Small-town sustainability: A case study

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

MASTER OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Co-majors: Community and Regional Planning; Sustainable Agriculture

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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2014

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ABSTRACT

Across the United States, cities and towns of all sizes are employing sustainability and resilience strategies in an attempt to address a myriad of challenges – natural disasters, rapid development, dwindling populations (Beatley, 1992; Campbell, 1996; Krueger, 2005). Yet, little is known about the communities with populations under 50,000 that are taking a sustainability approach to development. This research employs qualitative methodology to better understand Fairfield, Iowa, a City with a population of under 10,000, that is utilizing a sustainability approach to community development. This case study uses in-depth interviews, a narrative analysis, and a participatory plan evaluation to understand how and why sustainability has become a strategy for community development. Results demonstrate the importance of community engagement, proactive leadership, and goal oriented planning. This research offers insights into the way in which sustainability emerged as a theme in the Fairfield community, how it is being implemented, and elements for other communities to consider when engaging with sustainability.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"Story has a special importance in planning.... In order to imagine the ultimately un-representable space, life and languages of the city, to make them legible, we translate them into narratives. The way we narrate the city becomes constitutive of urban reality, affecting the choices we make, the ways we then might act." (Sandercock, 2003)

Cities and towns of all sizes are engaging in the challenge of determining their future growth pattern. Research across North America suggests that there are localized community development trends that have been sustained, which need modification in order to incorporate environmental and social equity into the current economic and development mindset (Beatley, 1992; Campbell, 1996; Krueger, 2005). Critics of the current dominant trends of urban development, namely the sprawl associated with postwar suburbia, contend that planners have been sustaining a pattern of development that warrants reconsideration and that Americans desire something different (Duany, 2002). Some planners and community organizers are utilizing sustainability strategies as an attempt to consider equity issues and offer alternatives to the current development trends.

While there is research on sustainability, resilience theory, and sustainability planning practices, there are few in-depth examples of how they have been implemented in one geographic location. There are even fewer examples of communities that have used sustainability as a framework for development, and again fewer studies on such communities in the Midwest. Exploring one such community in depth, this study looks at how sustainability has emerged as a theme in the

community, how it is defined, and how associated theories and practices have been operationalized. The research is presented in six chapters:

- Introduction

- Literature review

- Methodology

- Analysis

- Plan evaluation

- Conclusion

Addendums include tools that were used to carry out the research. This project reveals that while narratives are constantly being lived, they are not always known in their entirety even by the main characters. By condensing the story, we can gain insight into the unique characteristics of a community, how latent potential morphs into actualized progress, how a city engages with and characterizes sustainability, and how they are able to continuously make change and improve their quality of life and the environment.

Research Purpose and Questions

Sustainability is a buzzword that has become important within many disciplines. Douglas Mckenzie-Mohr phrases its importance this way in his book, *Fostering Sustainable Behavior:*

We live in a finite world and humanity will eventually be forced to adopt sustainable practices. While we have no choice regarding whether we

eventually adopt these practices, the speed with which they are adopted will determine the grace with which we make this transition. (McKenzie-Mohr, 2012)

The purpose of this research is to explore small-town sustainability initiatives on a local – grassroots and municipal – level. This research seeks to understand the story of sustainability planning in one locality, in order to shed light on and further understand how and why sustainable community development is fostered and occurs. Toward these ends, the study asks the questions:

1. How and why does a community adopt a narrative around sustainable community development and how are they acting upon it?
2. What are the key components of a locality receptive to and interested in sustainability and/or resilience?

These questions are answered utilizing a single case study/narrative analysis of a small city – Fairfield, Iowa. The research included interviews with city officials and residents, a qualitative performance evaluation of the *Fairfield Go Green Strategic Plan*, and observations from the researcher's participation in the community.

Research Approach

The world is constantly facing environmental, social, and economic challenges. These are reflected in small towns by the disappearance and pollution of natural resources, shrinking populations, and dwindling governmental funds. Yet,

there are ever-present opportunities for addressing challenges. In small towns, these opportunities persist in community design, rich history, and social networks that allow residents to develop creative solutions to the challenges they face. By mobilizing their internal capacities and strengths, while keeping an eye on the world beyond their borders for inspiration and pragmatic tools, small towns can act in ways that positively impact their growth. But small towns must be wary of strategies learned from larger population centers so as not to ignore the specific contexts that shape their local social and political space (Cohen, 1977; Duany, 2002).

As small towns navigate their challenges and target growth, there are lessons to be learned from cities employing sustainability strategies. In order to elucidate these lessons, this case study focuses on one city. This research interprets the implications of sustainable community development for plan writing and community engagement. By re-situating these issues it moves beyond previous research that primarily focused on large urban populations. The following factors will be analyzed throughout this case study:

- The meaning of "sustainability"
- A city's role in sustainable development
- The impact of planning for sustainability
- The process of making changes in a community

This research is grounded in qualitative methodology. Interviews were conducted to understand community residents and leaders' perspectives on how and why sustainable development is a theme in Fairfield, and the researcher participated in the community as a way to create reciprocity between the research and the subject

of the research. A performance evaluation of the City's Go Green Strategic Plan[1] was

conducted with members of the City's Go Green Commission[2] to further understand

the sustainability emphasis in Fairfield and to triangulate data from the interviews.

This research is the story of one community's rationale for and experience of

attempting to create a development strategy that considers the needs of people and the

planet.

Assumptions

One assumption that is made in the design of this research is that sustainability

and resilience are more than passing trends and are worthy of research. While they are

relatively new terms for U.S. planners, their premise is age old. Planners have always

been concerned with creating healthy, enjoyable, and safe environments for people to

inhabit. Sustainability encapsulates this core tenant of the planning profession and

expands it to ensure the persistence of the equitable treatment of humans and the

natural environment (Beatley, 1993; Bauriedle, 2002; Davoudi, 2012; Jepson, 2004).

A second assumption is that small towns are relevant. As the literature shows,

the research on small-towns has dwindled as their populations have shrunk. However,

there are lessons to be learned from small towns. The ones that are booming may have

relevant information for cities of any size that are seeking or experiencing growth, and

the ones that are disappearing may have tales of caution to be heeded.

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[1] The Go Green Plan is the City's guide for sustainable development.
[2] The Go Green Commission is a group of volunteers, appointed by the Mayor, to support strategic planning related to the Go Green Plan and the plan implementation.

Why Fairfield, Iowa?

Fairfield has characteristics similar to many other small towns in Iowa, and across the Great Plains and Midwest. Just like every other small town, it is the people, history, visions for the future, and actions taken that make it the place that it is. However, Fairfield has become known for something that most towns are not engaging with – sustainability.

Fairfield is known statewide for pursuing a path of sustainability. The best known and longest running initiatives for sustainability in Iowa are in Decorah, Iowa City, Dubuque, and Fairfield. While each of these communities warrants its own case study, Fairfield was selected, because it is a logical choice for understanding when and why sustainability first started becoming important to small towns. Fairfield is one of two small towns with a statewide reputation for this work, and has a long history of doing things first.

Researcher Perspective

As someone who grew up in a small city, I am particularly interested in the opportunities and challenges that exist for such communities to benefit from assessing the impacts of sprawl and re-prioritizing environmental, social, and economic capacities. I am interested in how cities with small populations talk about, envision, and participate in community development.

In 1990, my family moved from the hustle and bustle of Boston to a small town in the corner of Southeast Iowa. We did this at the suggestion of the leader of

the Transcendental Meditation organization, who some call "guru."[3] We were

amongst nearly 1,000 people who moved to Fairfield between 1974 and 1995.[4] There

were hippies from the west coast, spiritual seekers from the east coast, and

practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique from around the globe.

Students, scientists, professors, business-people, and families were all a part of the

mix of people re-locating to Iowa.

Today, Fairfield has a few unique aspects that characterize it, just as any small

town does. As you can expect from any small-town, news often travels down the

grapevine faster than you can walk from one side of the city to the other. Also similar

to other small Midwestern towns, a large portion of the population has family roots in

Midwest agriculture dating back through multiple generations. Among the things that

are unique to Fairfield is that approximately 1/3 of the current population are

transplants from all over the United States and around the world who have some

connection to "new-age" culture and/or the Transcendental Meditation organization.[5]

My family falls within that 1/3 alternative minority. Growing up as a part of this

unusual minority, I was taught to find and see connections between things, to focus on

similarities instead of differences. Simultaneously, I was encouraged to question the

status quo and develop my own individuality, express creativity, and celebrate

diversity.

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[3] Guru is a Hindi word meaning "spiritual teacher." Many people practice the
Transcendental Meditation technique and do not consider Maharishi to be their Guru.
People learn the technique for many reasons – health and well-being, medical,
psychological, spiritual etc. It is important to know that the Transcendental
Meditation organization is affiliated with Maharishi University of Management,
which is one of the largest employers in Fairfield and has influenced Fairfield's
trajectory of development.
[4] According to the Maharishi Foundation USA
[5] According to the Maharishi Foundation USA and officials of the City of Fairfield

The juxtaposition of growing up in the middle of "big-ag" pork, corn, and soybean country while hearing about organic fruits and vegetables, world peace, and vegetarianism on a daily basis, set the tone for my interest in sustainable agriculture and community development. The broadly defined, and largely accepted, purpose of community development is to empower individuals to make change in their environment. How and why does this change occur? What prompts a community to adopt a particular development strategy and how is it maintained? Through this research, I seek to further understand what sustainable community development looks like, perceptions of it, and how it is occurring in rural Iowa.

This research explores one community's approach to sustainable development and questions its relevance for other communities. It explores the meaning of sustainability and its relationship to resilience and transition theories. By looking at one community, this research hopes to elucidate ways that existing theories of and approaches to community and ecological development are being enacted, and how the on-the-ground actions can inform related theories.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a review of relevant literature, it is important to cast a wide net in order to cover the breadth of what this research focuses on. This research is contextualized by literature related to sustainability, resilience, and transition theory. The literature review begins by looking at how narratives are formulated and evaluated. This provides valuable insights into the scope of this work. Complementary to the narrative is an evaluation, a ground-truthing, of the story and the actions of its characters by means of a qualitative performance evaluation of a strategic plan. Therefore, contextualizing this research within the literature related to small-town planning, smart growth, and plan evaluation begins to close the gap of the confluence of these three subjects. The goal of this literature review is to place this research in the context of current thinking in order to provide an intellectual foundation, identify questions that have not yet been asked, and establish grounds for potential further research.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative research, takes issue with the conventional realist view that there is a reality "out there" that a researcher must discover (Lee, 2011). Engaging with narrative inquiry can include research conducted in an interview format, but also un-scripted conversations and dialogue. Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to understand how knowledge is structured, embodied in a person, and expressed in practice (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The researcher or "narrator" creates plots from disordered experience, and gives reality "a unity that

neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In so doing, researchers move beyond the material world of nature and into the intensely human realm of value (Cronon 1992). This shift gives power to the human voice, to individual stories, and to the knowledge that exists in tales.

Qualitative researchers have used the term "narrative" in a variety of contexts (Polkinghorne, 1995; Wells, 2011; Squire, 2008). In narrative inquiry, narrative refers to "a discourse in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot" (Polkinghorne, 1995; Wells, 2011; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In the West, narrative is often thought of as stories that have a coherent order, usually with a linear conception of time, and contain events that provide an explanation for a known end-point (Gergen, 2009; Wells, 2011). In ordering and formulating a narrative, stories are written that help people to make sense of themselves and the world around them (Squire, 2008).

Narrative inquiries can be divided into two groups based on two types of cognition (Polkinghorne, 2009; Wells, 2011). The two types of cognition are 1) paradigmatic, which recognizes categories that are made up of many units and 2) narrative, which combines elements into a "plotted" story (Wells, 2011). The associated types of inquiry are 1) paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry that gathers stories for its data and uses paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce categories out of the common elements across the data; and 2) Narrative-type narrative inquiry that gathers events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories (Wells, 2011). In both types of inquiry, the core question of the research revolves around "how and why" a story is constructed revolving around specific individuals, location, and time.

A narrative inquiry tells us "what it (the story of reality) is like," and allows insight into how things are, from the researcher's perspective, rather than how they "should" be or how the researcher "wants" them to be (Phillion and Connelly, 2002). A narrative analysis takes stories as data and examines the content, structure, performance, and/or context of the narrative to produce explanatory stories (Wells, 2011; Polkinghorne, 2009). The analysis of the inquiry treats the stories as units rather than fragmenting them into thematic categories (Riessman, 2008). In this way, a narrative analysis is useful when the interest is in how and why a story is constructed, what it accomplishes, and how the audience and narrators affect what may be told (Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011).

Sustainability Plan Evaluations

The quest for understanding what "sustainability" means began in earnest in 1987, when The United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development published the Brundtland Report (Brundtland; Grant, 2009). This report defined sustainability as the oft quoted, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." However, as more and more people and disciplines engage with this term, its definition continues to be criticized for vagueness and a lack of an appropriate temporal scope (Allen, 2010; Bauriedle, 2002; Gunder, 2006; Rammel, 2007). In the discipline of community and regional planning, this quest for understanding "sustainability" has taken on a multi-faceted approach centering around understanding

and planning for the three "Es" of sustainability - environment, equity, and economics - within the context of cities and communities (Campbell, 1996).

The three "Es" can be further understood as an ecological necessity to live within the carrying capacity of the planet, a social need to have governance structures that enable people to voice and enact their values, and the economic responsibility to ensure that the basic needs of all people are met (Campbell, 1996; Dale, 2010). Communities across the United States are adopting plans centered on these three elements of sustainability (Berke, 2010; Jepson, 2001). However, the extent to which communities are acting on their sustainability language or simply espousing it in their plans is largely unknown (Berke, 2010; Downs, 2007). The little research that has been undertaken, primarily in the form of plan evaluations, has revealed that the content of plans touting "sustainability" language and plans lacking such verbiage is insignificantly different, and the effects of the plans are almost the same. This research has largely focused on cities with populations of 25,000 to 100,000+ with little attention paid to smaller or rural cities and towns (Berke, 2010; Jepson, 2004; Beatley, 1992; Bauriedle, 2002; Duany, 2002; Gordon, 1997; Neumann, 2005). Yet, researchers have identified a need, across population size, for in-depth analysis and case-study development focused on why communities are undertaking sustainable development (Berke, 2010; Bridger, 1999; Jepson, 2004).

There is extensive research on the quality of plans being written across the country (Laurian, 2004; Brody, 2005; Burby, 2003). But how do we know if these plans are meeting their objectives? Even though plan evaluation is considered a planning best practice, many individual planners, organizations, and municipalities find it challenging to allocate the time and resources for this activity (Seasons, 2003; Haines, 2007; Godschalk, 2012). The majority of planning evaluation literature

focuses on the comprehensive plan, yet planners often utilize site, neighborhood, or strategic plans. And even though best planning practices suggest the incorporation of indicators and measurement tools into the plan document itself, many planning departments are resource constrained and may not review the plan as often as desired (Seasons, 2003). Therefore, there is a need for planning methodologies that cover the range of plans used by planners that they can incorporate into their professional agendas (Talen, 1996).

When considering sustainability evaluations there is an added "definitional" challenge (Godschalk, 2012). When a community does not agree on what sustainability is, it is challenging to have a dialogue about sustainability and determine what policies and actions will make a community more sustainable (Feiden, 2011). However, the evaluation or assessment process itself may help foster a dialogue around what will make the community more sustainable (Feiden, 2011). Because planning includes both an on-going process of community engagement and the activity of plan writing, some researchers suggest that plan writers and implementers develop evaluation criteria for themselves and report back to their communities before, during, and after the implementation phase has begun (Baer, 1997; Godschalk, 2012). This supports the idea that an evaluation could be part of the on-going dialogue about the plan itself, making the plan iterative in nature.

Evaluations might look at the plan's written quality and conformance with other city policy, or may be empirically based on outcomes resulting from the plan (Brody, 2005; Burby, 2003; Baer, 1997). These two different types of plan evaluation techniques can be called 1) conformance and 2) performance evaluation (Laurian, 2004). A conformance based evaluation draws connections between the plan and plan implementation and considers empirically measurable results (Laurian, 2004).

Performance based evaluation focuses on the planning process and considers the plan as a guide for future planning decisions (Laurian, 2004). Utilizing this strategy, a plan is successful to the degree that it is consulted and utilized in making planning decisions (Laurian, 2004). Content analysis may be employed in either of these approaches to evaluating plans. Content analysis refers to reducing the content in the plan to a set of categories for the purpose of analysis, a process that involves identifying and applying codes to the prepared document (Norton, 2008).

There is a strong emphasis in the planning literature on the importance of plan evaluation and of establishing regimes to make sure it happens. There are also case examples of plan evaluations, but there is little guidance for methodologies that consider community size, geographical location, and demographics. The literature largely supports the development of evaluation schemes from within communities, which would allow those communities to find meaning in the evaluation. This research explores this opportunity by working with the City's Go Green Commission to design and execute a plan evaluation based on pre-existing methodologies and the interests of the Commission.

Smart Growth

The U.S. EPA's SmartGrowth America program was established to help create "great" neighborhoods (Smart Growth America, 2013). It is often discussed as a way to help communities achieve a more affordable and equitable built environment (Haines, 2007). Communities embracing smart growth also embrace three key principles of community sustainability - economic, equitable, and environmental.

Smart Growth America is, "…committed to providing practical recommendations based on sound research, working with leaders on all levels to identifying policy solutions for a myriad of challenges, and establishing networks and coalitions consisting of a diverse group of people" (Smart Growth America, 2013). Planners across the country have embraced smart growth as a framework for intelligent community design (Berke, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Sartori, 2011).

