The Notion of Community in Neighborhood Planning Practice

by

Emily Talen, AICP

RESEARCH PAPER 9804

Research Assistant Professor
Regional Research Institute
West Virginia University
P.O. Box 6825
Morgantown, WV 26506-6825
etalen@wvu.edu

April 1998

Abstract: As an element of planning practice, the notion of community is not well thought out. Planners need to better understand community and its many components, much in the same way that planners need to have an understanding of economics, public finance, or land use law. The inability of planners to use the notion of community (specifically "sense of community") in order to strengthen collaborative effort (social capacity) at the neighborhood level is due, in part, to the lack of an epistemological and conceptual framework. The successful integration of planning and community must rest on a theoretical perspective which allows multi-dimensionality in the notion of "community" (multiple meanings), and the differentiation of neighborhood type on the basis of social organization (multiple levels). The integration between the notion of community and neighborhood planning is analyzed in four steps. First, I outline the basis for making community building the primary focus of neighborhood planning. Second, I assess how neighborhood planning practice currently incorporates the notion of community by analyzing neighborhood planning documents from sixteen U.S. cities. Third, I outline the multiple meanings and multiple levels of community, distinctions which may be of use in the context of building community within neighborhoods. Finally, I offer examples of how the various theories and typologies of neighborhood, based on the dimensions of community which they exhibit, can be used in neighborhood planning practice.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Mary Coffindaffer for her assistance with the analysis of neighborhood plans.
Introduction

Although planning is inundated with the concept of community on an ideological level, as an element of planning practice the role of community is precarious. One camp denounces the quest for community as "chasing rainbows", labeling it as "a chimeric notion which cannot and should not be the object of public policy" (Evans, 1994, p. 106; see also Audirac, Sherryen, and Smith, 1992). Others in this camp have stressed the need to abandon the sociological study of neighborhoods in favor of focusing on the functions and services of residential areas (Menahem and Spiro, 1989; Wekerle, 1985). A competing school of thought proclaims the fundamental value of community (Neuman, 1991; Etzioni, 1993), as a basis for neighborhood planning (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1992; Katz 1994), and as a catalyst for neighborhood rebuilding (Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993; Schorr, 1997). These competing views have contributed to the fact that in the world of planning practice, the concept of community is unstructured and used at random. In this paper I take the view that although community is a valuable construct for planning, its use in practice is not well thought out.

A full discussion of how the notion of community can be better integrated in neighborhood planning practice would require extensive discussion, well beyond what is offered here. This paper is simply a call for planners to engage more fully in this discussion. Planners need to better understand community and its many components, much in the same way that planners need to have an understanding of economics, public finance, or land use law. Rather than abandon the notion of community as being too complex, planners need to broaden their understanding and use of community as an avenue for improving quality of life, not as social engineering toward any particular form of community, but as a fundamental means of implementing neighborhood planning goals.

Currently, the ability of planners to structure their trade around the notion of building community is irresolute. This hesitancy, I contend, is due to a lack of theoretical perspective. By outlining an epistemological and theoretical structure in which the notion of community is treated multidimensionally, my intent is to lend support to a more effective incorporation of community in neighborhood planning practice. This is germane in light of the increasing rhetoric about the need to establish neighborhood level "sense of community" and the elusiveness associated with the implementation of this goal.
My approach to analyzing the integration between community and neighborhood planning is structured around the following steps and assertions:

1. The building of community at the neighborhood level should not be equated with social engineering or other ill-fated attempts to produce socially balanced communities. Building community is the process whereby an area's social capacity is strengthened, and as such should be the basis of neighborhood planning, not simply a term interjected here and there to conjure up vague notions of "community spirit" and "neighborliness". While neighborhoods will vary widely in their desire and/or ability to engage in community building efforts, successful strategies aimed at improving quality of life at the neighborhood level rest on the ability of neighborhoods to function cooperatively and for common purposes.

2. Based on an assessment of current neighborhood planning practice, the incorporation of community is ill-defined and only randomly applied, usually phrased within the context of resident involvement in issue identification rather than the building of community as an explicit and necessary goal.

3. The connection between neighborhood planning and community building has not been systematically established because of a lack of an epistemological and theoretical perspective. This lack of perspective is fueled, in part, by the tension created between placeless communities of interest versus neighborhood level communities of place.

4. Planners can utilize extant theoretical perspectives offered by community psychologists and social scientists to give the incorporation of community in neighborhood planning a better sense of perspective. The adoption of a firm theoretical grounding will support the integration of neighborhood and community by accommodating multiple meanings and levels of community.

