

**“Formal and Meaningless” or “Impactful”:
Citizen Participation in the Downtown Urban
Revitalization Plan**

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Abstract

Worcester's Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) is an urban renewal plan established under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) and executed by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA). Urban renewal plans grant redevelopment authorities like the WRA eminent domain powers to redevelop blighted or decadent properties. Worcester's history of urban renewal is contentious, and this history coupled with new prospects for eminent domain served as my original draw to the URP. One of the requirements for any Massachusetts renewal plan is a "showing of meaningful citizen participation", however neither M.G.L nor the WRA define this requirement. A goal of this report was to define this requirement and use it to evaluate the WRA's citizen participation methods. To achieve this goal, I interviewed 15 members of the public, analyzed meeting documents, and reviewed academic perspectives on citizen participation. I found that the WRA's methods did not meet all the requirements of any one of the four definitions I derived from academia and interviewees. In addition to this, I found significant power differences between groups of interviewees in how they define meaningful participation and whether they thought the WRA's process was meaningful. Auxiliary to this finding, I found that established frameworks for evaluating public participation methods to be lacking, and that there are unaddressed concerns in the climate of public participation in Worcester. I conclude that future research should be conducted regarding definition-setting for public expectations, as the ambiguity in definitions of meaningful citizen participation led to the original differences in definitions among interviewees. In addition to this, further research should be conducted on power differences as a potential cause for the difference in citizen perspectives towards their own participation in Worcester's politics.

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1.0 Introduction

The Worcester Redevelopment Authority's (WRA) Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) is an urban renewal plan established under Massachusetts law that grants the WRA to redevelop land and acquire it through eminent domain. The planners of the URP (WRA and the BSC Group) state that they "...incorporated input received from public outreach efforts undertaken during the planning process, as well as the recommendations that were developed for other area projects which incorporated extensive public outreach" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 105). The planners of the URP (WRA and the BSC Group) used five methods to facilitate citizen participation: a citizens advisory committee (CAC), two public hearings, one public forum, ensuring the online availability of the draft URP, and sharing the plan through media outreach. Massachusetts law requires that citizen participation in the planning of urban renewal plans such as the URP be meaningful. Massachusetts law does not define what constitutes "meaningful citizen participation. The planners of the URP also failed to address why and how the five methods they used embody meaningful citizen participation. In this report I sought to define meaningful citizen participation and evaluate the aforementioned five methods to determine whether they were meaningful because of the planners' unsupported claims and the sweeping powers granted to the WRA through the URP.

To create a definition for meaningful citizen participation and evaluate the planners' five methods, I identified four key research questions to achieve these two goals:

1. What tone did the general public discourse adopt when discussing the URP?
2. Why did the Plan include citizen participation?
3. What does "meaningful public participation" mean in the context of this plan?
4. Was the public's participation in the planning of the URP meaningful?

I break down answers to these questions in my report across six other chapters, excluding the introduction and works cited these chapters are: 2.0 Background, 3.0 Literature Review 4.0 Methodology, 5.0 Findings, and 6.0 Conclusion. In the Background I describe the URP in greater detail, its historical context, and the significance of citizen participation for urban renewal plans. In the Literature Review I cover the IAP2 Spectrum and Arnstein's Ladder, two popular frameworks used to evaluate citizen participation in policy planning. In the Methodology I review my methods for collecting data from documents and interviewees. For Findings I first show the prevailing themes for public discussion of the URP, I review the documentation of the impact of the aforementioned five participation methods, I create four definitions for meaningful citizen participation from academia and interviewees, I then use these definitions to evaluate the five methods. Outside of the analysis of participation methods, I share findings peripheral to my report such as the foundation for the URP and the climate of participation in Worcester politics. In the Conclusion I contextualize my findings with Worcester's previous urban renewal, share suggestions for future processes, and provide commentary on the URP and implications for academic Communications and Political Science fields.

2.0 The URP and Urban Renewal: Its History in the US and Worcester

Worcester, Massachusetts, the second largest city in New England, has executed several controversial redevelopment plans that sought to clear slums and increase housing under the National Housing Act of 1949 (City of Worcester, MA, 2019). The two most notable deleterious urban renewal plans executed by Worcester are the replacement of the Laurel-Clayton neighborhood with Plumley Village and the replacement of much of the City's downtown with the Worcester Galleria (Mandell, 2016). These two instances of mass clearing, their liberal use of eminent domain, and their failure to address and heed public opinion have left economic scars on Worcester and have tainted the reputation of contemporary urban renewal plans (Welker, 2017). One such contemporary plan in Worcester is the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP). In this chapter I review the specifics of the URP, its historical context, and its legal requirements.

2.1 The Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP)

On June 14th, 2016 the Worcester City Council unanimously passed the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) in an attempt to remedy issues that the City perceived with its Downtown area (Kotsopoulos, 2016). While distinct from previous plans in scope, it shares many of the same ideals as the previous Theatre District Plan (TDP). On its website, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) envisions the URP as an improvement upon the TDP's goals and through the URP seeks to:

...build on the current momentum of downtown revitalization through strategic public investments to cultivate a safe and vibrant downtown with a strong and sustainable economic vitality. A revitalized downtown will provide an 18-hour live, work and play environment which offers new opportunities to underperforming properties, connects people and places, and capitalizes on Worcester's unique location and characteristics (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 5).

In addition to encompassing Theatre District Plan's vision, the URP includes the following vision specific to the Wyman-Gordon parcels which the Plan identifies as abandoned manufacturing sites within the Urban Renewal Area (URA):

Ultimately, transform an abandoned manufacturing site into a productive element that will draw local and regional users. Redevelopment should be appropriate for the mixed-used character of the area, contribute to a positive impression of the neighborhood and the city, encourage pedestrian and traffic connections with surrounding neighborhoods and the nearby downtown area, and incorporate public amenities. The development should include recreational opportunities, such as a private indoor athletic facility with a track, multi-sports fields, and a pool. The redeveloped site should encourage healthy lifestyle choices, offer sustainable job opportunities, and contribute to the city's tax base (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 5)

The URP document uses three modes to convey the Plan's ideals and hoped outcomes: vision, goals, and objectives. In this order the Plan's ideals and perceived

future benefits become more specific and understandable through the means available to the WRA for implementing the URP. The two previously listed block quotes are the Plan's visions. The goal of the Plan is to "...create an environment that has a strong identity and sense of place within downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, residential, and entertainment/cultural uses" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 6). Six out of eighteen of the goals that the planners established to achieve this goal are:

- Foster an environment for businesses and institutions to thrive and create sustainable jobs
- Encourage and preserve economic diversity and quality of life by providing opportunities for businesses serving a diversity of incomes and skills
- Increase stock of market-rate housing
- Increase real estate tax income-generating properties in the URA
- Redevelop former industrial properties and in so doing increase the number and diversity of well-paying jobs in the city
- Encourage private sector investment and utilize public funds judiciously and strategically as a catalyst for private investment (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 6)

The URP sees these objectives as more explicit means for achieving the overarching goal and vision. These objectives reflect the expected changes or improvements on the population and land usage in downtown that will result from affecting the area's physical places.

In Section 12.02 (11) of the URP, the WRA claims that the comments and concerns expressed at public forums and public hearings are reflected within these stated goals and objectives of the URP (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 105). Considering a timeline of 20 years and a scope encompassing the entirety of Downtown Worcester, the degree to which the WRA incorporated public thoughts in

these goals and objectives is an important factor in evaluating citizen participation within the URP.

2.2 Legal Requirements and Why the URP Included Citizen Participation

While Massachusetts General Law defines several terms and requirements with lengthy entries, it fails to define what constitutes “meaningful citizen participation” in a section requiring meaningful citizen participation in the planning of urban renewal plans. The lack of this definition acted as the impetus for one of this report’s four key research questions: “What does ‘meaningful citizen participation’ mean in the context of this plan?”.

Outside of a definition for meaningful citizen participation, Massachusetts law explicitly defines, at length, requirements for renewal authorities and what conditions must be present to have a renewal plan. The bulk of the content of such definitions and legislation can be found within Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 121b:

Housing and Urban Renewal, M.G.L. 121b defines urban renewal as:

...a strategy for redeveloping and revitalizing substandard, decadent and blighted open areas for residential, commercial, industrial, business, governmental, recreational, educational, hospital or other uses. Under M.G.L. Chapter 121B, urban renewal agencies are authorized to undertake a range of public actions to address disinvested and underutilized neighborhoods and substandard, decadent and blighted conditions in order to create the environment needed to promote sound growth and attract and support private investment in designated urban renewal areas (Housing and Community Development, 2018).

Outside of definition-setting, M.G.L. 121b empowers the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Community Services to administer the state's urban renewal programs while the Community Services division of the DHCD "...[assists] municipalities which are establishing urban renewal agencies, and [provides] technical assistance to prepare and implement Urban Renewal Plans" (DHCD, 2018). Ultimately, the DHCD is the final hurdle that determines whether urban renewal plans such as the URP can and should be implemented.

The definition that Chapter 121b provides for urban renewal, however, contains various other terms like "blighted", "decadent", and "substandard" whose definitions are not forthcoming. To better understand some of these terms, Table 2.1 contains excerpts from the lengthy definitions provided within Section 1 of M.G.L. Chapter 121b.

Table 2.1 - Definition of Terms Appearing in Urban Renewal

Terms	Definitions
Blighted open area	“a predominantly open area which is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of a community because it is unduly costly to develop it soundly through the ordinary operations of private enterprise...”
Decadent area	“an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare or sound growth of a community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated...”
Substandard area	“any area wherein dwellings predominate which, by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morals” (General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2006).

Other clarification may be needed on the “...range of public actions...” which urban renewal agencies are permitted to exercise. The actions that urban renewal agencies may undertake, outlined in Section 11 of M.G.L 121b, include but are not limited to: sue, receive loans or grants, take by eminent domain, clear and improve any properties acquired, and make relocation payments (General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2006). Under M.G.L. 121b, any redevelopment authority in any city or town has the same toolbox of actions available as any urban renewal agency (General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2006).

For the sake of understanding the specific terms applied to Worcester’s Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan, executed by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority, throughout this document, “Urban Renewal Plan”, “Urban Renewal Project”, “Redevelopment Authority, and “Urban Revitalization and Development Project” all contain legal definitions within M.G.L. 121b. Shortened definitions for these terms are provided in Table 2.2 below. Interestingly, there has been a shift in the title of one of these definitions. The Urban Revitalization and Development Project definition serves to rename the older Urban Renewal Project after 1986. This shift is potentially an attempt to distance the law from unpopular past renewal plans mentioned in Section 1.2

Table 2.2 - Legal Definitions for Renewal Plans and their Authorities

Terms	Definitions
Urban Renewal Plan	“a detailed plan, as it may exist from time to time, for an urban renewal project, which plan may comply with all requirements from time to time prescribed by federal legislation in order to qualify an urban renewal project for federal financial assistance...”
Urban Renewal Project	“a project to be undertaken in accordance with an urban renewal plan (1) for acquisition by an urban renewal agency of the land and all improvements thereon, if any, within a decadent, substandard or blighted open area covered by an urban renewal plan and for assembly or clearance by such agency of the land so acquired;...”
Urban Revitalization and Development Project	“any urban renewal project undertaken after January first, nineteen hundred and eighty-six for such residential, commercial, or industrial redevelopment

	<p>projects as the department deems appropriate”.</p>
<p>Redevelopment Authority</p>	<p>“Whenever the municipal officers of a city, or the voters at an annual or special town meeting determine that there is a need for a redevelopment authority in such city or town for the purpose of engaging in urban renewal projects or other work under this chapter and that it is in the public interest that such an authority be organized in such city or town, a redevelopment authority shall be organized in such city or town” (General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2006).</p>

However, urban renewal plans, outside of showing to the State government that an area is blighted or decadent, have other requirements as well. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requires that citizens meaningfully participate in the planning of urban renewal plans:

A report on citizen participation describing citizen participation in

the planning process and a plan for continuing citizen participation during the project execution. A showing of meaningful citizen participation is necessary for approval of the plan (DHCD, 2018).

This requirement serves to part-way satisfy one of my research questions: Why did the Plan include citizen participation? In section 5.0 I answer this research question fully. Unfortunately for this report's evaluation of citizen participation in Worcester's Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP), Massachusetts General Law does not define "meaningful citizen participation" anywhere within its body. The lack of a definition in this legal requirement coupled with the absence of an example acting as a standard for citizen participation allows for broad interpretation of this requirement. With no concrete definition for this requirement, I sought definitions of "meaningful public participation" in Section 4.3 from academia, governmental agencies, and 15 interviewees. However, the next section focuses on the participation methods that the WRA used to meet the legal requirement.

2.3 Citizen Participation Methods in the Urban Revitalization Plan

There are several methods for involving the public in the planning process that the WRA utilized in developing the Urban Revitalization Plan. In total, there are five distinct methods, several of which I have mentioned in previous sections:

1. The WRA Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC),
2. public forum,
3. public hearings,
4. online availability of the draft Urban Revitalization Plan, and
5. media outreach.

The CAC, from its establishment in 2014 to the publication and ratification of the URP by Worcester's city council in 2016, held 9 meetings and was "...comprised of a dedicated group of stakeholders that included local residents, business owners, property owners, and municipal officials committed to the development and implementation of the URP" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 105). The CAC served to advise the WRA's decisions and provided commentary and concerns regarding the WRA's actions. Unlike public hearings, the public forum the WRA held had a set goal: to determine the fate of the Wyman-Gordon parcels. Holistic discussion of the URP at the forum did not take place and any discussion was limited to suggestions for the Wyman-Gordon parcels. The WRA primarily received the public's suggestions through note cards that the Authority handed out to the audience present (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 83). The two formal public hearings that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hosted for the legal requirements of public participation in M.G.L C 121B took place on Thursday, February 26th, 2015 at 5:30 pm and on Thursday, May 5th, 2016 (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 65). The authors of the URP did not describe how the last two methods, the online availability of the draft and media outreach, contributed to public participation. The methods the WRA used are not unique, and they have used them in the past to varying degrees of success in other historic urban renewal plans, but first the next section established urban renewal across the US.

2.4 Urban Redevelopment, Renewal, and Revitalization in the US

Worcester, Massachusetts, the second largest city in New England has executed redevelopment plans that sought to clear slums and increase housing as outlined in the 1949 Act but has also attempted to rejuvenate its downtown to its previous luster through similar clearance (Welker, 2017). The two most notable deleterious urban renewal plans executed by Worcester are the replacement of the Laurel-Clayton neighborhood with Plumley Village and the replacement of much of the City's downtown with the Worcester Galleria (Mandell, 2016). These two instances of mass clearing, much like the kind Jane Jacobs references, have left economic scars on Worcester and have tainted the reputation of contemporary urban renewal plans with liberal use of eminent domain and a failure to address and heed public opinion (Welker, 2017).

Urban redevelopment, renewal, and revitalization, however one may call the process, all refer to the same phenomena in the United States: the process by which a government redevelops plots of land either through acquisition and sale to private developers or through the encouragement of owners to redevelop (Sutton, 2008). Many urban redevelopment and renewal programs often received and still receive some form of financial support through federal funding, and direct federal influence in urban housing, redevelopment, and construction first began with the National Housing Act of 1934 (Department of Geography - University of California, n.d.).

Passed during the Great Depression as a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the National Housing Act of 1934 sought to make housing and mortgages more affordable for more citizens and created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC) (Department of

Geography - University of California, n.d.). The mechanism by which this Act sought to make housing more affordable was by providing federal guarantees of repayment to mortgage issuers and, in effect, sparked a boom of new construction of homes and modernization of older homes (Department of Geography - University of California, n.d.) The National Housing Act serves as the foundation for much of the legislation that currently governs urban redevelopment in the United States.

The first amendment to the National Housing Act of 1934 that outlined redevelopment similar to that seen throughout the United States was the Housing Act of 1949 (Committee on Banking and Currency United States Senate, 1949,). The 1949 act provided federal financing for slum clearance in conjunction with city-lead urban redevelopment plans in addition several other provisions (Committee on Banking and Currency United States Senate, 1949). This policy was the first federal program to provide direct funding for the clearance of slums and redevelopment of their land with housing or commercial uses and granted broad power to public agencies that would execute this clearance:

A local public agency would, after public hearing, acquire (through purchase or condemnation) a slum or blighted or deteriorating area selected in accordance with a general city plan for the development of the locality as a whole. The local public agency would then clear the land and make it available, by sale or lease, for private or public redevelopment or development in accordance with a predetermined local redevelopment plan for the area. (Committee on Banking and Currency United States Senate, 1949, p. 3639).

This law did not rigorously define what is a slum, or what qualifications need to be met for an area to be blighted or deteriorating. This interpretation was wholly left to the city and its home state, and because of the lack of a consistent definition at the time, often vibrant, healthy, and dense neighborhoods or areas were deemed slums (von Hoffman, 2000. pp. 209-303). City planners sometimes conflated densely populated areas with the overcrowding of dwellings, leading to the mass clearing of economically viable areas that, at worse, only required renovation (Jacobs, 1992, p. 270). This type of clearance often stunted the long-term growth of cities by leaving the economic scars of underused buildings that were erected in place of these viable neighborhoods (Jacobs, 1992, p. 285).

Both the attempted and executed clearing of vibrant neighborhoods deemed slums from Boston's West End to New York City's Greenwich Village to Chicago's South Side, highlighted both in Jacobs' work and in research, have tarnished the reputation for urban renewal and redevelopment plans (Moser, 2018). From 1950 to 1966, urban renewal plans funded at least in part by the Housing Act of 1949, displaced about 300,000 families nationwide (Moser, 2018). At around 3.54 people per family at the time, the percentage of a city's population displaced by these plans, in the case of Boston, reached as high as 4.53% (Associated Press, 1988; Moser, 2018). Usually it was the larger, more densely populated cities like Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, and Washington D.C that undertook these renewal plans at the time. But less renowned cities, like Worcester, MA have attempted similar clearing in their plans that have had mixed to poor results (City of Worcester, MA, 2019).

