited a limit to their engagement with SACOG in the Blueprint process. To them, their voice was just one among many, and often overwhelmed by the interests of more powerful groups, a concern echoed by interview subjects in this study. As explained by Pastor and Benner (2011, 82), the politics of planning for regional equity is challenged by the fact that "other drivers for regional planning are centered on economic competitiveness and environmental protection, which have more powerful constituencies and, often clearer strategies than those supporting equity interests." Alexander (2011) found similar issues of marginalized participation in her study of HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program, which resembles Blueprint's reliance on voluntary regional collaboration to achieve greater regional equity. Like SACOG, HUD staff are committed to "working with regional collaborators to advance regional equity" through increased housing and transportation choices (Alexander 2011, 673). These findings

reveal possible limitations in the regionalism of both SACOG's Blueprint and HUD's regional grant program. When local jurisdictions have a choice, the most aggressive proposals to address issues of regional equity may be excluded.

As a result, planners interested in regional equity or the equity implications of growth need to take an approach that embraces the organizing aspect of regionalism to focus attention on the equity issues that are often overlooked when discourses of sustainable development are invoked. Rather than working towards consensus (regionalism to the lowest common denominator), planners need to embrace conflict as a way to question existing relations of power among regional stakeholders. There are examples of this at work in the Sacramento region and California as a whole. Pastor and Benner (2011) cite the mass protests in Sacramento by ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and its allies during the Blueprint process, calling for greater "equity and inclusion" in the growth policies of the plan. A year earlier the same groups had pressured State legislators to put forward an Assembly Bill (AB 680) that would have reallocated regional sales tax based on population and policies designed to link affordable housing with job access. Although the bill failed to gain enough support and was ultimately defeated, it raised important questions about the inequitable distribution of tax revenues between central cities and their suburbs in metropolitan areas.

Although the equity outcomes of post-Blueprint planning and development are unclear, participation itself has had a capacity building effect on regional organizers, and these organizations have worked to create 'counterpublics' that challenge the

hegemony of the neoliberal approach. One outcome was the formation of CORE (Coalition on Regional Equity), created by the Sacramento Housing Alliance and its partners after their participation in Blueprint and a campaign to create an inclusionary housing ordinance in the City of Sacramento (CORE 2010). Today CORE is a non-profit that brings together stakeholders from a diverse cross section of the region, focused on issues of transportation and housing equity in the Sacramento region, and active participants in local and regional plan making efforts. There are also examples of push-back at the local level. In Elk Grove, notorious in the region for their rejection of Blueprint, GRASP is a group of local residents whose slogan is “A better Elk Grove is in our grasp” (Kalb 2012, 1). The group is opposed to the City’s plans expand its boundaries because they are concerned about what they see as the continuation of “unrestrained urban sprawl” and a lack of infill development. They have submitted a petition signed by neighborhood residents throughout the City to the Sacramento LAFCO, the governing body that ultimately approves annexation requests.

This study was intended as an exploratory case, taking a closer look at the resurgent interest in regional planning in order to understand how plans like Blueprint have influenced the planning practice and land use policies of local jurisdictions. Blueprint has inserted a regional awareness into the agendas of local planners, politicians, the development community, and the public. The results offer planners a window onto the different motivations and logics that shape local land use policy and provide a new understanding of the importance of regional processes like Blueprint in creating a space where alternative urban development paradigms can be argued and

debated. However, the implementation process has suffered from many of the established criticisms of similar voluntary and collaborative governance arrangements. Going forward, planners should consider alternatives to the broad based approach of voluntary governance, tailoring policy approaches to the political context of specific jurisdictions – allowing for flexibility through incentives in places like Sacramento and Davis, while a more stringent regulatory approach is called for in places like Elk Grove, where resistance to the regional growth principles and vision has limited the plan’s influence on local development priorities.

The influence of Blueprint is most apparent in local implementation efforts that focus on the urban design and ‘greening’ principles of the plan – the most politically palatable aspects. Too little attention has been paid to equity at the local level as it relates to housing and transportation choice. Ultimately, the narrow focus of implementation efforts raises questions about the ability of processes like Blueprint to address these issues through the goodwill and commitment of planners at both the local and regional levels, suggesting the need for additional requirements that can hold local jurisdictions accountable to the regional vision for future development. The experience of Blueprint implementation shows that programs like incentives, whether fiscal or legal, and technical assistance help shift the balance of pressures on local decision makers. To work, these programs need more money, always a challenge, but particularly so at a time when the narrative of fiscal austerity holds sway with city governments. Planners, both local and regional, also have a role to play in building on the successes of Blueprint. Planners should use their skills of analysis and communication to show

incredulous stakeholders how local land use decision impact regional livability. They can also argue for and institute more participatory mechanisms that allow marginalized groups to voice their concerns and engage in processes of empowered deliberation because an “activists presence that can hold Blueprint accountable to equity concerns” is needed to counter more powerful and established interests (Pastor and Benner 2011, 100).