Planners often focus research and resources on urban environments, resulting in a marginalization of rural communities, so much so that books written specifically for small and rural areas have tried to either apply urban planning practices to non-urban areas or distinguish rural places from urban areas in a cry for attention (Arendt, 1994; Daniels et al. 1995; Mishkovsky et al 2010). Special interest groups, which are often non-existent in rural areas, are the primary advocates for Smart Growth (Downs, 2007). It has been argued that most smart growth solutions are most applicable to urban and suburban areas and areas of relatively dense population (Wells, 2002). The needs of rural communities seem to be left out of our common understanding of "smart growth" (Haines, 2007). For example, many rural communities are concerned with stabilizing and re-enlivening a fleeing or ageing population and with re-establishing an agricultural and service-based economy. Yet, Smart Growth tends to emphasize mass transit and urban density.

The Iowa Smart Planning Act outlines ten smart growth principles relevant to the state (see Table 1. Smart Principles) and provides local comprehensive planning and development guidelines (Land Use-Smart Planning, Iowa Code 18B2.1, 2010). The Act was signed into law on April 26, 2010. The legislation holds that these principles are critical to producing greater economic opportunity, enhancing environmental integrity, improving public health outcomes, and safeguarding Iowa's quality of life

(Rebuild Iowa Office, Smart Planning Legislative Guide 2011). According to the legislation, these principles must be considered and may be applied when local governments and state agencies deliberate planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions (Land Use-Smart Planning, Iowa Code 18B, 2010). While the Iowa Smart Planning Act contains similar principles to Smart Growth, they are broader in nature. For example, a Smart Growth principle is "Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas," while a similar Iowa Smart Planning principle is "Natural Resource and Agriculture Protection" (See Table 1. Smart Principles). Furthermore, language was included in the Act stipulating that application of Smart Planning Principles does not expand nor do they reduce the authority of state and local governments and other public entities to exercise eminent domain (Iowa Smart Planning Legislation, July 2010).

Smart Planning and Smart Growth principles articulate a framework and actionable principles that incorporate the Brundtland Commission's definition of and the three "Es" of sustainability - economy, equity, and environment. They provide a guide for planners and community leaders to reference as they engage with establishing desirable places to live. There is a significant lack of research on implementing these principles in the Midwest and in small towns.

Table 1. Smart Principles

Iowa Smart Planning	EPA Smart Growth
Collaboration	Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions
Efficiency, Transparency, Consistency	Take advantage of compact building design

Table 1. (continued)

Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy	Create walkable neighborhoods
Occupational Diversity	Mix land uses
Revitalization	Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
Housing Diversity	Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
Community Character	Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection	Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
Sustainable Design	Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
Transportation Diversity	Provide a variety of transportation choices

Small-town Planning

Throughout Iowa, and the United States as a whole, rural populations have been on the decline for decades as people follow jobs and seek amenities in urban areas (Cohen, 1977; Daniels, 1987; Duany, 2002; Daniels, 1987; Mattson, 1997; Morton, 2003). With populations shifting to urban centers, so has the focus of planning research. Though surveys have suggested that three out of four Americans

would prefer to live in a small town, and there was a small surge of in-migration to

rural areas in the 1970s, the depressed farm economy and "farm crisis" of the 1980s

expedited rural de-population in Iowa and across the American Midwest (Coates,

1977; Cohen, 1977; Daniels, 1987; Duany, 2002; Daniels, 1987; Mattson, 1997;

Morton, 2003). Yet, with more than one-third[6] of Iowa's population still living in

rural areas there is a need for rural planning research that focuses on rural

communities and the urban clusters that serve them (Bridger, 1999; Jepson, 2004;

Daniels, 1987). Presently, research focused on rural areas, falls into two categories 1)

sociologically based planning research focused on understanding community

development via the study of social capital, civic structure, civic engagement, and

civic welfare and 2) research focused on economic development and revitalization,

especially of downtowns through historic preservation (Krueger, 2005; Robertson,

1999; Cohen, 1977; Mayer, 2010; Morton, 2003, 2008; Tolbert, 2002; Robertson,

1999; Flora, 1999; Zekeri, 1994). The upsurge of interest in sustainability planning,

and subsequent need for research, coupled with a dearth of literature on rural

communities, provides an opportunity to create intra-disciplinary bridges between

urban and rural planning trends.

Rural can be a challenging term to define. The U.S. Department of Agriculture

(USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) defines rural areas as nonmetropolitan

counties. Of the nation's 3,142 counties, nearly two-thirds are classified as rural.[7] By

this definition, rural communities in the United States comprise 17 percent of the

population (49 million people) and about 75 percent of the total land area. According

to the U.S. Census, an urban area consists of a population of 50,000 or more and

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[6] http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html

[7] U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Rural Population and Migration Briefing Room. http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Population/.

urban clusters consist of populations between 2,500 and 50,000.[8] According to these descriptions, many of Iowa's 99 counties would be considered rural areas containing urban clusters. For example, Fairfield, Iowa has a population of 9,464,[9] thus is an urban cluster, but is situated in a nonmetropolitan county, and could be considered a rural community.

Community is also poorly defined in the literature, but may be understood as the totality of interactions within a social system usually defined within a geographic space (Efrat, 2012; Hummons, 1990; Mattson, 1997; Wilson, 2013). There may be many different communities within one geographic space, embedded within complex networks of power (Rammel, 2007; Wilson, 2013). The interactions of communities within a spatial setting allow residents to persistently engage in mutually supportive, grassroots, activities, which creates a "sense of place" (Mattson, 1994; Robertson, 1999). This sense of place begins to address the interaction between land and place that is so integral to understanding development patterns, and the challenges associated with growth and development, facing communities living in a rural landscape (Mishkovsky, 2010; Robertson, 1999).

From a land use and development perspective, rural America includes towns and small cities as well as lands that are managed for economic value such as farms, prairies, forests, and rangelands (Morton, 2003; Coates, 1977; Mishkovsky, 2010). Historically, rural land has been used for the production and extraction of resources. Towns were developed at the transportation hubs—rail stations, river ports, major crossroads—where agricultural or natural resources could be traded or shipped. Many rural communities were built around main commercial streets and relatively compact, walkable neighborhoods, containing the valuable infrastructure that served their civic,

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[8] U.S. Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html
[9] According to the 2010 U.S. Census

cultural, and social needs (Robertson, 1999; Duany, 2002). The working lands

surrounding the towns often provided the reason for their existence, and continue to

do so in many places. The rural landscape is integral to the social and economic life of

small communities (Mattson, 1994; Robertson, 1999;Mishkovsky, 2010).

Rural communities often lack access to private and public funds making it

challenging to access capital for economic development and community revitalization

(Edwards, 2007; Morton, 2008). Yet, some rural communities are finding solutions

that allow them to take advantage of their assets, attract and retain businesses and

residents of all ages, and ensure that economic development results in lasting

improvements (Morton, 2003, 2008). Some places are exploring new ways to

generate income with the development of renewable energy facilities, including wind

farms and solar panels (Edwards, 2007). Others are directing public and private

investments to main streets and village centers. Still others are planning and building

walkable, convenient, and affordable neighborhoods (Edwards, 2007). However, rural

communities often lack the resources to address development issues. Many small,

rural jurisdictions have limited local government staff, experience, or funding, which

can mean few resources dedicated to comprehensive planning, regional collaboration,

and other efforts to identify shared community goals and visions that can help shape

growth and development (Morton, 2003, 2008; Edwards, 2007).

The Intersection of Sustainability, Resilience, and Transition Theories

As professionals continue to define sustainability and identify related

strategies for development, such as Smart Growth, rural populations continue to face

resource challenges. Understanding how and why change happens can aid

professionals as they engage with these complex and interconnected issues. The larger principles at play regarding these changes can be found by evaluating the literature on sustainability, resilience, and transition theory.

Sustainability implies the ongoing existence of a community as it faces development, maintenance, and disaster. In the last few decades, planners' understanding of sustainability has grown to include many facets such as political climate, organizational structure, design, environmental health, and social justice (Grant, 2009). The current fascination with sustainability in the planning field is growing towards holism; and models have expanded to include worldview, cultural wealth, and indigenous knowledge (Campbell, 1996).

Sustainability promotes the inclusion of human, economic, and environmental issues into community planning (Beatley, 1992); its potential longevity is enhanced by resilience theory. Resilience theory enhances sustainability models, when sustainability is viewed within the context of time (Allen, 2010; Davoudi et al., 2012). Resilience theory specifies factors that influence the progression, stagnation, and destruction of a community.

Resilience theory has implications for both present and future planning models. While it is possible to understand sustainability and resilience theory as two separate approaches, they strengthen each other when understood in tandem. Resilience theory promotes the monitoring of a system that responds to both its inputs and outputs in order to maintain a functioning equilibrium and in order to progress and thrive into the future. The sustainability movement recommends the use of earth's resources in a manner that allows them to be available to future generations (Brundtland, 1987). Combining sustainability and resilience theories challenges us to consider how we use environmental and social resources and how the use of these

resources affect other resources, as well as how our usage affects the overall health of the communities in which we live. In this planning model, a community's "health" would be defined like a complex adaptive system and by a community's level of "resilience" (Dale, 2010; Rammel, 2007).

Resilience is replacing sustainability in a similar way that climate change has replaced the environment in the hegemonic discourse regarding the natural world (Davoudi et al., 2012). Resilience may be a new planning buzzword, but it is not a new concept. In the 1960s, resilience first entered into the field of ecology along with the rise of systems thinking. Further development of resilience theory was set in motion in 1973 by the Canadian theoretical ecologist Crawford Stanly Holling, who distinguished ecological resilience and engineering resilience.

Engineering resilience is the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium or steady state after a disturbance (either a natural disaster or social upheaval) (Davoudi et al, 2012). In engineering resilience, the resistance to disturbance and the speed by which a system returns to equilibrium is the measure of resilience; the faster the bounce-back, the more resilient the system. The emphasis is on efficiency and predictability (Davoudi et al, 2012). Ecological resilience is "the magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure" (Holling, 1996). In ecological resilience, the measure of resilience is not just the "bounce-back" time, but also how much disturbance a system can take and remain within critical thresholds of equilibrium. According to Holling, "Ecological resilience focuses on 'the ability to persist and the ability to adapt.' The main difference between the two types is that ecological resilience rejects the existence of a single, stable equilibrium, and instead acknowledges the existence of multiple equilibria, and the possibility of systems to flip into alternative stability domains" (Holling, 1996). Engineering

resilience is underpinned by a belief in a pre-existing state of resilience to which a resilient system bounces back. Ecological resilience is underpinned by a belief in a new state of resilience to which a system bounces forth. Both ecological and engineering resilience are founded upon a belief in the existence of an equilibrium within a system.

The assumption of the existence of an equilibrium is reminiscent of the positivist approach to planning, which seeks to order space and time. Positivism refers to an empirical approach to scientific knowledge, which starts from the senses and gradually rises up to the most general axioms (Davoudi, 2012, 430). In the positivist approach to planning, a resilient system is a community that undergoes a major fluctuation and returns to either an old or new stable state.

A third type of resilience is evolutionary resilience. Evolutionary resilience expands engineering and ecological resilience to include adaptability, transformability, and persistence on different scales and within different time frames (Davoudi et al, 2012, 302). This approach to resilience is similar to the interpretive approach to planning, which discourages fixity and rigidity similarly to the way in which interpretative planning discourages the modernist "will to order." Considering ecological, engineering, and evolutionary resilience theory, we can understand planning to be about being prepared for innovative transformation at times of change and in the face of inherent uncertainties (Davoudi et al, 2012).

Transition theory informs the application of resilience theory by attempting to understand and unravel socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental complexities within societal transitions related to resilience, for example, resilience/transition from one state to another as seen when a community deals with a catastrophe or copes with a challenge. Transition theory suggests that at times

communities may be categorized within a coherent phase of organization, while at other times, chaotic characteristics may dominate, which will lead to a new set of coherence structures (Wilson, 2013). Transition theory allows communities to forecast into the future based on existing pathways of change and to learn from past incremental stages of change; highlighting the bounded nature of short and long term opportunities and the way that successive choices can progressively alter the boundaries of a community's resilience (Wilson, 2013). Additionally by emphasizing how decision nodes create and alter a community's resilience trajectory, transition theory provides insight into the area of overlap between processes that are apparently polarized (Wilson, 2013).

Resilience theory, as informed by transitional theory, consists of understanding pathways, lock-ins, and ruptures. Pathways are theoretical thoroughfares through which decisions are made and change can occur; path dependencies imply complex social and power structures; pathways associated with learning are difficult to change; small effects on a pathway can yield large results within the system (butterfly theory) (Wilson, 2013, 10). Lock-ins are ideas, structures, and relationships that bind a community within a set of pathways. There are two types of lock-ins in resilience theory, informed by transition theory. First, structural lock-ins permeate the boundary between local, community, and wider society; structural lock-ins are associated with processes beyond the control of a particular community i.e. societal moral codes, religion and rites, political orientation of a community, moral and behavioral considerations; they are also associated with physical structures i.e. the embeddedness of a community within a transport, food, or energy network (Wilson, 2013). Second, economic lock-ins are pathways on the community level that are directly tied to economic capital. For example, economic lock-ins might be related to

the impact of, and a community's relationship to, globalization, poverty, or profit (Wilson, 2013). Ruptures are pressures from inside or outside a community that break through a lock-in and/or change a community's pathway (Wilson, 2013).

Community resilience is affected by human-induced and natural disturbances including weather related and geographical disasters and anthropogenic disturbances related to mismanagement of the environment, including socio-political, economic, and globalization disturbances. Disturbances to a community's resilience may be endogenous (i.e. from local pollution) or exogenous (i.e. earthquakes) as well as gradual disturbances such as climate change or shifts in global trade. The complexity of the disturbances suggests that communities are continuously and simultaneously affected by multiple disturbances at any one point in time. Therefore, communities never reach a "maximum" state of resilience, but can only strive towards maximizing resilience (Wilson, 2013). This complexity is simplified and encapsulated in a commonly accepted definition of sustainable community development that can be summarized as:

> Sustainable communities are cities and towns that prosper because people work together to produce a high quality of life that they want to sustain and constantly improve. They are communities that flourish because they build a mutually supportive, dynamic balance between social wellbeing, economic opportunity, and environmental quality (Feidman, 2011).

This literature review reveals that sustainability is a complex topic with linkages to resilience and transition theories. These connections have not been thoroughly explored in relation to community planning, especially planning that occurs in cities

with a population under 10,000. The plan evaluation and smart growth literature show that planners are starting to incorporate sustainability into their practices. However, both provide an over-simplified framework for understanding sustainability related topics in the context of a community. They do not fully account for the highly contested definitions and characterizations of sustainability or for the complexities of the planning that occurs in small towns.

This research will contribute to the limited body of knowledge about small town sustainability. It will examine one locality and add understanding about the depth to which sustainability, as characterized by resilience, and transition theories, is active and how it is operationalized. It will add breadth to the literature about where and how Smart Growth is relevant. By employing a qualitative narrative analysis technique backed with an understanding of small town planning, this research adds diversity to the current literature available about planning in small towns.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

"A community that believes its own stories and trusts those who tell them affirms its identify and the obligations of membership." (Mandelbaum, 1991)

This research looks at the story of sustainability in Fairfield, Iowa. In order to formulate and understand the story, this single case study utilized in-depth interviews with community leaders, from which a narrative inquiry emerged. This data was triangulated by plan evaluation and participant observation. Single case studies provide an opportunity to develop thick, rich descriptions that create a thorough understanding of the issues of concern to a community and the characteristics of the people who make up the community. Through the study of one case, the goal is to gain insight into a broader class of similar circumstances. In a narrative approach to a case study the story of the case is the subject of investigation and is distinguished by an interpretative thrust. There is no one method, but rather a systematic interpretation of the protagonists in the story (Riessman, 1993). Narrative is both a phenomena under study and a method of study (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). By studying the sustainability narrative of Fairfield, this research acknowledges both what has already transpired and the fact that the study of sustainability continues to develop.

Participation

As a resident of Fairfield, I am active in the community. Prior to beginning this research I worked with the City's Sustainability Coordinator and continued to do so throughout the research. During the research process, I was appointed to the City's

Go Green Commission. Through these activities, and by employing reflexivity, I was able to have many conversations that corroborated or provided alternatives to consider related to findings from the interviews. My participation in the community provides critical insight into the dynamics and motivation of the Fairfield community, as well as an experiential perspective to ground the research.

I chose to use this research process as an opportunity to increase the knowledge base of the Fairfield community by involving community members in the research design and implementation for the plan evaluation. The word "community" comes from the Latin communes, meaning "public or shared by many." A community is any group of people that shares interests or geographic location with defined patterns of interactions between individuals and perceptions of commonality, this gives rise to a "sense of place" (Sarkissian, 2009; Bridger, 1999; Mattson, 1997). Community is the practical expression of our commonly owned goods, including municipal infrastructure, services we depend on, and our communications and exchanges that allow us to actively build the world around us (Sarkissian, 2009). Interacting with these complexities and engaging with communities is a key factor for planners to maintain relevancy in the field. My role as a participant researcher within a community provided opportunities to create reciprocal relationships, based on exchange (Herman, 1999). In the case of the plan evaluation, this resulted in the organization of information that was useful to both this research and the City of Fairfield.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of interview transcripts was completed using Nvivo, review of City documents and code, and triangulated through participant observation. The transcripts of interviews were coded using "open coding," allowing codes to emerge from the language of the interviewees (Saldana 2009). These codes were then analyzed within the context of the interview and focused coding was employed. During focused coding, the open codes were refined and re-applied to the interview transcript. After focused coding of each interview, the resulting focused codes were analyzed for themes. Emerging themes were condensed into codes and selective coding of these emerging primary themes was employed. The findings presented in Chapter 4 are the results of the final, selective coding process. Coding was completed after all the interviews were conducted.

