Drawing Outside the Lines: Participatory Design in Unincorporated Communities

By
Lillian Ring Jacobson

B.A. American Studies
University of California, Berkeley, 2011

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Signature of Author ________________________________

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 21, 2015

Certified by __________________________________________

Jose (Jota) Samper
Lecturer, Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by ________________________________________

Professor Dennis Frenchman
Chair, MCP Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
THESIS COMMITTEE

A committee of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning has examined this thesis as follows:

Jose (Jota) Samper, PhD
Lecturer in Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Advisor

Caesar McDowell, Ed.D
Professor of the Practice in Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Reader
ABSTRACT

Design is both a mode of communication and a collaborative process. It is a powerful tool with which to convey ideas about the built environment and unlock creativity. Yet urban planning has not harnessed design’s potential to engage communities in participatory processes. Urban design has been guarded as an exclusive realm for experts rather than a shared process that utilizes the knowledge of both professionals and community members. Urban planning has long struggled to successfully involve the public in its processes, and this thesis argues that participatory design is the key to meaningful community engagement in planning.

Participatory design is particularly important when planning in marginalized communities. It provides participants with a sense of ownership over their communities and exposes the manifestation of oppression in the built environment. Using Paolo Freire’s idea of “consciencizacion,” this thesis tests participatory design’s ability to allow both designers and community members to gain critical consciousness and work towards social change together.

The research for this project focuses on marginalized unincorporated communities that have been systematically excluded from city annexation practices because of their racial and socioeconomic makeup. These communities have been left under the jurisdiction of counties, lacking infrastructure, adequate emergency services, public open spaces, and sufficient political representation. This thesis also explores the impact of participatory design processes on teenagers in unincorporated communities who often bear the brunt of their communities’ oppression, and are rarely consulted in planning decisions.

My research concentrates on a participatory design process I conducted with high school students in a predominantly Latino unincorporated community outside of Santa Rosa, California. This community suffered a tragedy in 2013, when a 13-year-old boy was shot and killed by a Sonoma County Sheriff in a vacant lot along Moorland Avenue. The incident spurred community protests and organizing for change, and led to my involvement with the neighborhood. My work with the Santa Rosa teenagers revealed the importance of design in participatory processes. The physical act of designing unlocked students’ creativity, built their capacity to think spatially and feasibly, and showed them the power of young people’s voices in creating neighborhood change.

Thesis Advisor: Jose (Jota) Samper
Title: Lecturer, Department of Urban Studies and Planning
DEDICATION

To the young people of Southwest Santa Rosa
in honor of your voice and power
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INTRODUCTION

DESIGN AND ENGAGEMENT

Design is a powerful tool to communicate ideas about the built environment. Design is also a process that unlocks creativity and allows designers to envision new realities and think about space in innovative ways. Urban design works on a scale that affects entire communities of people, yet as a field, it has harnessed neither the power of design as a mode of communication, nor design’s potential as a collaborative process to engage with the communities it affects. Urban design creates the public realm, and as such “the public” should be involved in its methods. Its processes should not be the exclusive domains of trained professionals acting on behalf of community members; they should be open and engaging, utilizing the knowledge of both residents and professionals.

Urban planning has long struggled to successfully incorporate public participation into its methods. Since the 1960s, planning theorists such as Sherry Arnstein and John Forrester have encouraged planners to meaningfully engage with communities. These theorists argued for “citizen control” over processes, and for “progressive planners” who work with community members for the public good. However, the dominant mode of engagement in US planning remains bureaucratic public meetings, in which participants have minimal voice in the results of the process. This thesis argues that planning’s approach to participation and its mode of communication has not been effective, and that participatory processes should utilize design as a tool for engagement. This thesis also contends that when participants physically engage in the act of design, their capacity to think spatially and practically is strengthened, which leads to tangible change in their communities. Participatory design is thus an effective way for planners to work with communities for the public good.

DESIGN IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Participatory design is particularly important in the context of marginalized communities. These processes give participants a sense of ownership and political power over the shape of their neighborhoods, and expose the manifestation of oppression in the built environment. The foundation of my argument for using design in participatory processes lies in Paolo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Within the context of education, Freire argues for a new form of collaborative process between students and teachers, in which participants co-create a new reality. Freire describes these liberatory processes

as "concientizacion,"\textsuperscript{3} or the gaining of critical consciousness about systems of oppression. \textit{Concientizacion} requires teachers to let go of their sense of expertise, and recognize the knowledge and value of students, fostering a co-intentional process of liberation. I argue that if designers release their “expert” status, and engage in participatory processes with marginalized communities, both parties will gain critical consciousness and be able to work towards broader structural change and liberation together.

Freire’s framework is specifically useful in the context of planning with teenagers, which is a marginalized subgroup I worked with on this thesis. Freire’s ideas of liberation and critical consciousness are applicable to processes with youth because teenagers often bear the brunt of their communities’ oppression, as is evident in the current context of police brutality against young people of color. Youth are rarely consulted in planning decisions because their ideas are trivialized and they are not perceived as a worthwhile constituent group. Teenagers in particular are viewed in a negative light in society, with stereotypes of them as unruly and irresponsible. These perceptions of young people are often internalized, and youth do not believe in their own voice to shape their communities. I argue teenagers should be central to planning and design processes. They are the future of our cities, and can provide deep insights about the public realm, safety, and community needs. I also argue that teenagers react particularly well to design processes, and their creativity leads to innovative planning solutions.

The other marginalized group I focus on in this thesis are unincorporated communities. Specifically, I examine unincorporated areas that have been systematically excluded from cities based on their racial and socioeconomic makeup. Cities across the United States have intentionally left behind low-income communities of color (primarily Latino and African American neighborhoods) by annexing land around them. In some instances, these annexation practices have entirely encircled these neighborhoods, leaving “islands” of unincorporated land without access to adequate public services. Unincorporated communities, left to the jurisdiction of Counties, lack basic infrastructure, public space, community facilities, emergency services, and have limited political representation. They often house undesirable uses such as industrial sites, waste treatment facilities, and freeways. They are marginalized physically, politically, and even in scholarship: planning literature in the United States rarely addresses issues of unincorporated communities, tending to focus on problems within city limits.

The marginalization of unincorporated communities is difficult to perceive,
and this thesis uses design as a tool to make planners’ institutional oppression of unincorporated communities visible.

**CASE STUDY: SOUTHWEST SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA**

This thesis uses a case study to examine the role of participatory design in unincorporated communities. I focus on the Moorland Avenue neighborhood, which sits outside of Santa Rosa, in Sonoma County, California. As a low-income Latino immigrant community, the Moorland Avenue neighborhood fits within the description of marginalized unincorporated communities described above. The neighborhood is surrounded by incorporated city on three sides, and has been systematically excluded from the city limits along with other unincorporated islands in Southwest Santa Rosa.

Moorland Avenue was also the site of a police shooting of a 13-year-old boy in a vacant lot in 2013, which spurred community protests and organizing for change. The incident exposed the inequity facing this community, and led to a community planning process facilitated by the Sonoma County Health Services Department and the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department: the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process. The grant-funded

Figure 1: City of Santa Rosa is in white/light grey, and unincorporated land is in dark gray. The red box indicates the Southwest Santa Rosa Study Area

Source: Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, GIS Data Repository, “City Limits,” “Roads,” 2012.
process, conducted over a brief two-month period (August-September 2014), did not use design as mode of engagement, and was unable to build capacity or awaken critical consciousness amongst residents in a way that led to tangible change. I had been engaged in the early stage of this process as an intern at a consulting firm. Witnessing the process revealed the gaps in participatory planning methods, and spurred my continued involvement for this thesis.

**RESEARCH QUESTION AND FOCUS**

The goal of this study is to examine the value of design as a tool for engagement in marginalized communities. Using the case of unincorporated communities outside of Santa Rosa, California, I explore whether a participatory design process can enable residents to understand broader systems of oppression and build capacity to work for community change. My research question thus follows:

> How does community-based design function in unincorporated communities, and does a participatory design process enable residents to address the political and social marginalization they face?

**METHODOLOGY**

The goal of my research for this thesis was to test a new model of participatory design in unincorporated Sonoma County and compare the results of this process against the County-led Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning process. My methodology included three main components: 1) historical and political research on Santa Rosa’s planning, development, and annexation practices; 2) an analysis of the County-led Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process; and 3) an analysis of a participatory design process I conducted with high school students in Southwest Santa Rosa. In order to compare the two community processes, I used a set of three criteria to evaluate participatory processes in marginalized communities:

• Did the process build community capacity to continue making progress after the formal process ended?

• Did the process awaken a critical consciousness around structural oppression and the need for social change?

• Did the process have an impact on decision-makers and show them the need for implementable change?

Before engaging in my analysis of the two processes, I began with an historical and political study of Santa Rosa’s development and annexation practices. I examined Santa Rosa and Sonoma County planning documents and interviewed individuals involved with City and County planning practices. Interviewees included representatives from the County Board of Supervisors, planners at both the Sonoma County and Santa Rosa Community Development Departments, as well as employees of the Sonoma County Local Area Formation Commission, which is an agency that addresses boundary and jurisdictional issues. This research
provided me with an understanding of the inequitable annexation practices that have created unincorporated communities such as Moorland Avenue. It also expanded my area of interest beyond Moorland Avenue to consider unincorporated Southwest Santa Rosa more generally. This includes the Roseland community, a 710-acre unincorporated island (completely surrounded by City land) that is currently undergoing an annexation process.

After gaining an understanding of the historical and political context of the area, I began a thorough analysis of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process conducted by the County during the summer and fall of 2014. I based this analysis on my observations at the beginning of the process as well as interviews with both facilitators and participants of the process. Interviewees included Moorland residents, participants on the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory team, Department of Health Services employees, Sonoma County Regional Parks Department employees, and local community organizers who worked on the project.

Finally, I conducted a participatory design process with high school students in Southwest Santa Rosa at Elsie Allen High School. The process began with three two-hour “visioning sessions” in January. These sessions included activities such as mapping perceptions of safety, learning urban planning and design vocabulary terms, discussing inequity in unincorporated areas, drawing ideal communities, playing a neighborhood planning budget game, and building models of design proposals for the students’ neighborhoods. I conducted a survey of students after the workshops to understand the impact of these activities. The process continued through the course of the semester, with students engaging in an iterative design process on their models and working broader community efforts. This phase of the process culminated in the Elsie Allen Urban Planning Open House, where, students presented their models to City and County elected officials, local planners, the Santa Rosa City Manager, and other community members. I conducted surveys of the Open House attendees to gauge the level of impact the students’ work had on decision-makers. My analysis of the process was based on the two surveys I conducted as well as the students’ reflection essays during and after the process.

LESSONS LEARNED
My analysis of the two processes revealed the value of design in building community capacity, raising critical consciousness, and communicating ideas to decision-makers. In the Elsie Allen High School Process, design made visible the marginalization of unincorporated communities, and enabled participants to envision a different future for
their neighborhoods. The process led to creative ideas for community improvement, and showed the students the power of their ideas. My work with the high school students also showed me the value of youth voices in leading community change. The students’ work was innovative, collaborative, and strategic, and their ideas were taken seriously by decision-makers who attended the open house. The young people built capacity in the process by learning about political processes, working visually and spatially, and by communicating their ideas to people in power.

I also learned the importance of time in participatory processes. I achieved many of my goals in the Elsie Allen High School process, including making students aware of the social and political processes that led to their unincorporated status. However, five months (with the majority of my time spent across the country) was not long enough for the students to gain true critical consciousness: they have not yet made the connections between their specific context and the broader systems of oppression that created their community’s marginalization. I was also unable to build enough capacity for the process to continue without my involvement. Capacity building is a time-intensive endeavor, and this speaks to the importance of working in a community long enough to create a self-sustaining movement for change. Fortunately, I plan to continue working on the project past the duration of this thesis.

BIASES

There is inherent bias in my study based on the fact that I conducted the Elsie Allen High School Process and am emotionally invested in its success. However, I took measures to minimize the impact of my biases in terms of my analysis and evaluation. I conducted two anonymous surveys, which comprised a large component of my dataset, and I used evaluation criteria based on a numerical rating system. I was critical of the process I conducted and acknowledged its shortcomings.

It should also be noted that the sample population I used for the Elsie Allen process is not representative of Southwest Santa Rosa as a whole in terms of age and ethnicity, but the students do represent a valid source of community data. I compared the students’ perceptions of safety in their neighborhoods to reported incidents of crime, and the two datasets present a strong correlation. The goal of this project was not to identify community solutions based on a representative sample of the area, but to understand the impact of a process on a marginalized group.
THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis continues next with Chapter 1, in which I ground my ideas in critical theory and review literature around participatory planning and design. I also explore the specific context of marginalization in unincorporated and semi-formal communities, to provide an in-depth understanding of the setting in which I worked. Chapter 2 outlines my research methodology, including interviews, surveys, and a description of each visioning session I conducted with the high school students. Chapter 3 provides an historic and political analysis of Santa Rosa’s annexation practices, including the specific socioeconomic and racial basis behind the creation of unincorporated islands. I also explain a current annexation process underway in Santa Rosa in order to understand the steps of this political process. Chapter 4 describes the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, using interviews with county planners and elected officials, as well as Moorland residents, to explore the successes and failures of that process. Chapter 5 describes in detail the participatory design process I conducted with high school students, using narratives and quotes from their reflection essays throughout the process. Chapter 6 analyzes the data I collected, including students’ maps of safety perceptions, two sets of survey data, and student reflections essays. In this chapter, I also compare the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process with the Elsie Allen High School Process based on three evaluation criteria. Finally, I make conclusions about the role of design in participatory processes, reflect on my role as an outsider consultant, outline next steps for the Elsie Allen process, and make recommendations for participatory processes in marginalized unincorporated communities. I end with suggested steps to replicate participatory design processes in other communities.
In this chapter, I examine the current literature and theory on participatory planning and design, youth engagement in planning, and marginalized unincorporated communities. I begin by defining “urban design” to explain the way I will use the term throughout this thesis. I then ground my project in the theory of Paolo Freire, and his notions of critical consciousness and co-creation. I will then review a sample of literature on participatory planning from the 1960s onwards, discuss the current state of urban design as it relates to public engagement, and examine the role of youth participation in planning and design. I will close with a discussion of unincorporated communities as a product of systemic marginalization and exclusion in planning, and situate my case study within this theory.

**DEFINING DESIGN**
Before I explore participatory design, I first want to explain my definition of urban design. When I discuss “urban design,” I define it as the creation of the public realm. This is not merely a matter of aesthetics: the way we experience public space has a significant impact on how we feel in our everyday lives. Our comfort level, interactions with others, movement patterns, and what we are able to access is all a product of the design of a space. Furthermore, the design of public space is important to the very functioning of society. Hannah Arendt discusses “the public” as a conceptual idea where democracy, discourse and political action occur,¹ and the most important aspect of “the public” is its manifestation in physical space. The manner in which physical public space is experienced and constructed is fundamental to its ability to promote democracy and dialogue. Urban design, then, is the creation of spaces that shape the cohesion and functioning of our society.

Design is also a process and a creative method for problem-solving. Kenneth Bailey, a Principal at the organization Design Studio for Social Intervention explains, “Design is really a methodology for reframing a problem; a way to play with the complexities of the problem, come up with several ways to solve that problem and then test them.... Design is a verb less than it is a noun. It’s a thing that you do rather than a position you hold.”² The methodology and problem-solving aspects of design are critical to my argument, as is the idea of distancing design from the position of “designers.” I argue participatory design is a process to solve social and political problems that are manifest in physical space, and a way to engage communities in the problem-solving process itself.

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MARGINALITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Participatory design is not simply a method to create better public spaces; it is also a way to address issues of inequity and marginalization that are embedded in the built environment. Participatory design gives participants a sense of ownership and power over the future of their communities, which is particularly important in marginalized communities. For communities facing structural oppression, participatory design has the ability to be a liberatory process, in which both designers and community members become aware of specific modes of oppression, and work together to create solutions to undo those structures. The grounding for my argument comes from the classic text by Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire described this liberatory process as *concientizacin*, or the gaining of critical consciousness about the systems of oppression that have created inequity. Feire argues that awakening consciousness must happen on both the part of the oppressed and the oppressor. *Concientizacin* and a liberatory participatory process can only occur if designers and planners let go of their control and “expertise,” and engage in a mutually creative endeavor.

One of the fundamental flaws in the way planners and designers engage in participatory methods is the relationship they set up between themselves and participants: an “expert-layman” or “teacher-student” relationship. This is especially true in marginalized communities, in which the planner or designer acts as a savior for communities in need. Freire describes these well-intentioned people as “members of the oppressor class [who] join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation,” and explains that “they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think, to want and to know.” If planners and designers do not trust the knowledge and creative abilities of community members, social change will never be a product of a planning process. Structural change must come from both those with power and those without.

Friere writes:

“A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge….In this way the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement.”

Pseudo-participation has, as I will show,

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4 Ibid, 42.

5 Ibid, 51
plagued planning for years. Design is a way to challenge the current practice of pseudo-participation in planning, particularly in marginalized communities. Design has the power to expose the ways oppression manifests itself in the built environment: literally opening people’s eyes and awakening a critical consciousness around inequity in urban spaces.

**TRADITIONAL IDEAS OF PLANNING AND PARTICIPATION**

Urban planning places a stronger emphasis on community engagement than urban design. Since the 1960s there has been a general understanding that public participation and the involvement of marginalized groups is an important piece of the planning process. Unfortunately, few of the participatory approaches developed since the 1960s have shifted power away from planners towards residents. Paul Davidoff (1965) argued that planners should be “advocates” for marginalized groups. Davidoff writes, “The advocate planner would be responsible to his client and would seek to express his client’s views.”

While the notion of advocacy planning was important in moving away from centralized top-down decision-making, it is a problematic approach because it reserves the political voice for planners, rather than raising a political consciousness and building capacity for marginalized groups to advocate for themselves.

Deviating from the advocacy-planning model, Sherry Arnstein (1969) argues for empowerment in the planning process. She writes, “Citizen participation is a categorical term for 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.” Arnstein makes the point that planners’ attempts to conduct “public participation” processes have kept the power firmly in the fist of the planner. Her “ladder of citizen participation” starts the bottom rung at “manipulation” and works its way up through “consultation,” “placation,” “partnership,” and finally to “citizen control.” Yet despite Arnstein’s urging, the format of large community meetings, with planners and developers presenting to a handful of residents, remains the main mode of engagement across the profession. Planners conduct community meetings to fulfill bureaucratic participation requirements, barely reaching Arnstein’s “consultation” rung. Randolph Hester, a prominent participatory practitioner has contended that although community engagement has become a mainstream concept in professional planning,

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it is “more productive in defending exclusionary groups than in promoting the public good.”

If we can all agree that participation is a key tenet of planning, why hasn’t true "citizen control" over processes taken hold in the profession?

Answering this question John Forrester, in “Planning in the Face of Power,” (1982) contends that misinformation of community members is a key factor in undermining democratic participatory processes. Because planners have access to information, they wield power in planning processes, and have historically used that power to manipulate processes in ways that, either consciously or unconsciously, do not serve the interests of residents. Calling planners “organizers (and disorganizers) of public attention,” Forrester contends that planners manipulate planning processes “not only by shaping which facts certain citizens may have, but also by shaping the trust and expectations of those citizens as well.” He thus calls for a new type of planner—“progressive planners”—who are conscious of structural inequity, and the power of information and misinformation to undercut a participatory planning process.

Along similar lines as Forrester, Xavier de Sousa Briggs discusses the importance of communication in planning. In his article “Doing Democracy Up-Close” (2006), Briggs argues that speech “relates to both culture and power,” and thus planners should be intentional in the way they communicate with communities. However, Briggs argues that planners are not trained in communicative proficiency. Planners are frequently outsiders to a community, and even with intentional language, they lack the inside understanding of how the community functions. Briggs contends it is a “heroic assumption” to think planners know how to engage in meaningful dialogue with communities. He writes, “even where local residents manage to gain an audience, they [have] little impact on planning and development decisions in part because planners and residents did not speak the same language or understand each other’s politics.”

Planners have power and access to information, but do not use these assets to address the disconnect between residents’ needs and the political process.

Thus, planners have spent the past fifty years unsuccessfully attempting to engage communities in participatory planning processes, and failing to communicate across the power divide.

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10 Ibid.


12 Ibid, 3.

13 Ibid, 3.
I argue that the problem has been the mode of communication itself: planning, as it has been conceptualized to date, is not the place where participatory processes are most effective. I contend in this thesis that design is in fact the most powerful communication tool to engage communities in planning issues, and that it enables people to connect across cultural divides, age differences, language barriers, and power differentials. Design is a language in and of itself, and if communities are given the opportunity to speak the language together, public engagement problems that have plagued planning for decades will begin to dissolve.

Yet urban design has divorced itself from planning’s participatory movement by creating an expert-driven process that occurs in the studio rather than in the community. This may be related to architecture’s claim over urban design, which has created a divergence between urban planners and urban designers, as I will discuss in the next section.

**RECLAIMING URBAN DESIGN**

Academics and practitioners alike have tried to form a coherent identity for urban design, and its current state of limbo between planning and architecture has led to confusion about where the emphasis of the field should lie. Architecture’s focus on individual buildings creates projects that reflect the designer herself—there is an inherent sense of individual accomplishment in the architectural approach. But urban design creates places on a much larger scale than architecture, in ways that affect entire communities. Urban design cannot be connected to the designer’s ego and “expertise.” Urban design is the formation of spaces for the public good, and as such, is a component of planning as much as architecture. On this topic, Alexander Cuthbert writes “Urban design qua architecture remains wedded to the ideas of sectarian knowledge, physical determinism, a renaissance concept of the architect as master builder, and the domain of architectural aesthetics as the proper location for urban design knowledge.”

This individualistic, expert-driven, architectural view of urban design has led to a field in which public landscapes are designed in a private manner without collaboration or reflection. Urban theorist Michael Gunder writes, “Urban design, as a stand-alone field, lacks critical reflection. However, when its practitioners are educated as planners, their practice is grounded in a fully theorized discipline that engages with the world in a manner that allows ‘critical self-reflection to flourish’”

Planning, with its emphasis on the public good, and its (albeit slowly) emerging understanding of community engagement, needs to reclaim urban

15 Ibid, 190.
design in order to foster a participatory practice.

Design lends itself naturally to participatory work if for no other reason than the fact that visual communication is an incredibly powerful way to convey ideas about the built environment. I contend that design should be the main mode of community engagement around urban issues, and that design has the power to solve the decades-long problem of communication in public processes. If we break from the conventional ideas of ‘design skills’ as a particular expertise untouchable to those who have not had formal training, we might be able to see design as a tool for engagement on both sides of the drafting table. Community members will be able to better convey their experience and ideas through drawing and building, and planners and designers will more clearly represent their synthesis of community ideas.

**CURRENT IDEAS OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN**

The notion of community-based design finds its roots around the same time as participatory planning in the 1960’s. Similar to participatory planning, ideas of engagement in design did not fundamentally change the design process or address power dynamics between the designer and the participant. In fact, the problematic notion of Davidoff’s “advocacy planning,” which limits the political capacity of residents, is a term directly used by community designers in the 1980s. Randolph Hester surveyed community designers on the main goals of their work in 1984, and the ideas that emerged evoked a paternalistic savior role. Hester notes that community designers “often lobby for legislation, effect administrative policy, or assist in litigation.” If the designers themselves advocate for residents (which is not their expertise to begin with), residents will not gain the skills to advocate for themselves.

It should be noted that most community designers in Hester’s survey stated a goal of community empowerment, whether or not they put this goal into practice. Unfortunately, community design has been coopted from even these unstable roots, with the term being used to describe many processes that do not represent empowerment or social justice. Zeynep Toker, writing on contemporary participatory design practices, explains, “Many approaches (e.g. new urbanism and sustainability) and many practitioners have now adopted the term [community design] to use it as a catch phrase” She conducted a follow-up study to Hester’s initial survey, twenty years later.

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17 Ibid, 314
focuses on social movement theory, which involves three main concepts: “mobilization structure, political opportunities, and cultural framing.”

Mobilization structure refers to the ways people engage in collective action; political opportunities are the ability of groups to gain power and maneuver within the political system; and cultural framing implies the shared language and meanings people bring to a problem.

This social movement approach drives at the goals of liberation and political consciousness discussed by Freire. In my thesis, I modeled my participatory approach in Southwest Santa Rosa after these concepts.

One key component that is missing from the literature on community design is the idea that design itself is the tool for engagement. It is the tool that enables communities to unlock
their critical consciousness. Design allows people to engage in difficult conversations about oppression and inequity in the built environment, and to creatively work through ideas to remedy those inequities. Most practitioners of community design see “a design” as the end result of the process. They focus on the specific site itself rather than seeing design as the process to understand broader social issues within the context of a site or neighborhood. Even the community-based design processes Professor Hou holds up as subscribing to social movement theory focus on the end product as a site design and implementation. In my view, the design process is a creative outlet that leads toward broader social change, well beyond the site.

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DESIGN**

Using design as a tool for public engagement to raise political awareness is particularly applicable to young people. Teenagers are still forming their worldviews and political perspectives, and are generally excluded from decision-making processes. They are marginalized on the basis of their age, and their ideas are minimized, despite the fact that they are the future of our cities. Young people should be central to planning processes, particularly young people of color in marginalized communities. Given recent and ongoing events of police violence against young people of color, and the specific context of the Moorland Neighborhood, where a 13-year old Latino boy was shot in a vacant lot by a County sheriff, the voice of teenagers is more important than ever in creating safe and livable communities. Nearly 30% of the population in Southwest Santa Rosa is under the age of 18, and yet this constituent group has not been engaged in planning and designing the area.

Young people—particularly teenagers—are active users of public space, and can provide valuable insight on how spaces are used. Kevin Lynch was one of the first urban scholars to study and write about the impact of the built environment on young people in *Growing Up in Cities*, in the 1970s. He explained that young people need unprogrammed public spaces to socialize and be themselves, such as streets, public plazas, and shopping malls. More recently, Camille Passon et al. reiterated this idea, remarking, “A child and youth’s development depends largely on their

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24 United Census Bureau, “Age-Cumulative (Less),” American Community Survey 2013 5-Year Summary File, prepared by Social Explorer.
25 Lilian Knorr, “Youth and Cities: Planning with Low Income Youth and Urban Youth Cultures in New York City and Paris” (PhD Dissertation, MIT, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, September 2014), 27.
relationships and exchanges with the world around them...This is especially true for teenagers, who depend largely on socializing in outdoor spaces or in spaces that are left over by adults.”27 Yet, planning and policy documents rarely consider the needs of young people beyond schools or specific youth facilities.28 In fact, comprehensive plans often refer to young people as a subgroup of “special populations,” along with mentally ill, the elderly, and disabled populations,29 ignoring their needs as full participants in society and everyday life.

Teenagers are perceived in a negative light in our society, and thus frequently excluded from public spaces. The design of spaces often intentionally discourages young people from loitering by including seating that makes it uncomfortable to stay for long periods of time, and installing retaining walls in plazas that discourage skateboarding.30 Passon et al. explain, “While urban planning and design usually centers on the need to protect children from real and perceived harm, when dealing with youth [adolescents] there is a concern to design places that will minimize the harm and destruction that they may cause.”31 In current planning practice, teenagers are a problem to deal with rather than a constituent or user of public space.

Planning and design’s exclusion of teenagers from public processes is a fundamental flaw in the profession. Most adults do not see the value young people bring to a planning and design process, assuming that they lack the life experience, political knowledge, and skills to meaningfully participate.32 But by late adolescence, teenagers are able to “think in abstract and political terms about social issues. Adolescents have the cognitive abilities of perspective taking, problem solving, and planning, and the knowledge of social norms and values to be able to meaningfully participate in planning and community change programs.”33 Teenagers’ ability to think in political terms means that they are able to understand the deeper social implications of the inequities they face, and how these inequities are embedded in the built environment. A youth design process has the power to raise critical consciousness and motivate in the next generation to strive for change.

Participatory design can be particularly powerful amongst groups of young people because it allows them to unleash a level of creativity and playfulness that

28 Knorr, “Youth and Cities,” 32
29 Passon et al, “Implications,” 74
31 Passon et al, “Implications,” 74-75
32 Ibid., 76.
33 Ibid.
may be more suppressed in adults. Creativity is essential to identifying innovative design ideas, and also in thinking about intense structural problems that feel unsolvable. One additional supporting point for youth engagement is that planning and design projects take a long time to become reality, and if young people are involved in the process, they will be the future leaders who see their impact on their neighborhood and continue to work for change. The next generation should be involved in creating the future they want to be a part of.

UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES, INFORMALITY, AND MARGINALIZATION

A central tenet to my argument is that unincorporated communities represent a specific type of informality and marginalization. Informality is often thought of as an issue primarily in the developing world, and not something American urban planners contend with. As Ananya Roy writes, “‘First World’ urban and metropolitan theory is curiously silent on the issue of informality as a mode of the production of space.”

But informality exists across the United States, and unincorporated communities often exhibit the characteristics of informality, most commonly through a lack of infrastructure. The most common associations of informality in the US are the Colonias of the American Southwest, which are informal unincorporated immigrant settlements outside of cities along the US-Mexico border. While these communities deal with extreme informality in terms of makeshift housing and no infrastructure, there are many other unincorporated areas that appear more formalized, but have a mix of formal and informal characteristics. Peter Ward describes these semi-formal, unincorporated US settlements, explaining, “Most infrastructure is provided privately and formally, but informality often exists alongside formal services. Many streets are unpaved, and while some streets may be eventually surfaced, they rarely carry formal or adequate storm water drainage systems.” These characteristics render the marginality of unincorporated communities virtually invisible because they appear to be typical suburban edge developments, and their limited access to basic services is difficult to perceive.

Unincorporated communities have also been marginalized in planning and design scholarship. The field focuses on issues at the urban core—planning literature rarely examines conditions at the periphery just beyond the city boundaries. Michelle Wilde Anderson, a legal scholar, contends that unincorporated areas do

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36 Ibid, 73.
not gain attention in the planning field because they do not “conform to the twentieth century’s dominant paradigm of city growth, the white flight model of urban change.”

Development at the urban periphery maintains its status in the American psyche as middle-class suburban single-family homes, not low-income, semi-formal communities of color. But in fact, many of the same practices that led to deterioration of center cities in the 1960s and 1970s also led to the development of low-income unincorporated communities of color. Restrictive covenants and racist lending practices that kept racial minorities out of incorporated suburban developments also pushed these populations to unincorporated suburban areas with affordable land and limited infrastructure.

The marginalization of unincorporated communities in the academy is mirrored by their governmental marginalization, which is partially a product of their physical location at the urban edge. Anderson writes that unincorporated communities’ “location beyond the eyes and borders of surrounding cities makes their abandonment a less visible (though no less resonant) call to the state and local conscience.”

The other aspect of institutional marginalization in unincorporated communities is the fact that they are under the sole jurisdiction of counties, which are not set up to provide local services or act as local governments. Counties have limited budgets and do not have capacity to create infrastructure across such large areas of land. As Anderson writes, “County governments are not oversized equivalents of municipal governments; they are significantly distinct in ways that affect land values, material conditions, and political accountability.”

The single level of governmental jurisdiction also minimizes the amount of political representation unincorporated residents have. Instead of being represented by both city and county elected officials, unincorporated residents rely solely on a county representative to speak for them. Compounding this issue, Tony LoPresti explains that unincorporated residents face county representatives’ “split allegiance” between their unincorporated and city constituencies. Because there are generally more city residents, and these residents tend to be in higher income brackets than unincorporated constituents, political decisions often favor city constituencies.


