

The Act of Coordination

Planners' Perceptions of Actors in Coordinating Land Use Planning

A Case Study of Vancouver, Halifax, and St. John's



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Executive Summary

This study was conducted as part of a larger research project being led by Jill Grant of Dalhousie University. The 3-year research project, entitled *Coordinating Land Use Planning in the Context of Multiple Plans*, explores how Canadian communities are dealing with planning and policy challenges that arise as the number of plans that must be managed increases. This independent research project builds on the overall research and attempts to fill a gap in the literature relating to coordinating land use planning in a context of plan proliferation. This study describes planners' perceptions of actors in the planning process that help determine coordination outcomes. Actors considered included politicians, managers, planners, the public, and developers. Analysis focused on the Halifax, St. John's, and Vancouver regions. Data consisted of 43 personal interviews conducted in the summer of 2014 with individuals involved in plan coordination. The results reported interpret the perceptions expressed by the interview participants.

Participants generally agreed on many issues of coordination. With the exception of some small municipalities in the St. John's region, plan proliferation was generally perceived as a significant coordination challenge to communities. Most respondents agreed that all planning actors except developers have contributed to the observed proliferation of plans in Canada. Politicians were perceived as powerful actors bearing great responsibility for leading coordination efforts. Politicians often champion specific planning causes, but may not consistently prioritize coordination. Managers were perceived as highly involved in coordination, especially in promoting interdepartmental cooperation. Planners were perceived by most respondents as influential over coordination outcomes, particularly by writing coherent plans and by facilitating interdepartmental cooperation. However, planners were often perceived as too low in the government hierarchy to champion coordination. As the ultimate determinants of community priorities, citizens were generally perceived as powerful actors. However, the public may be the least organized actor, as citizens rarely unite around planning issues. Furthermore, the coordination of planning documents may not interest most citizens. Developers have an interest in simple, coordinated regulations, but typically interact in the planning process through applications for policy changes. Developers were perceived as influential in determining land use, especially in smaller communities.

The interviews revealed some differences in perceptions of planning actors based on region. Respondents in St. John's were most likely to report strong control of the planning process by politicians. They also reported the greatest level of developer involvement. Respondents from Vancouver perceived the relationship between politicians, planners, and developers as productive and centered on identified community-wide interests embedded in plans. Collaborative planning in Halifax was viewed in a predominantly positive light, but many planners felt that staff did not have power to make decisions independent of Council.

The level of involvement of the public was generally perceived as greater in Vancouver than in the other two study areas. Participants in Halifax generally viewed current public engagement protocols positively, but expressed frustration due to limited engagement on some occasions. In St. John's, participants described a lack of stringent

engagement protocols to collect public input on planning matters. While respondents in St. John's generally perceived public interest in planning as growing, they often reported a need to increase public knowledge of planning practices.

In sum, interview participants from all three study areas viewed coordination of land use planning as critically important. All of the actors involved in planning decisions (politicians, managers, planners, the public, and developers) have roles to play in either promoting or inhibiting coordination. Coordination outcomes are determined by the interaction of planning actors, and the extent to which they can agree to pursue common community priorities. Politicians and managers have a key role to play in interpreting these priorities from the public, and in ensuring their consistent application. Managers and planners can continue to foster greater interdepartmental coordination, producing documents that are coherent and complete. Developers should continue to pressure municipalities to maintain clear, simple, and up-to-date land use regulations, but respect the community vision embedded in those regulations. Coordinated planning produces better communities. It takes all actors in a community to ensure that coordination will take place. However, the burden of championing improved coordination of land use planning rests with community leaders.

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Introduction

Purpose

We have observed that Canadian communities are producing a larger and larger number of planning documents. Given the context of plan proliferation, the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the perceptions of planners regarding the roles and interrelationships of various actors in the planning process including planning staff, politicians, developers, and the public, and how those relationships affect the coordination of land use planning. Analysis focused on Vancouver, Halifax, and St. John's (including the City of Mount Pearl, Town of Paradise, and Town of Conception Bay South).

Research Questions

In exploring the roles and interrelationships of the various agents in creating and coordinating plans, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. *What roles do planners perceive that various actors play in the process of coordinating land use planning?*
2. *How do practitioners believe that the different actors and their interrelationships influence plan creation and coordination?*
3. *How do planners think that the roles and interrelationships of the actors have changed over time?*
4. *How do planners perceive different actors as having influenced the quantity, quality, and types of plans created?*

Project Background

Given financial, temporal, and other constraints, policy-makers may not always coordinate new plans with existing policies. Policies created at different times and with diverse objectives may sometimes be overlapping, inconsistent, untimely, or even contradictory (Grant, 2013). This independent research project builds on the larger project entitled *Coordinating Land Use Planning in the Context of Multiple Plans*, a 3-year research project that explores how Canadian communities are dealing with planning and policy challenges that arise as the number of plans that must be managed increases. The main research question is as follows (Grant, Filion, Habib, Manuel, & Rapaport, 2013, p. 2):

How are Canadian communities coordinating their land use planning activities in the context of rapidly proliferating plans and policies?

In the first phase of the research, Burns (2013a) conducted a literature review of plans and scholarly articles on the subject of plan coordination. He identified examples of plans and policy efforts designed to promote coordination from a sample of 35 cities across English-speaking Canada. Burns (2013b) later created an inventory of all types of plans being produced across English-speaking Canada, compiling a sample of over 350 plans drawn from 33 cities. He found that master plans, transportation plans, environmental plans, and green space plans were the most common. The commonness of corporate plans, recreation plans, cultural plans, downtown plans, housing plans, economic plans, resource plans, heritage plans, and growth plans varied regionally. Least common were waste plans, waterfront plans, and urban design plans. Most plans had been prepared recently, with about half produced in 2010 or later.

In the second phase of the research project, I administered a web-based survey to planners across Canada. The survey collected information concerning the perceived extent of coordination as a problem, the prioritization of coordination in Canadian municipalities, identification of coordination challenges as well as their perceived factors, and effective strategies for improving coordination.

In June-August 2014 along with two other research assistants, I conducted a series of personal interviews with planning professionals on the subject of coordinating land use planning in the context of multiple plans. We interviewed municipal planners, planning consultants, provincial planners, and other professionals. Amanda Taylor conducted interviews in Vancouver and Edmonton, Tanya Markvart in Toronto, and I interviewed respondents in Halifax and St. John's. This research utilized the interview data collected in Vancouver, Halifax and St. John's.

Methods

For this study, I have analyzed data from personal interviews of planning professionals conducted in Halifax, St. John's, and Vancouver. Interviews were conducted in June, July, and August 2014. I completed interviews in Halifax and St. John's, while interviews in Vancouver were completed by Amanda Taylor of Dalhousie University School of Planning. A total of 43 respondents were interviewed: 15 in Vancouver, 15 in Halifax, and 13 in St. John's. These three study areas were chosen due their different experiences in plan coordination and their different approaches to collaborative land use planning. Analysis in this study draws on personal experiences and perceptions of interview participants.

In his study of managing horizontal government, Peters (1998) made use of interviews with senior public servants in Canada, the UK, and Australia. The researchers contacted individuals who occupied positions with clearly defined coordination responsibilities or who were identified by other respondents as being involved with policy coordination. Taking a similar approach, our research team identified potential respondents who were perceived as heavily involved in the creation, implementation, or coordination of plans. Potential interview participants were identified

based on the team's familiarity with municipal planners in the study areas and through Internet searches for municipal staff. Prospective respondents were contacted by means of email and by telephone. It was common for participants to offer referrals that led to more interviews. See Appendix-1 for the participant consent letter used in recruitment.

The interviews used for the study were semi-structured and open-ended. According to Creswell (2003, p. 213), "[qualitative] interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants." Interviews for this research were designed to obtain particular content while retaining enough flexibility to incorporate and explore unanticipated material (Dunn, 2010). The interviews were guided by predetermined questions, but participants' responses were often explored in greater depth at the discretion of the interviewer. While all participants were asked similar questions, the wording often differed slightly between interviews. The line of questioning evolved over the course of the study as new areas of interest emerged, allowing us to more closely examine common concerns and opinions of participants in each study area. Questions were worded in such a way as to invite open-ended responses (Turner, 2010). The advantage of this approach was that participants were allowed to contribute as much detailed information as they were willing to provide. Furthermore, the approach gave us an opportunity to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. See Appendix-2 for the full list of interview questions. Most interviews took over an hour, with an average interview time of about 75 minutes. The audio of interviews was recorded and stored electronically for transcription. Interviewers also took written notes.

According to Creswell (2003), qualitative data analysis and interpretation is an ongoing process involving continual reflection, asking analytic questions and documenting findings and new areas of interest as the research progresses. Data analysis for this study focused on identifying the perceived roles of actors involved in the planning process as they relate to the coordination of planning activities. Analyzing the interview data entailed compiling the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes. These themes or codes reflected consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among participants (Kvale, 2007). The findings sections in this paper are organized around the themes identified in this manner.

While much of the research presented is exploratory in nature, Yin (2003) has argued that non-experimental research need not be limited to descriptive analysis and may be applicable to explanatory or causal inquiries. The interview method used sought to not only explore what the roles of actors are in the planning context, but also to explain how these roles affect the coordination of land use planning. Yin (2003) argued that such methods should be used in research focused on contemporary events (such as the proliferation of plans in Canada) not requiring control of behavioural elements. The results reported will provide greater understanding to persons interested in the roles that actors may play in affecting the coordination of land use planning, and they may provide more than a descriptive analysis of coordination phenomena in planning.

Background

There are many examples within the planning literature of research on the roles of actors in the planning process. The interaction of actors in a democratic planning process is a common theme (Ferrand, 1996; Grant, 1994; Ligtenberg, Bregt, and van Lammeren, 2001). The roles played by planners have been a common theme in the literature (Davidoff, 1965; Dayler, 2009; Forester, 1986; Grant, 1994; Hodge, 1986; Seelig and Seelig, 1996), as well as those played by politicians (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary, 2005; Grant, 1994), the public (Grant, 1994; Till and Meyer, 2001; Thomas, 2013), and by developers (Grant, 1994; Samsura, Krabben, and Deemen, 2010). Despite this wealth of knowledge on planning actors, there has been no research done to date on the influence of actors on land use planning coordination specifically, or concerning actors’ contributions to plan proliferation. This research is intended to help fill these gaps in the planning literature, exploring ways planning actors influence not just what planning decisions are made, but how those decisions (in the form of plans, initiatives, and so on) are coordinated with one another. This section gives a brief overview of the current planning literature relating to the actors involved in democratic planning. This section also provides some historical and planning background on each of the three study areas examined in the research: Vancouver, Halifax, and St. John’s. The reader may find this useful context for the findings reported later in the paper.

The Actors in Democratic Planning

Grant (1994) identified three categories of actors (politicians, planners, and citizens) who play key roles in the community planning process. The actors bring divergent interests and values to planning disputes, and tend to have different interpretations of the ‘community good’. They utilize a variety of tactics and strategies to influence the outcome of the process. Ligtenberg, Bregt, and van Lammeren (2001) argued that the complexity of the land use planning process arises in part because of the divergent interests of involved actors. The geographic aspect of land use planning makes the attachment of the various actors to specific landscapes, ecosystems, and socioeconomics cause for disagreement on planning issues (Ferrand, 1996). Actors are motivated by a desire to narrow the gap between the perceived current state of land use and their vision for future land use (Ligtenberg, Bregt, and van Lammeren, 2001).

Grant (1994) argued that community planning provides an opportunity for debate on issues of local governance, and that actors involved in the process engage in a tug-of-war to define the cultural themes by which the community is governed. Actors, consisting of individuals and groups, communicate, negotiate, and decide upon the spatial organisation of their environment through the democratic planning process (Ligtenberg, Bregt, and van Lammeren, 2001). Grant (1994) examined the different interpretations among actors of the cultural theme of ‘democracy’, and how the lack of consensus on this fundamental concept precludes its effective practice:

“Actors in the drama have their own perspectives on the meaning of ‘democracy’, influenced by their personal values and significant cultural themes... Rather than

generating consensus, democratic participation nurtures contention and dispute... People fight about the character and future of communities. They argue about the balance between the rights of the people, the responsibilities of elected representatives, and the authority of appointed bureaucrats... Communities sometimes experience frustrations because people have unrealistic expectations of local democracy and community planning. Providing venues for public input in local governance has not removed structural or systemic barriers to influence. Our political economy continues to encourage growth, regardless of local opposition. Community planning cannot solve the problems of contention and dispute in a democratic society: it simply accommodates the debate.” (Grant, 1994, pp. 3-5)

Differences in personality can only partially explain the diversity in actors’ approaches to participating in planning disputes. Many differences may derive from pre-existing roles that have been framed for the actors:

“Examining the planning drama, we find actors playing roles whose characters and behaviours seem partially predetermined, as if by script. By times, for instance, the planner acts the ‘pompous technocrat’; at other times the ‘genial civil servant’. Actors play their parts with divergent styles, using varied rhetorical devices and language... In the course of planning disputes, people produce and reproduce values, beliefs, and meanings. Actors argue about the kind of community they want, about who should benefit (or lose) from the change, and even about how to make decisions...Within the drama, actors improvise scripts through which they communicate key themes and messages.” (Grant, 1994, pp. 5-7)

Grant (1994) described the roles played by politicians in land use planning. As elected representatives of the people, politicians are expected to make decisions in the ‘public interest’. If constituents perceive a politician as failing in this duty, the public may refuse to re-elect them or even prosecute them for illegal activity. Politicians often face the dilemma of simultaneously protecting the interests of their local constituents and those of the wider community. Grant (1994, p. 31) described the roles a politician may play during land use disputes:

“During a local dispute about the fate of a piece of land, a politician has to work out what role to play: champion of the neighbourhood group; defender of the tax base; friend of the developer; servant of the silent majority; employer of the expert planner. Various actors on the stage and behind the curtains call out cues, hoping to influence the choice.”

Planners are often uncertain of their role within the process of democratic land use decision-making. Dayler (2009) described the uncertainty among planning professionals regarding the role they must play in a modern context. In practice, planners often tend toward one of two broad approaches, being either obsessed with planning theory or caught up in the administrative and consultative work that makes up the everyday business of planning (Hall, 2004). Planning academics have argued that planners can frame their role in different ways. Hodge (1986) contended that planners might act as technical experts trained to manage the development of a community. Davidoff (1965) pushed planners to become advocates for society’s most disadvantaged groups. Forester (1986) has argued that, depending on the context, planners may act as facilitators, mediators, or negotiators.

Several factors may limit the scope with which planners can decide their own roles. Grant (1994) proposed that the shifting preferences of the professional planning community for its roles may affect the types of skills and theories passed on to planning students, perpetuating certain norms. Furthermore, when planners begin work in a new community, they typically step into pre-defined roles within the existing organizational structure. Planners often lack the authority, autonomy, and legitimacy to define their roles outside of the pre-existing framework.

Grant (1994, p. 33) argued that, as actors in planning disputes, planners make choices about positions to take, but typically try to act as impartial technical experts:

“[Planners] may support or oppose proposed changes, depending upon their assessment of each case...With their pivotal technical position in the drama, they seek to define the nature of situations for other actors. They follow unwritten community rules in using persuasive tactics... To win the support of politicians and citizens, planners draw on some powerful community values. As technical experts, they frequently employ ‘science’ and ‘reason’ to persuade. They cannot, however, use the same range of values, tactics, and strategies available to other actors... the planner responds politely with facts, figures, and policies.”

Ducker (2007) described the nature of community planning as a process involving not only planners, but many other parties in municipal government as well. Coordinated land use planning is argued to require cooperation among relevant government departments.

“Street design standards are established in public works departments, and community public reinvestment programs are handled by community development. Utility extension decisions may implicate a joint utility provider, and the [Department of Transportation] makes critical road network decisions. Knitting these decisions together to achieve community policy can be both conceptually and practically difficult. But it also illustrates that planning may be too important to be left solely to planners.” (Ducker, 2007, p. 2)

Planners often play a facilitative role, guiding the creation of planning policy while ensuring that input is received from interested and affected parties. Planners often seek to legitimize their work through reference to a broad ‘public interest’. While in the early years of modern planning there was considerable consensus about what constituted the common good, defining a singular ‘public interest’ has become a topic of debate (Grant, 2005). As the conditions, needs, and wants of the community are constantly shifting, so too must the planner’s definition of the public interest.

The continual redefinition of the ‘public interest’ has left some practitioners feeling like polltakers. Seelig and Seelig (1996) have criticized modern planners for lacking vision, and have called for greater authority for planning professionals to lead their communities. They argued that public consultation has gone too far and has become a hindrance to sound public planning. However, this attitude gives short shrift to the potential value of citizen involvement. While facilitating public involvement may not be easy, planning that did not include broad participation of the public would be subject to the largely normative positions of the other agents in the process (Grant, 2005).