Validity and Ethics

Prior to beginning this research, Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board approved this research and research design. Throughout the research steps were taken to ensure high quality and trustworthy research. After each interview and each transcription, relevant thoughts, observations, and noteworthy comments were documented. Multiple sources of data were sought to ensure construct validity. Cross-checked and analyzed interview transcripts ensure internal validity, and careful descriptions of the generalizability of this research ensures external validity (Yin, 2014). Member checks were executed to ensure data reliability (Yin, 2014). Member checks occurred with each interviewee and all participants were given the opportunity

to view their full transcript. In the presentation of the research all names were
changed to protect privacy.

During all stages of the research reflexivity was employed. Practicing
reflexivity allows the writer to become conscious of the perspective, values, and
experiences that he/she brings to the study (Creswell, 2007). Reflexivity ensures that
the researcher is being transparent, questioning assumptions, and clarifying the
research lens. Qualitative research welcomes and embraces the vantage point a
researcher brings to a subject as an opportunity for further questioning and
understanding. Considering that this research focuses on the town where the
researcher grew up and now participates as a community member, the process of
reflexivity and journal keeping was vital to ensuring clarity of interpretations and for
testing of assumptions (Creswell, 2007).

Being a member of the Fairfield community offered an ease of access to
people and information that might otherwise have been challenging to obtain,
however it does raise ethical issues to address. It is possible that interviewees felt
more comfortable or less at ease with the researcher depending on how they viewed
her role in the community. In order to address this, transparency was employed. In
this context, transparency means that at each interview the researcher disclosed her
local professional affiliations and openly acknowledged community tensions, such as
between meditators and non-meditators. Additionally, extra time was taken to
formulate the interview as a conversation instead of a formal interview; and when
applicable, time was taken to make sure the interviewee would not feel like they
would be either jeopardizing their reputation or being offensive with their comments.

Research Adjustments

Important adjustments to the research questions were made during the research process. The research question initially queried the "rhetoric" of sustainability and asked about values expressed when implementing sustainability. It became clear during the research process that what was under review was a story, a narrative, of sustainability that is in the process of being told, not a rhetoric that is being espoused. This research therefore focuses on the expression of that story and attempts to capture key moments in time and to understand the influential characters. In regards to values and implementing sustainability, the researcher determined that focusing on the other two research questions - the narrative and the key components of a locality receptive to and interested in sustainability - would offer the reader more insight into sustainability in Fairfield.

Plan Evaluation

Fairfield's Go Green Plan is a voluntary Strategic Plan. It is not Fairfield's comprehensive plan. However, it could be considered Fairfield's 'comprehensive sustainability' plan. Similar to how a comprehensive plan is created, an informal steering committee for the plan met for several months before an outside consultant was retained to lead a commission, appointed by the Mayor, through a planning process. Among the differences between a comprehensive plan and the Go Green Strategic Plan is the expected scope of the planning process and resulting plan. A comprehensive plan is expected to be representative of the entire community and to guide the development of the city, while a strategic plan may not be expected to cover

so wide a scope and may focus on a smaller topic area (Godschalk, 2012). However,
due to the nature and commonly accepted definition of sustainability, which means
using resources in such a way that they may continue in perpetuity and balancing
economic, social, and environmental variables, a plan that focuses on sustainability
should be, by nature, comprehensive of key community development issues.

A plan evaluation was part of the research design from inception. The
interview process revealed that several members of the original Green Commission
(who authored the plan), as well as leaders of the community were interested in a five-
year review of the Go Green Plan. In an effort to offer reciprocity between the
researcher and the City of Fairfield, the plan evaluation became a collaboration with
the local experts who were appointed to the City's new Go Green Commission[10]. The
plan evaluation helped answer the question "how is sustainability a theme for
community development?" The evaluation looks at how the City has performed in
regards to sustainability. The Commission established a plan evaluation
sub-committee and determined three goals for the evaluation:

1. Examine the relationship between the plan's content and outcomes

    a. Determine the status of projects/goals listed in the plan i.e. percent of
        the plan completed

    b. Identify additional impacts of the plan i.e. projects we know about that
        are not in the plan

2. Understand the plan's scope/level of comprehensiveness

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[10] In the Summer of 2014 a new Go Green Commission was formed and was tasked
with reviewing and updating the plan and providing support to the City's part-time
Sustainability Coordinator.

    a.   Review the plan for the existence/inclusion of Smart Planning

        Principles

3. Identify plan alternatives

    a.   Identify gaps/additional goals to add or sections to modify and/or omit

        as necessary

      Utilizing a methodology based on Mary Edwards and Anna Haines's approach in "Evaluating Smart Growth: Implications for Small Communities," in tandem with Iowa's Smart Planning Legislative Guide, the researcher worked with the plan evaluation sub-committee. Edwards and Haines's framework includes comparing state level law (or in the case of Iowa, recommendations) with a local plan (Haines, 2007). The Legislative Guide puts forth 10 Iowa Smart Planning Principles (recommended as "must"), and 13 Smart Planning Elements (recommended as "may") that are considered to be recommendations from the State of Iowa to municipalities - counties and cities (Land Use-Smart Planning, Iowa Code 18B2.1, 2010).

      The evaluation was conducted in two parts and the evaluators worked in teams of two. Evaluators worked from a questionnaire and electronic packet of information that included elements of the Go Green Plan and places to record observations, questions, and additional thoughts (See Addendum A. Plan Evaluation Materials). During part one, evaluators reviewed the plan for the presence of the ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles. During part two, evaluators determined the status of projects and identified impacts of the plan.

Interviews

In-depth interviews were the primary tool for data collection. Fourteen people were interviewed. A combination of snowball sampling and researcher experience sampling was used. The researcher requested interviews from several people she had previously worked with as a Project Coordinator for the City of Fairfield's Hometown Rewards Program. She also requested interviews from people who were peripherally involved with projects she worked on, but who she had not directly worked with. At the end of those interviews, she asked for additional interview recommendations. In several cases the recommendations overlapped and those recommendations were pursued first. Each interviewee was given, or was read over the phone, a copy of an informed consent document and were told that their responses would be confidential and they could choose whether or not to answer any questions. Pseudonyms have been used for interview names.

The interviews were conducted at times and places convenient for the interviewees, usually at their place of work. However, one interview was conducted at an interviewee's home, one at a cafe, and one via phone. Each interview included only a single individual. All interviews were recorded and lasted between twenty-five minutes and one-and-a-half hours. In one instance, there was difficulty with a recording device and a follow up interview was conducted for clarification. An interview guide (See Addendum B. Interview Guide) with prompting questions and topic areas was used, but the conversation was allowed to follow the interviewee's area of expertise as long as it was related to the main subject of research. The interviews were framed as a conversation and conducted in a relaxed, informal manner so as to put the interviewee at ease and to allow for dynamic interviews.

Sampling a population always provides an opportunity for a limitation of the research. For example, during the research process, it was conveyed that there was

controversy about sustainability, either because it was viewed as something more important to one segment of the community "the meditators" more than another, or because of a distrust of government like this interviewee describes:

> *"The controversy that I've heard around sustainability seems to be around a feeling that it's coming from some sort of an agenda, you know that it's… an agenda 21 thing or there's some sort of an agenda behind it, trying to force us to be more sustainable. But we're not trying to mandate anything here, and I think, when you get down to the core values of what we are trying to do, to most reasonable people, it doesn't seem very controversial, you know… I think those attitudes are just starting to disappear.. It's fading away with reality of what we need to do and so we always try to describe the conservation or the savings, we try to come at it from angles where everybody can really agree."*
> (Corey, 2014)

However, every interviewee was in support of the general concept of sustainability. Therefore, it seemed that the voice of an important demographic was missing.

Reviewing the transcripts revealed that a few interviewees mentioned challenges to implementing the plan that were associated with resistance to making the plan mandatory; and the controversy in Fairfield happens on a per project basis rather than a broad sweeping "anti-sustainability" movement, as this interviewee describes:

> *"There was never any naysaying about this* [sustainability]*, there was never any group that was you know violently opposed to it. In fact, you know*

spending the money on skylights for City Hall, I mean, I've been in towns where that could be a feud for years and I never ever heard a word about it from anybody other than, that looks good, you know. So, I mean, I guess my point is they weren't excluding the loud or silent minority that maybe was on a different page. I don't think that anyone in town is on a different page. Now, having said that I've never been anywhere where anything's 100%, but you know, silence usually speaks to it. So either people supported it or isn't or wasn't strong enough in their view point to oppose it." (Sam, 2014)

This research was not designed to evaluate individual sustainability projects. Rather it was designed to develop the story of why and how sustainability became an important theme for development in Fairfield. This research reveals that controversy about the importance of sustainability is unexpressed on a regular basis. It also indicates that any controversy that does occur happens not on the level of general principles, but occurs around specific initiatives. Further research is needed to determine whether there is a segment of the population who does not support the concept of sustainability or if as the above quote from *Sam* says the disagreement comes on a per project basis. There may not be a strong voice against sustainability in Fairfield or it may be unexpressed in this research.

A potential limitation of the interviews is the narrow community representation. While the sample crosses the two most prominent cultural divides in Fairfield (age and meditators/non-meditators), there are other demographics that the sample does not represent. For example, while several of the interviewees work in the private sector only one of them was primarily representing that sector. Other business

owners and employees were also representing government. Also, most of the interviewees are highly educated and very knowledgeable about City activities.

Figure 1. Interviewee Affiliations shows characteristics of the interviewees. When summed, the number counts do not add up to the total number of interviewees, because several interviewees had multiple affiliations, as represented by the overlapping circles. One relationship not shown in the diagram is that one member of the original Go Green Commission who is associated with the meditating community also represented private business. One demographic not represented in the graph is agriculture, because only one farmer was interviewed, but for confidentiality reasons additional associations will not be described.
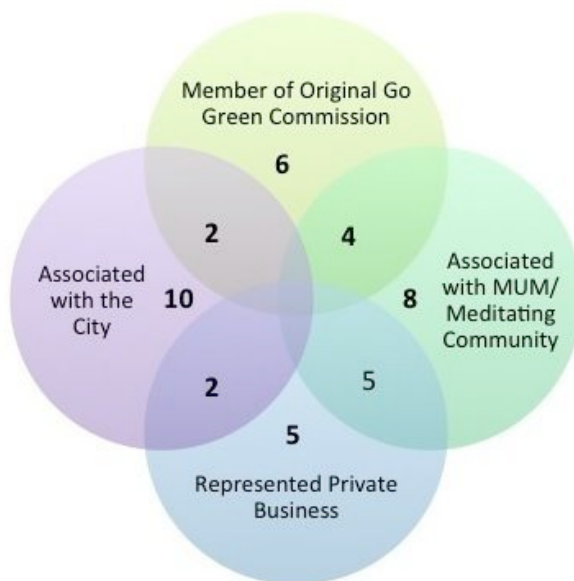

Figure 1. Interviewee Affiliations

Case Selection

A critical question to ask is "Why Fairfield, Iowa?" There are many types of case studies and ways to look at them. A case may be intrinsic, instrumental, or

collective; it could also be critical, extreme, representative, or revelatory (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2009). An intrinsic, critical, or extreme case provides further insight into a specific situation, while collective or revelatory case studies involve multiple cases and allows study of a wide-spread phenomenon or large population (Glesne, 2011). An instrumental or representative case refers to studying a case to "provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Glesne 2011, 22). Yin cautions that it is the "lessons learned" from these cases that can be assumed to be informative about the average person or institution, not necessarily the specifics of the case itself (Yin, 2009). Although Fairfield has some unique characteristics, this paper argues that there is no baseline norm for a town that pursues a path of sustainability and thus there are no extreme cases; therefore Fairfield is an intrinsic or representative case for this research. As one interview phrased it, "*the sustainability stuff is so situated in a place and in a community*" (Andrew, 2014), that it becomes critical to understand the unique qualities of the location in question and then collaborate and share the transferrable lessons.

History of Fairfield

Like many small towns in Southeast Iowa, Fairfield is surrounded by a rolling landscape of corn, soybean, cattle, and pig farms, its patterns of development determined both by agriculture and railroads. The area was settled in the 1836, in part because of agricultural promise (Welty, 1975). Although the first settlers came to the Fairfield area well before scientific soil surveys, their farmer's eyes saw that it had what they wanted most - timber, well-drained prairie soil, and water (Welty Fulton, 1975). The development story mirrors stories you are likely to hear about other small towns in Iowa. What sets Fairfield apart is its long tradition of higher learning,

manufacturing, and being the first in the area to attempt something new (Welty, 1975).

The City of Fairfield incorporated in 1839 and was home to a women's seminary, Axline University, and Fairfield College.[11] In 1875, Parsons College replaced these failing institutions and opened its doors for classes.[12] Fairfield's economic backbone found its strength in manufacturing companies like the Louden Company, Dexter Laundry, and Harper Brushworks. The manufacturing sector has continued to grow and expand. In 1946, an aluminum castings foundry opened, Fairfield Aluminum Casting Company (FALCO), and is still in operation. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Agri-Industrial Plastics (in the top 5 global producers of custom blow-molded plastic), H&H Mold and Tooling, and Creative Edge (water jet fabrication and design) entered the scene. At the same time as these new manufacturers located in Fairfield, a new college established itself.

Parsons College went bankrupt in 1966 and in 1974 Maharishi International University[13] moved from Santa Barbara, California to Fairfield, Iowa.[14] Adopting a new educational institution was not a first for Fairfield, but the City had never before tried to integrate a relatively large population of people with a seemingly different set of knowledge and values.

Maharishi International University was founded by Keith Wallace, a physiologist from California and was endorsed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian meditation teacher. Many of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's teachings became core principles of the school, including the practice of Transcendental Meditation. Over the years, the relationship between the people who were in Fairfield before the

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[11] http://www.fairfieldculturaldistrict.org/history.htm
[12] http://fairfieldiowahistory.com
[13] Now called Maharishi University of Management
[14] http://fairfieldiowahistory.com

Maharishi University arrived and those associated with the University (practitioners of Transcendental Meditation) has undergone many changes. Tensions between the two groups continue to vacillate between friendliness, antagonism, and apathy.

I was here, when MIU came to town. I remember debating in 9th grade, should we let "these" people come here. You know, some things have changed and some things just stay the same. Fairfield's always been known for the arts, but the arts have flourished in the last 10 years, it's become much more of our culture and there's a lot more going on. I have found that values are very similar, family and community are important. (Corinne, 2014)

We have many different communities. It's a whole community, but there are very different parts of the community. How they interact has strengthened over the years, you know, there used to be a huge divide between the two cultures here in town. And after 40 years it's kind of melding together now, but it's taken a long time. I mean, I've been here a long time. I came here from somewhere else in Iowa, but I'm still an outsider. I'm still not a true Fairfield person, for some people, some people look at me as being from the outside. (David, 2014)

I came here not knowing about the differences…so, you talk to the locals "oh those northerners? They just start projects and they never finish it and you gotta finish it." And then they talk "we" as the locals. And then you can talk to I don't know, what do people call them "meditators?" "northernors?" or whatever "out of staters" they'll go and say oh, those locals they're just close minded, they're not seeing the big picture. And I think at the end of the day, it all kind of works. You

know, you got a couple people with ideas and a couple people who finish the job. And it works out for the community. So, I think it works. I'm not too sensitive to it. I'm pretty go with the flow, so, it doesn't bother me too much. Ummm.. I guess the things that bother me are if it effects me directly, otherwise, you just watch it. It's whatever. (Trevor, 2014)

I think you know one of the things that's happened is that at one point people looked to the university to get their kinda social needs met and for direction. And at some point, people started looking outward and they didn't expect everything from the university. So, they set up theater groups and they set up Aikido and you know various things that make the community rich, and so the meditators started putting their energy into projects that weren't the university and then they had to collaborate more. And then there are these big companies that have both meditators and non-meditators working there. (Jason, 2014)

Fairfield has been home to many "firsts." It was home to Iowa's first two state fairs.[15] In 1854, the first library in the state opened on the square. In 1893, when Andrew Carnegie funded the design and construction of a new building, Fairfield became home to the first Carnegie library outside of Pennsylvania or Scotland; and just a few years later, the town square was one of the first in Iowa to install electricity.[16] Being the "first" to do something often implies being in the right place at the right time, harnessing creativity, and/or taking on some risk.

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[15] http://fairfieldiowahistory.com
[16] http://www.fairfieldculturaldistrict.org/history.htm

"...we're a farming community. I don't see why other people can't do community gardens or grow things locally than having to buy everything shipped from other towns or states, fresh food you know. I don't see why Iowa can't do that. ummm, I think everybody can and you just put limitations on yourself, if you say you can't do things. We're really, I think, Midwest conservative to where maybe we're not so conservative maybe we're more moderate. We can set back and think about things, but we can also do you know solar projects like this that other communities can take notice and say you know "look what Fairfield did" and the monies they're saving. Right now, I think, when things do come up, they're like "no one else is doing this, I don't want to do it." You know…. And Fairfield we're kinda neat, we're not afraid to do these risky projects, and maybe it's not risky, but I think maybe it is, risky projects that other communities go "oh" and then they want to do it too." (Trevor, 2014)

Today, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, Fairfield is a city of 9,464. According to the Maharishi Foundation, approximately one third of the Fairfield population is affiliated with new age groups and meditation practices.[17] Some residents estimate it as closer to 50%.[18]

Transcendental Meditation and Maharishi University of Management is what first attracted many people interested in alternative lifestyles. However, there are now many other smaller groups and organizations in Fairfield that also focus on alternative lifestyles and/or spirituality. The City maintains a strong economy with bases in manufacturing and agriculture, but has expanded to include many entrepreneurs and

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[17] According to the Maharishi Foundation USA
[18] Interviewees Sam and Jonathon

start-up businesses. The City has become known for its entrepreneurial spirit. For example, in 2003, the city received the Grassroots Rural Entrepreneurship Award for Most Entrepreneurial City in America (with a population under 10,00) by the National Association of Small Towns and Townships in conjunction with the Kaufman Foundation; and in 2004, it received the Most Entrepreneurial City in Iowa by Iowa State University's Center for Community Vitality.[19] It has also become known for its economic and environmental sustainability activity. In 2010, the City adopted a Go-Green Strategic Plan and partnered with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to hire a Sustainability Coordinator to implement the plan. The City has been working on plan implementation for almost 5 years. The City has completed a green house gas assessment, changed streetlights to LEDs, planted a community orchard, and hosted dozens of free educational workshops. In 2013, the City's energy-efficiency partnership with the local utility company received the Governors Award for Environmental Excellence.