40 LoPresti, “Reclaiming,” 143.


42 LoPresti, “Reclaiming,” 143.
UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES AS A SYSTEMIC PLANNING PROBLEM

Anderson notes a pattern across the US of unincorporated communities that have been marginalized both racially and economically, and she sees this marginalization as intentional. She defines “unincorporated urban areas” as “low-income, urbanized areas bordering incorporated municipalities but denied or bypassed for annexation for at least twenty-five years.” As you will see in the subsequent chapters, this definition describes the case study for this project: the Moorland Avenue community outside of Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa and other cities have engaged in a practice of “municipal underbonding,” a term coined by urban geographers to describe annexation practices in which cities grow around and exclude low-income minority communities.\(^44\)

Anderson found in her research that every community that fulfills her definition of an “unincorporated urban area,” was predominantly African American or Latino, and thus that the “pattern of unincorporated urban areas derives in part from racial discrimination.”\(^45\) The pockets of unincorporated land within and around Santa Rosa are predominantly Latino immigrant communities, following the pattern of racial exclusion in planning. Anderson writes, “When overlaid with the long histories of segregation that led to these communities’ establishment, these neighborhoods illustrate a material inheritance from racial discrimination.”\(^46\)

The material inheritance of racism in unincorporated communities derives from two major factors: 1) infrastructure and service deficiencies, and 2) a disproportionate amount of undesirable land uses (such as landfills, recycling plants, industrial uses, sewage treatment plants, and freeways).\(^47\) These two factors put a downward pressure on home values and inhibit unincorporated resident’s upward mobility and financial stability.\(^48\) Again, the Moorland Avenue neighborhood fits this description, bound by a freeway and industrial uses on three sides. These characteristics lock residents into their unincorporated status, with few financial assets to allow them to move into the city boundary. LoPresti notes that “spatial exile and government abdication” has left residents who are resolved to stay and improve their community with little support,\(^49\) and with little hope of making their community economically viable on its own.\(^50\)

Other issues arise from service deficiencies as well, including higher

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Anderson, “Cities Inside Out,” 1113.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 1101.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 1112.
\(^{47}\) LoPresti, “Reclaiming,” 143.
\(^{48}\) Ibid.
\(^{49}\) Ibid.
\(^{50}\) Anderson, “Cities Inside Out,” 1111..
crime rates in unincorporated areas due to inadequate county law enforcement services. Unincorporated areas are served by county sheriff departments, which means that law enforcement must travel long distances through their jurisdiction to respond to calls, and there is little possibility of community-oriented policing. In an article on design and informality, Michael Rios explains how these inequities set the perception of unincorporated areas that furthers their marginality and inability to create change, noting that “the dominant discursive frame is one of crime and gangs, abandonment and risk.” As you will see in subsequent chapters, the Moorland Avenue neighborhood is perceived as an unsafe neighborhood dominated by gang activity.

In order to address these deep issues of inequity, one cannot ignore the role that political status plays in the marginalization of unincorporated communities. Anderson writes, “Efforts to address the poverty, crime, and environmental justice issues in these areas overlook their unincorporated status, a structural dimension of their decline and disenfranchisement.” It is also important not to ignore the physical, spatial, and aesthetic manifestations of unincorporated marginality. In fact, the aesthetic and political qualities of unincorporated communities are inherently intertwined. Rios, writing about unincorporated areas as spaces of informality, explains the importance of understanding “how informality is implicated in discursive representations of place—in zoning codes, maps, and plans—and its relationship to spatial practices on the ground—in neighborhoods, streets and individual sites.” He further contends that aesthetics always has a political purpose, which, in planning, tends to reinforce dominant ideas of order and legitimacy, and render invisible marginalized communities that fall outside notions of traditional development. Rios sees possibility in the aesthetics of informal spaces to break from these dominant hegemonies: “With respect to urban informality, an engagement with aesthetics and the uncanny spaces of marginality draws attention to which things are visible in the city and which things are not, and problematizes existing social boundaries.”

As argued above, visual representation and design exploration has the potential to expose the political underpinnings of inequity and marginalization. When

52 Anderson, 1106.
56 Ibid., 176.
57 Ibid., 176.
design is used in a participatory process that engages the marginalized populations themselves, it has the ability to unlock a political consciousness that can lead to broader structural change. Rios solidifies this concept’s applicability in unincorporated informal places, writing, “An aesthetics of marginality renders the invisible visible, produces new social imaginaries of space and place, and visualizes different spheres of decision making and institutional arrangement.”

In the next chapters I will use the theoretical groundwork I have outlined here to examine a specific case study of a participatory design process I conducted with teenagers in unincorporated Sonoma County, California, and compare it to a County-led process in the same neighborhood. First, however, I will explain the methods I used to conduct this analysis.

58 Ibid., 177.
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY: OBSERVING AND TESTING PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

This methodology chapter divides the research process into the following stages: (1) identify evaluation criteria for participatory planning and design processes, which are rooted in the theory and literature from Chapter 1; (2) focus on a historical and political analysis of Santa Rosa’s planning and annexation practices, both past and present; (3) discuss research on the Moorland Avenue neighborhood, including my analysis of a planning process that occurred in the Moorland community last summer, and (4) explain the specific methods used to conduct the participatory design process developed for this thesis with high school students in Southwest Santa Rosa. In describing this recent participatory design process, I explain each of the three workshops I conducted with the students, the survey I conducted with participants after the three workshops, my methods for ongoing engagement with the students throughout the semester, an open house event in which the students presented their work to community members and government officials.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

This thesis evaluates the outcomes of two different approaches to community engagement in the context of planning in marginalized communities. One process used standard community planning methods, while the process I conducted used design as a tool for engagement. Here I have developed a set of evaluation criteria to determine how those two models rate in terms of their impact on participants and their success in leading to positive community change. The evaluation criteria and rating scale used are an important way to measure the outcomes of the two processes in quantifiable terms, and they allow me to minimize the inherent bias of my analysis. The criteria with which I evaluate the success of the participatory processes are rooted in the theory and literature I outlined in the previous chapter. I drew from Sherry Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” to think about ways for community members to gain control and build capacity in participatory processes. I also incorporated Jeffery Hou’s ideas of capacity-building and collective action through social movement theory. I heavily drew upon Paolo Freire’s ideas of conscientization, which I define as awakening critical consciousness about systems of oppression. I also incorporated work of John Forrester and Xavier de Sousa Briggs in terms of a community’s ability to communicate ideas to decision-makers. These theorists provided the foundation for my perspective on the goals of participatory processes, and led me to identify three main questions around which I based my evaluation:
• Did the process build community capacity to continue making progress after the formal process ended?

• Did the process awaken a critical consciousness around structural oppression and the need for social change?

• Did the process have an impact on decision-makers and show them the need for implementable neighborhood change?

Within these questions, I will also examine the role design played in achieving (or not achieving) these goals. To evaluate these questions, I used qualitative, semi-structured interviews with process participants and facilitators, and surveys conducted with both participants and decision-makers. Evaluation were conducted at multiple points in the process. Before I examined the processes themselves, however, it was necessary to understand the political and social context of the case study area of Santa Rosa, California, in order to learn what forms of structural and institutional oppression are at play.

**HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

In order to understand the specific neighborhood context of Moorland, I first examined the history and demographics of Santa Rosa as a whole. The main motivation of this research was to gain a broader understanding of annexation practices over time and to figure out what led to Santa Rosa’s irregular city boundary. To do this, I gathered basic demographic data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates about Santa Rosa. I also examined Santa Rosa’s historic General Plans, particularly the General Plan from 1960, which represented a time of explosive growth for the area. I was able to gather a critical perspective and hindsight from documents and interviews with the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO), which is the California state agency that monitors and regulates the formation of jurisdictional boundaries. I collected background information from the LAFCO “Island Identification Report,” which describes the formation of unincorporated islands in Sonoma County (all of which are in the Santa Rosa area), as well as the City of Santa Rosa Municipal Service Review, published by LAFCO in 2006. I interviewed the Executive Officer of LAFCO, Mark Bramfitt, and the Assistant Executive Office, Carole Cooper, as well as another LAFCO staff member who asked to remain anonymous.

This research led me to look more broadly for an understanding of state policy on unincorporated areas. I examined the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, which gave LAFCO the authority to regulate city boundaries. I also researched the role of California’s Redevelopment Funding in unincorporated areas, and the impact of the dissolution of Redevelopment Authorities in 2011. Because unincorporated communities are
pervasive throughout California, several articles discussed the challenges of planning in unincorporated communities across the state, such as Alvin Sokolow’s article, “Caring for Unincorporated Communities,” in *California County* (2000) and Tony LoPresti’s “Unincorporated California” in *The Urban Lawyer* (2012).

I then focused more narrowly on the current annexation process underway in the Roseland community of Santa Rosa. Roseland is a completely surrounded unincorporated island of the city, and I chose to examine this process because Roseland shares similar demographics with the Moorland Avenue neighborhood, it is close in proximity to Moorland Avenue, and several of the Elsie Allen High School students I worked with live in Roseland. This current annexation process also provided me with a clearer understanding of what would be needed for residents of Moorland to initiate annexation for their own community. I gathered information on the Roseland process through interviews with Efren Carrillo (the Sonoma County Supervisor who represents the Southwest Santa Rosa area, including Roseland and Moorland); Planners at the Santa Rosa Community Development Department, including Lisa Kranz (the Supervising Planner) and Jessica Jones (a Senior Planner); and the aforementioned interviews with LAFCO employees. I also collected information on the annexation process through Santa Rosa City Council reports, including “Southwest Santa Rosa Planning Efforts and Roseland Annexation Work Plan Process,” from February 2014; a recently released “Public Review Draft: City of Santa Rosa Services and Capital Costs Estimates, Roseland Area Annexation,” from January 5, 2015; and “Public Review Memorandum: Roseland Annexation Fiscal Impact Analysis, Summary of Findings for First Year Revenues.” These documents and interviews provided me with a perspective on the intricacies of Santa Rosa’s annexation history and current practices, which then enabled me to examine the Moorland Avenue neighborhood in detail, and the recent planning process that occurred there.

**ANALYSIS OF THE MOORLAND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS**

I gathered basic demographic data on the Moorland Avenue neighborhood from the American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates, and then studied the limited amount of Moorland planning information available at the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD). The main focus of my Moorland research was on the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process that the Sonoma County Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department administered in the summer and fall of 2014. I had been involved with this process as an intern
for a consulting firm that conducted the public engagement during the two-month long process, so my initial interest and observation stemmed from my work on the process during the first few weeks of the project (before I returned to MIT for the fall semester).

My research methods to supplement my observations of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process focused on interviews with relevant actors in the process: Kelly Elder, the Section Manager of the Healthy Communities Section at DHS, who was project manager for the Moorland Process for DHS; Scott Wilkinson, a Park Planner II at the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, and project manager for the Moorland Process on the Parks Department side; Vince Harper, the Assistant Director of Community Engagement at Community Action Partnership (CAP), who was in charge of community outreach for the Moorland Process; Sonoma County Supervisor Efren Carrillo; Lisa DeCarbo, a high school teacher at the nearby Elsie Allen High School, who was a member of the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team during the process; and Esther Lemus, a long time resident of Moorland Avenue and member of the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team. I also interviewed Amy Lyle, a Planner III at the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, in the Comprehensive Planning Department. Ms. Lyle was not involved with the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process directly, but provided an important County-level planning perspective on it. (A complete list of my interviewees can be found on page 42). Finally, I reviewed the Draft Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan, which I gained access to because of my involvement in the process over the summer. The County never released a final report because they lacked the funding.

I had intended to conduct a survey of all Neighborhood Advisory Team members from the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process to access a broader sample of residents who participated, but was unable to acquire a complete dataset. The Department of Health Services offered to distribute the survey at their January meeting (the first meeting since the end of the process in September), but only three members attended the meeting, and those three only partially filled out the survey, so the data was unusable. Thus, my evaluation of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process are based solely on my observations of the process and my interviews with participants and facilitators.
TESTING A NEW MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT

In January 2015, over the course of three, two-hour sessions, I conducted participatory design workshops with two classes of students at Elsie Allen High School in Lisa DeCarbo’s junior (16 and 17-year old) English classes. The subject population is a marginalized subgroup (youth) of an already marginalized population (low-income, predominantly Latino residents, many from unincorporated communities). Thirty-nine students participated in the workshops, which I called “Visioning Sessions.” Twenty of those students live in unincorporated areas: Moorland, Roseland, or farther outside the Santa Rosa City boundary. Nineteen of the students live within the City of Santa Rosa: many of them live within walking distance of Elsie Allen High School, between Roseland and Moorland, and some live closer towards the center of the city, above Highway 12. The group was primarily Latino, with some Asian, Southeast Asian, and white students as well (See Figure 2.1). The four white students lived within incorporated areas within Santa Rosa. It is important to note that this group is not representative of the Moorland Community: they are all teenagers, and live in a broader geographic area than the Moorland Avenue neighborhood. However, as I will explain in later chapters, the students represent a valid data set to provide planning and design perspectives on Southwest Santa Rosa.

I gained access to this group of students because their teacher, Ms. DeCarbo and some of her students were involved in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning process, and I had met her at one of the early meetings in the process. I wanted to work with young people for this process because the impetus for the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood process had been the death of a 13-year-old boy, and almost 30% of

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Figure 2.1: Demographics of student sample
Moorland Avenue’s residents are under the age of 18.¹

I worked extremely closely with Lisa DeCarbo throughout this process to create the curriculum and activities. Our relationship was evocative of a consultant-client relationship, in which I worked for her as a consultant, and she made the ultimate decisions over the content of my class material. The methods I used during the visioning sessions were a combination of techniques I had previously employed as a community planner and methods I learned in community organizing trainings, adjusted to incorporate design and the specific issues of unincorporated communities. I also based some activities on a combination of participatory design methods from James Rojas’ “Place It!” program in which participants use everyday household items to build models,² as well as Jeffrey Hou’s community-driven design methods based on social movement theory, as described in the Chapter 1. In the next section, I will describe each of the methods and activities, as well as the rationale behind the exercises.

**Visioning Session 1: January 8**

The goal of the first visioning session was to familiarize myself with the students, and conduct activities that allowed them to think spatially and start to gain an understanding of the design process. Another goal of the session was to discuss political ideas and define what an “unincorporated” community is. Ms. DeCarbo also asked me to include education around urban planning and design by teaching the students technical vocabulary terms.

**Exercise 1: Mapping Safety**

In the first activity, students were asked to map their perceptions of safety in their communities. I gave them worksheets with maps of Southwest Santa Rosa on the front (See Figure 2.2), and asked them to draw the route they take from home to school, marking places where they feel safe, unsafe, and places they avoid entirely. The idea for this activity came from my participation in a workshop with Karilyn Crockett, a former MLK Fellow at MIT, and the current Director of Economic Policy and Research for the City of Boston. Ms. Crockett’s self-mapping session focused on examining the way race and space play a role in planning, which is an important aspect of conducting participatory planning in marginalized communities. I modified the activity slightly to include a design component: on the back of the worksheet, I asked the students to choose a safe and

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an unsafe place from their maps, and to draw those places. This activity enabled the students to think about the way they move through their neighborhoods, attach emotions to specific places, and analyze why they feel those emotions based on the physical attributes of the place. After the students finished mapping and drawing, they shared their thoughts with the entire group, and discussed similarities between their perceptions of safety. I later used the data from this activity to map the students’ collective perceptions of safety in Southwest Santa Rosa, and compared it to crime report data. These two maps showed the alignment of teenagers’ perceptions of safety with incidents of crime.

**Exercise 2: Placing Yourself on the Map**

The second activity of the day was a standard planning engagement method I have used in many workshops: I asked students to place dot stickers on a large map of the Southwest Santa Rosa area, marking where they live. The map showed the Santa Rosa City boundary (See Appendix B), which enabled students to identify whether or not they live within the boundary or outside of it. The goal of the activity was to display the distribution of students between unincorporated and incorporated communities. The activity then led to a discussion of urban planning and design vocabulary words, including “unincorporated” and “annexation” (a full list of the vocabulary words can be found in Appendix B). I also explained the history of planning policies and annexation practices.
that led to the irregular Santa Rosa City boundary.

**Exercise 3: “Step Forward If”**
The final activity of this session was intended to make students aware of the disparities between unincorporated and incorporated communities. It was based on a community organizing game that visually displays the inequity present in a given space. The format of the game is as follows: the facilitator reads a series of statements, asking participants to take a step forward if the statement applies to them. The questions generally focus on issues of race and class, such as “Step forward is your parents went to college,” or “Step forward if English is your first language.” At the end of the game, people with more privilege are several steps ahead of those with less, creating a visual representation of power and oppression in society. I modified this activity, using unincorporated status as the form of oppression to base my statements around. Examples of questions I used were, “Step forward if you have sidewalks outside of your house,” and “Step forward if you have a park within walking distance of your house,” etc. The goal of this activity was to show the inequities between residents of unincorporated communities and Santa Rosa residents. We then discussed the students’ reactions to the activity and the specific disparities they experience on a daily basis.

**Visioning Session 2: January 15**
The goal of this second visioning session was to provide students with a creative outlet to imagine their ideal communities, and then harness that creativity into practical ideas with a budgeting game.

**Exercise 1: Imagining Ideals**
The idea for the first activity in this session came from my thesis advisor, Jota Samper, and his work on community-based design in Medellin. Samper showed me examples of “Imaginarios,” used in a process with the Empresa de Desarrollo Urbana. Imaginarios are worksheets in which participants draw their ideal community and describe the main elements of it. It is a basic concept, but gives participants the freedom to be creative and uninhibited with their ideas, unbound by political or feasibility constraints. This activity was also another opportunity for the students to gain comfort with drawing and designing their environments. After the students finished, they shared their ideas with the group as I took notes at the front of the room.

**Exercise 2: Budgeting for Betterment**
The next activity of the day was intended to use the creative energy generated by the first activity, and direct it towards practical problem solving in a budgeting game. The idea for this activity stems from various online planning games, such as

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Community PlanIt, in which participants act as a town’s mayor, and make planning decisions based on budget constraints and social and economic priorities. This activity was also the product of my collaboration with Ms. DeCarbo, as we worked to tailor the activities for her curriculum.

I structured the budgeting activity to be highly collaborative (unlike the online planning games, which are usually played by individuals), and split the class into groups based on where the students live. I designated a planning area for each group, and created large maps for each planning area (See Appendix B). There were two unincorporated groups and two groups within the City of Santa Rosa. One unincorporated group focused on the Moorland Avenue area, and the other focused on Roseland. The incorporated groups included the area directly around Elsie Allen High School, and an area above Highway 12. For this 45-minute activity, I gave each group a map of their neighborhood planning area, and cards with different price-point items on them, such as “bench,” “street lights,” etc. (a full set of cards can be found in Appendix B). These items each fit into one of six categories: businesses, design, community uses, parks/open space, infrastructure/pedestrian safety, and public safety. Each group was then given a budget of $1 million dollars, and as a team, they prioritized their top three planning categories, on which they were to spend $700,000. The remaining $300,000 could be allocated as they wished. This was intended to encourage the students to think...
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CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Figure 2.4 Sample cards from the budgeting game in Session 2

collaboratively about the priority needs in their neighborhoods, and how to allocate their money on those priority items.

I also asked students to identify existing neighborhood asset sites with stars. If the students placed any new project cards on existing assets, they received an additional $5,000 of spending money. This was intended to emphasize the importance of building on existing assets to get the most benefit out of the money spent. This last idea was taken from an “asset mapping” strategy commonly used in participatory planning processes,⁵ to ensure that participants acknowledge the positive aspects of their communities in addition to thinking about needed improvements.

The overall goal of the budgeting activity was to show students the challenges of prioritizing planning projects, and the difficulty in staying under budget when making community improvements. The budgeting game was also an intense team-building activity because it required the students to discuss which improvements were most important to them and come to agreement about neighborhood needs. After the session, I asked each group to choose a smaller-scale project site within their planning area on which to build a model in the next session.

Visioning Session 3:
The main focus of the third and final visioning session was to take the political and practical planning knowledge the students had learned throughout the series and apply it to the physical act of building a site model. The session gave students an opportunity to think in detail about specific ideas for their communities and to physically create those ideas, which helped them to think both spatially and practically.

Exercise 1: More Political Knowledge
Before embarking on the model-building activity, we discussed the different scales at which urban planners work. I reminded them of the trajectory of our entire process: we began by examining Southwest Santa

Rosa as a whole and understanding the context of the area; we then focused more narrowly by identifying planning projects within smaller neighborhood areas; and for the final session, each group prioritized a specific site in their neighborhood to focus on in detail. I then gave each student a worksheet with a list of planning-related government agencies in both the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County (See Appendix B). The worksheet included each agency’s description and contact information, and I discussed the importance of resident advocacy in working towards project implementation. The idea for this simple tool occurred to me because I had gotten confused about the different layers of government and various agencies, so it seemed useful to collect this information for the students.

**Exercise 2: Building Models**
The model-building format was generated from both James Rojas’ “Place It!” framework and Jeffrey Hou’s community-driven design processes. James Rojas conducts participatory model building activities in which participants use everyday items to create their ideal imaginary communities on pieces of construction paper. I used Rojas’ ideas for the model-building materials and the general format of the activity, but the models themselves were to be site-specific, not based on imaginary places, which is more in line with Jeffrey Hou’s methods. I gave each group a foam-core model base for their site (with a map of parcel lines and roads glued on top), and a range of model-building materials, including pieces of wood, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, clay, turf material, dried moss, pom-poms, and more. The students had approximately forty-five minutes to build the models from start to finish.

During the last half-hour of the session, each group presented their models to the entire class. They were instructed to describe the main components of their model and what they hoped it would accomplish in the community.
if it were implemented. Each student had an opportunity to speak during the presentations in order to build their public speaking skills.

In-Person Evaluation
Finally, I led a “plus-delta,” or evaluation, for the series of visioning sessions as a whole. I asked for “pluses” or positive aspects of the process, and “deltas” or things that could be changed or improved up on in future processes. The plus-delta is a common evaluation tool that I became familiar with during my work as a community organizer.

SURVEYS AND REFLECTIONS
I collected two valuable sources of data after the sessions that provided me with both quantitative and qualitative data on the students’ perspectives of the participatory design experience, and allowed me to examine this project against my evaluation criteria. After each session, the students wrote reflection essays about their experience in that particular session, based on prompts generated by their teacher. Ms. DeCarbo suggested this idea as a way to incorporate her English curriculum into the process, and it proved to be a valuable source of data for me as well. I use quotes from these reflections in my description of the process and in analyzing the impact of various activities.

After all three sessions were finished, Ms. DeCarbo administered a survey that I had created to gather feedback from the students about the process as a whole. The ten-question survey included four quantitative questions that used ranking scales from 1-5, and six open-ended questions. The goal of the survey was to gauge what the students had learned from the process, whether capacity was built, whether their perceptions of their neighborhood changed, and what support they needed to continue their work (a full version of the survey is in Appendix A). All 39 students who participated in the workshops completed the survey. I analyzed the qualitative data by generating themes based on patterns I saw in the responses to each open-ended question. I then coded each response based on these categories in order to quantify the number of responses that fit within each theme. For instance, if a question asked, “What did you enjoy most about the process?” I coded each answer that described model-building or a creative drawing exercise with a “1,” each answer that described practical political knowledge a “2,” and so forth. I could then see the percentage of responses that focused on creative activities compared with all responses to that question. Once this individual question coding was complete, I looked at larger patterns and themes that ran throughout both the quantitative and qualitative questions to gain a general sense of the impact of the process on students.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

From the onset of the process in January, both Ms. DeCarbo and I agreed that my work with the students should continue throughout the course of the semester. An important goal of participatory design processes is to build capacity so that progress continues after the “outside consultant” leaves, and it was not possible for me to build significant capacity in only three sessions with the students. However, there were obvious practical constraints to ongoing engagement given my distance from the students after January. I did not have experience with working on a community project from afar, so I learned as I went, and Ms. DeCarbo and I modified the process as we saw fit. I spoke with Ms. DeCarbo on the phone every few weeks to make sure both my work and the students’ work were in line.

Twelve students volunteered to continue working on projects with me outside of class during the rest of the semester. I wanted the students to choose a form of engagement that was meaningful to them, so I suggested ideas for continued participation, but let them define their own projects. Almost every student wanted to continue working on their models, eight students volunteered to contribute to a CoLab Radio blog series I had been writing, eight students offered to provide me with feedback on my representations of their ideas, and five students wanted to work on a neighborhood outreach project to teach community members about unincorporated issues.

Initially, I tried to communicate with the students via a group meeting app called “Slack,” but email proved an easier form of communication, so I coordinated email groups based on each of the neighborhood teams. The delineations between different types of engagement projects dissolved as the groups started working on their projects because close communication was needed between the different types of projects. For instance, the teams working on the models needed to communicate with the representational feedback teams because my 3D renderings needed to match the models. In the end, there were three main neighborhood groups, and each group worked together on different aspects of their project. Two of the groups were unincorporated (Moorland and Roseland), and one was incorporated (Santa Rosa Creek). The goal of these projects was for the students and me to present our work at an open house event for city and county planners, elected officials, and community members. The open house was Ms. DeCarbo’s suggestion as a way to build further capacity for students by giving them an opportunity to speak with decision-makers, and to spread their ideas more broadly. It was also an important way to motivate our work with a tangible goal and end product.
OPEN HOUSE EVENT AND SURVEYS

The “Elsie Allen Urban Planning Open House” event took place on April 10, 2015 from 1-3pm in the Elsie Allen High School Library. The event was structured as a drop-in exhibition, with our work on display for attendees to view and discuss with students. Ms. DeCarbo, who has a strong network of community members and government employees in the area, conducted most of the outreach and organized the logistics of the event, while the students and I produced the work to display. At the event, models were set up around the room on tables and my renderings were on the walls behind the models. The maps I created of student perceptions of safety and crime reports were also on display, and the CoLab Radio blog series was available for attendees to read. Each student group stood with their work, explained their ideas to attendees, and received feedback.

Forty people attended the event, including nine employees of the City of Santa Rosa, eight employees of Sonoma County, one employee of the State of California, eight people who work for neighborhood organizations or nonprofits, and several community members and residents. Among the attendees were Chuck Regalia (Santa Rosa City Manager); John Haig (Sonoma County Community Development Commission Deputy Director); Efren Carrillo (Sonoma County Supervisor); and Julie Combs (Santa Rosa City Councilor).

Part of my data collection at this event included listening to conversations between the students and the open house attendees, and engaging in conversations with attendees myself to gauge the adults’ reactions to the students’ work. The other main source of data collection from the Open House was a survey of the attendees. The survey helped me to evaluate the process against the third evaluation criteria I laid out: Did the process have an impact on decision-makers and show them the need for implementable change? The goal of the survey was to understand what attendees learned from the students’ work, whether it changed their perceptions of the communities or of the youth themselves, whether they thought the students’ ideas were feasible, and whether they thought the students’ work would lead to positive neighborhood change (a full version of the Open House Survey is in the Appendix A). The eleven question survey consisted of four quantitative questions (measured on a scale from 1-5), and 7 qualitative open-ended questions. I received 37 completed survey responses. I used the same analysis method to analyze this data as I used for the student survey.
STUDY SAMPLE

On the following page is a table (Figure 2.6) of the individuals I spoke with throughout my research process, organized by their jurisdiction, affiliation, whether or not I conducted an in-depth interview with them, whether or not I had a conversation with them at the Open house, whether or not they were involved with the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, and whether or not they participated in the Open House Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State (California)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>In Depth Interview</th>
<th>Conversation at Open House</th>
<th>Involved in Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process?</th>
<th>Survey Participant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma Local Area Foundation Commission (LAFCO)</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Executive Officer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County (Sonoma)</td>
<td>Board of Supervisors</td>
<td>Supervisor, District 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Planner II</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Health Services</td>
<td>Section Manager: Healthy Communities Division</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Parks Department</td>
<td>Park Planner III</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Deputy Director</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Outreach Specialist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City (Santa Rosa)</td>
<td>Community Development Department</td>
<td>Supervising Planner</td>
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<td>Senior Planner</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Community Action Partnership</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Community Engagement</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team</td>
<td>Moorland Resident</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsie Allen High School Students</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Junior English</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
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Figure 2.6 Research study sample
CHAPTER 3. SANTA ROSA HISTORY AND CONTEXT: ANNEXATION AND MARGINALIZATION

This chapter provides the historical and planning context for the City of Santa Rosa in order to understand the conditions that have created the Moorland Avenue neighborhood. The chapter will also show that Santa Rosa is an example of a city that has excluded low-income communities of color by growing and annexing land around them—a planning pattern I described in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I use demographics and historical data on Santa Rosa development and annexation practices through the 1990s. To explain these planning practices, I also discuss the State of California’s efforts to regulate city boundaries through the creation of independent State Agencies called Local Area Formation Commissions (LAFCOs). I then examine the specific challenges facing unincorporated communities in Southwest Santa Rosa, including the Roseland community and the Moorland Avenue neighborhood. Finally, I explain the current annexation process underway for the Roseland area, which will provide insight into the challenges of annexation for other unincorporated communities in the area, such as Moorland Avenue.

SANTA ROSA DEVELOPMENT AND ANNEXATION PRACTICES

Sonoma County is the northwestern-most county in the San Francisco Bay Area, located about 50 miles north of San Francisco. While it is most famously known for its agricultural uses and wineries, it is also home to one a large growing cities in the Bay Area: Santa Rosa. The 2010 Census quoted Santa Rosa’s population at 167,815, and the city has been steadily growing at about 1% per year since then.¹ The overall population of Santa Rosa is 71% white.

Figure 3.2: Image showing Santa Rosa’s Growth from 1868 to 2009. The darkest area in the center indicates the original 1868 city boundary, and the lighter areas show more recent annexations. The white box indicates the Southwest Santa Rosa study area.

Source: City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department, Annexation Data by year 1869-2014.
and approximately 28% Latino, but in the Southwest quadrant of the Santa Rosa area, which includes many unincorporated communities, there are much higher concentrations of Latino populations, with areas that are upwards of 60% Latino.²

Santa Rosa was incorporated as a city in 1868, and quickly became the economic center of Sonoma County. After World War II, the city continued to grow, and newer suburban subdivisions and commercial areas developed around the downtown core, expanding the city’s boundary outwards in a manner similar to other California cities.³ However, in the 1950s and 60s, the City adopted aggressive annexation policies in response to explosive suburban development occurring past the city’s edges.⁴ During this ten-year period, the City’s population increased an estimated 73 percent.⁵ The City employed an unusual practice of annexing territory to accommodate new development, while leaving previously developed territories closer in to the city center unincorporated.⁶ This practice was the result of two factors: the City’s desire to gain property tax revenue from new suburban development, and the desire of some residents of previously developed unincorporated areas to remain outside of the City because of a fear of additional taxes levied by the City.⁷ These annexation practices remained unquestioned when the 1960 Santa Rosa General Plan was written, because there was an assumption on the part of both the City and County that all areas within a very large boundary would...

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² US Census Bureau, “Latino or Hispanic by Race,” American Community Survey 2013 5-year Summary File, prepared by Social Explorer.
⁵ Candeub, Sonoma County General Plan, 7.
⁶ Ibid, 4.
⁷ Ibid.
eventually be annexed into the City. The General Plan was in fact written as a joint effort between the City and County, and none of the maps in the planning document show a distinction between unincorporated territory and incorporated areas; it is simply one planning area.

Unfortunately, many of the unincorporated areas were never annexed, and the practice of leap-frogging past lower-income edge settlements to annex new suburban developments continued into the 1980s. In interviews for this thesis, Sonoma County planners and politicians described the political motivations for “cherry picking” on the part of Santa Rosa. An anonymous interviewee who has been involved with county politics and worked in Santa Rosa real estate for many years explained that the City Manager from 1970 until 2000, Ken Blackman, and the Assistant City Manager, Chuck Regalia, built close relationships with real estate developers and helped them to annex new developments that would bring property tax revenue to the city. This interviewee colorfully described that Santa Rosa City government and real estate developers were “all playing in the same sandbox.” The city was motivated to annex new developments because they brought developer fees that would pay for infrastructure associated with the project, “so there was a general agreement that if somebody wanted to come in and they were willing to pay the fees, they would come in. There wasn’t a whole lot of attention paid to the areas left behind.”