Grant (1994) described the role of the citizen as less well-defined than those of politicians or planners. Members of the public are often a disparate group and may fill

different roles under different circumstances and at different times. The vast majority of members of the public never become involved in the planning process. Those who do become involved may do so at any time and for various reasons including wanting to prevent or control change. Citizens seek to persuade decision makers by asserting their own understanding of community values, defining the 'public interest' as congruent with their own interests. Grant (1994, pp. 33-35) described some members of the public who become committed to action:

“‘Activists’ take on key roles as opponents of projects... ‘Residents’ live in the communities in question; ‘property owners’ own property in the area; ‘taxpayers’ provide income to municipalities; ‘voters’ cast ballots on election day; ‘the people’ are sovereign; ‘the silent majority’ hovers as an undefined residual class of considerable ideological importance...”

The importance of public participation in local democracy has waxed and waned throughout the history of modern community planning (Grant, 1994; Moynihan, 1969; Thomas, 2013). The new public administration literature is pervaded by terms like 'network governance', 'collaborative government', and 'public-private partnerships', indicating the perceived importance of cooperation in contemporary theory (Alford and Hughes, 2008). Most recently, a new school of thought consistent with the view of the public as 'citizens' has become popular. It is based on the premise that government cannot serve as the only provider of public services (Thomas, 2013). Instead, provision of services and the general pursuit of public goals may occur through networks of governments, private and non-profit entities, and the public. This phenomenon has become known as 'governance' (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary, 2005). Coproduction of planning services may take place by actively involving citizens through public engagement sessions or by factoring received feedback into decisions.

Involving the public in administrative decision-making may provide several benefits to governments including better information, greater public acceptance of planning decisions, improved governmental performance, and increased citizen trust (Thomas, 2013). For citizens, the benefits can include a better fit of public policies and programs to community preferences, improved community capacity for other joint efforts, and ultimately a better quality of life. However, public involvement can increase governance costs by requiring more time of public administrators, by undermining necessary quality standards, and by raising program costs to meet the public's demands. Till and Meyer (2001, p. 377) found that "involving the public in science and decision-making costs about twice as much for a project than when the work is performed without public involvement". In addition, those citizens who become involved are rarely representative of the entire population.

As the normal proponents of development projects, developers play an important role in planning activities (Grant, 1994). Samsura, Krabben, and Deemen (2010) argued that the property development process is a social situation in which the interaction of individuals or groups of individuals (specifically developers, municipalities, and land owners) is an essential element. They used a game theory model to demonstrate the key strategic decisions involved in land use development projects. The authors argued that a developer's optimal strategy depends on market conditions, with greater development activity taking place during times of greater economic activity. Studies like

this one demonstrate that developers' primary motivation is to maximize profits. The coordination of overall land use planning is not a normal consideration of the rational developer, except insofar as it may affect the profitability of land development.

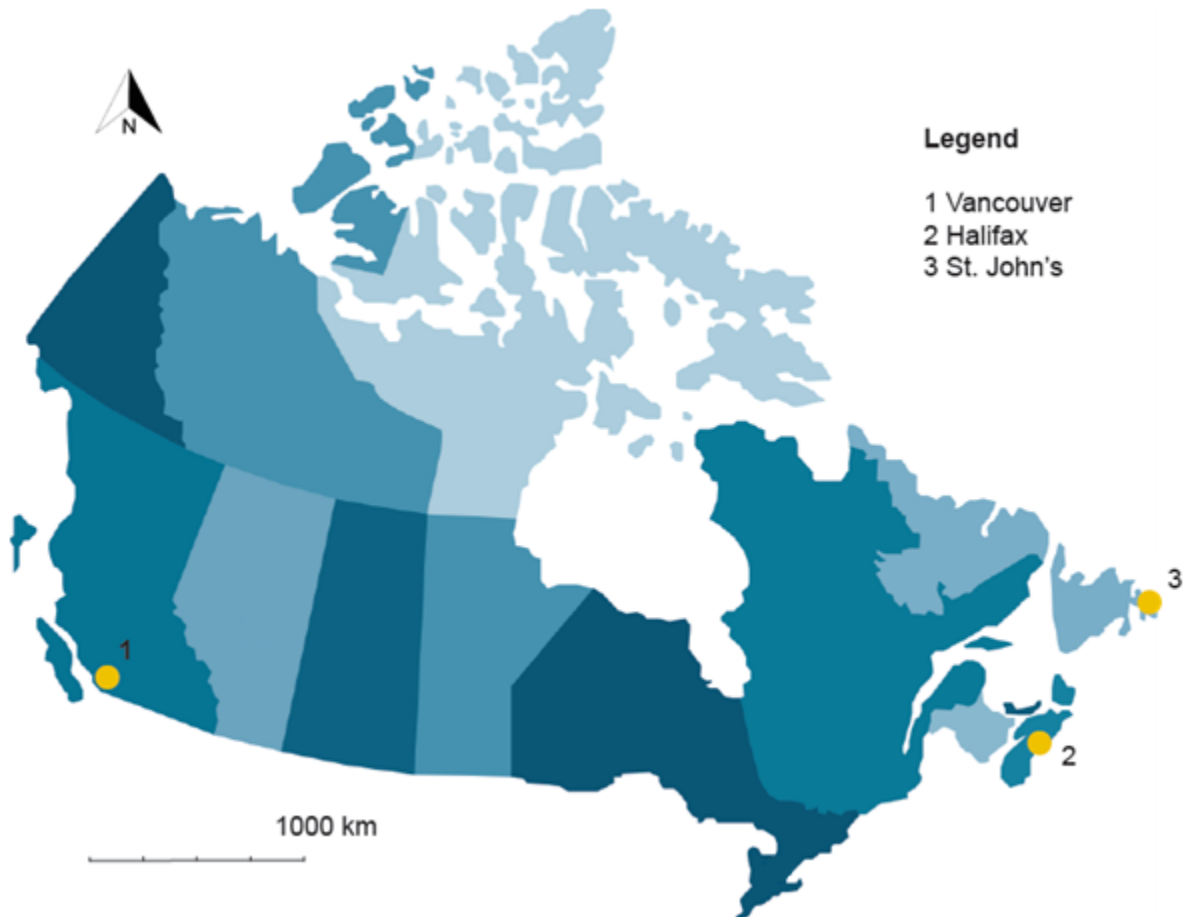
The decisions made by planners do have a significant impact on the profitability of potential development projects: "It is undeniably true that the location of a new highway, the extension of utilities, or the nature of the standards of a zoning ordinance may strongly influence the location, type, and timing of private development projects" (Ducker, 2007, p. 2). Planners may influence developer action by establishing clear plans and policies and by regulating the use, development, and maintenance of private and public property. It may be argued that developers have an interest in the predictable implementation of government policy as inconsistent or uncoordinated application of policy increases the uncertainty, and therefore the risk, of land development.

In sum, the planning literature supports the notion that all actors involved in the planning process influence decision-making. In the democratic planning process, the various interests and 'scripts' of each actor guide their interactions with each other actor. These interactions collectively determine the ultimate land use decisions that shape communities.

Study Areas

For this study, I analyzed data from personal interviews of planning professionals conducted in three study areas: Vancouver, Halifax, and St. John's (see Map-1). These case study areas were chosen due to their different experiences in plan coordination and their different approaches to collaborative land use planning. They also differ in characteristics like growth rates, size, and policy implementation approaches that the research team may wish to assess in greater detail at a later stage (Grant, 2014). This section gives a brief historical and planning background for each study area.

Map-1: Study Areas



Vancouver

Greater Vancouver is located on the coast of British Columbia (Davis and von Kleist, 1997) (see Map-1). The city of Vancouver is named after George Vancouver who explored the inner harbor of Burrard Inlet in 1792. The first European settlement in Vancouver was founded in 1862. While forestry remains the region's largest industry, Vancouver is well known as an urban centre surrounded by nature, making tourism its

second-largest industry. With a population of 2.3 million, Greater Vancouver is Canada's third largest urban area (Statistics Canada, 2014).

Metro Vancouver comprises 23 local authorities as members: 21 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation (Metro Vancouver, 2014). Metro Vancouver is a partnership of the region's municipalities that work together to deliver regional services, set policy, and act as a political forum. Metro Vancouver represents residents of a region under four separate legal entities: Greater Vancouver Regional District, Greater Vancouver Water District, Greater Vancouver Sewage and Drainage District, and Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation. Metro Vancouver works in collaboration with its member municipalities to achieve a shared vision of livability across the regions. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) was approved by the board in 2011 (Metro Vancouver, 2014). The RGS requires each local authority to provide a Regional Context Statement (RCS) demonstrating to the Metro Vancouver Board how its Official Community Plan supports the goals, strategies and actions identified in the RGS.

The City of Vancouver has developed a reputation in the international planning community as a model of good planning practice. The city is renowned as progressive with a liveable and compact urban form (Grant, 2009). Vancouver has improved the perceived relevance of planning to residents through the use of participatory processes and accessible language. Some elements that have contributed to the city's success have been unique, while some techniques and management strategies developed in Vancouver may be applicable elsewhere. The "Vancouver Model" is an urban planning and architectural approach pioneered in Vancouver (Boddy, 2004). It is characterized by mixed-use, high-density downtown living, green space, public amenities paid for by developers, quality urban design, priority for pedestrians over cars, and preservation of view corridors. This mixed use originated from a lack of freeways through the city, which forced people to live, work, and play in the downtown core. Vancouver is distinct from most large North American cities given its large residential population living in the city centre, lack of expressways connecting the core to the suburbs, and significant reliance on public transit.

Punter (2003) argued that Vancouver's international reputation for achieving a generally high standard of design and for making the most of its natural setting is founded on a number of innovative practices. Chief among these are the Vancouver Urban Design Panel, the citywide design strategy of CityPlan, and the city's participatory 'megaproject' planning process. In addition, Punter (2003) suggested that Vancouver has achieved an optimal balance between discretionary development control and an elaborate zoning system based on clear rules of decision-making. Vancouver's progressive and coordinated planning practices have resulted in an admirable level of coordination of built form, which Punter (2003) describes as a 'coherent city'.

Halifax

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is located on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia (see Map-1). The municipality occupies about 5577 square kilometres, more land than the province of Prince Edward Island (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2006). HRM is made up of 23 municipal districts and contains more than 200 communities varying in

size from small rural villages to dense urban centres. The urban core of HRM, generally defined by Peninsular Halifax and the former city of Dartmouth, is located on Halifax Harbour in the south of the municipality. The city of Halifax is the largest population centre in Atlantic Canada. According to the 2011 census, the population of HRM was 390,285 (Nova Scotia Community Counts, 2011). Major employers by sector in HRM in 2011 included Public Administration, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

The City of Halifax was founded in 1749 (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010). Halifax's 'sister city', Dartmouth, was founded shortly after in 1750. Halifax was officially incorporated as a city in 1841 (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014a). In 1994, the City of Halifax, City of Dartmouth, Town of Bedford, and Halifax County Municipality were amalgamated by the authority of the province (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010). In 1996, the consolidated Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) was established with a regional council. Proponents argued that amalgamation would decrease the overall cost of government, improve the quality and level of services, improve regional planning, and strengthen economic development by reducing competition between the four consolidated municipalities (Poel, 2000). While amalgamation has generally been viewed as beneficial, many of the predicted cost savings did not materialize. In addition, the collection of many municipal plans remaining in legal effect has been a lasting challenge to the coordination of land use planning in HRM. As of 2013, eighteen municipal planning strategies and thirteen secondary planning strategies – adopted by HRM or by former municipalities – remained in legal effect (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014b). The adoption Halifax's new overarching Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) has deemed these community or neighbourhood plans and any future ones as secondary planning strategies in an effort to improve regional coordination of planning priorities.

Halifax's recently adopted RMPS represents the result of the five-year review of the HRM Regional Plan. Council approved the most recent draft of the plan on June 25, 2014 (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014c). The public helped identify five general directions for policy changes to the regional plan. These are intended to help make the municipality more mobile, vibrant, prosperous, liveable, and sustainable. The 2006 Regional Plan set targets of concentrating 25% of new growth within the Regional Centre (Peninsula Halifax and Dartmouth between the Circumferential Highway and Halifax Harbour), 50% in urban communities (those serviced with publicly managed water and wastewater services outside the Regional Centre), and 25% in rural areas (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014b). A 2011 Stantec study concluded that adhering to the Regional Plan's original growth targets would save the municipality \$670 million in servicing costs between 2011 and 2031, and that significant cost savings could be achieved by increasing growth in the Regional Centre. As such, "the [new] Regional Plan shall target at least 75% of new housing units to be located in the Regional Centre and urban communities with at least 25% of new housing units within the Regional Centre" (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014b, p. 7). Other amendments to the Regional Plan introduced in RP+5 focus on sustainability, enhancing the regional centre, improving urban and rural community design, and making land use and transportation planning mutually supportive.

St. John's

The City of St. John's is located on the Avalon Peninsula on the eastern side of the island of Newfoundland (see Map-1). It is the most easterly city in North America (Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, 2014). The City of Mount Pearl, Town of Paradise, and Town of Conception Bay South (included in the study area) are part of the St. John's Metropolitan Area and are located south and west of the City of St. John's.

St. John's became officially incorporated as a city in 1921, but is considered by many to be the oldest English-founded city in North America (O'Neill, 2003). St. John's achieved municipal status in 1888 when it elected its first council (St. John's, 2014a). St. John's became incorporated as a city in 1921. The City of Mount Pearl was named after Commander James Pearl of the Royal Navy who settled there in 1829 (Mount Pearl, 2010a). The town elected its first mayor in 1955 and in 1988 was granted City status. Originally inhabited in the late nineteenth century, the Town of Paradise began to grow rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s as it became established as a commuter suburb of the city of St. John's. In 1992 St. Thomas and several other unincorporated areas were amalgamated into Paradise (Laurie, 2006). The Town of Conception Bay South was incorporated in 1973 (Conception Bay South, 2014).

The St. John's Metropolitan Area is the second largest in Atlantic Canada after Halifax (Statistics Canada, 2013b). According to the National Household Survey (NHS), in 2011 106,172 people lived within the City of St. John's (Statistics Canada, 2013c). Recently, the city's proximity to the Hibernia, Terra Nova, and White Rose oil fields has allowed for expansion into a new, high-demand industry (Fusco, 2007). The rapid expansion of the oil industry in the province has given rise to economic and population growth, as well as a great deal of commercial development in the capital.

The city adopted its first municipal plan under the provincial Urban and Rural Planning Act in 1984 (St. John's, 2012). St. John's is currently undergoing a review of the 2003 St. John's Municipal Plan (St. John's, 2014b). The plan is scheduled to be finalized and approved in 2015. Key themes in the draft plan that have emerged from the public consultation process are: valuing environmental systems; establishing vibrant, complete neighbourhoods; fostering a strong, diversified economy; promoting quality urban design; and investing in transportation and services (St. John's, 2014c). City Plan 2010, the municipal plan for the City of Mount Pearl, sets out the policies of Mount Pearl Council regarding the development of the municipal planning area for the ten years following its creation in 2010 (Mount Pearl, 2010b). The Town of Paradise Municipal Plan was created to guide future development of the municipality with a 10-year land use strategy (Paradise, 2004). The plan incorporates lands included in the 1992 amalgamation of the Town of Paradise, the Town of St. Thomas, Elizabeth Park/Evergreen Village, Topsail Pond/Three Island Pond, and other small areas formerly under the jurisdiction of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, the City of Mount Pearl, the Town of Conception Bay South, and the Town of St. Phillip's. The Conception Bay South Municipal Plan 2011-2021 was adopted by Council to manage growth in the municipality over the ten-year planning period between 2011 and 2021 (Conception Bay South, 2012).

The St. John's Urban Region Regional Plan is under review by the Province and the 15 municipalities in the region (St. John's, 2010). The result will be the new Northeast Avalon Regional Plan, replacing the existing regional plan which has been in place since 1976 (St. John's, 2014c). The plan has directed community growth and infrastructure (such as new highways) through the region, but changing circumstances have prompted the creation of the new plan. The Northeast Avalon Regional Plan aims to respond to current issues such as population growth, development demands, new economic opportunities, and regional services. It will address issues including the preservation of coastal lands, comprehensive land use planning, environmental protection, vibrant communities, regional transportation, and quality of life. Upon completion, the plan will act as a guide for development, infrastructure, and land use.