Fairfield maintains its connection to its agricultural roots by providing services and amenities to many rural residents of Jefferson County. However, the relatively recent addition of Maharishi University has changed the City's course of development to include more business and the arts. The population that the University brought with it may be the minority, but it includes many vocal-creative people, politically minded individuals, and wealthy benefactors who have taken an increasingly active role in Fairfield.

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[19] http://www.growfairfield.com/business-resources

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS

The major outcome of this research is the weaving together of the story of sustainability in Fairfield and the inception of Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan. Several key findings emerged from the data analysis process. The findings are organized into key analytic themes in an order that allows the reader to follow the chronology of events and the recursive nature of practicing sustainability, which necessitates action, reflection, and engagement. The story begins with analysis of themes that emerged from coding interview transcripts. Coding revealed major themes and sub-themes. The major themes were present consistently throughout the interview data and are organized here to present a clear picture of why sustainability became important in Fairfield. The sub-themes are encapsulated in the following definitions of the themes.

The first theme discussed provides an overview of the *story of sustainabilit*y - the nascent interests and driving forces. The subsequent themes elaborate on the story and articulate details that were important to interviewees, as indicated by the depth and breadth of the discussions around the topics, as well as the recurrence of topics. The second theme that emerged from the data - *the Fairfield special* - articulates the social context in which sustainability became paramount and provides insights into how the community perceives itself. When describing how Fairfield interacts with sustainability, all of the interviewees relied on an understanding of the social characteristics of the community. From this social context the interviewees were able to describe the culture of sustainability, the characteristics and definitions of it, and why it is relevant and important for their community. These reflections are captured in the third theme - *reflecting on sustainability.* The fourth and final theme - *City*

engagement - highlights how sustainability is operationalized in Fairfield. It shows how through progressive leadership, plan implementation, and demonstration, sustainability becomes a real and tangible way of making decisions and taking action. Together, these four themes create a rich, descriptive narrative about sustainability and illustrate why sustainability exists in Fairfield as a theme for community development.

The quotes and re-structured story highlight how sustainability emerged in Fairfield, as well as the key components to its existence. When reviewing the analysis it is important to remember that sustainability is directly connected to a community and sense of place (Sarkissian, 2009; Robertson, 1999). The information presented here is uniquely associated with the Fairfield community, yet the analysis reveals aspects of sustainability that may be relevant to other communities. All of the themes are analyzed, related to the larger theoretical frameworks, and questioned for greater understanding. The data is presented with extensive quotations and narrative accounts from the interviews. This demonstrates the richness within each theme and allows the reader to hear the answers to the research question from the voices in the community of study.

Story of Sustainability in Fairfield

As the literature about narrative inquiry and analysis reveals, some qualitative research is not only about identifying themes, but also about constructing a narrative that helps make sense of the world around us (Squire, 2008). By constructing a story, individuals have opportunities to more deeply understand the world they live in. By assisting a community in re-constructing the narrative of how they arrived at their current state of development, the individuals living in that community have the

opportunity to assess and evaluate their level of satisfaction with the present and to re-direct the plan for the future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recount that narrative is both something that can be studied and a way of studying a phenomena. In this research, narrative has been used as a tool for studying a phenomenon. By articulating the story of sustainability in Fairfield, reality is distilled into a script that can be shared and analyzed. The story in this research emerged from the interviewees. This research was not designed to uncover facts or stories from any particular time period. Rather, individuals familiar with the City were sought out for their knowledge and expertise. From these individuals, pieces of information emerged that when sequenced together reveal a story.

In 2008 and 2009, Fairfield's 2020 Go Green Strategic Plan (the Plan) was written. It is Fairfield's sustainability strategic plan. The Plan is the second of two strategic plans that were written within 10 years of each other. The first was written in 2002 and 2003 and was entitled, "The Fairfield 2012 Strategic Plan: Moving Fairfield Forward." In this first plan, one of the cornerstone values listed is:

> ***We value our natural environment, sustaining us and enriching our lives.*** *In Fairfield, we desire clean air, water, and soil. We strive for energy conservation and renewable resources, and for respecting the land and preserving natural diversity. We strive for creative stewardship of all our resources.* (Moving Fairfield Forward, 2003)

Goal two of this plan supports this value and moves "To improve our community's physical assets, beauty, and natural environment,' and "….to embrace and promote the practice of sustainable living" (Moving Fairfield Forward, 2003).

In the 2002 plan, which was published in 2003 [the first strategic plan]*, we had, 2 or 3 objectives to be known nationally, as a center for sustainable practices and knowledge so that someone could visit here and get a look at Abundance Eco-village or some of the projects that students are doing through the SL program* [the Sustainable Living degree program at Maharishi University of Management]*, some of the private homes that were developed with renewable energy, ah, permaculture practices, those types of things which were just starting to take off. But in 2008, we were on the verge of a financial collapse in the country, energy prices were at an all time high, and the challenge was getting fiscal, it was REAL. And the evidence of the growth of those sustainable practices was expanding more and more and so I thought it* [the sustainability practices in town and goals from 2002] *dove tailed positively with the urgency of what cities, the country, was going to face. Whether you bought into global climate change or not, the cost of energy was going up, which affected everything. You know it affected food, it affected everything, everything.* (Richard, 2014)

After the success of the 2002 visioning process, Mayor Ed Malloy called for a second strategic planning process. This second process focused on sustainability or "being green." As one interviewee recalled,

People would constantly go to Ed and ask him to take a stronger stand – Ed Malloy, the Mayor – take a strong stand on sustainability you know, let's eliminate plastic bags, let's sign the Kyoto protocol as a City. Ed felt for a

long time that the city wasn't available – wasn't ready for a broad scale

sustainability initiative, and then you know with Abundance Ecovillage getting

a lot of press, and people seeing solar powered homes around town, and the

local foods movement coming up, all of that stuff coming together, he felt like

there had been enough done that we could engage the other parts of the

community that hadn't been part of the sustainability discussion, make it

something that was beyond just the meditating community. At one point he

decided, you know, let's look, let's make a community initiative and then he

had this flash of insight to do it as a strategic plan like he had done a general

strategic plan. (Jason, 2014)

The Mayor appointed the commission responsible for designing the plan. The

planning process was funded by an $80,000 grant from the Iowa Office of Energy

Independence[20] via the Iowa Power Fund[21]. The planning process was designed by the

Institute for Decision Making (IDM) at the University of Northern Iowa and was

intended to be inclusive of diverse perspectives and have widespread community

impact. There was a sincere, targeted, effort to bring voices from many aspects of the

community and varying backgrounds and knowledge of "sustainability." Yet, the

public input portion was primarily by means of the appointed commissioners reaching

out to the business community to find partners for the plan's objectives. As one

community leader recounts:

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[20] The Iowa Power Fund is now housed within the Iowa Economic Development
Authority
[21] The grant also funded a green house gas inventory and the majority of the
Sustainability Coordinator's first few years of salary.

We got everyone together, because we wanted to get a diverse group representing the whole community. There were people who were knowledgeable about sustainability and people who knew very little about it. In the planning process and in the discussion of creating a vision and creating goals for the community, it came out that we wanted to recognize that a lot of people aren't up to speed on this or let's up the learning curve on what this is and recognize that not everybody is going to buy into it at the level that the people that are passionate about it are. We wanted to develop a plan that everybody could find themselves in, in some way - whether they're recycling more, whether they're growing more of their own food production in their yards, in their gardens, whether they're supporting farmers markets, whether they see the value of planting more trees, whether they see the value of getting more fresh foods in schools, all of those areas. What we realized is that if we do that and we allow everyone to find their way, whether it's you know wholesale buy-in or picking a little piece to do, it's going to change the culture, because right now we aren't thinking of those things, we're not thinking about our energy consumptions, we're not thinking about how to lower our energy consumptions, we're not thinking about our modes of transportation, we're not. So, let's begin…(Richard, 2014)

The group of twenty commissioners met over a period of several months. The planning process and subsequent formulation of the plan – the process of setting an intent, action items, and timeline – galvanized people around the topic of sustainability and allowed nascent principles in the community to be expressed and to flourish. As one instrumental commissioner commented,

It just occurred to me that sustainability was a guiding principle that was going to more and more have to guide economic and social development. As Lonnie [Lonnie Gamble, local sustainability expert] *says, if you're not into sustainability, what are you into? It was just clear to me that Lonnie had been working for all these many years and there was all this nascent stuff, but it needed some kind of a set of organizing principles." (Joseph, 2014)*

Nascent sustainability efforts included the Farmer's market, which has been in operation for more than 50 years, a small group of people interested in homesteading and pioneering practices for living off the land, and Maharishi University of Management's undergraduate degree in Sustainable Living. There are varying perceptions as to where the motivation for current sustainability initiatives in Fairfield really comes from. Some people attribute the momentum to the meditating community (even though the identified nascent sustainability efforts were not all championed by "meditators"), some to it being the "ethical" thing to do, and some see it as a possible lifeline that many small towns are trying to grab. Several interviewees described the impetus and motivation for sustainability:

I think a lot of small communities in Iowa are slowly dying. I think people often see sustainability as a branding thing or a way to kind of breathe new life into a community. (Corey, 2014)

I mean part of it feels like it's the RIGHT thing to do, if you believe in that, but it's also an opportunity for branding for the community, so, there's that part

too. Even if you don't have the hardcore commitment, you can still see there can be a benefit to setting yourself a part and again for you know economic growth or to attract people to the community and so forth. Make it a little more vibrant that way.(Elizabeth, 2014)

If I'm going to be honest, I don't know how it got brought up to Fairfield. I don't know if someone brought this idea in from another community, but I don't know if it's a way for the City to do a green initiative or sustainability like this to get Fairfield on the map ... almost like a game of chess, if you're able to do this, then maybe the state will give you more money and I think the state gives you some awards. (Trevor, 2014)

Why ruin our ground why ruin our water why ruin the environment that we're living in when we know that we can do some things to make it better or to not damage where we live? I mean again you know, I have an acreage. I don't want to pollute it or you when I change the oil in my vehicle, I'm not going to dump it out into the ground like it was done years ago. I remember my grandparents and they have a farm, loc-pretty local. That was the practice. I mean, you know, it just was the practice at that time. And you know, I wouldn't dare do that know. I'm going to get rid of it and recycle it and the same thing with waste. (Jonathon, 2014)

The varying perspectives on exactly where the need for more attention on sustainability came from indicates that the latent potential for a sustainability initiative was most likely not from one singular source. Rather, the impetus for

increasing attention on sustainability most likely came from many factors, including projects and interests attributed to both the meditating and non-meditating portions of the community. However, a few key residents, who were practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, mobilized the confluence of factors into action.

Interest in and passion for sustainability had been growing since Maharishi University of Management moved to Fairfield and started attracting people interesting in creative problem solving, health, and world peace. Among the people who re-located to Fairfield, there were people who were interested in organic food, organic cotton clothing, natural building materials, and alternative energy supplies. According to one individual, upon moving here,

> *I decided I really wanted to go into sustainability….uhhhh, it just was my passion you know. I'd always done other things, I never thought I could make a living at it so, that was uh '91 or so, there weren't very many solar powered homes around then. So, it was really a challenge to try to make that happen. And so umm… building with natural materials – straw bale and all that stuff. There were like minded people here, there were groups of people who were interested in that, but no one had really done it. (Jason, 2014)*

People like Jason were willing to spend the time and energy to live their lives according to their values. They were active, engaged, and vocal. The Mayor often heard from citizens with similar interests as Jason who wanted to see the City's actions reflex their own interests.

Our mayor gets approached a lot and people start with "you know what the

city should do?" and it's an idea and he's like, "you know, it's a great idea, if

you're passionate about it, I want you to get behind it." So, trying to put the

people who are passionate about things into action is the trick. Annnd it

doesn't always work. (Stephen, 2014)

In the case of sustainability, the Mayor's strategy seemed to work. People "got behind" the idea and garnered resources to formalize the City's support for sustainability initiatives. The result was seen in 2009, when Fairfield's Strategic Go Green Plan was ratified and launched with a community-wide low-waste celebration and concert featuring the Beach Boys. The fact that the Beach Boys wound up in a small town in Iowa to help kick-off a community's strategic plan begs the question "Why is all of this happening in Fairfield?"

As previously mentioned, Fairfield is home to Maharishi University of Management. The University acts as a network hub for practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique who live around the world. This network includes both well-known and un-known individuals from a wide-range of cultures and in a myriad of professions and industry, including entertainment. The Beach Boys are connected to Fairfield through this network. This far-reaching and active network has afforded the community access to people and ideas that effect day-to-day life both for the meditating and non-meditating communities. As one interviewee put it:

I think that um Fairfield is kind of an unusual community for the Midwest and

for Iowa in that they have Maharishi University and so they have a Eastern

influence in their community and they practice a lot of sustainable practices.

They teach a lot of sustainable concepts and they function in a much more

sustainable environment on their actual physical campus. So, I think that's

where the momentum started with the University, because that was a theme,

that was a niche for them, and then it leaked out into the town. And it kinda

grew from there. (Sam, 2014)

Only the beginnings of the story of sustainability have been enacted in Fairfield, and there are no doubt many more chapters to come. Regarding where the story begins and the motivation for creating the Go Green Plan, some interviewees expressed that it was the "*Mayor's initiative*" (Trevor, 2014), others drew similarities between the strategic planning processes and subsequent goals in 2002 and 2009, and one interviewee mentioned a small group of people bringing the idea to the Mayor and meeting with him over several months to formulate a strategy. The most common account is that the Mayor instigated the Go Green Plan, the official recognition of sustainability as a City priority, after having seen the "green" initiatives throughout the community and having received numerous requests to take a stronger stand on health and environmental issues.

All of the interviewees acknowledged the meditating portion of the community as a strong inspiration and driving force behind environmentally conscious initiatives in town. However, only in one instance was there mention of one segment of the population resisting any of the initiatives more than the other, and this was an "*older*" segment of the population (Rachel, 2014). Thus far, the sustainability initiatives spurred by excited newcomers to the town presented an opportunity for the greater Fairfield community to bridge community divides, amplify their common interests, and work together towards creating a long-lasting community. Yet, the

prevalence of discussion about the two co-existing communities - meditating and non-meditating - leads to the second theme of this research, what interviewees described as the *"the Fairfield special."*

The Fairfield Special

In discussing what sustainability is and when the City began engaging with it, all the interviewees relied on an understanding of this social context in order to explain how Fairfield interacts with sustainability. This theme provides the local social context for why and how sustainability has gained prevalence in Fairfield. *The Fairfield special* characterizes what the interviewees find unique about the community. It highlights the community context in which sustainability has emerged as a theme for development.

According to interviewees, Fairfield residents see the community as overarchingly diverse, progressive, and intellectual. Diversity in Fairfield refers both to race and ethnicity as well as lifestyle and cultural diversity. A larger source of diversity and tension is associated with practitioners of Transcendental Meditation who are affiliated with Maharishi University of Management. While it is not uncommon for cities of any size to have sub-communities or cultures that see things differently, it is how they rectify differing perspectives that can mean the tipping point from moving forward cohesively and moving forward disjointedly or stagnating (Sarkissian, 2009). A tipping point seems to have occurred from when the City was functioning largely without a respectfully organized voice from the meditating community to when practicing meditators started taking a more active role in the larger Fairfield community. *"...at some point, people started looking outward and they didn't expect everything from the university. So the meditators started putting*

their energy into projects that weren't the university and then they had to collaborate more" (Jason, 2014). This collaboration required that people engage with the diversity in their community in order for the City to have a chance to thrive.

Many interviewees spoke about this division between people who came from out of town and practice meditation and people who grew up in Iowa (or who practice meditation, but are from a farming community). There is a perception that a bifurcation exists, but also a growing perception that the divide is narrowing. As the interviewees expressed:

I think that you have the TM[22] community here who is really pretty conscious about themselves and how they are treating their bodies, and then also an extension of that is how the environment is being treated. I do think that it's kind of reaching this tipping point where it's spilling over. I mean for example you can drive around and see solar everywhere - all kinds of people in the farm community are starting to feel that solar is becoming the right thing to do, and for the farmers it just makes financial sense. The scenario going on is, if one person does it they all will. (Katie, 2014)

We're kind of a melting pot of diversity here in town that people come and bring ideas from wherever they're comin' from. I mean, we got people from California, the East Coast, bringing these ideas here. I think we're a pretty intellectual community with the college here in town. We got a bunch of really smart people here in town. (Trevor, 2014)

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[22] Transcendental Meditation

I like the salad analogy for community instead of the melting pot. The salad

analogy is, it's still a mix, but it's not melted together. You still have people

with differences, like individuals and kind of groups, but it's not so much that

it's all globbed into one homogenous thing. You can celebrate that. So we

have these very traditional events in town, you go to the town square and it's

like the county band playing marching tunes and such and if you go, you see a

lot of white haired Midwesterners who enjoy that; and then we have some of

this stuff that happens over at the Beauty Shop[23] you know, which is kinda like

right at the cutting of edge of what's new and what's emerging in the music

scene. (Stephen, 2014)

In order to increase the feeling of harmony and to bridge divides and biases,

the City often focuses on projects with common ground – "*We pick projects that are*

no brainers, that are easy to do. And we ah um, we shy away from conflict" (Corey,

2014). In this way, the City prioritizes projects that are sure to be successes. From one

perspective, this could be viewed negatively as avoiding important topics or projects.