This created an irregular city boundary and even entire “islands” (an official term used by the City and County) of unincorporated land entirely surrounded by city property. These practices exhibit the type of oppression that should be exposed through participatory design processes. Santa Rosa’s annexation practices are a neoliberal product of urban planning, and a source of politically sanctioned structural violence against the communities left unannexed.

1970s-1980s: The Era of “Cherry Picking”

Part of what enabled the city to leave properties behind was a policy that still continues today, in which the city will not annex areas where all residents do not want to become part of the city. While this seems like a policy that responds to resident wishes, it is actually the facade of democratic logic. It has become a fallback excuse that allows the city to “cherry pick.” In the 1970s and 1980s, as land in the northern and eastern parts of Santa Rosa were built out, developers moved to the outer reaches of Southwest

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8 Sonoma Local Area Formation Commission, “Unincorporated Island Identification Study” (Santa Rosa, CA: May, 2011), 2.
9 Carole Cooper (Assistant Executive Officer, Sonoma LAFCO), interview by author, January 13, 2015.
10 Anonymous (Sonoma LAFCO), interview by author, February 20, 2015.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
Santa Rosa, well past the regular city boundary. As one interviewee described, developers started working on projects in areas they “wouldn’t have touched before because of lack of infrastructure and flooding issues,” but which were now desirable to them because the land was inexpensive.\textsuperscript{14} The City wanted to annex these new suburban developments, leapfrogging past existing low-income, Latino communities closer in to the city. This created what is now the 710 acre unincorporated island of Roseland, and dozens other smaller unincorporated islands. Each time Chuck Regalia and Ken Blackman presented a new suburban subdivision for annexation to the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO), the commission protested that the City was cherry picking. But Mr. Regalia and Mr. Blackman used the excuse that they did not want to “force” people to come into the city, and that Roseland residents were opposed to annexation.\textsuperscript{15} While this may have been true to an extent, several county and even city officials now recognize that the hesitancy on the part of residents was due to a lack of education around what it means to be annexed, and how it would change their lifestyle. Residents were not informed of whether or not they would have to pay higher taxes or get rid of livestock, nor were they aware of the potential benefits they would gain in terms of service provision.\textsuperscript{16,17}

After decades of maintaining residents’ ignorance, a Senior Planner for the City of Santa Rosa now explains the need for education around annexation: “A lot of people don’t know they’re in the County, so [it will be important] to inform them of where they are, whether they’re unincorporated or not, what it means if they are unincorporated now, and what

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Lisa Kranz (Supervising Planner, City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department), interview by author, January 27, 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Carole Cooper, interview by author, January 13.
\end{itemize}
it will mean if they become part of the city.”

**1980s-1990s: Service Agreements**

Further complicating this issue, during the period between the 1970s-1990s, some unincorporated areas experienced failing utility systems that the county could not repair. Some residents in these areas struck individual deals called “Service Agreements” with the City or private utility companies to provide sewer and water service without annexing the property. These agreements created additional unincorporated islands of just one or two parcels, making coordination of service provision difficult and confusing. A 2011 report by Sonoma LAFCO describes the frustration that accompanies this lack of planning:

“Local governments gave little forethought or consideration to the difficulty and cost to the county and special districts to deliver acceptable levels of service to these unincorporated islands... Although the islands located in Sonoma County have historically received a variety of services from the County, special districts, and the private sector, these services often do not cover the full range or level of services that many urban dwellers have come to expect.”

Unincorporated islands under service agreements receive water and/or sewer service, but are not afforded the other benefits of being within the city’s jurisdiction, such as sidewalks, paved roads, curb and gutter provision, adequate emergency services, etc.

The most egregious example of cherry picking annexation came in the 1990s when the city petitioned to annex the Corby Auto Mall because of the immense tax revenue associated with the site. This area was brought into the city despite strong protests from LAFCO, who argued it was yet another instance of cherry picking and would result in over a million dollar per year loss to the County. LAFCO contested that the Auto Mall should not be annexed until the City addressed the 710 acre unincorporated island of Roseland. But the city pushed the annexation through, and Roseland as well as the 51 other unincorporated islands remain unannexed today. The Corby Auto Mall annexation was the last cherry-picking incident to occur before LAFCO was afforded greater political power to determine city boundaries, as is discussed in the next section.

**History of LAFCO and its Impact on Annexation**

Local Area Formation Commissions were established by the State of California in 1963 in response to the rapid growth of cities. LAFCOs were given the power to advise cities on the incorporation of unincorporated areas and to recommend boundaries for new cities. However, LAFCOs have been accused of cherry picking, which is the practice of annexing areas with high tax revenue and leaving behind areas with low tax revenue. This has led to legal battles between cities and LAFCOs, and has been a contentious issue in California politics. The history of LAFCO and its impact on annexation is discussed in more detail in the next section.

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18 Jessica Jones (Senior Planner, City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department), interview by author, January 27, 2015.
19 Carole Cooper (Sonoma LAFCO Assistant Executive Officer) and Mark Bramfitt (Sonoma LAFCO Executive Officer), interview by author, January 13, 2015.
cities and suburbs and the jurisdictional challenges created by expansion. Initially, LAFCOs were embedded in county governments across the state, and were intended to deal with city boundaries and annexations. However, because they were new and obscure agencies, LAFCOs had little authority to actually regulate city limits and address issues of annexation. Based on these conditions, Santa Rosa was able to continue cherry-picking annexation practices, despite Sonoma LAFCO’s protests for decades. A current LAFCO employee described the commission from the 1960s-1990s as “dependent and reactive, rather than proactive.” However, in 2000, the State passed the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, which prohibited the formation of unincorporated islands, and gave broader authority to the commission.

One provision of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act gave LAFCOs the ability to form a “Sphere of Influence” boundary for each city under their jurisdiction. A Sphere of Influence is a boundary that determines where a city’s formal boundary should eventually be, based on the city’s existing influence in the area (including areas with service agreements). Sonoma LAFCO’s goal is to align the city boundary with the sphere of influence, which would mean annexing all unincorporated islands within Santa Rosa, creating a more regular city boundary (See Figure 3.6).

In the 15 years since the enactment of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, no additional annexations have occurred in Santa Rosa that are not contiguous to the preexisting city boundary. While this is certainly an improvement over the previous practice, it has also limited Santa Rosa annexations entirely because the city has little motivation to annex the unincorporated islands, even with LAFCO’s urging (LAFCO does not have the authority to mandate annexations). Santa Rosa claims two reasons for their opposition to annex unincorporated islands: one is their usual defense that residents do not want to be annexed, and the other is that the City cannot afford the annexation. Most of the areas that have been left unincorporated are low-
Figure 3.6: The most recent Sonoma County Map of Santa Rosa’s “sphere of influence” (outlined in the purple dashed line). This is the boundary where Sonoma County believes the City of Santa Rosa should ultimately grow to. This includes all unincorporated islands, and the Moorland Area fringe island.

income residential communities, and thus the property tax revenue gained by the city in annexing these communities is not enough to offset the cost of service provision. In order for annexation to happen, the City has to “strike a deal” with the County for financial support to make up for the revenue gap.

**IMPLICATIONS OF UNINCORPORATED ISLANDS: MARGINALIZATION AND EXCLUSION**

Unincorporated islands create confusion amongst City and County officials, not to mention residents, many of whom are unaware of the fact that they live in unincorporated areas. The City continues to toe the party line that its annexation approach over the past 60 years is seemingly logical and sensitive to residents’ desires. In an interview with Lisa Kranz, the Supervising Planner in the Community Development Department for Santa Rosa, she explained, “Basically Santa Rosa’s position on annexation over the years has been that when property owners petition to annex, then the city will process the annexation. The city has not been aggressive in terms of initiating annexation…So islands have resulted.”

This lack of accountability over creating an irregular and confusing city boundary is frustrating, and ignores the inequity created by these practices. The areas that have been left behind by the City of Santa Rosa fit squarely within the definition of semi-formal, marginalized communities I outlined in Chapter 1. As was explained in that section, a history of deliberate decisions based on economic and racial discrimination created the formation of unincorporated islands. I argue that the repercussions and disparities of unincorporated islands fall under four main categories:

1. **Inequity in emergency services**
2. **Physical inequity in the built environment**
3. **Inequity in taxes and Redevelopment funding**
4. **Inequity in political representation and governance**

**1. Inequity in Emergency Services**

Besides the confusion over public utility provision and irregular services in Sonoma County's unincorporated islands, confusion also ensues with law enforcement and emergency services that are only allowed to provide services within their jurisdiction. This is not only an inefficient use of emergency resources, but it also creates public safety risks. Residents of unincorporated areas tell stories of calling the police in an emergency and being transferred back and forth between the Santa Rosa Police Department and the Sonoma...
County Sheriff’s department; or a delay in fire and ambulance services because the wrong jurisdictional department arrived at the scene and was unable to provide service.32 These anecdotes are confirmed in a newspaper article from 2010, which describes a woman who was transferred between the City and County police phone lines for 15 minutes before being able to explain her emergency situation.33 The issue of law enforcement in unincorporated areas is particularly important because in the 1990s, the City of Santa Rosa Police Department adopted a community-oriented policing strategy, whereas the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department has not.34 Residents of Moorland expressed a strong desire for community-oriented policing after the shooting of Andy Lopez,35,36 and this would be one immediate change they would see if the community were annexed.

2. Physical Inequities in the Built Environment

In addition to service inequities, unincorporated areas in Sonoma County (both islands and unincorporated areas generally) face physical inequities in their neighborhoods. Some of the most common differences are a lack of sidewalks, irregularly paved roads, poorly maintained roads, a lack of parks and public open spaces, a lack of community facilities, and no street lights. These physical inequities impact the way residents perceive their neighborhoods, and can manifest in higher crime rates and lack of safety. The Moorland Avenue neighborhood is known for its gang activity, and one employee at a nearby community organization said that gangs “have claimed the whole neighborhood.”37 Small physical improvements associated with full service provision could improve the level of crime and perceptions in the Moorland area. One resident of the

32 Conversations with residents at Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Meeting, August 9, 2014.
35 Discussions with Moorland residents at Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process meeting, and Interview with Vince Harper.
36 Vince Harper (Assistant Director of Community Engagement, Community Action Partnership, Santa Rosa, CA), interview by author, January 7, 2015.
Moorland neighborhood, Esther Lemus, said, ‘I think if there were more lights in the area, even the tagging and the graffiti would go down. I mean it’s so dark, no one sees who does it. And I think with lighting, it could cut all that type of crime.’

Several of the high school students I worked with for this project noted that the places where they feel unsafe are the poorly maintained ones, and these areas tend to be unincorporated.

The physical disparities of unincorporated communities around Santa Rosa are also manifest in the preponderance of undesirable uses surrounding unincorporated residential neighborhoods. Again, in concurrence with definition of semi-formal, unincorporated marginalization I described in Chapter 2, the Moorland Avenue neighborhood is bound by a industrial uses, warehouses, auto repair lots, and a recycling center. These deleterious uses leave residents with little chance of increasing their property values or becoming a desirable neighborhood for the city to annex. They are trapped in an unincorporated community with inadequate infrastructure and problems with crime and policing, but they have little governmental support to address the issues they face.

3. Inequity in Taxes and Redevelopment Funding

Part of the reason for the county’s inability to properly serve and maintain unincorporated areas is that the County has a much larger area to cover in terms of service provision, and limited capacity to do so. Counties in California also earn only approximately two-thirds as much as cities from basic sales tax on a per-capita basis. Counties tend to have less commercial activity than cities, particularly when cities like Santa Rosa annex areas that generate sales tax and leave residential developments that need services behind. In an article about California unincorporated communities, Tony LoPresti writes, “Counties are shouldered with the residual unincorporated communities that often have the least revenue generation potential, face the steepest infrastructure challenges, and require a high level of services.” Counties are responsible for these communities but have fewer resources than cities with which to provide services.

In the past, one of the few funding streams available to Counties in California for public projects was Redevelopment Funding. In 1952, California voters passed a constitutional amendment under California Redevelopment Law that allowed counties to collect tax

38 Esther Lemus (Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team member), interview by author, January 17, 2015.
39 Data collected from Elsie Allen High School students in Santa Rosa, CA on January 6, 2015.
40 Alvin D. Sokolow, “Caring for Unincorporated Communities,” California County, March/April 2000.
41 Tony LoPresti, “Unincorporated California,” 146.
increment payments, which enabled 31 of California’s 58 counties to form Redevelopment Agencies for unincorporated areas within the state. These county agencies generated over $312 million each year in tax increment revenue, and indeed, Sonoma County used these funds to pay for improvements in unincorporated areas such as installing sidewalks near Highway 12 in Santa Rosa Springs, and improvements on Stony Point Road in Roseland. But in 2011 the State passed a Budget Act that dissolved all 400 Redevelopment Agencies, leaving counties with few options to initiate improvements in unincorporated areas on their own. Most improvements are now accomplished through public private development, in which a condition of approval for new development includes a requirement for the developer to provide infrastructure improvements.

4. Inequity in Political Representation and Governance
Compounding the physical problems in Sonoma County’s unincorporated communities is the limited political representation for unincorporated county residents. Alvin Sokolow writes, “Of whatever size, unincorporated places lack the political power and locally concentrated government capacity that even small cities have to varying degrees.” The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors is made up of five representatives, and each of the five districts covers a large amount of territory, making each supervisor’s constituency broad and diverse. Compare this to the seven-member Santa Rosa City Council, which operates over an area much smaller than the County, and the fact that city residents are represented by both City Councilors and County Supervisors. Political representation in Santa Rosa can be much more focused than in Sonoma County. In the County, a representative’s interest and policy goals may not actually characterize the entire district’s needs because the constituency is so broad. For a long time, the Supervisor for District 5 (which covers Southwest Santa Rosa including Roseland and Moorland) was Mike Reilly, who focused on western Sonoma County more so than the unincorporated islands in Southwest Santa Rosa. In 2008, Efren Carillo, a Roseland native was elected as the Supervisor of District 5, and he has pushed the issue of annexation more strongly than former Supervisor Reilly.

42 Ibid., 137.
44 Carole Cooper and Mark Bramfitt, Interview by author, January 13, 2015.
46 Carole Cooper and Mark Bramfitt, Interview by author, January 13, 2015.
RACIAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

The Southwest Santa Rosa area is home to a higher concentration of Latino residents than other parts of Santa Rosa. Roseland and Moorland in particular have some of the highest concentrations of Latino populations in the area (See Figure 3.8). These areas also have lower property values than the incorporated parts of the city. In fact, there seems to be a direct correlation between property values and unincorporated areas: the boundaries of unincorporated islands nearly exactly match census block groups with low property values (See Figure 3.8). This corroborates the allegations of economic motivations behind Santa Rosa’s cherry picking annexation practices. The combination of low property values and high percentages of Latino populations indicates the institutionalized racial and socioeconomic discrimination and marginalization I described in Chapter 1.

Indeed, in an interview, a high-ranking official who asked to remain nameless said that he felt strong racial implications underlying the reasons why Roseland and Moorland have not yet been annexed into the City. This seems to be a common sentiment amongst frustrated community members in Santa Rosa’s unincorporated islands. Gabe Meline, the author of a 2010 local newspaper article on Roseland, described the community’s feeling of abandonment and discrimination:

“Some see race as a factor in why Santa Rosa has treated Roseland like a bastard child, so far failing to offer it the respect of annexation. Welcoming the neighborhood into the city limits is not just the city’s duty to the area, they say, it’s the city’s moral duty. By annexing Roseland and thus disproving the notion that it is systematically shutting out its Latino community, its poor families and others too often accorded second-class treatment, Santa Rosa will emerge a stronger, prouder city.”

Countering the City’s longtime excuse that residents of these unincorporated areas do not want to be annexed, Sonoma County Supervisor (and Roseland community member) Efren Carillo says that residents do want to be annexed, and that “it’s a matter of governance… Just fundamentally: fairness, equity, and good governance are the main drivers for why these 51 islands that are unincorporated need to be annexed by the city. No other city in [Sonoma] county has this dynamic.”

Echoing this sentiment, a resident interviewed in the 2010 newspaper article, Magdalena Ridley, says,

“They’ve annexed all the areas around Roseland and gotten commercial and tax revenue from developing the fields I remember as a kid, and the Corby auto row and all the shopping centers that people


51 Efren Carillo (Sonoma County Supervisor, District 5), interview by author, January 26, 2015.
Figure 3.8: Roseland and Moorland have some of the highest concentrations of Latino people and some of the lowest valued tax rate areas.

from Roseland shop at along Stony Point Road. That’s all part of the city, and we, somehow are considered separate from that. We don’t get credit for that revenue. We’re seen as ‘islands,’ as if we landed here from somewhere else. We created the opportunities for all these areas to be developed.”

Finally, the City is now moving towards better governance and inclusion of residents that have been excluded and marginalized for far too long, and the Roseland annexation process is currently underway. In the next section, I will explain Roseland’s annexation and the incident that spurred the City’s initiation of the process.

THE ANDY LOPEZ SHOOTING AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Despite decades of blatant inequity and residents’ recent outspoken voices for annexation, it took a tragedy in one of these unincorporated areas to spur change in Santa Rosa. On October 22, 2013, Andy Lopez, a 13-year-old boy was shot and killed by a Sonoma County Sheriff along Moorland Avenue. At the time of the incident, Andy was walking to his friend’s house through the vacant lot at the corner of Moorland Avenue and West Robles Avenue—a lot that was designated as a park several decades before, but had never been developed. Lopez was carrying a toy replica of an AK-47 gun with the orange toy-marker removed. A County Sheriff patrol car was driving along Moorland Avenue at the time. Thinking that the toy was an actual assault weapon, the sheriffs sounded the siren, and told Lopez to drop the “weapon.” As Lopez turned around with the toy gun still in his hand, one of the sheriffs shot Lopez seven times, killing him at the scene. The Sheriff’s Deputy who fired the shots, Erik Gelhaus, did not face criminal charges.

This incident falls within a series of US police killings and reports of police brutality in communities of color, and I argue that the systemic racialized marginalization of the Moorland community through its unincorporated status also played a role in the tragedy. The mistaken toy gun is part of a larger set of conditions and assumptions about the unincorporated neighborhood,

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52 Meline, “City of Dreams.”


54 Ibid.


56 Steinmetz, “Toy Gun.”

including the area’s reputation for gang activity, the concentration of lower-income Latino immigrants, the lack of a community-oriented policing strategy, and the vacant lots instead of parks for children to play in. These physical and social conditions are a product of Moorland’s exclusion from the City of Santa Rosa. Thus, the characteristics that define Moorland as an unincorporated neighborhood contributed to the death of Andy Lopez.

The shooting spurred immediate community protests and organizing for improvements in the neighborhood, including a memorial to Andy and makeshift park with donated children’s play equipment in the vacant lot where the incident occurred (See Figure 3.9). A community activist group called the “Justice Coalition for Andy Lopez” (JCAL) formed, and their goal is for the County to develop an official park at the site of the shooting, and to bring criminal charges against Deputy Gelhaus.

According to some, the Andy Lopez shooting led to the current process underway for Roseland’s annexation. One county employee adamantly claims the Andy Lopez incident “is what’s driving the Roseland annexation, and I don’t care what [Santa Rosa Assistant City Manager] Chuck Regalia says—until that incident he has said ‘nope, nope, nope’ to Roseland annexation.”

Although the shooting happened in Moorland, which is a few miles away from Roseland, Moorland is not seen as the most imminent annexation need in Santa Rosa. Roseland is the largest unincorporated island in the area, while Moorland is smaller and a “fringe

island,” which means it is surrounded by City land on three sides. Thus, Roseland is the first annexation priority for the city, and the process is finally underway.

THE ROSELAND ANNEXATION PROCESS

The annexation of Roseland will be a long and complicated process because its large size triggers additional procedural requirements than smaller annexations. The initial step, which the city has just completed, is called a “gap analysis” to identify the deficit between the amount of money it costs to provide services to Roseland and the amount of tax revenue it will gain from the area. It will cost the city approximately $3.5 million per year to provide services to the Roseland area, including police and emergency services, which account for nearly $2 million of these expenses.

![Graph showing annual expenses and revenue](image)

ANNUAL EXPENSES
- Police: $390,000
- Utilities: $325,000
- Admin.: $69,000
- Transp./Public Works: $490,000

ANNUAL REVENUE
- Property Tax: $2.8 million

ANNUAL GAP: $733,000

Figure 3.9: The Roseland annexation will cost the City of Santa Rosa more than it will generate from the additional property tax revenue. The City and County are working on a financial settlement to offset the difference.
annual costs. The City also estimates a long-term investment of almost $80 million for parks, roads, and storm drains to bring the community’s infrastructure up to par with the rest of the city.

The largest portion of these long-term investments comes from the development of new parks, which amount to $54 million for land acquisition and development of eight open spaces, including both small neighborhood parks to the 21-acre Roseland Creek Community Park. The revenue gained from property and sales tax amounts to approximately $2.8 million per year, for a gap of $733,000 in the first year (See Figure 3.9). The City and County are now in the process of negotiating how to account for that gap, and determining whether the County can help offset the costs associated with annexation.

The next steps in the process involve a large community outreach and education campaign to gauge residents’ sentiments about annexation. In order for a city to annex land in California, at least 50% of residents need to support the annexation. The City will conduct a “Sentiment Survey” of registered voters in the area, and will help form a citizen’s advisory committee. The City has made a brochure that explains the annexation process and the implications for residents. An important piece of information for residents to know is that their property tax rates will not change, and farm animals will still be allowed in rural residential districts. The only financial implication is a utility services fee, which amounts to approximately $50 per year.

After this initial community outreach, the City’s Community Development Department will present their findings to the City Council at a public hearing, and the Council will decide whether or not to move forward with the annexation process. If the Council votes to move forward, the Community Development Department will establish the final annexation boundary, complete an Environmental Review, adopt “pre-zoning” (zoning changes that will bring the county land in compliance with the city zoning code), and then file an application with LAFCO. At that point, LAFCO will make a determination on whether or not to approve the annexation, and will hold a public hearing.

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid, 19.
63 Carole Cooper and Mark Bramfit, Interview by author, January 13, 2015.
64 Ibid.
for community feedback on the issue. There is then a “protest vote,” in which LAFCO sends out protest forms to all registered voters and property owners in the annexation area. This is followed by another public hearing. If less than 25% of residents and property owners protest the annexation, it moves forward. If more than 50% protest, the annexation is terminated. If the vote is between 25 and 50 percent, it goes to an election by registered voters only, and if a majority of voters support annexation, then it is approved.68 This process will take years, and the City projects that if all approvals go smoothly, the annexation process will be complete by the end of 2017.69

Despite the fact that many residents support annexation, there are a lot of residents and property owners who are unaware of the topic altogether. The City explained to me that community engagement is a huge part of ensuring a successful annexation process. Lisa Kranz, the Supervising Planner for the City said, “A big part [of the process] is to bring people in…establish a vision for the community, but also help inform people about what annexation means…People don’t automatically know what that is. It’s a foreign and complicated thing.”70 As you will see in later chapters, this is consistent with what I learned in the community process I conducted with high school students in Southwest Santa Rosa: many students were unaware that they live in an unincorporated area, and the implication of this status on their quality of life. Education and awareness is a fundamental component of awakening critical consciousness and allowing people to meaningfully participate in guiding the future of their neighborhood.

It should not have taken the death of a 13-year-old boy to spur this long overdue annexation process, and it is frustrating that the unincorporated area in which the incident took place is not part of the annexation boundary. It makes political and logical sense that the largest unincorporated island is the first priority, but according to LAFCO there is another reason why Roseland is next in line for annexation: it has “tremendous redevelopment potential…there area some very large parcels, and the commercial strip on Sebastopol road is very nice, and it’s got a lot of upside potential.”71 Moorland, on the other hand, has little to offer in the way of tax revenue. There is only one commercial property (a small liquor and convenience store), and the majority of homes are low-income. As Marc Bramfitt, the Executive Officer of LAFCO explained, “Moorland on its own going into the city

68 Carole Cooper and Mark Bramfitt, Interview by author, January 13, 2015.
70 Lisa Kranz (Supervising Planner) and Jessica Jones (Senior Planner), interview by author, January 27, 2015.
71 Carole Cooper and Mark Bramfitt, Interview by author, January 13, 2015.
is problematic because it’s not revenue neutral.” Mr. Bramfitt thinks that Moorland has potential to be annexed after Roseland if the City expands the annexation area east across Highway 101 to include commercial properties along Santa Rosa Avenue.

From an equity standpoint, I argue that Moorland should have been included in the Roseland annexation process. Though the financial gap would have been greater, the City could have avoided conducting an entirely separate and equally complicated process several years down the line. Instead, Moorland is still grieving from a tragedy that was in part caused by its unincorporated status, and the community is left waiting for years, hoping to be annexed next.

**CONCLUSION**

Santa Rosa has used planning as a tool to exclude lower-income Latino communities by annexing land around them. This history of unjust annexation practices has led to an irregular city boundary and 51 unincorporated islands, completely surrounded by City of Santa Rosa land. The current Roseland annexation process indicates a potential shift towards more equitable annexation practices, but a broader awareness needs to be fostered about the systemic oppression that created these issues to begin with. In the next chapter I examine a planning process in the Moorland Avenue Community itself—a process that was intended to address community concerns that arose from the Andy Lopez incident. I will analyze the process within the political context I outlined in this chapter, and determine whether or not the process successfully built capacity and political awareness to lead towards larger scale social change.

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
CHAPTER 4. THE MOORLAND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD PROCESS: OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter examines and analyzes the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, conducted by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department. The process was a result of both the Andy Lopez incident and a County report, *Portrait of Sonoma*, that identified the Moorland Avenue Community as a neighborhood facing health inequities.¹ I will use the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process to compare with my own participatory design process in subsequent chapters, and will ground my analysis in the theory I outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter begins with a basic description of the Moorland Avenue neighborhood and the events that led to the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process. I then describe the sequence and participatory methods used in the County-led process. And finally, I spend the majority of the chapter analyzing the process in terms of capacity building, awareness of broader social implications, ideas about implementation, and the lack of design in the process.

THE MOORLAND AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Moorland Avenue neighborhood sits directly south of Santa Rosa, and the city boundary zigs and zags around it on three sides. It is bound by industrial uses to the north, west, and south, and Highway 101 to the east. The neighborhood is approximately 50% Latino, 35% White, 9% Asian American, and 3% African American.² The neighborhood’s median household income is $27,511—lower than the County’s median


by several thousand dollars.\(^3\) There is a strong presence of families, with almost 30% of the neighborhood’s residents under the age of 18,\(^4\) which indicates the importance of engaging young people in planning for the neighborhood. The physical character of the neighborhood is striking, with a sharp divide between two halves of the neighborhood. The portion of the neighborhood south of West Robles Avenue consists of long, rural lots, with single-family homes (often with goats and other small livestock in the yards), no sidewalks, and drainage and flooding problems along the road. North of West Robles was redeveloped in the 1990s with more suburban-style development, including cul de sacs, smaller lots with single-family homes, an affordable housing apartment complex, and sidewalks. Despite the redevelopment, some side streets off of this northern portion of Moorland remain unpaved, and many lots and homes are poorly maintained. There is also a vacant lot at the corner of Moorland and Robles (where Andy Lopez was killed), which was slated to be developed into a 2-acre park by the developer of the northern subdivision,\(^5\) but was never completed.

There is a strong perception of Moorland as a dangerous neighborhood due to the gang activity that has occurred in recent years, particularly on the side streets in the northern portion of the neighborhood:


\[^6\] Vince Harper (Assistant Director of Community Engagement, Community Action Partnership), interview by author, January 5, 2015.
have a strong association of Moorland as an unsafe neighborhood.

Southwest Santa Rosa and Moorland in particular have been identified by the Sonoma County Health Services Department in its Portrait of Sonoma report, released in 2014, as a community with significant disparities in terms of income, education, and health outcomes. Because of the findings in this report, the Department of Health Services applied for and received a Community Transformation Grant to fund a planning process “aimed at policy systems and environmental changes that promote long-term improvements in health and wellbeing.” Kelly Elder, the Section Manager of the Healthy Communities Section at the Department of Health Services explained that the Andy Lopez incident spurred the Health Department to use the grant funding to conduct the “Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process” in the summer and fall of 2014.

The Justice Coalition for Andy Lopez has been advocating strongly for a park to be developed on the vacant lot at the corner of Moorland Avenue and West Robles Avenue, and because of this, the Department of Health Services (DHS) decided to partner with the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department as a way to integrate the community desire for a park into the overall Moorland Healthy Neighborhood process. However, the goal of the process was for a more comprehensive plan than solely the park: the process was intended to address broader inequities within the neighborhood. DHS also engaged Community Action Partnership (CAP), an urban planning and design firm that specializes in participatory processes to conduct outreach and help facilitate the process. These four entities (DHS, Regional Parks, CAP, and the consulting firm) comprised the project management team for the process.

**THE MOORLAND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD PROCESS**

**Process Methods:**
The Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process was conducted from July 17 to September 20, 2014. CAP conducted the outreach for meetings, and the consulting firm facilitated both community-wide meetings and the smaller “Neighborhood Advisory Team” meetings. The process involved two community-wide meetings to discuss the main ideas, and three Neighborhood Advisory Team meetings to engage in more detailed discussions. The Neighborhood Advisory Team, or NAT, was a smaller group of residents who wanted to be more deeply involved.

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7 Burd-Sharps and Lewis, Portrait of Sonoma.
8 Kelly Elder (Section Manager, Health Communities Division, Sonoma County Health Services Department), interview by author, January 13, 2015.
9 Ibid.
in the process and help make decisions about the plan’s content. All meetings were held in a small community room within the affordable housing complex on Moorland Avenue. The process employed participatory planning methods, as I will discuss, but did not use design as a tool for engagement. Below, I will briefly explain the format of each meeting before analyzing the process as a whole.

**Neighborhood Advisory Team Meeting #1:**
Seventeen people interested in joining the NAT attended the initial meeting, including eight Moorland Avenue residents, two community activists, four high school students, one high school teacher (Lisa DeCarbo), and two “visitors.” The meeting began with an overview of NAT roles and responsibilities, an explanation of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process funding, time line, and the expected outcome of the process (a plan). The first participatory activity involved attendees writing their vision for the Moorland neighborhood on cards that read, “Moorland will be…”, and then sharing these visions with the group. The next activity was a large group discussion about Moorland’s assets, challenges, and opportunities. The meeting closed with a summary of the ideas generated in the discussion, and outlined next steps in the process.

**Community Workshop #1:**
Approximately 35 participants attended the first community-wide workshop. An activity was conducted as people arrived at the workshop, in which attendees placed dot-stickers on a map of the area around Moorland to indicate where they live, work, and play. There was no discussion of this activity afterwards. The meeting facilitator briefly reviewed the goals of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, and then split participants into groups for a walking tour of the neighborhood. Participants were asked to write what they noticed about their neighborhood on note cards during the walking tour. When we returned to the community room, participants placed their ideas onto a large map of the Moorland neighborhood. Community members added many comments and ideas to the maps, but there was no discussion of the ideas after the activity. The workshop closed with an announcement of the next (and final) community workshop.

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13 This information is based on my participation in this initial meeting.
**Neighborhood Advisory Team Meeting #2:**
Fourteen people attended the second NAT meeting, including four new attendees. The meeting began with an overview of the previous NAT meeting discussion. The facilitator then showed the results of the community meeting walking tour activity, and broke the ideas into 5 main categories: pedestrian safety, public transportation, environment and open space, sense of community, and community health and safety. In the next segment of the meeting, the project management team presented a neighborhood “vision statement” and goals, and asked for feedback from the NAT. The NAT had not been involved in drafting the language for the vision statement or goals; the project management team drafted them before the meeting. The next portion of the meeting discussed a prioritization scheme for neighborhood project ideas. The project management team suggested four prioritization criteria for the NAT to choose from: impact, urgency, existing resources, and feasibility. Again, the NAT was not involved in identifying these criteria, but they did decide to focus on the first two items: impact and urgency. The meeting closed with a summary and announcement of the next meetings.