2.5 Urban Renewal in Worcester, Massachusetts: A Brief History

Worcester, like many other US cities, has a tumultuous history with urban renewal. Worcester's most contentious period of renewal was led by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) from the 1960's to early 1970's. During this time, the WRA found many areas to be underutilized, vacant, and even a drag on the image of the city (Kotsopoulos, 2017). The WRA's answer to their perceived problem was to clear vibrant neighborhoods they deemed as slums and to create the Worcester Center Galleria, and Plumley Village in their place.

In the 1960s, Worcester commissioned several land use studies to determine how to best attract shoppers and the general population into its increasingly empty downtown streets as suburbanization took its toll (Welker, 2017). These studies informed the WRA that one of the better methods for attracting suburbanites back into the city would be through a mall. Thus, the WRA began to draft plans for the Worcester Galleria, a collection of two skyscrapers, a large parking garage, and the Galleria Mall (Damas, 2006). To construct the Worcester Galleria, the WRA made liberal use of eminent domain to acquire and demolish 86 individual buildings, leveled an entire neighborhood, shrank the Worcester Common by 50 feet, and dug up 170 graves (Welker, 2017). While the City of Worcester deemed this area a slum and a drag on the City in the past, today it regrets razing the area, describing the neighborhood that once occupied the Galleria's footprint as:

walkable city-blocks with active street level retail and small businesses. The vast majority of the businesses at the time [1960's] were locally owned and operated

and the buildings were “human scale” with lower heights and smaller widths with multiple buildings fronting each street block (City of Worcester, MA, 2019).

Without foresight into long-term impacts on the City, the WRA forged onward with the Galleria Mall, the centerpiece of the WRA’s Worcester Center Galleria project. However, this centerpiece would prove a poor investment. For a short time, the Mall was profitable and successful in attracting more suburbanites into Downtown Worcester, but as time went on and other malls opened in competition, the Mall went through several rebrandings, two closures and ultimately shuttered in 2006 and demolished in 2010 (Welker, 2017). Outside of the Mall’s poor performance, other aspects of the Center’s development cut off the Central Business District and Downtown from vital areas of Worcester, such as Shrewsbury Street and the Canal District, impeding further development of Downtown (City of Worcester, MA, 2019). The aggressive acquisition, redevelopment, and ultimate failure of the Worcester Center Galleria as a method for revitalizing Downtown Worcester left many residents wary of urban renewal within the WRA’s more recent Theatre District and Downtown plans (Kotsopoulos, 2015). Failure, defined in this context, is the Mall’s low customer retention, disappearing storefronts, and its eventual closure after a financially unsuccessful operation (Damas, 2006).

Another example of the mass razing of a viable area in Worcester is the case of the former Laurel-Clayton neighborhood. In 1970, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) partnered with State Mutual Insurance to demolish most of the Laurel-Clayton neighborhood because the City of Worcester had claimed, under the vague wording of the Housing Act of 1949, the predominantly working class African-

American neighborhood to be a slum (Mandell, 2016; Kotsopoulos, 2018). Residents of the neighborhood, and sympathetic organizers from around the city, assembled to oppose the proposed clearing, many claiming that no one in the community had ever asked for such redevelopment (Mandell, 2016). The City, in an effort to appease these organizers and to collect community input, established a citizens advisory committee. But, according to residents of the neighborhood in “The Plumley Village Story” documentary, they often learned of city plans for Laurel-Clayton through news headlines and cited a lack of effort, interest, and communication by and from the City (Mandell, 2016).

Despite a march on the State Mutual Insurance building and continued resistance to the City’s plans, the WRA and its partner obtained federal funds through Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949 to clear the then active and vibrant neighborhood (Mandell, 2016). This clearance displaced 225 households and disrupted several businesses, and while the developers made space for those displaced from the clearance in Plumley Village, many could not afford the new project’s prices (McFarlane, 2007; Mandell, 2016). In addition to this, residents of Laurel-Clayton had difficulty finding housing in the City at large and the neighborhood’s once tight-knit community vanished (Mandell, 2016). While Worcester’s goal in the case of Laurel-Clayton was to clear out slums and generate more housing, there was only a small, if any, increase in the housing stock (Mandell, 2016).

Despite the performance of the WRA’s Galleria and the lasting damage to the communities that lived in the footprints of the Galleria and Plumley Village, the WRA received some praise for the construction of the Worcester Public Library, and the YWCA buildings. However, after these and similar projects concluded, the WRA’s

influence within the city began to wane. After the city undertook significant tax reform in the 1980's under Proposition 2^{1/2}, much of the WRA's budget and staff were cut, sparing only a 5 member board of the once influential WRA (Kotsopoulos, 2014)

Today, the Authority enjoys a resurgence in its power within the City (Kotsopoulos, 2014). With restored funds, the WRA embarked on another plan. On December 3rd, 2013 the Worcester City Council accepted and approved the Downtown Worcester Theatre District Master Plan. The Theatre District Plan (TDP) was prepared for the Business Development Corporation (a private entity), in association with the City of Worcester's Executive Office of Economic Development and prepared by the private planners "Crosby | Schlessinger | Smallridge" to renew the City's theatre district (Crosby, et al., 2012). The overarching vision for the TDP was to create a Downtown Theatre District that is as an active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional and residential growth supporting a vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to Downtown Worcester (Crosby et al., 2012).¹ In addition to this vision, the Theatre District Plan seeks to "Create a sense of place, serve as the center of the expanded Theatre/Creative District, and connect all of the entertainment and creative venues both in the District and throughout Downtown". Described later in this report, the authors of the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) seek to fulfill the same vision and goals outlined within the Theatre District Plan (Crosby et al., 2012).

¹ 18-hour neighborhood refers to the time during which the neighborhood is active i.e having pedestrians and citizens actively using the amenities and venues in the area during 18 hours of the day, presumably 8 am to 2 am

Similar to the case of Plumley Village, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) sought citizen input in the planning process of both the TDP and the URP outside of the legally required public hearings through the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).² The purpose of the two separate CACs created for the Theatre District Plan and the URP was to advise the WRA in the planning of the Theatre District, Downtown, as well as future endeavors to redevelop key areas downtown (Bird, 2013). In addition to serving an advisory role, the WRA: “...will appoint CAC members to ensure a cross-section of real estate, financial, legal and community input. Members should be familiar with urban planning and development or with a direct connection to the downtown area” (Bird, 2013).

With the Worcester Redevelopment Authority’s (WRA) renewed power and its history with past renewal plans not meaningfully involving the public (i.e. Plumley Village), I show in the next section the benefits of citizen participation, how they apply to Worcester, and frameworks to evaluate the WRA’s participation methods.

² It should be noted that in Worcester’s city government there already exists a CAC which oversees appointments to city positions, this particular CAC is not what I will continue to reference in this report.

3.0 Citizen Participation: Its Importance and Frameworks for Its Evaluation

In this chapter I review some of the distinct benefits of citizen participation along with some of the challenges this participation poses for decision makers, especially in terms of demolition and redevelopment. I also review two established frameworks that policy researchers, the public, or other concerned parties can use to evaluate citizen participation methods and processes. These frameworks evaluate overarching *processes* that are comprised of *methods*, as well as the individual methods themselves. The two main frameworks that I will describe and build off in this report are Sherry Arnstein’s “A Ladder of Public Participation” and the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) “Public Participation Spectrum”. Both of these frameworks see wide use in the planning and evaluation of public participation processes, including urban development, from Sydney, Australia, to Austin, Texas (Planning Institute Australia, 2011; Miller, Fellos, Korbus, 2015). Later in this section I identify some of the concerns and shortcomings of both frameworks and synthesize a new framework that addresses these shortcomings to then apply and answer one of my research questions: Was the public’s participation in the planning of the URP meaningful?

3.1 Citizen & Public Participation and their Collective Importance

Citizen and Public Participation

Massachusetts law is both not forthcoming with a definition of “meaningful citizen participation” and “citizen participation” in general. In this section, I establish

the definition for citizen participation that I will use and why it is important in decision-making and urban planning.

While the terms public participation and citizen participation may seem similar, they are not identical. Public participation and citizen participation both entail an overarching process, not just individual methods or events. The definition of public and citizen participation I use within this report is derived from the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Public Participation Guide:

Public participation can be any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision (EPA, 2018).

I use the EPA's definition of public participation because it is a US federal agency that often negotiates and involves the public with respect to its environmental decisions. Like urban planning, the EPA's environmental decisions have broad implications for every person that resides within, visits, and utilizes the environs in question. Thus, generalizations and insight derived from the EPA's public participation efforts hold some applicability to the public/citizen participation efforts in urban planning and the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP).

While similar in name, public participation and the citizen participation discussed in the URP and required by Massachusetts law have a distinct difference: citizenship. Massachusetts law appears to prefer the opinion of citizens impacted by urban planning instead of the entirety of the public affected. Within this report, public participation will refer to citizen participation within Massachusetts and vice versa.

These two forms of participation may be thought synonymous for the majority of this report because, in the case of public hearings and forums, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) did not attempt to determine the citizenship of participants in their methods to collect public input. According to the US Census, 21.1% of Worcester residents are foreign-born, establishing hard rules on citizenship could deny a large portion of Worcester's polity representation in the citizen participation process (US Census, 2017). However, in the case of the Citizens Advisory Committee that the WRA created, and it being comprised of just 15 members, it is possible the WRA used citizenship status in its member selection.

The Importance of Citizen Participation

Urban planning and urban revitalization impact everyone residing within a planned area, everyone within the city at large, and everyone who plans to visit the city. The impact of planning to demolish even a single building in an area can cause a ripple effect in a community, stirring up heated sentiments and even igniting campaigns. But citizen participation has uses beyond a means for preventing public backlash and can have many benefits for the public and planners alike, including, but not limited to: preserving community ownership, community problem solving, easily implementable policies.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which often negotiates and involves the public with respect to environmental decisions, has outlined some of the inherent benefits of public participation such as more easily implementable decisions and community problem solving (EPA, 2018). These benefits are applicable outside of the realm of environmental policy decision-making and can be applied to urban

planning just as well. The EPA even acknowledges the universality of the benefits of properly realized meaningful public participation in decisions that affect the public and engage a multitude of groups (EPA, 2018).

Other benefits of public participation within urban planning have been outlined in a more international perspective at a professional and academic panel titled “Citizen Design Science in Urban Planning” held at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy within the National University in Singapore. Experts at the panel came to three distinct benefits to increased public participation in urban planning: comprehensive communal space planning, crowdsourcing, and a greater sense of citizen ownership. Mizah Rahman, one of the panelists, said that playgrounds, senior activity centers, and other various communal areas are often overlooked in planning and its users left outside of the decision-making process (Nair, 2017). The panel supported efforts to include residents in the planning of these areas because it is these areas that create communal cohesion and any effort to facilitate this cohesion would, in my opinion, facilitate the area’s sense of place as well. Similar to the benefits drawn from inclusion of citizens in the planning of communal areas, greater public participation in the overall planning process could produce useful crowdsourcing for bettering a city. Panelists claimed that crowdsourcing would lead to a plethora of solutions to the problems urban planners might be struggling to solve from a top-down approach (Nair, 2017). Instead, crowdsourcing would allow a bottom-up approach for problem-solving that would take into account the perspectives of those directly impacted by their urban surroundings to solve problems with nuance that a top-down approach might have lacked. Outside of problem solving, panelists also mentioned that crowdsourcing might be more easily utilized for identifying problems. However, for crowdsourcing to be effective, planners

and experts would have to educate citizens on what is within the scope of planning and how to identify problems in their surroundings and come up with possible solutions (Nair, 2017). A third benefit of public participation in the urban planning process that panelists identified as a direct consequence of crowdsourcing and overall greater public participation is a sense of ownership among citizens. Remy Guo, another one of the panelists, cited the success of an initiative in Seoul, South Korea where citizens were provided training on planning processes and how to improve their neighborhoods. This training encouraged citizens to participate in the planning process and gave them tools to solve problems within their own neighborhoods (Nair, 2017).

While all of the aforementioned benefits of increased public participation appear beneficial to all parties involved, they are reliant on the cooperation between planners and citizens within a distinct culture and form of government. Despite differences across cultures and scenarios, the benefits identified by both the EPA and the academic panel all directly correspond with an increase in public participation. Even though the exact benefits of public participation vary based on context, that increases in citizen participation have distinct benefits holds implications for urban renewal in Worcester.

Sometimes these benefits, however, can work against the agenda of planners and decision makers. Community and citizen ownership, one of the aforementioned benefits, is a difficult topic when it comes to redevelopment and demolition due to the conflict between the public's perceived ownership of a privately-owned space. There have been many cases where the dynamics between the public, government, and private spheres have led to different claims of ownership over a space. An example of these dynamics comes from Worcester, MA.

The 2018 demolition of the Notre Dame des Canadiens Church in Worcester, constructed in 1929 illustrates how even the demolition of a single building can impact a community. Even though it stood unused for 10 years, there was a large outpouring of dissent over plans to demolish the Church, much of which can be seen from the minutes and recording of a June 12th City Council meeting (City of Worcester, 2018). At this meeting citizens petitioned for and requested that the City look into acquiring the Church from the Hanover Insurance Group, the private owner of the property. One of the leading groups that organized public dissent over the Church's demolition while seeking alternate uses was the Save Notre Dame Alliance. The Alliance galvanized community members, held art and reuse plan competitions as well as galleries showcasing the Church (Save Notre Dame Alliance, 2018). The Alliance was the leading critic of how the Church's demolition was handled, and on the savenotredamealliance.com website they highlight concerns about how the courts, the City, and Hanover Group moved forward. Yet, efforts to prevent the demolition were unsuccessful, and demolition began in July 2018 (Save Notre Dame Alliance, 2018).

But what generalizations can we draw about citizen participation from the demolition of the Notre Dame des Canadiens Church? While Hanover did not include the public extensively in the decision-making process regarding existential changes to a piece of land, the public still acted and sought to make its opinion known, and to influence decision making. Hanover Group, the owners of the Church, faced negative effects, such as costly legal challenges, lost time, and lost reputation or trust from the public at large (Save Notre Dame Alliance, 2018). The Alliance's activism and its ensuing effects all came from the public's response to a single notable building in downtown Worcester being demolished, even though it went unused for a decade.

However, with an urban renewal plan that targets several buildings downtown, some like the Midtown Mall which have a long history of use, involving the public can prevent a large outpouring of dissent. Accommodating citizen participation, however, is not a simple task. Citizen participation that does not seriously address the concerns of the public may end up appearing tokenistic and can often carry with it backlash that is worse than never having accommodated citizen participation in the first place (Arnstein, 1969).

3.2 International Association for Public Participation’s “Public Participation Spectrum”

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an association of members “who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world” (IAP2, 2018). In their pursuit of improved public participation, the IAP2 created a Spectrum of Public Participation to:

assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate and depend on the goals, time frames, resources, and levels of concern in the decision to be made (IAP2, 2018).

The Spectrum is used as a reference point and at times a guide in many public participation plans. While this spectrum can encompass many policies, referendums,


plans, and similar ilk, for the purposes of this report I will focus on the Spectrum’s relevance to the URP’s planning process. The Spectrum, shown below, highlights five levels representing the increased power the public has to impact decisions. These five levels are: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. Figure 3.1 below contains a graphic of the Spectrum that the IAP2 created showing the gradations between participation levels.

Figure 3.1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2, 2018)

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Although the Spectrum may seem relatively straightforward, there are couple of aspects that are not immediately obvious and that are lacking. First, the Spectrum lacks examples for what participation methods can fit into which levels. However, the IBM Center for the Business of Government provides an evaluation of participation methods and where they fall on the Spectrum’s levels, I have included excerpts of their evaluation below in Figure 3.2. I chose to list these methods in particular because they resemble those used by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority mentioned in Section 2.3.

**Figure 3.2 - Examples of Participation Methods and Spectrum Levels
(Lukensmeyer, Goldman, Stern, 2011)**

Participation Method	IAP2 Spectrum Level
Citizen Advisory Committee	Collaborate
Public Meetings/Hearings	Consult
Questionnaire/Survey	Consult
Area Wide Council	Collaborate

Another, aspect that the Spectrum does not call attention to is that the IAP2 does not consider methods and processes that satisfy only the “Inform” level to be participatory. The IAP2 does acknowledge the importance of well-informed citizens but does not in any way believe methods that only serve to inform citizens to be meaningful. A third aspect is that there are discrepancies between the Spectrum and other IAP2 materials.

IAP2, in its Core Values, states that “Public participation includes the **promise** that the public's contribution will influence the decision” (IAP2, 2018). When applied to the Spectrum, however, this statement falls short in the Spectrum’s first participatory level: “Consult”. The Consult level only requires decision makers to obtain feedback from the public and let them know **if** the public’s contribution influenced decision making, instead of feedback always having influence. Beyond this inconsistency, a fourth takeaway is that the Spectrum does not provide direct analysis of certain public participation methods and provides no examples of the overall public participation processes that meet the Spectrum’s specific levels. In addition to these, the Spectrum takes the perspective of decision makers in its design with the “Promise to the Public” row using a collective “We”. I have summarized the key characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of the Spectrum below and will reference back to them later in this chapter as Figure 3.3 when I create a new framework.