To analyze the incorporation of community in planning, I use neighborhood-level planning as a basis. It is at this level that the community concept is most likely to be invoked as a catalyst for change within the planning arena. Further, I assume that "neighborhood" has a territorial basis, and that the various issues involved in defining what a neighborhood is (i.e., its locational meaning in a given context), have been resolved.¹
My analysis consists of four parts, paralleling the assertions made above. I first outline the basis for making community building the primary focus of neighborhood planning. Included is a discussion of the conceptual meaning of community which is germane to neighborhood planners. Second, I assess how neighborhood planning practice currently incorporates the notion of community by analyzing neighborhood planning documents from sixteen U.S. cities. Third, I outline the multiple meanings and multiple levels of community, distinctions which may be of use in the context of building community within neighborhoods. Fourth, I offer examples of how the various theories and typologies of neighborhood, based on the dimensions of community which they exhibit, can be used in neighborhood planning practice.

The practical value of building "community"

The multitude of meanings embedded in the notion of "community" has been treated elsewhere (Morris, 1996). In this study, I focus on one specific concept of community: the interrelationship between the individual and the social structure at the neighborhood level which is invoked in the commonly used phrase “sense of community”. I draw heavily on the theoretical definition of sense of community proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), who stress the importance of opportunities for membership, influence, mutual needs to be met, and shared emotional ties as determining factors in the degree of sense of community residents may feel. While membership may apply to non-territorial "communities of interest", the definition used here stresses the territorial, neighborhood-based notion of community. The outcome of these varied levels of sense of community, McMillan and Chavis theorized, contributes to both individual as well as community development. They equate sense of community with community competence, or the community's ability to solve problems through collective effort. Community, as in sense of community, can be thought of as the social domain of neighborhood planning.

Building community, then, is the process through which the relationship between the individual and the social structure of a neighborhood is channeled to increase neighborhood social capacity. This social capacity, a term used most recently in a study by Mattessich, et. al. (1997), is based on strong social relationships, group problem-solving skills and the ability to work collaboratively. This focus on the social, affective dimension in planning is distinctive. As Mattessich points out, the goal of fostering community via neighborhood planning is quite different from a task oriented form of neighborhood planning in which the accomplishment of specific objectives - e.g., sidewalk placement or business retention - is the primary focus.
Ultimately, strengthening the social capacity of neighborhoods via community building efforts is a long-term investment in the development of a mechanism to solve neighborhood problems and improve neighborhood quality of life.

When community building as a means of strengthening collaborative effort is confused with community building as social control, the entire notion of community becomes problematic for planners. Such views are derived from the ideas of Park and Burgess (1925), who stressed the social control function of neighborhoods. Common patterns of social interaction and the homogeneity of local residents ("natural groups") were viewed as evidence of an ameliorative social pattern organized by local neighborhood within a heterogeneous urban milieu. In much the same way, Perry's view of neighborhood (1929) was aimed at instilling proper morals and maintaining a sense of social stability.

When community is defined on the basis of existing rather than normative social structure, the issue of social control is less problematic. Most importantly, the focus on developing social capacity (as opposed to social control) has tangible meaning since there are specific means available to strengthen social capacity via community building initiatives. Methods of establishing community in this sense have been attempted in the past (Dewey, 1950; Bacon, 1968; Keller, 1968), and there are examples of the practical application of community in private governance systems (Barton and Silverman, 1987). More recently, Mattessich et. al. (1997), researched hundreds of studies of effective community building techniques, and developed a comprehensive list of 28 factors that are likely to result in successful community building. Thus specific methods for achieving social capacity are firmly in place; what is needed is a better understanding of how these methods interrelate with existing dimensions of community at the neighborhood level.

The need to strengthen community – usually defined in terms of "sense of community" – in neighborhoods has become a routine axiom of those working in community development, particularly inner city neighborhood regeneration, and is touted as an essential basis of urban policy (Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997). Social analysts such as Lisbeth Schorr and John Gardner write about the essential need to build the "social fabric of neighborhood", including a "sense of identity" and "shared values" (Schorr, 1997; Gardner, 1991). Kelbaugh (1997) writes about the social disaster brewing as a result of the loss of random encounters and degradation of "socially cohesive" communities.

These conclusions are fueled by social science research which specifically demonstrates the pragmatic value of "sense of community" - it has been linked to an increase in local action
and empowerment (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990), and implicated as an important factor in the mediation of negative enviromental factors such as crowding (Aiello and Baum, 1979 and Freedman, 1975). One study found that homeowner maintenance was significantly higher in neighborhoods which were socially cohesive (Galster and Hesser, 1982). Studies have repeatedly found that it is the social dimension of neighborhood that has a significant effect on how individuals rate their overall quality of life (O’Brien et. al., 1989; O’Brien and Ayidiya, 1991).