The growing reliance on civic modes of regionalism should be considered critically to assess their willingness to address those potential win-lose issues of regional equity. The implications of these findings extend beyond the Sacramento region, as federal programs like HUD’s Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities provide funds for similar regional planning efforts across the country. As Rosan (2007, 296) found in her study of MPOs across the country, the “real source of regional power is the state.” In the end, unless the state grants greater statutory power to regional institutions, implementation efforts will be limited to what makes sense at the local level regardless of the regional impact. Planner’s like those in Elk Grove are not unaware of how their city’s development priorities harm regional goals, but they feel constrained by local politics – a lack of regional land use authority ultimately means local jurisdictions will act in their own best interests first, and regionally when it makes sense.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol and Questions

Questions follow an arc that starts with the interview subject's experience with Blueprint either as a participant or someone who has subsequently been engaged with Blueprint implementation efforts or regional planning more broadly. The next questions focus on how the interview subject's organization or agency has responded to Blueprint plans, visions and policies. For public agencies these can include changes to local plans (comprehensive plans), policies (zoning) or practices (development proposal review). For private or non-governmental organizations these can include changes to plans and policies, consideration of the regional issues, and efforts to engage with policy makers about regional issues. Finally, the remaining questions attempt to get at perceived barriers to the successful implementation of regional plans and visions.

Questions should be phrased in a way to elicit more than yes or no answers by getting subjects to relate their experiences. Questions should start with "I've seen/read/heard that regional planning processes are criticized when it comes to local implementation, what has your experience been?" Questions can also ask the subject "what is your experience with... or what have you seen..."

** Ask about the availability of building permit data (or another proxy for measuring development on a regional scale)*

Interview questions:

Regional Institutions and Organizations

- How would you characterize implementation of the Blueprint vision? (e.g. can you give examples of successes/challenges...)
- Have post-process development outcomes been in accordance with Blueprint? If so, how?
- Have local plans or policies changed? If so, how? Why?
 - Have local governments been more willing to implement certain changes over others? (e.g. quality of life issues vs. affordable housing...)
- How do local land use plans and policies compare to the preferred regional scenario for growth?
- Has an increased awareness of regional connections and the impacts of uncoordinated growth been reflected in the administrative and decision making process of local institutions?
- What mechanisms are in place to hold local government accountable to implementing the regional land use vision? (e.g. incentives, technical assistance...)
- It has been suggested that participation in a regional visioning and land use planning process forges new coalitions among a diverse array of stakeholders through thinking collaboratively, has this been the case with Blueprint? If so, how?

- A weakness of regionalism (specifically as visioning exercises) in a voluntary collaboration framework is the challenge of follow through at the local level – what kind of challenges have you seen in terms of local implementation? (e.g. political support, regulatory barriers, stakeholder/public engagement, fiscal impacts...)
- Has this process given voice to stakeholder groups that would have otherwise not had a seat at the table? If so, what kind of groups?
 - What have you seen with regard to public input at a neighborhood scale? Did this have a significant role in shaping the preferred future regional growth scenario?
 - Who have been the biggest promoters of regional solutions?
 - How have subsequent planning processes (Blueprint, SB 375 and HUD Sustainable Communities) impacted the feasibility of realizing the preferred regional scenario for growth?

Local jurisdictions – city/county (planners, planning officials and local leaders)

- It's been suggested that these regional planning processes quickly lose momentum after the event, but do you think that the city's engagement with regional land use issues has changed post-Blueprint? If so how? What precipitated this change?
- Are regional land use plans and visions considered when making decisions about the future development (direction and type) in your community? If so how? Why?
 - Have the *Blueprint Preferred Scenario Map* and growth principles been incorporated into local plans and procedures? If so, how? If not, why not?
 - Have development priorities for the city changed since participation in the *Blueprint* planning process?
- Has public support for region-wide planning processes and solutions changed post-*Blueprint*? If so, how? What would you attribute this change to?
 - Is your local government more receptive to the idea of land use planning for the region as a whole post-*Blueprint*? If not, why?
 - Is there broad based support for regional solutions or are there just vocal advocates?
 - Who are the detractors? What kind of resistance has there been to implementing the *Blueprint* plan at the local level?
 - Has there been a change in the local political culture (awareness of regional issues) or are politicians responding to the concerns of constituents? If so, give an example of how?
 - Has support been consistent throughout subsequent regional planning processes?
- It has been suggested that these processes empower new participants - has this process given voice to local stakeholder groups that would have otherwise not had a seat at the table? If so, what kind of groups?
- What have you seen with regard to public input at a neighborhood scale? Did this have a significant role in shaping the preferred future regional growth scenario?

- Has there been a noticeable difference in the projects proposed by developers changed post-*Blueprint*? If so, how?

NGOs/private organizations (civil society groups)

- What role did you or your organization play in the original *Blueprint* planning process?
- What do you see as your organizations stake in regional land use outcomes?
- How have the concerns of your organization been addressed by processes like *Blueprint* (or subsequent efforts like the MTP/SCS updates)?
- Have you noticed a change in the willingness of local jurisdictions (city or county) to consider the regional impact of local decisions? What are some examples either way (yes or no)? (e.g. development proposals, plan amendments, legislation...) How has this varied by jurisdiction?
- What do you see as the challenges to realizing the implementation of a regional vision for future land use development like *Blueprint*?