Figure 3.3 Characteristics, Strengths, and Weaknesses of the Spectrum

<p><i>Key Characteristics of the IAP2 Spectrum</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Linear ● 5 levels described by a Promise to the Public and Public Participation Goal organized left to right ● Levels ordered based on increasing impact ● Inform is non-participatory ● Lack of method analysis ● Discrepancy between Core Values and the Spectrum ● Lack of reasoning behind the Spectrum’s design ● Takes the perspective of the decision makers
<p><i>The Strengths of the IAP2 Spectrum</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The use of Goals and Promises to the Public creates definite expectations for both officials and the public to refer to ● Simple design allows for easy reference and application to public participation efforts
<p><i>The Weaknesses of the Spectrum</i></p>

- Overgeneralizations make the Spectrum's levels lack specificity, especially between Collaborate and Involve, making it difficult to distinguish which methods belong where
- Is not forthcoming for the logic behind its categorizations
- Lacks examples of what methods fit where on the Spectrum
- Does not acknowledge the potential for abuse and malintent behind public participation efforts
- Only views the public's participation as something to be managed

3.3 Sherry Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation"

Sherry Arnstein was a public policy analyst and acted as the special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare under the Kennedy administration (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, 2015). Her publication, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", has been translated into several foreign languages and has been distributed internationally (Wilcox, 1998). In her publication, Arnstein defines citizen participation as a form of categorical citizen power:

It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out (Arnstein, 1969).

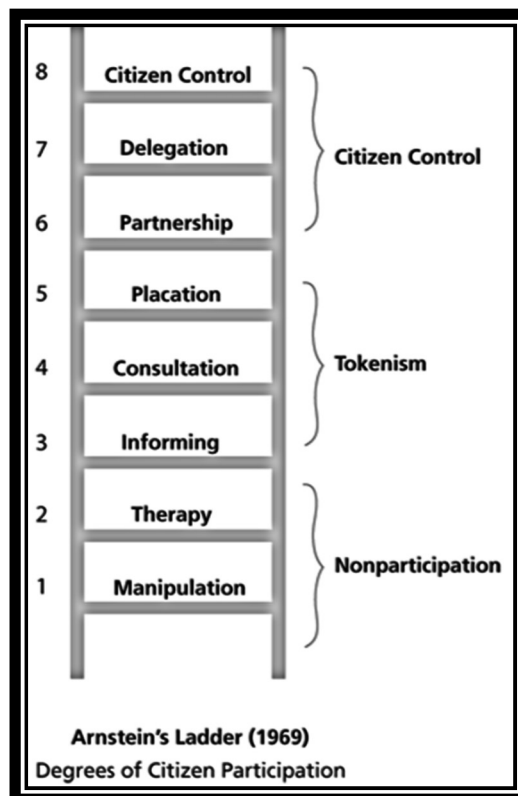
Working from this definition, Arnstein created a metaphorical ladder in which each rung represents an increase in the power of citizens in determining the end product.

Arnstein categorizes her eight rungs of citizen participation into three separate sections:

1. Nonparticipation
2. Degrees of tokenism
3. Degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969).

Her justification for these categories is their respective level of participation, or nonparticipation, represented in each rung, I describe her justifications later in this section. A rendition of Arnstein's Ladder can be found below in Figure 3.4 below.

Figure 3.4 Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



Unlike the IAP2 Spectrum, Arnstein’s graphic depiction of her Ladder does not contain descriptions of each rung or the categories in which they reside. Much of Arnstein’s descriptions rely on real-world examples and case studies as a means to describe and justify the positions of rungs of public power on the ladder, as such, her descriptions are lengthy. I have summarized the descriptions she gave in her original paper in Figure 3.5. I organized increases in public power as movement from bottom to top like the original Ladder, and I included the objectives and examples of methods that Arnstein used to describe the rungs of public power.

Figure 3.5 Arnstein’s Ladder in Detail (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 218-224)

	Level of Public Power	Objectives	Examples
Citizen Power	Citizen Control	To grant citizens full charge of managerial and policy aspects	Lack of intermediary between neighborhood and source of funding
	Delegated Power	To allow citizens a majority in the decision-making process	“...separate and parallel groups of citizens and powerholders, with provision for citizen veto if differences of opinion cannot be resolved through negotiation”

	Partnership	To negotiate power between citizens and planners	Joint policy boards, planning committees
Tokenism	Placation	To grant citizens advisory roles in the planning process	Community Action Agencies (done correctly)
	Consultation	To invite citizen opinions on planning	Survey, public hearings
	Informing	To notify citizens of their rights and important events	Public notices, public hearings
Nonparticipation	Therapy	“...to enable powerholders to “educate” or “cure” the participants”	Community Action Agencies
	Manipulation		Citizen Advisory Committees

While there are some similarities to the Spectrum, the Ladder differs in several ways. The Ladder organizes increases in citizen power/impact in a linear fashion, similar to the Spectrum. But while the Spectrum takes the perspective of decision makers, the Ladder takes the perspectives of citizens involved in the process and equips citizens with language and definitions to argue for greater participation. Different from the Spectrum, the Ladder uses example citizen participation methods to show how to

apply the Ladder as a framework. However, like the Spectrum, the Ladder is not without its limitations.

Limitations of Arnstein's Ladder

This framework is not without its limitations, and even its author, Sherry Arnstein, has criticized the Ladder's simplifications and generalizations. In this short subsection I bring together criticisms from Arnstein, academics, and weaknesses that I have identified in the framework to better understand how to create a framework addressing the Ladder's shortfalls.

Arnstein acknowledges the polarizing argument that she makes in depicting citizens as powerless groups and planners/government officials as having absolute power and acknowledges that this can be a false dichotomy. These two groups are not uniform and are a simplification of the myriad of groups and differing power levels between officials and residents. Arnstein justifies her simplification of 'haves' and 'have-nots' by taking the perspective of 'have-nots' viewing governmental systems as monolithic and unapproachable (Arnstein, 1969).

Outside of my critique of her oversimplifying the tensions between 'haves' and 'have-nots', Arnstein herself acknowledges the limitations of The Ladder's eight rungs. These rungs are manufactured cut-off points in a world of policy and involvement that is often more subtle and nuanced (Arnstein, 1969). In a similar vein, the characteristics used to define certain rungs can be applied to others. Arnstein provides the example of hiring residents/citizens for the planning process as one of these broadly applicable characteristics. Hiring citizens can apply to any rung as "...powerholders can hire poor

people to coopt them, to placate them, or to utilize the have-nots' special skills and insights" (Arnstein, 1969).

Critics of Arnstein's Ladder point out that her focus on power relationships "...limits effective responses to the challenge of involving users in services and undermines the potential of the user involvement process" (Tritter, McCallum, 2005, p. 1). McCallum and Tritter continue their critique that using power as the basis for The Ladder assumes that it is a common basis for conversation and thought of government officials and citizens. This assumption is not clearly explained by Arnstein and may not be a common mode of thought and comparison for people involved in the participation process. Outside of this, while Arnstein calls participation for participation's sake tokenistic, participation can be a select goal for officials or residents (Tritter, McCallum, 2005). In general, Arnstein views citizen participation's sole measure is the power to make decisions and seize control (Tritter, McCallum, 2005).

I have summarized the key characteristics of the Ladder, its above criticisms, and its overall strengths into three bulleted lists below that I will collectively reference as Figure 3.6 in my creation of a new framework.

Figure 3.6 Characteristics, Strengths, and Weaknesses of the Ladder

The Ladder's Key Characteristics

- Linear
- 3 categories containing 8 rungs moving from bottom to top
- Categories allow for quick judgements
- Power is the key variable
- Citizen participation is citizen power
- Takes the perspective of citizens
- Oversimplifies power relations
- Descriptors of one rung can be applied to others
- Criticizes the use of certain public participation methods

The Strengths of Arnstein's Ladder

- Supports rungs of the ladder with real-life examples
- Provides the logic behind the rungs of the ladder and what situations fit with which rung
- Breaks down the rungs into broader categories that describe the processes overall

The Weaknesses of Arnstein's Ladder

- Biased towards greater public participation being a universal good
- Views most attempts at public participation as unnecessarily paternalistic and is inherently suspicious of governmental officials
- Reliance on intent as well as effect allows for the same method to be categorized under different rungs (i.e. Community Action Agencies)
- Only views the public's participation in decision making as something to be seized

3.4 Synthesizing Arnstein's Ladder and the IAP2 Spectrum

Arnstein's Ladder and the IAP2 Spectrum both are useful frameworks for evaluating both overall public participation processes and the individual methods that make up these processes. Even though Arnstein's Ladder served as the bedrock for the construction of the IAP2 Spectrum, which led to many similarities in their design and focus, the differences in their key characteristics lead to significant discrepancies when using them to evaluate public participation processes (Shiple, Utz, 2012). To best understand some of the difficulties that may arise when using either the Ladder or the Spectrum to evaluate public participation (P2) in the URP, I analyzed four P2 methods using both frameworks. Figure 3.7 below is a set of public participation methods used as examples by both Arnstein's Ladder and applications of the Spectrum by the IBM Center for the Business of Government. Figure 3.7 shows how each framework views certain methods differently.

Figure 3.7 Application of the Ladder and Spectrum (Lukensmeyer, Goldman, Stern, 2011)

Participation Method	Arnstein’s Ladder	IAP2 Spectrum
Citizen Advisory Committee	Manipulation	Collaborate
Public Meetings/Hearings	Informing	Consult
Questionnaire/Survey	Consultation	Consult
Area Wide Council	Partnership	Collaborate*

*The IBM Center for the Business of Government doesn’t call out this method explicitly, but puts a similar example of participation, collaborative CAC’s, under Collaborate

In the above figure, four individual participation methods directly referenced within each of the frameworks can be categorized underneath four separate rungs of Arnstein’s Ladder while the same four fits under only two levels of the IAP² Spectrum. Arnstein’s Ladder offers more nuance in terms of categorization while the Spectrum allows for more methods to fit under the same umbrella. However, the Ladder’s nuance itself becomes complicated as Arnstein herself notes that individual methods, when implemented in differing ways, can be put under wholly different categories. For example, Community Action Agencies, shown in Figure 3.5, can be categorized as Therapy under the broader Nonparticipation category, and when done differently as Placation under the Tokenism category. The extra nuance and detail that the Ladder affords, while useful in some contexts, can be confusing as it focuses on intent and implementation in addition to the method itself. The Spectrum’s broader categories and detailed descriptions avoid this confusion, as it focuses only on stated intent, not implementation. The adoption of one of the Spectrum’s levels of participation carries with it a definite promise to the public and a definite goal commensurate with

succeeding levels. This more defined system allows methods to be categorized solidly underneath a single level.

With these discrepancies in mind, application of only one of the public participation frameworks can leave significant details and perspectives behind. Thus, I sought to combine aspects from both frameworks into a hybrid that would allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the WRA's public participation methods to better answer my research question of: Was the public's participation in the planning of the URP meaningful?

3.5 A Unified Public Participation Framework to Apply to the URP

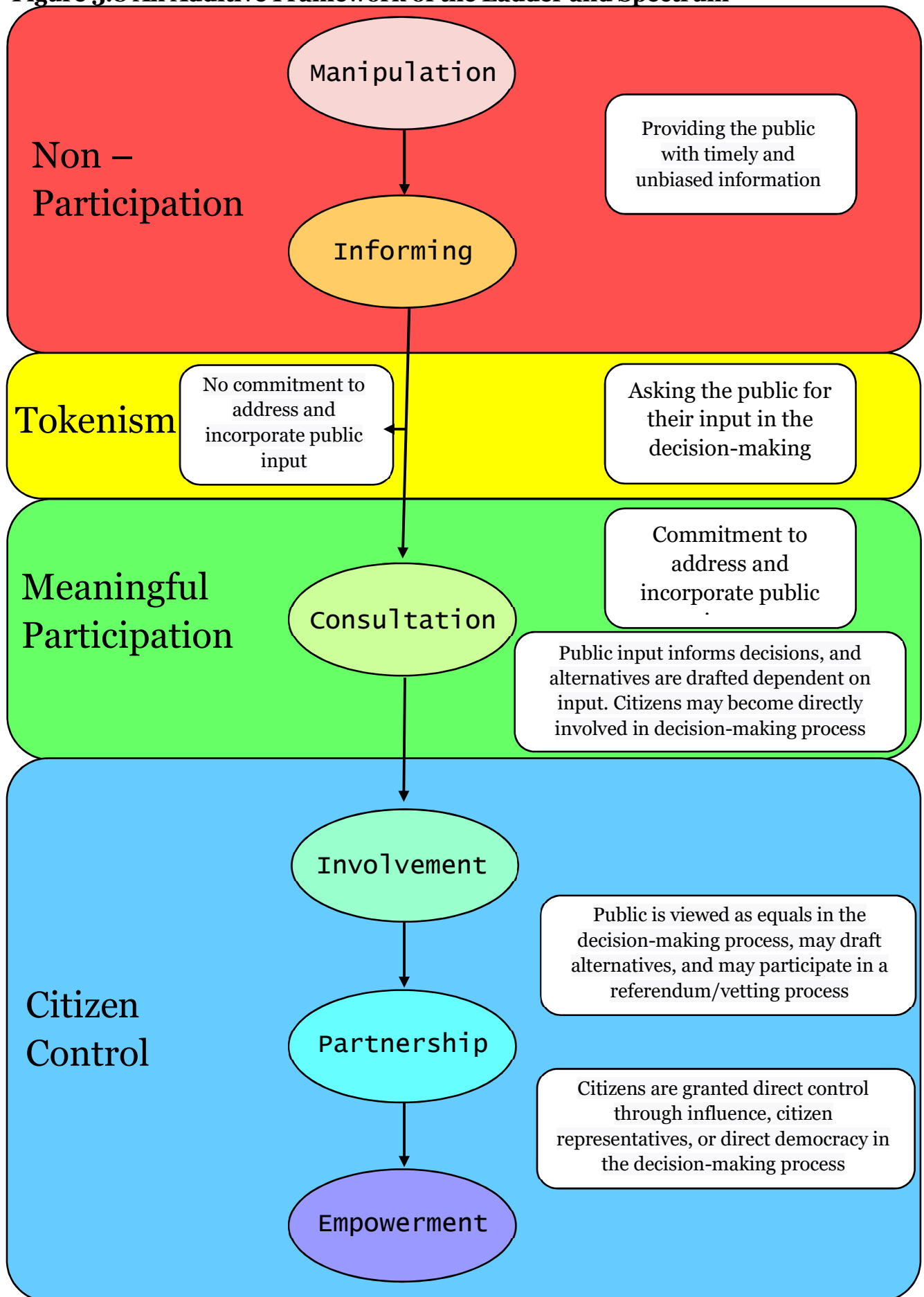
In this section I argue that, because of the resulting loss of detail in applying just one of the two aforementioned frameworks, the creation of a framework that incorporates best practices while minimizing the weaknesses of the Spectrum and Ladder will allow for a more accurate evaluation of the WRA's participation methods. Both Arnstein's Ladder and the IAP2 Spectrum have their similarities, differences and their own benefits and drawbacks, as shown in the aforementioned Figures 3.3 and 3.6. Arnstein's Ladder views public participation as a power struggle between citizens and the government where the citizens should *demand* greater involvement in decision-making. The Spectrum, on the other hand, views public participation from the perspective of government officials and those who seek to *grant* the public greater involvement in decision-making. Neither framework's perspective is incorrect, and both offer insight into the participation process that complements the other's short fallings. To better analyze the WRA's citizen participation methods I have compiled the strengths and weaknesses of both frameworks below and later within this section I have created a

unified framework that incorporates as many strengths as possible while, hopefully, negating as many weaknesses as possible.

An Additive Framework of Public Participation

This new framework brings together aspects of both Arnstein's Ladder and the IAP² Spectrum while attempting to eliminate the drawbacks of utilizing either framework alone. Like both frameworks, the Additive framework follows a linear path starting at the lowest possible level of public participation and ending at the highest possible level. The framework is structured with the lowest level of participation at the top and the greatest level at the bottom as an attempt to eliminate Arnstein's bias of more participation is always better. This framework also takes pointers from Arnstein's overarching groupings such as "Nonparticipation" containing Manipulation and Therapy, "Tokenism" containing Informing, Consultation, and so forth. This framework utilizes these categories in name, and partly in content reasoning, but also adds the new category of "Meaningful Participation". I argued in Section 2.5 that Arnstein's inclusion of these categories served as useful logical shortcuts for determining the overall amount of impact citizen participation had in the decision-making process. Such shortcuts serve as important landmarks in evaluating public participation and lends useful rhetoric to conversations on what the level of citizen participation should be. Therefore, I included all three of Arnstein's categories while adding the new Meaningful Participation category. A graphic representation of this new framework can be found in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8 An Additive Framework of the Ladder and Spectrum



The Meaningful Participation category is perhaps the most striking difference between the Additive Framework and the two previous frameworks. I created this category specifically for the URP as Massachusetts law requires “meaningful citizen participation” for all renewal plans (DHCD, 2018). For a participation method analyzed through this framework to be considered meaningful, the decision makers and implementers of said method must commit to addressing and incorporating public opinion in future decisions. This requirement is based primarily on an issue I encountered when attempting to apply the Ladder and Spectrum to theoretical participation methods removed from an overarching process. I found that, without any knowledge of the intent or implementation of the methods, the highest form of participation I could categorize a majority of methods within was either “Informing” in the Ladder and “Inform” in the Spectrum. The methods that did not stipulate a commitment from decision makers to respect public opinion could only, at the very best, inform the public, or at the very worst, be seen as tokenistic, all dependent on the actions of decision makers. Therefore, to reduce uncertainty on the actions of decision makers, the Additive Framework specifically requires decision makers and officials to make a written commitment and enter into an informal or formal agreement with the public to respect, address, and incorporate the public’s input in decision making. Without such a commitment, most participatory methods analyzed through the Additive Framework run the risk of being tokenistic or non-participatory.

Nonparticipation in the Ladder and this framework represents essentially the same definition: at this level, government officials are not involving citizens in the decision-making process, unless to educate or manipulate. Tokenism, unlike in the Ladder, is only relegated to a single level of public participation in this framework,

Consultation. The reason for this is related to working definitions of what might be considered meaningful public participation and its key difference with Tokenism. Any public participation measure that ensures, in legal writing, that the public's opinion, decisions, and/or consensus will be adhered to, or at the very least addressed, in the decision making of officials is essential to meaningful participation. Should officials make no such commitment, then the public participation measures, though possibly well intended, can lead to tokenism. Once decision makers agree to this commitment, the degree to which officials incorporate the public's thoughts on a matter and grant them power in the decision-making process distinguishes the following levels of participation from each other.