Often the role of fostering community is perceived as the underlying catalyst and foundation upon which neighborhood regeneration efforts must rest. Schorr’s (1997) account of successful neighborhood rebuilding efforts lays claim to the value of community in effectuating these efforts. Community at the neighborhood level has been shown to effect economic development efforts as well (Sundet and Mermelstein, 1988; Borich and Korsching, 1990). A study by Varady (1986) found that the success of neighborhood revitalization efforts depended on neighborhood confidence, in turn a function of, in part, social cohesion. Sometimes the utility of community is conceived of in terms of political advantage, whereby the collective neighborhood can mobilize to shape political action (Janowitz and Suttles, 1978).

The social capacity of neighborhood is intrinsic to the very definition of "neighborhood". According to Schoenberg and Rosenbaum (1980), one condition of the existence of a viable neighborhood is that neighbors share at least one common tie through a social network, institution, or public space. Kallus and Law-Yone’s (1997) analysis of the interpretation and use of the concept of "neighborhood" revealed that four out of eight "aspirations, themes and ideals" of neighborhoods had an explicit social basis and meaning (e.g., human association, social meaning, social reform). For planners, the social basis of neighborhood can be understood and applied through the lens of "community".

Community in current neighborhood planning practice

To a large degree, the value of neighborhood-based planning rests on the presupposition that neighborhoods serve multiple social purposes, such as the socialization of children, informal social control, personal support networks, and social integration (Rohe and Gates, 1985). While different types of neighborhood plans have been used for overt social purposes (e.g., Perry’s neighborhood unit concept), neighborhood planning has approached the sociology of neighborhood - specifically, the building of "community" - more implicitly. In this section, I present an assessment of how the notion of community is incorporated in neighborhood planning.
While various types of neighborhood planning are currently practiced in the U.S., the type of planning referred to here is that of city-funded, locally based planning dependent on the involvement of neighborhood residents and/or groups. Following the definition given by Rohe and Gates (1985), neighborhood planning typically involves local resident review of proposals or plans; development of new plans as a part of a city’s overall comprehensive plan; or neighborhood improvement activities (i.e., clean-up campaigns or housing rehab projects). More recently, neighborhood planning has evolved into an enterprise which focuses, predominantly, on commercial revitalization and the provision of public infrastructure.

In order to assess the use of community in neighborhood planning, I analyzed the written documents which are an integral part of neighborhood planning practice. While it could be argued that this appraisal of the written form of planning misses the essential community building activity taking place daily in neighborhood planning (perhaps intangibly), it is nevertheless the written documentation which gives evidence of the value afforded to community building in planning practice. In other words, my evaluation is centered on the degree to which planning practitioners value the notion of community enough to reflect on its utility in a tangible, written form. The absence of any written recognition in a "how-to" guideline, program description or actual plan can only be interpreted as evidence of a lack of importance attached to it.

Twenty major U.S. cities were selected at random from a list of the fifty largest cities in the U.S. Each planning department from these cities was asked to send any recent documents they had which would describe neighborhood planning efforts. Respondents were told that the purpose for the request was to analyze the incorporation of the notion of community in neighborhood planning. Fifty-four documents were obtained from a total of sixteen cities, consisting of actual plans for specific neighborhoods, descriptions of neighborhood planning programs, or guidelines for performing neighborhood planning. The documents were analyzed by carefully discerning any reference to "community", "sense of community", "social interaction" or other goal, objective, or method pertaining to the community building dimension of neighborhood planning.

Out of the fifty-four documents received, only twenty, from twelve cities, included the notion of community in some capacity. Table 1 presents a summary of the documents included in the analysis. Thirty-four of the fifty-four documents obtained made no mention of community, and the neighborhood planning documents of four cities - Louisville, New Orleans, Omaha and San Antonio - made no explicit mention of goals related to the notion of community.
As the analysis of the documents progressed, certain categories of "community" instituted in neighborhood planning began to emerge. As listed in table 1, I have grouped the use of community in neighborhood planning into four categories: resident involvement, interaction through design, descriptive use, and community building events. First, the treatment of community in many documents often consists of resident involvement in the identification of planning issues. Specifically, the documents discuss the need to promote resident participation in neighborhood planning groups, whereby residents are involved in the identification of issues as well as the performance of specific tasks (e.g., putting residents in charge of neighborhood clean-up programs). Presumably, resident involvement promotes sense of community by facilitating resident interaction. Resident interaction occurs through participation in both the planning stages of specific tasks as well as by carrying out these tasks. Involvement in neighborhood planning, therefore, is intended to foster the building of a "sense of community" by not only increasing resident interaction, but by encouraging resident responsibility for the accomplishment of planning goals. Here the notion of community building appears to have evolved out of – almost to the point of being equated with – the citizen participation tradition in neighborhood planning.

This category is slightly different from the category community building events. A number of neighborhood plans focus on increasing the number of events taking place in the neighborhood as a way of building community. This approach also relies on involvement as a way of building community, but the involvement may not be focused on specific planning related tasks. Thus, the events have no lasting effect in the sense of traditional neighborhood planning goals (such as business retention), but rather are used solely for the purpose of increasing resident social interaction.