**Community Workshop #2:**
This second and final community-wide workshop drew approximately 40 community members. Based on the feedback from the initial community meeting, the project management team drafted a list of strategies to work towards the five goals of pedestrian safety, public transportation, environment and open space, sense of community, and community health and safety. Strategies included ideas such as “Create bicycle lanes,” “Install streetlights,” “Solve flooding and drainage problems,” etc. The main focus of the community meeting was for participants to vote on these strategy ideas based on their impact and urgency. Participants were allowed to choose their top three ideas for each main goal. The meeting closed with a summary of the votes and explanation of the time line for the draft plan.

**Neighborhood Advisory Team Meeting #3:**
This third and final NAT was the largest

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
one, with 24 people in attendance, including 9 new members. The meeting opened with a summary of the previous NAT meeting, an overview of the agenda, and the results from the second community workshop. During the main activity of the meeting, the facilitator divided meeting participants into small groups, one for each of the five main topic areas of the plan. The project management team had created a list of the strategies that received the most votes at the community meeting, and asked each group to identify modifications to the strategies in their topic area. They also asked the groups to think about implementation ideas for each strategy and goal. The groups then reported back to the entire NAT on their modification ideas. It should be noted that an additional suggestion was added during this session to include a section on annexation in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan, but this suggestion was not heeded.

The resulting product from these meetings was a planning document that outlined community goals and strategy ideas. The document included an “Action Plan” with charts of potential agencies and community partners to work with for each strategy, the

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C. BEAUTIFYING AND IMPROVING MOORLAND’S ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACES

**Goals**
- Develop parks and open spaces that function as community hubs where we can gather, and where our children can feel safe, play and learn.
- Foster clean, graffiti-free, landscaped streets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy/Action</th>
<th>Potential Partners to engage</th>
<th>Ease of Implementation*</th>
<th>Potential Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.1. Create a park at Moorland and West Robles, preferably that includes both parcels of vacant land, with a memorial for Andy Lopez and assure that the community is leading the design of the park.</td>
<td>Sonoma County Regional Parks</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2. Improve existing safe places for children to play, such as Carrillo Place Apartments, and explore the potential use of private open areas into play spaces.</td>
<td>Carrillo Place Management, other willing property owners</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.3. Remove graffiti as a deterrent to more graffiti by making information for the County Sheriff’s graffiti removal service readily available to community members.</td>
<td>Sonoma County Sheriff Graffiti Abatement Unit</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.4. Clean up streets – including weeding, pruning trees, and picking up trash – and address the illegal dumping through regularly scheduled neighborhood clean-up days.</td>
<td>Dept. of Transportation and Public Works (TPW), Department of Health Services</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.5. Encourage landlords and homeowners to maintain and make repairs to their properties and plant and/or maintain their gardens.</td>
<td>Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management, Department of Health Services</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.6. Plant more trees north of Hazelnut, as possible.</td>
<td>TPW, Permit and Resource Management</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.7. Add street paintings at intersections for beautification and traffic calming.</td>
<td>Transportation and Public Works</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.8. Obtain information about re-development plans for local land parcels and work with the County and developers to ensure community’s needs, such as healthy food outlets, open space and pedestrian and bicycle friendly design elements, are addressed in the plans.</td>
<td>Permit and Resource Management, Regional Parks</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ease of implementation rating is based on an analysis of the level of coordination required combined with the level of anticipated capital and recurring costs associated with the action.

Figure 4.6: An example of one of the Action Plan charts from the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process.

ease of implementation, and a potential time frame for each action (See Figure 4.6).

**MOORLAND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD PROCESS ANALYSIS**

In the next section, I analyze the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process based around four main questions:

1) Was the process community-driven?
2) Did the process build capacity?
3) Did the process include discussions about implementation and broader political issues?
4) Why did the process avoid design and what impact did this have on critical consciousness?

1. **Community-Driven?**

The Community Transformation Grant that funded the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process provided short-term funding, enough for only a two-month long process. DHS wanted to conduct a community-driven process despite the short time frame. Kelly Elder said she wanted to “treat the community as a partner” to develop “a community-driven plan that established very localized, place-based priorities.”

This goal led the project management team to form the “Neighborhood Advisory Team” (NAT) of residents to guide the process. However, because the process was so short, and involved only three NAT meetings and two community-wide meetings, it was difficult to build a group with a strong sense of cohesion and ownership over the process. Vince Harper, at Community Action Partnership, was in charge of the outreach and forming the NAT. In an interview for this thesis, he explained the struggles to form an effective community group to lead the process:

“Because of time constraints, we kind of had to move the agenda quicker, and forming the group would have taken time, so there wasn’t a lot of emphasis on that. Because we had to move so quickly, they didn’t really gel as a group, so I still felt they were kind of separate people coming to this process...Anything to try and break the ice kind of went out the door. So I think there’s some hesitancy now on the part of residents to be seen as a leader.”

Despite the best intentions of the DHS to have a community-driven process, the constraints of the timeline did not allow capacity building within the group that would enable residents to truly guide the process.

Participants in the process felt this feigned attempt at community building, and were frustrated by the lack of follow-through and the short duration of involvement.

Lisa DeCarbo, a high school teacher at the nearby Elsie Allen high school, expressed her frustration as a member of the NAT, and the lack of relationship building that was possible in the process.

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18 Kelly Elder, interview by author, January 13, 2015.
In an interview with for this thesis, she said, “In my opinion, as we’re trying to build relationships, having grant money that ends in September and having it not sustained in some way as a priority is an empty and broken promise.”

Yet County agencies did not view the time constraints as a fundamental flaw in the process. In my discussions with each department involved in the project, interviewees mentioned the short time frame, but they believed they had conducted a genuine participatory process. Kelly Elder described the process as “open and inviting,” believing that those conditions were sufficient to generate community buy-in and leadership. Similarly Scott Wilkinson, the Project Manager for the process in the Regional Parks Department, said that one of the successes of the process was “just bringing folks together to talk about this stuff.” These comments reflect the field of planning’s inability to engage communities in ways that reach the higher rungs of Sherry Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation. Elder talked about viewing the community as a partner, but in her description of the process, there were subtle indications of the ways she and the other government agencies enforced their own agendas: “It wasn’t as if we had determined the outcomes, but we set the boundaries pretty clearly, and we tried to really keep the mission very clear to folks. So when things went a bit off course we could tie it back to the mission, and say ‘Does that really get us to where we need to go?’” The manner in which the process was conducted was not in alignment with the stated participatory goals of the process.

On the other side of the equation, community members who were part of the NAT were not aware of the ways the County agencies undercut the community’s power because they had never been part of a process in which co-creation and equal decision-making occurred. This meant that there was no push-back from the community to shift the course of the process. I asked Esther Lemus, a longtime resident of Moorland and member of the NAT, whether she felt community members were driving the generation of ideas or if the County was making unilateral decisions. She responded, “I think both. At times it felt like they were telling us what they were doing, and then at times it was, ‘well what do you think of this?’” Unfortunately, neither of those are community-driven methods of planning. The first involves no input at all, and the second involves ideas that are generated from the people in power, with minimal feedback from

20 Lisa DeCarbo (Elsie Allen High School Teacher), interview by author, January 20, 2015.
21 Kelly Elder, interview by author, January 13, 2015.
22 Scott Wilkinson (Park Planner III, Sonoma County Regional Parks Department), interview by author, January 20, 2015.
23 Kelly Elder, interview by author, January 13, 2015.
24 Esther Lemus (Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team member and Moorland Avenue Resident), interview by author, January 20, 2013.
residents.

There was general consensus amongst NAT members that too few residents were involved in the process, and thus the NAT was not representative of the whole neighborhood. Lisa DeCarbo said one of the main flaws of the process was the poor outreach and low resident representation:

“You had, I would have to say, less than a dozen people who lived there, at all of the meetings... You had people who used to live there, but no longer live there; you have people like me, who work in the area, but do not live there; you had somebody who owned apartments, but didn’t live in them. So I don’t feel that you really have a collective understanding and input from a majority, or even 25 percent of the people.”

And indeed, Vince Harper at CAP, who was in charge of outreach, admits that he did not notify the entire neighborhood. Ironically, he said it was too dangerous to conduct door-to-door outreach on the southern stretch of Moorland Avenue because there are no sidewalks. CAP did not conduct outreach for a meeting to discuss the fact that residents have no sidewalks because there were no sidewalks to conduct outreach on.

The lack of community representation on the NAT is related to the lack of power residents had in the process. Esther Lemus, one of the few longtime residents on the NAT, had many good ideas about how the process could have been run and how outreach could have been conducted, but she was never asked. She thought a lot of people did not attend the meetings because it was “intimidating” to attend a large meeting where you did not fully understand what was being discussed. She said she thought it would have been better to have smaller sub-meetings within the neighborhood: “For instance, in my neighborhood, my immediate neighbors could meet at my house or at someone’s house and discuss. It’s very hard to get all of the Moorland area to come, but I think if they meet in the little pockets of neighbors who they know and trust, then I think that would work.” Ideas like these come from an inside community knowledge that outside consultants, County officials, and even local organizations may not have. But because Esther and other residents were not consulted while the process was being designed, the turnout was low, and the process was not as effective as it could have been.

2. Capacity Building?

One of the main barriers to fostering a community-driven process in Moorland was the lack of capacity building with residents. Process facilitators made an assumption that participants understood

27 Esther Lemus, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
28 Ibid.
urban planning terms and how to navigate the political system to make neighborhood change. Esther said, “at times I felt that things were over my head. You know, all the jargon people use because they’re very involved in doing those processes, they know what the jargon means. But laypeople like myself, I guess we have to ask.”29 But they shouldn’t have to ask. Education, capacity building, and learning the language of planning should be integrated into every community process. Vince Harper said he was surprised that residents told him they felt intimidated during the meetings.30 Perhaps the process was not as open and inviting as the DHS thought it was. This relates back to the discussion in Chapter 1 of problematic communication in participatory planning, in which Xavier Briggs explains that planners and residents do not “speak the same language.”31

To make matters worse, the Healthy Neighborhood process did not include education around a fundamental issue for planning this neighborhood: unincorporated status and annexation. The County may not have felt political capacity building was possible because of time constraints, but it is one of the most important aspects of community-based planning in marginalized unincorporated areas. As mentioned in the previous chapter, and as you will see in later chapters, many residents are unaware that they live in unincorporated areas, and do not understand the implications of unincorporated status on their service-provision, infrastructure, and ability to implement plan ideas. In the case of the Moorland process, this lack of education has led to frustration amongst residents who do not know why their ideas are difficult to implement, how long implementation takes, or what the next steps are. When I asked Esther if she thought annexation would help the neighborhood accomplish its goals, she responded that she wasn’t sure: “I think we all want the goals to happen, but I’m not sure about annexation versus unincorporated: what are we losing if we become annexed? I’m sure there’s always fees. I would like to know, and become educated on what it entails.”32 These are entirely valid questions and concerns, and annexation may not be the answer to the community’s problems, but residents should learn about these issues through the planning process so they can make their own determination on the subject. In fact, the topic of annexation was purposefully avoided, and partially for good reason. Both Kelly Elder from Health Services and Scott Wilkinson

29 Ibid.
32 Esther Lemus, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
from Regional Parks said that they did not initiate a discussion on annexation because Moorland is unlikely to be annexed in the near future, and improvements need to be made regardless of who is governing the area.³³,³⁴ While I agree that improvements should occur regardless of annexation, residents should still be able to decide whether or not they want to be annexed, and should have the information to make those decisions. This excuse also avoids providing residents with information that allows them to understand the differences between what can be accomplished without annexation, and why some of their ideas may be more difficult to implement than others. In this instance, the County agencies are fitting into John Forrester’s description of planners as “organizers (and disorganizers) of public attention.”³⁵ Information about annexation and unincorporated status equates to power in this context, and by keeping that information from residents, the planners of this process firmly held onto their power.

Esther Lemus noted a feeling of helplessness after the process: “I think we’re all just waiting to see who is going to take the initiative or what’s happening next…But I really want someone to help us get through the hoops. We need someone who is savvy about those things. For me, it’s the first time I’ve been involved in something this big. So, you know, I need to know who to go to for whatever questions I have.”³⁶ The process did not teach residents about how to navigate the political system and which government agencies to contact. When the county’s institutional support disappeared after two months, the Neighborhood Advisory Team had not built the capacity to continue their work. Lisa DeCarbo is angry about the lack of relationship building and follow-through on the process, and described her frustration with the County in an interview with me. She said,

“You started this effort, and you got these people involved, and you were showing them the way that, ‘hey, if you are civically engaged, you can change things.’ But really, you left when the money left, and now what message is that? They’re taking advantage of the lack of education in the people who live there. And that is despicable. And I know the county is busy, but don’t take advantage of people’s ignorance. Because you’re perpetuating the socioeconomic divide which you seem to want to address in the Portrait of Sonoma.”³⁷

I wouldn’t say that the County was deliberately taking advantage of Moorland residents’ lack of knowledge.

³⁴ Kelly Elder, interview by author, January 13, 2015.
³⁶ Esther Lemus, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
³⁷ Lisa DeCarbo, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
around political issues (nor would I call it ignorance for residents to not understand the complicated jurisdictional issues associated with unincorporated status), but I agree that the lack of capacity building around key planning issues in this area is irresponsible and has led to frustration on the part of residents who do not know how to continue the work they started.

Somehow, however, the County is unaware that they did not build the capacity of the NAT. The name of the Neighborhood Advisory Committee was changed to “Neighborhood Action Committee” at the last meeting in September, as though the title suddenly enabled members of the group able to act on their ideas. According to Health Services and the Parks Department, this action team is intended to be an independent community group that works on its own (See Figure 4.7). Scott Wilkinson explained, “The idea was that they would organize themselves a bit more as an actual neighborhood group, which may involve actually developing a leadership body with people elected to certain positions.” And when I asked if anyone at the Parks Department was continuing to work on the process, Wilkinson responded, “There’s no one really actively working on it…I would hope that the neighborhood group continued to evolve, and push for things, next steps to be developed.”

Unfortunately, as is evident by the NAT members’ confusion about next steps, this goal was not made

38 Scott Wilkinson, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
clear to the members themselves. How can the residents push for next steps if they do not know what the next steps are?

3. Implementation and Broader Political Awareness?
As mentioned above, the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process did not broach the topic of unincorporated status and whether or not annexation can help the community implement their ideas. It is unclear whether or not annexation is the answer to Moorland’s problems, and perhaps the reason the topic was not discussed is because County departments themselves are unsure of the possibilities with and without annexation. Kelly Elder was confident that the county can accomplish all of the goals outlined in the plan because as she put it “we do parks, we do sidewalks, we do infrastructure.”

The source of money and governmental capacity to actually accomplish these goals is less clear, but the Health Services Department is sure that the County can implement each of the priority items in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan. In fact, Elder believes that the improvements need to be made in order for the City to annex Moorland because the changes will create a more revenue neutral annexation. She explained,

“There has to be a perceived value in order for the city [to annex Moorland]. A city is a business as well....[Moorland has seen] no growth, really, just because of the type of community it is. It isn’t attractive. There’s land, certainly, and there are opportunities, but it’s just one of those places that is perceived as a bit blighted, so there isn’t a lot of interest in investing. So I think as small improvements are made, things like that will change...and the financial liability of annexation will be mitigated.”

Scott Wilkinson, of the Regional Parks Department took a different view of plan implementation without annexation. He said that the County “is obviously not in the business of doing a lot of typical improvements that would happen, such as sidewalks, and drainage, and other services. And the county doesn’t want to invest there if it is going to become part of the City. And their position, I think, is that it should be the city because it’s an island.” When I asked him if he thought the plan was implementable without annexation, he laughed and sarcastically responded, “Yeah! Why not?” and then more seriously said, “It certainly seems that if they couldn’t even get a park, a small park, built there for 20 years, that transforming that neighborhood, the whole streetscape and infrastructure of that neighborhood wouldn’t happen any time soon.” Essentially Wilkinson is implying that the County does not want to spend the money to improve Moorland because eventually it will be annexed.

40 Ibid.
41 Scott Wilkinson, interview by author, January 20, 2015.
42 Ibid.
into the City, and Elder is saying that in order for the city to annex Moorland, the improvements need to happen first. The two County agencies that administered the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood process have directly opposing views on whether or not improvements will actually be made, and whether or not annexation is an important factor in plan implementation. I argue this is a fundamental discussion that should have occurred before embarking on a planning process in an unincorporated community. It also demonstrates the importance of understanding the broader political context and implications of political decisions when working in a marginalized community.

The actual Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan document provides little guidance in the way of implementation. To begin with, the goals of the plan are broad and include few concrete details. The five main goals for the neighborhood are: improvements in health and safety; development of Moorland's sense of community; beautification and improvement of Moorland's environment and open spaces; and improvements to pedestrian and bicycle safety; and public transportation access in Moorland.43 There is a general "Action Plan" with a matrix that outlines suggested strategies to accomplish the goals and the government agency or organization that could be involved in implementing that item (as shown in Figure 4.7).44 Unfortunately, the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD)—an agency that would be involved with implementation of many items in the plan—had no involvement with the process. Amy Lyle, a Planner III at PRMD said she knew the process was occurring and saw the final report, but was not consulted about the proposals. In reference to the Action Plan, she said “I think [the plan] actually listed who would be in charge of certain implementation measures. For instance, I know PRMD was listed on a lot of those, but we weren’t really contacted. So I’m sure there are other entities that it will be a surprise to them, too.”45 Lyle also mentioned another key barrier to implementation of the plan: it was never formally adopted, and is thus not binding, so she doubts it will be implemented.46

Kelly Elder, ever positive, is not worried about the fact that there was no implementation plan. She thinks the process will lead to implementation because “the benefit of doing this kind of work is that we shine the light on what needs to be done. So the implementation plan was to get a plan.”47 In Elder’s view,

44 Ibid., 14-18.
45 Amy Lyle (Planner II, Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department), interview by author, February 6, 2015.
46 Ibid.
47 Kelly Elder, interview by author, January 13, 2015.
even though the plan was not adopted, the ideas will become a priority and will attract investment from the county. "Now that there's something in place, a framework for investing, people are really eager to do that…So it isn’t for lack of interest that things don’t happen. It’s lack of organization, and it’s a lack of opportunity. So we’ve kind of created an opportunity for things to happen [in Moorland]."48 While Kelly Elder’s confidence is somewhat reassuring, she has an overblown faith in the power of the plan by believing it will implement itself. This is the type of planning fallacy that leads to a shelf full of unread plans whose ideas have never been realized.

It is irresponsible enter a community, motivate residents to envision a better future, and then leave them without any strategy for implementation or the capacity to work towards implementation themselves. It is even more frustrating to end a process without communicating to participants that implementation of their ideas is unlikely, or will take a long time. This leads to the type of “waiting” that Esther Lemus described earlier, as is also exemplified in a sad anecdote Esther told me about her expectations:

“The other day, I was at a stop sign at Moorland and Bellevue. We asked for stoplights there, because during the work hours it’s very hard to get out onto Bellevue. And I saw a big sign and a flag, and I thought, ‘Oh wow! They’re going to be working on our stop lights!’ And then I drove a little bit more and it was PG&E [the utility company] working on something else, and I thought, ‘ohhhh.’ So that was discouraging.”49

The frustrating aspect of this story is not just that the ideas haven’t been implemented, it is that Esther has had no communication with anyone from the County that would allow her to know whether or not the ideas are going to be implemented—she expects implementation to be a surprise because the County has not conducted any follow-up since the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process ended. It is equally frustrating that she has no concept of how long the implementation process takes, and when it is reasonable to expect a streetlight to be installed. After the grant-funded process ended in September, the County and CAP did not communicate with the Neighborhood Action Team until January.50 When they finally decided to conduct a “follow-up” meeting at the end of January, only three participants showed up.51 The lack of follow-through, communication, and implementation drove participants away.

4. Lack of Design and its Impact on Critical Consciousness?

The last component of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process I will discuss is the fact that the process did

48 Ibid.

49 Esther Lemus, interview by author, January 20, 2015.


51 Kelly Elder, email correspondence with author, January 23, 2015
not include design. Scott Wilkinson at the Regional Parks Department, who is trained a landscape architect, believes this omission was due to limited funding, limited scope, and short time frame of the process.  

He also said he thought the project was “interpreted more as a community planning process rather than a community design process.” This is an interesting distinction, and reflects the issue I raised in Chapter 1 that participatory planning processes do not use design as a tool for engagement. I argue that a line should not exist between community planning and community design: design should be a fundamental component of community planning processes.

Wilkinson said he had hoped design would be a part of the final product because graphics would have more clearly conveyed the ideas, and they may have helped decision-makers think about implementation strategies, as opposed to a laundry list of community priorities. He said, “You have this list, and near the top of the list is, ‘we’d like sidewalks and safe crossings.’ Well then, let’s talk about where to actually put that, for one, and what that would actually look like. And then you could actually get real costs together of what it would take to improve an intersection. That would be more useful than a list.” This speaks to my rationale for the importance of design in any community process: visual representation is a powerful tool for communication and engagement when discussing ideas in the built environment. Wilkinson said he thought the Health Services and Parks Departments would have made a more powerful presentation to the County Board of Supervisors if there had been design elements in the final product. This is not to say that Wilkinson envisioned a process in which participants actually contributed to the design, but it does reflect the importance of visual representation in a community process.

One reason I believe design was omitted in this process is that design is seen as a luxury for wealthier communities. Moorland is struggling with issues of crime, poverty, and lack of infrastructure, so the argument follows that they don’t ‘need’ to think about design or aesthetics because they have more pressing issues. I argue design is critical for community

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52 Scott Wilkinson, interview by author, January 20, 2015.

53 Ibid.
processes in marginalized communities because it fosters creativity and allows visions of a different future to emerge. In fact, design may be feared in processes within marginalized communities precisely because of the liberatory and visionary effect it has. Scott Wilkinson himself indicated this fear upon further consideration of whether or not design should have been a component of the Moorland process. During our conversation, he sorted through the pros and cons of design in community processes, finally concluding,

“If you show them a nice vignette, three dimensional stuff, people absolutely relate to that stuff. Now, on the flip side of that, would that give them too much hope that it would actually happen? There’s that side of it too. It’s like, ‘where’s our beautiful, bucolic, shade-lined boulevard?’ you know? Well, talk to us in several years, because there’s a whole lot of issues that are going to hold that up from happening anytime soon.”

So despite the fact that Wilkinson believes design could have made the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan more powerful and effective, he did not want the community to expect their vision to become a reality.

The deliberate suppression of expectations is a way to avoid awakening a critical consciousness in residents. By not allowing community members to envision a different future. The status quo and existing power structures that have created their marginalization and oppression to begin with remain safely in tact. Despite the fact that DHS and the Regional Parks Department intended to address equity issues through the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, they were unwilling to do so in a way that upset the power balance or unveiled the potential for systemic change in the area. The process did not achieve Paolo Freire’s notions of “revolutionary leadership” in which leaders and people unveil their reality and examine it critically together to envision a new future. The avoidance of design inhibited the possibility of critical consciousness and broader social change.

CONCLUSION
All of the factors I discussed in this chapter—a lack of capacity building, diverting discussions about annexation implementation, and avoiding design and critical consciousness—created a process that led to very little neighborhood change in Moorland. It also led to frustration and disillusionment amongst participants in the process and an inability to continue working for community improvements. In the next chapter I will explain how I conducted a process in Southwest Santa Rosa based on a different model of participation, one that used design as a central tool for engagement, and focused on building capacity and awakening critical consciousness.


54 Ibid.
CHAPTER 5. TESTING A NEW MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT: ELSIE ALLEN HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

This chapter provides a detailed description of the participatory design process I conducted with the Elsie Allen High School students, using narratives of from their writing during the process. In the first three weeks I spent with the students, Ms. DeCarbo asked them to write reflection essays after each session. This idea was initially intended to help her tie the sessions into her English curriculum, but the essays proved to be a useful source of information for me during and after the process. In the following pages, I use the students’ reflection essays to describe each session, and examine the impact of the activities on the students. I begin by explaining how I gained access to the Elsie Allen students in order to conduct my process, and then describe each workshop with the students in detail, with quotes from their essays to structure my narrative.

INITIAL ROADBLOCKS

When I approached Sonoma County planners about my continued involvement on the Moorland project, they were hesitant to for me to continue working with the Neighborhood Advisory Team. They feared that my contact with the community, particularly if I added design into the process, would “raise the community’s expectations” in an unrealistic way.¹ This echoes Scott Wilkinson’s statements in the previous chapter about suppressing residents’ expectations, and proved that the goal of the County’s community planning process “raised the community’s expectations” for change in a much more detrimental way than my continued involvement would have. Regardless, I was not able to gain access to the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team, and needed to think about working with the community in a different way.

A high school English teacher at the nearby Elsie Allen High School, Lisa DeCarbo, attended the summer Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process meetings with some of her students. I contacted her to discuss her experience with the process, and to gauge her interest in continuing to work on urban planning issues with her students. She was enthusiastic, and we coordinated a series of three, two-hour

¹ Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, conversation with author, September, 2014.
visioning sessions in two of her classes over the month of January. We also established an expectation that I would continue to work with any students who were interested throughout the rest of the semester. I am incredibly lucky to have found a community partner in Ms. DeCarbo: she has been deeply involved in community organizing and community-building work in the Southwest Santa Rosa area for years, focusing on bridging connections between the school, her students, and the broader community. She also incorporates issues of social justice and political awareness into her English and Language curriculum. This type of community partner who already has built relationships and trust within the community is essential to a successful community process.2

Elsie Allen High School Process

Visioning Session 1: Mapping Perceptions of Safety

In this session, my goal was to familiarize myself with the students, gain an understanding about their feelings on their neighborhood, and discuss unincorporated status. I began with an activity in which the students mapped their route from home to school and marked places where they feel safe, unsafe, and places they avoid entirely. I then asked them to draw and describe some of these places, and think about why they felt the way they did in these environments (Samples of the students’ worksheets can be found in Appendix B). One of the students noted in his post-session reflection that listening to his classmates’ perceptions of safety had opened his eyes:

“I began seeing a pattern in the areas that people considered safe and unsafe. The safe areas had good lighting, safe sidewalks, and sometimes a park. These areas were well-maintained and within the city of Santa Rosa. Most of the unsafe areas don’t have good lighting and sidewalks, have gangs, and were usually in unincorporated areas.”3

These answers were unsurprising, but the students’ reflections after only one session revealed the power that can result from seeing common experiences amongst neighbors and classmates. One student wrote, “There is a better chance to make a positive community when you know that someone believes in the same thing as you.”4

The second half of the workshop was dedicated to learning about urban planning, including the physical, political, and social differences between unincorporated areas and areas within the Santa Rosa City limits. I gave each student an urban planning and design vocabulary list, with technical terms such

2 Lisa DeCarbo, Interview by author, January 2015.
3 Student reflection, January 8, 2015
4 Student reflection, January 8, 2015
YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

1. On the map below, draw the route you take from your home to school.
2. Use the legend symbols to label places on your route where you feel safe/happy, unsafe/unhappy, and a place you avoid entirely.
3. On the back of the page, use the space provided to illustrate some of the places you labeled on your map.

Figure 5.1: Images of students’ work from Visioning Session 1. A map of safety perceptions, and drawings of a safe place (top right) and an unsafe place (bottom right).
as “jurisdiction,” “annexation,” “infrastructure,” “streetscape,” “land use,” etc. (a full list of the vocabulary terms is in Appendix B). After reviewing the vocabulary words, I asked students to put stickers on a large map of Southwest Santa Rosa, marking where they live, and we looked at the city limit together. Elsie Allen High School sits on the border of Santa Rosa boundary, and many students did not know they lived outside the city limit. This surprised me: I had been so entrenched in thinking about planning challenges in unincorporated communities that I assumed residents experiencing these challenges were aware of the causes. This realization was an important reminder that people don’t live in the bureaucratic world of maps and lines—they live in their community and experience everyday life. When they drive on their unpaved road, they do not think about the jurisdiction that should improve it. They perceive their environment, and unless someone makes them aware of the reasons their neighborhood looks a certain way, there is no reason for them to acknowledge the bizarre city boundary Santa Rosa planners have created. It also underscores the way that unincorporated marginalization is not an obvious or visible form of oppression. Planners have taken part in reinforcing the marginalization of these communities by making the exclusion difficult to see and understand. Design and visual communication, then, are a way to transcend the complexities of these regulatory abstractions.

After the unincorporated mapping activity, we played a “Step Forward If” game, as explained in Chapter 2, in which I asked students to step forward if they enjoyed certain amenities in their neighborhoods, such as parks, sidewalks, community centers, grocery stores, street lights, etc. The goal of the game was to visually display the amount of inequity in the room: at the end of the game, the students who lived within Santa Rosa were at the front of the room, and towards the back of the room were residents of...
unincorporated areas. The students were startled at the injustice they saw within their own classroom, that some of their classmates do not have access to the same services and community amenities as others. One of the most important aspects of community-based planning and design in unincorporated areas is this initial step of making residents aware of city/county jurisdictions, annexation, and the reasons for the disparities unincorporated residents experience on a daily basis. One student who lives on Moorland Avenue, Amandeep, wrote a reflection that illustrates the power of this understanding, and shows the emergence of a critical consciousness from the process:

“Growing up in Moorland [Avenue] since the age of five, these problems were all normal to me, and getting older I soon became aware of the injustices. However, I did not know that the reasoning behind it was because Moorland is not actually part of the city. Learning this is quite frustrating, especially knowing that a few people high up in the local city government could have just annexed Moorland, and in doing so the livelihood and wellbeing of children and families would have been much greater. This motivates me to act, and if the benefit isn’t for myself, it will be for the future generations of residents in my neighborhood.”

Amandeep is starting to see the inequity rooted in his community’s condition, which is an important step in raising critical consciousness. However, this quote shows he has not yet transitioned to the ultimate goal of critical consciousness, which is to understand the link between one’s own individual (or community) marginalization and the broader systems of oppression that have created that marginalization. Amandeep is correct that Moorland’s unincorporated status has created many problems in the neighborhood. However, he is not correct in assuming that annexation of Moorland would instantly improve his community or its marginalization. The actual driver of Moorland’s marginalization is institutional racism and exclusionary planning practices. These larger structural issues are the foundation of Moorland unincorporated status, and thus the cause of the problems associated with that status. Amandeep is making steps towards raising his critical consciousness and thinking about structural change, but the process takes time, and we need to continue thinking about the issues together.

Visioning Session 2: Imagining Ideals and Budgeting for Betterment

In this session, the goal was for students to tap into their most creative ideas by imagining their perfect neighborhood, and then harness that creativity towards more realistic ideas in a budgeting game. In the first activity, I asked students to draw their ideal communities, and at first they struggled to move beyond “practicality” and think of ideas outside the box. Eventually, they started to draw
ideas like teleportation devices instead of cars, rooftop pools on every house, and universal free wifi. I was impressed by many students’ creative ideas for environmental sustainability. One student explained that in her ideal community, everybody’s house would have solar panels, and energy would be pooled together to power a community theater. Another student explained that the sidewalks and roads in her community would made of solar collectors, and all the homes would have green roofs and rainwater collection tubs. A third student explained that he wanted a community with a “human-nature connection,” communal living, and sustainable farming for healthy foods. (Additional samples of student drawings can be found in Appendix B). Their ideas reflect the changing societal emphasis on the environment and climate change, and I should have expected this focus in their work. My surprise at these ideas is indicative of my assumptions about the students based on their age, race and class. This is something I will discuss more in subsequent chapters.