An interesting difference that I found between Arnstein's Ladder and the IAP² Spectrum was the Spectrum's clear distinctions between each level of public participation. The Spectrum distinguished between its levels with additive "Goals" and "Promises" that detailed the entirety of obligations a government or private entity would assume at every level. While I found the wording of these obligations vague, the additive process is useful for considering what new obligations decision makers would assume at each level. I adopted this additive process and modified it to highlight the key differences between each level of public participation in the new framework instead of a holistic summary. Movement from one level to the next calls attention to the difference between each level and refrains from summarizing the entirety of obligations an entity assumes. While the loss of this summary creates the need for a closer reading of all the previous "jumps" from one level to the next, it also allows for an almost checklist-type process that allows for quicker evaluation of what needs to be done to move to a more public-empowering level.

Manipulation

This part of the framework takes a majority of its structure and reasoning from the first rung on Arnstein's Ladder: "Manipulation". While Arnstein distinguishes her first rung from the second, "Therapy", I do not make such a distinction. The therapy that Arnstein described in her work, while perhaps slightly more empowering to citizens since it acknowledges their wants, is still a form of manipulation. Referencing Section 2.4 where I provide a description of Arnstein's work in greater detail, Arnstein characterizes the goals of planners utilizing Manipulation and Therapy as "...not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). The processes of educating the public about a plan's absolute necessity or curing them of their concerns about such a plan are both manipulative.

Manipulation, thus, is the lowest form of public participation that government officials or city planners can achieve, as manipulation entails an active effort by such officials to at worst prevent the public from interfering with plans or at best shape public opinion. Some more common activities that would meet this level would include Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC), and public relations campaigns. However, unlike Arnstein's Ladder, which condemns all CACs, this framework views them differently. CAC's, seen through the lens of this framework, would only be manipulative if their primary purpose is to have governmental officials advise and shape citizen opinions, instead of citizens advising officials. Public relations campaigns, on the other hand, are always manipulative. Such campaigns are designed to shape and craft public opinion

and perceptions on the matter at hand. These campaigns do not take cues from the public, they give them, and are thus inherently manipulative.

Informing

Informing in this framework is nearly identical to the corresponding levels in the Ladder and the Spectrum and is one of the most straightforward levels. This level relies on government officials or other decision makers to provide the public with honest information about the decision in question, its process, and the intent of the decision makers. However, one difference with the Spectrum that this framework shares with the Ladder is the stipulation that information must be provided to the public with sufficient time for the public to react before a plan is implemented. This level, though more participatory than Manipulation is still non-participatory because there are no formal methods afforded to the public for feedback, recourse, or other involvement in the decision-making process.

Consultation

There is one main difference between this level and Informing: the active request for input from the public. Beyond Manipulation, every level relies on the foundations built in the previous level, therefore Consultation can only be reached when honest information has been disseminated through the Informing level.

Consultation is the turning point in public participation for any governmental process that determines whether current and future participation will be either tokenistic or meaningful. There are two criteria that a public participation process must meet to become meaningful: a written promise or legal requirement for public opinion to be respected or at least addressed in the decision-making process, and the

dissemination of information that Consultation relies on being timely enough for informed public response. Within the Additive Framework, efforts that meet these two criteria while soliciting public input constitute meaningful public participation. For example, methods that could meet the level of Consultation would be public meetings, hearings, forums, and citizen surveys.

Involvement

This level of public participation takes a majority of its inspiration from the IAP² Spectrum which contains the similar level, “Involve”. The IAP² describes the Involve level through the goal “To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered” (IAP², 2018). This goal is paired with the promise to the public that officials “...will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision” (IAP², 2018). The new definition of “Involvement” in the new framework relies on and builds upon the promise to the public instead of the overarching goal. This level requires that officials develop alternatives to the current plan and participation process in question dependent on the public’s thoughts on the matter. The previous promise outlined by the IAP², when read carefully, does not explicitly require the creation of alternatives and only says that if alternatives are drafted, then they must reflect public opinion.

In addition to mandating officials to create alternative plans, the Involvement level requires officials to notify the public of every important decision or modification related to the overarching plan. This obligation also entails providing means for public

input to influence these decisions or modifications, as well as ample time for this input to have any potential effect.

Partnership

While assuming the responsibilities and requirements of all the previous levels, except Manipulation, Partnership expands beyond Involvement by including citizens directly in the drafting of alternatives to better match public input. Unsurprisingly, this inclusion often takes the form of a partnership between the decision makers and the public, often treating the public as equals in the process as a whole. While the first three levels of participation in this new framework mainly drew upon Arnstein's Ladder, this level matches most closely with the "Collaborate" level of the IAP² Spectrum. In the Spectrum, this level's public participation goal is "To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution" (IAP², 2018).

The key difference between this level and the one depicted in the Spectrum is that this level would require the decision makers to implement the aforementioned 'preferred solution' in some form or capacity that the public accepted and/or drafted. Should the decision makers not implement the preferred solution in full, then they must provide detailed reasoning as to why they did not implement it and provide some form of a meaningful compromise. A meaningful compromise would implement as much of the public's solution as possible while commenting specifically how and why the compromise deviates from the preferred solution.

Empowerment

While the name of this final level of public participation is similar to the IAP²'s level of "Empower", it also incorporates aspects from the upper rungs of Arnstein's Ladder to add more detail to the IAP²'s promise and goal for Empower. The goal and promise that the IAP² assumes at the final level are, respectively: "To place the final decision making in the hands of the public", and "We will implement what you decide" (IAP²). These descriptions do not lend any specificity as to how citizens are engaged or the origins of their power in the process. Two of the three distinct levels that comprise "Citizen Power" in Arnstein's ladder are "Delegated Power" and "Citizen Control" and both, though different, would fall under Spectrum's "Empower" level, and thus this new Empowerment level.

Empowerment in this new framework encompasses Delegated Power and Citizen Control in Arnstein's, not unlike the Spectrum's Empower level, but with greater description. Empowerment can be obtained by any means that grant citizens or a group of citizens direct control or influence in the decision-making process. This control can be achieved by Arnstein's suggestion in Delegated Power by the creation of "...separate and parallel groups of citizens and power holders, with provision for citizen veto if differences of opinion cannot be resolved through negotiation" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 222). This process would go a step beyond treating citizens in the process as partners as seen in Partnership and grant them a supervisory role over the process. Another form of Empowerment would be to call for direct democracy where citizens retain the right to draft proposals and cast binding votes on how to proceed in the planning process. Citizen Control, according to Arnstein, is often best implemented when a neighborhood or citizen-created corporation is granted direct access to the funding that would have only been accessible by an intermediary.

Citizen participation has distinct benefits in policy planning, but the IAP2 Spectrum and Arnstein's Ladder do not provide enough detail in analysis of the WRA's methods for involving the public, in my Additive Framework I sought to address the lacking of these two frameworks. In the next section I discuss how I evaluated the WRA's methods through interviews and document analysis.

4.0 Methods for Evaluating Meaningful Citizen Participation

The overarching goal of this report is to evaluate the citizen participation process that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority utilized to plan the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan. To evaluate this process, I identified four key research questions:

1. What tone did the general public discourse adopt when discussing the URP?
2. Why did the Plan include citizen participation?
3. What does “meaningful citizen participation” mean in the context of this plan?
4. Was the public’s participation in the planning of the URP meaningful?

To answer the first question, I relied on a thematic discourse analysis of online newspaper articles. For my second research question, I reviewed the legal requirements of citizen participation for renewal plans referenced in Section 2.2 as well as an interview with a WRA official to determine why the Plan included citizen participation. To the third research question, I sought perspectives from both academia and interviewees to generate a comprehensive definition for the URP’s context. For the fourth research question, I used several methods, document analysis, interviews, and applications of the definition found through the third research question to determine whether the public’s participation in the URP was meaningful.

4.1 Thematic Analysis of News Articles

To answer my first research question, “What tone did the general public discourse adopt when discussing the URP?”, I analyzed the public’s discourse and discussion of the Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) through a thematic discourse

analysis. This analysis centered on electronic newspaper articles derived from MassLive.com, Telegram.com, and WorcesterMag.com, three services that cover downtown Worcester extensively. The Telegram.com's newspaper, the Telegram and Gazette is based in Worcester, MA and is the most circulated newspaper in Worcester in addition to being the newspaper of public record for the City. WorcesterMag.com, whose print edition is Worcester Magazine, is the alternative paper to the Telegram and Gazette and has a readership of 80,000 in Worcester and Middlesex counties (Worcester Magazine, 2010). MassLive.com, which is a primarily online news service, has an office in downtown Worcester and has reporters dedicated to covering downtown Worcester and the "Worcester-Renaissance" (MassLive, n.d.).

I identified articles in each of these sources relevant to my research by performing a keyword search on their respective websites for "urban renewal", "urban revitalization", "urban renewal plan", or "urban revitalization plan". The dates considered in this search period span from 2015 to November 14th, 2018, it should be noted that these dates were set so that this research would have a set collection of data that would not constantly expand.

The thematic analysis for these newspaper articles and meeting minutes consisted of reading through every article and updating a spreadsheet keeping track of what themes appeared in which articles. In addition to identifying these themes, I performed some keyword searches within articles looking for specific words that would indicate a particular theme. A truncated example has been reproduced below in Figure 4.1. The "x"s show that the article's content referenced one of the themes in the corresponding column. The bolded themes, such as "**Lack of Transparency**" are

umbrella categories for sub themes, such as “No City Transparency” or “Lack of Communication”.

Figure 4.1 Example of Coding Spreadsheet

News Source	Lack of Transparency	No City Transparency	Lack of Communication	Lack of Active Engagement
https://www.worcestermag.com/2016/04/28/worcesteria-april-28th-2016	x	x	x	x

The 5 overarching themes that I identified and searched for within news articles are:

1. Lack of Communication
2. Lack of Transparency
3. Lack of Active Engagement
4. Lack of Goodwill
5. Reasons for Hope

Figure 4.2 show the 5 overarching themes that represent 16 subthemes. As referenced earlier, I identified these themes from a sample analysis of 5 news articles. Figure 4.2 below depicts these overarching themes with their corresponding subthemes.

Figure 4.2 Overarching Themes and Their Subthemes

Lack of Transparency	Lack of Active Engagement	Lack of Goodwill	Power Issues	Reasons for Hope
No city transparency	WRA should engage more groups	Gentrification	Eminent domain	Revitalization
Lack of communication	Reactionary input	Mutual distrust	Distrust of government	Optimism
		Suspicion of renewal		18-Hour
		Midtown Mall		Difference from the past
		Critical business owners		Renaissance

In addition to using these themes to analyze news articles, I kept track of the people that articles quoted and whether they were in support of the revitalization downtown and the URP. I also kept track of the articles that associated eminent domain with the word “last resort”, whether articles referred to the revitalization downtown as a “renaissance”, and whether the URP was described as “ambitious”. In my analysis, I found many articles to refer to eminent domain as a last resort, which mimes the rhetoric often used by the City Manager and other city officials in describing the URP.

4.2 Analysis of the Documentation of Citizen Participation

The planners of the URP, outside of a single page in Section 12.02 (11) Citizen Participation, submitted documentation of the participation methods they used to involve the public in the planning of the URP in a separate file titled: “Downtown Urban

Revitalization Plan Attachments”. The documentation in the main URP document, the single aforementioned page, does not argue effectively for the Massachusetts requirement of a “showing of meaningful citizen participation”, and alone did not supply enough information to answer my research question: Was the public’s participation in the planning of the URP meaningful? Thus, to better answer this question, I analyzed the attached documentation of the WRA’s participation methods and compared my findings back to the content of the main URP document. This documentation includes minutes from nine Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, two public hearings, and one public forum.

My document analysis focused on two aspects of the minutes in the attachment file: detail and record of impact. In terms of detail, for both the CAC and the public hearings I performed line analysis of their collective 11 documents to determine how many “Discussion” and “Presentation” lines and in what proportions appeared in each document. In this analysis I define Discussion as either an exchange of information between participant and administrator, between participants, or a suggestion made to an administrator. I define Presentation as long-form statements to the general body of assembled participants made by administrators that is either a response to being identified by another administrator or not in response to a question posed at the meeting. In comparing Discussion to Presentation lines, I neglected roll-call lines, formal motions repeated in-text, and similar structural text that appear across all the minutes. My analysis of the detail of the public forum did not rely on line counting and a comparison of Discussion and Presentation lines. The public forum did not record the discussion of participants because they were broken up into four groups to deliberate

questions asked by administrators to these participants. Instead, I analyzed the detail made to recording the suggestions these groups made to the forum's administrators.

To analyze the recorded impact of the minutes from the CAC meetings, public hearings, and the public forum I determined what suggestions participants made across these collective 12 meetings. I then compared these suggestions to the content of the main URP document, identifying whether or not these suggestions were heeded and implemented in the URP.

4.3 Interview Methods and Questions

In addition to the news article analysis, I interviewed several individuals who either are directly impacted by the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP), are community activists, participated in the WRA's methods, or played a role in planning the URP. My rationale for interviewing citizens was to gain the perspectives of those involved directly by the methods the WRA used for citizen participation or to gain the perspective of city official or decision makers that administered these methods. I generally relied on a snowball method for finding new interviewees and asked each interviewee whether they knew someone who too could answer my questions. Perspectives from these interviews provided me with information that I could not glean just from analyzing the URP's submitted documents, and to rely solely on such documents would be to take the perspective of the WRA at face value. In addition this, I asked interviewees, when relevant, three of my research questions: "Why did the Plan include citizen participation?", "What does "meaningful public participation" mean in the context of this plan?", and "Was the public's participation in the planning of the URP meaningful?". The line of questioning for each of the interviewees varied with their

experience and role in the planning of the URP, generally these groups were 1.) Business Owners/Community Activist/City Councilor, 2.) CAC Members, 3.) WRA Member and 4.) News Reporter. Each of these groups had separate lines of questioning, designed to determine their awareness of the URP, its citizen participation methods, and any influence they had on the URP's planning.

In interviewing the CAC and WRA members, I adhered to a list of questions which can be found in part below and in full in the appendix:

1. How did the CAC influence the final URP document?
2. What was the CAC's role in planning the URP?
3. What role did the WRA play in CAC meetings?
4. What do you think was the most important action the CAC took with regards to the URP?

Similarly, I used a set of questions to act as a guide for conversation for the 1st and 4th groups listed above. These questions can be found in full in the appendix.

4.4 Creating a Definition of Meaningful Citizen Participation

In this section I sought to create two definitions for meaningful citizen participation, one from academia and one from interviewees. Creating such a definition would directly answer my third research question: What does "meaningful citizen participation" mean in the context of this plan? To create this definition, I reviewed two academic sources and one federal to determine their shared and distinct definitions of meaningful citizen participation. I then created a list of shared attributes for meaningful participation from the perspective of these sources and used this as the academia definition for meaningful participation. For the interviewee definition, I asked 14 of my interviewees (excluding the News Reporter, as they were not in Worcester during the drafting of the URP) how they would define meaningful citizen participation. From their

responses, I sought to create a definition using the shared attributes from my interviewees. I then sought to use these two definitions, one from academia and one from interviewees, to apply to my overall evaluation of the WRA's participation methods in the next section.

4.5 Analysis of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority's Efforts

The following subsections address the specific analyses I will conduct on the public participation methods utilized by the URP. For each participatory method (i.e. the CAC, public hearings, and public forum) I utilized results from document analysis in 4.2, the responses from interviewees arising from Section 4.3, and definitions of meaningful participation from Section 4.4. In addition to utilizing these results, I also determined the overall impact each method had on the final URP document. Using all four of these sources to analyze each participatory method, I sought to answer my final research question: Was the public's participation in the planning of the URP meaningful? For the two non-participatory methods (news publications and online availability of the URP draft), I relied primarily on perspectives gleaned from document analysis in 4.2 and interviewees. I did not apply Section 4.4's definitions of meaningful participation to these methods because they are inherently non-participatory and serve only to inform the public.

5.0 Document, Participation Analysis, and Consensus

Building

In this chapter, I review the major findings from my application of my methods in chapter 4.0. In 5.1 I found popular news media to view the URP with hope while remaining skeptical of power issues inherent to the Plan. Section 5.2 contains the bulk of the results from my application of methods in chapter 4.0 and I broke it into seven subsections. In 5.2's first subsection I defined meaningful citizen participation using academic and interviewee perspectives but found power differences to play a role in how groups of interviewees defined meaningful participation. In the second subsection I found that there are significant differences in detail and recorded impact across the three main participatory methods the WRA utilized. Using my results from the aforementioned two subsections, I evaluate the WRA's three participatory methods and two non-participatory ones across four subsections. From this evaluation I found that none of the WRA's methods to satisfy all of the requirements of any single definition I synthesized in Section 5.2. After this evaluation, I discuss findings that were peripheral to my main research questions. In Section 5.3, these findings cover concerns with the original inspiration of the URP, the Theatre District Master Plan, and in 5.4 I discuss the overall negative climate of citizen participation in Worcester politics.

5.1 Themes of Public Discourse Surrounding the URP

Discussion of the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan in popular Worcester news media generally, while viewing the Plan in a hopeful light, did not let readers forget about some of the more contentious aspects of the Plan, such as eminent domain.

Using the methods discussed in 4.1, I identified the frequency of certain emergent themes in 50 online news articles collectively published by Telegram.com, WorcesterMag.com, and MassLive.com. Table 5.1 represents the overarching themes that were identified across these 50 articles, note that the number associated with each theme is the number of articles of the 50 that these themes appeared. “Reasons for Hope” had the highest frequency with 35 instances and “Power Issues”, the second highest, had 30 instances.