For the category descriptive use, sense of community and related terms are used in very broad terms which are unconnected to any specific method of achievement. Thus sense of community or "cohesiveness" may be a goal of the neighborhood, but it is not tied to any concrete method of goal achievement, or process by which its accomplishment can be measured. Here terms such as "sense of belonging" and "sense of place" are used fairly simplistically to describe the benefits of engaging in planning. Sense of community is something to be achieved, but it falls short of a specific goal and is mentioned in cursory fashion. Often, sense of
community is linked to the idea of "planned neighborhoods" in general, or through the provision of a "safe environment". While the linkage between planning and sense of community is direct, no specific method of how this is to be accomplished is made and therefore the use of the term is essentially descriptive.

A final category in the use of community in neighborhood planning documents, termed interaction through design, centers on the idea that the physical environment can engender social interaction and thereby build a sense of community. This is based on a variety of ideas, such as the provision of public parks, the location of public seating arrangements, the strategic placement of activity centers, and the need to encourage residents to maintain balconies and porches. While the influence of the physical environment on social interaction and sense of community is widely accepted in the planning domain, questions about how this is accomplished and under what circumstances such interaction occurs are still largely unresolved (i.e., whether social interaction is predetermined by resident homogeneity, stage in the life cycle, or a variety of other non-environmental factors; see Talen, 1998).

Several conclusions can be made about the use of community in planning. First, while the term is interjected in many plans, it is rarely a goal in and of itself, to be accomplished as a necessary foundation for successful neighborhood planning. Instead, it is applied descriptively ("a well planned neighborhood creates a sense of community"), or as a byproduct of neighborhood activities and events. In this regard, the notion of community as an aspect of neighborhood level planning lacks depth.

Second, the plans demonstrate a fairly narrow application of the notion of community, as either a goal with an undefined method of effectuation (except in abstract terms), or as a result of resident involvement. For example, there are no references to either the various types of "community" existing in neighborhoods, nor the various methods of effectuation which should be decided upon on the basis of the kind of neighborhood community which currently exists or is desired. Community as building membership, as promoting sense of place, as promoting social attachment, or as a mechanism for social influence may be implicitly intended, but are not explicitly recognized. In this respect, the notion of community is unidimensional and lacks stature.

Third, the connection between the collaborative identification of issues by neighborhood residents and building sense of community may be obvious to many planners and residents, but it is given limited attention in actual neighborhood plans, guidelines and program descriptions. Without regard to specific context, resident involvement, these documents contend, is supposed
to engender community. Community building in neighborhood planning, it seems, has become inextricably tied to, in fact confused with, citizen participation. Citizen participation strategies were a fundamental aspect of the Community Action and Model Cities programs of the 1960s, but community building was not the primary focus of this participation aspect. The reliance on resident participation as a means of fostering community points to an underdeveloped understanding of the term.

**Sense of Community and neighborhood planning: theoretical perspectives**

The limited, inconsequential use of the notion of community in neighborhood planning is, I contend, due in part to a lack of theoretical perspective. One reason why the theoretical waters are murky is the existence of a fundamental paradox between, on the one hand, the need for social cohesiveness and sense of community at the neighborhood level, and, on the other, the attempt to "liberate" community and recognize the aspatial nature of much of residential life. This is the tension created by positing the needs of the community against the needs of the individual; such needs must be simultaneously addressed, yet they are not easily balanced.

In order to elevate and better understand community in neighborhood planning, planners need to have a sound conceptual framework as a basis. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to relate specific theories of community to specific types of neighborhood planning strategies, my intent is to lay some theoretical groundwork. As a start, in this section I suggest an appropriate epistemological and theoretical basis for the integration of community in neighborhood planning. What social science theory can planners draw upon as a basis for making better use of the notion of community in neighborhood planning? Fundamentally, the theoretical perspective required must be able to address two issues:

1. *Multiple meanings of community* - that "sense of community" involves multiple meanings; and, relatedly,
2. *Multiple levels of community* - that there simultaneously exist non-territorial communities of interest as well as neighborhood based communities of place.

The successful integration of planning and community must rest on a theoretical perspective which allows multi-dimensionality in the notion of "community" (multiple meanings), and the differentiation of neighborhood type on the basis of social organization (multiple levels). In this way, planners can resist neighborhood planning dogma about community, a tendency which has led to a state of poorly articulated notions and subsequent
community, a tendency which has led to a state of poorly articulated notions and subsequent reactions against the community building function altogether. An example of this ill-fated dogma is the view that the neighborhood unit concept is required for strengthening social goals. Scholars admonish the rigidity of the neighborhood unit concept and other attempts to socially engineer particular types of "balanced" communities (Banerjee and Baer, 1984).