Potential amalgamation with the City of Mount Pearl and some areas of the Town of Paradise has been discussed for many years. In a fifth report on the subject, consultants recommended in 2011 that the city pursue amalgamation (Stantec, 2011). Reasons cited included bringing together within one municipal unit all lands that drain into the Waterford River Basin and then into St. John's Harbour and providing a more consistent level of service and lower tax rates to the Town of Paradise. As of 2012, Mayor O'Keefe announced that St. John's would stop pursuing amalgamation with Mount Pearl and Paradise for the time being due to a lack of support in those areas (MacEachern, 2012).

Planning in St. John's is growing more collaborative. The development of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan has involved the establishment of a municipal plan review advisory group, a brochure mail-out to residents, press releases and public notices, and a series of public meetings and forums (St. Johns, 2014g). Happy City St. John's is a non-profit organization that seeks to inform, encourage, and facilitate public dialogue around civic issues in the city (Happy City St. John's, 2014). Happy City has played a role in fostering a greater level of public involvement in the planning process in St. John's.

Findings

This section reports on the results from the analysis of the interview data, using quotations taken from interview recordings as evidence. The interview quotations presented use respondent IDs consisting of two or three letters indicating the region where the respondent worked, and an interview number. 'VAN' indicates the interview was conducted in Vancouver, 'HRM' that it took place in Halifax Regional Municipality, and 'SJ' that the interview was completed in St. John's.

In addition to the two following small subsections on the participant profile and the perceived importance of coordination by participants, the 'Findings' section is divided into five main subsections concerning the major actors of plan coordination: politicians, managers, planners, the public, and developers. The subsections are further divided according to key themes observed among the responses pertaining to each type of actor.

Around politicians, I discuss the themes of plan proliferation, perceived inconsistency of their action on coordinating land use planning, political championing of planning causes like coordination, and the importance of policy. Managers' contribution to coordination, especially interdepartmental cooperation, is discussed briefly in the following section.

Next, the contributions of planners to plan proliferation as well as their perceived roles in determining coordination are discussed. The section explores the influence of planners on coordination outcomes by acting as champions, interacting with the public, creating coherent policy, making the most of limited resources, facilitating interdepartmental cooperation, educating other actors, and promoting rational decision-making.

In the next section, findings concerning the role of the public in coordinating land use planning are examined. The contribution of citizens to plan proliferation is considered, as well as the involvement of members of the public in the planning process, the impact of technology on public involvement, public engagement strategies, and the importance of educating citizens on planning issues like coordination.

In the final 'Results' section, developer influence over plan coordination is explored. Here I discuss the contribution of private developers to plan proliferation, developer influence over plan content, plan revisions, and the implementation of plans. The interaction of development interests with those of other actors is also discussed.

Participant Profile

I used data drawn from personal interviews with planners conducted between June and August 2014 in Vancouver, Halifax, and St. John's. Most participants were employed as municipal planners (see Table-1). There were also a large number of planning managers or directors, planning consultants, and provincial planners represented. Fewer in number were development officers, engineers, developers, professors, and politicians.

Table-1: Interview participants by occupation and community

Participant occupation	Halifax	St. John's	Vancouver	Total
Municipal planner	8	2	7	17
Manager/director	1	3	4	8
Planning consultant	2	3	1	6
Development officer	1			1
Provincial planner	2	4		6
Engineer	1			1
Developer			1	1
Professor			2	2
Politician		1		1
Total:	15	13	15	43

Table-2 shows the distribution of participants in each community by gender. Overall, there were 40 males and 13 females interviewed. St. John's had the most even gender distribution, with seven males and 6 females interviewed. The distribution of males to females was 11 to 4 and 12 to 3 for Halifax and Vancouver respectively.

Table-2: Interview participants by gender and community

Participant gender	Halifax	St. John's	Vancouver	Total
Male	11	7	12	30
Female	4	6	3	13
Total:	15	13	15	43

Table-3 shows the distribution of participants from each study area by (estimated) age group. Overall, most participants were between the ages of 30 and 49 or 60-69. The age distribution of interview participants was similar between Halifax and Vancouver, featuring the largest number of respondents between the ages of 30 and 49, as well as a significant number between the ages of 50 and 69. St. John's had a large number of participants between the ages of 20 and 39 as well as in the range of 50-69.

Table-3: Interview participants by estimated age and community

Estimated age of participant	Halifax	St. John's	Vancouver	Total
20-29	1	3	0	4
30-39	5	3	5	13
40-49	5	0	5	10
50-59	1	3	2	6
60-69	3	4	3	10
Total:	15	13	15	43

Perceived Importance of Coordination

Responses to the interviews confirmed that planners perceive coordination as important. Participants unanimously agreed that coordinating land use planning was important for municipalities in part because it meant more efficient use of government resources, but mainly because it results in more responsible planning that better serves the needs of the community.

“It’s in the interest of municipalities to keep plans up-to-date and to make sure they serve the constituency. Because if you don’t have people that are happy in their community and that’s the product of poor planning, then they’re going to move elsewhere. And municipalities want to keep residents.” (HRM08)

Participants often cited examples of ordinary citizens becoming frustrated when trying to understand a multitude of overlapping or unclear planning regulations. Furthermore, having multiple plans that are often overlapping or even contradictory “leads to confusion not just with regular folks that need to work within the system but it can create confusion for planners, and it can create confusion for elected officials...” (HRM04). Overall, better plan coordination was viewed as beneficial to a community as a whole.

While all respondents agreed that coordination was important for effective planning, many expressed that coordination efforts in their municipalities were insufficient: “Everyone knows coordination needs to happen, and harmonization. But you don’t really see it happening that much. It’s almost like it’s too hard, too thorny” (HRM09). There was widespread agreement that coordination of land use planning can and should be improved in Canadian communities.

Politicians

This section discusses my findings concerning the perceived role of politicians in coordinating land use planning. I discuss the themes of plan proliferation, perceived inconsistency of political action on coordinating land use planning, political championing of planning causes like coordination, and the importance of policy. Politicians were generally perceived as extremely powerful actors bearing great responsibility for the prioritization of coordination in planning. Many participants expressed frustration, however, with a lack of consistency in political will that makes coordination difficult. However, many examples were given of politicians championing specific projects, providing the leadership necessary to coordinate community efforts for a common goal. Overall, politicians bear significant responsibility in determining coordination outcomes. Along with planners and managers, politicians are most likely to directly affect change toward a state of greater coordination.

Politicians as Drivers of Plan Proliferation

Interview participants generally agreed that politicians are becoming more aware of planning issues and that they are starting to give greater priority to long term strategic planning:

“Municipalities feel that there's a reason to invest in planning for the future more so than they did before.” (HRM04)

“The plans [being created] are actually proactive. There's a growing recognition on the part of councils that planning is proactive and it's more cost effective to anticipate, to be proactive and plan ahead, rather than to respond reactively.” (HRM08)

“Councils are moving away from their basic role of providing services... to special project planning... They are now taking on special quality of life projects and they think the only way of moving forward is by undertaking some kind of planning exercise associated with them.” (SJ05)

Some respondents argued that politicians see plans as a way of demonstrating accountability to the public on important issues: “I think there's definitely a political will to have priorities laid out and showing everyone publically that you're working on things” (HRM1). Several respondents from Vancouver argued that politicians are becoming increasingly responsive in plans to public desires:

“The politicians are being responsive to the public... A lot of the work that we're doing is all about the local accountability of elected officials. They're responsive to their public, and Council is putting forward ideas and they're debating issues based on what they're hearing from the public. So it involves enshrining [those public desires] in the policy environment, because the accountability happens on the floor of council.” (VAN06)

“We develop some [plans] because, while they are politically driven, they're driven because of public need.” (VAN08)

Many participants argued that some politicians are still distrustful of public engagement as a planning tool, wishing to retain decision making power in the hands of Council: “Government is suspicious of that innately; there’s sort of a long institutional suspicion of engagement [in Halifax]” (HRM09). A respondent from St. John’s argued that in many cases, politicians may simply be allowing engagement to take place to maintain a positive, and responsive image without truly taking public input into account:

“I think that councillors are aware that [planning] is very much a public process, and we have to be fairly forthcoming to residents... And therefore the politicians are aware that planning decisions are not to be made behind closed doors. It’s important to embrace the public. And I think that [the municipality] does a lot of posturing. [I am uncertain] whether or not politicians listen to that opposition...” (SJ07)

Many participants saw politicians as a driving force behind plan proliferation in Canadian communities. One participant argued that politicians bear ultimate responsibility for plan creation since they must officially adopt a plan for it to be brought into law: “The plan would not exist without the executive body adopting it officially. So they’re solely responsible for plan adoption” (HRM14). In Vancouver, one participant argued that politicians in the city are increasingly initiating planning efforts:

“[There has been] a shift from plans being driven by departments... to a much stronger role by the mayor and the political parties... There’s more direction coming from council than in the previous model which would have been very much a recommendation-based model based on the professional assessments that [staff] were doing.” (VAN10)

Many participants argued that politicians often respond to new issues by ordering the creation of new plans:

“The ‘tyranny of the urgent’: sometimes some new priority emerges in a city, and that fuels a desire by council to have a suite of plans around it.” (VAN07)

“At a political level, there’s a desire to respond to some of these [current issues]. That can be a driver to say, ‘Okay, we need a plan’. They can be totally standalone documents that don’t really have much to do with anything else. And then you have another set of documents that you have to coordinate.” (HRM15)

A large number of interviewees in Halifax argued that councillors in the past had too often sought to develop plans specific to their own communities, resulting in unnecessary secondary plans.

“Some councillors think that their particular small area requires a plan when it can be considered as part of a bigger document. It doesn’t necessarily have to be its own plan for that particular area.” (HRM02)

Several participants were skeptical regarding the prospect of growing interest in planning on the part of politicians:

“There may be less buy-in on the political side of things for planning. In some cases planning is seen as an impediment to development. In some cases there is a political

mindset that planning really isn't that important, but then something happens and [politicians] see the benefit of planning." (SJ12)

A participant argued that some politicians, as well as members of the public, are simply against regulating land use: "A large segment of the population, sometimes including politicians at the municipal level, resist regulation. [They are] anti-policy, laissez faire" (HRM10). Another commonly cited challenge to coordination was lack of familiarity on the part of some politicians with planning documents: "I've experienced a lot of situations as a consultant where councillors have never read the plan" (HRM04). Politicians may not be aware of the nesting of plans and what policies are legally binding:

"That is sometimes confused by lots of people including council. They think just because they've got a plan then it is a fully legal and integrated document. But, in fact, many of these smaller plans don't have the same recognition under the legislation" (SJ05).

One planner from Vancouver argued that politicians tend to only become involved in planning in reaction to major issues as they emerge, and are not typically interested in proactive long term planning:

"At the political level, unless you're really into this stuff, you wait for the political issue to emerge, the contradiction to occur, the neighbourhood that's upset, the developer who can't get something done..." (VAN12)

The Inconsistent Actor

Changes in government due to election cycles were often cited as a coordination challenge by participants: "Council changes, the mayor changes, the CAO changes, and it shakes everything up" (HRM06). Several participants argued that the necessity of appealing to the public for re-election often precludes politicians from following the strategies laid out in plans. In essence, politicians were perceived as often operating on a shorter timeline than is conducive to long term strategic planning.

"So when you have a council that's been given a task to try to make decisions, and they're constantly in campaigning mode because they have to come up for re-election eventually, I don't know if they necessarily follow the plans... So when they make decisions on whether something should be amended or whether something should be approved... I think it's actually rarely... based on what the plan says, and it's more what that will mean to get re-elected in the next election cycle. So absolutely, I think that those cycles affect how development occurs and how decisions are made." (HRM04)

"I think politicians tend to have... Like they've got the four year horizon, and they want to have tangible results to their time in office. So they're probably more preoccupied with tangible results that they can point to rather than with policy." (HRM10)

"The immediacy of political pressure is probably what drives a lot of the [coordination] conflicts. It's been commonly said that at best the politician has a four-year outlook, whereas a planning process has a ten-year outlook." (SJ02)

Many participants argued that the turnover of politicians through the municipal election cycle undermines political investment in plans. “We’ve done strategic plans for communities where [before that] we had done their Recreation Master Plan. None of the councillors that were currently sitting knew anything about the Recreation Master Plan” (SJ10). One participant cited election cycles in First Nations communities as particularly problematic:

“You would see it more succinctly in First Nations communities. [With] two year election cycles, It would be like a complete shift in leadership. Trying to get people to still champion the plan that the community had [can be] really difficult because they [may not] feel an investment in it because they weren’t part of creating it.” (HRM04)

Some participants felt that the frequent turnover of politicians results in sudden shifts in the direction of projects:

“Plans are [sometimes] changed because of the election of new councils. Different councils want to attack or address something from their own vision and their own political philosophy, which can prompt a new planning process.” (VAN06)

A few participants did not see changing governments as much of an issue. One participant argued that political investment in plans is not difficult to maintain because “you rarely have a situation where it would be all new [councillors] and a new mayor” (HRM04). Another participant defended political action for the purpose of re-election:

“I often note that people criticize politicians for only thinking about the next election. Well, that’s their job. It’s their moment of accountability. So they had better be [thinking about the next election].” (VAN12)

Politicians bring different values to the planning process, and reaching a consensus on planning matters may be difficult as a result. Regional coordination was an important theme throughout the interviews. Balancing regional interests with the desires of a politician’s own riding represents a significant challenge to setting coordinated regional land use priorities. In Halifax, one participant pointed out a disconnect between the priorities of politicians from rural areas and those from the urban core:

“We do have a bit of disconnect between an urban and rural core [in Halifax]... The priority should be the regional centre, then the suburban areas, and then the rural areas. But when you talk to councillors, it’s always, ‘I represent [a certain community], and I think [my community] should be a priority. I think all the growth should happen in [my community].’” (HRM02)

Often politicians fail to provide consistent prioritization of planning because they must balance a large number of issues: “There are so many projects and so many plans and so many policies that [politicians] kind of lose focus on what’s important. So sometimes there might be different direction” (SJ05).

A participant in St. John's argued that politicians in small municipalities may be more influenced by vocal members of the community than those in large cities, resulting in more sudden shifts in priorities:

"The bigger the city, the less direct contact a councillor has with immediate issues and with their constituents. If I'm a councillor in Toronto, I probably represent 50,000 people. In [my community]... [councillors] represent [far fewer people]. So for one of those [councillors], if there's an immediate issue, [someone is] in your office saying, 'Why is this taking so long?' Toronto doesn't work that way. There are just too many people that one person is responsible for, so [councillors] appreciate or understand that [planning] might take a bit more time." (SJ04)

Inconsistent prioritization on the part of politicians can be a challenge for completing and implementing planning projects. Some participants cited 'budgetary challenges' as particularly problematic, arguing that "competition from councillors [and] what they make a priority" determines funding allocation (HRM03). Often it is a lack of resources that precludes the implementation of plans.

"Getting follow through on plans [is difficult]. Most plans are shelved, and collecting dust on shelves. Why does it happen? It's often a lack of capacity." (HRM04)

"Budgets and human resources are stretched to a point that you can create [plans], but whether or not they are effectively implemented is another thing." (HRM01)

Politicians as Champions of Coordination

Despite the issues of inconsistency inherent in a democratic political system, politicians often push forward improvements in planning practice. Many participants felt that politicians often fill the role of 'champion', and that they are in the best position to effectively champion planning causes. A large number of respondents cited examples of politicians acting as champions of plan coordination.

"In a lot of cases champions tend to be councillors who take on a specific cause – whether it's because of political pressures, or it's something that they have been directly involved in because it's in their ward... Those [initiatives] that have political [support] behind them tend to [be more successful] than in cases where you have someone from the public who's trying to champion the cause." (SJ12)

"There has been the initiation of the development of a new regional plan for the Northeast Avalon [Peninsula]. The Minister of Municipal Affairs said, 'Okay, this is something we need to get back on the table.' So he brought all the mayors of the 15 municipalities together and reinvigorated the idea to develop a new regional plan..." (SJ02)

Most participants, especially those working as municipal planners, felt that politicians are ultimately responsible for setting priorities in municipal government, and thus play a key role in ensuring coordinated planning activities:

"Councillors are ultimately the people who have to decide what's going to happen. Staff just try to make them aware of all the issues." (HRM05)

“Council needs to consolidate itself into three or four concrete ideas... Then staff could get behind those ideas. But likewise, I think that it's staff's role to help council come to those three or four ideas.” (SJ05)

Those interviewed believed that it is the responsibility of politicians to ensure that coordination of plans is a high priority in government.