Table 5.1 Overarching Themes

Lack of Transparency	Lack of Active Engagement	Lack of Goodwill	Power Issues	Reasons for Hope
8	7	17	30	35

Table 5.2 below shows the relative occurrence of themes across the 50 articles that make up the 5 overarching themes. The most common sub-theme associated with “Lack of Transparency” was “City Transparency” at 5 instances. “Lack of Active Engagement”’s most common sub-theme was “WRA not Engaging Enough Groups” with 6 instances. “Lack of Goodwill”’s most frequent sub-theme was “Midtown Mall” at 10 instances. “Power Issues”’s most common sub-theme was “Eminent Domain” at 30. “Reasons for Hope” had “Optimism” as the most common sub-theme at 25 instances.

Table 5.2 Sub-Themes with Corresponding Overarching Theme

Lack of Transparency	Lack of Active Engagement	Lack of Goodwill	Power Issues	Reasons for Hope
No city transparency 5	WRA should engage more groups 6	Gentrification 4	Eminent domain 30	Revitalization 20
Lack of communication 3	Reactionary input 3	Mutual distrust 6	Distrust of government 2	Optimism 25
		Suspicion of renewal 3		18-Hour 5
		Midtown Mall 10		Difference from the past 6
		Critical business owners 7		Renaissance 11

A large number of news sources quoted city officials with significant power over the Plan and all of them were quoted as being ubiquitously in support of the URP. While the perspectives of those in power are important, the frequency at which they are quoted may pose questions of one-sided coverage. In addition to keeping track of themes that occurred within the 50 newspaper articles, I kept track of who was quoted and their positions on the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan. The positions of these people were broken down into three categories: for, nuanced, against, neutral. The most quoted person in these 50 articles of 61 quoted people was Ed Augustus Jr. at 18 articles, followed by Vincent Pedone at 12 articles. In total, of the 61 people quoted, 31 were in favor of the city's efforts in revitalization downtown or of the URP. 4 quoted people were

directly against the URP, 18 held nuanced views of the URP that criticized some portion of the Plan but not the overall effort, 3 toed the line between nuance and being against the Plan. There were 4 people that held neutral views of the URP or only had quotes that were informative about the Plan. Table 5.3 depicts the most frequently quoted people across all of the 50 articles, each of these four have significant ties to the planning of the URP and redevelopment in Worcester in general.

Table 5.3 - Frequency that People are Quoted in Articles, their Position, and Role

Person Quoted	Articles that Quote Person	Position on Plan	Role
Ed Augustus Jr.	18	For	City Manager
Vincent Pedone	12	For	Chairman of WRA
Michael Traynor	12	For	CEO of WRA
Tim Murray	5	For	President of Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

5.2 Evaluating Meaningful Citizen Participation

An evaluation of meaningful citizen participation cannot easily be resolved in a binary answer to my research question “Was the citizen participation process meaningful?” due to the complexity of perspectives of those involved. Though individual answers to this question are straightforward, the aggregate responses, from those who planned this participation, from those who participated and those who did not, make a clear answer in the affirmative or negative difficult. This holds true even when applying

my own participation framework and those from Arnstein and the IAP2, they simply cannot account for the complexity of so many perspectives. In addition to this, the question of who should be granted the authority to judge whether the process was meaningful or not, administrators or participants, leaves the WRA's argument of meaningful participation in question. Regardless, in this section I will attempt to offer some insight into the question of the "meaningfulness" of citizen participation in the planning of the URP.

In the URP, the authors provided a one-page summary of the citizen participation process and outlined the five WRA-endorsed methods that made this process meaningful: 1.) Citizens Advisory Committee, 2.) Public Forum, 3.) Public Hearings, 4.) News Publications, 5.) Online Availability of the Plan. I will first analyze these methods individually and then view my collective results in whole to inform my final evaluation of the citizen participation process. I begin this analysis with an evaluation of the Citizens Advisory Committee.

The Multitude of Definitions for "Meaningful Participation"

From my three researched sources I found differences in how academia and the federal government defined meaningful citizen participation. However, these definitions were not too dissimilar, and I created a consensus definition comprised of five requirements that together cover the definitions from my three sources.

The three sources that I draw from for this academic/federal definition are: 1.) Morrison and Dearden, two healthcare policy researchers, authors of "Beyond Tokenistic Participation: Using Representational Artefacts to Enable Meaningful Public Participation in Health Service Design" 2.) Cheryl King, Kathryn Feltey, and Bridget

Susel, authors of: “The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration”, and 3.) The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which created the “Public Participation Guide”. While these three sources come from very different disciplines varying from healthcare policy, to urban planning, to environmental policy, they all address the intersection of public participation and the policy planning process. The citizen participation process for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan stands too at this intersection.

I synthesized the three above sources, their similarities and unique requirements, and created an academic/federal consensus of requirements for meaningful citizen participation:

1. Citizens must be engaged early. This allows their input to have the best chance for actual impact.
2. Decision makers must be receptive to public input and it must have actual potential to impact decision making.
3. The overall citizen participation process and the individual methods utilized must be collaborative. This facilitates a mutual exchange of knowledge between administrators and the public.
4. Citizens must be seen as equal partners in the decision-making process and the overall process must be trust-driven. Their input should not be limited to buy-in and reaction but include design and proaction.
5. Participants must be treated fairly. This means administrators must not restrict input to professionals or any single group, they must include a wide sample of stakeholders in their processes, and they must allow citizens to contribute their knowledge in familiar ways.

In this report, I sought to answer four key research questions, two of which are: What does “meaningful citizen participation” mean in the context of this plan? Was the public’s participation in the planning of the URP meaningful? To answer the latter, I must first answer the former question and define meaningful citizen participation for this report. While I could find a consensus definition for meaningful citizen

participation between the academic and federal sources, a broader consensus among the 14 interviewees was more difficult.

Power Differences in How Interviewees Define Meaningful Citizen Participation

Respondents from low power groups gave more detailed definitions of meaningful participation than those from high power groups. What I found, across all my interviews, was that every member of the low power groups such as small business owners and community activists tended to believe their own participation and that of the overall process was not meaningful. Whereas high power groups like large downtown business owners, institution leaders, downtown investors, and city officials all believed their own participation and the WRA's process was meaningful. This finding, while not initially anticipated, is the logical conclusion of differences in definitions between the low and high-power groups. In addition to this, the unique definitions given by lower power (LP) groups were more power-intensive than those from high power (HP) groups and the LP definitions tended to match more closely with the aforementioned academic definitions. Power, for the purposes of this argument, means having at least one of two things:

1. Large and/or multiple vested interests in downtown Worcester
2. Direct influence in city government.

Throughout my interviews and research, I have noticed that respondents belonging to the same power groups shared or held similar views. Small downtown business owners

and community activists, both fall under a low power definition in power, while investors, city officials, and institution leaders count as high in power.

From the definitions given by interviewees from LP and HP groups, I assembled a list of key themes coming from the definitions of these two groups. Below are three tables summarizing the unique themes from the definitions of these groups, ordered by how many respondents stated that theme. When comparing the unique themes mentioned by LP groups to those mentioned by HP groups, there are stark differences in the power-intensivity of these themes. Table 5.4 below illustrates these themes by organizing themes arising from Low Power (LP) groups with the number of interviews that referenced the listed theme. This organization is similarly applied to the themes arising from interviewees that are members of High Power (HP) groups in the below table.

Table 5.4 - Unique Themes in Definitions of Meaningful Participation Split by Power Groups

Themes from LP Groups	Number of LP Interviewees	Themes from HP Groups	Number of HP Interviewees
Input with impact	5	Accessible meetings	2
Receptivity to input	4	Constructive input from the public	1
Early in the process	3	Deriving themes from public input	1
Engaging business owners	3	Engaging specific social groups	1
Visioning/design	3	Recording the process	1
Facilitators	1		

LP groups, in their unique definitions, tended to favor definitions of meaningful citizen participation that were power intensive. In these definitions, the input of citizens would have actual impact, where the administrators would be receptive to input, and where citizens would be engaged early in the decision-making process. HP groups tended to favor top-down and administrative approaches in their unique responses to a definition of meaningful citizen participation. In this, LP groups thought accessible meetings, the public giving constructive input, administrators being able to derive themes from input, the engagement of social groups, and recording the overall process as definitions of meaningful participation.

While I have segregated the above unique responses based on the power of the groups, the above table does not represent a full definition of meaningful participation from either group. There were similarities between the definitions held by both LP and HP groups, while Table 5.4 shows their contrasting definitions, Table 5.5 below shows the cases where the two groups agreed.

Table 5.5 Themes in Definitions of Meaningful Participation Shared Across Power Groups

Shared Themes	Number of Interviewees from LP Groups	Number of Interviewees from HP Groups
Attendance	2	2
Direct communication	5	1
Notice	1	1
Representation of the public	3	1

Showing the public their input was heard	1	1
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The above table represents the attributes for meaningful participation that both high and low power groups agree upon. Both groups agree that meaningful citizen participation must be well attended, include direct communication with the public, give the public notice of participation processes, be representative of the wider public, and that the public must be shown that its input was received.

Using the information from the above two tables and their summaries, I have come to one consensus definition for meaningful citizen participation and two divergent definitions that depend on power groups. The baseline requirements for meaningful participation that both power groups agree upon are:

1. Participation processes must be well-attended by citizens that represent the wider public
2. Decision makers must give notice to the public of participation processes and communicate directly with the public
3. Decision makers must show to the public that their input was received and recorded in some form

The requirements for meaningful citizen participation according to low power groups, that includes the above consensus definition, are:

1. Citizens must be engaged and their input sought early on in the process, and this input should allow for citizens to envision/design aspects of the decision making process
2. Decision makers must be receptive to citizen input and this input must be able to impact the decision making process
3. Decision makers should use third party facilitators to engage the public and the overall process must engage small business owners in the area in question

The above definition aligns closely with the aforementioned academic definition for meaningful citizen participation, specifically the first, second, and fourth requirements. 1.) Citizens must be engaged early. 2.) Decision makers must be receptive to public input and it must have actual potential to impact decision making. 4.) ...Their input should not be limited to buy-in and reaction but include design and proaction.

The requirements for meaningful citizen participation according to high power groups are:

1. Meetings must occur at both accessible locations and times and their content well-documented
2. The public must provide constructive input while decision makers construct themes from the public's input
3. The participation process must engage a wide range of social, religious, and ethnic groups

In summary, while there is some consensus about baseline requirements for meaningful citizen participation between low and high power groups, beyond these requirements there are significant differences in how low and high power groups define meaningful participation. Low power groups tend to favor a more power and citizen centric approach that more closely aligns with academic/federal definitions, and high power groups tend to focus more on meeting details, social group engagement, and how to interpret citizen input.

A Lack of Detail and Recorded Impact: The Minutes of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Public Hearings, and the Public Forum

The recorded impact of citizen participation presented in the final draft of the URP does not represent the full impact of the WRA's citizen participation methods. The Worcester Redevelopment Authority's (WRA) final draft of the Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) contains a brief summary of the citizen participation process the WRA utilized in section 12.02 (11) Citizen Participation on page 105. Nowhere in this summary do the planners of the URP specifically outline the impact of the citizen participation process on the final draft or on the WRA's decision-making. The sole section that describes any impact that citizens had on the final draft is:

Comments and concerns expressed at public forums regarding such matters as traffic volume and circulation, recreation/open space, public infrastructure improvements, and private property physical improvements are reflected in the goals and objectives, defined in Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives.

The above is then repeated on the same page in a description on how Attachment C contains materials related to the held public hearings and public forum. This page and the above excerpt are the only reference to the impact of citizen participation within the entire final draft of the URP. The activities and content of Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, however not their impact, are briefly referenced as well:

Information presented at meetings has included site conditions, redevelopment options, elements of this URP, proposed infrastructure improvements, and implementation strategies and funding initiatives. Discussions, question and answer periods, and future planning steps rounded out the meetings.

Due to the lack of recorded impact in the final draft, my further analysis of the WRA's citizen participation process relies on interviews and an analysis of the minutes attached to the URP in a separate PDF file titled "urp-final-draft-attachments". My analysis of these attached minutes from the CAC, public hearings, and public forum has led me to several conclusions. First, the record of the CAC meetings lack both detail in general and in how the CAC impacted the URP. Second, the record of the public hearings lack detail in how they influenced the URP. Third, the record of the public forum reflects both detail and the method's impact on the URP. Fourth, the inconsistency in record of the impact of these three methods has negative implications for future citizen participation efforts.

The Record of the CAC Meetings Lack Both Detail in General and in How the CAC Impacted the URP

In reference to my first claim, it is worth referencing back to CAC Member #2's disappointment in how their suggestion went unrecorded:

"That is one of the meetings that I really remember, because at that meeting they were talking about trying to loop in the Canal District. And I remember Allen Fletcher saying: 'It seems to me that it makes more sense to loop in lower

Pleasant Street than to loop in the Canal District’...Whereas lower Pleasant, which did fit their criteria, was not the politically savvy thing. I brought it up, and we discussed it, and Allen threw his weight to the idea, but it didn’t even make it into the minutes”.

CAC Member #2’s disappointment that their discussion and suggestion was not recorded by the minutes is one instance of the broader issue with the CAC minutes. Out of the 9 CAC meetings, 3/9, 33%, of their minutes do not contain any record of discussion occurring between CAC members or other attendees. On average, only 11.1% of the lines in a minutes document recorded discussion, compared to 88.9% recording presentation. Table 5.6 below shows my data collection for line analysis in full while Table 5.7 shows the averages for this line analysis. One notable trend that emerged from the data was that, after May 14th, 2015, the quality of the minutes drops drastically, this can be seen especially in the last three entries of the table.

Table 5.6 - Line Analysis of CAC Minutes

Date of Meeting	Discussion Lines	Present. Lines	Total Lines	Discussion / Presentation	Discuss. / Total	Present. / Total
1/22/15	8	41	54	8/41 ; 19.5%	8/54 ; 15%	41/54; 75.9%
2/13/15	7	28	35	7/28 ; 25%	7/35 ; 20%	28/35; 80%
4/16/15	18	40	44	18/40 ; 45%	18/44 ; 41%	40/44; 90.1%
4/30/15	5	47	51	5/47 ; 10.6%	5/51 ; 9.8%	47/51; 92.1%

5/14/15	6	62	66	6/62 ; 9.7%	6/66 ; 9.1%	62/66; 93.9%
6/4/15	5	16	20	5/16 ; 31.2%	5/20 ; 25%	16/20; 80%
8/27/15	0	17	21	N/A	N/A	17/21; 80.9%
11/19/15	0	13	14	N/A	N/A	13/14; 92.9%
2/11/16	0	20	21	N/A	N/A	20/21; 95.2%

Table 5.7- Averages for Line Analysis

Avg. Lines for Discussion	Avg. Lines for Presentation	Avg. Total Lines	Avg. Discussion / Presentation*	Avg. Discussion / Total*	Avg. Presentation/ Total*
4	32	36	4/32 ; 12,5%	4/36 ; 11.1%	32/36 ; 88.9%

*- Averages using the rounded numbers in this table

There was a large drop in the detail of the CAC meeting minutes after May 14th, 2015. Of the four meetings that took place after May 14th, three of them have zero record of discussion. In addition to this, the average total amount of lines in the minutes on and before May 14th was 50, after May 14th this average drops to just 19. However, the average meeting lengths see no significant change, with the lengths on and before May 14th averaging to 71 minutes and the lengths after that date averaging to 61 minutes. A 10 minute difference in meeting length cannot account for the lack of record of discussion after May 14th and the large drop in average total lines. The data that I used to come to these findings can be found below in Tables 5.8 and 5.9.

Table 5.8 - CAC Meeting Lengths, Frequency, and Attendance

Date of Meeting	Meeting Length	Days Since Last Meeting	Attendance (Members/Membership)
1/22/15 Thursday	1 Hour & 10 Min.	0	8/13 ; 61.5%
2/13/15 Friday	55 Minutes	21	12/13 ; 92.3%
4/16/15 Monday*	1 Hour & 34 Min.*	48*	12/15 ; 80%*
4/30/15 Thursday	1 Hour & 10 Min.	14	10/15 ; 66.7%
5/14/15 Thursday	1 Hour & 8 Min.	14	11/15 ; 73.3%
6/4/15 Thursday	1 Hour & 5 Min.	20	11/15 ; 73.3%
8/27/15 Thursday	50 Minutes	83	8/15 ; 53.3%
11/19/15 Thursday	1 Hour & 5 Min.	83	8/15 ; 53.3%
2/11/16 Thursday	1 Hour & 5 Min.	83	10/15 ; 66.7%

*- After this point 2 members were added to the Committee

Table 5.9 - Average Meeting Length, Frequency, and Attendance

Average Meeting Length	Average Days Since Last Meeting*	Average Member Attendance
1 Hour and 7 Min.	46	69%, or 10/15

*- Excluding the first meeting in the calculation

The overrepresentation of lines dedicated to presentation versus the lines dedicated to discussion is best understood as an imbalance of detail in recording presentation versus discussion. The minutes recorded in minute detail, almost to the point of quoting directly, any presentation to the Committee, while record of discussion lacked detail and was often summarized and granted few, if any lines in the minutes. There are many potential reasons for this imbalance, one of which could be because

written speeches or testimony were submitted to the Committee's minutes-taker, allowing for full quotation.

While it is possible that not much discussion did take place during this meeting, Member #2's experience and the average lengths of the meetings do not suggest a total lack of discussion, just poor recording of it. While the record of the CAC meetings lacked detail in its discussion, further analysis of the minutes and interviews shows that the official record lacked in its showing of the Committee's impact on the URP. To evaluate the detail of how the impact of the CAC was recorded, I must first determine the CAC's impact on the URP, I determined this impact through interviews and minutes analysis.