*Multiple meanings of "neighboring": social interaction and sense of community*

The first theoretical perspective of use to planners – essentially constituting an epistemological foundation – is the notion that neighboring, including social interaction and sense of community, involves a variety of different dimensions. The research on both of these aspects, particularly sense of community, is voluminous. During the past 20 years, researchers have built upon each other's conceptions of the varied meanings involved, such that our understanding of the social life of neighborhoods is now fully multi-dimensional.

For planners, a necessary distinction must be made between social interaction, referred to as the social component of neighboring, and sense of community, the affective, psychological component. Together, the social interaction and affective components are often referred to as the primary determinants of neighboring (Unger and Wandersman, 1985; Skjaeveland, et. al, 1996).

The social interaction component consists of (often locally-based) social networks and the emotional support which can exist among neighbors. Research on neighboring, in fact, often consists of quantitative measures of local social interaction. Such activity is overt, and ranges from strong social relationships (e.g., exchange of help and goods) to weak social ties (e.g., casual greetings).

The broad category of social interaction can be further broken down. Unger and Wandersman (1985) define social interaction as both social networking within neighborhoods as well as social activities such as "borrowing or lending tools, informal visiting, and asking for help in an emergency" (p. 141). The former refers to a person's overall connectedness within the neighborhood, regardless of whether the connections lend support. Wellman (1981) describes these networks as linkages, patterns of ties, or even flows of resources between individuals. This is related to the notion of *collective meeting of need*, whereby the local community meets the practical needs of its members, including the shared use of physical facilities (see McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Skjaeveland et. al, 1996; Riger and Lavarakas 1981; and Puddifoot, 1995).

Linkages can exist between individuals, between neighborhood groups, or between individuals and groups. While social networks can exist well beyond the neighborhood level, the relevance
to neighborhood planners is the degree to which such linkages exist at the proximal (i.e., neighborhood) level. Further, it is possible that high levels of weak social ties (linkages) among neighbors can eventually give rise to stronger, more supportive social ties (Granovetter, 1973; Greenbaum, 1982).

In addition to social networking, social interaction can consist of more supportive relationships. Unger and Wandersman (1985) proposed three types of social support neighbors provide. First, personal/emotional support is beneficial in that it can lessen social isolation and contribute to a resident’s sense of belonging. Here neighbors greet and visit each other either as casual interaction (referred to as "sociability") or interact on a deeper, more intimate level as friends (referred to as "socioemotional support"). The existence of more intimate forms of emotional support have been shown to be linked to higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction (Fischer et. al., 1977; Unger and Wandersman, 1982). Secondly, neighbors can provide instrumental support, involving short-term obligations and help in times of emergency. This type of support has a functional relevancy to it, for example in terms of crime prevention or the provision of aid. A final type of social support is informational, in which neighbors receive referral sources, information about neighborhood events, or any other form of "interpersonal influence". Such influences, of course, can at times be "disruptive" (Merry, 1987).

Social Interaction in these various forms must be distinguished from the affective component of community. This component considers the psychological aspects of community, beyond overt social interaction (although in many ways tied to it). Beginning with Sarason’s seminal work, “The Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology” (1974) a number of different dimensions have been proposed. Together, these dimensions define "sense of community".

McMillan and Chavis (1986) integrated the work of a number of different social researchers and developed a comprehensive definition and theory of sense of community. While they stipulated that the theories could apply equally to territorial or non-territorial communities, neighborhood planners would obviously be interested in how these concepts are manifested at the neighborhood level, and thus I emphasize the use of these terms in the neighborhood context. Each of the different aspects of sense of community are listed below.

1. Membership - the feeling that one has invested oneself and therefore has a right to belong. Attributes in this category include boundaries (the notion that some members belong and some do not); emotional safety (the feeling of security); a sense of belonging and identification; personal investment (a feeling that one has earned a
place in the neighborhood); and a common symbol system (a name, a landmark, an architectural style).

2. Influence - the feeling that a resident can be influential within a neighborhood. Such feelings are correlated with the ability of the neighborhood to exert pressure to conform. Such pressure serves to validate certain norms and beliefs. Influence is thus bidirectional, whereby residents are both influenced by the neighborhood and reciprocally have an influence on the social norms and values of the neighborhood.

3. Integration and fulfillment of needs. Need fulfillment and reinforcement, McMillan and Chavis contend, is a primary function of a strong community. "Successful" neighborhoods, in which membership is desirable and members possess a certain competency, are products of a neighborhood whose residents have a positive sense of one another. Membership, based on residency in a particular neighborhood for example, must be rewarding. A strong sense of community is evidenced by the fact that people meet the needs of others as well as themselves.