However, proven ways to successfully make long-term change indicate that it is

necessary to provide positive experiences related to the behavior or mindset that you

want to change (Heath, 2010; Mckenzie-Mohr, 2012). Additionally, this statement of

"*shying away from conflict*" may not be entirely accurate, but instead conflict-

resolution might be handled in a culturally appropriate manner. As one interviewee

describes the culture,

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[23] The Beauty Shop was a performance venue run by "young" people in the
community through the Bonnell Building Project – a non-profit organization with a
focus on education and human development that provides space and resources to
anyone who shows up with an idea and will to collaborate. The Beauty Shop no
longer exists, but the people involved in the project are still in Fairfield and often
perform at a bar that now occupies that space.

"They [City Council] *were about split down the middle with what they would*

refer to as the meditation community and the locals, as they generally call

them. They work very well together. One of the things about the meditators is

that they're very understanding and compassionate people and even though

that is a bit of a stereotype, that is a theme with them. So, when they disagree

it's a whole different kind of a discussion than it might be with someone who is

frustrated and pounding their fists and this and that" (Sam, 2014).

Interviewees from both the meditating and non-meditating communities know
and understand that there are groups within the community who come from different
backgrounds and lifestyles, but also perceive a willingness amongst the leadership to
work together and compromise to keep Fairfield moving forward:

It [sustainability] *works in Fairfield, because everybody will sit down and talk*

about it and that's why in a lot of towns this would never ever work, because

all the jabs and the insults'd come out in the first meeting and that'd be the

last time anyone sat in the room with each other. And here they just figure out,

ok, if that won't work, what will work, let's get the best of both worlds on that.

So, for example, I think Stephen is really good at that, Umm, he's from the

meditating community, but he really understands the non-meditating

community and what is important to them. So, he can sit at the table and talk

and look at both sides of it. (Sam, 2014)

Working together is not a simple task when opinions differ and perspectives clash. In

order for Fairfield to progress and move forward, individuals in the community have

to acknowledge and address differences. Specifically, the cultural divide between

residents affiliated with Maharishi University of Management and people with longer

lineage ties to Iowa.

Interviewees often mentioned the diverse population of Fairfield as a strength.

Yet, it is clear that it also comes with challenges. Some interviewees remember

debating whether they wanted "*those people*" (Corinne, 2014) to move to town in the

1970s, while others shared stories of stark differences in aesthetics and land-use

preferences between "meditators" and "locals." Yet, it was the "newcomers" who

were often credited with bigger picture thinking and revitalizing community vibrancy.

However, it should be noted that many of the specific ways in which vibrancy was

amplified were done utilizing latent community potential. For example, Fairfield is

the second largest grossing farmers market in part due to the demand for local and

organic food from the meditating community, but the Fairfield farmer's market is one

of the oldest in the state.[24] One interviewee summarizes *the Fairfield special* this

way:

> *What's neat about Fairfield is that I meet people all the time that have lived*
>
> *here for decades and they're really interesting and do really interesting things*
>
> *and I've never heard of 'em. And if I were in some other town in Iowa, you*
>
> *know, they'd be sticking out like a sore thumb and everyone would know about*
>
> *'em, but here they're just like a lot of people that are doing interesting things*

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[24] Personal communication with Southeast Iowa Local Foods Coordinator

in Fairfield. Or if they're not doing anything, they're thinking about doing

interesting things - a lot of 'em are. (Andrew, 2014)

The Fairfield Special theme contextualized the story of sustainability by elaborating on the social dynamics at play in the Fairfield community. These social dynamics shape and influence how Fairfield residents perceive and define sustainability and translate it into action. The next two sections elaborate the communities' perceptions and actions. *"Reflecting on sustainability"* expands on why sustainability is important to people in Fairfield and how the community characterizes sustainability.

Reflecting on Sustainability

This research found conceptions of sustainability that mirrors current definitions of sustainability, sustainable development, and resilience found in the literature. There is a general consensus that sustainability implies an integration of people, the environment, and the economy, but less consensus on what that means for communities engaging with the term and implementing its principles (Dale, 2001). For example, Meadow's definition of sustainability is reminiscent of the resilience theory literature. Meadows (1992) describes a sustainable society as one whose systems keep in check the positive feedback loops that cause exponential population and capital growth. In other words, equilibrium of inputs and outputs is reached - birth and death rates are equal and investment rates equal depreciation rates (Dale, 2001). In resilience theory, a system is kept in balance through responses to inputs

and disturbances (Holling, 1996; Davoudi et al, 2012; Wilson, 2013). Rees (1989)

puts forth a more detailed definition of sustainable development, stating it is:

> …positive socio-economic change that does not undermine the ecological and
>
> social systems upon which communities and society are dependent. Its
>
> successful implementation requires integrated policy, planning, and social
>
> learning processes; its political viability depends on the full support of the
>
> people it affects throughout their governments, their social institutions, and
>
> their private activities.

He further breaks this down into three points:

1. is oriented to achieving explicit ecological, social, and economic objectives;
   may impose ecological limits on material consumption, while fostering
   qualitative development at the community and individual levels;

2. requires government intervention, but also the leadership and cooperation of
   the private sector;

3. demands policy integration and coordination at all spatial scales and among
   relevant political jurisdictions, and depends on educational, planning, and
   political processes that are informed, open, and fair."

Reese's components to sustainable development are explicit in Fairfield's

approach to sustainability. As point one above suggests, the Plan has specific goals

and objectives related to the natural environment, the social environment and the

economy. The implementation of the plan has resulted in a reduction of energy usage,

increased recycling, and community collaboration.[25] Its very existence acknowledges

what Reese calls "government intervention" in point two, as do specific objectives

such as "3D(3) Expand infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists" (City of Fairfield,

Go Green Plan, 2009). Also in point two of Reese's definition is mention of the

private sector. The private sector was engaged in Fairfield's planning process, as

evidenced by the individuals on the commission, and on the lists of partners identified

in the document (City of Fairfield, Go Green Plan, 2009). The third point of Rees'

definition is the most complex to actualize, because it requires integration of complex

organizations and collaboration between people with a widespread difference of

opinions and objects. When discussing sustainability, both the literature and

interviewees talk around this point and describe it as "a process." Sometimes this

"process" is integrated into the definition of sustainability, especially when it is

informed by transition or resilience theories (Wilson, 2013), and sometimes it reads as

a caveat to be applied when definitions, like Rees', includes such complex

components.

The Go Green Plan lays out one definition that helps guide this "process" of

sustainability in Fairfield. The definition was constructed with inspiration from the

Presidio Graduate School's Sustainable Management program and the book *Natural*

Capitalism. It states*:*

> *Sustainability* is a way of working and living that balances immediate needs
>
> for commerce, living, habitation, food, transportation, energy, and
>
> entertainment with future needs for these resources and systems as well as the
>
> liveliness and support of nature, natural resources and future generations. It

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[25] According to correspondence with City officials and department heads

addresses human and natural systems (such as social justice, meaningful

experiences, social values, biodiversity, ecosystem services and life-cycle food

chains) as well as economic systems (such as market viability, profit and

returns) in order to meet needs and desires without endangering the viability

of future generations or endeavors. (City of Fairfield, Go Green Plan, 2009)

In addition to this definition, Fairfield's approach to sustainability is guided by individuals in the community who have their own understanding of sustainability. During the research process, interviewees reflected on sustainability. They articulated its characteristics, why it is important, and its qualitative impact on the community. The definitions and characterizations of sustainability ranged from very specific to very abstract. This broad spectrum of how the term is conceptualized is indicative of the diversity of mindsets found in the Fairfield community.

A couple of interviewees succinctly defined sustainability, but most interviewees spoke about it in broad terms and scope. For example, to some people sustainability means…. *taking care of nature, taking care of earth, taking care of the environment, so, it can take care of you. You know. Puttin' back what you take out. It's kind of like anything like a friendship, like a marriage – you have to give to get (Rachel, 2014)*. The majority of the interviewees preferred to discuss sustainability in terms of general characteristics or from a broader perspective. For example,

> *It's just about a smarter way of doing things. I'm kind of over the "green" and this and that. By doing things in a smarter way I think we're working more with nature rather than against it. I think that sustainability is also really localized. Soooo it's about using local resources. When I say I don' t like the word sustainability, I don't mean that I don't like that terminology. What I'm*

trying to say is that's just about a more intelligent and harmonious way of

doing things that includes a bigger picture. (Katie, 2014)

Other interviewees expounded on the "bigger picture" by moving beyond the term itself and describing a "*sustainability worldview*" *(Jason, 2014)* or further questioning the term. One interview stated that *"...an essential part of a sustainability worldview is that there's an underlying unity that uh – there's a unity that underlies a surface diversity. You know, there's a wholeness in nature and in life and that you know people can directly experience it (Jason, 2014).* This is not an unfamiliar sentiment amongst ecologically-minded farmers and artists. Farmers and writers like Wendell Berry and Aldo Leopold have been describing the interconnectedness between man and nature for decades. In "The Peace of Wild Things" Berry writes,

When despair for the world grows in me

and I wake in the night at the least sound

in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake

Rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things

who do not tax their lives with forethought

of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars

waiting with their light. For a time

I rest in the grace of the world, and am free. (Berry, 1998)

Taking on an intellectual-ecological perspective, one interviewee challenged the term "sustainability":

> *Sustainable is a steady state as a concept; and especially since we've degraded our systems, do we really need to do something more? Is sustainable enough? I always like to use the term ecological, because you know mimicking nature and then it implies, to me anyway, that it's improving systems. I've actually been trying to think of a better word, and I can't think of a better word. (Andrew, 2014)*

Other interviewees didn't outspokenly re-frame the entire premise of sustainability or challenge the term, but they did expand it to encompass a variety of facets of community life. They used the term as a starting point for describing a complex scenario. For example,

> *I've always seen it as the words that go with the words with sustainable – renewable, rather than something that can be depleted. So, renewable energy sources being something like solar, wind, that's readily available rather than fossil fuels. There's also sustainable agriculture - growing our food in a way that what doesn't deplete the soil you know, take the nutrients out. It's cyclical. Sustainability is self-contained, there's a cyclical nature to it. It's also about quality of life. So, it's like this concept of what kind of world do I want my kids to inherit and my grand children and so on. And so, it kinda strikes you like, ya, it's the seventh generation concept. You think ok, seven generations ahead, what are we leaving and are we living in a way where*

we're making a big mess for the next generation? So, I think that anybody in a government situation in that position has to answer those questions. (Stephen, 2014)

Some interviewees grounded their understanding of sustainability with why it is important in Fairfield. For some people, the emphasis was on the ethical necessity and for others the pragmatic results. One interview describes the ethical importance and self-perpetuating nature of sustainability in Fairfield this way:

I think it's moral, ethical. I think there are elements there where people just feel that it's the RIGHT thing to do. And people live their lives wanting to do things that are right and not sidestepping. I think people here are really passionate about living the highest quality of life that they can and I think that a lot of it really comes from that. Also, as a community we've had a really great decade of celebrating community pride and pride in our accomplishments so whatever it is that we can do to either to distinguish ourselves from another community or to better ourselves in terms of what – how we operate now, we feel good about that. We like celebrating that. That becomes self-motivating, that is ummm what's the next step? What's the next thing that I can do? We're very fortunate that way. I'm not sure that that dynamic would work everywhere. I think it does because I think it's a human dynamic. So, I think because of the strong you know ethical, moral, annnndd the strong side of people really taking pride in their community accomplishments, those are the things that drive it at this point. (Richard, 2014)

From some perspectives, sustainability re-enforces the City's image of itself, as part of its branding. For example, several interviewees mentioned Fairfield's perception of itself as a leader. Re-enforcing this notion with actions that have a positive and tangible impact, in the form of saving money and protecting the environment from harm, can make sustainability an important aspect of how the city functions as a leader. David discussed this type of pragmatic relevance of sustainability by using an environmental and economic lens:

Umm, I think Fairfield sees itself as a leader when it comes to wanting to umm reduce what they see as consumption, what the city sees as consumption. For example, the UV change in purification of the outflow at the plant [waste water plant] *is a huge savings in electricity. I looked it up last year's electricity and propane costs. They cost the city almost $130,000 for the year and by changing that system from where you have to heat that material to get the bacteria to break things down to where you can just run it through this lighting set up, the electricity and the propane it takes to power the UV light tubes is vastly less than to heat that to 95 degrees. So, that's sustainability in action for a city, because we are reducing waste and conserving the resources we have (David, 2014).*

Overall, the bottom line of community development is creating places that people want to live and can thrive in. In order to thrive, people must have their basic needs taken care of, but also feel a sense of happiness and satisfaction – vibrancy. When asked why sustainability was important in Fairfield, Rachel spoke of this

bottom line. She implies ethical and practical reasons for engaging sustainability. She articulates the relevance of sustainability both for Fairfield and for the discipline of community development. In her words, sustainability is important…

…. Because you want to continue to make a vibrant place for people to come visit, possibly stay, find a job bring their kids up. You want all this wonderful stuff, you don't want – not that industry's bad – I don't want to say that at all, there's places for it, but that's how you grow as a community that's how you, you bring people in and if people see this warm and inviting sustainable community, I think that would draw them in and make them want to stay here, and that's what we want. Ya, definitely. So, ya! To protect it, to grow, to keep continuing being a wonderful city, bring people in like I said. Because it's a better way of life and keep it for all of your kids and grand kids and everyone. (Rachel, 2014)

In Fairfield, sustainability is ethical/moral, common sense, pragmatic, and for the common good. In the end, as one interviewee said, *Sustainability is an every day word in Fairfield, and everybody has a concept of what that means (Sam, 2014)*.

While interviewees were quite willing and capable to discuss their opinions of sustainability, they also reflected on its presence in the Go Green Plan. Goal one of Fairfield's Go Green Plan is to "Create and maintain the sustainability culture." Each interviewee had a sense of what the culture was that was being created and maintained. It was important to many interviewees to recall that sustainability was already a part of the community's culture and that the Plan was expanding what

already existed. As one interviewee, a member of the original Go Green Commission, stated:

> *I think the sustainability culture is that sustainability isn't something that you tack-on, you know, and you take a car and we tack on the sustainability part of it, it's completely re-thinking the community around the concepts of sustainability and ecology and all that and so, creating a culture of sustainability means that all the things about renewable energy, food, and recycling, and everything are embedded into the DNA of the community. I think the idea is to maintain the level of sustainability culture we had and then move it into other areas where it hadn't been part of the culture. (Jason, 2014)*

When discussing the sustainability culture, the interviewees articulated ways of thinking about it and actions associated with it that were of primary relevance to the geographic, social, and spatial locality that is Fairfield. As the culture is maintained and expanded upon…. "t*he sustainability culture I think is about more local innovation..ummm…it's about engaging in the community to do things at a local level and not be sending our resources out all across the country, but really strengthening ourselves (Katie, 2014)*. The discussion of culture quickly roots sustainability in time and space, as well as personal experiences. For example,

> *Once it* [sustainability] *becomes part of the culture it's the way you think, and so that, I think about recycling, I've been an avid, dedicated recycler you know… forever. So…you know, since college certainly, since I've controlled my own waste streams, and that is just. I get done with a bottle somewhere*

and I will drive it home, rinse it out, and recycle it, I don't just toss it in the trash at the gas station, because it's part of my culture. So, to me once it becomes part of the culture, everyone's thinking about that… all those little decisions that they make throughout the day, and it's part of the way you live. Ummm…and so, that's that's the goal. Very lofty goal, but not immmmmpossible. (Elizabeth, 2014)

The culture that the community is attempting to create is an enhancement of what people are already doing and what currently exists in Fairfield. By incorporating a sense of fluidity and a connection to nature into the term "sustainability", it is also an expansion of the concept of sustainability. This enhancement and expansion influences actions that both individuals and the City take. Someone who worked closely with the City expressed it this way:

I think it's a culture of efficiency and community responsibility you know for these all things sustainable and I don't think there's actually what you'd call a laundry list. I think it's more a concept than a physical thing. "We wanna live our lives and be more sustainable." Well, what does that mean? We're going to recycle and do this and that and be more efficient in our energy use, we're going to live, frankly, the way I look at it's just living a simpler or maybe the better word is "cleaner" life. And not just taking advantage of what America generally thinks which is "we have all these things we can do all these things" but see what it is, how it effects us to live without some of these things that we don't generally need everyday. And that we're just wasting assets tending/contributing towards, I hate to use the word pollution, but

contributing to you know those concepts of the world and I think Fairfield just
wants to be known for being a leader in changing the direction that we're all
going in and looking at things from a little different perspective. And just
making sure that question is asked when we build something and design
something and buy something and all those kind of things. So, it is definitely
an aspect of the culture of the citizens of Fairfield. (Sam, 2014)

This reflection, and subsequent perception, of the context and meaning of sustainability was fundamental to all interviews. Individual interviewees had personal reasons for being interested in sustainability, but also a sense of what it means to the broader population of Fairfield. While the articulation of the reasons and importance of sustainability are not identical, they are similar and were paramount in all interviews.