“You've got to have the leadership at the highest political levels in order to get either a process for coordination or to make sure that something is coordinated. It just has to be that top down approach. If it's endorsed by council, it will get done. If it's endorsed by a minister, it will get done. Leaders set priorities. The coordination of plans follows from this.” (HRM08)

“The political buy-in [for coordination] needs to be there. And whether it's initially the politician's idea or whether the thought is posed to them by staff, you definitely need their buy-in in order for anything to happen because Council ultimately have the final say of what happens.” (SJ12)

One participant argued that political prioritization is essential to funding plan updates: “If there's a political priority [elsewhere] then it may be difficult to put funding to updating plans or that kind of thing” (SJ09).

One participant made a strong case against direct involvement by politicians in policy coordination, arguing that political champions typically champion specific issues separate from policy coordination:

“I'm not sure political pressure leads to coordination or if it just leads to someone picking a favourite... forwarding a specific project or goal that's separate from policy... That may not necessarily lead to more coordinated policy... The political element brings some values and priorities into the situation that may be in conflict with policy... Perhaps less political involvement might facilitate better policy coordination.” (HRM10)

A participant from Halifax explained that many but not all politicians see coordination of land use planning as a priority:

“There are councillors who appreciate that there's an unmanageable complexity to all these plans, and know that it's going to be hard work to amend them and to make them coherent. And there are other councillors who [might say], “What do you need to fix those for? We don't need to spend money and time on these plans. Just give me my road.” You get both from council.” (HRM09)

In addition to ensuring that keeping plans up to date is a priority, participants also argued that it is the role of politicians to ensure that government activities are consistent with existing policies: “Sometimes political push can be inconsistent with policy. So you may get policy telling you one thing, and you may get decision-makers telling you another” (HRM10). Another participant argued that councillors in the past have expressed favouritism toward certain developers, resulting in decisions inconsistent with planning policy: “Councils, especially in really small towns, don't want to enforce their plans and regulations if they know the person trying to develop something” (SJ13).

A large number of interviewees argued that politicians play a critical role in encouraging and prioritizing interdepartmental coordination in municipal government. A

respondent from Vancouver argued that councillors must play the role of arbitrator in interdepartmental disputes:

“We do have situations where [departments] grumble about one another... But it works itself out because at the end of the day we all have one political master. So Council is the arbitrator of [interdepartmental] conflict.” (VAN07)

A Matter of Policy

One participant pointed out the importance of encoding community priorities set out in guiding documents into official policy to ensure that the community vision is enforced and ultimately realized. The respondent stated that “by adding [guiding documents] into [the] plan you get the buy-in from the public and from the politicians so that they actually have to acknowledge them and use them.” (SJ12)

Several interviewees stressed the importance of politicians setting clear guiding policy to enable staff to effectively enforce the priorities of the community:

“So all of these plans kind of prioritize the actions of HRM and the departments. And it provides staff with a framework. So if council directs staff to look at a certain issue then we can go through and look at all of the plans that are in place and see what direction there is and how to prioritize whatever the task is.” (HRM05)

“When your role is to approve or reject a development based on its merits, based on the municipal plan and the regulations, and the rules become grey and muddy, it's hard to consistently apply them...” (SJ07)

Without legally binding policy to back up planning decisions, many planners seemed hesitant to make strong decisions to enforce the community vision. This was especially true among municipal planners as compared to planning consultants and planning directors.

“The bureaucracy is afraid to stick its neck out without getting someone at the political level to tell them what to say... Being a city staff member, you can get yelled at from all corners pretty easily. So unless you have policy or regulation to back you up on something it won't happen... And [staff] also have to justify their recommendations to council.” (SJ01)

“Staff will respond to policy a lot easier and more readily than they will to a visioning document because the visioning document is subjective.” (SJ10)

A Halifax interviewee argued that setting clear policies and regulations is a way for politicians to delegate decision-making power to staff, allowing for a more efficient division of tasks and more coordinated planning decisions:

“A plan is a way of transferring power from the executive to the administrative body... So the fact that you have more and more plans, I think it means that there's more and more of this transfer of power from the executive to the administrative... Which can serve the public better because they don't have to go to the political executive stream to get something done. They can go to the administrative [body]. So it could serve the public better having more and more plans in place... The executive body can get very bogged

down with constant decision-making. So I think it's in the interest of the executive body to delegate the decision-making to the administrative body through the creation of plans... So that the executive body can then focus on new issues, on challenges... I think the executive is there to really interpret the values of the community in a way that the administrative body is not assigned to do..." (HRM14)

Despite the importance of setting clear priorities, some participants argued that politicians often commission flexible plans due to the political nature of planning: "Staff may want to be more restrictive but the council will want to have some flexibility to be more politically supportive" (HRM10). Some interviewees explained that politicians may desire more flexible plans to maintain more control over development:

"Our council really likes things to be a lot more structured in the plan. Until they get the [development] application and then they want it to flexible." (SJ04)

Others argued that maintaining flexibility in plans is beneficial for the community as it allows greater freedom to deal with changing needs:

"In some ways, we get a bit of flexibility to be able to respond to changing needs. Some might think that that's better." (VAN11)

Managers

Managers (such as CAOs or planning directors) were perceived as highly involved in coordination activities, possessing great influence over interdepartmental coordination in particular. Along with politicians and planners, managers may have the most direct control over coordination outcomes in land use planning.

Some participants argued that managers, like politicians, were becoming more interested in planning, and bear significant responsibility for plan creation:

“More recently planning is seen as more important by senior managers. Senior management within HRM is looking for accountability. They want to see results.” (HRM03)

“[Plan proliferation is occurring because] municipal administrators are beginning to recognize that they need answers in [certain] fields, and that it is going to be much easier for everyone if we deal with them in advance. It's more that it's an administrative, possibly even bureaucratic implementation.” (SJ11)

Many respondents expressed the view that managers, in addition to politicians, have a role to play in ensuring that planning and plan coordination remain high priorities for a municipality:

“At the end of the day, the city manager and the political masters are the ones that iron out any conflict.” (VAN07)

“In a municipality where you've got professional people who are at the director's level, that [coordination] tends to be driven by the directors.” (SJ03)

“Every project needs a champion within the organization. That champion I think has to be someone at a higher level than the planners themselves... The championing has to happen at the management level of a project, and the planner should be free to champion the project at the community level. Of course the community itself has to champion [the project as well].” (HRM11)

Many participants argued that managers bear significant responsibility for ensuring interdepartmental coordination in particular. One participant listed “Strong leadership, strong management, and... regular communication” as essential factors of interdepartmental coordination (HRM03). When asked if political leadership was an important aspect of interdepartmental coordination, one participant responded “political will is very important but that has to be matched if not exceeded by the city manager and his or her top staff” (SJ10).

“...What it takes is a very strong CAO, somebody that's got their finger on the pulse of what's happening within the various units of the municipal government, and can keep council on track as to each of these different plans that are in place and the initiatives that are coming out of them, and how they are all connected or can be connected...” (SJ01)

“I think it's really important to have good managers and directors. Because that becomes the manager's job, to know what the other departments are doing, and then make sure that gets communicated to staff.” (HRM05)

A respondent from Vancouver argued that managers, as the liaisons between staff and politicians, can help to improve coordination between actors in municipal government:

“The city manager generally has the closest relationship with the mayor and councillors, so you’re really relying on your city manager to temper things, and also things to go through your city manager and them to [understand] it...” (VAN02)

Planners

In this section I discuss the contributions of planners to plan proliferation as well as their perceived roles in determining coordination. Planners were perceived by most respondents as influential, but often constrained by resource limitations (especially time) as well as a perceived professional requirement for objectivity. Planners were often perceived as too low in the hierarchy to champion coordination, but the interdisciplinary nature of planning work may put planners in an ideal position to facilitate interdepartmental cooperation. As the ultimate writers of plans, planners were perceived to have a critical role in ensuring coordination. They were also perceived as educating other actors on the importance of coordinated and responsible planning. Planners may influence coordination outcomes by acting as champions, and have a key role to play in promoting better coordination of land use planning.

Planners as Drivers of Plan Proliferation

Many participants saw planners as a driving force behind plan proliferation in Canada:

“A lot of the initiatives actually come from staff. Council always have a few ideas of their own but most of the long term policies and strategies are staff driven or staff identified at least. And certainly the preparing of these strategic plans is staff driven.” (SJ05)

“A lot of changes are happening. Often in our profession, that is responded to by making more plans... There are three types of planners generally: academic, municipal and consultants. All three have a vested interest in producing more plans. It's what we do. It's what we get paid to do.” (HRM06)

Some participants argued that the growing influence of professional planning bodies has resulted in more work for planners, and consequently more plans: “The planning profession has become more prominent and that means that more things get planned” (HRM04).

HRM06 described a need for greater criticism between planning professionals to foster fewer, higher quality plans:

“Because we had an awkward start as a profession, [planners are] really reluctant to criticize one another, and we are reluctant to criticize each other's plans... [Good] plans get written and we celebrate them, but awful plans get written and we say nothing. We talk about it at CIP quietly over wine... Creative disciplines without criticism risk not attaining rich outcomes... I think if we had that level of criticism, we would also have fewer plans. [Planners could achieve] a much more elegant [document] structure that results in something even better than what the 62 plans are trying to achieve.” (HRM06)

Many respondents felt that staff is simply responding to community and political demand when they create new plans:

“We're trying to keep a lid on it from staff's perspective. Sometimes it's community-driven or community-driven directly or indirectly through council.” (HRM02)

"In our role as staff, we're not in the position to create things without the question being asked. When council asks us a question, we do have a lot of room to create answers. But if the question is never asked, we can't bring the information to them." (HRM05)

Planners often felt that it was their role to limit the creation of new planning documents when possible, articulating to citizens and politicians not just when a plan is needed, but when new planning documents are unnecessary.

"I'm a big advocate of strategic planning: Finding out what the [community's] needs and interests are... and if we can use an existing planning infrastructure to achieve that, I think it's better than creating new plans and documents." (HRM14)

"So for example... the Main Street Dartmouth planning. There was some push to create a new planning document for one street. If we start doing that, we might go from 22 planning bylaws to hundreds and hundreds of planning bylaws. In the end, we were able to convince council that we could accommodate it under the current planning documents. We just did a special amendment." (HRM02)

Several participants commented on the effects of changing municipal structures on plan proliferation. They felt that the increasing specialization among units of municipal staff has resulted in a larger number of specialized documents.

"In any large organization, you get specialization. I think that one reason for the growth in plans is increased specialization for subject matter within the organization and needing a guidance system for those parts of the organization that you've added to. For example, we've added healthy communities, food policy, and sustainability overlays." (VAN10)

"There's a certain amount of different actors needing a plan for their own purposes... They deal with some of the same issues around placemaking, but each work group or each division feels the need to have a plan that encapsulates their work plan and the objectives that they have... So in some cases, different work groups or departments or divisions at the city feel the need to have a plan that says things in their language to their audience in a way that they're comfortable with. And I think that explains a little bit of the proliferation of plans." (VAN07)

Can Planners Champion Coordination?

While most participants stressed the importance of engaging the public in decision-making, a handful argued that planners should play more of a leadership role. As professional city-builders, planners may be in a position to do more than act as a facilitator between the represented (the public) and the elected representatives (politicians). They can advocate for improved planning practices in their recommendations to Council, acting as champions of coordination. Several respondents argued that planners should have more power to make decisions. This would ensure more consistent application of planning policies and sound planning theory.

"Planners – directors of planning – should have far more discretion and authority to make decisions rather than them always being referred back to Council. I think you could go to almost any municipal council meeting and see politicians debating the merits of a tiny little architectural detail of a building that they shouldn't be dealing with it at all... Planners

are too often becoming pollsters and worrying about what the public might say rather than exercising their best professional judgment... Too many planners start to become too political.” (VAN09)

“I think planning has to become more like an advocate for better design.” (SJ10).

“Planners aren’t simply waiters taking an order. Sure, we listen to what the community has to say. We listen to what the council has to say. But ultimately we’ve got to factor in our own professional expertise, our own sense of professionalism. Otherwise what value do we bring? You could just hire a facilitator or a waiter really. There’s plenty of room for strong and powerful leadership in the context of public engagement and highlighting the right ideas and helping people to understand where the energy should be expended and what’s important and what’s not.” (HRM09)

Several participants offered examples of planners filling the role of ‘champion’:

“All the planners who lead the plans are champions in and of themselves.” (VAN06)

“You don’t necessarily have to have an organizational answer [for coordination], you just have to have smart planners who realize there’s a benefit for the community at large for us to coordinate our work. So if there’s an inclination to do that, it just takes one planner picking up the phone and talking to another planner, or emailing and saying, ‘We’re working on something similar, why don’t we at least compare our materials?’” (VAN13)

Another respondent from Vancouver argued that planners frequently champion coordination between departments in addition to good planning practice:

“I love my job as a senior planner because I definitely see my role as not just championing urban design and good land use planning, but also grasping what the other objectives are. It’s also [about] knowing who to go and talk to and at what point.” (VAN02)

Others argued that planners do not typically play the role of the champion.

“Oftentimes planners are not high enough in the hierarchy or necessarily in the know about everything that’s going on [to champion coordination]” (SJ01)

“A lowly planner may not be able to be a champion... A director of planning perhaps.” (HRM12).

A respondent from Halifax described what they saw as the main impediments to planning leadership on issues like coordination in the region:

“There’s a strange culture of obedience, of meekness among planning staff. It comes from having that innovative urge beaten out of them by [management]. So creativity is stifled. Also some planning schools teach their students that planners shouldn’t lead, shouldn’t make decisions; that they should only provide information to help others make decisions. And that is deadly for innovation.” (HRM09)

The Planner and the Public

Planners often act as the ‘face’ of the municipality: “We’re very much the public face of HRM. And so working with the public is also another big part of [coordination]” (HRM13). In their work with the public, planners fill the role of representative for the city: “We represent the city in the public context through public meetings and working with the various developers and other organizations” (SJ12). Most participants commented on the importance of involving the public in planning decisions:

“The plans are not for planners or politicians. They’re for the community at large. I really like it when the community feels that they understand [the plan] and have a part in it, because there are a lot of disingenuous motives out there to not really involve [people]. (VAN05)

“The measure of any plan’s success is the extent to which the community members themselves see their own aspirations reflected in it. They need to be able to see some sort of ownership. And that ownership can come either from the inception, helping to drive the need for the plan, or it can also come from helping to drive the content; ideally both.” (HRM09)

“You can have a plan that says all you want but if you don’t engage with the people who are responsible for those places, the plan will never really lead to any lasting difference... You’ve got to have processes and methods and procedures in place to enable you to reach those people to work with them in coming up with a plan that everybody can live with.” (HRM11)

A respondent from Vancouver described the importance of allowing citizens a voice in the planning process and the role the planner must play in interpreting their needs:

“It’s about figuring out your audience, figuring out the message, figuring out what their needs are. It’s about taking the time. At the end of the day, for all the technology and all the fancy sketch-up models and this and that, it’s really about connecting with people on their values, communicating— especially in the City of Vancouver and other places that are growing – how change is inevitable. It’s about figuring out how we are going to manage that change and work on that together, and how to balance the different values within that as we move forward.” (VAN06)

In their dealings with the public, several participants argued that it is the role of planners to interpret the needs of the community and identify specific tools to meet those needs:

“Oftentimes neither the public nor the politicians can articulate what needs to be done. They can articulate what the problem is or they will tell you what you need to do but not recognize the implications.” (SJ01)

“I think it’s important that planners work with the public to understand their needs and interests... A lot of times the public will come forward and ask for something very specific. I think the role of the public should be to discuss what their interests are and allow staff to choose the tools.” (HRM14)

A respondent from Vancouver described how challenging it can be as a planner on the front line of public engagement. Often there are conflicting pressures from the public and from politicians, presenting a coordination challenge to planning staff.

“We get pressure from the public. I imagine council does too, but I don't think they get the sort of grassroots: ‘When's my local park going to get built? How come this park land is sitting fallow and there are kids playing around in it but we've got no playgrounds?’; those kind of things. It's challenging.” (VAN08)

Another challenge for planners engaging with the public can be managing expectations of what a plan can accomplish. A Halifax planner described staff's difficulty in meeting the growing expectations of the public:

“Community visioning may have raised unrealistic expectations, and now we have to manage community expectations. It doesn't mean we always quash them, but we do have to be careful not to promise more than we can deliver... The expectations can go up much more quickly than the resources to deal with them... There's often a critical window of opportunity in planning to meet some of those expectations... You have to make sure that you're demonstrating some clear wins to build the case for additional resources... You have to make sure you're demonstrating some clear value.” (HRM15)

Planners: the Creators of Policy

Planners are ultimately those who write the documents that become part of a community's plan environment. Planning staff has an essential role to play in ensuring the creation of coherent documents that are consistent with pre-existing policies. Most respondents commented on the importance of staff being aware of planning documents:

“Certainly one of the most important things when you have nested plans is to have a clear understanding of the interrelationship between all of the various components. So if you're going to change one component in one place, [you know] how that reflects on the other components. [You know] how they link together so that you don't produce something that's inconsistent.” (HRM12)

Participants also commented on the need for planners to keep other actors (especially politicians) informed of potential conflicts of new plans with existing planning documents.