The second half of the session was spent playing the budgeting game I described in Chapter 2. I divided the students into four groups based on where they live. There were two unincorporated groups and two groups within the City of Santa Rosa. One unincorporated group focused on the Moorland Avenue area, and the other focused on Roseland. The
incorporated groups focused on the area directly around Elsie Allen High School, and an area above Highway 12. I gave each group a map of their neighborhood planning area (See Appendix B), and cards with different price-point items on them, such as “bench,” “street lights,” etc. These items each fit into one of six categories: businesses, design, community uses, parks/open space, infrastructure/pedestrian safety, and public safety. These six categories were derived from the previous session’s discussion about the types of places that made the students feel safe versus unsafe, so the topics were directly related to their ideas and perceptions of the community. Each group was then given a budget of $1 million dollars, and as a team, they prioritized their top three planning categories, on which they were to spend $700,000. The remaining $300,000 could be allocated as they wished. In addition, I asked them to identify existing neighborhood asset sites with stars. If they placed any cards on existing assets, they received an additional $5,000 to spend. This “asset rule” was intended to emphasize the importance of building on existing assets to get the most out of the improvement money spent. An interesting point to note is that the Moorland group could not identify any existing assets.

In preparing for this activity, I worried that budgeting would be complicated and frustrating. I wanted the students to gain a sense of how to deal with real world constraints, but I did not want the activity to be uninspiring or make them feel hopeless. Fortunately, they reminded me yet again that I should not assume planning ideas are beyond the comprehension of teenagers, and that if I give community members an opportunity to think about serious neighborhood issues, even with budgetary constraints, they will identify creative and realistic solutions that serve their needs. The students worked together and problem-solved; they argued with each other and came to agreement about what to prioritize. In the end, they created compelling plans to improve their communities.

Figure 5.4: Sample cards from the budgeting game activity in Visioning Session 2. (A full set of cards can be found in Appendix B).
One thing I had not expected was the students’ ability to translate what they had learned in the first session about city and county jurisdiction into this budgeting activity. The jurisdictional status of their respective neighborhood planning areas affected they types of improvements they proposed, and the students were aware of these distinctions. One student, Sergio, wrote in his post-session reflection, “Since we are an incorporated area, the city has already helped us out, so we used the million dollars to improve the community with exciting and fun things, like fountains and sculptures in parks, and a bowling alley.” The unincorporated groups focused much more on basic needs such as road-paving, sidewalks, streetlights, and healthy food options. This perhaps should have been an obvious outcome to me, based on my knowledge of the physical and social discrepancies between the neighborhoods, but I had not expected the sharp distinction between the ideas generated by unincorporated versus incorporated communities, nor did I expect the students to so quickly synthesize this political understanding.

An important element of this workshop was the creative and visual thinking it enabled. Instead of simply talking about what the communities needed, the activity helped the students think more constructively and realistically about tangible and location-specific ideas to improve their communities. One student wrote

6 Student reflection, January 15, 2015

Figure 5.5: (Top) Students working with their neighborhood group during the budgeting game. (Bottom) Students presenting their planning proposals
in her post-session reflection, “Learning I live in an unincorporated area and that it factors into my neighborhood not having necessary utilities and resources is one thing, but thinking about how to fix it by planning and renovating makes me want to do something about it.”

Several groups took strong strategic approaches to their neighborhood plans by intentionally clustering their improvements in a specific area. One student, Erick, explained, “We decided to put a lot of things in one area and fix it up for two reasons: one being that after making that area nice, improvements in other areas will follow; and the second reason being so that more people can come together for different activities in a central place, and the area will not be seen as unsafe.” The students were thinking in similar ways as formally trained planners because the students have expertise on their neighborhood needs, and can think critically about how to best use the available space in the area. These young people simply needed a creative outlet to use their community knowledge and work through complicated planning issues together.

**Visioning Session 3: The Language of Design: Model Building and Community Change**

In this final visioning session, the main activity of the day was for the students to build physical models of their ideas. During the previous session’s budgeting activity, students created an overall planning framework for their neighborhoods on a large scale. For this session’s model-building project, they chose specific sites to focus on at a smaller scale. As you will see, they began to think strategically and in deep detail about the function and design of their sites.

Before we engaged in the model-building activity, I discussed practical planning issues, including the slow pace of implementation in bureaucracies, and the importance of neighborhood advocacy in implementing ideas. This brief conversation was an important piece of capacity building so students could understand the barriers to implementation they face. I had been frustrated by the County’s attempts to lower Moorland residents’ expectations for change, but I also acknowledge the importance of creating a realistic perspective on government planning processes, and ensuring that community members understand the length of implementation. I gave each student a list of government agencies in both the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County with contact information and websites (See Appendix B). This information excited Ms. DeCarbo, and after the sessions, she worked with the students on an advocacy project in which the students reached out to each

7 Student reflection, January 15, 2015
8 Student reflection, January 15, 2015
of the government agencies. Access to information is an important step towards empowerment and change. The students already understood more than most residents about their political situation, jurisdiction, and annexation; their advocacy to government agencies will demonstrate that residents are aware of neighborhood issues and working for improvements.

After this political discussion, we began the model-building activity. I gave each group a foam-core model base with a map of their specific site glued on top, and a range of model-building materials, including pieces of wood, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, clay, turf material, dried moss, and more. I wanted the students to be creative in representing their ideas, and they took to the challenge. They made light posts out of pipe cleaners and pompoms; they built a skate park with a half pipe out of foam; they even made taco trucks out of little pieces of wood. A few students went outside and gathered twigs to make tree trunks.

After the students finished the models, each group presented their ideas to the class. Their work displayed creativity and clear representational skills, as well as astuteness in the programming of their sites. They considered the different ways uses interact with each other to make a space more vibrant. One group put a homeless shelter next to a local business and job-training center. As Louis, one of the students in this group, explained, “We put it right next to the shelter so that some of the people in the shelter can have an opportunity to find a job and get

Figure 5.6: Students working on their models during Visioning Session 3.
a head start to getting back on their feet.”

This same group situated a daycare next to a community farm “not only so the daycare kids can learn to plant and farm, but also because it is near the intersection so a lot of people can come and plant and work together.”

Another group built a youth recreation center next to a community center with classes for adults “where people can go learn art, maybe mechanics, or languages.” As they explained: “We thought this was a good idea because a parent could go take a class while a kid is taking a sport next door.”

This group also added a bus stop because “it makes the whole area more accessible. You have to try to make it easy to go, because if people can’t get there it kind of defeats the purpose.”

Similar to the budgeting game, the students displayed a deep understanding of their neighborhoods, which translated into thoughtful, strategic, and feasible planning ideas.

As I saw the students working together and putting energy into this project, I witnessed first-hand the importance of incorporating design into a community process. Design unlocked creativity in the students and enabled them to see a different reality for their community. The technical planning terms I taught the students are useful in understanding the field, but the real language they learned was design and visual representation. The act of building and creating enabled the students to identify specific ideas for their community and to think about how those ideas could be

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9 Student presentations (recorded), January 22, 2015.
10 Ibid.
11 Student presentations (recorded), January 22, 2015.
12 Ibid.
13 Student presentations (recorded), January 22, 2015.

Figure 5.4: Final models and student presentations during Visioning Session 3.
organized spatially. This outcome is more powerful in a participatory process than a laundry list of community priorities with no true vision. The high school students were able to think about compatibility and synergy of uses, and thus their ideas were more feasible. They will be able to present a stronger and clearer argument to decision-makers when advocating for implementation. As you will see in the next sections, Ms. DeCarbo organized an event in which the students displayed their models to community members, city and county planners, and elected officials. This idea came to her in the middle of the students’ presentations when she saw how powerfully and effectively they had conveyed their ideas. Young people are rarely asked what they want to see in their community, so if nobody asks, they can show us instead.

**ONGOING INVOLVEMENT DURING THE SEMESTER**

After the three workshops in January, Ms. DeCarbo gave her students the opportunity to continue working with me throughout the semester. Twelve students volunteered to stay involved in various ways. Eight students contributed to a CoLab Radio Blog series with reflections about what they learned during the three-week process. All twelve students revised and finalized their models, spending time during their spring break at a work session together in Ms. DeCarbo’s classroom. An additional three students are now involved with various Sonoma County committees, such as the Roseland Annexation Advisory Committee, and the Roseland Village Development Committee. These three students also created educational materials about annexation and unincorporated status to share with their neighbors and foster greater community awareness about the issues. Finally, on April 10th we hosted an open house event where the students showcased their work to elected officials, city and county planners, and community members. Below, I will outline each of these forms of ongoing engagement in detail.

**CoLab Radio Blog Post:**

I wrote a series of blog posts for CoLab Radio, chronicling my participatory design process with the students (the full series can be found in Appendix B). I felt it was important for the students to have an opportunity to provide their own voice on the blog as well, so I asked for volunteers to write reflections on what they learned during the three sessions, to be published on CoLab Radio’s website. More students than I expected volunteered to write, so in order for the post to meet the length requirements for the post, I selected quotes from their reflections, organized around themes. The themes that arose from their posts were: education about urban planning...
and design; understanding inequity; the importance of collaboration; and feeling like they can make a difference. As you will see in the next chapter, these themes are similar to the ideas that resulted from the survey I administered of students after the process. The fact that these ideas emerge from the students repeatedly in different formats reiterates the importance of incorporating education, capacity building, and an understanding of broader social issues into community-based processes.

**Ongoing Model-Making**

It was evident the students were most enthusiastic about the model-making activity because all of the students chose to focus on improving and revising their models. These twelve students comprised three groups: two from unincorporated areas (Moorland and Roseland), and one from an area within the City of Santa Rosa (above Santa Rosa Creek). The ultimate goal was for students to present the models to City and County planners, elected officials, and community members at an Open House event in April, and I worked with the students to meet this deadline.

During the ongoing model-making process, the students communicated with me via email to discuss various changes and new ideas they generated for their project sites. I sent them diagrams and renderings based on their ideas and received feedback and to ensure I represented their ideas properly. This was not an ideal way to communicate about the design process; it would have been more efficient (and likely more collaborative and effective) if I had been able to meet with each group face-to-face to discuss their ideas. But given the limitations of proximity, the process worked well, and included multiple design iterations and discussions about different ideas and changes.

The iterative process with the students was important for my own critical self-reflection, and made me examine my role in the process as an outsider. Was it my responsibility to simply represent their ideas visually, or did I have a voice in the process as a trained professional? At one point, the Moorland group sent me revisions to a framework diagram I had made. In these revisions, they had decided to put a library in a place where existing homes were located. The site would have been a good place for a library, but it is unfeasible to think that homes would be demolished and replaced with a library in this neighborhood, and there could be negative political push-back if the students presented the removal of residences as part of their plans.

I decided that my role in this process was to be an educator and capacity-builder, and this included explaining the political nature of presenting planning
ideas. I wrote this group an email explaining why people might be upset by the proposal to replace homes with a library, and also noted that they could still propose their idea, but they should have strong justifications for why this was the best location for a library. They emailed back and forth with each other (and me) to discuss their options, and decided to relocate the library to an old warehouse site. It could be argued that I pushed them in this direction, but I think it is important to recognize the value of an outside, trained practitioner in participatory processes. Community-based design does not mean that every idea a community member identifies is inherently right. Community-based design is a process that builds capacity and allows community members to learn skills (including feasibility and the potential political consequences) that will create neighborhood change. My role as the “outside expert” in this case was to explain the potential outcomes of proposing a library on the site of existing homes, and to let the students work together to identify the solution they thought was best. In a later section, I will describe each of the groups’ proposals in detail.

**Participation in Citizens’ Committees:**

Three students from the Roseland group wanted to broaden their participation and engagement into the community. They decided to join the Roseland Annexation Advisory Committee and the Roseland Village Redevelopment Committee. The Annexation Advisory Committee is working with both the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County to provide feedback on the current Roseland Annexation process. The Roseland Village Redevelopment Committee is planning to develop the same site on which the Roseland students built their model. The students were excited to learn of the development project because it showed the legitimacy of their site selection and ideas. Some of the ideas discussed by the Roseland Village Redevelopment Committee included similarities to the students’ proposal, such as a library and green space.

The students who are involved with the annexation advisory committee were also interested in starting an educational campaign in their neighborhoods to generate broader community awareness about annexation and disparities facing unincorporated areas. These students were unaware that they lived in unincorporated areas before the January process, and they noted that many of their neighbors are unaware as well. They are working to create pamphlets that will explain the basic issues, and plan to distribute the pamphlets to their neighbors in the hope that others will join committees and get involved as well.
FINAL PRODUCTS

In this section I will describe the final products that were presented at the Open House. This includes the students' models as well as my representations of their ideas. I will also describe the format of the event and the reaction from both students and adults who participated in the Open House. For each group I created aerial representations and perspectives based on their physical models. The “cartoonish” aesthetic of my representations was intended to convey a sense of playfulness through the drawings, but also to emphasize that the designs are not finalized and polished, but are instead open ideas intended to spur dialogue. The quotes on each of the drawings are directly from the students’ explanations of their proposals. This form of communication was effective at the open house, and students used both their physical models and my renderings to convey the ideas to the adults.

Moorland Avenue Proposal (Unincorporated):

Four students worked on the design proposal for the Moorland Avenue area. This group collaborated well and had the most iterative process out of the three groups. Their ideas changed as they worked on their model and communicated with me throughout the semester. Their overall concept was to create a community hub with a concentration of activity at the main intersection of the neighborhood: Moorland Avenue and West Robles Avenue. They included a park in the vacant lot at the northwest corner of Moorland and Robles as a memorial to Andy Lopez. Along the same side of Robles to the west of the park, the students proposed a farmers market.
Figure 5.6: Students working on the Moorland Avenue area envision a new community hub with active open spaces, community facilities, affordable housing, and improved senior housing. They also emphasize the importance of pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks, street lights, a walking trail, and crosswalks.
because the only nearby food store is “Berry's Market,” which, they explained, is mainly a liquor store. Across Robles Avenue, on the site of an old warehouse building and vacant lot, the students proposed a recreation center and a community training center. The goal behind these adjacent community uses is to provide a place for young people to play sports and participate in organized activities next to a location where parents can learn skills and take classes. Behind the farmers market, adjacent to existing houses, the students proposed an affordable housing development for families. They explained that additional affordable housing is needed in the neighborhood, and this would be a good location because it overlooks a park and is near other new community amenities.

Finally, the students noticed the proximity of their proposal to an existing senior housing facility, and decided to expand and improve this facility. They proposed to increase it to two floors of housing, and to create a courtyard and fountain with seating for the senior residents to use on site.

The group also emphasized the importance of adding streetlights and crosswalks along both Moorland Avenue, Horizon Way, and West Robles Avenue to increase pedestrian safety and reduce gang violence. By fostering activity on the street and making pedestrians feel comfortable both during the day and at night, this group hoped that crime would decrease in the area. Without realizing it, these students applied Jane Jacobs’ notion of “eyes on the street” in their design, with the hope of reducing crime and violence in their neighborhood.


**Roseland Sebastopol Road Proposal (Unincorporated):**

The Roseland area group chose a site along Sebastopol Road where a grocery store and large surface parking lot has been sitting vacant for years. This also happens to be the site of the proposed “Roseland Village Redevelopment Project,” which is currently undergoing a public process by the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC). Two of students in the Roseland group joined this public committee to participate in the Sonoma CDC process, which informed some of their site ideas. On the grocery store and parking lot site, the students proposed a small Sonoma County branch library. This library would specifically cater to teens by including large computer labs, and providing access to study rooms for young people to meet and work together. One of the students explained that many teens live with large families and it is difficult to find quiet space to study, so a community space like this would provide significant benefit to young people in the area.
Figure 5.8: Students envision improvements and additions near Roseland Elementary School, including a daycare facility and an educational community garden. On the northern side of Sebastopol, they propose a small teen library. They also envision a bowling alley and a small park near an upgraded Joe Rodota Trail. These amenities will provide both outdoor and indoor spaces for teenagers to spend time.
At the northern edge of the site runs the Joe Rodota Trail, which leads to several regional parks. The students proposed improvements to the trail, and also added a small green space with a sitting area that creates a gateway from the trail into their development site. This small green space is located on an empty patch of land next to the former grocery store. The students noticed people using this patch of land as a cut-through from the Joe Rodota Trail to Sebastopol Road, and thus decided to turn it into a small park with landscaping and benches. Also along Joe Rodota trail, the students proposed to renovate the vacant grocery store into a bowling alley. This large shopping center was the site of a bowling alley several years ago, but it shut down and currently the nearest bowling alley is in Rohnert Park, which is half an hour away. It should be noted that two of the student groups proposed bowling alleys on their sites, indicating a need for additional recreation space for teens.

Across the street from the proposed library and bowling alley is Roseland Elementary School. Behind the school is an old building that used to be a small medical clinic. The students proposed renovating the clinic into a daycare, and constructing an educational community garden between the daycare and Roseland Elementary. The thinking behind this proposal was to create a shared space where both young children and school-age children can learn about gardening and food production together. The students also explained that this would be convenient because many of the daycare children will have older siblings at the elementary school, so parents would be able take them to one location during the day. Similar to the Moorland group, this team also identified locations for additional crosswalks and pedestrian safety measures.
Santa Rosa Creek Proposal (Incorporated):
The third group worked on a site within the Santa Rosa city limits near an existing large sports park called “A Place to Play.” This site is directly north of Santa Rosa Creek and is currently a large plot of unused land adjacent to a reservoir used by the Santa Rosa Utilities Department. The main concept for this group’s proposal was create a development that would draw people across the creek and provide uses that are compatible with and enhance A Place to Play Park. They proposed a small park and playground on the southern edge of the site along the creek. Their reasoning for the playground is that A Place to Play is primarily comprised of sports fields, so this area would provide younger children with recreational opportunities as well. North of the small park, adjacent to the reservoir, the students proposed a large plaza and fountain lined with various types of retail and commercial uses. The retail uses ranged from cafes and pop-up stores, to a big-box retail store. They also proposed a bowling alley to provide teenagers with an indoor form of recreation at the site. This group was less concerned with providing community facilities and pedestrian improvements, and more focused on connecting open space with commercial uses.

Figure 5.10: The final model for the Santa Rosa Creek group after a semester of work.
Figure 5.9: Students in the Santa Rosa Creek group chose to focus on the area between A Place to Play Park and the Santa Rosa reservoir. They created a new park and playground, and enhanced the existing creek with a beautiful new walking trail. They also envision a commercial plaza where nearby residents and park visitors can shop, bowl, eat, and sit by the fountain. The plaza creates a place for teenagers to hang out, study, and meet up with friends.
URBAN PLANNING OPEN HOUSE AT ELsie Allen HIGH SCHOOL
Lisa DeCarbo organized the open house event to provide the students with a broader audience to present their work to community members, elected officials, and various government employees. The event was held on April 10, 2015. Lisa conducted most of the outreach for this event because she has strong connections and contacts throughout the area. I also included invitations for the specific people I interviewed for this project.

I traveled back to Santa Rosa for the event to support the students as they presented their ideas, to present my own representations of the students’ work and the maps I had created, and also to see the reaction of adults and decision-makers in the community. The day before the event, I met with the students to discuss what they learned through the semester-long process, and to help them put the finishing touches on their models and practice their presentations. I also conducted an activity with them on data visualization with maps of crime and safety I had created (which I will discuss in the next chapter).

The Open House was an incredible success, with over 40 people in attendance. In addition to many community members of both the Moorland and Roseland communities, elected officials and planners from both the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County attended. The students spoke clearly and enthusiastically about their projects, and received a lot of positive feedback. County Supervisor Efren Carrillo, who represents the Southwest Santa Rosa area, and is a strong supporter of annexation, attended the event and asked the students to present their models at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting. Several Santa Rosa City Councilors requested student

Figure 5.8: Students presenting to the Santa Rosa City Manager and a Santa Rosa City Planner at the Elsie Allen Urban Planning Open House.
presentations at a City Council meeting as well. The students were thrilled by these invitations. The Santa Rosa City Manager, Chuck Regalia, also attended the event, as did several planners from the Sonoma County Community Development Department. Both these City and County planners requested copies of the maps and renderings I had made in order to support the case for annexation, and to have the students’ ideas on hand for future development projects (including the Roseland Village site).

In addition to the immense amount of positive feedback, the students also received important questions and criticisms from the adults. The students took this feedback in stride, and said they learned from their discussions with the adults. One student in the Roseland group was excited by a community member’s idea to include a cultural center near their library proposal. After the event, this student enthusiastically told me about different events a cultural center could connect with, including a Cinco de Mayo festival that already occurs on the site. He explained how important it is for young people to feel connected to their culture so they don’t join gangs, and said he wanted to add the cultural center to the model and to share this idea with the Roseland Village Development Committee. It speaks to the feasibility and thoughtfulness of the students’ ideas.

Figure 5.9: (Top) Students talking with County Supervisor Carrillo and a Moorland resident about their proposals. (Bottom) Student showing maps to Supervisor Carrillo and Deputy Director of the Sonoma County Community Development Department
that the adults felt comfortable providing critical feedback. Oftentimes adults trivialize young peoples’ ideas by avoiding negative comments. This stems from an assumption that youth are incapable of critical thinking or that their ‘feelings might be hurt’ if they receive criticism. But the adults gave both positive and negative feedback, and the students took the criticisms as new ways to enhance their ideas. This enabled the collaborative learning process to continue even as the finished models were being presented. As attendees left the event, we asked them to fill out a survey on their reactions to the students’ work, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

**CONCLUSION**

When I first started working on this thesis, I was unsure I would have access to any community members to conduct a participatory design process. However, my work with the high school students grew beyond what I could have expected. My partnership with Lisa DeCarbo was instrumental in enabling my work with the students and allowing me continue to communicate with them throughout the semester. This speaks to the importance of finding strong community partners when working as an outside consultant. Ms. DeCarbo also created an opportunity for the students to present their ideas on a larger stage to decision-makers in the community, which not only motivated us to work towards a deadline together, but also built the students’ capacity to speak with decision-makers, which is something I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.
In this chapter, I analyze the various forms of data, both quantitative and qualitative, I collected over the course of my research. I begin with an analysis of the students’ perceptions of safety from the data I collected in the first visioning session, and use this to justify the validity of young people as a source of information for community design processes. I then analyze the survey responses I received from students in January directly after the visioning sessions to gauge their immediate reactions to the first phase of the process, as well as the survey responses from adults after the Open House to gauge their reactions to the students’ work. Finally, I use this analysis to evaluate my process against the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood process using a three criteria rating system.

**Legitimacy of Youth Perceptions: Safety and Crime**

One could question the legitimacy of my dataset based on the fact that I worked solely with high school students, and that they are not a representative sample of the Southwest Santa Rosa community. This is a fair criticism, and I believe a genuine community-based process should engage a broader sample of the population in terms of age and demographics. However, these criticisms are rooted in the negative perceptions of teenagers I outlined in Chapter 1. Teenagers’ views are not considered legitimate, particularly with regards to political issues and decision-making. But in fact, based on the data I collected, the students proved to have astute perspectives on neighborhood issues, and were capable of discerning complicated problems rooted in the inequity of unincorporated areas.

One of the most important displays of youth-based community knowledge in my process related to the students’ perception of safety in their neighborhoods. As described in the previous chapter, the first activity I conducted with the students was one in which they mapped routes from home to school, and marked where they felt safe versus unsafe. I compiled this data into GIS, and once the data was entered, the places where students felt unsafe showed a strong correlation with the boundaries...
of Santa Rosa’s city limit (See Figure 6.1). The majority of perceived unsafe places were located in unincorporated areas, and the few places that were marked within Santa Rosa were generally parks that are dark at night. The conversation we had as a group after this initial mapping activity, as well as the students’ drawings of places where they feel unsafe, indicates that many characteristics of unincorporated areas make the students feel unsafe: lack of sidewalks, lack of street lights, gang activity, lack of police service, poorly maintained roads, and vacant lots.

This “Unsafe Map” on its own shows compelling evidence of inequity in unincorporated areas, but because of my limited sample size, I needed to compare it to outside data as well. Based on police blotter data, I created a map of reported crime in Southwest Santa Rosa from January to March of 2015 (See Figure 6.1). The map includes all incidents of police and sheriff patrol cars dispatched, from small minor offenses, to assaults and robberies. This map shows an undeniable correlation to the students’ map of unsafe places. The maps together display ‘hot spots’ of crime in the same places where students feel unsafe, and these areas are predominantly unincorporated.

It should be noted that there are some areas that do not overlap on the two maps; for instance, the area along Hearn Avenue in the Roseland Neighborhood is highlighted as an unsafe place, as is the stretch of Bellevue Avenue near Elsie Allen High School, but there are few reports of crime in these places. These discrepancies are at least partially based on the students’ definition of “unsafe places.” I did not ask the students to map perceptions of safety solely based on crime or gang activity; the safety perception map includes places where the students feel unsafe as pedestrians, such as roads without sidewalks.

These two maps not only present a strong depiction of inequity in terms of the safety in unincorporated areas, but they also legitimize my dataset. The students’ perceptions of safety in their community are in line with external data on crime reports. This validates my argument for inclusion of teenagers in planning and design processes, because they are keenly aware of their surroundings and are able to articulate their perceptions as they move through their environments. It is also important to acknowledge that young people are more likely to walk or bike around their neighborhoods than drive, which may give them greater insight into their surroundings than adults. I argue that data on perceptions of safety should be collected in any participatory design process with young people of color in order to think about the issues that caused the tragedy on Moorland Avenue over a year ago. Now that I have legitimized my dataset, I will move on to an analysis of the data collected from the students over the course of the semester.
Figure 6.1: A map of student perceptions of safety correlate strongly with reports of crime in the area.
STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS
After the three sessions ended, I sent Ms. DeCarbo a survey for the students to fill out on their experience with the process. My intent had been to compare this survey data with a set of surveys filled out by the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team, and compare the impact each process had on the participants. Unfortunately, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, there were not enough surveys filled out by the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process participants to provide comparable data. Despite the fact that I am unable to compare two sets of survey data, the student responses to the survey show important findings about the effect of the process on their perceptions of the community, the capacity built, and their awareness of larger social issues. Furthermore, the limited participation at the follow-up Moorland Healthy Neighborhood meeting in January (at which the NAT survey was to be administered) indicates the County’s failure to conduct a process that builds capacity and relationships in a sustainable way, and is thus a form of data in and of itself.

The Elsie Allen High School student survey included 4 quantitative questions in which the students rated their answers based on choices from 1-5. These questions asked about overall satisfaction with the process, the students’ confidence in their ability to make change, whether or not the ideas from the process address their neighborhood concerns, and whether or not their perception of their neighborhood changed during the process. The remaining six questions were open-ended responses, in which the students answered prompts about how their perception of their neighborhood changed, the best part of the process, additional support needed to implement their ideas, the most important thing they learned in the process, their hopes for next steps, and what they would have done differently in the process (a full version of the survey can be found in Appendix A). The answers showed strong themes throughout the responses, and I will highlight the main points in the following section. An infographic summarizing the survey results can also be found on the following page in Figure 6.2.

The four main themes I recognized in the survey responses were:

A) The Importance of the creative process
B) The importance of practical political knowledge and an awareness of structural inequity
C) Implementation and ability to make change together as a community
D) The need for more time in the process
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

"Being able to see our ideas come alive with our models"

"Learning why some parts of Santa Rosa have different resources than others"

"I learned how expensive even small things are, and how to prioritize improvements"

"I learned that politics and money can strongly affect the wellbeing, health, happy childhood, amount of violence, happiness of a childhood, amount of violence, lack of basic needs, and support in a neighborhood"

"I feel like if more people knew about this, they would want to join in and try to change their communities"

"I hope that some of use will take the torch and raise awareness of the possible changes and ideas created during this process"

"I need to be able to unite my neighborhood and bring everyone together in order to fix problems"

"We needed more time because I felt the urban planning and design process was very important yet we didn’t invest enough time in it"

Figure 6.2: Graphic representation of student survey results based on major themes from survey responses
A. Importance of the Creative Process:

The topic of creative activities emerged several times in response to the open-ended question about the best aspect of the process. Nearly one-third (32%) of responses to this question included language about visual, creative, and hands-on activities that allowed participants to visualize how their ideas could work in reality. Many of these responses specifically discussed the model-building activity. For example, one respondent wrote that the best aspect of the process was, “Being able to see our ideas come alive with our models.”

This speaks to the importance of giving community members an opportunity to literally construct their visions for the future. It not only gives them a sense of ownership over the ideas, but the ideas themselves are more realistic and feasible because they are forced to think spatially and practically.

B. Practical Political Knowledge and Awareness of Structural Inequity

Several of the open-ended questions elicited responses about the importance of learning political knowledge and understanding jurisdictional issues. The students’ reflection papers after each visioning session also confirmed this theme. Learning about unincorporated status transformed many students’ perceptions of their neighborhoods, and they started to understand the reasons unincorporated communities face inequities. One student responded that the best aspect of the process was “learning why some parts of Santa Rosa have different resources.” Twenty-eight percent of students responded that the best aspect of the process was learning about political processes, including the budgeting game. A game I had feared was too technical or boring, was a favored activity because it gave them a clearer understanding of how planning processes work and how they can think about change in their community. One student responded that the best aspect of the process was the budgeting game because the student “learned how expensive even small things are, and how to prioritize improvements.” Another responded that the best aspect of the process was “learning how our government goes through the process of deciding what to put in our cities and experiencing first hand the difficulty of planning out urban pricing.”

Along similar lines, in response to the question of the most important information students learned, 33% responded with language about understanding political and jurisdictional knowledge, and an additional 14% responded with ideas about understanding inequity and why certain places feel safer than others. One student responded that the most important thing

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1 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015

learned was “that politics and money can strongly affect the wellbeing, health, happiness of a childhood, amount of violence, lack of basic needs, and support in a neighborhood.” I cannot say that the participatory design process I conducted accounts this student’s overall political awareness, but it does indicate that the process made the student more aware of the specific influence of politics and institutional failings on the community. This is a powerful statement and speaks to the importance of critical consciousness-raising in a community process in order to motivate community change.

In response to the open-ended question about how students’ perceptions of their neighborhood changed as a result the process, answers varied more than in other questions, but 16% of respondents described that their neighborhood perception changed because they now understand the inequity between unincorporated neighborhoods and neighborhoods within the City of Santa Rosa. This came not only from students who live in unincorporated communities, but also from students within Santa Rosa who now appreciate the benefits their neighborhoods see due to its jurisdictional status. One student wrote that his or her perception changed by “Knowing that my neighborhood has more satisfying places because we are an incorporated area—we are part of the City.”

Another student wrote, “Every time I pass by a poorly maintained neighborhood, I try to figure out whether they are an unincorporated area.”

Granted, unincorporated status is not the sole cause of a poorly maintained neighborhood, but this quote shows the connections that students are starting to make between political issues and marginalization.

The same question about the way students’ perceptions changed elicited 32% of responses that indicated the process opened their eyes to the need for improvement in their neighborhoods. In many of these responses, the realization was accompanied by a sense of solidarity in knowing that other students felt similarly about their communities. One student wrote that his or her perception changed by knowing “that I’m not the only one who feels unsafe or insecure about where I live, and to know that makes my fears acceptable.”

I did not expect this kind of response to the question, but it raises an important issue in community-based processes that planners often take for granted: community members may not be aware that their neighbors share their concerns. Without a forum for residents to talk together about their community experience, this common ground and solidarity may not emerge. This speaks

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3 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015.
4 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015.
to the importance of face-to-face interactions, and further displays how a creative process unveils important social issues.

C. Implementation and the Ability to Make Change Together as a Community

The main frustration I heard from community members involved with the previous Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process was a lack of thought given to implementation or capacity building. For this reason, I was interested to see how the students who participated in the January process felt about their ability make change in their neighborhoods. One of the quantitative questions in the survey asked students to rank from 1-5 how well the process enabled them to make change in their neighborhood. Fifty-five percent of students responded with an answer of 4 out of 5: “I think I can make change.”