Each interviewee was able to reflect on the meaning of sustainability and its relevance in Fairfield. They described its characteristics, why it is important in Fairfield, and what the Go Green Plan is ultimately attempting to accomplish. Sustainability in Fairfield is clearly about more than switching out light bulbs and growing your own food. The concept is more systematic and complex. There is an ethical component, perhaps a spiritual component, and even a regenerative or resilient element to how the term is conceptualized.

In Fairfield, the term denotes, "*an underlying unity, a wholeness in nature*" (Jason, 2014) or something that includes "*a bigger picture*" (Katie, 2014). These ideas are largely missing from the planning literature, as are the necessary tools for implementing definitions of terms and theories. If the theory reflected the findings from this research, definitions of terms related to sustainability and sustainable

development would include aspects of resilient theory, a larger profile of motivating factors, and ethics.

The lack of literature on sustainability planning and smart growth for small, rural, towns and the findings from this research pose the questions, "Are existing definitions (like Rees' and Meadows') enough?" and "What do these definitions look like when applied to the physical landscape?" How the definitions and conceptualizations of sustainability are translated into action is explored in the next section "City Engagement."

City Engagement

Even though tools for implementing sustainability in small towns are scarce, Fairfield is working from their own definitions and ideas to move ahead, utilizing available and developing new resources. The formalization of the plan was an acknowledgement of grassroots activities that had been going on in the community for many years. The Plan largely serves as a galvanization of ideas into actionable steps and empowers the City to take on issues that the community cares about. Progressive leadership, partnerships, and the sustainability coordinator have been instrumental in the implementation of the strategic initiatives. In implementing the Go Green Plan, the City must carefully balance needs and desires to ensure that they are able to demonstrate, and continue to demonstrate, what they have delineated in their plan. They must also continue to balance conflicting opinions and desires from Fairfield residents. The City is responsible for implementing the Go Green Plan, but they also engage with sustainability by thinking long-term, creating partnerships, and continuously balancing the community's needs and wants.

Morton (2003, 2008) points out that small municipalities often have limited financial resources and staff. It follows that if small towns and rural centers wish to thrive, they must "think outside of the box." Fairfield tackles this challenge with three levels of engagement:

- Utilizing its engaged citizenry

- Creating partnerships with private businesses and local non-profits

- Establishing relationships with statewide organizations

On each level of engagement, you can find what Selman and Parker (1997) have identified as three types of people that are essential to successful sustainable development processes at the community level (the types are not mutually exclusive) 1) catalytic personalities 2) community champions 3) super networkers. These people propel ideas forward with action. They exhibit what the community calls "progressive leadership," which comes in the form of engaged citizens and forward thinking city officials. Progressive leaders have a positive vision for the future of Fairfield and they think broadly when evaluating the ramifications of their actions on both a short and long term temporal scale. In regards to the Go Green Plan, the hiring of a sustainability coordinator ensures that Selman and Parker's three qualities of necessary people are a) embodied within the coordinator or b) are partially embodied by the sustainability coordinator and also sought out from other factions of the community.

The City utilizes leadership to address their local physical sustainability in the context of global sustainability. Local physical sustainability refers to man-made infrastructure and natural resources that are needed to provide a high quality of life for residents. For example, the City must budget and spend funds in a balanced way, and

during this process they make choices that effect the consumption of globally

accessible resources, such as oil. As one interviewee states,

> *If it was anything new we immediately had it* [sustainability] *as one of the 12*
>
> *things we need to address. It would be one of the 12, always." If it was*
>
> *something existing, sometimes it would depend on the level of complication and*
>
> *you know financial need, but it was always considered. (Sam, 2014)*

When Daly (1991) describes a steady-state economy, he describes a balance of

physical resources - human and non-human. Using his model, rates of use of

resources would not exceed their rates of regeneration (Daley, 1991). Given the

current constraints and priorities of municipalities, which Morton and Edwards point

out, such a "steady state" may only be feasible if time is considered on a long-term

scale. For example, cities may lack the capital to invest in solar. The investment may

only be feasible if they look for additional sources of funding and/or at a slightly

longer than average payback period and future trends of rising energy costs. In order

to make similar projects that are in the Plan a reality, Fairfield relies on a city council

that is willing to work together for mutually beneficial solutions and creative

financing.

The first step of implementing Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan was to hire

a Sustainability Coordinator who would oversee the plan. The coordinator was hired

and initially began work by doing a green house gas inventory and community tree

plantings. One city leader recalls the initial focus of plan implementation:

> *The City contracted with an individual who did a lot of technical assessment*
>
> *with grant programs. He was the local point for all things sustainable. I would*

say because of the City's responsibilities day to day from an infrastructure standpoint a lot of focus was on the city's infrastructure – utilities, buildings – to try to bring sustainable concepts to them again leading by example. (Sam, 2014)

Interviewees who had worked with the Sustainability Coordinator recounted the importance of having a person in such a position. As one City department head stated, *It helps having a sustainability coordinator, it really does. He focuses his time and energy on green initiatives. I don't know where this would be without him and maybe a couple other people (Trevor, 2014).* Another City leader reflected more on the components of the plan and how the Sustainability Coordinator interfaces with it:

I would say most of the things that are in the plan are not very controversial to most residents… everything is voluntary - meaning that, we're not saying you have to do this, we're just trying to help people move further down the road, we're trying to help people become a more resilient community through all of these different ways, but if you don't want to, you don't have to. So, it's an interesting method, but I don't think it's super effective. I think that if you didn't have a sustainability coordinator, a plan like that wouldn't work, nothing would happen in an organized or strategic way. So, if you are going to do a plan like that, you've got to have someone that's pushing, finding funding, you know creating those opportunities to make things happen. (Corey, 2014)

The Sustainability Coordinator is seen as a leader in the community whose expertise is grant writing, community organizing, energy efficiency, and growing food. To residents of Fairfield, the existence of the position is an example of progressive leadership. Several interviewees mentioned a progressive feel to the Fairfield community. They specifically attributed this term to the mayor and the city council as a whole. The feeling was that this progressive leadership comes from individuals who care about the town.

> *It* [sustainability] *works in Fairfield, because everybody will sit down and talk about it and that's why in a lot of towns this would never ever work, because all the jabs and the insults'd come out in the first meeting and that'd be the last time anyone sat in the room with each other. And here they just figure out, ok, if that won't work, what will work, let's get the best of both worlds on that. It's a caring community. (Sam, 2014)*

In addition to sustainability expertise and a caring nature, a progressive leader is described as someone who isn't short-sighted, who understands the importance of education, and who can integrate diverse perspectives. As one interviewee states, *The City's done a good job of trying to educate about and implement things that are not short sighted, that they look at the long term – the effect of the operating costs of things and trying to integrate more practices that make sense (Corinne, 2014).* A City representative summarizes progressive leadership this way: *It's not like you can keep doing something just 'cause that's the way you've been doing it (Rachel, 2014).*

Balancing short-term needs with long-term goals and desires is the challenge posed to progressive leadership. While sustainability may be something that is a

priority to the community, ideals still must be balanced with realities. Some projects are attainable immediately, while others need additional planning, and still others may not be feasible for a long time or until something unforeseen happens. This is especially true when it comes to the City budget.

> *Sometimes you do have to be careful about your budgeting, because sometimes sustainability can cost a lot of money and sometimes it's a big payout upfront, but it'll pay back in the long run of course. But when we did the solar lights ummm and the library upgrades you know, it was a lot of money out, but it all comes back, it just takes time, but sometimes coming up with the money right then and there can be challenging, because we plan the budget a year ahead of time. So, you almost have to have it scheduled on what you want to do and when, even if there was a 5 year plan and then taking little steps in those directions (Rachel, 2014).*

One thing that helps ease budgetary constraints and helps to get projects accomplished is meaningful partnerships. During the interview process, individuals, businesses, and organizations were continuously referenced for their work related to sustainability in the City of Fairfield. Additionally, the Go Green Plan lists partners and responsible parties for each objective. Partners range from locally owned businesses to private foundations to utility companies to state and federal agencies. As one interviewee states, *If you have money and you have resources* [human and financial]*, and it has common ground, it's going to be successful and those are the things that are going to get done (Corey, 2014).*

Getting things done is crucial to proving the concept of sustainability and making the Go Green Plan a living reality, but in addition to resource challenges the City is also faced with some resistance to the concept. In addition to budgetary challenges, a few interviewees mentioned challenges to implementing the plan that were associated with resistance to making the plan, or portions of the plan, mandatory. The resistance primarily surfaces on a per project basis when particular initiatives in the Go Green Plan are attempted. For example, one of the goals of the Go Green Plan is "To achieve sustainable community design and public policy and infrastructure" (Go Green Plan, 2009). One suggested strategy to achieve this goal is to "Monitor new buildings for compliance with existing state energy code" (Go Green Plan, 2009). There are costs associated with this, both for the City and the building owner. One City leader describes this type of resistance:

Someone who is resistant to it, isn't as comfortable or as familiar, they're only thinking of the up-front costs and thinking, "I'm going to make that investment, don't force me to make that investment in a certain way, I'm going to build the cheapest building you know that I can…" So, that's where the resistance came from … you know: don't make it that mandatory, because it hadn't risen to that level of importance. *(Richard, 2014)*

Fairfield residents were interested, and are still interested, enough to devote time/energy/money to a Go Green Plan, but many didn't, and still don't, want anything dictated. It seems very important that the whole process comes from the community itself, from a bottom-up type of initiative. There seems to be a sense from community leaders that step one is to get widespread community buy-in, prove the

concept, find people interested; and step two is to move into policy changes.

However, one interviewee did say "*Change the policy, people will adjust" (Elizabeth, 2014).* There are some things that it seems government could take a stronger stance on for the betterment of the whole community, such as conforming existing code with the strategic priorities in the Go Green Plan. However, the hesitation seems two-fold: 1) premature action will divide the community 2) precaution around ensuring that decisions really are for the betterment of the entire community. Even though for advocates, sustainability "*just makes sense" (Richard, 2014).*

While waiting for issues to *"rise to that level of importance" (Richard, 2014)* where more regulatory action might be taken*,* the City demonstrates sustainable technologies and behaviors so as to provide guidance for business, industry, and individual citizens. It has also garnered a statewide reputation for sustainability and now demonstrates sustainability practices for other communities.

> *I think the whole idea was to get that momentum to get positive attention to the money being spent and the fixes being made from that perspective to try to motivate you know just the everyday citizen homeowner to try to take on those things as well. And they're much softer on their building and zoning to accommodate that compared to what a conventional town would be. On another level of demonstration, the popular opinion in Iowa is that Fairfield and Dubuque are the sustainable cities and then everyone is following their lead. (Sam, 2014)*

The vision of the Go Green Plan states, "We envision our community as a model showing how sustainability increases the quality of life for all by enhancing

economic vitality while restoring and preserving a healthy natural environment" (Go

Green Plan, 2009). One interviewee understands this vision to mean that the City is

…trying to use their resources as best they possibly can. You know, not be a waste,

just be a sound community that tries to do the best they can with the resources that

they have (Jonathon, 2014).

There is some disagreement about the degree to which the City is a model.

Some interviewees don't believe in the concept of a "model," while others see the

City as the "*cow bell*" leading the heard (Sam, 2014). Yet, none of the interviewees

expressed that they thought other people and cities could look at Fairfield and mimic

exactly what they did and thus become a sustainable community. The majority of the

interviewees mentioned that other Cities could borrow certain tools or strategies that

Fairfield had success with, but also "*just because it worked here, doesn't mean it will*

work there" (Jason, 2014) or what the literature refers to as "sense of place" (Mattson,

1994).

Both the findings of this research and the literature allude to sustainability's

fluid nature and that it is "not a fixed ideal, but an evolutionary process of improving

the management of systems, through improved understanding and knowledge"

(Rammel, 2007). Sustainability cannot be a static objective, because social and

natural systems are dynamic and ever-evolving (Rammel, 2007). As one interviewee

stated, *I'm sure there's a direction that we're headed, but I don't think we can say,*

"We know where we're headed." There's gonna be things that evolve along the way

and we'll say, "Let's take that avenue." Or say, "We need to back up on this one and

re-focus on this," (Jonathon, 2014). The disagreement on the details of sustainability

as seen in "Reflections on Sustainability" re-enforce this notion of an iterative process

and fluidity.

The myriad of definitions and characterizations are constantly changing and evolving, at pace with the individual's level of engagement with "sustainability." As people grow in experience and the definitions change, actions and implementation change, thus changing the model that is being created. Therefore, a model is not a one-dimensional road map that will lead people to a desired end goal. Rather, the model that is being created is 3-dimensional, complex, and interactive. Fairfield models particular behaviors that support their process i.e., *"Setting clear goals"* (Katie, 2014), but the process and subsequent supporting behaviors may take on different characteristics in another location.

Conceptualizing sustainability as a dynamic process conflicts with the idea of developing a static model or showcase. It lends itself more towards the definition of a model that changes with the times, a model that can try technologies and processes in response to local needs. So, how do we know what exactly is being modeled? And how do we measure whether a model has been created? Aspiring to be a model may be motivating and inspirational, but a true model is only created if a city is doing the real work that results in preserved and healthy natural environments, enhanced economic vitality, and increased quality of life. According to this research, engaging with sustainability on a city-level, in a location specific manner, creates learning opportunities and enhanced quality of life, but does not create models that can be copied and transferred to other locations.

The nascent interest in sustainability was spurred to action by progressive leaders who were open and willing to work around and through social conflicts. The subsequent community planning process provided an opportunity for defining and articulating the meaning of sustainability in Fairfield and solidified the City's active engagement. Through reviewing the *story of sustainability* the latent potential, the

nascent interests, and driving forces behind the movement towards sustainability in Fairfield become clear. *The Fairfield special* provided insight into the social challenges, which community leaders must navigate and which characterize how sustainability is operationalized. *The Fairfield special* also introduces different factions of the community who have differing perceptions of the importance of sustainability. These differences come out in *reflecting on sustainability,* which defined and characterized sustainability in the local context of Fairfield. *City engagement* shows how the story of sustainability continues to be written through active participation by all factions of the Fairfield community, especially the meditating portion of the community. Together, these four themes create a rich, descriptive narrative that highlights why sustainability exists as a theme for community development.

The *story of sustainability* begins with the rich soil and farming practices in the Fairfield area, which people associated with Maharishi University of Management who had an inclination towards healthy eating and homesteading gravitated towards to provide local organic food. The experimentation with local organic food, natural building, and renewable energy was acknowledged as a community asset in the 2003 Moving Fairfield Forward Strategic Plan. This plan laid the groundwork for a more robust city sustainability initiative that was formalized with the adoption of the 2009 Go Green Strategic Plan.

As the *Fairfield Special* discusses, two factions of the Fairfield community - the meditating and non-meditating portions - are sometimes perceived to be at odds when it comes to sustainability issues. Yet, for the City and community at large to have undertaken the amount of sustainability work and for the level of goodwill to exist that was expressed in the interviews, sustainability must bridge as many (or more)

divides than it breaks. However, all interviewees agreed that the impetus for the Go
Green Plan and the formalization of sustainability as a City initiative came from those
associated with the University or meditation.

The differences present in the *Fairfield special* are reflected in the definitions and
characterizations of sustainability in *reflecting on sustainability.* Sustainability in
Fairfield is multi-faceted. It has components of ethics, spirituality, environmental
protection, economic development, and community revitalization and vibrancy. Much
of the literature does not discuss spiritual or ethical sustainability, Fairfield adds this
characterization. However, the literature does articulate social equity or justice as a
characteristic of sustainability, which is minimized in Fairfield.

In *City engagement,* the beginnings presented in the *story of sustainability,* the
social characteristics from *the Fairfield special,* and the characterizations of
sustainability from *reflecting on sustainability* are seen in action as interviewees
present the challenges and methods for operationalizing and enacting sustainability.
Arguably the most impactful strategy for implementation was the hiring of a
sustainability coordinator. The sustainability coordinator oversees sustainability
efforts and is responsible for making sure the City is tracking on target with the goals
laid out in the Go Green Plan. On a day-to-day basis, the coordinator and other city
officials wrestle with the logistics of taking action by balancing budgets, resources,
and enthusiasm.

The plan evaluation presented in Chapter 5 corroborates pieces of this analysis
related to how and why the Go Green Plan was implemented. It articulates addition
details about the focus of sustainability in Fairfield and how it is being
operationalized. The findings and analysis from Chapters 4 and 5 will be used to

make conclusions and draw implications for other communities and future research.

Conclusions, implications, and future research possibilities are presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5. PLAN EVALUATION

Many of the interviewees referenced Fairfield's Go Green Plan (the Plan), and the Plan was the centerpoint for most of the interviews. The interview process spurred a dialogue about sustainability in Fairfield. This dialogue was continued in the form of a plan evaluation conducted by members of the Go Green Commission. This process is what both Baer and Feiden refer to as iterative planning and the on-going dialogue about the plan. Fairfield's Go Green Plan was described by interviews as just that, an iterative plan - a plan that was not static and could change in response to the needs of the times. By extending what emerged from the interviews into a plan evaluation, this research exposes additional details about the story of sustainability in Fairfield.

Plan evaluations are considered a "planning best practice" (Seasons, 2003; Haines, 2007). Yet, there is still a lot of discrepancy in the literature as to how to go about conducting a useful evaluation (Talen, 1996; Godschalk, 2012). The literature refers to many motivations for conducting a plan evaluation, including looking for policy conformance or empirical performance value (Laurian, 2004; Brody, 2005). The process undertaken in Fairfield was a participatory process. It was a review of the quality of the document and the goals therein. The evaluation was designed to both further clarify what interviewees recounted and to be useful to members of the City's Go Green Commission.