“When [staff are] trying to move a project or strategy forward, there are always [plans] that are back there that you've got knowledge about; that you're aware there might be conflict with. [It is important] to be aware of those and make sure that council is aware of them. If council has ‘back-burnered’ [a plan] or changed direction, there are always still people out there who remain committed to [the plan]. So when the priorities change, that sometimes creates community tension. One project might conflict with the direction that was laid out 3, 4, 5 years ago.” (SJ05)

“It's important to make sure that the public, that staff, that everyone who's engaged in these programs is aware of those linkages and really understands those linkages.” (VAN06).

Many participants saw it as the role of planners to articulate to Council what plans and policies need to be made: “I think planners are quite good at identifying what work needs to be done and including those recommendations in documents or in recommendations to council” (SJ01). Many respondents also argued that planners must articulate to Council when conflicts are discovered in planning documents, and initiate the process of revision:

“Obviously when you're trying to apply [plans], if you've got conflicting policies, you wind up going back to policy makers and looking for adjustments. You try to be a catalyst for change in policy where there's a conflict.” (HRM10)

Navigating a complex system of planning documents can be a challenge even for planning professionals.

“It takes a little bit to figure out if you are making the right decision for the land that you're planning on [by] being able to tie together all the pieces [of policy]. It's like putting together a quilt.” (HRM04)

Some participants argued that planners often have knowledge gaps that may hinder effective planning and plan coordination. One participant argued, “some of the challenges [to coordination] arise from the training of planners”, pointing out that planners often do not have a complete understanding of the development process (SJ01).

One participant didn't see staff awareness of plans as a challenge. Instead, they argued that staff may sometimes be unwilling or unable to apply policies in ways that may put them at risk:

“I think staff are aware [of existing documents], but they might be hesitant to enforce something without policy because they are at risk.” (SJ10)

Several participants argued for the importance of writing plans in plain language. This helps ensure that community visions are set out clearly and are accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Consistent implementation of community priorities depends on a clear understanding of the vision set out in plans, for which the language used is critical. When asked if different professionals can interpret the wording in plans differently, participants mostly agreed:

“Yes, all the time. It happens with really legal language... Being as precise and measurable as possible is really important. Slippery words like ‘appropriate’ or ‘sufficient’ get interpreted differently all the time, and unfortunately our plans are full of that kind of language... Different people will interpret that differently.” (VAN07)

“You'll find that no matter how you write things, people can read them as different and they kind of interpret various different definitions out of them.” (VAN11)

Several participants discussed the importance of balancing the accessibility of plans (by keeping them short and by using simple language) with their function as detailed instruction manuals (through the use of precise language and detailed writing):

“You can write plain language plans that speak to other people that still are absolutely tight from a legal perspective. But you can certainly write plans in legalese that no one can actually comprehend.” (HRM15)

A planner in St. John’s described the difficulty of trying to write clear and specific policy in a political environment:

“During their creation, plans come out in draft form. They get circulated and politicians will ask for the language and ideas to be toned down, watered down, because ultimately they don’t want something that’s too definitive. They want to have a back door so that the council will have ultimate say.” (SJ07)

For planners who are concerned with coordinated land use planning, clear and detailed writing is of obvious importance for ensuring implementation that is consistent with the intent of policy. However, producing plans that are accessible to a broader audience may result in greater community-wide understanding of planning priorities and increase community investment in plans.

Planning with Limited Resources

Many planners expressed frustration with inconsistent prioritization of government projects, pushing staff in multiple directions at once.

“We may be on a path to do a community plan, and all of a sudden something else pushes us off that track and puts us onto something else. And because there are limited resources, those resources would be put onto something else... it’s frustrating because it’s hard to stay on one plan... There are lots of distractions and lots of demands... it could be lack of organization, lack of coordination from managers. It could also be political pressure. It’s hard to say whether strong management would keep us on track. I think it’s to do with a lack of resources... Also, because plan reviews take a long period of time, it’s easy for something else to come in and then that plan puts it aside” (HRM03).

“One of the challenges of coordination is that when you go through broad policy making, you can’t anticipate all future and emerging demands. When those new demands... arise, it’s a challenge to coordinate those with the already identified needs that you presume are still unmet. And now your question is how to fairly accomplish multiple objectives, noticing that the size of the pie doesn’t necessarily increase just because the demands do. So now you have more actors chasing scarce resources.” (VAN10)

There was much frustration among participants regarding limited resources and the strain this puts on staff: “We’re not proactive, we’re reactive, and that has a lot to do with resources” (HRM13).

Participants in Vancouver did not report funding as a coordination challenge as often as participants from Halifax or St. John’s. Many felt that funding of planning was adequate: “For planning, and I’m talking about land use planning and regulation, we don’t chase a lot of funding” (VAN10).

Often in small municipalities, resource constraints force employees to take on multiple roles. Staff members who are untrained in planning are frequently tasked with making planning decisions.

“Small communities don't have staff resources... If it's just the clerk, council, or whoever the case may be, then they likely don't have a background in planning. So it's difficult for them to wrap their heads around the planning process.” (SJ09)

Most communities in Newfoundland do not keep full-time planners on staff:

“One of the biggest challenges in Newfoundland is that municipalities don't actually have to have a professional planner on staff...” (SJ13).

“[There is a] lack of planning capacity in the region. We have fifteen municipalities in the St. John's urban region... Of those fifteen municipalities, I think there are only four professional planning staff.” (SJ02)

Because many small towns cannot afford to hire a full-time planner, it is common for municipalities in Newfoundland to hire planning consultants:

“Consultants are a big planning factor here in Newfoundland. There are very few communities in the province that have planners.” (SJ09)

“Some of the other smaller communities, for whatever reason, have chosen not to have planners and they engage planning consultants on an 'as needed' basis.” (SJ02)

When asked if communities' reliance on external consultants could negatively impact coordination, SJ09 responded that yes, it might, but in practice it usually doesn't because “it seems that when a community takes on a consultant, they use them for most of what they're doing... So they're aware of what the planning process was, what the plan looks like, and they probably developed it themselves” (SJ09). Another respondent felt that depending on consultants to complete planning work rather than on in-house planners may reduce community-level knowledge and buy-in of plans, making implementation difficult:

“It's difficult for someone who is not a planner to understand the theory behind the policies and regulations [that have been created]... Without the planner who wrote the plan on staff, you don't get that. It's not translated to the community... It's hard for someone like a clerk, for whom 10% of their job is planning, to explain to residents and Council the reasoning behind the policies and regulations and to vouch for the planner and for why [the plan] should be implemented.” (SJ13)

Another respondent argued that it is important to have a planner on staff to promote proactive rather than reactive planning:

“If you don't have someone speaking at the council level with a good understanding of the benefits of proactive versus reactive planning, then you're going to get into a reactive mode all the time.” (SJ02)

Planners as Agents of Interdepartmental Coordination

Planners often interact with other actors, such as politicians. They interact frequently with actors in other government departments like Engineering or Parks and

Recreation. Most participants agreed that planners are in a critical position to facilitate interdepartmental coordination.

“Because of the general role that the planning departments take on, I find that the coordination of these things generally falls to us. Often it seems that we’re the only department in the city that takes into account a lot of policy initiatives across several departments. Other departments tend to be very focused on the issue or the initiative of the time, without looking at the larger pieces.” (SJ04)

“We’re trying to get more into the planner being the sole point of coordination... Sort of a gatekeeper... That’s the nature of what we do. We’re generalists, we’re not specialists. And we tend to have the people skills that engineers lack, for instance... And we’re just better at coordinating people, I think.” (SJ07)

A respondent from Vancouver commented on the Planning Department’s efforts to collaborate with other actors:

“I think that what we tried to do in our planning practice in Vancouver, in our public planning practice, was to achieve collaboration with citizens, with special interest groups, with developers, with politicians, and with various governments” (VAN13).

The interdepartmental nature of planning decisions makes such cooperation extremely important. Many participants commented on the importance of involving experts from different backgrounds and departments in planning decision-making.

“Planners are good at identifying things that need to be done, and then getting the people that are the experts in those areas because planners are not experts in all areas. There are specialists for those things to help [planners] figure out what needs to be done. [Planning] is multidisciplinary work.” (SJ01)

“Having good relationships and an understanding of what everybody brings to the table is important to interdepartmental coordination. It’s really [about] being aware across the organization of who’s doing what, why, how, and how it relates to what you’re doing. It’s important to understand each other’s mandates, and to have a culture where integration is at the forefront... You’re going to be able to pull from where you need to in your organization to create really innovative solutions. It’s [about] having that mindset where you’re reading what’s out there and thinking beyond your own department to pull those pieces together.” (VAN03)

“It’s a matter of an interdisciplinary approach by a group of departments that have knowledge about what their areas of expertise are to develop a plan.” (SJ04)

Respondents commented on their experiences with interdepartmental coordination in their communities. In Halifax, “the regional plan isn’t only written by planners. We consult with all of the affected departments, and they contribute” (HRM05). Input from multiple departments was also sought during the creation of St. John’s new municipal plan: “It’s a matter of going around and talking to the different departments about the [St. John’s] municipal plan, the current plan policy, and how they would like to see that policy changed” (SJ01). Many respondents from Vancouver described a close working relationship between the Planning and Engineering departments, as well as other municipal disciplines involved in planning: “I think a

unique aspect of Vancouver is that engineers, planners, the finance planning and capital planning groups, and Parks and Recreation all work together very closely” (VAN02).

One participant argued that it may be in the interest of staff to coordinate in order to present a unified vision to Council: “Staff has to go forward to the Council with a collective vision, because if council sees that there’s dissent or lack of coordination then they don’t feel confident themselves in taking it to the public” (SJ05).

In addition to acting as facilitators of interdepartmental coordination within municipalities, often planners saw it as their role to coordinate with other levels of government: “Usually it’s up to the planner to look at a community and [identify] issues. Then they would have to figure out who to go in the provincial government to talk to about those things” (SJ01).

Planners as Educators

Many study participants felt that planners play an educational role in their dealings with other agents involved in the planning process. Bridging the gap between different actors in the planning process by fostering mutual understanding may facilitate implementation of planning goals that are consistent with planning documents.

“[Planners must] understand themselves what the policies and regulations are, and communicate them to the developers and the council. [They must] keep an open line between all parties involved so everyone understands the policies that they have to abide by. So there is an educational aspect to it... We, as planners and staff of towns and government, need to do a better job at educating... Any time you talk to anyone, that’s your opportunity to drive home that you don’t just get to do whatever you want, and to explain what a plan is.” (SJ13)

One participant commented on the importance of educating members of the public in order to increase understanding and buy-in of plans, and to rationalize planning decisions publicly:

“You’ve got to bring the public along with you if you’re going to be changing or proposing something new... You need to have some educational component as to why you’re suggesting some things. As planners, you have to sometimes bring people to the recognition of what you’re trying to accomplish.” (HRM12)

Several respondents argued that providing greater education to the public provides tangible benefits to municipalities, resulting in better quality public input in planning decisions.

“[The public] are becoming more ‘planning literate’, so their engagement is becoming more meaningful and more valuable to the city. I see it as a positive feedback loop.” (SJ10)

“[Planning] is not just about discourse but also about sharing information with the community, and raising the level of awareness about what plans do. It’s also about encouraging people to consider what type of community their community is, what it’s about, what they value about the community. When you start to have those kinds of

discussions, it increases the level of attachment for the individuals within that community. When that increases, you start to get a really nice feedback loop happening... Having that discussion, that awareness, that planning sensibility, that information, and being aware of who we are as a city helps improve everything about planning.” (HRM06)

Planners as Agents of Rationality

Unlike other actors in the planning process, professional ethics require planners to act objectively and without personal bias. As such, they may have a greater reliance on facts and rational decision-making than other actors. While politicians were seen by respondents as the ultimate decision makers of the planning process, planners may bear the responsibility of rationalizing decisions with policy and with public opinion.

“At some point you need to rationalize decisions that are made, and Council sort of expects that of staff... I don't think that a political body like the council is as tied to rational decision-making as the administrative body because they can base their decisions more on values and their community feedback and sentiment. But in order to make decisions and in order to operate and allocate resources, the administrative body needs to do so in a rational way, and a way of doing that is by having plans in place. [Plans are] a way of rationalizing the use of municipal resources and services. And a lot of times that's the most important way of being accountable to the public, is rationalizing the way that resources are allocated.” (HRM14)

Planners, as agents of rationality and facts, may be responsible for ensuring quality data is used in public decision-making.

“I think [data collection] is becoming more and more a priority [in planning] because people want to see the success of plans... The community and stakeholders want to see a quantitative report on how success has been measured and that there is accountability... Senior management also wants some accountability.” (HRM03)

At the municipal level you see an appreciation of good data to inform difficult decisions. [Council] might not like the decision that they have to make but they have to explain their decision to the public or to applicants or whoever. Having good information leaves them less open to criticism on their decision.” (SJ01)

Several participants, however, argued that decision makers might not prioritize data because they want to retain arbitrary power to make planning decisions. One respondent argued that higher levels of government in particular are less likely to rely on evidence-based decision-making:

“If you want to be cynical about it, [politicians] don't want to rely on evidence-based decision-making. Why would they need good data if they don't care? They're going to make the decision based on what they think, not what the information tells them would be a good decision. I think we're seeing at all [levels], particularly provincial and federal levels, that informed decision-making is in decline.” (SJ01)

A respondent from Halifax argued that some flexibility in plans may be desirable from a staff perspective in that it may allow for more innovative solutions to planning problems:

“[Planners] should write in enough discretion into [plans] so that staff won’t have to say ‘no’ necessarily if there is a conflict. Policy should never trump a better solution. You should be able to do the right thing and not have some section 44b in a book somewhere prevent you from doing the smart thing, the better outcome for the community. That’s like the infamous ‘common sense variance’ that doesn’t exist, but you can get to it by introducing some flexibility into the way the design guidelines are written...” (HRM09)

The Public

In this section I present findings concerning the perceptions of the role of the public in coordinating land use planning. The contribution of citizens to plan proliferation is considered, as well as the involvement of members of the public in the planning process, the impact of technology on public involvement, public engagement strategies, and the importance of educating citizens on planning issues like coordination.

Many respondents reported a growing involvement on the part of the public in planning, often citing new technologies for public engagement like social media. However, others argued that citizen involvement in planning might be less intense than in the past, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Most participants mentioned the importance of educating members of the public as well as other planning actors to increase the level and quality of their involvement in the planning process.

Citizens were generally perceived as powerful actors in the planning process, ultimately directing the actions of politicians and setting long term social values. In the short term, these values are interpreted by politicians who then set specific priorities to direct planning action. Despite the influence constituents often exercise over their elected representatives, the public was perceived by interviewees as the least organized actor in the planning process. Citizens rarely unite around planning issues. More importantly, citizens tend to become involved over specific issues, typically of personal interest. Overall, citizens are unlikely to initiate coordination efforts.

Citizens as Drivers of Plan Proliferation

Participants generally saw the public as a very powerful actor in the planning process. While politicians set community priorities at the government level, they are ultimately accountable to citizens: “Staff is directed by Council, and you expect that Council is directed by their constituents” (HRM05). If enough citizens become engaged over a certain planning issue, they can have significant influence on prioritizing some planning issues over others:

“I guess it depends on how vocal the community is. If there's an active group in that community that's pushing [an issue] then that can certainly add to pressure to do something about it.” (HRM03)

A large number of participants saw the public as a significant driver of plan proliferation. One participant argued that the public is expecting more and more of Planning Departments, and that these expectations become embodied in new planning documents:

“I would say there's demand from the public for improved policy related to a broader range of issues. The public's [growing] expectations about what they expect planners to provide would be one of the reasons [for plan proliferation]; greater public awareness and high expectations of standards for built form. (HRM10)

The respondent continued, arguing that citizen groups and NGOs are playing a more important role in planning, and often push for the creation of plans:

“There are a lot of NGOs proliferating that are perhaps driving policies. Whether it's heritage groups or environment groups, there are a lot of grassroots organizations that are pushing for more comprehensive policies.” (HRM10)

Another interview respondent argued that members of the public are demanding action on a range of new issues, and that municipalities are reacting to these demands by creating plans:

“[Plan proliferation] is more coming from the public. The public wants to see certain things implemented. And if you don't do a plan and prioritize the actions then how do you review everything and how do you make sure that you're proceeding as a municipality in the way that supports the interest of the public and represents what everyone wants?” (HRM05)

Several interviewees expressed concern that often communities are too eager to have their own planning documents created in an attempt to preserve community identity, contributing to a growing number of plans, when in fact the planning process could be made more efficient by having a simpler system of bylaws.