Documentation of the CAC's Impact

Three out of the four interviewed CAC members believed they and the Committee had limited to no impact on the URP. Member #1 believes the CAC had a modest influence on the planning process, Member#2 believes that the Committee's power was limited due to WRA cherry-picking, Member #3 does not believe anything meaningful came out of the process, while Member #4 thought that good participation did come out of the Committee. The views of Members #1 through #3 contrast with the views of Michael Traynor, the CEO of the WRA, who mentions some of the impact of the CAC in an interview conducted for this report. Traynor views the role of the CAC as:

They were the sounding board. I don't remember the particulars at this point. But we changed some of the boundaries just through dialog and discussion with members of the committee. We talked to them about the particular properties that we ended up identifying for renewal activities. Properties that we looked to

acquire if necessary, and what would be the reuse...There's a lot of discussion with the board members, this is what we are thinking this property should be. I don't remember the specifics but we used them as a sounding board. Getting their input and their reactions to things that we were suggesting.

From the above, Traynor does believe the Committee had an impact on the URP, specifically with boundary setting, which properties to acquire, and the potential uses for said properties. When asked what action the CAC members thought the Committee took was most important, only Members #1 and #4 offered responses. Member #1 thought that the suggestion to notify business owners/tenants of public hearings, not just property owners, was the most important action. Member #4 stated:

“Showing up, number one, showing up and providing input. If you don't show up and provide input, you have no influence...People were really making sure the plan wasn't gentrification pushing everyone out”.

The lack of responses from Members #2 and #3 to my interview question could be attributed to the 4-5 years in between the interview and CAC meetings, but the overall dissatisfaction of these two members is most likely the main cause. So far, the impact that the CAC had on the planning process, according to interviews, is:

- a notification to business owners, planning the boundary, property acquisition and reuse, participating, and advising against gentrification.

Mentioned later, these suggestions and discussion are reflected in the CAC meeting minutes. In addition to these interviews, I also reviewed CAC minutes and

WRA minutes to determine the recorded impact of the Committee. I included 6 WRA meeting minutes in my analysis due to the reports made to the Authority at these 6 meetings on the CAC's own meetings. From this analysis I identified discrepancies between records of the reports made to the WRA and the recorded suggestions and activities of the CAC.

Reports recorded within WRA meeting minutes, like the CAC minutes, do not contain much detail and did not even capture the full suggestions and discussion summarized in the CAC minutes. The WRA meeting minutes and the minutes of the CAC contain large discrepancies in the recorded impact of the CAC, which further my claim of a lack of detail and recorded impact of the CAC.

According to the WRA's own minutes, the only suggestion received by them from the Committee was changing the name of the URP from the Downtown Urban *Renewal* Plan to the Downtown Urban *Revitalization* Plan. However, the minutes of the CAC meetings, though lacking detail in both discussion and suggestion, do contain suggestions and discussion that went unreported to the WRA, these are listed below. None of the WRA minutes reported the discussion that took place at CAC meetings. In addition to this, 3 of the CAC meetings went unreported in their entirety to the WRA, specifically the April 30th, June 4th, and August 27th of 2015 CAC meetings. Of these 3, the April 30th CAC meeting minutes contain the most lines dedicated to discussion and the most suggestions of all the Committee minutes. The absence of such a large portion of discussion and potential CAC impact from the WRA's own minutes is concerning for WRA's argument for meaningful participation. However, I do not have an answer as to why such a large portion of the CAC's discussion and suggestions went unreported to the

WRA. Figure 5.1 below is a summary of the discussion and suggestions of the Committee presented in the content of the CAC minutes, WRA minutes, and interviews.

Figure 5.1 The Summarized Discussion and Suggestions of the CAC According to Its Minutes

Discussion: State participation, pros and cons of housing, displacement of local small businesses and their relocation, increasing the footprint (boundary), traffic circulation, priority of a parking garage being over or under redevelopment, discussion of Midtown Mall.

Suggestions: Proposing to mail notice to property and business owners about the first public hearing, getting more information on existing infrastructure, an awareness of potential upgrades to buildings, careful consideration of effects on Midtown Mall businesses, changing “renewal” to “revitalization”, boundary setting for the URP, alternative uses for properties, approval of EOED meeting findings.

Outside of the CAC and WRA minutes, the only record of the Committee’s impact appears in the WRA’s final public hearing on May 5th, 2016. Below are the only two instances of an account of the Committee’s impact:

The Committee held 10 meetings, an Economic Meeting to review the Wyman Gordon Area as well as a public hearing on February 26, 2016. The Committee requested of the WRA to expand the area to cover the Wyman Gordon property

as well as the end of Southbridge Street. The WRA embraced the requests and they were included in the current plan.

Chair John Brissette, Vice Chair Jill Dagilis – thanked City Manager and Board and reviewed the accomplishments of the CAC established in 2014 holding ten meetings and including an Economic Development forum at Crompton Collective regarding the addition of the Wyman Gordon property to the URP; a public hearing was held regarding the plan and the open process the Committee followed.

However, the Committee did not hold 10 meetings, it held 9. The “Economic Meeting to review the Wyman Gordon Area” was originally supposed to be held by the CAC, but, according to WRA minutes, was held by the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) due to a lack of member attendance. Below is the excerpt from the WRA September 18th. 2015 stating this fact:

Mr. Traynor reported on the Office of Economic Development Meeting that was held at the Crompton Collective, 138 Green Street. The meeting was originally scheduled as a WRA Citizens Advisory Committee meeting, but due to a lack of quorum it was hosted by the Executive Office of Economic Development...The findings will now be presented to the CAC and submitted for approval...

In summary, the impact the Committee had on the URP gleaned from interviews is accurately represented in the CAC minutes. However, the discontent of Member #2

with both cherry-picking and the lack of detail in the CAC minutes, coupled with the lack of lines dedicated to discussion in the minutes, and the discrepancies between WRA minutes and CAC minutes, outweigh the aforementioned limited accuracy. The official submitted record (CAC minutes) and the unofficial record (WRA minutes and interviews) of the CAC's activities and impact on the URP planning process lack detail, and at times, accuracy. There is very little stated evidence in the URP's final draft of the CAC's impact, and while the attachments to this draft, which are meant to supplement this absence, do have record of suggestions, they do not have record of how the planners of the URP incorporated these suggestions.

Documentation of the Public Hearings Is More Detailed than the Citizens Advisory Committee in Detail but Not in Impact

Compared to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) minutes, the minutes from the public hearings are more detailed and the impact of the hearings, while documented slightly better than the CAC, is poor. The minutes from the first public hearing that the WRA held on February 26th, 2015 contains 200 total lines and has 62% of them dedicated to discussion. In addition to this, there are clear exchanges between participants and the members of the WRA, giving greater detail to the discussion that took place. In comparison, the minutes from the CAC averaged to 11.1% of the total lines being dedicated to discussion, and the outlier of the largest amount of recorded discussion in the CAC meeting minutes was 45% discussion lines. The minutes from the second public hearing on May 5th, 2016, though not as detailed as the first, still surpasses the CAC's average amount of discussion lines with 34% of a total of 252 lines. Outside of line comparisons, the level of detail in the discussion present is also higher

than in the quality of the CAC minutes. There are fewer summaries, names are always tied to talking points, and some of the record appears to be full-quotations of what a speaker said, something that's uncommon in the CAC minutes.

The level of detail in the public hearing minutes is more detailed than that of the CAC, but the impact of the public hearings, like that of the CAC, is poorly recorded. While the recorded impact of the CAC suffers from zero mention in the final draft of the URP document, the impact of the public hearings is mentioned, albeit briefly, in section 12.012 (11) Citizen Participation:

Comments and concerns expressed at public forums regarding such matters as traffic volume and circulation, recreation/open space, public infrastructure improvements, and private property physical improvements are reflected in the goals and objectives, defined in Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives.

The use of “public forums” in the above, refers to the public hearings and the public forum the WRA held, collectively. I analyzed the goals and objectives that the authors of the URP claim were inspired from the four listed themes in the above block quote. From this analysis, I identified 8 goals and objectives that fall under these themes, with two that could fit under more than one theme. A list of these themes can be found in the appendix. However, the planners of the URP do not go into detail which specific “comments and concerns” they incorporated into the goals and objectives. To determine which comments and concerns they did incorporate, I identified the suggestions made at public hearings and compared them to the aforementioned 8 objectives. I found 17 unique suggestions made at public hearings, of which 9 fit under an overarching theme

of “Boundary & Property Suggestions”. The other 8 suggestions lack a unifying theme. Of these 17 suggestions, only 3 of them are represented in the goals and objectives, specifically:

- Manage and increase the parking supply with appropriate thought given to shared usage and proximity to high demand areas
- Improve roadways and sidewalks, as well as traffic circulation, as appropriate.
- Consider future cultural, food and sports-related programming opportunities to improve the quality of city experiences.

The incorporation of just 3 of the 17 identified suggestions into the goals and objectives of the URP does not make a strong case for an accurate record of the impact of public hearings. However, the planners of the WRA did heed a large amount of these suggestions, especially those pertaining to Boundary & Property Suggestions, they just did not document the impact of these suggestions. Suggestions to include the Denholm Building ground floor as well as parcels surrounding Allen Court are all both reflected in some capacity in the list of properties the Plan. While these suggestions and others were heeded by the planners of the URP, the evidence of their impact and that these suggestions even existed requires a large amount of effort and comparison.

The Public Forum is the Most Documented Method the WRA Used, Both in Detail and Impact

In comparison to the Citizens Advisory Committee and the two public hearings that the WRA utilized, the public forum is the most documented method both in level of detail and in the impact the forum had on the URP. Before analyzing the quality of the

public forum's minutes, it is worth noting that the structure of the public forum does not lend itself easily to being recorded in detail. The public forum held on September 16th, 2015 for the purpose of discussing future uses for the Wyman-Gordon parcel is unlike the public hearings in that citizens do not give their input one at a time at a podium, a method that is useful for minutes recording. Instead, the participants of this public forum were broken down into 4 groups, each consisting of 9 to 10 people, and the organizers of the Forum gave each of these groups 6 questions to deliberate on and to answer. However, even though there was a minutes taker for the entire meeting, this person could not feasibly record every conversation that occurred simultaneously from these 6 groups. Due to this infeasibility, the minutes taker recorded only the final responses and suggestions presented by each group to the corresponding 6 questions at the end of the Forum's break-out session.

The final responses and suggestions that these 4 groups came to are identified in the minutes with the relevant group number, showing specifically which ideas came from which groups. Such specificity is lacking in the case of the Citizens Advisory Committee and public hearing minutes. In addition to this, the summary of the overall public forum at the start of the minutes captures a majority of the points presented by the 4 groups. However, for 3 of the 6 questions that the Forum's organizers asked the 4 groups, there are no listed suggestions from 1 to 2 of the groups. The aforementioned summary mentions that there was some consensus among groups in their suggestions, it is possible that the minutes taker omitted repeat answers from groups and chose to only include unique responses. However, even though the lack of an explanation for the omission of the responses to these groups makes this evaluation difficult, that every

response recorded from the groups is unique supports this case. Therefore, the public forum's minutes did record the contributions of the 4 groups in detail.

Not only were the contributions of the participants well-recorded and attributable to the groups that they were a part of, but the overall impact of the public forum on the URP is also well-documented. While the process by which the URP incorporated input from this Forum is unknown, the authors of the Plan specifically cite this Forum as the source for one of the Plan's visions on page 5 of the final draft:

A public forum regarding the 11 parcels that previously contained Wyman-Gordon Company manufacturing activities (collectively referred to herein as the Wyman Gordon Parcels) was held in September 2015. During breakout sessions, participants were asked to consider a number of questions, including how various reuses would suit the area, how transportation and circulation could be improved, and what public amenities they would like to see incorporated into the URP. As a result, the following general vision was developed:

Even though the process by which the planners of the URP incorporated input from the Forum is unknown, the vision presented in the Plan does contain some of the suggestions made by the 4 groups. Unlike the Citizens Advisory Committee and the public hearings, the record of the Forum is detailed and the impact of it is directly stated in the final draft of the URP.

Although the record of the public forum outperforms that of the CAC and the public hearings, there are broad inconsistencies in the documentation of these three participation methods and how they impacted the URP. In the next subsection, I found

that the inconsistencies in documentation among the WRA's participation methods prevent certain methods from being considered meaningful

The “Meaningfulness” of the WRA’s 5 Participation Methods

In this section, I analyze the individual methods the WRA utilized in seeking citizen participation. For this analysis, I rely on the definitions for meaningful participation I established in the subsections titled “*The Multitude of Definitions for “Meaningful Participation”*” and “*Power Differences in How Interviewees Define Meaningful Citizen Participation*”. Below is a review of the academic/federal consensus definition from the aforementioned subsections, I refer to it from here on as the

Academic/Federal Consensus or as the A/F Consensus:

1. Citizens must be engaged early. This allows their input to have the best chance for actual impact.
2. Decision makers must be receptive to public input and it must have actual potential to impact decision making.
3. The overall citizen participation process and the individual methods utilized must be collaborative. This facilitates a mutual exchange of knowledge between administrators and the public.
4. Citizens must be seen as equal partners in the decision making process and the overall process must be trust-driven. Their input should not be limited to buy-in and reaction, but include design and proaction.
5. Participants must be treated fairly. This means administrators must not restrict input to professionals or any single group, they must include a wide sample of stakeholders in their processes, and they must allow citizens to contribute their knowledge in familiar ways.

The requirements for meaningful participation that interviewees agreed on are repeated below and I reference their collective requirements as the **Interviewee**

Consensus:

1. Participation processes must be well-attended by citizens that represent the wider public
2. Decision makers must give notice to the public of participation processes and communicate directly with the public
3. Decision makers must show to the public that their input was received and recorded in some form

The requirements for meaningful participation according to low power groups are repeated below, and I refer to them as the **Low Power (LP) Group Definition** or **LP Definition**:

1. Citizens must be engaged and their input sought early on in the process, and this input should allow for citizens to envision/design aspects of the decision making process
2. Decision makers must be receptive to citizen input and this input must be able to impact the decision making process
3. Decision makers should use third party facilitators to engage the public and the overall process must engage small business owners in the area in question

The requirements for meaningful participation according to high power groups I also repeat below, and I refer to them collectively as the **High Power (HP) Group Definition** or **HP Definition**:

1. Meetings must occur at both accessible locations and times and their content well-documented
2. The public must provide constructive input while decision makers construct themes from the public's input
3. The participation process must engage a wide range of social, religious, and ethnic groups

Based on these definitions, I will use conclusions from the “*A Lack of Detail and Recorded Impact: The Minutes of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Public Hearings, and the Public Forum*” section and interviewee perspectives to evaluate the WRA’s 5 participation methods. To restate, in the final draft of the URP, the WRA claims that it utilized 5 distinct citizen participation methods to solicit input from and to inform the public:

- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Public hearings
- Public forum
- Newspaper publications
- Online availability of the draft of the URP

I start my analysis with the first of these methods, the Citizens Advisory Committee, and will work my way down this list in the following sections.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The Citizens Advisory Committee did not fully meet any of the four definitions that I derived based on my own research. The closest definition the CAC fulfilled was the Academic/Federal Consensus definition, of which it met 3 of the 5 requirements. To summarize, the CAC did involve its members early in the process, was a collaborative exchange of knowledge between members and leaders, treated its participants fairly, and was well-attended. While input from the CAC did impact the decision making process, members were not informed of their impact and the decision makers were not receptive to member input. Decision makers did not treat the members of the CAC as equal partners in the process and the CAC did not provide notice to the public of CAC meetings. In addition to these, the CAC did not host meetings at accessible locations or

times, and it did not engage a wide range of social groups. Based on all of these actions and inactions, and that the CAC did not fully meet any of the derived definitions of meaningful participation, the Citizens Advisory Committee was not a meaningful process.

The activities of the CAC only met three of the five requirements set forth in the A/F Consensus: citizens were involved early, the process was collaborative, and community members were treated fairly. The CAC's activities thus failed to meet the A/F Consensus two other requirements: that decision makers were receptive to input, and that the CAC was seen as an equal partner in the participation process. Both Members #2 and #3 believed that the planners of the URP were not receptive to the Committee's input, with Member #2 stating that "People that had the dissenting, or unexpected voices weren't really listened to." And members of both the CAC and the WRA expressed positions that citizens were not leading the process (citations for interviews with Member 1 & 3), with Michael Traynor, the CEO of the WRA, explaining that the CAC was "the sounding board" for the WRA.

The Citizens Advisory Committee met just one of the requirements for meaningful participation that both High Power and Lower Power interviewee groups agreed on: attendance. The CAC was well-attended, with the average meeting having 10/15 (69%) members present, further information on attendance can be found in the previous section. The CAC however did not meet the Interviewee Consensus' two other requirements, meaning the CAC did not give notice to the public of CAC meetings and the planners of the URP did not supply Committee members with evidence that their input was heard and recorded. All of the interviewees, save for actual members of the Committee, did not receive official notice of the CAC but instead heard about it through

other citizens or from the content of public hearings. In two instances, the owners of Addie Lee's and of The Muse, only heard of the CAC through hearsay of city officials that frequent their restaurants across from City Hall. As seen in the previous section, the minutes of the CAC do not detail the full suggestions and recommendations made at CAC meetings, with CAC Member #2 complaining specifically about this: "I brought it up and we discussed it and Allen threw his weight behind it. But it didn't even make it into the minutes".

The CAC did not meet any of the three requirements for meaningful participation set forth in The Low Power (LP) Definition. However, the LP Definition shares the two requirements in the A/F Consensus that the CAC failed to meet, which only creates one new requirement, that of using facilitators for the participation process. The third requirement for the LP Definition requires facilitators, and from CAC Member testimony there were no third-party facilitators involved.