Beyond this straightforward quantitative answer, it is important to understand how the students think they can make change and what additional support they need. Student responses to several of the open-ended questions displayed the repeated theme of the “community working together.” In response to a question about their hopes for next steps in the process, 55% of students replied with an answer involving the community working together to implement ideas. An additional 11% explained that they want to spread the word throughout their community and share the information they learned with more residents. An critical aspect of these responses is that the students put the ownership of action and responsibility on themselves because they realize their own power to drive change.

One student responded, “I hope that some of us will take the torch and raise awareness of the possible changes and ideas created during this process.”

Similarly, in response to the question about the most important thing the students learned in the process, 31% answered that they learned they have the ability to make change together, and several students focused on the importance of youth in pushing transformation. One student wrote, “I learned that we, as tomorrow’s leaders, have to step up to the plate and focus on these issues to make our city and home safer.” Another responded, “If anyone is going to make a change, the younger generation should start and help spread the word about it.”

The theme of community ownership over the implementation process was also strongly emphasized in the open-ended question about what additional support the students need to implement their ideas. Fifty-seven percent responded with an answer about needing greater community awareness.

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6 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015
7 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015
8 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015
and involvement—a sharp contrast to the mere 8% of responses that mentioned the need for government support. I do not believe this discrepancy is based on a bias I imposed that government is not there to improve their neighborhoods—I gave the students a list of government agencies indicating who is responsible for different kinds of changes. I argue this overwhelming response for more community support is based on the fact that the students saw their own power to discuss problems and collaboratively identify solutions.

This is an improvement over the earlier Moorland Healthy Neighborhood process, in which community members did not feel it was within their power to push their ideas forward because they were “waiting” on the County to implement the plan. Instead of feeling a sense of helplessness and dependency on an external government agency to improve their neighborhood, the students believe they can do it themselves if they engage more community members and gain a larger base.

**D. The Need for More Time:**

It is important to note that when asked in an open-ended question about what students would have changed in the process, 62% responded with an answer related to the need for more time, both in the individual activities for each session and in the process overall. One student wrote, “We needed more time because I felt the urban planning and design process was very important yet we didn’t invest enough time in it.”

Similarly, several students wrote in response to the question about their hopes for next steps that they would like to have additional visioning sessions with me. Time constraints were also a limiting factor in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, so this is a limitation I was not able to improve upon.

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9 Student Survey Response, January 29, 2015

Lack of time in a process is often an unavoidable obstacle when working as an outside consultant in a community. In the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, the Sonoma County Health Services Department only had grant funding for a two-month long process. In the case of the process with Elsie Allen High School students, I was limited by my academic schedule. While time constraints are sometimes unavoidable, it does not change the fact that short processes can leave communities feeling neglected, frustrated, and even exploited. As one community member from the earlier Moorland process told me in an interview, “I wish [the County officials administering the process] would have stayed there longer, because it was going so well and we were beginning to understand it a little better, and then all of a sudden it just stops.”

10 Esther Lemus (Moorland Avenue resident), interview by author, January 20, 2015.
I hope that my continued involvement with the students over the course of the semester, and my trip back to Santa Rosa in April gave the students confidence that the project is not over, and that my support does not end when I turn in my thesis. However, I acknowledge that my limited time frame and the fact that I live across the country was not an optimal way to build confidence in a community-based process. Capacity building takes time, and as I will discuss later in this chapter, my process with the students was not long enough to build sufficient capacity for the students to continue working entirely on their own. But I intend to continue working on the project beyond the duration of this thesis, I expect the students to reach that level of capacity as the process continues. I believe the issue of time also speaks to the importance of having a strong and invested community partner who is embedded in the neighborhood. Lisa DeCarbo was my link into the community, and she provided continuous connection to the students throughout the semester. She is committed to the process, and will continue to be an in-person motivator for the students to work towards implementing their ideas.

OPEN HOUSE SURVEY RESULTS
As mentioned in the previous chapter, I conducted a survey of Open House attendees at the event in April. Not all attendees participated in the survey, but I received 38 survey responses from various attendees, including community members, elected officials, non-profit organizations, local educators, and City and County planners. As with the earlier survey of the students, I included a mix of both quantitative and open-ended questions. Four of the eleven questions were quantitative, asking respondents to rate their reactions on a scale from 1-5 about topics such as the likelihood of implementing the students’ ideas, and the likelihood of neighborhood change. The remaining seven questions were open-ended, asking respondents to answer questions such as the most important thing they learned from the students’ work, and whether or not their perception of the neighborhood changed (the full survey can be found in Appendix A). The goal of the survey was to gauge adult reactions of the students’ work: I wanted to understand the impact of the students’ ideas on decision-makers in the community. I used the same coding method for qualitative responses as I did with the student survey, and then looked for patterns in answers across the entire survey. I organized the responses around four main themes, and will discuss them in detail in the following sections. It is interesting to note that there are some similarities between the themes of the student survey and the adults’ survey. One key similarity is that both adults and students began to see the power of the youth voice in creating community
change, which, as I will discuss, indicates a shift towards Paolo Freire’s idea of liberation and critical consciousness. An infographic summarizing the key results of the survey can be found on the following page. The four themes around which I organized the Open House survey results are:

A) Belief in future change and a desire for continued involvement
B) Greater awareness of community issues, including perceptions of safety
C) The passion and enthusiasm of young people
D) Knowledge of young people and importance of including them in decision-making

A. Belief in future change and desire for continued involvement
A surprising theme that emerged from the Open House surveys was a sense of hopefulness and belief that the students’ ideas would come to fruition. Given the cynicism I heard from planners and residents about implementation of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan, I expected the reaction to students’ work to be appreciative, but not optimistic. This may indicate my personal biases toward planners and political actors, and my lack of faith in the political system. It might also exhibit my own subconscious lack of faith in the young peoples’ ideas. However, my assumptions were negated by number of adults who indicated that the students’ ideas are feasible. On the survey, I asked respondents to rate (on a scale from 1-5) the likeliness of implementation of the students’ ideas. Twenty percent of respondents rated a 5 out of 5 (“definitely”), 33% marked a 4 (“likely”), and 39% chose 3 (“it’s possible”). Another question on the survey asked the likelihood that the students’ work will lead to positive neighborhood change. An overwhelming 62% of respondents marked a 4 out of 5 ("I think it will lead to change"), and an additional 29% marked a 5 out of 5 (“Neighborhood change will definitely happen”).

These responses were accompanied by similarly optimistic answers to the qualitative questions as well. In addition to gaining greater awareness of community needs, many open house participants noted that they became aware of new opportunities for change. One question on the survey asked, “Did the students’ work change your perception of the neighborhood? If so, how?” In response to this question, 23% of open house attendees responded that the students’ work made them see new neighborhood opportunities. One respondent wrote, “Yes, I saw many opportunities for change that I never considered before.” Another explained, “Yes. We need to look at increasing library, bowling, and recreation opportunities, listening to our students.”

"Although I had a ‘big picture’ idea of the needs, I learned in much greater detail what the needs are and how they can be improved."

"I learned that where students feel safe versus unsafe..."

"The value of good ideas framed in knowledge of planning and love for the community"

"The youth voice is important, and gaining strength, and policy-makers need to be listening."

"I saw many opportunities for change that I never considered before."

"We need to look at increasing library, bowling, and recreation opportunities...We need to fund sidewalks to schools."

"The students have keen observation skills and great ideas for improving their community’s built environment."

"The students have a ‘big picture’ idea of the needs, I learned in much greater detail what the needs are and how they can be improved."

"I learned that where students feel safe matters and is worth paying attention to."

"The students’ awareness and enthusiasm for their work and the realization that they could be part of positive change."

"The students have knowledge of planning and the thought behind their ideas"

"The youth voice is important, and gaining strength, and policy-makers need to be listening."

"The value of good ideas framed in knowledge of planning and love for the community."

"The students have keen observation skills and great ideas for improving their community’s built environment.”

"The students have a ‘big picture’ idea of the needs, I learned in much greater detail what the needs are and how they can be improved."

"I learned that where students feel safe versus unsafe."

"The students’ awareness and enthusiasm for their work and the realization that they could be part of positive change."

"The value of good ideas framed in knowledge of planning and love for the community."

"The students have keen observation skills and great ideas for improving their community’s built environment.”

"The youth voice is important, and gaining strength, and policy-makers need to be listening.”
We need to fund sidewalks to schools.”\textsuperscript{12} This last comment includes specific ideas for change, and a sense determination to make those ideas happen.

The opportunity and determination displayed by open house attendees was also expressed by their commitment to continue to be involved in neighborhood issues. One question on the survey asked, “On a scale from 1-5, after seeing the students’ work, how likely are you to get involved with community issues and working for neighborhood change.” In response to this question, 64% of open house attendees marked a 5 out of 5 (“definitely”), and an additional 24% marked at 4 (“likely”). Admittedly, the sample population of this survey is comprised of people who chose to attend a community event at a high school, so the population may be skewed in favor of neighborhood involvement. However, several open house attendees provided their contact information, asked to be included in future events with the students, and requesting students’ participation at community events and meetings. Even if the students’ work did not motivate new people to engage in these issues, it connected young people with committed adults in the community in a way that can lead to change. In the previous section on students’ survey responses, I mentioned young peoples’ desire to spread their ideas more broadly and for wider community support. This event was the first step in achieving that goal.

B. Greater awareness of community issues, including perceptions of safety

Most of the adults who attended the Open House are involved in planning-related endeavors. I would have expected them to be aware of the issues facing unincorporated areas, but the survey responses indicated that they learned new information about community concerns at the open house. One thing that repeatedly arose in both the surveys and in my discussions with attendees at the open house was their surprise at the maps of students’ perceptions of safety and incidents of crime reports in Southwest Santa Rosa. In fact, both City and County planners requested that I send them copies of the maps because they present such a strong case for annexation. Seventeen percent of respondents said that the most important thing they learned at the open house was where students feel unsafe. One respondent wrote, “I learned that where students feel safe matters and is worth paying attention to.”\textsuperscript{13} The crime and safety maps not only legitimized my dataset for this thesis, but also legitimized young people as a valuable source of information in the eyes of decision-makers.

\textsuperscript{12} Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.

\textsuperscript{13} Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
open house attendees learned about broader neighborhood needs for each of the project areas as well. Some survey respondents commented on the specific ideas that were repeated amongst the different student groups, such as the need for library space, computer labs, and spaces for teenagers to spend time (such as bowling alleys and recreation centers). In response to the question of whether or not the students’ work changed the adults’ perception of the community, 48% responded that it gave them a greater and deeper awareness of the issues. One respondent said, “Although I had a ‘big picture’ idea of the needs, I learned in much greater detail what the needs are and how they can be improved.”  

C. Passion and Enthusiasm of Young People:  
Throughout the survey responses, as well as in my discussions with open house attendees, the theme of student enthusiasm was reiterated over and over again. The adults were surprised and excited by the level of engagement and enthusiasm the students brought to their work. The open house was structured as a drop-in event, so attendees arrived at various times during the two-hour time frame, and the students presented their ideas multiple times as new attendees arrived. Their excitement to discuss their ideas and gather feedback did not wane as the event proceeded. Several of the open-ended survey questions elicited responses related to the students’ passion for their projects. In response to the open-ended question, “What was the most important thing you learned from the students’ work?” nearly one-third (27%) of answers focused on the theme of the students’ enthusiasm for the work. I had not expected this type of response to a question about what participants learned; I had expected more responses about the specific types of improvements the students proposed. But it was clear that the adults did not expect to see such commitment from the teenagers. One respondent wrote about learning of “the students’ awareness and enthusiasm for their work and [realizing] that they could be part of positive change.”  

These adults held stereotypes of teenagers as being disengaged from civic life. It was important that they saw how passionate young people are about their communities when they are given a voice.  

Along similar lines, when survey participants were asked what they enjoyed most about the students’ work, 37% of respondents expressed  

14 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015  
15 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015
their enjoyment at seeing the students’ excitement, hard work and engagement. In response to a question about whether or not participants’ perceptions of the neighborhood changed, 13% wrote that their perception changed, not of their neighborhood, but of young people in seeing how much they care about the community. This perception shift was an unintended positive consequence of the process, and it demonstrated the pervasive stereotypes adults in the community hold of young people. As I think about engaging youth in planning processes more broadly, these results displayed the need to open adults’ eyes to the biases they hold. It reiterates Paulo Freire’s notions of liberation and awakening critical consciousness as an obligation of both the part of the oppressed and the oppressor: both teenagers and adults need to unveil the power of the youth voice.

D. Knowledge of Young People and the Importance of Including them in Decision-Making:

In addition to being surprised at the students’ level of engagement, survey participants also noted surprise at the level of knowledge and political awareness of displayed by students. This speaks to the lack of faith adults have in the ability of teenagers—particularly teenagers of color—to understand complex social and political issues. This theme also demonstrates that the semester-long process built capacity and enabled students to discuss planning issues with adults in the profession. In response to the question about the most important thing open house attendees learned, 24% of responses included language about the knowledge, creativity, and awareness of young people. One respondent described the students as “extremely well-informed,” and another wrote, “The students have keen observation skills and great ideas for improving their community’s built environment.” When asked about the effectiveness of the students’ ideas, 43% of open house attendees responded with a mark of 5 out of 5: that almost all of their neighborhood concerns were addressed. An additional 54% responded with a 4 out of 5: that many of their neighborhood concerns were addressed by the students’ proposals.

In response to the question about what participants enjoyed most about the students’ work, 22% described the students’ knowledge of planning ideas and the thoughtfulness behind their proposals. One respondent remarked that the best aspect of the students’ work was “the value of good ideas framed in knowledge of planning and love for the community.” Another noted, “Each of the projects had rationale and intent.”

16 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
17 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
18 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
19 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
Still another remarked on “how thoughtful their ideas about the neighborhood needs were—[the students thought] about kids, working parents, older people, safety, and so forth.” An additional 13 percent responded that the most enjoyable part of the event was the students’ presentations and being able to discuss the ideas with the students. The adults in the room took the students’ proposals seriously and discussed ideas with them in a respectful way, providing criticism and valuable feedback that enabled the students to continue learning during the event. The adults’ direct feedback to the students was a sign of respect, and indicated that the students’ ideas were feasible and well-researched. The fact that both City and County elected representatives requested student presentations at official meetings indicates that they feel the students’ ideas are important to incorporate into development proposals.

Building on the previous theme, the knowledge displayed by the students opened adults’ eyes to the importance of including young people in planning processes. One survey respondent wrote that the most important thing learned at the event was that “the youth voice is important, and gaining strength, and policy-makers need to be listening.”

Another responded about learning “that young people and their fresh perspectives on issues [are] very valuable.” A third responded plainly, noting, “students deserve a voice in our planning processes.”

In response to the survey question about next steps open house attendees hoped to see, 48% responded with ideas about students presenting and participating in official City and County meetings. An additional 20% wrote that they hope policy-makers use the students’ ideas to implement change.

These responses indicate an inchoate shift toward a Freirian idea of liberation, at least between adults and youth in the community: both the students and decision-makers in the community are beginning to see the importance of co-creating a new reality.

It is important to note that in response to the survey question about what was “missing” from the students work, three open house attendees indicated a desire for the students to have better knowledge of the underlying zoning for their project sites. This is a completely valid critique, and is an area of capacity building that I was unable to address in my process. This critique is related to the limited time frame of my process, as was critiqued in the students’ survey as well.

21 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015  
22 Open House Survey Response, April 10, 2015.
STUDENT REFLECTIONS

In addition to collecting open house attendees’ feedback through surveys after the event, I also collected feedback from the students to understand how the event and process as a whole had affected them. I asked that they write an open-ended reflection about their key conclusions from the process, beginning with the visioning sessions in January, through their continued involvement during the semester, and culminating in the open house. The key themes that emerged from their reflections were:

1. The “eye-opening” nature of the process (e.g. critical consciousness)
2. The students finding power in their voice and believing they can make neighborhood change
3. The role of design in enabling students to understand broader social issues

Eye-Opening:

In 60 percent of the reflections I received from students, they used the term “eye-opening” to describe the process. While this phrase could be interpreted in multiple ways, I argue that “eye-opening” in this context is another way of saying that the process awakened a critical consciousness and an awareness of injustice. In the reflection essays, several students reiterated that they had been unaware they lived in an unincorporated area, and that gave them an understanding of the inequity they face. One student, Amandeep, wrote, “Learning about and acting on our knowledge of urban planning was an eye-opening experience. I had lived on Moorland Avenue for all of my childhood, and only 16 years later do I find out that my neighborhood isn’t part of Santa Rosa, and that if it had been so, traumatic experiences I had to go through could have been preventable.”

While it should be reiterated to this student that his community’s marginalization is not purely caused by its unincorporated status (the unincorporated status is a product of his community’s marginalization), this quote indicates that he is beginning to put together pieces of how political structures and inequity work together.

In addition to the general awareness of living in unincorporated areas, several students wrote that a key moment for them was seeing the maps that correlated their own perceptions of safety with the incidents of crime in the area, and that these two sets of data aligned with the boundaries of unincorporated communities. The maps built upon our previous discussions of inequity in unincorporated communities, and the students reacted strongly to visually seeing their own neighborhood.

perceptions used as data to convey important issues.

2. Students finding power in their voice and believing they can make neighborhood change

A key goal of mine during this process was for students to see the importance of their voice in the community, and to build capacity that enabled them work towards neighborhood change. With regards to seeing the importance of their voice, in their reflection essays, several students described moments where they felt empowered and able to make a positive contribution. One student, Sean, wrote, “[The process] enlightened us on power I didn’t even know we had. It has also shown me that I can be a leader, and if I work hard, and dedicate myself to something, I can make any change happen.”24 Another important piece of this was for the students to realize they already had awareness of community issues, and to give them vehicle to express that awareness. Ana Laura wrote in her reflection, “[The process] taught us the vocabulary and ideas to attach to how we already felt about our community, and new ideas we didn’t even know were an option.”25 Along similar lines, one student remarked on how the process changed her perception of her own ideas. She said the positive reaction of adults at the open house taught her not to “belittle” her own ideas anymore.26 This student had begun to internalize the perceptions of young people—particularly young people of color—that their ideas were not worthwhile. The process enabled her to see that her voice matters.

An important component of building capacity and finding voice is being able to use that voice in conversation with people who hold power. Thus, the open house was a crucial moment for the students. Several of them remarked that the open house felt like the culmination of their hard work and gave them a chance to feel the potential of their ideas. Amandeep wrote, “The biggest part of this whole experience was being able to share our knowledge and experience about our neighborhoods with community leaders and residents. This allowed us to create a path for change.”27 In order for the students to feel the reality of their ideas, they needed to share them with people beyond their teacher and me. An added benefit of the open house was the opportunity for students to practice presenting to adults. Two students commented on the fact that the open house made them feel more confident in speaking to adults, and one student remarked that it exposed her to “how to talk and be professional to important

24 Sean Greiner, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
25 Ana Laura Mendez, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
26 Ava Streeter, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
community members.” These skills will allow the students to continue to work for change and feel confident in future interactions as community leaders.

3. The role of design in enabling students to understand broader social issues:

Perhaps the most important theme—for the purpose of my thesis—that emerged from the students’ reflections was the role of design in their learning process. My hypothesis was that design is a fundamental tool to public engagement in planning, and that it allows people to understand broader structural issues that are manifest in the built environment. Several of the student reflections confirmed this hypothesis. In his reflection, Amandeep described several traumatic experiences he had as a child growing up on Moorland Avenue, and then wrote, “Through this process of building models [and making] maps, I was able to better understand why these childhood events occurred and what can be done to change our neighborhood for the better, possibly for future generations of youth.”

Design and visual representation allowed Amandeep to connect the physical aspects of his community’s marginalization to the social factors that caused the inequity. Another student, Lupita emphasized the importance of the model building activity with her group. She wrote, “When day 3 came and we started to take our ideas off the paper and into the model, something within our group changed. We started to become more ‘into it,’ and as we finished our last touches, we realized how much we wanted to impact our community and spread awareness.”

Lupita’s quote indicates that the three-dimensional spatial thinking of the model-building activity was critical in order for her group to understand the need for community change. This reiterates that a “participatory design” process in which participants merely provide feedback to a designer is not enough to fully engage people in positive community change. The opportunity for participants to physically design spaces in their community with their hands is a fundamental component of community-driven design.

The students were also able to incorporate their political knowledge and the political capacity they had built into their model building. For example, several students in the Roseland group joined committees related to annexation and development in Roseland. These students then took the information they learned from their participation on the committees and used it to inform their designs. One student, Melody, who joined the Roseland Annexation Advisory Committee, wrote, “Being a part of the

28 Ava Streeter, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
29 Amandeep Singh, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
30 Lupita Albor, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
Roseland Advisory Group, I was able to have helpful knowledge of what decisions were being made in our community, which helped during the project of improving our models. I had no influence on the students’ decision to join the committees, nor did I make them aware of the opportunity, which shows the way community change and capacity building can build upon itself once it begins. When given the tools and awareness of political processes, engaged community members will take the initiative to create change. Melody saw an opportunity to continue to gain political knowledge and become active in her community, and she used that opportunity to enhance her model-building process. In this instance, capacity building and design worked hand-in-hand.

**EVALUATION OF PROCESSES**

In this section, I will use my analysis to evaluate and compare the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process and the participatory design process I conducted with high school students. There is undoubtedly bias in my evaluation based on the fact that I conducted the second process and am emotionally invested in its success. However, I attempted to minimize bias through the survey methods, and by using quantitative scale for my evaluation criteria, and I believe I have provided a fair evaluation. I begin with a comparison of the two processes based on the three evaluation criteria that I outlined in the Chapter 2. I then explain my rationale for each evaluation in detail, and examine of the role of design in meeting these criteria. My evaluation criteria for planning processes in marginalized communities are listed below:

- Did the process build community capacity to continue making progress after the formal process ended?
- Did the process awaken a critical consciousness around structural oppression and the need for social change?
- Did the process have an impact on decision-makers and show them the need for implementable change?

I will use a rating system on a scale from 1 to 4 in order to quantitatively evaluate each criterion. There is some subjectivity in quantitatively evaluating qualitative criteria, but I will provide reasoning for my evaluation in the next section. A graphic representation of the rating scale is included with my explanations of the score determinations.

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31 Melody Velarde, Student Reflection Paper, April 13, 2015.
No discussion of marginalization or structural oppression occurred during the process.

Discussion of inequity may have been occurred, but participants did not learn the institutional causes of such inequity and marginalization.

Decision-makers are unaware of what changes are needed in the community, and are unaware of a community voice.

Figure 6.4: Evaluation criteria and ratings for the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process and the Elsie Allen High School Process.
Capacity Building:

My rationale for rating the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process at a 1 out of 4 in terms of capacity building is based on the evidence from interviews with participants and information on the structure of the process. Participants described “waiting” for next steps and needing help to “go through all of the [political and bureaucratic] hoops to implement” their ideas. The process did not include discussions of the planning and development issues facing unincorporated communities, and thus participants were unaware of the hurdles they face to create neighborhood change. Because of this, no action has occurred since the end of the formal planning process in September, and while facilitators of the process expect residents to continue making progress, they did not give residents the skills to do so. Participants do not know which decision-makers to contact or how to speak to them about neighborhood issues. Because of these issues, I argue the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan ranks lowest on the capacity-building scale.

The Elsie Allen Urban Planning and Design Process involved a significant...
amount of capacity building, but not enough for the participants to continue the process entirely on their own, and thus I rated it at a “3” on the four-tier scale. Several students, in both the reflections and surveys, discussed the importance of learning practical political knowledge, which is a form of capacity building. The initial session included learning urban planning and design vocabulary words as well as a discussion about what it means to live in an unincorporated community. Students were able to orient their design ideas around an awareness of political processes and constraints. The second session involved a budgeting game, which gave participants an opportunity to understand the difficulties of prioritizing projects based on limited funding, and they used their political knowledge of unincorporated status to think about the ideas they proposed. In the third session, the model-building activity allowed participants to think spatially and practically about site selection and site constraints. Finally, the Open House event in April built the students’ capacity to communicate their ideas to decision-makers. Several students explained the importance of learning how to discuss technical ideas with adults. They also gained a new perception of themselves as leaders. Thus, I argue the Elsie Allen Urban Planning process built significant capacity amongst the participants in terms of an understanding of political processes, learning new technical terminology, and speaking with decision-makers about ideas for community change.

However, I do not believe the Elsie Allen process is able to continue to sustain itself beyond this initial phase without my continued involvement. I believe some students will continue to participate on city and county political committees, but in order for the majority of students to continue to push their ideas forward, I will need to continue helping Lisa facilitate next steps. Because I plan to continue working with the community on this project, there may be a later stage at which a self-sustaining level of capacity is built. For these reasons, I gave this Elsie Allen Process a 3 out of 4 on the capacity-building criterion.

**Critical Consciousness:**

The Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process did not score well in terms of awakening a critical consciousness amongst participants. The impetus for the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process was a tragedy in which a 13-year-old Latino boy was shot by a white police officer in a vacant lot. Yet the County-led process included no discussion of the incident’s causes (such as institutional racism and the marginalization of unincorporated Latino neighborhoods), or why a planning process is an appropriate response to the tragedy. What can planning do to prevent these types of issues, and what do residents need to know about the political and
institutional systems that have caused their marginalization and oppression? These questions were not asked in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, and the process facilitators did not make a connection between residents’ ideas for improvements and broader structural issues. These deeper, more difficult conversations were absent, perhaps so the County could continue to ignore the large-scale institutional changes that need to occur in Santa Rosa. Participants in the Moorland process did not learn about their community’s systemic exclusion from the City of Santa Rosa, nor the implications of their unincorporated status. Thus, the solutions that resulted from the process do not address the underlying reasons for the community’s neglect and marginalization and will not lead to long-term change. For these reasons, I evaluated the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process as a 1 out of 4 on the Critical Consciousness criterion.

The Elsie Allen Urban Planning and Design Process made a concerted effort to awaken a critical consciousness in participants, but missed the opportunity to connect Santa Rosa political processes with broader structural oppression. Thus, I rated the Elsie Allen process at a 3 out of 4 on the Critical Consciousness scale.
The Elsie Allen process included specific discussions about disparities between incorporated and unincorporated communities, as well as a history of Santa Rosa’s unfair and corrupt practices that led to such inequity. Many of the students were unaware that they lived in unincorporated areas, and that this status was a product of systemic marginalization. The awareness of the political practices that led to inequity and discrimination motivated several students to continue to work on their models, start advocacy and education campaigns, and even enter into the political system by joining city and county committees. Through the Elsie Allen process, participants learned about their own marginalization, were able to see how their marginalization is manifest in the built environment, and gained an understanding of the political practices that created their exclusion. These are important first steps in awakening a critical consciousness.

However, while we discussed unfair annexation practices and “cherry-picking,” I did not facilitate conversations that dug more deeply into the structural oppression at the root of these practices. I realized this when I read survey responses and reflections essays that reduced annexation as the solution to unincorporated communities’ marginalization. Annexation may solve some of the symptoms of unincorporated marginalization, but it would not solve the institutional issues that have caused these communities’ marginalization to begin with. A comparison I draw is to redlining practices in the 1960s: removing redlined districts from official maps is a step in the right direction, and might alleviate some of the symptoms of institutional racism caused by redlining, but it does not solve institutional racism as a whole, and has not prevented racial housing discrimination to continue through other means. Likewise, annexation will improve some conditions in Roseland and Moorland, such as providing a community-based policing system, and eventually resulting in needed infrastructure such as sidewalks, streetlights, and a park. However, it will not reverse the lack of development in the community, the industrial uses and freeways that surround the neighborhood, or the perception of the community as a dangerous and poor. Because of the lack of clarity around structural oppression, I rated the Elsie Allen Urban Planning and Design Process at a 3 out of 4 on the Critical Consciousness criterion.

Impact on Decision-Makers

County employees facilitated the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, and thus the process should have some influence on County decision-makers. The County Board of Supervisors received a copy of the plan, and based on my interview with Supervisor Carrillo (who attended several of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood meetings), he is aware of
the specific issues facing Moorland, and the community’s ideas for change. County planners I spoke with are also aware of the main components of the plan. However, because the planning document did not outline implementation strategies, or make specific ‘asks’ of the Board of Supervisors, there is no direct course of action to accomplish the community’s goals. Thus, I rated the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process as a 2 out of 4 in terms of its impact on decision-makers.

I similarly rated the Elsie Allen High School Urban Planning and Design process at a 2 for its impact on decision-makers. I argue that the process I conducted actually gained more attention from decision-makers than the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process, and there are next steps that will be taken to continue to improve its impact, but the students did not make any concrete requests of decision-makers in terms of implementing ideas. Because I will continue to work on this project, my expectation is that at a future stage, there will be a more organized and official impact on decision-makers that will hopefully move towards implementation of the students’ ideas. However, at this stage, the impact rating will remain at a 2.
A CAVEAT ON THIS EVALUATION AND COMPARISON

It is worth noting that the comparison between the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process and the Elsie Allen High School Process does not provide an examination of the full range of possible participatory methods. The Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process was an unsuccessful participatory planning process for several reasons, only one of which was the lack of design used in the engagement methods. Similarly, the Elsie Allen High School Process was productive because of multiple factors, not solely due to the inclusion of design. There exist successful participatory planning processes that do not include design, and still work to build community capacity and address larger social issues, just as there exist participatory design processes that do not achieve these goals. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the full array such processes. However, it should be explained that there is a larger spectrum of participatory methods between the unsuccessful participatory planning process and the successful participatory design process. Despite this caveat, as I will argue in the next chapter, I still contend that design is a fundamental tool to foster a productive participatory process in a marginalized community that builds capacity, awakens critical consciousness, and impacts decision-makers. Design helps to unlock the type of deep engagement with planning and built environment issues that enables a participatory process to meet the three evaluation criteria set out in this thesis.

CONCLUSION

The combination of both quantitative and qualitative data I collected provided me with a clear understanding two different processes in Southwest Santa Rosa, and where these processes succeeded and failed. This analysis examined the impact of the processes on both participants and decision-makers. I was able to understand the level of capacity built, the amount of critical consciousness gained, and the amount of influence each process had on community leaders. In the next chapter, I will examine the role of design in meeting these three criteria, which will lead to conclusions about how to facilitate a participatory process in a marginalized community.
REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I use the analysis I conducted in the previous chapter to reexamine my initial research question and draw conclusions and recommendations for participatory processes in marginalized communities. I begin by continuing my discussion of the two case-study processes I studied in this thesis, and explore the role design played in achieving the evaluation criteria I set out. I then reflect back to the theoretical grounding of Paolo Freire and situate my role in the Elsie Allen High School process within Freire’s framework. Next, I move into more concrete ideas of next steps for the Elsie Allen Process, both planned and aspirational. I make recommendations for participatory processes in unincorporated communities that enable them to address their structural marginalization. And finally, I conclude with steps to replicate a participatory design process in an array of different settings.

THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN ACHIEVING THE EVALUATION CRITERIA

My initial research question asked whether or not a participatory design process can enable residents to address the political and social marginalization they face. The criteria outlined in the previous chapter examined the extent to which participants were able to address their marginalization, so now I explore the role design played in achieving these ratings. The Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process did not include any aspects of design, whereas the Elsie Allen process used design as a focal point.

The Moorland Process gathered feedback from residents solely through written and verbal communication, which did not give residents an opportunity to learn about spatial planning through hands-on methods, and thus did not allow participants to explore how their marginalization is recreated in the fabric of their own neighborhood. Because facilitators of the process did not teach technical planning vocabulary or terminology, the planners and participants did not communicate on the same level (as indicated by Esther Lemus’ feeling that meeting discussions were “over her head”). Because design was not used as a communication tool, there was no way for residents and planners to effectively communicate across the divide and express their ideas to each other. Compounding these issues, design was not included in the plan as a way to communicate ideas to decision-makers. Even if facilitators of the process had not used participatory design methods with residents themselves, they could have visually represented the community’s

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1 Esther Lemus (Moorland Avenue Resident), interview by author, January 20, 2015.
verbal ideas to convey those ideas to County Board of Supervisors. Indeed, Scott Wilkinson, the park planner involved with the process suggested that renderings and sections would have helped make a stronger case for the ideas. Thus, the inclusion of design as a communication method would have significantly improved the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood’s effectiveness in both its impact on residents and decision-makers.