“There is a grassroots belief that each community is unique... And they certainly have unique characteristics: the people, the history, the cultural or socioeconomic situation. But it's not so much the built form. And the built form and the uses within [buildings] is what you end up regulating through the land use bylaw... [through a process that] identifies the uniqueness and embeds it in legislation...When [homogenizing the bylaw] goes political, it becomes a feeling of loss of identity among the communities, and their strong belief that they are unique.” (HRM13)

Many planners felt that they often had to push for greater plan consolidation in the face of demand for individualized community plans.

“We in the past have had problems in areas that didn't require their own plans – that [the plans] could come under the existing documents. Some community groups have been pushing for their own documents because they feel that their community is somehow special and requires its own document. We've been trying to limit that as much as possible... I think you can capture in any planning document particularities of a community. They do not need their own planning document.” (HRM02)

Several participants denied the contribution of citizens to plan proliferation. A respondent argued that communities typically do not push for plans specifically. Rather, plans are the result of staff interpreting the needs of the community when citizens identify problems that need to be solved: “... A community could appear to be interested in a plan but that's not really what they want. It's what they get but not really what they want” (HRM13). Several participants argued that, while separate documents may be produced as a result of community planning processes, the communities typically do not push for their own community plans:

"I can't think of one [community] that created its own plan area. I haven't seen a community come forward and say 'We are unique and should have our own plan area.'" (HRM13)

Another participant argued that community involvement in the planning process does not imply that the community initiated the process: "We have to make a difference between community involvement in the plan and community pushing for its own plan for its own area" (HRM02).

Often members of the public are able to identify when planning is needed, but may not realize that planning is not a tool that will immediately solve the community's problems. In this sense, attributing plan proliferation solely to public demand is inappropriate. "A community might raise awareness that they need a plan but they wouldn't know that that's the tool that's going to be thrust upon them to resolve the issue" (HRM13).

Some participants, especially from smaller communities in the regions examined, had experienced less public pressure for new plans.

"In my municipality [community pressure] has not been a strong force in dictating planning initiatives. Certainly the community is invited to participate in various ways in these planning [exercises], but I don't think a lot of the initiatives are community driven." (SJ05)

Involvement of the Public in the Planning Process

Several participants explained that few members of the public become personally involved in planning matters: "It's a very limited segment of the population that gets involved in a plan making exercise" (HRM02). Although the public was seen by participants as a potentially powerful actor, they may be too disorganized to affect planning in many cases:

"In the municipality where I work, people have ideas but they're not necessarily pushing those ideas. They don't coalesce as a community group. It might just be a few individuals." (SJ05)

Many respondents explained that there typically is not consensus on planning issues among the public, making it unlikely that citizens will unite and become involved in the planning process:

"One of the challenges is that different groups in society have different perspectives on things... So that's one challenge in coordination – that we see the world through a different lens sometimes." (VAN07)

"I think public consultation is great but I think public consultation also causes barriers because not everybody has the same outlook on what needs to be done." (HRM07)

Another respondent argued that it is impossible to identify a singular 'public interest'; that attempting to define a singular 'community' may not be possible for the purpose of identifying a common vision:

“There is no such thing – as I have learned – as ‘the community’, ‘the singular’. There are too many interests, too many individuals, too many parties.” (VAN12)

Often it is specific interest groups, rather than the general public, that become involved in planning: “There could be some particular factions or interests involved... There has been lots of public engagement of particular interest groups” (HRM12). The priorities of these interest groups, such as environment or heritage groups, often receive disproportionate attention from government. They can offer valuable input to the planning process as well. A respondent from Vancouver offered some examples of the many interest groups that become involved in planning matters in the city:

“There are a lot of organizations and groups that are not formal city groups but certainly have an effect. Groups like Urban Development Institute, business improvement areas with groups like the DVBIA (Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association), residents groups. All of them have an important voice in ensuring the plans are integrated, that they meet needs, and providing critique frankly where it's needed.” (VAN01)

Many respondents argued that members of the public tend to become involved only over matters of personal interest:

“It's not that common to get people just to walk in because they saw a sign for a public meeting and thought they'd check it out. Whether it's a neighbour who's made the application, their application, a friend who has made the application, or whatever the case may be, it's almost always a personal interest – not a planning interest.” (HRM13)

“I think there's always a small portion of the public that is engaged. Then there are the great unwashed masses who have lots of other things to do in their lives and can't see how planning will impact them... It's not until we start to more fully understand how regulations are going to actually impact us that we start to really become involved.” (HRM12)

Many participants said that members of the public become involved over specific planning issues. When asked if the public was a driving force behind new plan production, one participant responded: “Some of it arises out of particular issues that the public is upset about and that the politicians get frustrated over” (SJ01).

Often, according to several participants, the public seems to become more involved in higher level strategic planning in which they can have a say in setting broad visions for the community. It may be easier to reach consensus on a broad vision for a community, but much more difficult to reach agreement on specific regulations. Public involvement in the creation of ICSPs may have been so great because of the high level of those plans. In one participant's words, “the devil is in the details” in long term strategic planning, and cities may lose some momentum of public investment during the detailed planning phases (HRM03).

“You get a lot more people out when there's something going on. Like if there's an amendment to a plan or something like that, you'll get a lot of interested parties.” (SJ09)

“Zoning can be an outcome [of a planning process], but that's not really what people are seeing. What they're seeing is this really engaging process to have a discussion around the future. That's a much more compelling argument than amending a zoning bylaw. The more you highlight the technical aspects of [planning], the less likely you are to see that attraction.” (HRM15)

There was disagreement among participants over whether members of the public have become more involved in the planning process than in the past. Many respondents argued that public engagement has only grown as a planning tool and that members of the public have become more interested in planning:

“People have, I think, put more faith in planning and the need to plan, which is a good thing for planners... It probably has to do a lot with the changing context in terms of what we're socially aware of and what we're environmentally aware of, and having folks who are interested in the profession, and having... more people advocating for planning. People are becoming more aware of opportunities to exercise their rights and are demanding to be consulted. That pushes the need for planning.” (HRM04)

“[There is a] growing expectation on the part of the community that community members are empowered in the decision-making processes that shape their lives. It's like the democratization of decision-making. The old days of Council making the decisions as the wise patrician elders are waning. And what's coming on is a new era of deep citizen engagement.” (HRM09)

“Yes, I would say the public is becoming more aware of the planning process... I'm sure many people, if they have sat through a public information meeting or a public hearing, they started to get an appreciation of what's involved... So people are more aware, especially of the land use bylaw which is the end result of all the plans – it's how you do it on the ground. People are far more aware of that than I can ever recall.” (HRM13)

The respondent HRM13 continued, arguing that public involvement in the high level regional plan may have contributed to greater community-wide understanding of the planning process:

“There is an improvement in education... The regional plan did a lot for that. [It] was so high focused and so much in the spotlight that I think people got curious and now understand the whole process better because of it.” (HRM13)

By contrast, some participants had not perceived a growing level of public involvement in planning over the course of their careers. Several interviewees, particularly older and more experienced planners, felt that public involvement in the planning process may have been greater in the 1960s or 1970s. When asked if the public is playing a more significant role in the planning process than in the past, one participant responded:

“It depends on what you think of as the past. I think in the '60s and '70s, it seemed like [the public] were much more involved than they are today in directing municipal and provincial government. The adoption of the Heritage Property Act came about through something that would resemble an Occupy movement now. People stood in front of bulldozers in downtown Halifax to physically stop development from happening.” (HRM14)

The level of involvement of the public was generally perceived as greater in Vancouver than in the other two study areas. Citizens in Vancouver may be more likely to champion planning causes than in either Halifax or St. John's:

"There are a lot of champions in our city, both internally and in the community. There are lots of people in the community that are very engaged. Planning is almost a hobby here. There's some sort of planning-related article in the news every day." (VAN01)

A respondent from Vancouver perceived a changing public interest due to dramatic changes in the city's demographics over time:

"If you look at Vancouver now compared to about 30 years ago, our public is incredibly different. There is greater ethnic diversity. Who we are as a city has changed, so I think the plans need to change to reflect that." (VAN06)

Several respondents for the St. John's region felt that planning was a relatively new concept for a lot of people in Newfoundland, and that the level of public involvement in planning was still at a relatively low level.

"In Newfoundland particularly, it is challenging because... engaging people in planning is relatively new here... So, the biggest part of any consultation is educating people right now, unfortunately. Once you've educated them on what a plan is, how it works, and how it manifests itself in a built environment, then next year or the year after [the public] will start to develop opinions on that. But as of right now, it's just a lot of, 'I want this, I don't want this, make it happen.'" (SJ10)

Several participants argued that there is still a strong 'anti-government' attitude among members of the public in the St. John's area.

"I'll call it the political mindset and the public mindset of planning [in Newfoundland] in general. The general thoughts here are, 'Well, it's my land, so I can do what I want with it.'" (SJ12)

"[There is a] historical context of avoiding local government [in Newfoundland]. ... Back to the 1600s, there was a trend of people trying to run away from 'the man'. That is why you have all of these little coastal communities. People would go and establish [a community] and then government would want to come, and then [the people] would say 'no', and move further." (SJ10)

Another respondent described the gap in many people's mindset regarding development and a new economic reality in Newfoundland:

"It's basically still of the mindset of, 'How can we get you to come here, how can we make you happy, and how can we get you to build in our downtown?' We've moved from being a 'have not [province]' to a 'have [province]', and we do have money, and we have the resources to do things. And I think [St. John's] hasn't quite moved into the mindset where... we should be saying to the developers, 'What are you going to do for us?'" (SJ12)

Technology and Public Involvement

The importance of technology in public engagement came up in many interviews. Many participants felt that social media has helped to improve public awareness of planning issues:

“I think that the technology has allowed sharing of information about planning and planning activities.” (HRM12)

“The new social media certainly is helpful. I don't know if it's what generates [public involvement] initially, but it certainly helps us because we have a place to direct people. So there's more one-stop shopping instead of having to shuffle from department to department to get your answers... We didn't have that tool not that long ago. It was all hard copy and we'd end up mailing out bylaws and photocopying sections and things like that. Now it's so much easier...” (HRM13)

Many participants argued that the ease with which social media allows public input into the planning process has allowed for a greater amount of public engagement and citizen influence on planning decisions:

“Technology has been a luxury in terms of being able to engage with people.” (VAN06)

“For those who are interested, there are certainly more ways that people can more easily become engaged.” (HRM12)

“A lot of people like to be involved, and I think social media and the Internet have bridged that distance gap in a way. And I think people are more informed now because of social media, [and] you can say that they're probably more engaged because they're more informed.” (HRM14)

When asked if social media had played a role in increasing public involvement in planning, one participant argued that the ease of public input through social media may actually be ‘watering down’ that input and providing a cheap substitute for real debate, resulting in less impactful public engagement:

“I've seen... petitions and things like that [that have had an impact]... but you can sign dozens of petitions every day. I don't know how much impact it has anymore. The currency of petitions may be watered down now with social media... ‘Slacktivism’, it's called... Social media sort of allows you to express your views from your living room. It doesn't have the same effect as a public meeting where you go out and you express your views... And social media allows you to sort of curate your own intake of information... I think it's changed the dialogue of local government. I think there's something valuable in going to a public meeting and standing up in front of people, expressing your views and feeling that criticism, feeling that support, and listening to other people's point of view even if it makes you uncomfortable.” (HRM14)

The importance of traditional media in generating public interest in planning came up in one interview:

“The regional plan was so well-covered in the media. And some parts were so controversial that it generated a lot of background noise that I think sunk in as well. Even if you weren't following it, you heard about it. And that was positive.” (HRM13)

“There are more newspaper articles and more stories on the news about planning, and maybe the public's perception will change and it will be given more power.” (SJ07).

Public Engagement Strategies

Effective public engagement helps to establish a clear vision for the community, which is essential to coordinated planning efforts: “Whenever we see a variety of work being done with the public, it's easily reflected in the plan in the goals and the vision” (SJ13). Ensuring that plans reflect the desires of the community, and involving the community in the creation of that plan, helps to generate commitment to the plan. Without the buy-in of the community, ensuring that the plan is followed can be more challenging.

Several participants argued that the way in which members of the public are approached for consultation has a significant impact on the level of involvement of citizens in planning: “...It depends on how it's presented to the public, how they're engaged as well. That's a factor [of public involvement] as well” (SJ09).

A respondent from Vancouver described in positive terms the engagement that is done in the city:

“Our engagement process is second to none. We have one of the most innovative methods, which is to do a ‘pop-up city hall’ around the city. It's just like taking city hall to the people, educating them on what the city does. Our engagement approach involves piloting those types of things as well as the traditional methods like open houses, where you go to an open house and you have a whole bunch of boards, and people come out and participate.” (VAN06)

Participants in Halifax generally viewed current public engagement protocols positively, but expressed frustration due to limited engagement on some occasions. A respondent from Halifax described public engagement efforts in HRM:

“We have public meetings to find out what the key issues are in the community... I think HRM is pretty good at holding public meetings and getting people's input or concerns heard and recorded... [HRM] does allow for public input, and I think there's a fundamental wish amongst planners [in HRM] to have community input.” (HRM03)

In Newfoundland, the method of public engagement can vary a great deal despite requirements set out in the provincial planning act:

“[Public engagement] depends on who is leading the project ... It's up to the consultant and the town exactly how far they want to take it. So it really depends on the individual or company that the town or municipality hires... ... And a public consultation is a little more intense in a bigger centre like the city [of St. John's]... So the type of consultation is indicative of the size and type of community.” (SJ13)

A respondent in St. John's had a more critical view of official public engagement methods: “Right now it seems like public consultation only happens at the city level if it's justified by a public hearing or public meeting having to happen. And those are like theatre style executions, if you ask me” (SJ10). The participant continued, describing

the importance of municipalities setting clear guidelines for effective engagement, and how this may be lacking in St. John's:

"The city doesn't have any policy on public engagement. They have no means to direct public engagement around projects or anything like that... There is no means to say, 'These are the people you have to talk, we prefer it to happen in this style, you should have a charette, you should talk to them one-on-one.' There is nothing to guide the staff in deciding how to engage or what to engage on... Those tools are being developed, but they're not being implemented right now." (SJ10)

Many planners noted that members of the public involved in planning often feel frustration when the visions set out in plans are not implemented or adhered to, or when there are long delays for plans to be implemented. This can make maintaining commitment to a project challenging for staff.

"Two and a half years have lapsed [since St. John's started working on its new MPS]. So all of the public process that we had gone through... I mean what is the public thinking, right? Why did we go through all this process and now it's two and a half years later and nobody can remember what it was. So a plan that had a lot of public support... No wonder the public is skeptical." (SJ01)

A respondent from Vancouver argued for the importance of engaging the public as circumstances change to ensure that input remains relevant:

"It's about communication amongst staff with the public, identifying the issues and needs, and making sure that we're all tacking generally in the right direction, [even] as new information comes in. You have new information, you get a new 'public.'" (VAN06)

The Importance of Education

While many participants stated that members of the general public seem to be becoming more involved in planning, many felt that awareness of planning policies is still an issue. Several participants argued that most people only encounter planning when they are impeded by regulations:

"I don't think the average Joe really understands what a plan area is. They understand a land use bylaw, and many of them know land use controls. But very few of them understand what's above... what the umbrella legislation is – the plan – until they run into it or they can't do something." (HRM13)

"I would love to... see the percentage of elected folks that know, or community members that know, or anyone that knows [about plans]." (HRM04)

In light of this perceived unawareness of planning policies and theory on the part of the public, many participants emphasized a need for greater education. One participant described the importance of education as perceived by many planners:

"Education on what planning is is huge. That needs to happen. Local government education needs to happen and it has to happen at a young age... The community [needs to] better understand how these plans are supposed to work in the context of what

they are... It would be good to have that kind of education on the ground right now to make people aware of both the context and the issues ...” (SJ10)

Another participant argued that, while public awareness of planning regulations is still a challenge, citizen knowledge is growing:

“There are still areas and there are still people who have no idea you need a permit. It still happens on occasion where... they didn’t have a clue they needed a permit for an addition to their house. But the average person now knows and understands those things.” (HRM13)

Participants often said that ‘NIMBYism’ and attachment to the status quo still pervade many communities. This can make coordinated planning efforts difficult, because some members of the community may resist moving forward with the goals outlined in plans:

“I think that there is a strong awareness of how things could be better in a lot communities, but there’s also a really strong attachment to the historic use and feel and function of the community. So that can be a conflict at times.” (SJ10)

Other times, as was argued by several participants, attachment to out-of-date plans can make coordinated progress difficult in a community:

“There’s a great sense of community ownership over a plan once it’s adopted... There’s still a very active crowd in the city that loves the Halifax peninsula MPS and protects it... We keep old plans because there are attachments to them. “ (HRM09)

“Staff is willing to move forward in a different direction... but some of the community members who were involved in that plan making exercise – for the Halifax Plan [which] dates back to 1978 – still... want to maintain the status quo because they feel that [the plan] works... They do not want a change in plan... It’s a very small minority though.” (HRM02)

Another respondent argued that attachment to the status quo is weakening in Newfoundland communities:

“...I think that it’s working because politicians and the public see [planning] and recognize that it’s required. I don’t think that they’re demanding it yet but I think that they tolerate the changes to the status quo because they recognize it as a good rationale.” (SJ11)

Developers

In this section I present findings from the interviews concerning developer influence over plan coordination. I explore the contribution of private developers to plan proliferation, developer influence over plan content, plan revisions, and the implementation of plans. The interaction of development interests with those of other actors is also discussed.