The Citizens Advisory Committee only met none of the three requirements for meaningful participation in the High Power (HP) Definition, meetings were not held at accessible locations or times, the organizers of the CAC did not construct themes from citizen input, and the CAC did not engage a wide range of social groups. CAC Member #2 was most vocal about the time and location of CAC meetings, and cited it as an obstacle for their participation: "It is really inconvenient for me to get to city hall at 7:30 in the morning on a weekday". The time of week and time of meeting would disrupt the common work schedule of someone working 8 am to 4 pm or 9 am to 5 pm work shifts. In addition to this, Member #2 found the inconsistency of meeting times frustrating: "For me, to have five days notice, does not get it on my calendar". "Since I thought these were supposed to be regularly scheduled meetings, I found it difficult to get into the

groove of scheduling”. There is little evidence that the WRA constructed themes based on Committee input. While there is evidence that the CAC impacted the content of the URP, due to documentation concerns referenced in the previous section, there is no acknowledgement of CAC impact within the body of the URP. The CAC also was not comprised of a wide range of social groups. CAC Members #1, #2, and #4 have all commented about the diversity, or lack thereof, amongst Committee members. CAC Member #1 questioned whether everyone on the Committee lived in Worcester and believed all of the members were well-established community leaders, not grassroots members of various groups. Member #4, on the other hand, while praising the Plan, would have liked to have seen more representation from multicultural business owners.

The Citizens Advisory Committee did not fully meet any of the four definitions that I derived based on my own research. The closest definition the CAC fulfilled was the Academic/Federal Consensus definition, of which it met 3 of the 5 requirements. To summarize, the CAC did involve its members early in the process, was a collaborative exchange of knowledge between members and leaders, treated its participants fairly, and was well-attended. While input from the CAC did impact the decision making process, members were not informed of their impact and the decision makers were not receptive to member input. Decision makers did not treat the members of the CAC as equal partners in the process and the CAC did not provide notice to the public of CAC meetings. In addition to these, the CAC did not host meetings at accessible locations or times, and it did not engage a wide range of social groups. Based on all of these actions and inactions, and that the CAC did not fully meet any of the derived definitions of meaningful participation, the Citizens Advisory Committee was not a meaningful process.

The Public Hearings

The public hearings did not fully meet all of the requirements set by my 4 derived definitions for meaningful citizen participation. The hearings met 2 of the 5 requirements for the A/F Consensus, and therefore none of the requirements for meaningful participation set by the LP Definition, as the LP Definition shares two requirements and its third is not met by any of the participation methods. The hearings also only met 1 of the 3 requirements set in the Interviewee Consensus while fulfilling 2 of the 3 requirements for the HP definition. Based upon these definitions, the public hearings that the WRA utilized do not constitute a meaningful process.

The public hearings did not engage citizens early in the process, did not use facilitators, and decision makers were not receptive to public input, did not give enough notice to the public, did not communicate directly with many members of the public, did not see participants as equal partners in the decision making process and they did not show the public that their input was received and recorded. Decision makers, however, did treat participants fairly, exchanged knowledge with participants, hosted the hearings at both accessible locations and times, had their content well-documented, and constructed themes from citizen input. From all of this, the public hearings did not meet the full requirements for meaningful participation under any of the 4 definitions but came closest to fulfilling the 3 requirements for the High Power Definition.

Using the same definitions applied to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), I found the public hearings, as a participatory process, to meet only 2 of the 5 A/F Consensus requirements,, 1 of 3 Interviewee Consensus requirements, none of the LP Definition requirements, and all of the HP Definition requirements. Only to the High Power Definition were the public hearings meaningful.

In the public hearings, to the A/F Consensus, citizens were not engaged early in the process, decision makers were not receptive to public input, and citizens were not seen as equal partners in the decision making process. Participants, however, were treated fairly and there was an overall mutual exchange of knowledge between participants and decision makers, meeting 2 A/F requirements.

The public hearings did not involve the wider public early in the participation process. The WRA held the first public hearing on February 26th, 2015, one month before the CAC's first meeting on January 22nd. While this first hearing occurred early, wider public participation did not occur after this first hearing until the last public hearing, 434 days later on May 5th, 2016 where the WRA voted to accept the URP. The lack of further involvement shows the public was not involved continuously early in the process. 8 interviewees, spanning from CAC members to community activists to small business owners, have all cited an unwillingness and a lack of receptivity to citizen input on the part of the WRA, John Rinaldo reflects this sentiment: "And I think no matter what the public said, the city, they were dead set on doing it their way no matter what. So, no matter how much dissention there was, it was a dog and pony show". Public hearing participants were not treated as equal partners. In both the first and second public hearings, public speakers were limited to 3 minute comments and the WRA board members reserved the right to divert discussion and ask questions of the speakers. In addition to this, CAC Member #3 comments about how the WRA overall views the participation process: "They [the WRA] take them seriously as a hurdle that they have to pass but they don't take them seriously for meaningful input". Participants, however, were treated fairly and there was a mutual exchange of knowledge between participants and decision makers. None of the interviewees believed they were or would

have been treated unfairly at public hearings, and all believed that they could have spoken at the hearings. In addition to this, the minutes of the public hearings, analyzed in the previous section, show an exchange of suggestions from the public and technical information from administrators.

Under the definition of meaningful participation outlined in the Interviewee Consensus, the public hearings were not a meaningful process as they met only one of this Consensus' three requirements. The public hearings were well-attended, but decision makers did not give enough notice to the public, did not communicate directly with many members of the public, and decision makers did not show the public that their input was received and recorded. 43 people signed into the first of these public hearings while the second hearing has no sign-in sheet attached to the official minutes, yet was held at the much larger venue, the DCU Center (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016). To one of the WRA board members, David Minasian, the 43 attendees of the first hearing was a large amount: "This process is going to be much better for the City of Worcester if all of you continue to be a participant in this process" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 74). However, interviewees largely did not believe they were duly notified of the first or second public hearings. For the second public hearing, there was an instance of a business owner whose property was targeted for eminent domain in the URP not being notified of the hearings, specifically, Sam Etre, owner of the Corvette Auto Body Shop: "Sam Etre – Corvette Auto Body Shop – never notified about plan; does not want to have to move his business" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 95). Any impact that the public hearings had on the URP was not well-documented. As shown in the previous section, the only direct reference of the impact of public hearings on the URP is two sentences stating that some

of the goals and objectives of the URP were derived from public hearing input, without specifically stating which goals and objectives these are.

The public hearings met 2 of the HP Definition's 3 requirements: they took place at both accessible locations and times, had their content well-documented, and decision makers constructed themes from citizen input. Due to lack of research and my inability to determine by last-name the social groups participants belonged to, I cannot judge whether the public hearings engaged a wide range of social groups. Both public hearings took place at 5:30 pm, which allows most day-shift workers to attend a majority of the hearings. The WRA also held these hearings at two accessible locations, City Hall and the DCU Center, two well-known centrally located venues in downtown Worcester. The content, rather than the impact, of these public hearings are well-documented, especially in comparison to the detail of the CAC meetings. Decision makers constructed themes based off of the input gathered at these hearings, the goals and objectives that, while not specifically showing the impact of the hearings, shows what themes the WRA gathered from hearings: "Comments and concerns expressed at public forums regarding such matters as traffic volume and circulation, recreation/open space, public infrastructure improvements, and private property physical improvements are reflected in the goals and objectives, defined in Chapter 12.02 (3) Project Objectives" Worcester Redevelopment Authority, p. 105).

While the public hearing only came close to meeting the High Power Definition's requirements, the public forum came closer to meeting all of the requirements for meaningful participation.

The Public Forum

The public forum that was originally meant to be hosted by the Citizens Advisory Committee but was instead hosted by the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) was the most meaningful citizen participation process that the WRA endorsed. The public forum meets 4 of the 5 Academic/Federal Consensus requirements for meaningful participation, 2 of the 3 Interviewee Consensus requirements, and meets the core requirements for the LP Definition, and 2 of the 3 HP Definition requirements. The public forum discussed in this section is different from public hearings, as the purpose of this forum was to gather community visions for the future of the Wyman-Gordon parcels. According to Craig Blais, CEO of the Worcester Business Development Corporation, the public forum that took place was a Charrette process, which is defined below:

A charrette is a type of participatory planning process that assembles an interdisciplinary team—typically consisting of planners, citizens, city officials, architects, landscape architects, transportation engineers, parks and recreation officials, and other stakeholders—to create a design and implementation plan for a specific project (The World Bank, 2015).

The sources that I draw on in this section will not be as broad as those in other sections, as only two interviewees commented directly on the public forum. Primarily, I rely on the submitted minutes from the forum, academic sources, and interviews with Craig Blais, CEO of the Worcester Business Development Corporation, and Michael Traynor, CEO of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority.

The public forum met 4 of the A/F Consensus' 5 requirements. The Forum did not occur early in the overall planning process, as it was held on September 16th, 2015, midway between the two public hearings that bookend the overall process. Decision makers that held the Forum were receptive to citizen input and the input did have the potential to impact decision making. Michael Traynor stated that the WRA wanted input from people that lived around the Wyman-Gordon parcels, the Canal District:

“Our consultant, BSC, had three proposals on what might be redeveloped on that site. So we got a lot of good input from people there, what their thoughts were we wanted to get input from the people that live in that area. That was a meaningful exercise”.

This, coupled with the evidence of the public forum's impact in the “*A Lack of Detail and Recorded Impact: The Minutes of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Public Hearings, and the Public Forum*” section, confirms that the public's input had the ability to impact the planning process. The public forum was a collaborative process with a mutual exchange of knowledge, Traynor described what took place as: “It was like a listening session on what people thought the future of the Wyman-Gordon properties should be at the time...we had people at different tables, they had sheets of paper, writing down different ideas”. From analyzing the minutes of the public forum, the organizers broke participants into 4 different groups that each were asked 6 questions to deliberate on and report back to the greater forum. Before the breakout groups however there was a presentation giving an overview of the URP and of the forum format, demonstrating a mutual exchange of knowledge. Citizens were also seen as equal

partners in the decision making process as citizens were directly asked to generate and design alternate uses for the Wyman-Gordon parcels:

“During the break-out session community members identified three key features for improvements in the area: to establish a multi-sports facility, to increase mixed-use development, and to improve walkability and transportation connections...”.

Considering the lack of breadth of sources, I can only determine that the participants were treated fairly because they were broken up into groups of 4 and left to their own devices away from the influence of decision makers.

The public forum meets two of the Interviewee Consensus’ three requirements for meaningful participation. The public forum was well-attended, 35 participants signed into the Forum, close to the 43 for public hearing that the WRA believed to be a large attendance (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016). The public was informed that their input had been received, recorded, and is reflected in the URP. I cannot judge whether the Consensus’ second requirement, that the public was duly notified of the process, due my own lack of research into the matter. The impact that participants had on the URP and the planning process was well-recorded and is shown in one of the very first pages of the URP in its Vision section: “A public forum regarding the 11 parcels that previously contained Wyman-Gordon Company manufacturing activities...As a result, the following general vision was developed:” (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 5). This Forum, however, was not well-publicized to the wider public. A

majority of the interviewees had not heard of this Forum or its results, which may be due to the Forum's target specifically being residents of the Canal District.

Regarding the LP Definition, considering the public forum met the two requirements that the LP Definition shares with the A/F Consensus, the public forum already meets 2 of the LP Definition's 3 requirements. However, the public forum, like every participation method discussed thus far, did not use third party facilitators and does not meet all of the LP Definition's requirements.

The EOED hosted the public forum at an accessible time and location and was able to construct themes based on citizen input, meeting 2 HP Definition requirements. However, I cannot determine from names alone the social, ethnic, or religious groups that participants belonged to, with this and other gaps in my research, I cannot determine whether the participants were from a wide range of groups. The public forum, like the public hearings, was held at 5:30 pm, granting most working people whose shifts end before 5pm the ability to attend the Forum. In addition to this, the EOED hosted the Forum at the Crompton Collective, a large building in the center of the Canal District, making it accessible to its intended participants, residents of the District (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 81). Decision makers constructed themes based off of citizen input, this is evident in the three proposals the BSC Group created based off of participant input: "During the break-out session community members identified three key features for improvements in the area: to establish a multi-sports facility, to increase mixed-use development, and to improve walkability and transportation connections" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 82).

The public forum fulfilled the majority of the requirements for all of the definitions used in my analysis, because of this, the public forum is the most meaningful

process the WRA endorsed in the planning of the URP. Decision makers that held the Forum were:

- receptive to citizen input
- generated themes from this input
- held a collaborative process
- saw citizens as equal partners
- asked citizens to generate alternate uses
- treated participants fairly, and informed them that their input had been received and recorded in the URP

The public forum was also well-attended, but decision makers did not use third party facilitators and I could not determine whether they involved a wide range of social groups. However, the public forum still did not meet all of the requirements for meaningful citizen participation set forth in the four definitions.

News Publications and the Online Availability of a Draft of the URP

The informative measures the WRA utilized were not effective in informing the public of participatory methods, and the provided evidence of news publications undercuts the WRA's argument that news publications informed the public. Both Sherry Arnstein's and the IAP2's frameworks for evaluating public participation state that methods that serve only as informative measures for the wider public are non-participatory. As such, the definitions that I derived that set requirements for meaningful *participation* do not apply to *informative* methods. However, both of the aforementioned frameworks cite informative measures as critical for meaningful participation, stating that accurate information is a requirement for such participation. With this, I evaluate the efficacy of the WRA's informative measures, not in terms of meaningful participation, but in how effectively they informed the public. To evaluate

these measures, I review what methods interviewees were aware of, the newspaper articles planners of the URP included in the Plan's attachments, and how many people viewed the rough draft of the URP. In my review of how informed interviewees were of the WRA's methods, I did not include the perspectives of city officials as they are the ones most likely to be aware of the WRA's processes. The informative methods that the WRA cites were not effective in informing the general public of participation methods, and further demonstrate that the WRA did not involve the public early in the planning process. I could not determine the impact or efficacy of the online availability of the draft as I do not have access to how many people downloaded said draft.

The news publications supplied by the WRA in the URP attachments only reference the second public hearing, none of the other participatory methods (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, pp. 109-116). While a majority of the interviewees were aware of some of the WRA's methods, few of them were informed by the City and most learned of them through other citizens. One interviewee in particular complained about WRA's usage of the *Telegram & Gazette* as the means for informing the public of the second public hearing:

“Nope, didn't know about them didn't get any information about them, where did they put them? The *Telegram and Gazette*? I don't read the *Telegram and Gazette*...I didn't know anything about the dates, times, anything (John Rinaldo, owner of *The Muse*).

While the *Telegram & Gazette (T&G)* serves as the newspaper of record in Worcester and is required to publish notices of public hearings when directed by Worcester

government, it does not represent the most accessible means for public information. The *T&G* places its articles, even those published at the direction of city government, behind a paywall and requires readers to pay to view articles. Outside of the question whether the *T&G* serves as an effective means for informing the public, the WRA only includes newspaper articles from the *T&G* in the attachments of the URP final draft that notify the public of the second public hearing held on May 5th, 2016. There are zero articles listed that serve to notify the public of the first public hearing on February 26th, 2015, the public forum, or of the existence of a Citizens Advisory Committee. These publications exist but are not included in the WRA's attachments.³ In addition to this, after a review of the announcements on the City of Worcester's website, worcesterma.gov, there are zero announcements of the first public hearing the WRA held, while there is one for the second hearing.

The timing of announcements was not conducive to meaningful citizen participation under the Academic/Federal Consensus and Low Power Definitions. The announcement for the public hearing and the linked copy of the draft was published on 4/20/16, 2 weeks before the second public hearing (City of Worcester, MA, 2016). For many, according to the minutes of the second public hearing, this was the first notice that they had received of the existence of the URP, specifically Sam Etre and Jo Hart: "Jo Hart will have submit my questions waited too long to speak; plan should have been brought forth earlier" (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 96). If this was the first notice of the Plan's existence for participants, and they only had 2 weeks formulate

³ <https://www.telegram.com/article/20150914/NEWS/150919573>

their input, and at the very public hearing they were supposed to participate in the WRA voted to accept the URP, it is not difficult to imagine citizen dissatisfaction.

5.3 Citizen Participation Issues Related to the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan's Inspiration

That the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP) is based off of the Worcester Business Development Corporation's (WBDC) Theatre District Master Plan (TDP) inhibits meaningful citizen participation for the URP before it was planned. Before there was the URP, there was the TDP. The WBDC published the TDP in 2013 with an agreement that the City of Worcester would create an urban renewal plan based off of the TDP:

“The agreement that we made with the city, if we did that vision plan, they would layer it with an urban revitalization plan. So the city hired a consultant, BSC. So, BSC went ahead and did the plan, over the original 35 acres” (Craig Blais, CEO of the WBDC).

Michael Traynor, the CEO of the WRA, confirmed Mr. Blais' information: “We tried to align with that [The TDP] as much as possible”. Traynor's and the WRA's alignment with the TDP, and therefore the WBDC, is obvious in comparing the visions of the two plans and in what properties both suggest rehabilitating. This sentence precedes the vision outlined on page 5 of the URP: “This URP embodies the vision that was defined in the 2012 Theatre District Master Plan, which reads as follows...” (URP

Final Draft). In addition to this, suggestions for Midtown Mall, the Money Stop, and several other properties originate in the TDP. That so much of the URP is derived from the TDP, which was privately funded and planned by the WBDC, raises questions for how much citizen participation could have impacted the URP. However, Craig Blais and the authors of the URP both argue that the TDP incorporated “extensive” public outreach. The first sentence of the URP’s section 12.02 (11) Citizen Participation reads as follows:

“This URP incorporates input received from public outreach efforts undertaken during the planning process, as well as the recommendations that were developed for other area projects which incorporated extensive public outreach (e.g., the Theatre District Master Plan)” (Worcester Redevelopment Authority, 2016, p. 105).

While there is evidence that the WBDC held a community forum, and Craig Blais claims to have met with every property owner in downtown Worcester, there is not only an absence of submitted evidence of the TDP’s citizen participation processes in the URP, but the TDP document itself does not reference citizen in any significant capacity (Worcester Business Development Corporation, 2012). The only instance of public input that I could identify in the TDP’s document is the following: “As a part of the public discussion, concerns about parking and design were raised related to the redevelopment of this lot” (Worcester Business Development Corporation, 2012, p. 47).