4. Shared emotional connection. The sense of community among neighborhood residents can be strengthened by a shared history. This history, however, need not be personally experienced by each member, but instead each resident must be able to identify with it. Shared events and positive social interaction contribute to a shared emotional connection. Further, community events that have a closure to them (rather than being left unresolved), opportunities to honor residents for particular deeds, and the facilitation of investment in the neighborhood all serve to strengthen the "spiritual bond" among neighbors.

These dimensions are not necessarily manipulable; they are rather social aspects of a neighborhood to be discovered, understood, and, in some instances, strengthened. The planner who is educated about the multidimensionality of community will begin to ask probing questions. Is a particular aspect of community - social interaction, sense of mutual aid, membership, for example - evident in a given neighborhood? If not, how can various dimensions be strengthened to build community and therefore strengthen social capacity and collaborative effort? Is there a need to strengthen or otherwise facilitate the development of social linkages, emotional support, functional support, membership, reinforcement, a shared history or personal investment? How do the different aspects of community either in evidence or desired by residents in a neighborhood affect the selection of community building strategies specifically? The answers to these questions are not straightforward. The goal of understanding the multiple meanings of
community is for planners and residents to be able to probe the underlying social dimensions of each neighborhood and thereby employ the notion of community building more effectively.

*Multiple levels of community*

The literature on community reveals a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, social research reveals the existence of place-less communities and the notion that community can be "liberated" from any specific physical context. The community of place, usually defined in terms of neighborhood, is replaced with the community of interest or "portable personal communities" which are detached from any specific locale (Crump, 1977). For planning, the view that "community in the urban setting...no longer has a territorial basis" (Olson, 1982, p. 502) must be reconciled with the fact that the success of neighborhood planning rests to a large degree on its ability to build community and increase social capacity at the local level. To accomplish this, planners need a theoretical foundation which supports both a neighborhood-based construct as well as a wider view which incorporates multiple levels of community.

In a seminal article by Wellman and Leighton (1979), the authors sketched out the contrasting views of community lost (social disorganization), community saved (the persistence of neighborhood communities), and community liberated (aspatial, network based communities). The existence of the "roving neighborhood" in which there is a more fluid arrangement of dwelling clusters and "no presumption [about] social cohesion or 'neighborhood'-ness" (Banerjee and Baer, 1984, p. 189) reflects the translation of "community liberated" in planning terms. While it is true that social life and sense of community defy precise territorial bounding, neighborhood planners must be able to make the argument that some aspects of community persist at the neighborhood level.

One theoretical construct which accommodates the view that sense of community exists at multiple levels and that one of these levels is the neighborhood, is the notion of the "community of limited liability" (Janowitz, 1952, 1967; Greer, 1962; Suttles, 1972; Hunter and Suttles, 1972, Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Hunter, 1975; Warren, 1978). It is from this theory that the integration of community within neighborhood planning can successfully be constructed. In this perspective, sense of community has both multiple meanings and multiple geographies. These geographies are both spatially and aspatially defined social networks. What is important for neighborhood planning, however, is that at one level of the socio-spatial complex of each residents' world view is a neighborhood level construct of community. What the limited liability
concept translates into is the differentiation of neighborhood types, organized into "hierarchies of community" (Hunter, 1979).

The community of limited liability grew out of the community saved orientation, but posits that the neighborhood is one of a series of communities in which residents divide their membership. Neighborhood interaction is the result of an individual calculus regarding the cost/benefit of investment in the community (social, personal) and the community's capacity to produce tangible benefit. Local neighborhood interaction and attachment (components of community) vary by individual and by neighborhood. Residents are thus able to be, simultaneously, members of a number of diverse networks. Network sociologists are critical of this view since the limited liability community formulation "is still predicated on the neighborhood concept, seeing urban ties as radiating out from a local, spatially defined base" (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, p. 376). Yet it is precisely this ability to incorporate both views - territorially based community and network-based community - that make the limited liability formulation particularly valuable as a theoretical construct for neighborhood planning.

To incorporate community in neighborhood planning, it must be accepted that the cohabitation of territory and social life at the level of neighborhood can coexist with the view that social space is multi-layered and multi-geographic (i.e., consists of larger or smaller social networks). By grasping this view, planners can come to terms with the fact that neighborhood as a territorial unit is easier to define than neighborhood as a social unit with geographic boundaries.

**Neighborhood Typologies**

The successful incorporation of community as a basis for neighborhood planning essentially involves conceptualizing neighborhoods in terms of the varying meanings and levels of community, many of which were discussed above. For example, Warren (1978) used the dimensions of "individual identification with the local area", "degree of social exchange between neighbors" and "extent to which the area is explicitly linked to the larger community" to derive six neighborhood types. Warren's resulting typology classified neighborhoods as Integral (high level of interaction and local activism), Parochial (high interaction, low activism), Diffuse (low interaction, indifferent to political process), Stepping Stone (high interaction, active in larger community), Transitory (low interaction and high outside linkage), or Anomic (low on all three dimensions).
Other typologies have been developed. Riger and Lavrakas (1981) used two dimensions of community attachment - social bonding and physical rootedness - to develop four "patterns of attachment" which can be applied to derive neighborhood types. Weenig, et. al. (1990) used social interaction (high and low) and psychological sense of community (strong and weak) to derive four neighborhood types. Brower (1996) attempted to link social, cultural and physical qualities of neighborhoods to derive a four-part neighborhood typology based on life-style.