Design was a fundamental tool that enabled participants in the Elsie Allen process to build capacity, understand broader social issues, and see their own marginalization. It also helped the students communicate their ideas to decision-makers. Allowing participants to work with models built their skills to think spatially, and the drawing activities enabled them to explore how their marginalization is visually represented in the built environment.

These activities made visible the exclusion and discrimination that planners have obscured through complicated maps and abstract, seemingly nonsensical boundaries. Design and visual communication provided a way to transcend the complexities of these regulatory abstractions, and to expose the oppression lying beyond Santa Rosa’s city limits. Both student reflections and surveys indicated the importance of the hands-on creative activities in the success of the process. Furthermore, the models enabled students to communicate their ideas with decision-makers not only verbally, but also visually. This mode of communication had a strong enough impact on decision-makers that they asked the students to present their models at official meetings.

Overall, based on my comparison of the two participatory processes in marginalized communities, the process that involved design was more successful in terms of building community capacity, awakening a critical consciousness, and impacting decision-makers. I believe the inclusion of design in the Elsie Allen process was a critical to its success.

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE ROLE OF THE OUTSIDE CONSULTANT

I began this project by grounding my ideas in Paolo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire provides a foundational framework for my thought process in how I approached my work with Elsie Allen High School students. My second evaluation criteria discusses the importance of critical consciousness (my term for Freire’s concientización), and my goal was to foster a process in which the students and I engaged in a mutually creative endeavor that exposed oppression and works towards liberation. I started to achieve some of these goals in the process I conducted. The students and I communicated throughout the
semester on an iterative design process for their communities, and we used design and physical planning to discuss oppression and inequity. However, there are some Freirian aspirations that I, upon critical reflection, realize I was unable to achieve. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Freire describes well-intentioned “members of the oppressor class [who] join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation,” and “bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think, to want and to know.”

In many ways, I actively pushed against my own “prejudices and deformations” about the young people of color I worked with. But in other ways, I exhibited exactly those characteristics of the oppressor class Freire described. The most common way in which I noticed myself displaying these traits was in my constant surprise at the quality of the students’ work, how quickly they grasped complicated political language and ideas, and their understanding of how political decisions have created inequity in their neighborhoods. I made assumptions about what they could accomplish and understand based on their age, race, and class, and my constant surprise was an indication of my “lack of confidence in people’s ability to think, to want and to know,” as Freire put it.

Another challenge I experienced in relation to Freire’s framework was to change my relationship with the teenagers from that of “expert-laymen” or “teacher-student” to co-creators. This was a challenge during my process with the high school students for two reasons: 1) I was perceived as an “outside expert” from MIT; and 2) it was difficult to define the line was between my efforts to build capacity through education, and my desire to insert my perspective into process. With regards to the first issue of “outside expert” status, I found that because our society is conditioned to value prestige and technical expertise, it is challenging to enter into a marginalized community as an affiliate of a powerful institution such as MIT without falling into traditional power dynamics. In an attempt to minimize these dynamics from the onset, I reiterated multiple times that I was gaining as much knowledge from the students as they were from me, because the are the experts on their community. While they grasped this concept, the MIT name and status lingered more than I expected, and one student even asked to shake my hand because “he had never shaken the hand of someone from MIT before.” I told the students they were smart enough to go to MIT, but this did not seem like the answer to undermining the power dynamic at play. I am still struggling with how to address the implications of working in a marginalized community as someone from the outside

with technical knowledge and power. I will keep working on these issues as I continue in my professional practice.

I also struggled with the blurred line between building capacity through education and inserting myself into the process. It was difficult for me to know when I was moving beyond education into a role of suggesting ideas based on my own perceptions of what is “right.” I am reminded of an example I described in Chapter 6, in which students from the Moorland group proposed a library where existing homes sit. As a trained planner, I knew that prosing such a location for a library was neither feasible nor politically shrewd. As residents, the students knew that it would be a good location for a library in terms of access and visibility. This conflict forced me to decide my own level of input into the students’ design process. Ultimately, I explained to the students that their proposed library site would be challenging, and that they could still to propose the library in that location, but should have strong justifications behind their decision. The students discussed the idea and decided on a new location. Was I educating them around political feasibility in planning, or was I asserting my own ideas into their plan? I believe I made the right decision in this situation, but there were multiple other moments, some that I may not even be aware of, in which the distinction between education and imposition was unclear.

Overall, the process with the high school students gave them a sense of power and leadership over their community, and showed them institutional forms of inequity that pervade their neighborhoods. In this sense the process made strides towards some Freirian ideals. However, it also showed me that I still have reflective work to do as a practitioner to improve this and future processes for a more liberatory result.

**NEXT STEPS FOR THE ELSIE ALLEN HIGH SCHOOL PROCESS**

Once I started working on the Elsie Allen process, I realized I could not achieve the goals I wanted to accomplish in the span of five months. This is evidenced by the fact that the process did not reach the highest ranking on any of the evaluation criteria for participatory processes in marginalized communities. Thus, I am committed to continuing the process beyond the duration of this thesis. In this section, I outline my proposed next steps for work with the Elsie Allen High School students.

The immediate next step for the process is to follow through on requests by decision-makers to have students present their models at a Board of Supervisors meeting and a City Council meeting. This will continue the momentum gained at the Open House, and will continue to build capacity amongst the students. It will also ensure that the student’s ideas
are officially recognized during the Roseland annexation process as well as the Roseland Village Redevelopment process. Ms. DeCarbo and I are discussing the timing of these presentations, and working to have the students on the agendas for summer meetings.

Another next step is to help the students organize their educational campaign to inform neighbors about the issues facing unincorporated communities. The students took some of the initial steps for this project in terms of gathering information around annexation and joining citywide committees for annexation and development, but because the focus of their work over the semester was to finish the models and present their ideas at the open house, the outreach component of the campaign has not yet occurred. Ideally, students would be trained in outreach techniques and we could work on designing a campaign strategy together.

A third idea that Ms. DeCarbo and I discussed was to hold events at each of the students’ neighborhood sites, perhaps combining them with preexisting community events (such as the Cinco de Mayo festival that is annually held at the Roseland group’s development site). At these “on-site” events, the students would have an opportunity to present their models and ideas to a broader sample of community members. This idea is still in its infancy, and will take time to organize and develop.

Finally, in order to reach a higher ranking on the critical consciousness criteria, I would like to facilitate a conversation with the students around institutional racism and the distinction between symptoms and causes. Right now, the students have an understanding of the inequity they face within the context of Santa Rosa’s annexation practices, but they have not yet made the connection between those practices and the larger systems of racism and marginalization that caused decision-makers to exclude them from the City limits. This discussion is fundamental to awakening a critical consciousness in the students, and one way to frame the conversation is to show similarities between Santa Rosa’s annexation practices, other cities annexation practices that have excluded Latino and African American communities, and redlining practices that occurred in cities across the country. Showing the students annexation and redlining maps, in combination with the physical conditions of these communities, will paint a picture of the ways in which Moorland and Roseland’s unincorporated status is a byproduct of a broader system of marginalization and oppression, not the cause.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PLANNING IN MARGINALIZED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

The exclusion of low-income communities of color from cities is not unique to Santa Rosa; it is a substantive planning issue that needs to be addressed. Across the country, planning has served as a tool that enabled cities to grow around Latino and African American neighborhoods, leaving these neighborhoods with inadequate public services and limited political representation. Unincorporated status is a particular form of marginalization, and thus requires specific methods of planning and engagement. Below I discuss my four main recommendations for planning in marginalized unincorporated communities:

1) **Make the invisible visible:** use design as a tool to expose unincorporated marginalization

2) **Make the link to broader systems of oppression**

3) **Use annexation as an idea to organize around, not as the end solution**

4) **Engage young people in the effort to create community change through design**

#### 1. Make the invisible visible:

A complicated piece of unincorporated marginality is that many residents are unaware that they live outside the city limits. Planners have drawn lines around communities, and these lines affect residents’ daily lives, but are not visible to people without maps. The invisibility of unincorporated status entrenches it as a form of marginalization: if people are unaware that they are being oppressed, they will not work to change their situation. However, unincorporated status can be made visible, and design is an important tool to accomplish this. Unincorporated marginalization can be shown on maps, but can also be seen in disparities in the built environment: unpaved roads, vacant lots, lack of streetlights and sidewalks. The process I conducted with the high school students revealed that once residents are shown their position outside the city limits, the veil is lifted on their oppression, and they see the physical manifestations of their marginalization in everyday landscapes.

Design is an important way to make unincorporated marginalization visible, and to allow people to think about possibilities for change. The students noticed that groups who worked in incorporated areas identified different planning and design ideas for their neighborhoods than groups in unincorporated areas. Making these connections between the built environment and oppression, and then thinking spatially about how and where improvements can be made, is a key aspect of building capacity in unincorporated communities.
2. Make the Link to Broader Systems of Oppression

One aspect where my process with the high school students fell short was in connecting unincorporated status with broader structural marginalization. The exclusion of Moorland and Roseland is a form of marginalization, but it is also a symptom of institutional racism and discrimination in urban planning that has pervaded American history. In order to awaken critical consciousness in unincorporated communities, residents must understand their oppression within a broader historical context. A difficult aspect of being a planner in this context is to acknowledge the role planning has had in reinforcing the marginalization of unincorporated communities. Just as Freire described, a liberatory process involves both the oppressor and the oppressed unveiling and acknowledging the power dynamics that have led to the current situation. Planning processes in marginalized unincorporated communities must discuss ties to broader systemic issues, otherwise the ideas generated by that process may lead to individual neighborhood-level solutions, but will not work towards larger-scale social change.

3. Use annexation as an idea to organize around, not as the end solution

Related to the importance of connecting unincorporated status to broader systems of oppression, annexation should not be seen as the answer for solving unincorporated issues. In many cases, including that of Moorland and Roseland, annexation will probably improve the daily lives of residents and address many neighborhood issues, but it is not the ultimate solution to address the inequity and exclusion of these communities. Furthermore, many of the improvements that accompany annexation will take years to implement, such as road paving and sidewalks. A planning process in an unincorporated community should think about interim solutions that improve the community even without annexation, as well as larger-scale systemic changes to aspire towards.

However, annexation is a concrete idea that is easy to rally residents around, and can be an important first step in addressing the marginalization of these communities. The students I worked with are excited about fighting for annexation; they joined the Roseland Annexation Advisory Committee, and want to conduct an educational campaign around annexation in their neighborhood. As Supervisor Efren Carrillo noted, filling in the unincorporated islands is simply a matter of “good governance.” So, while annexation should not be viewed as the solution to marginalization in these communities, it is a good way to build community awareness around inequity and foster cohesion around neighborhood and city-wide change.

3 Efren Carrillo (Sonoma County Supervisor, District 5), interview by author, January 26, 2015.
4. Engage young people in the effort to create community change through design:

Young people often bear the brunt of a community’s marginalization—as was evident in the Andy Lopez shooting—but have no voice in making their communities better. Youth should be primary actors in spurring community change and leading the way on planning issues. At a base level, young people are the future, and should thus be involved in planning new visions for our society. Planning and design implementation takes years, so youth will actually witness the changes they work for, and can see them through from start to finish. But beyond this, I saw firsthand the power and influence young people can have on decision-makers when they express their ideas. The adults who came to the Open House saw the energy and momentum the young people were gaining, and understood the importance of furthering that momentum.

I believe the design process helped to capture the imagination and creativity of the high school students I worked with. It gave them a way to express their expertise on their neighborhoods and communicate their ideas with clarity to people in power. The design process also built the capacity of young people, as they learned to think spatially and think about feasibility and site constraints, which added to the power of their ideas. As I observed the energy and inertia of a burgeoning youth movement, I saw the potential of community change in the Santa Rosa area. As one student wrote so succinctly, “We as tomorrow’s leaders have to step up to the plate and focus on these issues to make our city and home safer.”

The power of these young people will lead them to continue working even beyond their city and home, towards broader structural change.

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4 Student Survey Response, January 26, 2015.

STEPS TO REPLICATE A PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

The goal of this thesis is to encourage the wider use of participatory design techniques, particularly for work in marginalized communities. The final section of this document outlines steps to implementing participatory design processes in a wide range of settings, not solely unincorporated communities. These steps focus on the initial engagement process from the time a planner enters the community to the point when the community’s ideas are shared with decision-makers. I do not specifically address how to exit a community after this initial phase because each context will necessitate different levels of capacity building before a planner can withdraw from the process. Here I propose nine steps for a participatory design process in marginalized communities, and explain them in detail below. A summary of steps...
CONCLUSION

are as follows:

1) Approach engagement with a commitment to structural change
2) Identify a strong community partner to help ground the process in existing relationships
3) Discover the manifestation of oppression in the built environment and the research the causes of the community’s marginalization
4) Use visual activities to communicate forms of oppression by engaging participants through their own experience of the built environment
5) Foster discussions about the political processes and systems of oppression that led to the community’s marginalization
6) Identify activities that build capacity around practical political and planning knowledge, grounded in the place-specific context of the neighborhood
7) Conduct a creative, physical, and visual activity that synthesizes the different types of knowledge gained throughout the process
8) Continue to build community capacity by finding opportunities for participants to present ideas to a larger audience, including decision-makers
9. Engage in reflective practice throughout the process

1. Approach engagement with a commitment to structural change

Before starting any participatory process in a marginalized community, planners should commit to thinking about engagement methods through a structural lens. This means using each activity in the process to consider the larger systemic issues that the process attempts to address. Participation should not occur simply for the sake of participation: each engagement technique should address aspects of the community’s marginalization by relating to systems of oppression manifest in the built environment. Creative participation tools should be designed with a grounding in the systems of oppression at play in the community. Without this deeper foundation, the tools will only foster a surface level of engagement with participants, and will not achieve the goals I outlined in the previous chapter: building capacity, awakening critical consciousness, and impacting decision-makers. Even if the tangible change that is implemented occurs at a smaller scale (i.e. installing street-lights or building a community center), the process itself should identify the need for structural change and should include discussions about how the momentum gained from these smaller changes can build towards larger social movements.

2. Identify a strong community partner to help ground the process in existing relationships

When working as an outside consultant (or as a municipal planner) in a community, building trust is a fundamental component of a successful participatory process. Even if the planner commits to embedding herself in the community for an extended period of time, she should identify existing community actors to
3. Discover the manifestation of oppression in the built environment and the research the causes of the community’s marginalization

Participatory design strives to expose and address the manifestation of oppression in the built environment. Thus, the facilitator of such a process must first learn where these physical indicators of oppression lie. The facilitator will continue to learn about these issues from participants as the process is conducted, but she should be familiar with the types of physical inequities facing the community from the onset. This information can be collected through fieldwork in the neighborhood (basic observations, photos, sketching) as well as discussions with residents and community partners. In the case described in this thesis, indicators of oppression were evident in the lack of infrastructure, open space, and community facilities in unincorporated areas, and these problems translated into other issues such as gang activity, lack of pedestrian
Safety, and police violence. In other cases, the built environment may reveal different issues related to the community’s marginalization. Having this information will help structure activities throughout the process.

Research should also be conducted to understand the political processes that led to the community’s marginalization. Research methods will include an examination of historical and current planning documents, demographic data, newspaper articles, and interviews with decision-makers, political actors, as well as community organizations and activists. The facilitator should reflect on how these context-specific systems of oppression are connected to larger patterns of marginalization in planning as a whole. For example, in this thesis, the City of Santa Rosa engaged in exclusionary annexation practices rooted in racial and socioeconomic discrimination. However, I discovered that these practices are not unique to Santa Rosa, and have been a common way for cities to exclude communities of color throughout the United States. This relates to other historic practices of exclusion such as redlining and restrictive housing covenants. Both a context-specific and broader social understanding of oppression are important in designing a process that works to address marginalization in the built environment.

4. **Use visual activities to communicate forms of oppression by engaging participants through their own experience of the built environment**

Once the indicators and causes of a community’s marginalization are identified, the facilitator can then begin to design engagement techniques. In a participatory design process, visual tools should be utilized to expose the manifestation of oppression in the built environment, and the activities should encourage the participant to draw upon his or her own experience of the built environment. These kinds of activities should allow participants to explore their everyday surroundings and push them to think critically about physical elements they might otherwise take for granted. The activities should also create a low barrier to entry for spatial thinking. Design, drawing, and mapping can be intimidating, so this first activity needs to be accessible to people who have never thought about their community in spatial and visual terms.

For the process conducted in this thesis, I utilized a self-mapping activity that asked students to identify a neighborhood route they regularly take, and to examine it from a personal safety perspective. There are other visual mechanisms that can be successful as well. Some examples include: a walking tour of the neighborhood with opportunities for participants to draw their experience along the tour; a “PhotoVoice” project...
in which participants take photos of their neighborhood and tell a story about the photo’s meaning; a cognitive mapping exercise in which participants create a personal mental map of their neighborhood without any given spatial references; or even a group scavenger hunt through the neighborhood with various planning and design clues. Regardless of the specific methods utilized, the goal of this activity should be for participants to think critically about their everyday experience in the built environment and to represent their ideas visually.

5. **Foster discussions about the political processes and systems of oppression that caused the community’s marginalization**

This step builds upon each of the previous steps, and can be incorporated throughout the process. The facilitator can hold discussions after any of the visual and spatial thinking activities, or the discussions can be separated as their own activity. In order to take a structural approach to the process, it is important for participants to think about the political and systemic causes of their oppression. The discussions should include learning about the context-specific political and planning processes that led to
disparities in their community, but should also serve as an opportunity to connect to broader systems of oppression and discussions of structural change.

For this thesis, I conducted a basic dot-mapping activity to spur dialogue about political processes. The activity itself was not complicated (participants placed dots on a map where they live, and then examined the city boundary in relation to the dots), but it was sufficient to stimulate important questions about unincorporated status and annexation. The activity created a platform to discuss central ideas about Santa Rosa annexation and planning practices as well as exclusion more broadly. The mapping activity was particularly useful in this unincorporated community where the city boundary shows a clear picture of unjust planning practices at work. Other activities to foster political dialogue may be necessary in different contexts.
6. Identify activities that build capacity around practical political and planning knowledge, grounded in the place-specific context of the neighborhood:

In addition to teaching residents about political systems of oppression, participatory design processes should also build the capacity of residents to work within those systems and effect change. Political capacity is important in order to think about larger structural change, but is also necessary to implement smaller, tangible neighborhood change, such as installing sidewalks or turning a vacant lot into a park. Residents need to understand the bureaucratic steps to follow, decision-makers to speak with, and potential political barriers they face in project implementation. This knowledge will enable residents to continue working towards change after the outside consultant withdraws from the process.

An important aspect of political capacity building is to ground activities in the context of the neighborhood, with concrete project ideas in specific locations. It is challenging to discuss political processes in the abstract, so location-based ideas make learning about implementation processes more realistic and understandable. Another recommendation for these activities is to allow participants to play the role of decision-makers. Putting residents in the seat of power allows them to understand implementation practices and it gives them an important perspective on challenges faced by decision-makers, which may improve their strategies for implementation in the long run. The activity I used for this thesis was a game in which groups were given a budget and were required to work as a team to prioritize neighborhood improvements based on financial constraints. Another activity to achieve similar ends could be a role-playing game in which participants act as different stakeholders, including the Mayor, city planner, elected official, community activist, developer,

Activities that build political capacity should give participants a sense of what it feels like to make community-level decisions. The photo at right shows the budgeting game I conducted with Elsie Allen High School students. Other activities, such a political role playing game could serve a similar purpose.
business owner, etc. Each actor or group must advocate for their interests and negotiate with others to reach an agreement about a community project. These kinds of activities allow participants to see multiple sides of an issue, and gain a better understanding of complicated political processes.

7. **Conduct a creative, physical, and visual activity that synthesizes the different types of knowledge gained throughout the process**

A participatory design process should culminate with a creative exercise that synthesizes the knowledge gained throughout the process. A physical model-building activity is one successful method to accomplish this goal. Allowing participants to physically construct an idea for their community enables them to build on the knowledge they have gained throughout the process and apply it to a specific site. It forces participants to think spatially, which inevitably leads to more feasible ideas, because they are bound by site constraints rather than thinking about improvement in abstract, hypothetical terms. Model-making is also a team-building exercise that encourages creative thinking and problem-solving amongst community members. Not only do participants work together to identify specific improvements and project ideas for the site, but they must also decide how to represent those ideas together.

A wide range of building materials should be provided so that participants can express themselves as they see fit. It is also important for the model to focus on a site that is of a reasonable scale for participants to complete the activity in approximately one hour. In the case of my thesis, the students chose the site for their models before the session so I was able to create specific model bases for each group. Resident site selection is the preferable technique, however, some processes may deal with sites that are already slated for development, leaving less freedom for participants to choose the location for their models. After the activity, each team should present their models to the entire group in order to communicate the thought process behind their work, and so the groups can learn from each other's ideas.

Model-building is not the only type of activity that fosters a creative and visual synthesis of a participatory design process. The only requirement is for the activity to utilize visual methods to convey ideas about the built environment that tie together the themes of the process as a whole. The final product of the activity should be able to communicate participant's ideas to people who were not involved in the process, as will be discussed in the next step. Potential activities include: a film-making project where community members document the physical aspects of their neighborhood; a mural or other piece of public art; a large creative map; a “pop-up” installation...
or demonstration project of their improvement ideas at a particular site; or even a live performance of their hopes for community change.

8. **Continue to build community capacity by finding opportunities for participants to present their ideas to a larger audience, including decision-makers**

Once the community has identified ideas together through the participatory design process, they should present their ideas and models to a broader audience, including decision-makers. These presentations will continue to build residents’ capacity by allowing them to communicate their ideas both visually and verbally to people who were not involved in the process. These interactions may also lead to other avenues for the process to gain momentum and move towards implementation. It may be useful to utilize a community partner’s relationships and networks to create these presentation opportunities. For example, in the case of this thesis, Ms. DeCarbo organized and conducted outreach for the Elsie Allen Urban Planning Open House, which brought several different types of political actors and decision-makers into contact with the students. She had already built this network over several years, and was thus better equipped than I to coordinate such an event. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Open House led to additional presentation opportunities.

Visual projects that synthesize planning knowledge can come in various forms. I utilized physical-model making for this thesis, but other projects could include public art and collaborative murals, among other ideas. At left is a neighborhood map sculpture. At right is a group mural project. Both pieces were created through community processes.

because the decision-makers in attendance wanted their colleagues to witness the students’ work as well. The presentation step is a fundamental piece in creating a process that will live beyond the duration of the consultant’s involvement.

9. Engage in reflective practice throughout the process:
A successful participatory design process that awakens critical consciousness must utilize reflective practice throughout. At a basic level, evaluations should be conducted at each step in the process. These evaluations can occur in-person with participants (“plus-deltas,” for example), as well as through written anonymous surveys. The facilitator should also identify indicators to evaluate the success of the process based on specific metrics. The criteria I identified in the previous chapter (building capacity, awakening critical consciousness, and impacting decision-makers) provide a foundation for evaluating participatory processes, but additional indicators might be applicable given different community contexts.

In addition to metrics and evaluations, qualitative personal reflective practice should also occur on the part of both participants and the facilitator. Awakening critical consciousness in a process between the oppressed and the oppressor (as most planning processes in marginalized communities are) requires deep contemplation about the modes of oppression that are being exposed, as well as the impact of these systems of oppression in relation to both parties. Planning plays a central role in perpetuating oppression, and thus a process that works to address these systemic issues will be difficult and even painful for both the planner and the participant. Participants should be given regular opportunities to reflect on their own emotions about learning the structural forces that have caused harm to their communities. Each session should include a group conversation for participants to discuss what they learned, as well as individual (written or other) reflections after the session.

Similarly, the facilitator of the process must reflect, not only on her role in a system that has oppressed this community, but also on the ways her own assumptions and biases—linked to her position of power—are at play throughout the process. As I mentioned in an earlier section, during my process with the Elsie Allen High School students, I noticed myself making assumptions about the ability of the teenagers I worked with. In order for a participatory process to truly awaken critical consciousness and work towards systemic change, the planner must reflect on her actions and thoughts throughout the process. A participatory design process should be liberating for both the community and the planner.
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Student presentations (recorded). January 22, 2015.

Student reflection. January 15, 2015

Student reflection. January 8, 2015


APPENDIX A: SURVEYS AND INTERVIEW TOOLS

A.1: Elsie Allen High School Urban Planning and Design Process Survey (Students)
A.2: Elsie Allen High School Urban Planning and Design Survey (Open House Attendees)
A.3: Interview Guides:
   - City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department
   - Sonoma County Community Action Partnership
   - Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department
   - Sonoma County Regional Parks Department
   - Sonoma County Supervisor of District 5
   - Sonoma Local Area Formation Commission
   - Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team Members
A.1: Elsie Allen High School Urban Planning and Design Process Survey (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with the overall experience of Lilly's Urban Planning and Design process with you?</td>
<td>1. Not at all satisfied  2. Unsatisfied  3. Somewhat Satisfied  4. Satisfied  5. Extremely Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What was the best aspect of the process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What would you have done differently in the process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you feel that you gained tools to change your neighborhood?</td>
<td>1. I don’t think I can change anything  2. I don’t think I can change much  3. I can maybe change a little  4. I think I can make change  5. I’m definitely going to change my neighborhood!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What additional support do you need to work towards improving your neighborhood?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. On a scale of 1-5, how much did the process with Lilly change your perception of the neighborhood?</td>
<td>1. No change  2. Very little change  3. Some change  4. Change  5. A lot of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If your neighborhood perception has changed, in what ways?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What was the most important thing you learned in the process?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What are your hopes for next steps in the process?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A.2: Elsie Allen High School Urban Planning and Design Survey (Open House Attendees)

ELSIE ALLEN URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN SURVEY

1. What was the most important thing you learned from the students’ work?

2. On a scale of 1-5, how likely it is that the students’ work will lead to neighborhood change?

   1. I don’t think it will change anything
   2. I don’t think it will change much
   3. It might change a little
   4. I think it will lead to change
   5. Neighborhood change will definitely happen!

3. On a scale of 1-5, after seeing the students’ work, how likely are you to get involved with community issues and working for neighborhood change?

   1. Not at all likely
   2. Not very likely
   3. It’s possible
   4. Likely
   5. Definitely

4. On a scale of 1-5, how well do the students’ ideas address your neighborhood concerns?

   1. Not well
   2. They only address the issues a little
   3. They address some of the issues
   4. They address many of the issues
   5. They would address almost all of the issues!

5. Did the students’ work change your perception of the neighborhood? If so, how?

6. On a scale of 1-5, how likely do you think the students’ ideas are to be implemented?

   1. Not at all likely
   2. Not very likely
   3. It’s possible
   4. Likely
   5. Definitely

7. What did you enjoy most about the students’ work?

8. What would you have liked to see in the students’ work that was not there?

9. What are your hopes for next steps in the process?

10. Would you like to be involved with future student projects? If so, in what capacity?

11. Any additional comments/questions?
A.3: Interview Guides

Questions for City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department:

1. What is your role with the city?
2. Can you explain to me how the irregular city boundary of Santa Rosa occurred?
3. How do the unincorporated islands factor into your everyday work?
4. What are the steps for a community to be annexed? I know Roseland is first in line—is there thought given to which communities might be next?
5. What do you foresee the process for Moorland being?
6. I was reading a Santa Rosa General Plan from 1961, and it was jointly produced by the City and Sonoma County, and the planning area encompassed both incorporated and unincorporated areas (because growth was expected to encompass both) when did this joint practice stop? Has any thought been given to similar joint efforts where planning encompasses both incorporated and unincorporated areas?
7. The plan also mentioned “aggressive annexation policies from 1950-1960”—were the policies different then than they are now?
8. Were you involved at all in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process at all?
9. Are there ways for an unincorporated community to change its status and work with the city and county to allow for change and development to happen?
10. What do you see as the main goal, and driver of your work? And what are you most proud of accomplishing?
11. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me that hasn’t come up in this conversation?

Questions for Community Action Partnership:

1. What is your role at CAP, and what was your involvement in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process?
2. How did you feel about community engagement throughout the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process?
3. How were members of the Neighborhood Advisory Team chosen, and what was their involvement?
4. How were decision-making processes structured? (Did residents feel as though they had an effect on the decisions?)
5. What feedback did you get from residents after the process?
6. Has any action continued after the process? (Community organizing or implementation of the plan)?
7. Have you discussed how to address implementation, particularly if without the need for annexation?
8. What do you think the major benefits of the process were? Did it accomplish the goals you hoped?
9. How do you hope the process continues?
10. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I did not cover?
Questions for Sonoma County PRMD

1. Can you explain your position at PRMD, and what your day-to-day work involves?
2. What is the main goal of PRMD with regards to unincorporated islands and fringe islands like Moorland?
3. Were you involved at all with the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Plan/did Health Services and Regional Parks get in touch with you about the process?
4. Have you seen the draft plan, and what kinds of improvements residents want to see in the neighborhood? (If not, show plan) Do they seem like things that can be done without annexation? (And do they seem like things that are likely to get done without annexation?)
5. If so, what avenues for implementation do you think are available? And funding?
6. If they were involved, know about process—[Has the Healthy Neighborhood process spurred any additional action by PRMD with regards to Moorland?]
7. How is PRMD involved with annexation processes? Are you involved with the Roseland process? Do you think Moorland will be annexed at any point in the next few years or so?
8. I know that one of the county general plan policies is to discourage development in unincorporated areas within the urban service boundary until those areas are annexed—is there any other way for these areas to grow and change, if they aren’t likely to be annexed in the near future?
9. Does PRMD have a particular approach or policy with regards to unincorporated areas that are within urban service boundaries, and close to the Santa Rosa city boundary?
10. Are there any long-range plans that include Moorland, so I can see what the county’s goals for the neighborhood are?
11. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I did not cover?

Questions for Sonoma County Parks Department:

1. What was the main goal of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process from the perspective of the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department?
2. Was the process constrained by the short duration of the process?
3. What was the goal of the community engagement process? What kinds of ideas did you hope to get from the community, and did the ideas meet your expectations?
4. How were members of the Neighborhood Advisory Team chosen, and what was their involvement?
5. How were decision-making processes structured?
6. Have you discussed how to address implementation, particularly if without the need for annexation?
7. What do you think the major benefits of the process were? Did it accomplish the goals you hoped?
8. Why was design not incorporated into the process?
9. What do you envision for the next steps?
10. Is Andy’s Park design part of this process, or separate? Will there be another community engagement process as the park plans move further along?
Questions for Sonoma County District 5 Supervisor:

1. Can you give me a little background on yourself, where you grew up, and how you got involved with county politics?
2. What is your main goal as a County Supervisor?
3. What is your connection to the Moorland neighborhood?
4. I know I met you at one of the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning meetings—were you pretty involved throughout the process?
5. How did you feel about the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process overall?
6. How did you think the community engagement effort went?
7. How did you feel about decision-making processes?
8. Some of the NAT members I’ve spoken with felt a little frustrated after the process because they felt like they had been left hanging, and that no progress has been made on the plan. What are your views on this?
9. Another bit of feedback I received was that people didn’t learn who they should go to to talk about the issues they want fixed. Did you feel like there was a capacity-building effort in the process?
10. Have you discussed how to address implementation with any of the county agencies, particularly if without the need for annexation?
11. Do you think annexation is a key method to accomplish goals of the plan? (do you think most residents would want this as well?)
12. What do you think the major benefits of the process were? Did it accomplish the goals you hoped?
13. How do you hope the process continues?
14. Are there any County policy changes you would like to see that could help some of these unincorporated areas?
15. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I did not cover?