Not only is the documented impact of $\frac{2}{3}$ citizen participation methods absent in the URP, but it is also completely absent from the TDP that the URP coopts.

Considering the TDP is a privately funded and organized plan for downtown, the involvement of the public and their ability to hold the content of the TDP, and therefore the URP, accountable was already limited at the start of the participation process. Even if the public did meaningfully impact the TDP, and by proxy, the URP, the lack of documentation undercuts any future participation methods that could be an improvement on those used for either plan.

5.4 Observations on the Climate of Citizen Participation in Worcester Politics

While not the center of my research, in interviewing past participants of the Citizens Advisory Committee, small business owners, activists, and several others, many cited concerns, not just with the WRA, but with politics in Worcester as a whole. While I cannot speak to the climate of citizen participation in Worcester as a whole, I can speak to what interviewees believe. Small business owners generally saw a lack of communication on the part of the City, while some interviewees saw the lack of power in their input as a bar to their own participation, while others cited issues with a lack of citizen attendance.

All 4 interviewed small business owners have cited a lack of communication by the WRA and by the City in general, especially for the placement of construction vehicles in front of their establishments during streetscape work. Outside of this, 6 of the 8 interviewees that belong to low power groups as defined in this report did not believe citizen input could impact the decision the URP or the decision making process. CAC Member #4 and Craig Blais have both said that, in order for the public to have impact,

they need to first show up, and both believe that people who complain without showing up do not make a good argument for themselves. However, two other interviewees have stated that because citizens feel that they do not have an impact on the process, they are less likely to show up. CAC Member #2 embodies this, as they felt disheartened when their suggestion went unrecorded "...I brought it up and we discussed it and Allen threw his weight behind it. But it didn't even make it into the minutes...that might have been around the time when I said, if this isn't convenient to my schedule, then I'm just not gonna do it".

6.0 Conclusion

In this section I contextualize my findings and evaluation of the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan's (URP) citizen participation processes within the history of urban renewal in Worcester. I then move onto suggestions for future participation efforts that I believe will make for a meaningful participation process. However, these suggestions should be weighed against the structural concerns of centralized decision making I discuss in the succeeding section. After these subsections, I move onto discussing externalities for this report that I did not expect, such as the failings I identified in my own participation framework and the idea of using frameworks in general to evaluate public participation processes. I then conclude my report with broader implications for the relevant academic fields of Communication, Rhetoric, and Political Science.

The Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan's Place in Worcester's History of Urban Renewal

The history of urban renewal in Worcester is a tumultuous one, beginning in the 1960's with the controversial taking and demolition of the Laurel-Clayton neighborhood, and the subsequent displacement of its primarily working-class Black-American population. However, Worcester's current urban renewal plan is unlike its predecessors, with repeated claims by administrators that eminent domain is a tool of "last resort" and an absence of mass-clearing as a stated goal. Yet, Worcester has not fully escaped some of its past legacies. Some of the same complaints espoused by the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) created to involve citizens of

Laurel-Clayton are seen in the complaints of the members of the CAC created for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP). Specifically, complaints of a lack of impact on the plan in question and a lack of interest on the part of the City for the Committee's input.

However, concerns for the citizen participation process that the WRA utilized do not end with the CAC. Massachusetts law requires a showing of meaningful citizen participation yet does not define what meets this definition. The ambiguity surrounding this definition has led to many conflicts in definitions, specifically amongst members of high power and low power groups. Yet, even when accounting for various potential definitions for meaningful citizen participation, the WRA's 3 participatory methods, the CAC, 2 public hearings, and a public forum, do not fully meet the requirements for any of my 4 derived definitions. These findings, combined with the poor documentation of the impact of the WRA's methods on the URP, pose troublesome implications for future participation processes. Outside of the specific methods the WRA utilized, the overall approval process for urban renewal plans does not facilitate meaningful citizen participation.

Suggestions for Future Citizen Participation

To prevent future conflict between decision makers and participants and to make future participation processes more meaningful, I have a few suggestions. First, before the citizen participation process begins, a definition for meaningful citizen participation should be set. As I mentioned in a previous section, creating a universal framework for citizen participation as well as a universal definition for meaningful citizen participation is problematic. Therefore, any definition set at the beginning of a participation process

should use the perspectives and definitions of potential participants to form a comprehensive and inclusive definition. This could be done through a survey, interviews, free form ballot question, focus groups, or whatever method that could query a large portion of the population. Whatever method used to create such a definition, however, must demonstrate with little uncertainty that those asked to create a definition represent the wider demographics of the city of Worcester. The process used to create this definition should be extremely transparent, with data sets made publicly available for review. Creating a definition before a process begins and by using the above methods establishes expectations for the process at hand that a majority of those that will be involved have agreed upon. Establishing a definition in such a manner demonstrates to the public that their voice can be heard and potentially impact the participation process. Congruency in expectations and definitions while demonstrating the public's voice can impact the process is essential to preventing conflict and for building trust between administrators and the public.

Second, administrators and decision makers must make a commitment to maintaining and adhering to this definition. As soon as administrators deviate from the collectively created definition, trust will wane and conflict will brew. If the definition that was used to demonstrate that the public will have a legitimate voice in the process is subverted, it will sow doubt into whether the public could have any impact on the process they're participating in. This commitment must also apply to any collective public decision as well. However, if administrators do find the public's decision to be unreasonable, they must find a compromise between the public's views and their own. While finding such a compromise, they must explain explicitly to the public, in a form

understandable to the layperson, why the collective decision is either infeasible or legally spurious.

Structural Concerns for the Approval of Urban Renewal Plans and Who Decides What is Meaningful Citizen Participation

The approval process for urban renewal plans does not facilitate meaningful citizen participation in its structure, and this is further compounded by the lack of a comprehensive definition in Massachusetts law. For the URP, the Plan must first be approved by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA), then the Worcester Planning Board, then City Council, and finally the Legal Counsel of the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Nowhere in this process is there a public vote, referendum, or ballot question. The public has no official basis in the approval of a Plan that grants eminent domain powers to the unelected members of a redevelopment authority (WRA). Massachusetts law attempts to ameliorate this lack of public process by requiring "meaningful citizen participation" in the DHCD's M.G.L Chapter 121B Urban Renewal Plan Preparation Guide (DHCD, 2018). In this requirement, the DHCD states: "Showing meaningful citizen participation is necessary for approval of the Plan" (DHCD, 2018). Yet, the DHCD provides no definition for meaningful citizen participation. At most, the DHCD states that, if the community forms a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), then information about its members and how they were selected "...should be included in the Plan". The DHCD does not require a CAC and does not state whether it is a meaningful process, the lack of definition and lack of description of whether the CAC is a meaningful process further adds to the ambiguity surrounding meaningful citizen participation.

The approval structure, coupled with the ambiguity of meaningful citizen participation amounts to a process that privileges decision makers to self-evaluate. When the WRA, City Council, and the DHCD all approved of the URP, they accepted that the planners of the URP had met all of the legal and DHCD requirements for urban renewal plans. By this, these decision making groups all implicitly agreed that citizen participation in the planning of the URP was meaningful, effectively defining meaningful participation as what occurred. Michael Traynor, the CEO of the WRA, took a similar track when I asked him to define meaningful citizen participation: “I think meaningful is ...I think what we did reflects what meaningful is”. However, that those whose job it is to engage the public are also the ones who evaluate the efficacy of their own methods represents a conflict of interest. In addition to this, whether intentional or not, the ambiguity of a definition for meaningful citizen participation in the requirements prevents the public from determining for themselves whether a process was meaningful, preventing a check on this conflict of interest. The diversity of definitions arising from just 15 interviewees, hardly a representative sample of the City of Worcester, prevents a large body of citizens from deriving their own definition for meaningful participation to then use in evaluating the WRA’s processes.

Outside of the above concerns regarding checks of power, differences in definitions of meaningful participation will inherently lead to conflict amongst participants and decision makers. When a requirement is left undefined, it allows for a multitude of definitions, as shown in this report specifically for meaningful citizen participation. This diversity of definitions then creates differences in expectations in how this definition will be met, and any difference in how two groups approach a situation, like citizen participation, breeds conflict. Furthermore, that these expectations

are broken along power differentials, as shown in this report, sets up conflicts peripheral to differences in definition. These peripheral conflicts compound the difficulties of citizen participation, as, what may have once been a difference in definition, evolves into differences in class and power.

The Inadequacy of Established and Synthesized Participation

Frameworks for Evaluating the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan (URP)

When I set forth to evaluate the WRA's methods for involving the public in the planning process, I initially sought to use established frameworks, such as Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" and the IAP2 "Public Participation Spectrum" to evaluate said methods. However, when I identified the key components of these frameworks in my literature review, I found the criteria for certain levels of participation in both frameworks either too general or difficult to apply directly to the URP. My two key findings from comparing the Ladder to the Spectrum was that Arnstein's Ladder has multiple levels that can apply to the same method and the distinction between levels in the IAP2 Spectrum were too general. In addition to these, and while the Ladder defines citizen participation, neither framework defines meaningful citizen participation. From these, I synthesized the key components of these two frameworks and attempted to remedy the shortfalls of both through a new framework. What I found to be the common shortfall that led to the Ladder's levels applying to multiple participation methods was a lack of commitment from administrators to implementing and incorporating citizen input. Whereas, for the Spectrum, it is not clear what is necessary for movement from one level of participation to the next. In the framework I synthesized attempting to

remedy these shortfalls, I required for any method to be considered meaningful that decision makers make a commitment to incorporating citizen input and maintain said commitment. In addition to this, I made the requirements for moving from one level to the next clearer than how the Spectrum depicted movement.

In my cursory evaluation of the WRA's methods using this new framework, with a definition of meaningful participation being a commitment to incorporate the public's input, I found every method the WRA used to not be meaningful. At first, I was tempted to continue forward in my research using this narrow definition, but as I interviewed both city officials, CAC members, and other citizens, I found my own definition exceedingly narrow. For a time, I was confused as to how I should evaluate the WRA's methods if my own and well-established frameworks could not account for the perspectives of those actually involved in the processes. Thus, started my skepticism of using a framework to analyze participation processes. How could a framework devised by people far removed from the processes being evaluated possibly hold validity across this evaluation and any it is applied to? This criticism applies to the framework I devised as well. So, I set forth to evaluate the WRA's methods based on what people who were actually involved in these methods thought meaningful participation was and is.

Sherry Arnstein defines citizen participation as a form of categorical power. While this definition and the entrance of power critiques into participation processes is an extremely important contribution to the evaluation of governmental processes, Arnstein's Ladder suffers from one of its own critiques of governmental power. The application of an overarching framework to citizen participation processes itself removes power from citizens to define what they believe meaningful participation to be. An overarching framework, because it is so generalized, not only fails to fully account for

the idiosyncrasies of citizen participation, but can be used, even without ill intent, to establish a basis for citizen power and meaningful participation that citizens themselves do not believe to be correct. With this, I heavily encourage any future attempt to evaluate citizen participation in government to be situation-specific and to account for the perspectives of those involved, instead of those who designed a framework far-removed from the situation at hand.

As an aside, I would suggest any public administrator or any concerned citizen to read King, Feltey, and Susel's article "The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration" published in *Public Administration Review*. King et al.'s article encompasses many of the themes touched upon in this report.

Hurdles in Completing this Project

In all, I originally expected an evaluation of citizen participation methods to be a straightforward, yet interesting process. While interesting, my evaluation and what I found was far from straightforward. Much of this report's methods had to adapt to new findings and new realizations in how to best evaluate the role of the public in the policy planning process. However, while I found my results to be interesting, there are still many areas, questions, and people that I would have liked to research. In interviewing citizens of Worcester, I uncovered some themes about overall perceptions and attitudes towards citizen participation in Worcester. As the submission deadline for my report neared, I unfortunately could not interview and revisit these themes. In addition to overall attitudes towards citizen participation in Worcester in general, the power differences in respondents was not originally a variable I considered in my interviews.

The differences among power groups only became apparent in retrospect once my interviews had completed. Had I accounted for power groupings initially and sought out differences along these lines while determining why power groups held different views, I believe the findings would prove illuminating to how power shapes perceptions of government in Worcester. Outside of these, I would have liked to interview more people in general, and I would recommend that future research start interviewing early in the research process, as trends, even from these early interviews, can shape the overall report, like this one.

Implications for Communications, Rhetoric, and Political Science

Additionally, this report's findings have interesting implications for both the field of Professional Writing and Society, Technology, and Policy. While these implications apply more broadly to the parent fields of these subfields, such as Communications & Rhetoric and Political Science, they are still relevant nonetheless. In terms of Communications & Rhetoric, the lack of documented impact that participation methods had on the URP, how decision makers communicated to participants, and the power differences in definitions of meaningful citizen participation warrant further research in this field. For Political Science and public policy, the analysis of the public's dissatisfaction with the legal bases for citizen participation and its role in policy planning is interesting. In addition to this, collective policy planning and its implications for direct democracy models is useful for creating a more democratic society.

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4. If the respondent answered YES to any of the methods, I will ask
 - a. Where did you hear of the [insert method]? When?
 - b. Did you participate in the [insert participatory method]? If not, why?
5. How effective do you think these methods were in involving yourself and/or other citizens?
6. Do you feel your voice was heard, or could have been heard in the planning process?
 - a. Why do you feel that way?
7. Do you feel the public was meaningfully involved in the planning process of the URP?
 - a. Why do you feel that way?
8. Do you have any suggestions for future methods the WRA could use to involve citizens in the planning process?
9. What do you think meaningful public participation would look like?

CAC Member Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the WRA's URP? What do you think its primary role in downtown is (marketing tool? To attract investors? To retain college kids?)
 - a. In my research several news articles have called it: "Ambitious", "Hit-list"
2. What impact do you think the URP will have on Worcester's Downtown?
3. In my research I have found that several changes were made to the URP document based on CAC input
 - a. Could you tell me about some of these changes?
 - b. How do you feel the CAC's influence was limited in changing the document, if at all?
 - c. Were you, at any point, frustrated with a part of the CAC's involvement?
 - d. What do you think was the most important action the CAC took with regards to the URP?
4. Who are the different stakeholders do you see coming to the table in CAC discussions? From your perspective, what groups do you think were best represented on the CAC? What groups of people do you think were left out, if any?
5. From your perspective, how would you characterize and describe the members of the CAC?
 - a. I am aware of some of the criteria used to choose these CAC members, but just to clarify, how are members chosen and to what criteria? Application basis?
 - i. If yes to application: Why did you apply to become a CAC member?
 - b. Are there any particular people that stick out to you as being especially influential? Who might they be??

- c. Was there a dominant voice or person in CAC meetings? Did you feel that any particular person in the meetings made the conversation more difficult?
 - d. Were you ever dissatisfied with the direction that CAC conversations went? What was one of these topics and what direction did it take?
6. In my research, I am aware that the CAC was created as method to incorporate citizen participation in the planning of the URP, what role did the WRA play in CAC meetings? Were there any individuals from the WRA that made a big impact in the CAC meetings?
 7. Would you have liked to see the WRA engage with any particular group of people more than they already did?
 - a. Mention my research has seen some people say certain groups weren't adequately involved
 8. How effective do you think the CAC and other methods used by the WRA were in involving yourself and other citizens in the planning process?
 9. Do you believe that the voices of citizens were heard, or could have been heard, in the citizen participation process?
 10. How would you characterize the overall citizen participation process that the WRA utilized?
 11. How would you define meaningful citizen participation?
 12. Do you think the citizen participation process was meaningful?
 13. What would you like to see in future citizen participation efforts? Any particular methods, considerations?

News Reporter Questions

1. Do you live in Worcester?
2. How long have you been covering revitalization in Downtown Worcester?
3. How familiar are you with the URP and the WRA? Have you looked it over at all?
4. Are you aware of any of the efforts the WRA used to include the public in the planning process?
5. How would you describe the tone of the public discourse surrounding the URP?
6. What are the most common features do you think people mention when talking about the URP and revitalization downtown in general?
7. Do you think the overall tone of the discussion is positive, negative, critical?
8. If you have interviewed anyone related to the Plan, what are some of the overarching themes and trends that you have seen people discuss?
9. Do you know if the WRA reached out to news agencies to publicize the URP, public hearings, or similar meetings?
10. Do you believe media opinion played an influential role in the planning of the URP?

WRA Representative Interview Questions

1. Through my research I have identified several ways the WRA has tried to include the public in the planning process, can you tell me about them?

- a. I know the WRA legally had to hold at least one public hearing, can you tell me why or for what benefit the WRA went beyond the legal requirement?
2. What efforts to include the public in the planning process do you think were especially meaningful?
 - a. In what way do you think the public, through these efforts, influenced the planning process?
3. How were the implemented participation methods selected?
4. How would you define “meaningful citizen participation”?
 - a. How did you come to this definition?
5. What is the role of the public in the planning process in the eyes of the WRA?
6. What was the CAC’s role in planning the URP?
7. How did the CAC influence the final URP document?
8. What role did the WRA play in CAC meetings?
9. How were CAC members chosen?
10. What do you think was the most important action the CAC took with regards to the URP?
11. Did media opinion influence planning the URP?
 - a. If so, how did media influence planning and could you point to a specific example?
12. How would you describe the tone of the public discourse surrounding the URP, mostly positive, somewhat positive, neutral positive, neutral negative, somewhat negative, mostly negative?
13. Did the WRA publicize the citizen participation processes of the URP?
 - a. If so, how, to which news agencies, and what was publicized?
14. Did the WRA reach out to news agencies to publicize the URP in general?
 - a. If so, which agencies, and what was publicized?
15. What was the process for incorporating public input into drafting the URP’s goals and objectives?
 - a. Do you remember any specific goals and/or objectives that were direct responses to public input?