In practical terms, strengthening the incorporation of community in neighborhood planning means that the assessment of the social organization of neighborhoods should be an integral part of a neighborhood profile. There are no hard and fast rules for differentiating neighborhoods on the basis of the meanings and levels of community they exhibit. Drawing upon existing typologies, planners should assist residents in understanding their own dimensions of community. In this way, planners working at the neighborhood level can move beyond hollow claims about building sense of community toward an informed understanding of the dimensions involved, and how these dimensions converge in various ways to form different kinds of neighborhoods.

Theories, typologies, and the link to neighborhood planning

A basic premise of this paper is that the theories and typologies that expose the levels of community existing within neighborhoods can be used to better target community building efforts. The challenge for neighborhood planners is to have a deeper understanding of just what the instillation of "sense of community" in the context of each specific neighborhood means.

A few specific examples demonstrate how a broader perspective of community can impact planning policy. For example, some neighborhoods will exhibit weak patterns of social attachment because they are transitional or are characterized by a high degree of resident mobility. Neighborhoods which are experiencing a high degree of residential renovation may be characterized in this way. In such cases, where informal social networks are lacking, neighborhood sense of community may be increased by focusing on participation in formal organizations. Crenshaw and St. John (1989) identified the existence of "organizationally dependent" neighborhoods, whereby the social foundation of residents (many of which were newcomers) was a function of participation in formal organizations.

For neighborhoods characterized by a high degree of aspatial community affiliation – that is, with large proportions of residents networked through common causes, interests or employment which is non-territorially based – the question of representation in community
building efforts at the neighborhood level should be a main concern. As Duffy and Hutchinson (1997) point out, in traditional, territorially based communities, any individual could be seen as representative of the local neighborhood. But where there is no existing neighborhood attachment (or other dominant form of community), representation from the "neighborhood" becomes problematic. The implication for neighborhood planning may be that in neighborhoods with a high degree of place-based sense of community, scarce resources may not need to be focused on ensuring maximal representation in neighborhood planning strategies for the purpose of building community. In contrast, representation may need to be the primary focus in neighborhoods with lower levels of "communities of place". In the latter case, it may be necessary to ensure representation from various "communities of interest" in order to have an effect on building community (see Harrison et. al. 1995).

A study by Weenig, et. al. (1990) demonstrates how knowledge about the various facets of social interaction and sense of community can have a very practical utility. Based on an assessment of strong and weak sense of community, measured along several dimensions, as well as various levels of overt social interaction, the study was able to identify the particular type of information dissemination method which would be most appropriate for a given neighborhood. For example, for a neighborhood with a strong sense of community (along several dimensions) but with sparse neighboring activities (i.e., overt social interaction), researchers predicted that information would probably not diffuse rapidly, although social influence would be high. For a neighborhood with both a strong sense of community and many neighboring activities, information diffusion was predicted to be fast, with correspondingly strong social influences on behavior.

Ideally, planners should assist in the assessment of resident perceptions of the social dimensions of their neighborhoods. A number of different methods can be used to make this assessment. More formally, there are survey instruments available to evaluate the various dimensions of sense of community. For example, Nasar and Julian (1995) developed an economical survey instrument (11 items) specifically for the assessment of a neighborhood's sense of community (multidimensionally defined). The survey was designed to provide an empirical basis for evaluating how sense of community varies between neighborhoods in different physical and ecological contexts. Less formally, planners and residents could assess the social dimensions of their neighborhoods via small group discussions, focus groups using facilitators, and other participatory means.
Since the assessment of resident perceptions through survey research is not always feasible, alternative indicators may be useful. Hirschfield and Bowers (1997) used data on police calls as indicators of levels of social cohesion (the social and affective dimensions of neighboring), theorizing that if the number of calls is high, then the neighborhood has a lower ability to solve social problems, reflecting low social control and low social cohesion. In the same study, participation in neighborhood crime watch programs was seen as an indicator of high social cohesion. Other indicators which are theorized to predict low levels of social cohesion are absence of local participation in formal and voluntary organizations and the absence of local friendship and acquaintanceship networks (Sampson, 1993). Such information could be used to identify particular neighborhoods where certain aspects of community are potentially lacking.