According to respondents, developers have an interest in simple, coordinated regulations, but typically get involved in planning reactively through applications for policy changes. Developers were perceived as influential in determining land use, especially in smaller communities. When trying to introduce innovative design practices to a community, developers often face resistance from citizens and politicians protecting a status quo. Developers frequently must also contend with outdated regulations. The reactive nature of developer involvement in planning, as well as the frequent divergence of their interests from those of the broader community, make developers unlikely champions of coordination.

Developers as Drivers of Plan Proliferation

There was almost unanimous agreement among participants that developers have not contributed to plan proliferation. Interviewees felt that while developers may desire certain (i.e. simpler or more lax) regulations, they have no interest in creating additional layers of policy. When asked if developer pressure has been a significant factor in plan proliferation, most respondents answered along these lines:

“I've worked on the other side of the coin for developers. And I think it's actually usually the opposite. They'd like to see fewer plans than more plans, and less policy than more policy.” (HRM04)

Several respondents from Vancouver argued that plans are often created in response to development pressure, so developers can be directly responsible for the creation of some new plans even if they do not advocate for the plans.

“Plans are created in response to something, and that something is often a desire for land use change driven either by developers or landowners or both. It's not as [common] at the city-wide scale... [as] at the neighbourhood planning scale... but often a plan is driven in response to development pressure.” (VAN07)

“When you get multiple developments concentrated in an area that doesn't have a good plan or policy framework, it can drive a need to do plan making... So yes, for sure, development is a driver.” (VAN10)

Development pressure often spurs the creation of secondary plans. Another respondent from Vancouver described an example of a secondary plan that was created in response to developer activity:

“We have secondary land use plans that direct land development... We've been developing in a very logical sequence a series of secondary land use plans to allow

growth to slowly develop outwards. We had a bunch of developers who bought up land further away. Through their insistence and their lobbying of council, we proceeded with a secondary land use plan. We leap-frogged an area designated for development, with no development currently taking place, and created a land use plan without servicing of any sort, without any kind of strategy for future implementation. That was very much developer driven.” (VAN08)

While developers may not often intentionally push the development of new plans, development pressure in certain areas or on certain issues may precipitate a response by government in the form of a plan or a plan review.

“There may be parcels of land where certain developers or communities put pressure on, for example, water extension. That may push the issue and [necessitate] a plan review... It depends on what the community wants and sees as a priority or if there's a certain developer that pushes for a plan... Or if suddenly there's an interest in condo development, in living downtown, or in living in a subdivision, I would say [there is pressure] from the market...” (HRM03)

A participant from St. John's explained that development pressure has resulted in more secondary plans in some cases, and fewer in other cases:

“In some cases, development has caused us to do more secondary plans, and in some cases, because of the speed of it, it's caused us to do fewer... In some cases, with council taking the shorter view and doing 'one-offs', there is no secondary plan done... It is in the form of a permit as opposed to a larger conceptual area [plan]. That's the piece that causes fewer [secondary] plans. The piece that causes more [secondary plans] is probably [staff] digging in and saying, 'You've got to do this.' So we force that in a couple of areas.” (SJ03)

Developers were frequently described as responsive to plans in Vancouver. A respondent argued that development in Vancouver typically follows the creation of plans, rather than plans being created in reaction to development pressure:

“I don't like the term 'development pressure'... Certainly the pattern of land investment for development and the interests of the development communities plays a role in what plans you decide to do and when you decide to do them... and sometimes the frenetic speculation in land that you'll see in an area that you might not have expected will cause you to bring a planning initiative into play that you might otherwise have held on the back burner. But just as often, we were opening up development opportunity or we used our plans to shift development inclinations from one area that might have been more fragile to another area that had more real opportunity.” (VAN13)

Developer Influence over Plan Content

While the vast majority of respondents did not feel that developers drive plan creation, many interviewees felt that developers have some influence over the content of planning documents.

“I think that if [developers] did have an influence on the planning process it would mostly be during plan development.” (SJ09)

“They're always involved. They always come to the table because it affects their interest. So when we do our consultation, whenever we're drafting plans, the development industry is always involved either as a developer or through their various organizations like the DLG...” (HRM05)

“Anyone interested in development would have an interest in what's going into these plans. I don't think it affects the type of plan. I think it affects the policies that are included in the plan, and primarily probably the zoning and whether or not the interests of the developer are met. So I would think the municipalities would be pressured to include certain standards and policies and that sort of thing.” (SJ13)

Most respondents also agreed that, while they are not typically drivers of plan proliferation, developers are interested in plan content being simple and coordinated with regulations.

“I mean they want consistent regulations and consistent plans to make it easier for them to apply and to know exactly what they're supposed to do... But I don't know if they're the ones who are requesting or wanting more plans.” (HRM03)

“Very often you'll hear from developers, ‘We don't care what you ask us to do. Just let us know what you want us to do. We need some certainty.’ I think that if plans can create a sense of certainty that can contribute to more affordable or timely development. But that level of certainty is just not there. The reason why developers can often drive fancy cars and live in beautiful houses is because the successful ones can make money out of the uncertainty. I think we would be better off by simply creating greater certainty in terms of what's likely to happen on a piece of land, minimizing the windfalls for people.” (VAN09)

A participant from Vancouver argued that having long term plans in place, with clear goals concerning future development, can not only help shape land use according to public desire, but can create greater certainty for developers:

“The developer usually wants some surety about development, because otherwise it can be very expensive and tricky, and a lot of money can be lost. Most of the time in Vancouver, we have been ahead of the wave of development. Usually by the time development really got underway, we had plans in place. And often the development has been pulled into certain locations because we'd established a positive proposition for development and usually set some sort of incentive in place that made development attractive.” (VAN13)

Several participants offered specific examples of developers influencing the content of plans. Regarding the creation of HRMbyDesign, Halifax's strategy for downtown development, one respondent who felt developers had heavily influenced the document stated “[developers] were instrumental in pushing HRM to look for more consistent planning documents so there [would be] some certainty in terms of development proposals” (HRM12). Another respondent from Halifax described developer influence over the regional plan:

“[Developer pressure] has certainly had a tremendous impact. I've given you the regional plan example. I think that the distribution of where growth would happen that I discussed – 75% in suburban and rural areas – would have been much different if the development industry could have been held at bay a bit more successfully or if the development

community had been a bit more enlightened and understood that that kind of growth is not sustainable and ultimately leads to a beggared municipal coffer.” (HRM06)

Developers as Drivers of Plan Revisions

Many interviewees explained that developers typically drive policy changes to planning strategies. Many participants felt that this was the main way that developers interact in the planning process.

“The developers, they're the big drivers of what we call MPS amendments – changes to the overall municipal strategy specific to their needs. That's mainly how they interact.” (HRM14)

“I guess the other side of it would be pushing to amend policies... [Developers] are not usually pushing for more plans insomuch as they're pushing for amendments to plans... modification of existing plans or lessening of restrictions. I think they view plans as restrictions.” (HRM04)

A respondent from St. John's recollected an instance when an entire policy was rewritten to make a proposed development legal:

“They had to re-write an entire policy... to make this a legal development, and it seemed to go pretty smoothly for [the developer]. And if I understand correctly, it was against the public advice of the Planning Department. So yes, I would say developers hold a pretty large mallet in the Northeast Avalon [region], in Newfoundland in general, and probably throughout Canada.” (SJ11)

A respondent in Halifax argued that developers often push for plan amendments out of necessity because regulations may not be kept up to date by staff:

“Applicants drive policy changes in the strategies. And that is because [the strategies] are maybe not in touch with the neighbourhood anymore, the character... The developer generates a plan amendment when they can't do what they want to do... We often see them for site specific developments.” (HRM13)

A respondent from Vancouver argued that the role of pushing for updates to plans has been unfairly thrust upon developers when it should be the responsibility of planners to ensure that documents are kept up-to-date and in line with the community vision:

“Why is it that so often it's the developer who is initiating a rezoning application rather than the public sector? If we had a really effective system, the public sector would develop plans, which would generally be followed, and only in extreme circumstances would you contemplate changes...” (VAN09)

Another respondent from Vancouver argued that developers actually have an interest in maintaining a system that allows for frequent amendments to plans:

“The developer will tell you that one thing they want is certainty. They just want to know when they go in that this is what they can do and how long it will take to get it, and some reasonable understanding of what the needs and demands of the city are, until they don't

want the certainty because they want to do something different and they expect you to be flexible and responsive to the circumstances, the economic realities, changing market demands. They play it both ways. They want certainty until they don't. They want the plan or the zoning bylaw to tell them what they can do so they know at the beginning, unless it doesn't tell them what they want." (VAN12)

Developer Influence over Plan Implementation

While developers may have limited influence on plan creation, as the ultimate builders of many projects that make up the built form of the city they have significant sway over what gets done in the implementation phase of land use plans.

"I think there's been a lot of push from developers to shape the way policy is implemented." (HRM10m)

"[Developers will] say... 'If you want your community to grow, you will submit to these necessities.'" (SJ11)

Participants in St. John's generally perceived a greater level of developer influence over projects in their city than participants from Halifax or Vancouver.

"There have been major lobbying efforts from developers in St. John's..." (SJ11)

"It was disheartening coming out of school... and realizing how much developers control what gets done in the end..." (SJ10)

The relatively recent experience of rapid economic growth in the St. John's region may affect the level of influence developers have over planning decisions:

"For a long time there was absolutely no development pressure and the city [of St. John's] had to beg people to come and open up a store, build a house, or do something with their land... They've been so used to just saying, 'Yes, of course, come build in our city or come open your business here.' And now since they've had that boom and that pressure's coming in, they are so used to being the 'yes man' to the developers that they don't really know that they have the right, let alone the prerogative to... say 'no' sometimes to the bad developments." (SJ10)

"Now communities [in the St. John's region] are in a position where... there's all kinds of demand for development. And the communities are getting to the point where they have an upper hand and they're actually able to have a stronger say and a more forceful policy position regarding development." (HRM10)

The respondent also argued that, despite communities in the St. John's region having more freedom to reject development proposals, many are being overwhelmed by the sheer number of proposals received:

"In St. John's... the economy was really grim. Anybody who wanted to develop had a fairly strong hand [when] dealing with the policy makers in terms of shaping development... The problem is that some of these small towns, like suburbs, are swamped with development applications, and their staff is minimal. So even though they

have in some ways a stronger ability or a position where they can say 'no', they're also being overwhelmed." (HRM10)

Some participants felt that developers have more control over land use in smaller communities as they tend to have fewer development regulations.

"Development in smaller areas – areas that don't have a municipal planning area, so small towns – is better defined as 'willy-nilly'. I don't think anyone is lobbying for anything. I think you just go and build whatever it is you're building – your house, your cabin, your shed, or whatever – and then that's that." (SJ11)

Several respondents from Vancouver perceived a greater level of responsiveness on the part of developers to the public interest as outlined in plans. They argued that development pressure was not the major force in determining land use in Vancouver because of the city's unique planning practices, and that planning more often led the way for development than vice versa.

"Vancouver is right up there among cities that have maintained more of a proactive management of development, and in many cases the development has followed the planning rather than the planning follow the development." (VAN13)

"...The plans reflect that: ...Let's focus people where it makes sense in those areas. That's where our density is going to go, and that's where that growth is going to happen. So we set out that big picture plan about doing that type of work around those key areas. So then the developers should know and will work with us as part of that process." (VAN06)

The Profit Motive and Coordination

Many participants pointed out that developers are primarily motivated by a rational desire to maximize profit. Often, this interest does not square with the 'public interest'.

"Development pressure isn't so much always to the benefit of the community. More so it's to the benefit of the financial considerations of the developer." (SJ04)

"I would say most developers are driven entirely by profit. But you get other developers, or even some of the same developers, who are also interested in what their projects look like. They are interested in the satisfaction of their customers because they know that makes it easier. But I would say most developers will not do something if they don't think it's going to be profitable. There are a few exceptions to that but those companies are generally no longer around." (VAN09)

"We have a lot of policies in our plans that pertain to environmental protection. But that doesn't always hit the ground the way it's supposed to when there's pressure from developers. Quite often that extra townhouse unit comes in lieu of extra stream protection, for example." (VAN08)

One of the participants also argued that developers might not be willing to incur costs individually for public amenities that may in turn provide value to the development community:

“Parks experiences pressure from existing residents to build parks; to make the city centre more livable through the development of park amenities, playgrounds, sports fields and so on. The Development Planning department doesn’t see that pressure. They see the pressure from developers needing a financial break in order to provide them an incentive to develop. So it’s kind of a catch-22. Developers want to build, but they don’t want to pay for amenities. But amenities can bring developers a nice sense of place, and a nice sense of community is what developers want to build. It draws residents to want to buy in a place.” (VAN08)

Another participant in Vancouver described the situation around developer-funded amenities in rather different terms. They saw it as a stick wielded by some communities to wrest contributions from developers at the expense of setting coordinated long term visions through strategic planning.

“We have an absurd situation in Vancouver and some metro municipalities. There is an incentive for municipalities not to plan, and then allow or even encourage developers to come forward with applications to change the zoning of an area. The municipalities use that as an opportunity to collect community amenity contributions and other contributions. Municipalities may [intentionally] improperly zone land because they want people to come forward [with amendment applications] so they can charge the developers. That is a real concern of the development community... Governments have almost become addicted to developer contributions.” (VAN09)

Given the primarily self-interested nature of developers, and to the extent that overall coordination of land use planning represents a benefit shared among the entire community, developers may not be relied upon to push the coordination agenda. However, sometimes developer interests align with the ‘public interest’. One participant gave an example of developer interest in Halifax being consistent with the goals of planning staff: Regarding regional planning in Halifax, “...the development community would tell you it is the regional centre that should be the priority. [Staff and developers are] in synch on that one” (HRM02). The profit motive need not always run counter to the broader community interest. Another respondent from HRM offered an example of profitable development equating to dense, new urban building forms:

“There are current trends that are moving towards more urban forms of development. Developers are great with that. Because of course it’s more density so it’s more development. It tends to be more profitable for them. So that’s all good...” (HRM10)

Several respondents also argued that developers can be a formidable force for innovation. Some interviewees stressed that, in situations when developers push for innovation in new projects, they often contend with resistance from politicians and members of the public who try to protect the status quo.

“[In St. John’s] they wanted to build beautiful... town homes. The city said, “No, we don’t want social housing in our town...” Good town homes are definitely not slums... So while developers do influence what kind of developments happen here, they also experience

challenges when they try to go the other way and bring more modern and socially sustainable concepts into towns.” (SJ10)

“...You have to have a really strong stomach to be a developer in HRM. To get anything done – even simple things – can be really frustrating. Even if they’re for public benefit, it can take a lot of time.” (HRM04)

Innovative developers often encounter obstacles in the form of out-of-date regulations.

“I think there are a lot of developers who are inspiring change in a good way. Some are leaders... [For example], in terms of urban design, some of the better developers want to do things that are newer that have been done elsewhere. They are trying to bring those templates for physical form to our area. Of course sometimes [they] run into policy issues putting on a couple more storeys to make the economics better, [using] zero lot lines – adjusting setbacks or those sorts of things that have a good benefit in the right context... (HRM10)

Another respondent from Halifax offered an example of policy creating a barrier to a positive, innovative design practice in the city:

“What architects like to do now is have the skin of their building go right up and continue as a continuous screen around the entire roof, inside of which the mechanical equipment can sit. And that’s not allowed. So the best of intentions on minimizing the impact of rooftop mechanical units has come close to killing a couple of projects.” (HRM09)

A respondent from Halifax argued that, while some developers try to introduce innovate design practices, most need to be encouraged to implement such practices into their designs:

“Ninety percent of developers aren’t cool people looking to work with really cool architects to get really cool stuff built. They’re looking for direction and some assuredness. So if we created more eloquent, dynamic, and robust plans, it could help encourage those developers... [to consider] incorporating good urban design, to consider the public realm.” (HRM06)

A large number of participants felt that planners must do more to understand the development side of the planning process. Greater understanding of the economics of the development industry may help planners to better coordinate with developers, and to ensure a development environment that is consistent with plans and regulations.