The interviews unearthed the story of sustainability in Fairfield - the early sustainability initiatives, motivating factors and driving forces, as well as some of the actions that have been taken. The plan evaluation informs this story by identifying additional themes of actions that have been taken and elucidating local priorities

related to important principles identified in the literature. Specifically, the plan was

evaluated against Iowa's Smart Planning Principles . By analyzing the Plan for the

presence of these principles this research adds to the limited body of knowledge

available about smart planning and sustainability in small towns. The evaluation also

reviewed the Plan to determine the active status of objectives and to determine the

relevancy and currency of the aims and objectives (See Figure 2. Go Green Plan

Objectives). Both parts of the Plan evaluation - the review for smart principles and the

review for active status and currency - were designed to assist members of the Go

Green Commission to better understand the document that they volunteered to help

implement.

Objectives by Categories

Community and Culture
To create and maintain the sustainability cultures

Aim 1A: To make sustainability an integral part of community life

Aim 1B: To provide opportunities for community sustainability education and life-long learning

Aim 1C: To establish Fairfield's sustainability resource for learning and leadership development

Aim 1D: To develop a culture of wise use of energy and materials

Aim 1E: To incorporate sustainability principles in achieving the goals in the Move Fairfield Forward Community-Wide Strategic Plan

Economic Development
To create jobs, wealth, and opportunities for investment, with sustainable development

Aim 2A: To achieve energy independence as a county

Aim 2B: To create a model for economic development through the local food industry

Aim 2C: To establish Fairfield as a model Waste Energy / Waste Resource community

Aim 2D: To develop financial resources for Fairfield's sustainability initiatives

Aim 2E: To enhance sustainable business and job opportunities from the existing business base and through attracting new industry and high tech sustainability businesses

Aim 2F: To create an entrepreneurial environment for development of innovative businesses

Land use, Buildings, and Transportation
To achieve sustainable community design and public policy and infrastructure

Aim 3A: To significantly reduce energy consumption in new and existing buildings and increase renewable energy use

Aim 3B: To enhance building performance through sustainable design and engineering, which saves resources and enhances the well-being of the people who occupy the building

Aim 3C: To establish sustainable planning for a sustainable community

Aim 3D: Significantly reduce greenhouse gasses (GHG) emissions resulting from transportation

Aim 3E: To adopt best practices in land use, facilities management, and city services

Figure 2. Go Green Plan Objectives
Source: City of Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan

Evaluations might be completed by professionals, advocacy groups, government officials, or citizens (Berman, 2008). In order to understand the true meaning of an evaluation, it is important to consider who is doing the measuring and who is doing the reporting and whether or not their personal interests may be affecting the results (Berman, 2008). Figure 3, "Evaluator Affiliations" breaks down the affiliation of the evaluators. Five members of Fairfield's Go Green Commission, plus the researcher, completed the evaluation. It should be noted that one of the evaluators was also interviewed for this research; and one of the people affiliated with the City in figure 3 is primarily affiliated with the non-profit sector. The motivation for the commission to evaluate the plan came at the request of the Mayor and from the commission's desire to better understand the document and to identify areas in the community to devote resources. The commission self-selected an evaluation sub-committee that identified and enunciated the following goals for the plan evaluation:

1. Examine the relationship between the plan's content and outcomes
   a. Determine the status of projects/goals listed in the plan i.e. percent of the plan completed
   b. Identify additional impacts of the plan i.e. Projects known but that are not in the plan
2. Understand the plan's scope/level of comprehensiveness
   a. Review the plan for the existence/inclusion of Smart Planning Principles
3. Identify plan alternatives
   a. Identify gaps/additional goals to add or sections to modify and/or omit as necessary

Figure 3. Evaluator Affiliations

At the beginning of the evaluation, the sub-committee reviewed the Plan's structure. The Go Green Plan is organized by three themes – Community and Culture, Economic Development, and Land Use, Buildings, and Transportation. Each theme has one over-arching goal. These themes/goal areas have nineteen affiliated aims and thirty-nine objectives, each with additional suggested strategies (See Figure 4. Go Green Plan Structure).
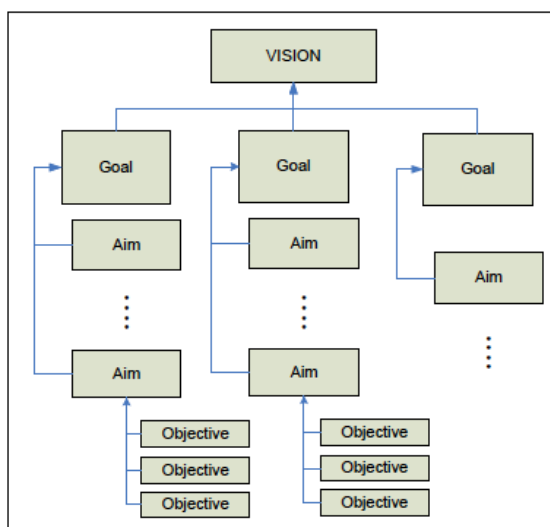

Figure 4. Go Green Plan Structure
Source: City of Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan

The evaluation was broken into two parts. During part one, evaluators reviewed the plan for the presence of the ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles. During part two, evaluators determined the status of projects and percentage of the plan that was complete. Both parts of the evaluation relied largely on the expertise of the evaluators. The evaluators represented a range of subject expertise - local foods, finance, and green building. They also represented a range in regards to familiarity with Fairfield. Some had lived in the City for multiple decades and some less than five years. The evaluators worked in teams of two with another evaluator who had a similar area of expertise, but different range of familiarity with Fairfield.

Edward and Haines' (2007) methodology for reviewing smart growth in the comprehensive plans of small communities was adapted and divided into two parts. During part one, the Go Green Plan was evaluated for the comprehensive or narrow presence of Iowa's ten smart principles. If a principle was comprehensively present, it influenced all parts of the population and physical geography equally. If a principle was narrowly present, its applicability was targeted to a specific sub-population or geographic region of the City. In order to evaluate this, each aim within a goal was reviewed to see if the smart principle was narrowly represented, comprehensively represented, or not represented. Each team of two had a hand-out with definitions for each principle and reviewed the aims within one goal (See Addendum A. Plan Evaluation Materials).

All ten principles were found in the goals and aims of the Go Green Strategic Plan. The broad concept of each principle is present in the Plan; and in some instances, the principles targeted specific portions of the physical landscape and

certain segments of the population. The ten Iowa Principles are listed in Table 2. Iowa

Smart Planning Principles.

Table 2. Iowa Smart Planning Principles

	Iowa Smart Planning Principles
1	Collaboration
2	Efficiency, Transparency, Consistency
3	Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy
4	Occupational Diversity
5	Revitalization
6	Housing Diversity
7	Community Character
8	Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
9	Sustainable Design
10	Transportation Diversity

The principles with the most references in the Plan were:

- Collaboration

- Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency

- Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy tied with Occupational Diversity

This indicates that these principles are expressed the most throughout the Go

Green Strategic Plan, and were potentially the most valued and/or needed in Fairfield

at the time the plan was written. The principles that are the least explicit in the plan

and least referenced (in order from most to least omissions) are listed in bullet points

below. These principles are less explicit in the plan and were perhaps less relevant at

the time of the Plan's inception.

- Community Character tied with Transportation Diversity

- Housing Diversity

- Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection

During part two of the evaluation, evaluators worked in the same teams as they did in part one and were given a thematic area of the plan, which is associated with one of the three goals in the Plan (See Figure 4. Go Green Plan Structure). They reviewed each aim and objective in their theme area (See Figure 4. Go Green Plan Structure). Working from a spreadsheet and hand-outs (See Addendum A. Plan Evaluation Materials), they first read through all of the aims and objectives and identified whether the language was vague or action-oriented. If the language was vague, the reference ID for the objective was recorded.

After familiarizing themselves with their thematic area in this way, they reviewed each aim and objective more thoroughly. This time, they were selecting from a drop down list in an excel spreadsheet whether or not an aim "hasn't begun/needs attention", was "in process," was "achieved," or was "unknown." If no action had been taken or nothing was known about the aim, the pair discussed the issue and recorded suggestions for next steps or ways to find out additional information. If an aim was out of date or appeared to need modification, suggested modifications were recorded (See Addendum A. Plan Evaluation Materials). While the evaluators worked in teams of two, there was open dialogue between the entire evaluation committee if and when a question arose. For example, when the team working on the Economic Development theme reviewed Aim 2D, objective 1 "Create and grow a specific green foundation," the team knew of some conversations that had been going on, but asked the rest of the group if there had been any action steps taken.

This evaluation of individual aims and objectives was based on local expert knowledge.

Simple statistics were used to arrive at the conclusions from the evaluation. Sums were taken by theme as well as across all categories. Table 3. "Progress update by plan Category" shows the percentage of objectives associated with each theme/goal area that are either in process or have been achieved. It indicates that Community and Culture has received the most attention with 86% of the objectives either in process or achieved. However, it should be noted that some of the achievements in this theme are byproducts of objectives in other themed categories. For example, in Land use, Buildings, and Transportation aim 3E(6): Develop a community greenbelt including fruit trees and edible landscapes is in process and has been the result of many educational workshops, which fulfills aim 1B(1): Develop a public mass awareness campaign about sustainability, in Community and Culture. So, while evaluating the Plan by theme can be helpful to get a snapshot of what has occurred in Fairfield and where the emphasis of action lies, relying solely on this method does not tell the entire story. The percentage complete by theme does not necessarily indicate where the most energy has been targeted, but reveals where the most traction has been gained.

This snapshot does reflect what several interviewees expressed - the current implementation focus is on projects that are non-controversial and enhance the feeling of community. The focus has been on, and traction has been gained in, education, outreach, and community building. This is reflected in the approximately percentage point differentiation between the "Community and Culture" section and other sections of the plan (See Table 3. Progress Update by Plan Category).

Table 3. Progress update by Plan Category

% In progress or complete by Category	
Community and Culture	86%
Economic Development	55%
Land Use, Buildings, Transportation	64%

Approximately 72% of the objectives in the plan have either been achieved or are in process (See Table 4. Status of Objectives). This 72% is representative of objectives across all three themes/goal areas. During the plan evaluation, there was some conflation of the status "achieved" and "in process." This might be because there are some objectives that are perpetually "in process" whether they were indicated as achieved or in process. For example, several strategies associated with objective 1A(4): "Cultivate and empower community leadership" have been achieved, but this aim is an on-going process that will be continually needed as community demographics shift and change; and aim 2A(2): "Develop a wide range of locally sourced renewable energy supplies in ways that create wealth in the community" is in process with no foreseeable end date for achievement, because the population in Fairfield changes and different technologies become available. This indicates the fluidity of the Go Green Plan and emphasizes that achieving sustainability in Fairfield is in fact less of a moving target and more of a continual process.

In order to make the Plan current, 64% of the objectives need review and modification (See Table 3). Objectives flagged for modification, included objectives that have been achieved and need to be re-worded, objectives that were vague/unclear, objectives that little was known about, and objectives that were thought to no longer

be relevant/attainable in Fairfield. It should be noted that not all of the objectives

needing review need modification, but all objectives that need modification require

the review of the Go Green Commission.

Table 4. Status of Objectives

Status of Go Green Objectives	
Total # objectives	39
% Achieved	28%
% In process	44%
% Hasn't begun/needs attention	23%
% Unknown	5%
% Of objectives needing review or modification	64%
% In process or achieved	72%

The Plan evaluation provides a snapshot of sustainability progress that has

occurred to date. However, in order to make the Plan current and accurately reflect

what is occurring in Fairfield and the direction being taken, the evaluation sub-

committee identified several steps that they need to accomplish:

- Review Aims and determine needed modifications
- Review Objectives and determine next steps
- Review least referenced Smart principles and determine if additional action is
  needed

- Sustainability Coordinator, with the support of an evaluation sub-committee representative, review and propose updated "Success Indicator/Dates"

- Develop an email, phone call script, or mailed flyer be undertaken with partner organizations

- Draft an addendum to the Go Green Plan to bring to City Council

After 5 years, the City of Fairfield's Go Green Plan has gained firm traction throughout both the physical and social landscapes. This is evidenced in the widespread action that has been taken across all three themes/goals areas in the Plan (see Table 2. Progress Update by Plan Category). Additionally, the Plan itself includes the ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles (which are similar to Smart Growth Principles, see Table 1. Smart Principles), now commonly thought to encapsulate the essence of community sustainability. At the time that the Go Green Plan was written, these principles were very new to professionals; and the Iowa Smart Planning Act wasn't adopted until after the plan was ratified. Furthermore, these principles have been critiqued as being largely inaccessible to small communities, and community professionals struggle with how to incorporate the principles into small-town living (Wells, 2002; Haines, 2007). Yet, Fairfield is able to see them persist in its community.

The performance evaluation of the Plan enhances the development of a sustainability narrative. Reviewing the Plan with local experts yielded insights into the Plan's strengths and weaknesses and how the plan could be modified to make it more relevant. The evaluation adds credibility to what the interviewees say and provides an overview of sustainability in action. Together, the narrative and plan evaluation paint a holistic picture of how sustainability is occurring in Fairfield.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the context in which a sustainability plan is written affects what is in the plan and how it is implemented. It also demonstrates that a community's characteristics and its understanding of sustainability shape how the term is operationalized. The findings presented here offer insight into how planning for sustainability might support the creation of vibrant small towns, while helping to mitigate some of the challenges they face. One outcome of this research is to lay a foundation for further research to understand why and how small towns across the country are engaging locally with global issues by means of incorporating sustainability into their plans.

This research establishes a narrative about how and why sustainability has emerged as a theme for community development in Fairfield, Iowa. The narrative emerged from interviews and triangulation of the interviewee's statements, including an evaluation of the City's Go Green Strategic Plan. Data collected from the interview process and the plan evaluation reveal an emphasis on sustainability as it relates to community and culture. The interviewees and the plan evaluators emphasized creating a social and political environment that is receptive to sustainability ideas, principles, and technologies. This emphasis yields a Plan that is a voluntary guidebook for sustainability strategies; and the perception of the current state of Plan implementation as "part 1" of a series related to sustainable community development.

The interviews and the plan evaluation discuss the process of plan conception, implementation, and evaluation. The plan evaluation shows an emphasis on plan implementation related to community and culture. This emphasis was reflected in the interviewees' focus on the social context of sustainability and reliance on it to

conceptualize and define the term, which in due course influences the priorities for the plan implementation.

The themes of the narrative that emerged from the interviews highlight characteristics important to Fairfield's narrative. The *Story of Sustainability* reveals the initial interest in sustainability and highlights the chronology of events related to the topic. *The Fairfield Special* reveals the social context within which sustainability has emerged as an interest and is defined. *Reflecting on Sustainability* elucidates how individuals and the City collectively perceive, conceptualize, and define sustainability. *City Engagement* illustrates how conceptions of sustainability lead to its operationalization and how the Plan is being implemented. Together, the themes generate a glimpse of Fairfield's path on the road to sustainability. They represent important factors relevant to Fairfield's narrative as articulated by the interviewees and crosschecked with input from the plan evaluation. Through the analysis and synthesis of the data collected, key factors of a community interested in sustainability have been distilled. These factors are discussed further in the "Implications" section, below.

Review of Analysis and the Go Green Plan Evaluation

One of several key themes that emerged from this research was the *Story of Sustainability* in Fairfield. The formalization of sustainability as a City initiative came after decades of interest from community members. However, from the time the idea was officially discussed in the strategic plan of 2003 to the time that the Go Green Plan was adopted, only six years passed.

Looking back through time, local food, a strong tenant of sustainability (as characterized by smart growth and the interviewees), has long had a place in the historically agriculturally based Fairfield area. Yet, it was in the mid-1970s that the other aspects of sustainability, such as renewable energy, natural building materials, and environmental conservation became increasingly prevalent. At that time, the arrival of Maharishi International University (now called Maharishi University of Management) brought with it a population interested in healthy living, conscious eating, and the interconnectedness of all life. A few people turned their interests in these areas into off-the-grid lifestyles or professions. They became organic farmers, owners of businesses dealing in natural products, renewable energy engineers, and hobbyists. They developed a skill set and knowledge base for which they became known as experts in sustainable living.

One of these individuals, who is referenced in several interviewees' quotes in this research, continued to increase their "sustainable living" knowledge and activities and embodies Selman and Parker's (1997) essential qualities for the success of sustainable development - a catalytic personality, community champion, and super networker. These qualities are also found in other residents as well as those who served on the Go Green Commission. However, there is one individual who stands out for their passion and commitment to sustainability. This person shared their enthusiasm with many others and it became "*contagious*" (Joseph, 2014). The interest became so widespread in fact, that it is only by tracing the threads of the community's interest in sustainable living in chronological order that the catalyst emerged. It is not that one individual ignited a flame of interest where there was no fuel; rather they kept focus on their own interests and collaborated with an increasing number of people. In addition to this expert-catalytic personality, there was also a mobilizing-

catalytic personality who championed the formulation of the Go Green Commission and the writing of the Go Green Plan.