Questions for LAFCO:

1. Explain to me a little bit about what LAFCO does and what your role is at LAFCO.
2. Can you describe to me how all of the little unincorporated and incorporated islands formed in Sonoma County around Santa Rosa?
3. Can you explain what the “sphere of influence” is and how it relates to the “urban service boundary” (and the urban growth boundary)?
4. In the LAFCO policy and procedures guidelines, there was discussion of an “annexation plan” to be prepared by the City Santa Rosa—has this plan been made, or are is it in process?
5. Who was involved in making the plan and deciding on which islands would be annexed first?
6. If there is no City plan, is LAFCO involved in any kind of long-range annexation planning? How do different areas get chosen for annexation?
7. Can you describe what a typical annexation process would be?
8. Are annexation processes usually initiated by the community or the city?
9. Can you describe what is happening with the Roseland process right now, and what you foresee as the next steps and outcome?
10. Do you know about the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process administered by the Health Services Department and Parks Department? Did you have any role in the process, or were you consulted at all?
11. It seems that most of the ideas that came out of that planning process cannot happen unless the Moorland Area is annexed (under current regulation). I know Moorland is not in line to be annexed any time soon—can you think of any other ways to address some of their needs?
12. (e.g. sidewalks, paved roads, drainage improvements, development of grocery store, increased bus service, police service, parks etc.)
Questions for Moorland Resident (on NAT)

1. How long have you live in the Moorland neighborhood, and how do you feel about the neighborhood? (What do you like, not like, how have you seen it change)?
2. Now onto more specific questions about the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process:
3. What was your role in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process? How did you become a member of the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team? Why did you get involved?
4. How did you feel about the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process?
5. What were some good elements, and what were somethings you were not happy with? Did it accomplish what you hoped it would?
6. Did you feel as though you had decision-making power during the process, that your voice was heard?
7. Did you feel as though the ideas that came out of the process will address your neighborhood concerns?
8. Do you feel that you discussed implementation enough once the ideas were generated? Like how to actually get the ideas done?
9. Do you think the ideas will get accomplished? If so, how?
10. Has any action continued after the process? (Community organizing or implementation of the plan)? Do you feel like there has been any change in the neighborhood because of the process? Has your perception of the neighborhood changed at all because of the process?
11. How do you hope the process continues?
12. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I did not cover?

Questions for Santa Rosa Employee (on NAT)

1. How long have you worked in the Southwest Santa Rosa area neighborhood, and what was your role in the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Process?
2. How did you become a member of the Moorland Neighborhood Advisory Team? Why did you get involved?
3. How did you feel about the Moorland Healthy Neighborhood Planning Process?
4. What were some good elements, and what were somethings you were not happy with? Did it accomplish what you hoped it would?
5. Did you feel as though you had decision-making power during the process, that your voice was heard?
6. Did you feel as though the ideas that came out of the process will address residents’ neighborhood concerns?
7. Do you feel that you discussed implementation enough once the ideas were generated? Like how to actually get the ideas done?
8. Do you think the ideas will get accomplished? If so, how?
9. Has any action continued after the process? (Community organizing or implementation of the plan)? Do you feel like there has been any change in the neighborhood because of the process?
10. How do you hope the process continues?
11. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I did not cover?
APPENDIX B: MATERIALS FROM ELSIE ALLEN PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

B.1: Self-mapping worksheet and samples of student work
B.2: Map used in dot-mapping activity
B.3: Urban Planning and Design Vocabulary List
B.4: Ideal Neighborhood Worksheet with samples of student work
B.5: Maps of Neighborhood Groups for Budgeting Worksheet
B.6: Cards for Budgeting Activity
B.7: Government Agency Worksheet
B.8: CoLab Blog Series
B.1: Self-Mapping Worksheet and Samples of Student Work (not comprehensive)
YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

1. On the map below, draw the route you take from your home to school.
2. Use the legend symbols to label places on your route where you feel safe/happy, unsafe/unhappy, and a place you avoid entirely.
3. On the back of the page, use the space provided to illustrate some of the places you labeled on your map.

YOUR LEGEND

- Safe/Happy
- Unsafe/Unhappy
- Avoid

APPENDIX
In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel happy/safe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? Draw what the place looks like in the yellow box.

The place that makes me happy is a large field on west Robles avenue. Here I can get away from the suburban houses and cars. There's two horses you can feed and even a dog. During spring the grass on the field is perfectly light green. This is a place without any graffiti or police, and being near Moorland avenue that actually has some nature. ☺

In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel unhappy/unsafe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? What would make it a better place? Draw what the place looks like in the orange box.

A place where I feel unhappy would have to be the large broccoli memorial field. The situation happened a year ago, and nothing seems to have changed. There still is an older fence you have to be reminded of the incident everytime you walk or drive by it. 😞 😞 😞

Amandeep Singh AP Lang Comp
In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel happy/safe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? Draw what the place looks like in the yellow box.

The place that I have chosen as the place that makes me feel happy/safe is the park near my house. The park is called Bellevue Ranch Park. The main reason why is because it is peaceful to stroll through and plan for the kids and family that visit. The parents have multiple benches to sit on while their children can enjoy the playground as well as the huge open grass area available for almost any activity possible.

In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel unhappy/unsafe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? What would make it a better place? Draw what the place looks like in the orange box.

The place that I have chosen as the place that makes me feel unhappy/unsafe would be the highway near cook middle school. When I walked home there would be a side road you can walk and then suddenly there wouldn't be one anymore. This would cause me to be walking on the road sometimes.
In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel happy/safe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? Draw what the place looks like in the yellow box.

There is a trail next to my home that I love to go on to get away from home. The trail is used by people but I don't see people on it as often. I feel safe because it's a clean trail and there's a canal to look at, and you can see living animals moving around in the water. (fish, caiman, butterflies...) There's trees and lily pads that the birds sing in and it's very relaxing. The trail eventually merges into another bridge street that is rarely used by any cars, so I can lay in the middle of it or sit down and hang my legs from it.

In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel unhappy/unsafe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? What would make it a better place? Draw what the place looks like in the orange box.

Sebastian road is kind of scary to me because the people I bump into there are scary. They're rude and they stare at me. It makes me very uncomfortable when the men look at me because they look at me in a creepy way.
In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel happy/safe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? Draw what the place looks like in the yellow box.

I feel happy on the Colson Creek trail behind Bellevue. It is full of nature and is very placid and relaxing.

In the space below, describe a place on your map where you feel unhappy/unsafe. Why does it make you feel this way? What is there? What would make it a better place? Draw what the place looks like in the orange box.

I feel a little unsafe in Eddie Dr. because it has no street lights and is very dark at night. The sign with the street name also got knocked down and was replaced with a faded piece of cardboard.
B.2: Map used in dot-mapping activity during Visioning Session 1

PUTTING YOURSELF ON THE MAP

1. Place a dot on the map where you live.
2. Notice whether or not your home is within the city of Santa Rosa boundary or outside.

[Map image with instructions]
### Urban Planning and Design Vocabulary List

#### URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN VOCABULARY LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annexation</td>
<td>the legal process to incorporate an area or territory into an existing political unit such as a city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eminent Domain</td>
<td>the right of the government to take private property for public use, as long as the property owner is financially compensated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporated area</td>
<td>an area/neighborhood within the City (e.g. Santa Rosa) limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>the basic physical structures needed for the functioning of an area, such as roads, sewer systems, water service, sidewalks, transportation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td>the official power to make legal decisions and judgments over a certain geographic or political area (City, County, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>the type of use on a plot of land (commercial, residential, public, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Use</td>
<td>use that is beneficial to the public and not for private profit. Public uses include parks, community centers, plazas, infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and similar functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Use</td>
<td>private property used for commercial activity, including retail stores, restaurants, banks, and anything else considered a “business”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Use</td>
<td>property used for housing of any type—single-family homes, multi-family apartments, condominiums, and government-funded public housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcel</td>
<td>an area or plot of land with a single owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian</td>
<td>a person who walks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian-friendly</td>
<td>a term used to describe an area that is comfortable for pedestrians and includes amenities to enhance pedestrian safety (such as sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, street trees, walk signals, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Permit</td>
<td>a type of authorization that must be granted by the government before construction of a building can occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property line</td>
<td>The ownership boundary for a parcel of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/open space</td>
<td>a social space that is open and accessible to everyone, and is usually maintained and funded by the government (such as parks, plazas, community spaces).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>the size of a development project or planning area. Small-scale projects range from the size of a single block to a neighborhood plan. Large-scale projects range from a region to an entire city plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN VOCABULARY LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Streetscape</td>
<td>the natural and human-made features in and around a street, including sidewalks, street trees, buildings, street furniture, street lights, bus stops, and public art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated area</td>
<td>an area/neighborhood outside of city limits (e.g. Santa Rosa). These areas fall under the jurisdiction of the County (e.g. Sonoma County).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Design</td>
<td>the process of envisioning and designing the physical environment including buildings, streets, sidewalks, parks, and other aspects of our everyday surroundings. Urban design is concerned with both the beauty and function of our surrounding environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Planning</td>
<td>a process and profession concerned with determining land use, building development, public space, infrastructure, and transportation for a given area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Land</td>
<td>Empty land and that is not developed with any buildings or public parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>the separation of a city, town, or county into different zones or districts based on land use (commercial, residential, public, etc.) and other types of regulations. Zoning determines what kinds of buildings and uses are allowed in specific areas.</td>
</tr>
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#### OTHER WORDS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

1. In the space below, draw your ideal neighborhood however you envision it. Don’t worry about being “practical”-- it’s your ideal place!
2. On the back of the page, explain your neighborhood, and identify key elements within each of the 6 categories listed
YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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---

[Hand-drawn neighborhood illustration with labels like 'Com. garden']

---

Ashley Alvarez
YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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2. On the back of the page, explain your neighborhood, and identify key elements within each of the 6 categories listed.

Lyzette Campos

Dog Park

Super cool dog park where everyone goes

Principal area

Drive-thru movie & pizza spot

Center/popular neighborhood spot

Central movie

Kids are always out walking

Sidewalks around the whole thing (walk everywhere)

Solar pannus

Light posts everywhere
YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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YOUR IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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B.5: Maps of Neighborhood Groups for Budgeting Worksheet

2. ELSIE ALLEN PLANNING AREA - incorporated

City of Santa Rosa Limit

Planning Area Boundary
### B.6: Cards for Budgeting Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mural</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Crosswalk</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain Garden</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fountain</td>
<td></td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Trash Can</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Trees</td>
<td></td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Street Parking (instead of large parking lot)</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moveable Sidewalk Furniture</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bench</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park-let</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Street Facade</td>
<td></td>
<td>$350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaped Street Median</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INFRASTRUCTURE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

- Crosswalk
  - $1,000

- Sidewalk
  - $200,000

- Paved Road
  - $125,000

- Bike Lane
  - $15,000

- New Bus Line
  - $150,000

- Walk Signal
  - $5,000

- Stop Sign
  - $1,000

- Sheltered Bus Stop
  - $50,000

- Traffic Light
  - $200,000

- Drainage/Flooding Improvement
  - $250,000

- Blinking Crosswalk
  - $10,000

- Paving Improvement (fix potholes)
  - $5,000

- Traffic Calming Devices (speed bumps, curb bulbouts, traffic circles)
  - $5,000

- Pedestrian Bridge
  - $300,000

- Bike Rack
  - $1,000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGN</th>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY</th>
<th>BUSINESSES</th>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY</th>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bike Rack Sculpture</td>
<td>Street Median</td>
<td>Other Idea!</td>
<td>Other Idea!</td>
<td>Other Idea!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<td>Other Idea!</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PUBLIC SAFETY</td>
<td>PARKS/OPEN SPACE</td>
<td>Other Idea!</td>
<td>Other Idea!</td>
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B.7: Government Agency Worksheet

IMPORTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES FOR URBAN PLANNING

Sonoma County Offices:

Sonoma Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO): the government agency that regulates city and county boundaries. The commission has the power to review and approve proposals to change city and county boundaries (e.g. proposals for annexation).

Sonoma County Community Development Department: this department focuses on providing affordable housing and supporting public services to increase economic stability in communities across the county.

Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works: the department that administers infrastructure services for Sonoma County, including roads, public transportation, water systems, waste and garbage disposal.

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department: the urban planning department for Sonoma County. They are responsible for development proposals and land use planning.

Sonoma County Regional Parks Department: the department that oversees and ensures the maintenance of large and small parks, and other recreational amenities throughout Sonoma County.

City of Santa Rosa:

Santa Rosa Community Development Department: This is the City department where planning processes occur. This department includes both a planning division (which deals with land use and zoning) and a building division (which approves individual building permits and safety regulations).

Santa Rosa Economic Development Department: this City department deals with specific programs to promote economic growth and stability in Santa Rosa. The department focuses on encouraging business development and affordable housing.

Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks Department: This department administers all city parks, community centers, swimming pools, public spaces, and other recreational amenities.

Santa Rosa Transportation and Public Works: this department works closely with urban planners the Community Development Department to plan for and construct transportation infrastructure including roads, public transportation, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

Santa Rosa Utilities: this City department provides water services and wastewater treatment and other public utility infrastructure to communities throughout Santa Rosa.
Annexation and Inequity: The Story of an Unincorporated Community

Unincorporated areas are rarely talked about in City Planning education. As future city planners we focus on the land within the city boundaries. But what about those areas outside of the city, under the jurisdiction of counties? Sometimes the boundaries are not as clear as we think. I am currently conducting my City Planning Masters thesis research on an unincorporated community outside of Santa Rosa, California.

The neighborhood—The Moorland Avenue community—is predominantly Latino and struggles with issues of poverty, inadequate infrastructure, lack of open space, gang activity, and limited access to public transportation. Last year, there was a police shooting of a 13-year-old boy, Andy Lopez in a vacant lot along a residential street. This incident spurred protests and organizing for change in the neighborhood, and residents installed a make-shift park in the lot where Andy was shot.

This month, with the support of an amazing teacher at Elsie Allen High School in Santa Rosa, I have been working with 11th grade students to collaborate on a participatory design and visioning process for the community. In upcoming posts, I will describe my sessions with the students, but first I want to provide some of the political and physical context of the area.

Santa Rosa was incorporated as a City in 1868, and quickly became the economic center of Sonoma County, California. Until about 1950, the city expanded its boundary slowly and regularly outwards from the downtown area. However, between 1950 and 1960, the City adopted aggressive annexation policies in response to the explosive suburban development occurring past the city’s edges. During this period, Santa Rosa annexed only the areas it deemed beneficial and economically profitable and left all other areas unincorporated. In order to capture property tax revenues, the city leapfrogged lower-income edge settlements to annex new suburban-style developments. Several people I have talked to described this annexation practice (now outlawed) as “cherry picking.” This left the city with an extremely irregular boundary, in which islands of incorporated areas sit well outside the main city boundary, and islands of unincorporated areas are completely surrounded by the rest of Santa Rosa.
This history of unfair annexation practices has left pockets of unincorporated areas with limited public services, not only because the county does not have the resources to provide urban services, but also because the unincorporated “islands” are difficult to access. The Moorland Avenue neighborhood is what the County calls a “Fringe Island,” because it is surrounded by incorporated city on three sides.

The Moorland Avenue neighborhood is paved, and parts of it have sidewalks, but some side streets are unpaved. One resident, Esther Lenus, told me she and her neighbors got together to pave their side street because the County did not respond to their requests. Other sections of Moorland lack sidewalks, streetlights, and have significant drainage problems, forcing residents to walk in the street on a daily basis. These are just some of the basic planning issues facing this community.

The City of Santa Rosa is currently in the process of annexing the largest unincorporated island in the area—the Roseland neighborhood—in an effort to make the city boundary more regular. Unfortunately, similar plans are not in store for the Moorland neighborhood. In talking with County and City officials, they have made it clear that Moorland will not be annexed because it is a “drain” on the tax base. In other words the property tax revenue gained will not compensate for the cost to provide city services.

Unincorporated areas face unique planning and implementation barriers, but I believe that community-based design and the power of young people can help overcome these institutional failings.

— Unpaved Road in Moorland Neighborhood

— Moorland Avenue Neighborhood Map

— House in Moorland Neighborhood
Mapping Experiences in Unincorporated Communities

This is the second post in Drawing Outside the Lines: Community-Based Design in Unincorporated Communities, which chronicles a series of design workshops ("Visioning Sessions") with high schoolers in an unincorporated area outside of Santa Rosa, California. Read the history of this community here.

In this session, my goal was to get to know the students, understand their feelings about the neighborhood, and discuss what it means to be an unincorporated community. I started with an activity in which the students mapped their route from home to school and marked places where they felt safe, unsafe, and places they avoided entirely. I then asked them to draw and describe some of these places, and think about why they felt the way they did. Students were asked by their teacher to write a reflection after the session. One of the students noted that listening to his classmates' perceptions had opened his eyes: "I began seeing a pattern in the areas that people considered safe and unsafe. The safe areas had good lighting, safe sidewalks, and sometimes a park. These areas were well-maintained and within the city of Santa Rosa. Most of the unsafe areas don’t have good lighting and sidewalks, have gangs, and are in unincorporated areas."

As a planner, these answers were unsurprising, but the students' reflections after only one session revealed the power that can result from seeing common experiences amongst neighbors and classmates. One student wrote, "There is a better chance to make a positive community when you know that someone believes in the same thing as you."

The second half of the workshop was dedicated to learning about unincorporated areas, and why residents outside Santa Rosa's city limits experience disparities in health, safety, and life outcomes. Students put stickers on a map, marking where they live, and we looked at the city limit together.
Students marking where they live in relation to Santa Rosa’s boundaries

I should note that the City of Santa Rosa has an extremely irregular city boundary. The City’s history of unfair annexation practices and “cherry picking,” has led to dramatic inequality between its incorporated and unincorporated areas today (see my previous post for more detailed information on this issue).

Elsie Allen High School sits on the border of the city limit. Students’ homes in the school district are split between unincorporated and incorporated areas, and many students did not know they lived outside the city limit. We did a “Stand If” game, in which I asked students to stand if they had certain amenities in their neighborhoods, such as parks, sidewalks, community centers, grocery stores, street lights, etc. The students who were left seated at the end of the game all lived in unincorporated areas. I then asked the students to “stand if you’re a brilliant student at Elsie Allen High School” to remind them that they’re all part of the same community.

The students were startled at the injustice when they learned that within their own classroom, some people didn’t have access to services in the same way as others. I am quickly learning that one of the most important assets of...
Imagining Ideals and Budgeting for Betterment

This is the third post in Drawing Outside the Lines: Community-Based Design in Unincorporated Communities, which chronicles a series of design workshops ("Visioning Sessions") with high schoolers in an unincorporated area outside of Santa Rosa, California. Read the history of this community here.

Drawing the Ideal Neighborhood

In this session, I wanted the students to first tap into their most creative ideas by imagining their perfect neighborhood, and then harness that creativity into realistic ideas through a budgeting game. To start things off, students drew their ideal communities. It took a little pushing for them to move beyond “practicality” and to think outside the box. But eventually, they started to draw ideas like teleportation devices instead of cars, rooftop pools on every house, and of course, universal free wifi. I was incredibly impressed by many students’ emphasis on environmental sustainability. One student explained that in her ideal community, everybody’s house would have solar panels, and energy would be pooled together to power a community theater. Another explained that the sidewalks and roads would be made of solar collectors, and all the homes would have green roofs and rainwater collection tubs (I kid you not). A third student explained that he wanted a community with a “human-nature connection,” communal living, and sustainable farming for healthy foods. My faith in the future of our environment has been restored knowing that these teenagers will soon be leading the country.
Budgeting for the Ideal Neighborhood

For the second half of the session, I divided the students into groups based on where they live. I gave each group a map of their neighborhood planning area, and cards with different price-point items on them; such as “bench,” “street lights,” etc. These items each fit into one of six categories: businesses, design, community uses, parks/open space, infrastructure/pedestrian safety, and public safety.

Each group was then given a budget of $1 million dollars, and as a team, they prioritized their top three planning categories, on which they were to spend $700,000. The remaining $300,000 could be allocated as they wished. In addition, if they placed any cards on existing assets, they received an additional $5,000 to spend. This was intended to emphasize the importance of building on existing assets to get the most “bang for your buck.”

I was nervous about this game for three reasons: First, I was not at all confident that my pricing and budgeting math would work. After all, I’m a designer, not an accountant. Secondly, who thinks budgeting is fun? I wanted the students to get an idea of how to deal with real world constraints, but I didn’t want to bore them. Finally, I was worried that they would get frustrated by the constraints, and give up. Fortunately, none of that happened, and I was, yet again, amazed by the energy and brilliance of these young people. They worked together and problem-solved. They argued with each other and came to agreement about what to prioritize. They even haggled with me over the price of a bench: “$1,000 for a bench?! I’ll go out and build it myself!” And in the end, they were able to come up with some amazing plans to improve their communities.
Students discussing how to allocate resources

One thing I had not expected was the students’ ability to translate what they had learned in the first session about city/county jurisdiction into this activity. Two of the groups consisted of students who live in unincorporated areas, while the other two groups were comprised of students within the Santa Rosa limits.

The status of their respective communities affected the types of improvements the students proposed, and they became aware of these distinctions. One student, Sergio, wrote in his post-session reflection, “Since we are an incorporated area, the city has already helped us out, so we used the million dollars to improve the community with exciting and fun things, like fountains and sculptures in parks, and a bowling alley.” The unincorporated groups focused much more on basic needs such as road-paving, sidewalks, streetlights, and healthy food options. The activity also helped the students think more constructively about tangible ideas to improve their communities. One student wrote, “Learning I live in an unincorporated area and that it factors into my neighborhood not having necessary utilities and resources is one thing, but thinking about how to fix it by planning and renovating makes me want to do something about it.”
Students presenting their group’s final allocation decisions

I was also impressed by the strategic approach taken by each of the groups. Several groups intentionally decided to cluster their improvements in a specific area. One student, Erick, explained, “We decided to put a lot of things in one area and fix it up for two reasons: one being that after making that area nice, other areas would follow; and the second reason being so that more people could come together for different activities in a central place, so the area would not be seen as unsafe.” Their thoughtfulness reminded me of how much community members bring to the planning and design process. I have my education and technical skills, but I don’t have a community member’s deep knowledge and understanding of the place itself. These young people simply needed a creative outlet to use their community expertise and work through complicated planning issues together.

Post and Photos by Lillian Jacobson.
The Language of Design: Model Building and Community Chan

This is the fourth post in *Drawing Outside the Lines: Community-Based Design in Unincorporated Communities*, which chronicles a series of design workshops (“Visioning Sessions”) with high schoolers in an unincorporated area outside of Santa Rosa, California. Read about the history of this community here.

**Visioning Session 3:**
In this final session, the main focus of the day was for the students to build physical models of their visions for their neighborhoods. In the previous session, students created an overall planning framework for their neighborhoods. For this session’s model-building activity, they zoomed in and chose specific sites to focus on. Some groups chose a single park, others focused on a stretch of road, or a few city blocks. They all began to think strategically and in detail about how their site should function and look.

**The Importance of Advocacy**
Before we dove into the model-building activity, I talked with them about the slow pace of implementation in bureaucracies, and the importance of neighborhood advocacy in getting things done. Multiple Sonoma County officials told me that there is money to complete projects in Moorland and other unincorporated areas, but these projects need to be made a priority. To encourage the students to engage in advocacy, I handed out lists with the contact information and websites of government agencies in both the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. Their teacher, Lisa, was excited by this, and is going to have them pick an agency to contact and direct their advocacy towards. I think this is an important step towards empowerment and change. They already understand more than most residents about their political situation, jurisdiction, and annexation. Their voice on these matters can make a difference.

**Model-Building**
After this introduction, we transitioned into model-building. I gave each group a foam-core model base for their site, and a range of model-building materials. The previous day, I had spent most of my life’s savings on art supplies (I have a hard time controlling myself in craft stores) because I wanted the students to have lots of options in representing their ideas. They certainly took to the challenge. They made light posts out of pipe cleaners and pompons, built a skate park with a halfpipe made from foam, and some students went outside and picked up twigs to make tree trunks. I have to say, the models they built in an hour far surpassed my first model, which I spent a week on.
Students working on their model.

After they were done making the models, each group presented their ideas to the class. As usual, I was blown away by their work. I was especially struck by the artfulness with which they programmed their sites. They thought about how different uses interact with each other in order to help make a space more vibrant. One group put a homeless shelter next to a local business/job training center. “We put it right next to the shelter so that some of the people in the shelter can have an opportunity to find a job and get a head start to getting back on their feet,” explained Louis, a student in this group. Louis’ group also sited a daycare next to a community farm “not only so the daycare kids can learn to plant and farm, but also because it’s near the intersection so a lot of people can come and plant and work together.”

Another group built a youth recreation center next to a community center with classes for adults “where people can go learn art, maybe mechanics, or languages.” They explained: “We thought this was a good idea because a parent could go take a class while a kid is taking a sport next door.” This group also added a bus stop to make the whole area more accessible. “If people can’t get there it kind of defeats the purpose,” they explained.
The Language of Design

Seeing them working together and putting so much energy into this project, I discovered something critical to my thesis: design itself is a tool that unlocks creativity and allows people to talk about difficult community issues. I am glad I taught the students technical planning vocabulary words, but the real language they learned, and needed, was design and visual representation. I have always believed that design should not be relegated to “experts,” and that community members should have a voice in the design process, but I never realized the importance of design as a mode of communication itself in a community process. The act of building and creating enabled the students to identify specific ideas for their community and to think about how those ideas would be organized spatially.

Student model of a park.

This outcome is much more meaningful for the participatory process than a laundry list of community priorities with no real vision. Because the high school students thought about how uses might work together to enhance each other, their ideas were more feasible. They will be able to present a more powerful argument when advocating for implementation. Lisa is going to organize an event where the students will show their models to community members, city and county planners, and elected officials. The idea for this event came to her in the middle of the students’ presentations when she saw how powerfully and effectively they had conveyed their ideas. Young people are rarely asked what they want to see in their community; so, if nobody is asking, they’ll just have to show us instead.
Student Voices: Reflections on Community-Based Design

This is the fifth and final post in a series chronicling a set of three design workshops ("Visioning Sessions") with high schoolers in an unincorporated area outside of Santa Rosa, California. Read the history of this community here. This concluding post is focused on the voices of the students themselves. Eight students volunteered to write reflections to contribute to this blog. I have used excerpts from their reflections below organized around 4 main themes. You can read their full posts here.

Education about planning and design
Planners often make an assumption that everyone knows what urban planning and design is. People experience urban planning issues on a daily basis, but they may not think about it in urban planning terms. My work with the Elsie Allen High School students was an important reminder that planning and design ideas need to be broken down into accessible concepts. In educating these young people, I was excited to see how eager they are to share their learning with their neighbors and work towards a broader understanding of community issues.
Kelsey Gomez
During the three-day series on urban planning, I learned information that made me look at neighborhoods in new ways. There are many areas in the city that can use improvement, whether to increase safety or pure aesthetics. I hope that with this project I will be able to put my knowledge to use and share it with other people in my community to make a change in the city.

Maria Martinez
My understanding of urban planning has completely changed me. When I go outside I think about how the plazas and malls are organized and who they benefit. I also realize that it doesn’t take just one person, it takes the involvement of many people, to make change happen. This is often hard, because many people are under informed, unaware, and don’t believe that their opinion can make a difference.

Dillon Pfeiffer
It was so much fun to have my classmates come together to discuss common problems in our communities. I learned a lot about how urban planning can actually help the community in more ways than I ever thought was possible.

Understanding inequity
One of the main goals of the visioning sessions was to talk with students about the reasons behind the inequities facing their neighborhood. There are institutional and structural reasons for the lack of safety in their neighborhoods, and understanding these is important in order to fight for greater equity. I didn’t anticipate how fired up this knowledge would make the students. A group of them have decided to work on an educational campaign to teach their neighbors about the challenges of being unincorporated and potentially gain community support to petition for annexation.

Disparities Found in Moorland Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Disparities</th>
<th>Social Disparities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irregular street paving</td>
<td>Lower median income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer sidewalks</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of street lighting</td>
<td>Larger household size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage and flooding problems</td>
<td>Outside perceptions of crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer parks and community spaces</td>
<td>Some gang activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer crosswalks</td>
<td>Less political representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe pedestrian environment</td>
<td>Differences in emergency services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Amandeep Singh
Growing up in Moorland Avenue, I have become accustomed to constant gang violence and frequent police visits. I have even witnessed a drive-by shooting on my neighbor’s house. The older I become, the more I realize this isn’t normal, and it definitely isn’t good. Having two immigrant parents from India who just barely got their chance at the “American Dream”, and growing up in a world that was new to all of us, it can definitely be said that no one chooses to live in Moorland. There’s no stunning view, no fresh cut grass and white picket fences, no block parties, or neighborhood gatherings. Everyone there lives here because it’s for the same reason: they have to, it’s their only option. Some people may say that if you want to succeed, you have to try your best; but when a child grows up with so many traumatic experiences, they definitely aren’t on any fair or equal standing with others.

Maria Martinez
The city isn’t in charge of fixing potholes or keeping unincorporated areas clean. I found out that for the past ten years I have live in an incorporated area. This has drastically impacted me because I had thought that all neighborhoods were like the one I lived in. Knowing that they are not, has made me want to help to improve communities with less resources.
Importance of collaboration

Collaboration is obviously a fundamental component of participatory planning and design. Nonetheless, it was meaningful to witness the students’ excitement as they worked through problems together and saw that they are able to come up with successful ideas as a group.

Jonathan Torres
The best thing I learned was the power of collaboration. At first, I saw that everyone wanted different things in our neighborhoods and we couldn’t come to a conclusion on what we wanted. But by collaborating, we gained clarity on our opinions and came to the best conclusions. We were able to plan out an ideal neighborhood and it was lots of fun! I realized that collaboration is the key to making any change happen in my neighborhood.

Matty Tran
In the budgeting activity, our group had some disagreements, but in the end we were able to collaborate and come to an agreement on what the money was to be used for.

I loved the model making activity the most. It took collaboration, communication, and teamwork. Everyone’s model was done exceptionally well and was well thought-out, incorporating what was taught through the series of workshops. It amazed even Lily how well thought-out the ideas were and how hard everyone worked on the construction of the models.

Feeling like they can make a difference

One of the most important goals of the visioning sessions was for the students to see that they have the power to make change in their community. The students’ know their community best, and I hoped the visioning sessions would begin to show them their own ability to work for neighborhood improvements.
Feeling like they can make a difference

One of the most important goals of the visioning sessions was for the students to see that they have the power to make change in their community. The students’ knowledge about their community best, and I hoped that the visioning sessions would begin to show them their own ability to work for neighborhood improvements.

Bella Cruz

These activities made my classmates and I feel empowered to make a difference in our local communities. Even in an unincorporated area, the community can speak up about how they feel their community could benefit from a particular change, especially if it concerns residents’ safety. We learned that even in unincorporated areas, there are resources and people to contact in order to discuss local problems and that change can occur.

Sean Greiner

We learned a lot about our community and we learned that we have the power to make a change. I want to continue working with Lilly on building the models because I want to improve my community and make a positive change. Lilly came into our class and educated us about this topic and our communities. She sparked an interest in many kids; this can possibly lead to positive change in our communities.

Amandeep Singh

Rethinking city planning when it comes to impoverished neighborhoods is the only way for change to happen. When simply adding a park or an after-school program has the ability to better the lives of a generation of ignored and forgotten children, the time to act is now. There are no families, children, or students more ready for that change than those of Southwest Santa Rosa.

I am excited to continue working with the students over the course of the semester and beyond, and I look forward to seeing the change they make in their neighborhoods, and the leaders they become in their communities.