“There are some areas of practice that [planners are] very weak in. [For example], finance: Linking the financial aspects of development to planning, the economics of property development, and the implications of some of the policies and regulations that [planners] write. That’s going to become more and more important.” (SJ01)

In order to point out the need for greater education and understanding of other actors’ interests, a respondent from Vancouver used an example demonstrating the lack of understanding on the part of planners and developers of each other’s needs:

“The planners were invited to write down all of their concerns, and to write down what they thought developers would say about planners in terms of their concerns, and vice versa. The developers were invited to write down what planners thought would be their

concerns. There was a complete mismatch. What it demonstrated was that there really was very little understanding of the things that planners were concerned about and what developers were concerned about. I think that's an ongoing problem." (VAN09)

Interpretation of Results

This section provides some additional analysis of the research findings reported in the previous section. It is broken into two short subsections. The first discusses several major themes that were common among interviewees from all three study areas. The second subsection describes some of the observed differences in reported perceptions between study areas. It is clear from the analysis that planners have had very different experiences with coordination efforts in each community, but that there are some themes that may be common across Canada. Overall, the interpretation illustrates some coordination challenges and opportunities that may be common across the country, and others that may be more community-specific.

Common Themes

Analysis of the data revealed many commonalities among the expressed perceptions of planners in the three study areas of Halifax, St. John's, and Vancouver. With the exception of some small municipalities in the St. John's region, plan proliferation was generally perceived as a significant challenge to communities. Actors are often unable to navigate the myriad of planning documents that contain rules relevant to their situation. With the exception of developers, most respondents agreed that all planning actors have contributed to the observed proliferation of plans in Canada.

Participants agreed on many aspects of the roles of planning actors in determining coordination outcomes. Politicians were generally perceived as extremely powerful actors bearing great responsibility for the prioritization of coordination in planning. Many participants expressed frustration, however, with a lack of consistency in political prioritization, making coordination difficult. Many examples were provided by participants of politicians championing specific projects, providing the leadership necessary to coordinate efforts toward a common goal. Managers were perceived as highly involved in coordination activities, possessing great influence over interdepartmental coordination in particular.

Planners were perceived by most respondents as influential, but often constrained by resource limitations (especially time) as well as by a perceived professional requirement for objectivity. Planners were often seen as too low in the organizational hierarchy to champion coordination, but the interdisciplinary nature of land use planning may put planners in an ideal position to facilitate interdepartmental cooperation. As the ultimate writers of plans, planners have a critical role in ensuring coordination of documents. They were also perceived to have a role in advising the other actors on the importance of coordinated and responsible planning.

Citizens were generally perceived as powerful actors in the planning process, ultimately setting long-term community goals and implementing them through the election of political representatives. Many respondents reported a growing involvement on the part of the public in plan coordination, often citing new technologies for public engagement like social media. However, some participants argued that citizen involvement in planning might be less intense than in the past, particularly during the

1960s and 1970s. Whether or not public interest in planning is growing, citizens were often seen as the least organized actors. Rarely uniting around planning issues, when citizens do become involved it tends to be over specific planning issues of personal interest. It is unlikely that the coordination of land use planning, either at a high policy level or at the implementation level, would be seen as interesting and worthwhile by the general public, making their championing of coordination as a community priority highly unlikely. Most participants mentioned the importance of educating members of the public as well as other planning actors to increase the level and quality of their involvement in the planning process, which could perhaps improve the prioritization of plan coordination among citizens.

Developers were perceived as influential in determining land use, especially in smaller communities. When trying to introduce innovative design practices in a community, developers often face resistance from citizens and politicians wishing to maintain the status quo. Often contending with outdated regulations, developers have an interest in simple, coordinated policies, but typically get involved in planning reactively through applications for policy changes. Due to the reactive nature of their involvement in planning and to the frequent divergence of their interests with those of the public, developers are unlikely champions for coordinating land use planning.

Regional Perceptions

Analysis of the interview results revealed some differences in responses based on the region of participants. Respondents in St. John's were most likely to report strong control by politicians of the planning process. They also reported the greatest level of developer involvement. Interview participants from St. John's used the most language suggesting a perceived lack of power on the part of planners. Respondents from Vancouver perceived the balance of power between politicians, planners, and developers very differently. While politicians were still viewed as powerful in Vancouver, they were generally perceived as supportive of planning priorities, often delegating decision-making power to staff. Developers in Vancouver were often perceived as responsive to plans. According to interview participants, planning practice in Halifax is characterized by a give-and-take relationship between staff and politicians, with one or the other initiating planning activities. Some planners in the region cited a need for greater delegation of decision-making power to staff. Often developers were seen as influential in Halifax, but this was just as often attributed to out-of-date regulations as to politics.

The level of involvement of the public was generally perceived as greater in Vancouver than in the other two study areas. Frequently participants from Halifax or St. John's cited Vancouver as an example of a city that coordinates land use planning effectively and that fosters a high level of public engagement. Innovative engagement protocols and a public culture of community involvement were frequently given as reasons for Vancouver's reputation for community engagement in planning. Participants in Halifax generally viewed current public engagement protocols positively, but expressed frustration due to limited engagement on some occasions. In St. John's, participants described a lack of stringent engagement protocols to collect public input. They reported inconsistent use of engagement strategies dependent largely on the

person directing the engagement. While respondents in St. John's generally perceived public interest in planning as growing, they often reported a need to increase public knowledge of planning practices.

Conclusions

Land use planning takes place through a democratic process involving multiple actors. Actors bring divergent interests to the process and influence land use planning outcomes in various ways. Through interaction and often compromise between actors, decisions of land use are made. This research project helps fill a gap in the planning literature concerning the ways planning actors influence not just what planning decisions are made, but how those decisions (in the form of plans, initiatives, and so on) are coordinated with one another. The study also addresses a lack of literature concerning the proliferation of plans in Canada.

Interview participants from all three study areas viewed coordination of land use planning as critically important. All of the actors involved in planning decisions (politicians, managers, planners, the public, and developers) have roles to play in either promoting or inhibiting coordination. Coordination outcomes are determined by the interaction of planning actors, and the extent to which they can agree to pursue common community priorities. However, some actors may be more likely to champion the cause of plan coordination.

Politicians, managers, and planners may be most likely to initiate efforts to promote coordination, and may have the most direct control over coordination outcomes. Politicians have a key role to play in interpreting priorities from the public. Along with managers, they must ensure consistent government prioritization of coordination in land use planning. Managers and planners must continue to foster greater interdepartmental coordination, ensuring consistency between projects and documents produced by different agencies. Planners must strive to create documents that are both accessible and complete, while ensuring that policies remain up to date.

Developers, while having an interest in clear, simple, and up-to-date regulations, should not be expected to provide the impetus for better coordination. The reactive nature of developers' interaction with the planning process as well as the divergence of private development interests with the 'public good' make developers unlikely champions of coordination. Developers should continue to pressure municipalities to maintain coherent regulations, but respect the community vision embedded therein.

Members of the public are also unlikely to push for plan coordination. It is likely that citizens will expect elected representatives and civil servants to work out the details of community planning while they involve themselves in more tangible issues of personal interest. Education from planners or politicians may help bring the issue of coordination to the attention of the public. The high degree of influence that constituents have over politicians makes educating them on the importance of coordination even more critical.

In a context of rapidly proliferating plans and policies, coordinating land use planning is critically important. Coordinated planning produces better communities, and

it takes all actors in a community to ensure that coordination will take place. However, the burden of championing improved coordination of land use planning rests with community leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

Using interviews conducted in Halifax, St. John's, and Vancouver, this research was intended to help illuminate the perceptions of Canadian planners regarding the roles of actors in the coordination of land use planning. Major themes identified in the study may indicate areas in need of further research. For example, emerging technology and social media represent a new dimension of public engagement. Researchers could seek to determine the significance of social media's effect on public involvement in planning, and how municipalities can effectively utilize this new medium.

The literature on coordination in land use planning is sparse, and while this research may help to begin filling that gap, there are many more aspects of coordination warranting investigation than have been considered here. This research considered the influence of several actors involved in the coordination of land use planning (politicians, managers, planners, the public, and developers), but this is by no means a complete accounting of all agents who affect coordination outcomes. For example, the influence of actors like federal agencies who provide funding for specific projects, operating externally to the municipal planning process, could be considered.

The dataset used for this study holds a large amount of valuable evidence pertaining to land use planning and plan coordination. Those interested in advancing the literature on the subject of plan coordination will find more information in the dataset than was utilized for this study. Future researchers could consider collecting the examples of coordination best practices provided by the interview respondents in order to identify strategies to promote greater plan coordination. Many participants reported varying results of public engagement efforts, so a comparison of official engagement protocols with participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of those protocols could be useful. Much of the discussion on coordination centered on the relationship and power dynamics between politicians and planners. Interested researchers could examine this relationship further, and should consider interviewing some additional politicians to add to the completeness of the data. Finally, due to time constraints, this study did not consider data collected through an online survey of Canadian planners on the subject of plan coordination. This represents another opportunity for future research.

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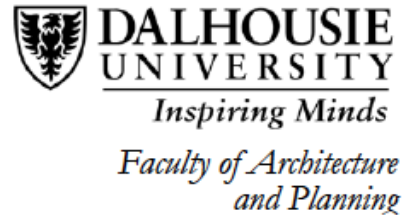
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Appendix-1: Participant Consent Letter



Project Title: **Coordinating land use planning in the context of multiple plans**

Principal Investigator: **Dr. Jill L Grant**, FCIP LPP
School of Planning, Dalhousie University, Box 15000, Halifax NS, B3H 4R2
[redacted] fax: [redacted] [redacted]

Dear Study Participant:

I **invite you** to take part in a research study at Dalhousie University. The work is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Taking part in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. We will use the information collected only for research purposes. This letter explains what you will be asked to do, and any risk or inconvenience you may experience. Participating in the study may not benefit you directly, but we hope to learn things which will improve understanding of community planning. Please feel free to discuss any questions you have with me, Jill Grant. If you agree to participate, please sign the form at the bottom and return it to me, or to my research assistant, [name], at the address listed here.

The **purpose of the study** is to understand the approaches that municipalities are using to coordinate land use planning in a context where municipalities have an increasing number of plans and responsibilities to manage. For this research we are arranging **in-person interviews** with people living and working in the cities selected for analysis. We hope to interview **community planners, development officers, transportation planners, municipal engineers, emergency measures coordinators, sustainability coordinators, and others** who have been involved in the process of developing, managing, or implementing planning policy. My research assistant, [name], will conduct the interviews. We expect each interview to take about **45 minutes to one hour**; it will consist of semi-structured questions about your experience and opinions. (We have attached an outline of the question topics we will discuss.) If you agree, we will tape record the interview; alternatively we can take notes. You may refuse to answer any question, or end the interview at any point. (If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will destroy any data you contributed.)

We recognize that participating in this study may cause you some **inconvenience**, but we will try to minimize that by visiting at a time and place convenient for you. We will try to limit the **risk** that anyone reading the results of the research can identify you from your comments. In publications, we will not use any identifying information other than your type of position (for example, “planner” or “project manager”) and the city involved. (If you are the only person in your organization with that responsibility, we will take further measures to obscure your identity by not identifying the city.)

We will keep your remarks **confidential**. We will never reveal your identity. As we report our results we will do our best your confidentiality and obscure your identity. We will maintain our interview notes and any analysis based on them in a secure location. Only the research team at Dalhousie University and University of Waterloo, and students working on the project,

will have access. Dalhousie University policy requires that data be stored securely. We will retain the data for long-term study of planning trends in Canada.

We are happy to share the results of the research with you, as we hope that you may find **benefit** in knowing more about the topic. We post the results of our research on our project web site at <http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/multiple-plans/index.html>. We hope that you may find it helpful to learn about experiences in other regions. The work contributes to general knowledge about planning trends in Canada. (Should any new information arise which may affect your decision to participate in the study, we will let you know immediately.)

In the event that you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Integrity Coordinator at Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics and Integrity for assistance [redacted]. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form attached, and check the boxes to signal your preferences. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Jill L Grant, School of Planning

Date

Research assistant: _____
[redacted]

School of Planning 902-494-3260
Dalhousie University
Box 15000, Halifax, NS
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Research team:

Jill Grant, Principal Investigator, School of Planning, Dalhousie University
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Ahsan Habib, DalTRAC, School of Planning and Dept of Civil Engineering, Dalhousie University
Patricia Manuel, School of Planning, Dalhousie University
Eric Rapaport, School of Planning, Dalhousie University

Follow our research at <http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/multiple-plans/index.html>

PLEASE READ AND SIGN IF YOU AGREE: Consent form

I have read the description of the project and agree to participate as set out in this form. I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Name	Signature	Date

*I agree that you may **record my remarks** for transcription:*

Signature or initials: _____

I agree that you may use brief quotes from my remarks without identifying me:

Signature or initials: _____

I agree to be contacted for additional information during the course of the study, should that prove necessary.

Signature or initials: _____

I would like to be informed of the preliminary results of the research:

Mailing address: _____

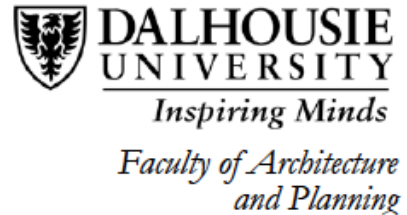
Email: _____

Keep one copy of this form for your records, and **return a signed copy** to:

Jill L Grant, School of Planning, Dalhousie University,
Box 15000, Halifax NS, B3H 4R2, Canada
fax 902-423-6672

Visit our website for further information and updates on the research:
<http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/multiple-plans/index.html>

Appendix-2: Interview Questions



Project Title:

Coordinating land use planning in the context of multiple plans

Principal Investigator: **Dr. Jill L Grant**, FCIP LPP
School of Planning, Dalhousie University, Box 15000, Halifax NS, B3H 4R2
[redacted] fax: [redacted] [redacted]

Interview Questions

- 1. Describe your role and responsibilities.**
- 2. How long have you been working for local government in these kinds of roles?**
- 3. Can I ask you about your education and training for the job: Where and what did you study? When did you graduate?**
- 4. To what extent is policy and plan coordination a priority here in [city name]?**
- 5. We have found that many cities have a large number of plans. What factors explain the number of plans that Canadian communities are producing?**
Examples of factors [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]
 - Good planning practice has led to new kinds of plans.
 - Political pressure leads to particular kinds of plans.
 - Community expectations can drive the planning process.
 - Developer pressures can drive the planning process.
 - Strategic priorities of agencies or departments may lead to plans.
 - Responding to local risks generates plans.
 - Funding programs may require certain plans or policies.
- 6. [Show the participant a list of possible types of plans and ask them to indicate which of these they have in their city, and who is responsible for them]**
- 7. What do you see as some of the challenges to coordinating multiple plans and policies?**

Examples of challenges [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]

Too many plans.

Depends on legislative requirements.

Insufficient staff time.
Insufficient staff expertise.
Depends on political priorities.
Depends on market conditions.
Reflects changing needs in the community.
Insufficient data availability.

Competing interests among departments.
Professional rivalries affect outcomes.
Difficult to change past practices.
No established hierarchy of priorities.
Plans don't apply to outside agencies.

7. Could you describe an example of the challenges of coordinating different plans and policies you have experienced in your own work?

8. What strategies do you use to identify conflicting policies or approaches in plans?

9. What are some strategies communities may use to coordinate plans? What strategies are used in your community?

Examples of strategies [*these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.*]

Communities set a clear organizational hierarchy that facilitates choices.
Legal frameworks set out in planning acts guide decision making.
Policies are coordinated when the comprehensive plan is revised.
Collaborating, sharing data, and consulting with others facilitate consensus based decisions when policies may conflict.
Interdepartmental meetings provide opportunities to coordinate priorities.
Budgets provide mechanisms for communities to set policy priorities.
Communities allow plans to lapse because priorities and conditions change.
Processes or organizations are created to deal with particular coordination challenges.
Champions are appointed to facilitate coordination around critical issues.
Planning is inherently political, so plans have to be flexible.

10. What success stories do you have in [*name of city*] in coordinating plans?

11. What factors influence interdepartmental policy/plan coordination?

Examples of factors [*these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.*]

Budgetary concerns
Links with external interest groups
Political leadership
Departmental hierarchies
Timing

12. Is there anything about coordinating plans and policies that you would like to add before we finish?