Somewhat more problematic, although often easy to obtain, are socioeconomic data by neighborhood which have been linked to levels of community. Variables linked to low levels of social cohesion, for example, include high population turnover, low socioeconomic status, social heterogeneity and family disruption (Bursik, 1988; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Hirschfield and Bowers, 1997). Hirschfield and Bowers (1997) hypothesized that lone-parent households, high numbers of recent migrants, and social and ethnic heterogeneity are "social disorganization risk factors". Socioeconomic status is more difficult to apply, given the conflicting views that on the one hand lower-income neighborhoods are more dependent on communities of place (St. John and Clark, 1984; Fried, 1986), but on the other hand neighborhood residents of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to participate in formal or voluntary neighborhood groups (Sampson, 1993).

Conclusion

The social life of neighborhoods is complex. Yet this dimension is at times so pervasive and so integral to the other aspects of neighborhood life - political, economic - that to relegate its consideration to intuition and informal assessment is misguided. In this paper, I have attempted to lay some epistemological and theoretical groundwork for the explicit incorporation of the social dimension of neighborhood – specifically the idea of "community" – within the context of planning practice. Neighborhood planners should stress the utility of community, but they should do so with a keen understanding of the term. Planners should break down wide-ranging concepts like "community" into specific notions such as collective meeting of need, membership, mutuality of interest, or emotional attachment. What this means is that planners must have a
more thorough understanding of what is meant by community, how it varies from neighborhood to neighborhood, and target their responses more appropriately.

Several issues need to be addressed if planners are to continue their focus on community. First, planners should devise ways to measure the achievement of community building goals. The analysis of neighborhood plans revealed the descriptive use of "community" whereby community enhancing goals were not linked to any specific method of effectuation. Similarly, community related goals remain descriptive if the degree to which they are actually attained is not measurable. To assert that neighborhood planning is important because it builds "sense of community" is hollow unless this sense of community can be measured over time. One approach to the measurement would be to institute resident surveys on sense of community (multidimensionally defined) as a regular aspect of the planning process (conducted every five years, for example).

Second, there should be a separation between consumer behavior and the social behavior of residents at the neighborhood level. The demise of the neighborhood social unit is often linked to the demise of various neighborhood level commercial services. In its place has emerged a residential form predicated on individual need. Sprawling shopping centers and discount chain stores have become our manifest destiny allowing, as some believe, liberation from the confines of specific neighborhood constructs which limit individual movement.

The need for individualism in the context of consumerism should not be fought, and, more importantly, should be separated from the need to build social life in neighborhoods, where appropriate. While the preferences of residents for shopping and recreation are open-ended, this does not necessarily mean that the socialization needs of residents at the neighborhood level are equally open-ended. In other words, consumer behavior is different from social behavior.

Third, a key paradox which neighborhood planners will have to grapple with in any attempt to build community is that on the one hand, social diversity is a morally compelling goal, but that on the other hand, social science research points to the fact that social homogeneity is strongly linked to resident interaction and some aspects of sense of community (this paradox was articulated by Gans, 1961). This paradox is complicated by the fact that the concept of neighborhood has historically been used to promote social homogeneity and exclusion (Silver, 1985).

Just as there are a variety of social life needs among different neighborhoods and different residents, there are a variety of approaches to accomplishing social goals, i.e., the building of community. Both the ends and the means vary by neighborhood. This does not
mean, however, that planners should retreat from social goals because of a seemingly vast amount of relativity, where everything depends on everything else. It merely means that the incorporation of social goals requires broad, creative, multidimensional thinking beyond simple reliance on resident participation in the planning process.

The definition of "neighborhood" is a subject of much debate (see, for example, Hunter, 1979; Galster, 1986; Sawicki and Flynn, 1996). My focus, however, is not on the question "what is neighborhood", but rather, "what kind of neighborhood is this"? (see Olson, 1982).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Involvement</td>
<td>Create a sense of community, improve involvement with neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhoood Planning Programs</td>
<td>Well planned neighborhooods can promote a sense of community, stem vacant lots, and help solve issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhoods and Block Clubs</td>
<td>Preserve, nurture and enhance &quot;community spirit&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Building Components</td>
<td>Promote social interaction via proper placement of public space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Through Design</td>
<td>Promote social interaction via proper placement of public space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: "Community in Neighborhood Planning Documents"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Use</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>Memphis, TN</td>
<td>Hope Gardens Neighborhood 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residen Involvment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>Audubon Park Neighborhood 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Title IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>Neighborhood Planning Workbook 1998 (G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residen Involvment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction through design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive use</td>
<td>Community Building Blocks</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>The Plan for West Philadelphia 1994 (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residen Involvment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residen Involvment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residen Involvment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Neighborhood Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(G)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1: "Community" in Neighborhood Planning Documents**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Community Building Component</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Title/Date</th>
<th>Neighborhood Planning</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Plan Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Wekerle, Gerda R.  From refuge to service center: Neighborhoods that support women. *Sociological Focus* 18, 2: 79-95.