There were other factors influencing interest in sustainability in Fairfield before the Go Green Plan was written. Business people were noticing market trends, the cost of fuel began to rise, and climate change and global warming entered the scene. The interest and motivation stemmed from the personal, *"I have an acreage, I don't want to pollute it"* (Jonathon, 2014), to the communal, *"It's a branding opportunity for the City"* (Corey, 2014), to the global, *"It's the RIGHT* [emphasis added] *thing to do for the world"* (Elizabeth, 2014). The Go Green Plan reflects these three levels of interest in the introduction. It states:

> Our Beliefs: We believe it is our obligation to be stewards of the natural resources entrusted to our responsibility and us to protect our environment and eco-system for all future generations. We believe we can fulfill this obligation through listening, communicating, and acting collectively, while honoring the diversity of opinions and interests in our community. (Go Green Plan, 2009)

The second theme, *The Fairfield Special* grounds sustainability in the local social context. Fairfield is one community that is inclusive of differing opinions, but it is also segmented into "meditators" and "non-meditators." The prevailing thought is that the meditating community has brought forth many positive things in the community - new businesses, more people, more jobs, visionary ideas. Yet, both groups in the community continue to hold reservations and cast judgments about the other. This research did not directly uncover such sentiments. Rather, this sentiment was relayed from second-hand statements interviewees made about working and

living in Fairfield. All of them agreed that the divide has narrowed, but that the community is still characterized by two distinct groups. The groups have started to overlap, because people now move to Fairfield who are less in solidarity with "meditators" or "non-meditators," and because individuals have established personal as well as business relationships across both groups. The sustainability initiatives are successful because individuals from both groups are willing to set aside their differences and work together towards a common goal.

The third theme, *Reflecting on Sustainability* characterizes and defines sustainability from the perspective of Fairfield residents. Sustainability is about a smarter way of doing things, about continual movement towards healthier living for people and the planet, and about the technologies that will allow the community to progress in that manner. It means utilizing renewable energy technologies, increasing capacity of local food production, and *"taking care of the environment, so it can take care of you"* (Rachel, 2014). Social justice and social equity, which the literature on sustainability accounts for in a variety of ways, were weakly represented and were not explicitly expressed by interviewees or in the Plan. The only slight reference towards these ideas was when interviewees described the need for their *diverse* community to find ways to work together. Another slight reference is in the Plan's implementation strategy, which attempts to be inclusive of all residents and target widespread demographic characteristics. The vision of the plan does not specifically address social equity or cultural respect. It functionally ignores social differences and simplifies the community into an all encompassing phrase (emphasized below):

"We envision our community as a model showing how sustainability increases the quality of life **for all** [emphasis added] by enhancing economic vitality while restoring and preserving a healthy natural environment."

The fourth theme, *City Engagement,* delineates the role of the City in the Go Green Plan. The City is responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented. To accomplish this, the City hired a Sustainability Coordinator who works part time for Fairfield and part time for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. In addition to working on projects in the plan, the Sustainability Coordinator is also encouraged to be entrepreneurial and responsive to suggestions from the community. In this way, the Plan becomes dynamic and continually progressive.

The City of Fairfield encourages calculated risk-taking. Progressive leaders - elected, non-elected, and unofficial - are supported in entertaining ideas that at first glance may seem unconventional. They consider changes such as re-planting a tree for every tree cut down or figuring out how to utilize a grant opportunity to place solar panels on the library in a relatively short time frame. By taking the time to consider propositions and weigh the pros and cons, they are often able to accomplish things that other communities of their size do not. Engaged citizens help to turn these considerations in action by holding elected officials accountable when they voice their opinions at city council meetings, in the grocery store, or via email or social media. The City does not always accomplish new feats or even their goals in the time frame allotted, but it keeps taking steps and moving forward. City leaders understand that there is a lot of work to be done and so are always doing at least something to progress. One thing that interviewees were divided on regarding "*City Engagement*" was the issue of increasing regulations. Some interviews indicated that the overall

tension between needs/wants and increased regulation/decreased regulation delayed progress of the plan. This can be seen in the politics associated with updating the book of code and the comprehensive plan, which several interviewees referenced, and which is associated with objectives in the Plan. However, the Plan is expansive enough that there are numerous other projects for the City to focus on. So, again *something* is always being done and progress continues. A few interviewees described updating code as "*the next step*" (Richard, 2014). The City's focus has been on ensuring wide-spread community buy-in and support of the general principles and projects in the plan - creating a general basis of support and showing success. The "next step" may be to engage in the more controversial and political topics such as codes and regulation, but there is no explicit timeline for this. Current code and regulations are not cited as explicitly hindering the plan from being implemented, but according to interviewees changing some code and regulation would make implementing certain objectives in the Plan more realistic and attainable.

By instigating and taking responsibility for the Plan, the City took on a leadership role in the sustainability arena. It continued to exhibit progressive leadership by demonstrating sustainability in action and conducting a green house gas inventory and taking measurable steps to reduce their energy consumption. As the city takes on this leadership role, it must constantly evaluate and balance immediate needs and long term desires. It is able to do this by seeking out partnerships with local and state agencies.

The City's actions and partnerships are reflected in the Go Green Plan. The Plan evaluation showed that action has been taken on many initiatives and that the City is not just talking about sustainability, but actually implementing its objectives. The Plan supports the Brundtland Report's definition of sustainability, but the way

that is implemented imbues the definition with resiliency theory. The Go Green

Commission found that the plan needs further review and updating, which re-enforces

the notion of sustainability as a fluid process that changes over time. It also shows

that Iowa Smart Planning principles, and similar Smart Growth principles, are

relevant to the sustainability of small towns.

Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan is five years old and the emphasis on its

implementation has thus-far focused on community-building and education. The

overall sentiment from interviewees is that Fairfield is responding positively to

"sustainable" practices. This may be in part, because many of the more controversial

objectives in the Plan have not yet been undertaken. There seems to be a strong

foundation of support for the concept, but because it is often perceived as a

"*meditator thing*" (Corey, 2014) accomplishing some of the more permanent

objectives (i.e. from the Go Green Plan: 3E 6, Develop a community greenbelt and

edible landscaping) is challenging. The emphasis has been on putting the plan into

action in a way that brings the community together and does not create further

divisions between meditators and non-meditators. It is unknown at this time whether

this tactic is inhibiting the implementation of the plan or is laying the groundwork for

greater future success.

Implications

People participating in sustainability planning efforts will benefit from taking

a deeper look into Fairfield's path towards sustainability and will find lessons of

opportunity and caution to further inform their own work. The recommendations in

this section are considerations that planners and other community members might find

beneficial. While it is important to be cautious when generalizing findings from

single-case studies, there are several transferrable lessons. The implications of this research applies most directly to communities that are formally engaging with sustainability. The primary recommendations are related to planning and engagement around issues of sustainability and articulate key components of a community interested in sustainable development.

The Go Green Plan offers clear direction and definition of terms, which takes into consideration both the geographic and social context of the community. The Mayor appointed the original commission, it was not open to all and there was no attempt to reach all members of the community until after City Council had approved the plan. By limiting participation in the planning process, the City risked creating a perception of sustainability being an exclusive or elitist topic. It also created a future need for education about sustainability, which a more open process may have engaged with sooner. However, the planning process was inclusive of individuals with varying positions of leadership, of both primary social groups (meditators and non-meditators), and people with varying degrees of knowledge related to sustainability. This restricted planning commission created a focused group of people who saw the planning process through to completion. The lesson to be learned from Fairfield in regards to formally engaging with sustainability is first identify who is already working on sustainability in the community, identify the local sustainability champions and necessary partners. Then, create and adopt a plan. During the planning process, be selective in who develops the plan and limit the initial number of participants. Also, set goals that you know you can achieve, but also set some audacious objectives with clear action steps. The Plan includes several bold objectives (ie. 3 (A) 1: Reduce city-wide energy use by 60% by 2020), not all of which will be achieved as they are written. However, as the literature on behavior change reveals

(and as business leaders in Fairfield were familiar with), setting far-reaching goals provides an opportunity for innovation. It is also important in the plan document itself, to define terms, set clear goals and outline objectives with related strategies and success indicators.

A second lesson learned is to fund an employee and charge them with the responsibility of implementing the plan. A key component of Fairfield's implementation strategy was to start with the projects most likely to be successful. Start with non-controversial projects that everyone can agree on that will result in a greater sense of accomplishment and community. Work where there is interest and need. Keep doing *something* in the direction you want to be going and be open to new ideas and projects. These ideas and projects might come by means of an "ear to the ground," which can help amplify citizen voices and support a population of active and engaged citizens. Alternatively, it might come from a local expert or elected official. It was through a combination of this "ear to the ground" and expert/official lead projects that the Go Green Plan was written and is being implemented. The city also provided opportunities for citizens to get involved. Thus, creating goodwill, enhancing a positive sense of community, and establishing avenues for citizens to be actively engaged in a way that benefits the city and the individual can be especially useful in small towns where resources may be limited.

The Plan's goals and objectives are laid out with a targeted plan of action and affiliated with responsible parties from a wide berth of segments of the private sector. The planning process and resulting plan implementation are considered an educational process through which community members are able to better themselves and the environment in which they live. This approach towards formalizing a community's interest is one that may be replicated by other communities of any size and in any

region. The specific make-up of the planning committee and resulting plan will be different and may be created differently, but by taking the time to envision and plan, in a manner that allows a variety of opinions and perspectives to be voiced, the community can move forward with coherence and enthusiasm.

Future Research

This research project reveals many possibilities for future research. As previously mentioned, there are ample opportunities for research related to sustainability in small towns, as little research currently exists. There is a dearth of information available about the challenges and opportunities they face. How are they surviving and what do they need in order to thrive? How are they operationalizing sustainability, resilience, and smart growth? How do they perceive their future given the current population trends? These are just a few of the questions that have gone mostly unanswered.

One tenant of sustainability is to provide for future generations. In the face of many challenges, many small towns continue to provide for residents. How do they do this? What do they offer to the definition of resilience and sustainability? If they are adopting language about sustainable development, how and why are they doing this and what is the impact? These are just a few of the questions that this research has stirred and which have the potential to impact local, regional, and national policy. In order for sustainable development practices to have the greatest global effect, they must be implemented on a wide variety of scales and in many types of communities - including small towns.

There are 59,492,276 people in the United States who live in rural areas.[26] Yet, relatively little is known about how they plan their communities and how they are dealing with the challenges of declining populations or how, in some cases, smaller cities are becoming medium sized cities. In richer nations, such as the United States, rural populations peaked in the 1950s, but they are not expected to peak in developing nations until 2025 (Cohen, 2003). There is a wealth of information that can be shared on a national and international level by taking a closer look at life in small-towns.

Perhaps small towns go unseen by researchers because they are geographically spread out or do not have loud enough political voices to be heard or because data analysts anticipate increasing numbers people living in urban areas. Whatever the reason, it does not change the fact that there are a significant number of people living in small towns that are in need of the benefits that can come from research. Benefits such as access to resources and validation of the reality they are living. As the literature on qualitative research and narrative inquiry reveals, telling stories and developing narratives that are grounded in the reality of present-day existence provides a strong foundation for individuals and communities to create a healthy future for themselves, through which they contribute to society as a whole.

Although, small-towns may be dwindling in size, they are not disappearing. In order for this research to be most effective and impactful, further qualitative research into the intricacies of sustainable development is necessary. Focusing future research on small-towns would further increase the relevancy of this research. They continue to contribute to the larger society by providing space for industry and people. Yet, they are arguably under-supported because while they share the needs of larger

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[26] According to the 2010 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

municipalities, they also struggle with different challenges that warrant different solutions. Yet, in order to identify relevant policy advocacy, the gap of available information on small-towns must first be narrowed.

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ADDENDUM A. PLAN EVALUATION MATERIALS

Instructions

PART 1: review the plan in three groups by goal area

Suggestion: sit in a circle and take turns reading goals/aims/objective, have one person record. For each goal and aim determine its comprehensiveness and indicate if an Iowa Smart Planning Principle is present.

Part 1 is meant to give us an overview, a general sense, of the plan. It's a "high level" review. Don't over think this part.

1) Which, if any, of the Iowa Smart Planning Principles are present in the Goal/Aim?
For each principle present, are they narrow or comprehensive?
        Spatially comprehensive – all parts of the community?
        Socially comprehensive – all segments of community?

        Ie. If the sections apply more to one segment of Fairfield's population or one geographical area of the City than another segment or geographical area, then the principle is narrowly included.

PART 2: review objectives by themed category

1) Are the objectives action oriented and specific ie. adopt, develop, and will or general (vague) and non-action oriented ie. encourage, promote, should, enhance?
Read through the objectives in your group and record the reference number for any "vague" goals"
Ie. Aim 1A

2) Have the action items been achieved or worked on?
If Y:
Brief summary of the project, partners, and timeline,
Select achieved, in process, unknown/needs attention, from the drop down in the spreadsheet

If N, then discuss:
Why not?
What further action might be needed?
Does the action item need modification or to be omitted?

If it needs modification, further discussion, or omission, then flag it with a X

If unknown:
What needs to be done (who needs to be contacted) to find out more information (reference person/organization listed as "lead)?

3) Are there any objectives missing from the category? Ie. projects you know are underway, but are not an objective within the Aim in your category?
If Y, add project names/contacts to posters on wall (make sure to include reference location OR write in project or goal that "should" be included in the section

4) Additional Comments

Definition of terms:

Iowa Smart Principles

The first major section of the Iowa Smart Planning Act outlines ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles. These principles must be considered and may be applied when local governments and state agencies deliberate all appropriate planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions. Application of these principles is intended to produce greater economic opportunity, enhance environmental integrity, improve public health outcomes, and safeguard Iowa's quality of life. The principles also address the need for fair and equitable decision-making processes. Language was included in the Act stipulating that application of Smart Planning Principles does not expand nor reduce the authority of state and local governments and other public entities to exercise eminent domain (Rebuild Iowa Office, Smart Planning Legislative Guide 2011).

Iowa Principles[27]:

1. Collaboration
Governmental, community, and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction of the entity, are encouraged to be involved and provide comment during deliberation of planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions and during implementation of such decisions. The state agency, local government, or other public entity is encouraged to develop and implement a strategy to facilitate such participation.

2. Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to provide efficient, transparent, and consistent outcomes. Individuals, communities, regions, and governmental entities should share in the responsibility to promote the equitable distribution of development benefits and costs.

3. Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to promote clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency.

4. Occupational Diversity
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote increased diversity of employment and business opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote the establishment of businesses in locations near existing housing, infrastructure, and transportation.

5. Revitalization
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should facilitate the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility, and integrates different uses of property. Remediation and reuse of

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[27] Land Use-Smart Planning, Iowa Code 18B2.1, 2010

existing sites, structures, and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in undeveloped areas.

6. Housing Diversity
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.

7. Community Character
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community (*sense of place*).

8. Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should emphasize protection, preservation, and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreational facilities.

9. Sustainable Design
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that utilize sustainable design and construction standards and conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air, and materials.

10. Transportation Diversity
Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, and improve air quality.

Example Spreadsheets from electronic packet
These spreadsheets were used by teams of evaluators to review Fairfield's Go Green Strategic Plan.

Chart 5. Plan Evaluation Part 1

Go Green Plan Evaluation PART 1	Goal 1: To Create and Maintain the sustainability culture in			Aim1: To make sustainability an integral part of the community		
	Spatially Comprehen sive? C/N/X	Socially Comprehen sive? C/N/X		Spatially Comprehen sive? C/N/X	Socially Comprehen sive? C/N/X	
Iowa Smart Planning Principles						
Collaboration	C	C		C	C	
Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency	N	N		C	C	
Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy	N	N		x	x	
Occupational Diversity	x	x		x	x	
Revitalization	x	x		C	C	
Housing Diversity	x	x		X	X	
Community Character	C	C		X	X	
Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection	x	x		X	X	
Sustainable Design	C	C		x	x	
Transportation Diversity	x	x		C	C	

Chart 6. Plan Evaluation Part 2

Go Green Plan Evaluation PART 2, Category: Economic Development, review of AIMS and OBJECTIVES pages 9, 17-22		Vague Aim Reference Codes for example, "Aim 1A"	If YES, Brief Summary of project, partners, timeline, strategies employed:	If YES, what is the objective's status?	If NO, discuss: Why not? What further action might be needed? Does the action item need modification or to be omitted or to be achievable? Brief summary:	If unknown, What needs to be done (who needs to be contacted) to find out more information (reference person/organization listed as "lead")?	If the objective needs modification, further discussion, or omission, type an X
	1. Are the aims action oriented and specific ie. adopt, develop, and will or general (vague) and non-action oriented ie. encourage, promote, should? Read through the objectives in your group and record the reference number for any "vague" goals" (refer to page 9 of the Go Green Plan)	Aim2D, Aim2F					
	2. Have the objective items been achieved or worked on? (refer to pages 11-16 for strategies and partners)						
Aim2A: To achieve energy independence as a county	2A(1): Reduce the amount of energy consumed in buildings by providing benchmarks & financial incentives for new & retrofitted green buildings	yes 8%		Achieved 3			yes reset the bar higher, focus on new dev
	2A(2): Develop a wide range of locally sourced renewable energy supplies in ways that create wealth in the community	ideal, eco village, seed center, sustainable learning, sky factory, single family homes		In process 2			

ADDENDUM B. INTERVIEW GUIDE

1) What brought you to Fairfield?
2) How did you come to be involved in Fairfield's sustainability planning initiatives?
3) Describe the role of the Go Green Plan
4) Goal 1 of the Go Green Plan is 'Create and Maintain the Sustainability Culture." How would you describe the sustainability culture in Fairfield?
5) What does sustainability/going green mean to you?
   a. Describe your perspective on sustainability
6) Why does Fairfield have a Go Green Plan?
   a. Where did the idea for the Go Green Plan come from?
   b. What do you think about it?
7) What was happening in Fairfield at the time that the Go Green Plan was created?
   a. What were the challenges the community was facing?
   b. What were people interested in doing/seeing happen in the community?
8) Who/what organizations are actively involved in implementing the plan?
   a. Has the group of people changed over time?
9) How do you decide what projects to focus on?
   a. What is the community focusing on currently?
      i. Why?
10) What advice would you give someone else in your position whose community was starting to talk about "sustainability" and "going green"?
11) What does community mean?
12) What is Fairfield doing well and what do they need support on?
13) Do you have a story you could share with me about "sustainability" in Fairfield?